

THE INK MONKEYS I

VOLUMES ONE THROUGH THIRTY

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COLLECTED EXALTED MATERIAL FROM

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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO A FAN COMPILATION

This is a fan compilation of the first thirty volumes of the Ink Monkeys project, a collection of freely available material from the generous authors of Exalted by way of White Wolf. There's more Ink Monkeys stuff out there, on the blog and in other compilations like this one.

I didn't do anything particularly cool when I made this PDF. Copy-and-paste and search-and-replace formatting, mostly. I made the templates for this stuff long before the Ink Monkeys ever existed. If you want to tell them how cool they are, be sure to visit [their blog](#).

A printer-friendly version and updates to both versions of this PDF can be found [here](#). At that same link, you can find further collections of other volumes not covered in this PDF, as well as the Ultimate Collection which contains all volumes.

—Plague of Hats

ART APPRECIATION

This version of the document is a little bare bones. Which means that it doesn't include some pretty awesome fan-art. It's just too great to be printer-friendly. Apart from the Monkeys' blog, you can check out the art in the color version of this PDF.

—Plague of Hats

NEW RULES

Don't forget to check out White Wolf's [Scroll of Errata](#) for other rules that might come up in this document.

—Plague of Hats

NEW KEYWORDS

Form-Enhancing: These Permanent Charms add additional powers to a Form-type Charm they build upon. Unless stated otherwise, each Form-Enhancing Charm adds one mote to the cost of activating the appropriate Form. The surcharge only applies once per Charm, regardless of how many times the Infernal purchased that Charm. Exceptions to these rules note their surcharge in parentheses beside the keyword. Once-learned, a Form-Enhancing Charm always improves all activations of its Form by forcing the surcharge. This is not optional.

Monstrous: This keyword serves as a referent tag on some Infernal Monster Style Charms and Primordial Charms that inflict fear through unnatural mental influence. Whenever a victim pays one or more Willpower points to resist a Monstrous effect, she deducts this total from the number of Willpower points required to resist any Monstrous effect within the next day. Discounts from separate resistance expenditures stack, resetting the clock to 25 hours whenever Willpower is spent. Only after the character has gone a full day without spending Willpower to resist a Monstrous effect does the discount drop back to zero. Even if resistance costs no Willpower, the victim can only resist when the Charm permits Willpower to be spent resisting it. The total number of "windows of opportunity" in

which resistance is possible does not increase. All Monstrous Charms also have the Emotion keyword.

Mount (Any): This Charm may only be applied to living beings (or, in the case of Abyssal Charms, living beings and ghostly animals), not automatons or vehicles operated with the Ride ability, such as Warbirds.

Mount (Mundane): This Charm may only be applied to living mounts (or, in the case of Abyssal Charms, living mounts and ghostly animals) which are not Essence-users.

Native: Powers like the Eclipse, Moonshadow and Fiend anima do not allow acquisition of Native Charms. Only natural wielders can learn Native charms. Exalted Charms and hero-style expansions are natural to the appropriate type of Chosen. Spirit Charms are natural to gods, elementals, demons and akuma. Arcanoi are natural to ghosts. Raksha Charms are natural to Fair Folk. Primordial Charms are natural to Primordials, Green Sun Princes and Exalted akuma. The God-Blooded children of natural wielders cannot learn their parents' Native Charms. Martial Arts Charms that are not Hero Style expansions cannot have the Native keyword.

Rage: Charms with this keyword impose a state of enchanted fury duplicating all effects of the Charm Retribution Will Follow (i.e. berserk rampage, immunity to pain, mental defense and Limit reduction). Inducing Rage is a form of unnatural mental influence with the Compulsion and Emotion keywords. Characters attacked with a Rage effect instantly succumb to the berserk fury unless they pay one Willpower to remain calm.

Victims in the grip of Rage cannot abort their rampage by spending Willpower to calm down, but their madness does make them invalid targets for all other Rage effects for as long as it lasts. Characters who pay Willpower to resist Rage also become immune to all Rage effects for one day. Since victims of Rage aren't valid targets for other Rage effects, they can't abort their madness by deliberately exposing themselves to other Rage magic for a new chance to resist. Retribution Will Follow retroactively gains the Rage keyword. In the spirit of this keyword, that Charm also adds the line "The martial artist can't voluntarily terminate or reactivate this Charm before its Duration."

Reactor: No combination of effects including any Charm carrying this Keyword may cause the character to gain more than 20 motes during the course of a single action. Stunt rewards explicitly do not count toward this limit.

CHAPTER ONE

SOLARS

DAWN CASTE

WAR

IMMANENT SOLAR GLORY

Cost: —; **Mins:** War 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Mirror (Essence Engorgement Technique), Native

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm is identical to its counterpart in Lore (see *Exalted*, p. 218), save for its different Ability placement (in all points where the two Charms differ save for Ability placement, this version of Immanent Solar Glory is considered to take precedent). The two are, in fact, the same Charm, and so a purchase of Immanent Solar Glory in War counts against the total maximum number of purchases for the Charm in any Ability. Immanent Solar Glory is also available in Performance, Larceny, and Bureaucracy.

New Abyssal Charm: Essence Engorgement Technique. Keyword: Native. This Charm, found on page 157 of *The Manual of Exalted Power—The Abyssals* also has counterparts in War, Performance, Larceny, and Bureaucracy, with the same restrictions as detailed above.

ZENITH CASTE

PRESENCE

LISTENER-SWAYING ARGUMENT

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Presence 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK, Illusion, Social

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Any Presence Excellency

Locked in debate, the Solar's words fall so sweetly upon the ears of listeners that those of her opponent become harsh and discordant in comparison; such tonal inflections render the content of the conversation irrelevant. While this Charm is active, third-party observers to any debate the Solar engages in believe the Lawgiver to have decisively won the argument, regardless of the merit of her words (or lack thereof). Where possible, this is achieved by subtle introduction of bias. The observer glosses over the Solar's flaws and strictly judges his opponent's words and delivery. Against more rational opponents or those using objective criteria, Listener-Swaying Argument induces outright hallucinations—whatever is necessary for the witness to believe in the Solar's victory.

The unnatural mental influence imposed by Listener-Swaying Argument affects all observers with a Dodge MDV lower than the Solar's ([higher of Charisma or Appearance] + Essence), and costs 2wp to resist at the time of activation. Characters can also correct memories clouded by this Charm,

but only with external prompting to remember the debate or a personally compelling reason approved by the Storyteller. The victim must pay three Willpower to fix each scene of damaged memory.

RESISTANCE

INVINCIBLE ESSENCE REINFORCEMENT

Cost: —; **Mins:** Resistance 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Stackable

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

Undertaking a grueling regimen of endurance training, the Solar folds Essence into his body until his skin becomes hard enough to turn aside blades. The Lawgiver's natural lethal and bashing soak calculations become (Stamina + 3). This Charm may be purchased up to a total of (Resistance) times; each purchase after the first adds 3 to the character's natural lethal and bashing soak.

With Essence 4+, the Solar also gains natural lethal and bashing hardness equal to the number of times he has purchased this Charm.

NIGHT CASTE

ATHLETICS

GLORIOUS TEMPLE BODY

Cost: —; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Mirror (Superior Weapon Body)

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Increasing Strength Exercise, Monkey Leap Technique, Lightning Speed

The power of her Essence speaks through the medium of her body as the Lawgiver's majesty is made manifest in her every motion. This Charm confers the following permanent benefits, none of which are considered to be dice added by a Charm:

- The character adds (Essence) to her Strength + Athletics total for the purpose of feats of strength.
- The character adds (Essence) in yards to her base movement and dash distances.
- The character adds (Essence) in yards to the distance she may jump vertically, and (Essence x 2) to the distance she may jump horizontally.

New Abyssal Charm: Superior Weapon Body (Prerequisites: Corpse-Might Surge, Shadow Races the Light, Spider Pounce Technique). The Abyssal Mirror to Glorious Temple Body is identical to its Solar counterpart.

AWARENESS

PANOPTIC FUSION DISCIPLINE

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Awareness 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Any Awareness Excellency

The Solar's supernal senses expand and his mind speeds up to process a thousand myriad details in a split second. Opponents attempting to strike a Lawgiver using this Charm appear to be moving in slow motion. All of the character's attacks are enhanced as though he had just spent three ticks accumulating dice with an Aim action (as a result, the character may not normally benefit from a true Aim action while this Charm is active), and his DVs are raised by 1 against all physical attacks of which he is aware. None of these bonuses count as dice added by a Charm.

With Essence 3+, each tick the lawgiver spends Aiming while Panoptic Fusion Discipline is active converts one die provided by this Charm into an automatic success; his opponents seem to slow even more, until their anticipated actions are outlined in golden contrails before the eyes of the Lawgiver.

DODGE

REED IN THE WIND

Cost: —; **Mins:** Dodge 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar Exalted understand the humble wisdom of the reed and the willow. The greater the force directed against them, the more nimble they become to avoid harm. Whenever the Lawgiver uses his Dodge DV to avoid a physical attack, he adds a bonus equal to half the attacker's Essence, rounded up. This bonus counts as dice added by a Charm.

LIGHTSPEED BODY DYNAMICS

Cost: —; **Mins:** Dodge 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Native, Reactor

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Shadow Over Water

The body and soul of the Solar Exalted are as one, transcending all limits in emulation of the light from which they were born. A Lawgiver who has purchased this Charm has perfected his body at the motonic level through a mastery of Dodge techniques, allowing him to accrue ambient motes as a matter of course. Whenever the Solar successfully avoids an attack by applying his Dodge DV, he gains (attacker's Essence ÷ 2, round up) motes in step 10. This Charm is subject to the following limitations:

- The attack must be made with intent to injure the Lawgiver, and must also be capable of harming him. For example, this Charm would offer no benefit if the character were attacked with a firewand while carrying a hearthstone which rendered him immune to fire.
- The Charm offers no benefit if the Solar defends himself with a Charm carrying a Flaw of Invulnerability.
- Lightspeed Body Dynamics is incompatible with any other Charm which grants the character motes of Essence.

LARCENY

REVERSAL OF FORTUNE

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Larceny 5, Essence 3;

Type: Reflexive (Step 9)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Counterattack, Mirror (Death Claims All)

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Stealing from Plain Sight Spirit

Unfortunate times require such a defense as this. A Lawgiver may use this Charm to respond to any attempt to steal from him. By paying five motes, the character not only becomes aware of all items capable of being stolen from the target, but is also able to perfectly steal one item—potentially the one being stolen from him. At Essence 4+, the Lawgiver may use this Charm in response to attacks. This Charm has the same restrictions on objects which may be stolen as Stealing from Plain Sight Spirit, with the exception of an item being actively stolen from the Solar.

New Abyssal Charm: Death Claims All (Prerequisite: Reality-Subverting Gesture). This Charm is identical to its Solar counterpart.

ECLIPSE CASTE

RIDE

IMMORTAL RIDER'S ADVANTAGES

Cost: —; **Mins:** Ride 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Mirror (Fell Rider's Advantages), Mount (Mundane), Native

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Master Horseman's Techniques

The Solars reinvent that which defines their legends. A character who purchases this Charm gains the following benefits: Ride Charms no longer count as Charm activations, and Ride Charms may be activated to enhance a mount the Solar is not presently riding, so long as he can perceive that animal or it is within one mile. In addition to these advantages, the Solar gains an auxiliary peripheral mote pool containing (Essence + Ride + 5) motes. The Solar may only use this pool to pay for Charms of the Ride ability. When this pool runs out, the character may then use her personal and peripheral mote pools to pay for Ride Charm activations. This mote pool refills by normal means, including stunts. A repurchase of Immortal Rider's Advantages at Essence 4+ doubles this mote pool. Another purchase at Essence 5+ doubles it once more.

This Charm only applies under the following conditions:

- The mount must be a living being (i.e. not a Windblade or other accouterment which incidentally use the Ride ability).
- The mount must belong to the Solar (see **Exalted**, p. 238) or be the character's Familiar. Exalts, gods, and other powerful NPCs never qualify.
- Phantom Steed is expressly permitted to benefit from Immortal Rider's Advantages.

New Abyssal Charm: Fell Rider's Advantages (Prerequisites: Soul Reins). This Charm is identical to its Solar counterpart, save for allowing ghostly animal mounts.

A SNOWBOUND MYSTERY

The mountains surrounding Diamond Hearth conceal a particular curiosity: in a crag tucked between two mountains, a boneyard stretches for nearly half a mile. Filled with the gigantic femurs, spines, and bristle-toothed skulls of tyrant lizards, the place—known to history as Tyrant's Grave—has puzzled savants for centuries. What could induce a cold-blooded creature to wander so far into the wastes of the frozen north, where it would almost certainly die? Was this the proof of some sort of instinctual death ritual, leading the tyrant lizards to a place somehow hallowed to their senses? And if so, why has there never been a sighting of a tyrant lizard trekking north across the snowy plains?

The truth is not nearly so remarkable.

During the middle First Age, a hedonistic Exalt established a luxurious palace on the snowy slopes of the mountains near Diamond Hearth. Open year-round as a pleasure house to the ranks of the Exalted, this palace played host to numerous spectacles, including a particular sport invented by bored Law-

givers: lizard slaloms. It was a simple game: the Solars would ride tyrant lizards down the slopes of the mountain, sledding them down a treacherous path of boulders, trees and ramps. If that wasn't exciting enough, their Lunar mates would drop obstacles onto the course, and if that still wasn't enough challenge, they might also toss raksha captives or other enemies of the Realm onto the course to be seized and eaten as a kind of challenge objective. Unfortunately, as much as the Solars loved to ride their tyrant lizards off ramps built at the edge of gigantic cliffs, few beasts could last long under such treatment.

Perhaps to the eyes of history this game seems to be little more than another issue of Solar barbarism, but at Tyrant's Grave the bones of those long-dead mounts have been carefully arranged, their skulls ordered by their number of victories on the slopes, with notches on their femurs to indicate the number of felons which each great beast devoured in his or her triumphs on the course.

Ride Charms such as Horse Skids Trick and Draft Horse Measure were used to great effect in lizard slaloms.

HORSE SKIDS TRICK

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Ride 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK, Mount (Mundane)

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Master Horseman's Techniques

If a mount is only as good as its rider, a Lawgiver's mount defies all convention. By activating this Charm and paying three motes, for the next action the character's mount's capacity for movement-based stunts is increased a hundredfold. It may skid along the ground without losing speed, maintaining velocity without moving its legs, allowing it to drift, draft, and grind. It may spin, turn, twist, whirl, and even skate backwards at full speed. While taking these skid actions, the Solar's mount may not be directly targeted by any attack.

HERO RIDES AWAY

Cost: —; **Mins:** Ride 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Emotion

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Master Horseman's Techniques

In ancient times, Solars chasing sundown represented something both tragic and awe-inspiring; their efforts redoubled at the fading of the day as a nod to their patron, his symbolic death leaving them to fill the void. This Charm captures a Lawgiver's breathtaking iconicity and his otherworldly there-and-gone nature, turning it into a renewed intent to bring the story to its conclusion.

When this Charm takes effect, the Solar's player chooses a Virtue and rolls the Lawgiver's Conviction. The Exalt regains one spent channel for the chosen Virtue and Willpower points equal to (number of successes + 1). To gain this benefit, the Solar must leave a Magnitude 3+ social unit that he has helped in the past day, and must do so by making a dramatic exit on his mount, blazing his unforgettable image into their minds as he departs. Examples of a dramatic exit include riding off into the sunset, pausing to cut an iconic figure on the horizon, rearing one's steed so it can churn the air before galloping away, or departing at the height of a raging thunderstorm.

This help must be intrinsically heroic and known to all members of the social unit, the sort of deeds that draw Solar Essences to Exalt mortals. Examples include driving off a ruthless band of brigands, killing a monster, curing a plague, feeding the hungry in a time of famine, improving the local infrastructure, healing the lame, etc. The Storyteller is the final arbiter of what constitutes acceptable help. Barring something unusually awe-inspiring, such help must have taken at least one full scene to provide.

If the Solar ends a story with such a departure, he loses a point of Limit, and all members of the community gain a positive Intimacy toward the Solar with an emotional context defined by the Lawgiver (generally respect, love, gratitude or reverence). Resisting this unnatural Emotion effect costs (Solar's Essence, max 5) Willpower. Similarly, the unit's leader must spend (Solar's Essence, max 5) Loyalty or the Intimacy becomes part of the unit's Policy. For example, if the Solar saves a small town from hobgoblins and chooses an Intimacy of gratitude, all citizens feel thankful to him and incorporate that appreciation into their local culture. As a result, the people as a whole won't betray the Solar when the Wyld Hunt comes looking and only the most determinedly ungrateful individuals can bring themselves to such heinous treachery.

ONE MAN CAVALRY

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Ride 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 1)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Emotion, War

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Hero Rides Away

When a hero rides away, he may be headed toward battle. Formation lines break and the wicked scatter at the Solar's terrifying battle charge. A Solar may use this Charm when emerging from a position of cover, such as smashing in through a window or leaping down from an overland pass; the Charm may also always enhance a mounted Join Battle roll. The Solar's player makes a (Charisma + Ride) roll, opposed by his opponents' MDVs. Each opponent whose MDV fails to protect her is awestruck by the Lawgiver's emergence onto the battlefield, and suffers a -3 internal penalty to all attacks directed at the

Solar or her mount, and a -1 internal penalty to all attacks against the Solar's allies. This unnatural mental influence costs (6 – target's Valor) points of Willpower to resist, producing immunity to any further uses by the same Solar for the rest of the scene.

Used in mass combat, this Charm may enhance a charge by the Lawgiver, causing it to count as a rout condition. Only the Solar need be mounted for this Charm to be activated, but if she is leading a cavalry charge by a mounted complementary unit, then the rout check is made at +1 difficulty. One Man Cavalry may not be activated more than once per action in this fashion.

THUNDER-HOOF METHOD

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious, Holy

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Sometimes Horses Fly Approach

Sometimes riding down a foe is just not good enough. Points are best when made soundly. The Solar may pay five motes and one Willpower to concentrate all the incredible speed of his mount into a single instance of acceleration. For the space of a heartbeat, the Solar 'draws back the reins,' holding his mount in place as a surge of withheld speed gathers in its legs like a storm, briefly drawing the world around horse and rider into the vacuum so created. When the Lawgiver lets go, all that force is unleashed in one tremendous shockwave that tears loose from the point of launch, ripping away at the ground with a sonic boom that inflicts automatic knockdown on all individuals within (Solar's Essence x 5) yards, while the mount is propelled forward (Essence x 10) yards in an instant. Creatures of darkness may not rise from prone until their DV has refreshed twice. This Charm may not be used more than once per action. For a point of reference, this Charm simply causes a sonic boom in the air, while in loose dirt or mud it may cause the added abuse of showering foes with muck; used over water, such as at dockside, it creates a small tsunami to achieve this effect.

SAIL

IMMORTAL CAPTAIN'S ADVANTAGES

Cost: —; **Mins:** Sail 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Mirror (Fell Captain's Advantages), Native

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Perfect Reckoning Technique

A man of the sea is a legendary thing to behold. A character who purchases this Charm gains the following benefits: Sail Charms no longer count as Charm activations, and Sail Charms may be activated to enhance a ship the Solar is not presently aboard, so long as he can perceive that vessel or it is within one mile. In addition to these advantages, the Lawgiver gains an auxiliary peripheral mote pool of $(\text{Essence} + \text{Sail} + 5) \times 2$ motes. The Solar may only use this pool to pay for Charms of the Sail ability. When this pool is depleted, the character may use his personal and peripheral mote pools to pay for Sail Charm activations. This mote pool refills by normal means, including stunts. A repurchase of Immortal Captain's Advantages at Essence 4+ doubles this mote pool; a repurchase at Essence 5+ doubles it again.

This Charm only applies under the following conditions:

- The character must own the ship (see **Exalted**, p. 238).

- Characters who are admiral to a fleet of ships may apply this effect to various ships under their command, even ones they do not own.

- The character may apply Perfect Reckoning Technique to every ship he commands with a single activation.

New Abyssal Charm: Fell Captain's Advantages (Prerequisites: Dark Water Odyssey). This Charm permits the Abyssal to apply Dark Water Odyssey to every ship he commands with a single activation, but is otherwise identical to its Solar counterpart.

FLAG OF ALL NATIONS METHOD

Cost: 7m; **Mins:** Sail 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Combo-OK, Illusion, Mirror (Treacherous Flag Display) Obvious

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Ship-Claiming Stance

The authority of the Lawgivers transcends boundaries. All nations are their nations; all people are their people. Standing at the center of a vessel she owns, the Solar releases her Essence into the ship, veiling it from hostile eyes and hostile intent. All observers who witness the ship see it as a friendly vessel, if possible—its sails display friendly colors, and its sailors seem to be of the proper origin and nationality. Pirates and other nautical predators instead see a ship that is too poor to bother assaulting, or too formidable to consider boarding. This unnatural mental influence costs four points of Willpower to see through. The disguise has one major flaw—the ship's reflection upon the waves shows its true nature. Solars are thus advised not to sail too close to other vessels when relying upon this Charm.

New Abyssal Charm: Treacherous Flag Display (Prerequisites: Unhallowed Ghost Ship). This Charm is identical to its Solar counterpart.

MARINER'S PARABLE DEFENSE

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Combo-OK, Emotion, Illusion

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Ship-Claiming Stance

The Solar's vessel shouts his legend into the world. This Charm may only be used aboard a ship the Solar owns. The identity of the vessel's owner becomes Obvious to all characters who perceive it. Should they be unaware of the Solar by reputation or personal association, Mariner's Parable Defense makes it clear—the Exalt is a legendary man of the sea: a hero who sinks pirates, rescues damsels in distress, puts storm gods in their place, braves hurricanes and defies the Yozis; or a peerless pirate who ransacks port towns, evades capture with a laugh, and steals comely lads or lasses with as much ease and abandon as casks of jade. Should the Solar's ship put into port while this Charm is in effect, this aura follows the character wherever he should go, up to (Essence) miles from the ship.

Common folk marvel at the Solar's heroism or cringe before his rapacity—he raises his Appearance and MDVs by three with regard to all characters struck by this aura. Additionally, fear of the Solar's prowess imposes a -1 external penalty to all attacks directed at his person or his ship. This unnatural mental influence costs two Willpower to resist for a scene.

Additionally, the Solar gains one temporary dot of Influence while this Charm is active.

CHAPTER TWO

LUNARS

SHIFTING KNACKS

BEAST-POWER CONCENTRATION

Prerequisites: Deadly Beastman Transformation, Essence 2, Appearance 3

Certain Stewards, whether due to vanity or subtlety, prefer to enter battle without outwardly displaying the beast within. This Knack assists in such endeavors, refining the Lunar's Essence until she is able to concentrate the power of her Deadly Beastman Transformation into her human form. This Knack modifies the character's war form, allowing her to activate that form while retaining her natural human shape, if desired. While using Beast-Power Concentration, the Lunar enjoys the benefits of Deadly Beastman Transformation's Bonus Attributes, enhanced healing, and use of Gift Charms, but does not manifest any of that Form's mutations. The Lunar's Tell becomes more prominent while this power is active, reducing the base MDV needed to see it to 8.

STRENGTH

BEAST SPIRIT DEFENSE

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Strength 4, Essence 3;

Type: Reflexive (Step 2)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ferocious Biting Tooth, Impressions of Strength

Disdaining finesse, Luna's Chosen may defend themselves with raw power. The Lunar moves forward to meet an oncoming attack, striking it with her mightiest blow. A great surge of Essence erupts before her limb or weapon, taking the form of her spirit shape; this Essence-icon catches the attack and dissipates in the act of throwing it aside.

This Charm acts as a perfect parry which may block any attack of which the Lunar is aware, even if that attack is unblockable. This Charm has one of the Four Flaws of Invulnerability (see *Exalted*, p. 194).

LION'S ROAR REBUKE

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Strength 4, Essence 3;

Type: Simple (Speed 4, DV -1)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious, Crippling

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Any Strength Excellency

Filling his lungs with thunder, the Lunar throws back his head and roars with a voice to shake the stars from the firmament. All characters within (Essence x 10) yards must roll Stamina + Resistance against a difficulty of the Lunar's Strength. Should this roll fail, the target is rendered temporarily deaf. He automatically fails all auditory Perception rolls, and suffers a -3 internal penalty to all Perception rolls that might be aided by

hearing, such as noticing someone attempting to sneak up on him with Stealth. This deafness persists for (Lunar's Strength + Essence) hours. The target is also generally disoriented in the wake of the roar, suffering a -1 external penalty on all actions until his DV has refreshed twice.

DEXTERITY

ESSENTIAL MOONSILVER AFFINITY

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Dexterity 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK, Gift, Obvious

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Any Dexterity Excellency

Suffusing her body with a distillation of her protean Essence, the Lunar's body becomes more flexible, better able to stretch and bend as needed. All of the Lunar's attacks gain the R tag (see *Exalted*, p. 373), and she reduces the mobility penalty of any worn armor by 2. Finally, any non-combat roll which would be aided by such flexibility adds one automatic success.

When the Lunar uses Deadly Beastman Transformation, she may commit one mote to infuse this protean Essence into her war form.

SENSING THE DEADLY FLOW

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Dexterity 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Combo-OK, Fury-OK

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Wary Swallow Method, Wind-Dancing Method

The Lunar Exalted are long-accustomed to living on the edge. This finely attuned instinct for danger may be honed into a preternatural battle insight, allowing canny Stewards to stay one step ahead of their attackers. While this Charm is active the Lunar subtracts half of her Dexterity rating (round up) from any onslaught or coordinated attack penalties she suffers.

Activated with Relentless Lunar Fury, this Charm reduces all onslaught and coordinated attack penalties by half (round down) or by the Lunar's (Dexterity / 2, round up) for the duration, whichever would provide the lesser benefit.

STAMINA

LIMB-SHIELDING GROWTH

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Stamina 3, Essence 2;

Type: Reflexive (Step 2)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Gift, Obvious

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Armor-Forming Technique

The Lunar extrudes a wide, flexible, bony carapace over the back of one of her arms, stretching from shoulder to wrist. This shield provides a +3 DV cover bonus against all attacks without any associated fatigue or mobility penalties, and does

not restrict the use of the Lunar's hands. Unexpected attacks bypass this protection. The Lunar may also apply this shield as a costless Step 2 perfect parry without an associated Flaw of Invulnerability, even against unblockable attacks; doing so over-stresses the shield, however, causing it to shatter. A shield which is broken in this manner may not be reactivated for the rest of the scene. At Essence 5+, the Lunar may apply this parry up to three times within the course of a scene before the shield shatters.

When the Lunar uses Deadly Beastman Transformation, she may commit two motes to add a shield to her war form. If the shield should shatter, she must wait a scene before she may re-assume the war form to reactivate Limb-Shielding Growth as a Gift.

WEAPON-TRAPPING BODY DOMINION

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Stamina 4, Essence 4;

Type: Reflexive (Step 9)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Counterattack, Obvious, Stackable

Duration: Instant (One scene)

Prerequisite Charms: Armor-Forming Technique

Lunars are the absolute masters of their territory, and no territory is more sacred than a Steward's own body. This Charm may be activated in response to any attack that successfully rolls damage against the Lunar, provided that attack is made with a weapon not possessing the N tag. The character makes an unblockable (Stamina + Athletics + levels of damage inflicted by the attack) counterattack, opposed by the original attacker's Dodge DV. Success traps the offending weapon within or against the Lunar's body; her blood congeals into a powerful bonding agent at the point of impact even as her body extrudes a sturdy cage of bone to hold the weapon in place. The weapon remains trapped as long as the Lunar commits Essence to this Charm, up to a maximum duration of one scene.

Reclaiming a captured weapon requires a miscellaneous Speed 5, DV -2 action in which the attacker rolls (Strength + Athletics) against a difficulty of the Lunar's Stamina. Should the attacker release her weapon while the Lunar holds it, a barehanded Martial Arts attack roll may be necessary to grasp it again in order to attempt to draw it out. The Lunar may hold up to (Essence) weapons with her body at once, but each held weapon imposes a -1 mobility penalty (as though from armor).

CHARISMA

FERAL SMILE TACTIC

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Charisma 3, Essence 3;

Type: Simple (Speed 5, DV -1)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Compulsion, Emotion, Social

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Any Charisma Excellency

The Lunar lets the world catch a glimpse of the beast within—her features take on a feral and angular cast, and her body language is that of a predator ready to strike. Her player rolls ([Higher of Charisma or Appearance] + Presence). All characters whose Dodge MDV is lower than the Lunar's successes become incapable of launching any social attack at the Lunar intended to change her mind or demand action from her, un-

less the purpose of such social efforts is to beg her not to harm them. Should a character under the influence of this Charm attempt to attack the Lunar, his Join Battle dice pool is automatically set to 0 if he is the one to initiate hostilities. This unnatural mental influence may be overcome for one action by spending a point of Willpower, and characters become immune to it for the rest of the day once they have spent a total of three points of Willpower. Characters with an Intimacy of fear toward the Lunar may not spend Willpower to overcome this Charm so long as that Intimacy endures.

LION'S VOICE COMMAND

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Charisma 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious, War

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Any Charisma Excellency

The Lunar's voice rolls forth with the authority of the king of beasts, carried by every natural feature of the world. The wind conducts his words, walls will not bar his voice, and every leaf and blade of grass reflect his utterances back into the world. While this Charm is in effect, the Lunar's voice may be clearly heard up to a mile away, unless the Lunar wishes it not to be. In mass combat, this Charm allows the Lunar Exalted to stock the ranks of their armies with heroes and sorcerers they have inspired, trained or sired. The character needs no relays when leading a complementary unit of up to Magnitude (Lunar's Essence).

SILVER AND GOLD SPAN THE HEAVENS

Cost: 1m per dot of Bond; **Mins:** Charisma 3, Essence 3;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Native, Touch

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Sacred Guardian Renewal

Focusing her will through the bond built into her Exaltation, the Lunar repurposes that connection, pledging herself to the support of one of the Solar Exalted—not because she must, but because she wishes it so. This Charm only requires a brief touch (during which its effects are Obvious to the Solar being targeted, but not to any observers), although in the First Age it was common for it to be incorporated into formal oaths of fealty, pledges of brotherhood, or marriage vows. For each mote the Lunar commits to the Charm, she establishes one dot of Solar Bond with the Solar she is touching. This Charm may only be used to maintain a bond with one Solar at a time, and in no way obviates the Lunar's existing bond; indeed, if the subject of her original bond is present in the scene, the force of that original bond rises up and mutes out Silver and Gold Span the Heavens, rendering the Charm ineffective until the Lunar's original mate is no longer present.

The bond established by this Charm is mechanically considered a true Solar-Lunar bond in all ways (including the creation of an unbreakable positive Intimacy), save for the Knack Golden Widow Method (see **Glories of the Most High: Luna**, p. 35). The Lunar must pay one Willpower to voluntarily end this Charm; doing so does not erase the Intimacy created by her temporary bond, but the Intimacy may now be eroded normally.

This Charm's bond pool is self-contained; that is to say, it refreshes at the end of the story. For example, Lilith uses the Charm to create a three point bond to Dace, and then channels all six dice. The next day she cancels Silver and Gold Span the Heavens and creates a five-point bond to Panther. Because she already spent six of her bond dice from this Charm, she only has four left to use to assist Panther. After spending them, she cancels the Charm and bonds herself to Arianna, committing five motes. Now she has no dice left to spend to help Arianna until the beginning of the next story, when her Solar Bond dice pool refreshes. Lilith also has Solar Bond 3 toward Swan, her original mate; she still has six bond dice to channel to assist him, as that pool is separate from the one created by Silver and Gold Span the Heavens.

If used to target an Abyssal or Infernal Exalt, this Charm's cost gains a one Willpower surcharge.

MANIPULATION

ANY-TRINKET ALLURE

Cost: 3m (+1wp); **Mins:** Manipulation 3, Essence 3;

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK, Illusion

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Treasure as Trash Misdirection

Noble Stewards are able to exploit the covetousness and greed of others, even if they have nothing to work with but a few rocks and sticks. Taking an object in her hand, the Lunar reflexively rolls (Manipulation + [higher of Craft or Occult] + Essence). All observers whose Dodge MDV is lower than the Lunar's successes see the object as something else, as determined by the Steward. An object can be disguised as anything else within the following limitations: the illusion must be of roughly the same size and shape as the object, and it must be within two Resources dots of the original object's value. This unnatural mental influence costs two points of Willpower to resist. Any-Trinket Allure will disguise an object for a week by default, or for one season for a one Willpower surcharge.

SCENT OF ALL NATIONS ATTITUDE

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Manipulation 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK, Illusion

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Perfection of the Mockingbird

The Lunar Exalted are most at home when walking abroad. Gathering Essence from the four winds and the earth below, the Lunar becomes a citizen of the world. Though her outward appearance does not change, there is something familiar about her to all that meet her. To a Haltan, she seems like a Haltan; to a Delzahn nomad, she seems a fellow rider of the sands; to a Dynast, she seems a native of the Realm. Observers simply overlook any differences in language, appearance, dress or mannerisms that would violate this impression. This Charm constitutes a form of unnatural mental influence costing three points of Willpower to resist for one week.

Alternately, the Lunar may select a particular nationality upon activating this Charm, and all she meets will believe this is her place of origin; for example, she might decide to present

herself as a Haltan, and this is how she would seem to the Haltan, the Delzahn, and the Dynast.

PERCEPTION

OUTLAND-NAVIGATING GUILF

Cost: —; **Mins:** Perception 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Wyld-Sensing Instincts

The Wyld is merely a training ground for even stranger and more hostile frontiers. This Charm permanently refines its prerequisite, allowing it to be applied with regard to the Underworld, Malfear, Yu-Shan, and even Autochthonia. The Lunar may sense the proximity of entry points (and exits) to such realms, navigate their dangers, investigate their oddities, and lead groups through them in relative safety.

WORRY THE BONE

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Perception 4, Essence 3;

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK, Touch

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Any Perception Excellency

Woe to those who would take what a Lunar chooses to hold. Grasping an object, which can include a weapon or artifact (attuned or unattuned), the Lunar activates this Charm, claiming temporary ownership of the item. So long as she commits Essence to this Charm, the object metaphysically belongs to the Lunar. Furthermore, attempts to steal the item from her suffer at a -4 external penalty. In addition to this effect, she may make a free counterattack in step 9 of attack resolution against any individual who attempts to take the object from her.

EYES AS MOONBEAMS METHOD

Cost: 8m; **Mins:** Perception 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Eyes of the Cat, Keen Sight Technique

Condensing her anima into her eyes, the Lunar reveals all hidden things with her gaze. The character's eyes become two burning silver lamps, throwing out foot-wide beams of illumination that stretch for (Essence x 100) yards. These lunar lamps have a number of effects, all of which are as visible to onlookers as they are to the Exalt using this Charm. Any dematerialized being caught in their light becomes visible so long as the Lunar continues to gaze upon them (imposing a -2 internal penalty to the Lunar if they are engaged in combat with any other characters); invisible characters are likewise revealed if this Charm wins roll-off against whatever magic hides them. Magical objects and structures sparkle and scintillate with a nacreous sheen when touched by the light of this Charm, while works of raksha glamour become wan and ephemeral, almost transparent. Objects originating in the underworld radiate a dark miasma, while those tainted with infernal Essence are enmeshed in a greenish, sickly haze. Finally, the Lunar may bend these moonbeams at sharp angles if she desires, allowing her to see around corners or off down narrow and twisting tunnels.

INTELLIGENCE

ARGENT MUSE APPROACH

Cost: 3m per die; **Mins:** Intelligence 3, Essence 2;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Any Intelligence Excellency

Lunars inspire others to make their dreams real. The meager are encouraged to be more than they thought possible; the mighty are illuminated by the unorthodox methods of the Stewards. To activate this Charm, the Lunar concentrates on a project being undertaken by another character, and offers instinctive commentary on the character's method of approach. Inspiration strikes in the mind of the subject, igniting new creative ideas and methods. The Lunar may add one die per three motes to all rolls the target takes in pursuit of a certain project, so long as those rolls are based on a mental Attribute and the project is inherently creative in some way. The Lunar may bestow no more than (her Intelligence) dice to a single subject, and these count as dice added by a Charm.

If the character is acting as muse to her Solar mate, Argent Muse Approach's bonus does not count as dice added by a Charm.

MANDATE OF THE HUNGRY MOUSE

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Intelligence 3, Essence 3;

Type: Simple (One dramatic action)

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Lunar seats herself in the lotus position and spends an hour entering a dreamlike meditative state, in which she considers a particular structured organization or group she has had dealings with in the past month. The character's player rolls (Intelligence + Occult), subtracting an external penalty equal to half the targeted organization's Magnitude.

If any successes are accumulated, then the Lunar's anima banner appears around her as a dim, shimmering haze, barely visible; at the conclusion of the Charm's use, hundreds upon hundreds of ephemeral vermin coalesce and scamper out into the world—mice and rats, hornets and serpents, centipedes and pigeons. Henceforth these phantom animals plague the efforts of the target organization: mice eat a bureau's paperwork, rats spoil the grain allocated to feed a legion's soldiers, snakes startle the horses of couriers along the road carrying urgent messages for the organization. All of the target organization's endeavors take twice as long to execute as they properly should, and all rolls made to further their plans suffer a -1 external penalty. Only by beefing up security and tightening organizational standards may this Charm be effectively countered; the target organization's leaders must take an extended series of dramatic (Intelligence + Bureaucracy) actions, each requiring a month of effort, in order to oppose Mandate of the Hungry Mouse. Once the leadership has accumulated a number of successes equal to (the Lunar's activation successes times her Essence), the effects of this Charm cease, and the organization becomes

immune to all uses of Mandate of the Hungry Mouse for one year.

WASP OF THE LABYRINTH TRICK

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Int 3, Essence 3;

Type: Simple (Speed 4, DV -1)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Stackable

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Any Intelligence Excellency

Having slain a foe, the Lunar may make use of her victim's body. Upon using this Charm, a six-inch stinger emerges from the Exalt's wrist. Targeting the necrotic Essence gathering in the corpse, she drives this spike into her target's body, releasing her Essence into the cadaver and catalyzing the necrotic power there to form thousands of Essence-born parasites which spread throughout it. The parasitic larvae attach themselves to its bones and organs, while vastly slowing down its natural decay. The parasites animate the corpse on the Lunar's next action, turning it into an automaton which is completely obedient to the her (use the traits for a zombie found on page 314 of *Exalted*).

The Lunar may expressly use this Charm on zombies to gain control of them with a successful Dexterity + Martial Arts attack; if the zombie is already under another being's command, the Lunar must make an Intelligence + Occult roll at a difficulty of the current master's Essence to wrest away control of it. Should the Lunar drop the mote committed to this Charm, the parasites dissolve and the corpse rapidly decays on the spot. If the undead was animated by previous forms of magic, it simply resumes its normal functions. The Lunar may animate or control as many undead as she cares to commit Essence to sustain.

MOON AND EARTH BLESSING

Cost: 15m; **Mins:** Intelligence 4, Essence 3;

Type: Simple (One dramatic action)

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

A favorite Charm of the Wardens of Gaia, Moon and Earth Blessing instills a land with supernatural fecundity and fertility. The Lunar paces out the limits of the land she wishes to bless, stopping frequently to blaze marks into trees or stones, or to scuff patterns into the dirt that she believes will be pleasing to the Argent Madonna and the Emerald Mother. A single use of this Charm may bless a landscape up to (Essence) miles across. Once the Lunar's circuit is finished, her nocturnal Essence suffuses the land. Even the most barren tundra, harshest desert or vilest swamp soon becomes fertile and abundant: new growth appears, the soil readily accepts crops, and small animals are drawn to the region. This area is marked with the strangeness of Luna's blessing in minor ways; one pumpkin out of a patch might contain small glowing lights that drift away into the air rather than seeds, for example, while night-blooming flowers are likely to proliferate, and owls flock to the regions more than any other birds. All Survival rolls in the area reduce their difficulty to 1. This blessing lasts for a year and a day, after which the area's fecundity may increase or disperse according to local weather and the persistence or lack thereof of efforts to culti-

vate the land (it is easier to keep a land fertile in the East than on a glacier in the far North, for example).

If used within a territory the Lunar owns, this Charm's blessing lasts until the Lunar no longer owns the territory.

PHANTOM CROSSFIRE FEINT

Cost: —(+5m); **Mins:** Intelligence 5, Essence 4;

Type: Permanent

Keywords: Obvious

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Celestial Circle Sorcery

The Lunar Exalted claim to be Creation's premiere battle-sorcerers; thanks to Charms such as Phantom Crossfire Feint, this is no idle boast. The Lunar may reflexively pay a five mote surcharge when taking a Shape Sorcery action. She blurs and fades from vision, reappearing at a random point somewhere within one hundred yards...along with a number of Essence-sculpted duplicates equal to her Essence. This relocation never takes the Lunar or any doubles outside of the targeting range or placement necessary for her spell to strike its intended target(s). These doubles all mimic the Lunar's every action, going through the motions of shaping a spell as she does; they are indistinguishable from the Lunar through mundane scrutiny. Opponents wishing to attack the Lunar must succeed at a miscellaneous Speed 5, DV -1 (Perception + Occult) roll at a difficulty of the number of duplicates produced in order to determine which Lunar is real, or else strike at random and hope to injure the true Steward. (It may help for the Storyteller to number the Lunar's duplicates in order to keep track of them.) These duplicates vanish when the spell is cast or interrupted.

WITS

COLD BREATH OF THE MOON

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Wits 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Combo-OK, Sickness

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Luna protects Creation from the terrors beyond its borders, but she also uses her light to lure those horrors into the world, that they might be her prey. The Lunar is able to share a portion of those horrors which walk by the light of the moon with a target, afflicting them with night terrors. To use this Charm, the Lunar must crouch above a sleeping individual and spend a moment studying the rising Essence of their dreams. Seizing upon a momentary instability, the Lunar breathes a nightmare into the target's lungs. The Lunar must roll (Wits + Occult) against a difficulty of the target's ([Perception + Awareness] / 2); success infects her with night terrors for a number of nights equal to the Lunar's Essence, while failure causes the target to prematurely awaken.

The nightmares created by this Charm are harrowing, nonsensical, and often feature the world inexplicably and relentlessly changing around the target, melting into ever more distressing forms, filled with terrible monsters. Upon awakening from such a nightmare, the character rolls Conviction as normal. Success indicates that the character simply gains no Willpower. Failure leaves the character disoriented throughout

the remainder of the day, suffering a -1 internal penalty to all actions as vague recollections of awful sights and the cold, merciless light of the moon prey on her thoughts. A botch causes the character to suffer a -1 internal penalty, as described above, and to lose a point of Willpower. This Charm may not be used on a target again until the original night terrors have run their course.

SILVER LUNAR RESOLUTION

Cost: —; **Mins:** Wits 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Native

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm is identical to its counterpart in Stamina (see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Lunars**, p. 158), save for its different Attribute placement (in all points where the two Charms differ save for Attribute placement, this version of Silver Lunar resolution is considered to take precedent). The two are, in fact, the same Charm, and so a purchase of Silver Lunar Resolution in Wits counts against the total maximum number of purchases for the Charm in any Attribute. Silver Lunar Resolution is also available in Charisma.

MOTH-TO-FLAMES DEFENSE

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Wits 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 1)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious, Touch

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Like a moth to a flame, a Lunar may be drawn to the weaving of a spell. With this Charm, she may feed on the shaping sorcery's Essence, breaking the spell before it can be cast. By paying six motes, the Lunar enhances an unarmed physical attack against a target taking a Shape Sorcery action, her attacking limb swirling with silver streamers of raw chaos. Should the Lunar roll damage against the target, the target suffers automatic knockdown, increasing the difficulty of the (Wits + Occult) roll to maintain her Shape Sorcery action to 4. If the casting is successfully broken, the Lunar draws in five motes of Essence, streamers of energy from the broken spell flowing into her body as the magic dissipates. This Charm is equally effective against Shape Necromancy and Weave Protocol actions.

THOUSANDFOLD WASP DANCE

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Wits 4, Essence 3;

Type: Simple (Speed 5, DV -1)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Lunar takes a moment to gather all the aggression, frustration, and stress flitting through her mind and spirit. Infusing these irritants with Essence, the Exalt releases them into the world, where they bedevil her foes. The Lunar breathes out a swarm of irritating, biting insects, which fill an area with a diameter of (Essence x 10) yards, centered somewhere within (Wits x 30) yards. All characters inside of this swarm that the Lunar does not selectively decide to spare the swarm's wrath are subjected to an environmental damage effect (Damage 1B/action, trauma 3) and suffer a -1 external environmental penalty. The swarm shrinks at a rate of one yard per tick if exposed

to an appropriate environmental hazard, at the Storyteller's discretion, such as a burning building or a Terrestrial Exalt's iconic anima banner. Likewise, the swarm may be destroyed by sufficiently destructive area-of-effect attacks such as Total Annihilation, again at the Storyteller's discretion.

At Essence 4+ the Lunar may use a miscellaneous action once per action tick to control the swarm, causing it to move according to her will. The swarm drifts at a rate of five yards per tick when subjected to such control.

WALKING ON MOONLIGHT

Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Wits 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Secure Den Prana

The Lunar's anima condenses into a shimmering path of pure moonlight that arches up and into the air, stretching far away into the distance before her. This path, which quickly levels out and runs a mile above the ground, is shorter than it appears, spanning the hidden gaps in the night sky that only Luna knows, and will speed a Steward's trip between her territories.

The character may only activate this Charm at night within the boundaries of a territory she owns, and she may only use it to travel directly toward another territory that she owns (see *Exalted*, p. 238). The Lunar doubles the amount of ground she covers while she proceeds along this moonbeam path, after the effects of all other Charms or magic. This Charm automatically ends when the sun rises; Lunars are thus advised to take to the ground before dawn, lest they suddenly find themselves bereft of road while a mile up in the air. The Lunar may activate this Charm at the next sunset to resume her journey if she has not diverted more than two miles from the course to her destination during the day, despite being outside of an owned territory.

CHAPTER THREE

DRAGON-BLOODED

WATER ASPECT

LARCENY

INVESTIGATION-DEFLECTING CURRENT

Cost: —(+5m); **Mins:** Larceny 5, Essence 4;

Type: Permanent

Keywords: Illusion

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Trackless Walk Style

To leave no trace of oneself at the scene of a crime is the work of children. Master criminals and espionage agents among the Terrestrial Exalted may instead misdirect investigations toward their enemies. This Charm modifies its prerequisite; by activating Trackless Walk Style with a five mote surcharge, the Dragon-Blood may not only leave no trace of himself at a crime scene, but will also arrange the scene to leave subtle clues pointing toward the presence of another character of his choice. Any failed Investigation roll to gather clues at the scene of the crime where this Charm was used will provide a false positive response, indicating the presence and culpability of the selected individual. This unnatural Illusion costs one point of Willpower to see through, but characters normally do not attempt to do so unless presented with contradictory evidence, such as an airtight alibi.

CHAPTER FOUR

ABYSSALS

DUSK CASTE

MARTIAL ARTS

IRON MAIDEN'S EMBRACE

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3;

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Combo-OK, Crippling, Mirror (Armor-Shattering Strike), Obvious, Stackable

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Dark Messiah Form

The prospective victims of the Abyssal Exalted wrap themselves in steel and hope it will save them. Rather than prying enemies out of this flimsy shell, it amuses the Chosen of the Neverborn to instead turn protection to torment. This Charm may enhance an unarmed martial arts attack, causing it to damage an opponent's armor such that buckles and plates are driven into the target's flesh. Should the attack successfully strike the target, then the target's armor raises its mobility penalty by one point and loses three points of bashing and lethal soak, and the attack inflicts one additional level of automatic, unsoakable lethal damage in step 10. The target may not remove her damaged armor without a difficulty 3 Dexterity + Medicine roll to extract the damaged portions from her flesh. Alternately, she may accept two additional levels of lethal damage as she rips the crumpled armor free. This is a Crippling effect.

Mundane armor is permanently damaged by this Charm (unless manually repaired), but magical armor realigns itself one scene after it has been successfully removed, sustaining no lasting damage. Iron Maiden's Embrace is ineffective against unarmored opponents.

MELEE

ELEGANT BLOODLETTING ART

Cost: —; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Mirror (Golden Destruction Cut)

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Savage Shade Style

The controlled, elegant blows of the Abyssal Exalted bring forth great sheets of blood from their victims, transforming battlefields into impromptu artistic performances. This Charm acts as a permanent upgrade to its prerequisite, allowing the Abyssal's player to count extra successes on the attack roll three times rather than twice for the purpose of determining raw damage. A second purchase, at Melee 6+, allows extra successes to be counted four times rather than three, while a third purchase at Melee 8+ allows extra successes to be counted five times. A fourth and final purchase at Melee 9+ causes each extra success to be counted ten times for the purpose of determining raw damage.

WAR

VERMILLION PLAGUE CONSCRIPTION

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** War 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Arise and Slaughter

The cause of death must be championed, whatever the cost. Where support flags amongst the living, the Abyssal general wields the power to change a mortal's perspective. Upon activating Vermillion Plague Conscription, the Abyssal may begin to rectify this situation. A haze of bright murder tinges the Abyssal's anima with the ruby specks of a blood splatter. For the rest of the scene, whenever the deathknight slays a living mortal, that mortal immediately rises as a loyal zombie and begins to follow the deathknight's orders. The Abyssal may create up to (Essence x 5) zombies in this manner within the course of a scene. Zombies created in this fashion retain their animation and their loyalty to the deathknight even after the motes committed to Vermillion Plague Conscription have been released. At Essence 5+, the character may purchase this Charm a second time to increase the number of zombies he may create to (Essence x 10).

MIDNIGHT CASTE

PRESENCE

BARROW KING'S AUTHORITY

Cost: —; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Mirror (Shining on Dark Realms)

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Dread Lord's Demeanor

Abyssals are the rightful kings of the dead and masters of the realm below. Those that recognize this fact may shelter in the deathknight's shadow, protected by his fell majesty. Any ghost with an Intimacy of loyalty toward an Abyssal who knows this Charm is immune to being summoned and bound through necromancy or sorcery by any individual other than the Abyssal himself. Furthermore, any attempts to mentally influence such a ghost to betray the Abyssal or abandon her Intimacy suffer a -1 external penalty.

New Solar Charm: Shining on Dark Realms (Prerequisite: Majestic Radiant Presence). The Solar Exalted are a light that may shine even in the darkest of realms, providing protection and hope to those that call the Underworld home. This Charm is identical to its Abyssal counterpart.

HUNGRY DARKNESS PRANA

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Dread Lord's Demeanor

The Abyssal's presence devours light. Drawing in the very light of day, her Essence bleeds out into the world, smothering all illumination. Flames gutter, animas dim, and even sunlight dwindles within (Essence x 100) yards of the deathknight. All visibility within this range is reduced to "No moon, grass or leafless forest." (See **Exalted**, p. 135) It is cold within this field of darkness; living visitors are assaulted with the chill of the grave (treat as an environmental hazard with damage 1B/minute, trauma 1). A susurrus of ghostly prayer may be faintly heard, carried on winds from the Underworld. Individuals within the Abyssal's shroud of darkness suffer a -1 external penalty on all hearing-based Awareness rolls due to this distraction. Finally, this blighted zone is considered to count as being surrounded by the trappings of death for the purpose of protecting the Abyssal from exposure to Creation. The Abyssal is immune to all negative effects of her Charm. Sunlight originating from a Holy source cuts cleanly through Hungry Darkness Prana.

LIGHT-DEVOURING LABYRINTH

Cost: —; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Illusion, Obvious

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Hungry Darkness Prana

This Charm permanently upgrades its prerequisite. The Abyssal's black shroud confuses the senses of those within; insubstantial touches propel visitors inward. No matter what direction a character seems to be heading in, he will find himself moving toward the center of the field of darkness—the Abyssal herself. Attempting to move away from the Abyssal or leave the shroud of darkness requires a reflexive (Wits + Awareness) roll once per action, at a difficulty of the Abyssal's Essence; success permits a character to move as he wills, while failure confuses him and draws him toward the Abyssal. Alternately, the victim may spend two points of Willpower to ignore this Charm's unnatural mental influence for one day.

SURVIVAL

CANNIBALISTIC EMPOWERMENT UNDERSTANDING

Cost: —; **Mins:** Survival 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

Though some of their brethren might find such practices distasteful, practical Abyssals may learn to renew themselves from even the crudest aspects of death. This Charm permanently alters the Abyssal's feeding capabilities (see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Abyssals**, p. 95), permitting the deathknight to gain Essence by devouring inanimate human corpses. Devouring a single mote's worth of flesh requires a Speed 5, DV -2 miscellaneous action; only one such action may be placed in a flurry. Once the character has gained her (Stamina + Essence) motes in this manner she must wait a full day to digest before this limit resets and she may feed again. A relatively in-

tact, adult cadaver is worth three motes of Essence, and usually runs dry of Essence long before the deathknight has consumed all of its flesh; as a result, most cadavers are still suitable for reanimation even after serving as fodder through this Charm.

POMEGRANATES FULL AND FINE

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 2;

Type: Simple (Speed 5 in long ticks)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Emotion, Mirror (Food-Gathering Exercise)

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Any Survival Excellency

The viands of the dead and the meat of spectral beasts do little to sustain living mortals, though the Abyssal Exalted and other Essence-users have no difficulty surviving on such pale repast. Still, it is unseemly for a deathknight's guests to starve to death because of their host's ill-preparedness. This Charm constitutes an attempt to forage for food in the Underworld, automatically accumulating enough food to sustain a unit with a magnitude no greater than the Abyssal's Essence for a day. Alternately, it may be activated to prepare a meal of already-located food, in which case the Charm's type becomes Simple (One dramatic action), encompassing the meal's preparation time. This Charm may only be used in the Underworld and in shadowlands; it will not function in Creation, nor on food originating in Creation.

Food located or prepared with this Charm is fully nourishing to both the living and the dead. Moreover, each meal of such food counts as a scene spent building an Intimacy of fascination toward the Underworld and a second Intimacy toward the Abyssal who provided the repast. This Intimacy may be of awe, fear, or respect—whichever is most appropriate to the situation. Should characters who partake of a meal possess conflicting Intimacies, the meal counts as a scene of work toward eroding those Intimacies. Should the Abyssal consume his own prepared meals, he gains no Intimacies; the food is simply more enjoyable, flavored with a bittersweet mixture of life and death in perfect equilibrium.

With Essence 3+, the Abyssal's repast becomes more potent. This enhancement is non-optional. Mortals who spend a fortnight eating nothing but the food of the dead enchanted by this Charm become permanently able to consume the fare of the Underworld... and just as permanently unable to draw sustenance from any food originating in the living world, save for human flesh (food originating in shadowlands counts as food of the underworld for this purpose). This change is a Shaping effect, and attempts to reverse the condition treat it as a Wyld mutation.

DAY CASTE

LARCENY

MALICIOUS PARODY IMPOSTER

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Larceny 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Combo-OK, Illusion, Obvious, Shaping, Touch

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Face-Drinking Bite, Unjust Appropriation Method

Sometimes the most instructive perspectives in life come from outside one's self. A deathknight may demonstrate the folly of a person's ways by showing her target the way in which the world sees him. The Abyssal must have a head-sized object carved with an effigy-face, such as a gourd or a pumpkin, and must have it to hand (prepared with a miscellaneous Draw/Ready weapon action) in order to use this Charm. The character makes a (Dexterity + Larceny) roll, opposed by the target's highest DV (Essence-users impose a -3 external penalty on this roll); should this attack succeed, the Abyssal quickly steals the target's head, replacing it with the prepared replacement. This does not kill the target. Instead, the victim may now see himself as the Abyssal does.

The effigy head of the victim becomes animate, capable of the simplest phrases and mannerisms. It knows all of the victim's Intimacies and has full control of the victim's body. Its Motivation is to subtly murder the target's positive Intimacies, starting with family and friends, by means of baroque betrayals, staged accidents, and the like, typically beginning with helpless loyalties such as pets. It does these things through seemingly oblique acts of cruelty extending from parodies of the victim's own shortcomings, like leaving a dangerous object at the top of the stairs where someone will likely trip and fall, or by placing sharp bones in a beloved pet's repast. Should the effigy work through all of the victim's Intimacies, or should the victim have no positive Intimacies to begin with, the thing moves off into the world to seek victims at random, with a preference for the weak and the unwitting. If confronted, the effigy attempts to flee rather than fight. The effigy is unable to make use of any of the victim's Essence-based powers, but uses their dice pools otherwise. Destroying the effigy-head renders the body comatose until its head is returned.

While in this condition, the victim's head may witness all the actions the effigy takes, and even speak to and be answered by the Abyssal, but no one else may hear him. The victim's severed head may use any Charms that might be beneficial in his reduced state (generally meaning social magic, Awareness Charms, and soak-boosting effects), and may make social attacks against the Abyssal, but can take no other actions of real consequence. Meanwhile, the effigy controlling his body appears to all who see it to be the victim. This unnatural Illusion is treated as a social attack accumulating ten automatic successes, which costs three points of Willpower to see through.

Unlike most Charms, the Abyssal may not voluntarily drop the mote commitment that sustains Malicious Parody Imposter so long as the victim's head is separated from his body. The Charm may end only when the Abyssal returns the victim's head to his body, or when the victim dies. Other characters

may not return the victim's head to his body while the Abyssal lives; they must coerce or convince the deathknight to end his cruel lesson. If the Abyssal is dead, the victim's head may be re-attached by any character who puts it back in its proper place.

DEATH DEALER'S CHANCE

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Larceny 5, Essence 3;

Type: Simple (One dramatic action)

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Face-Drinking Bite

This Charm allows the Abyssal to disguise his subject as a ghost. This disguise includes a forged identity with Underworld-based Influence equal to the Abyssal's Essence. Characters using Charms to examine a subject under the effect of Death Dealer's Chance conclude that he is a ghost (add the Abyssal's Larceny in extra dice to the roll-off). For most intents and purposes, the subject is a ghost: he respire Essence as a creature of death, is immaterial in Creation, tangible at night in shadowlands, and so forth. The target does not become a creature of darkness, nor are they subject to any effects that specifically act upon ghosts, such as the necromancy spell "Summon Ghost." The subject gains no Arcanoi and may continue to use his own Essence-based powers, should he have any.

The subject must freely agree to have this Charm used upon him and may not be magically coerced into giving consent. Upon activation, the Abyssal begins a signature game of chance with the subject. Sometimes this Charm takes the form of a card game; other Abyssals prefer a series of riddles; others still roll dice, draw stones, or engage in challenges stranger still. The process varies from Exalt to Exalt, but always concludes in three stages. The subject rolls (Wits + a relevant Ability determined by the Storyteller) against a climbing difficulty in each game: difficulty 1 for the first game, 2 for the second, and 3 for the third. The Abyssal may not aid or hinder these rolls in any way. With each successive victory, the target feels himself changing. First his body grows numb and cold. Second, he begins to see the shadowy vapors of the dead (if ghosts are present) and hears the whispers of the Neverborn. Finally he is remade as a ghost and, if in Creation, dematerializes instantly. If, however, the target fails at any of these rolls, the results may be tragic: Exalts take (Abyssal's Essence) levels of unsoakable lethal damage, while mortals immediately perish. If the subject's nerve breaks and he abandons the games before the third roll is complete, he merely forfeits all Willpower. Should the Abyssal depart with the games unfinished, he instead suffers this fate.

The subject may end this disguise at any time by spending a point of Willpower and using a Speed 5, DV -2 miscellaneous action to tear away the gauzy Essence enshrouding him. The disguise otherwise dissipates at the rising of the next full moon, when Luna smiles to uncover the ruses of ghost and shadow. This occurs wherever the character may be.

MOONSHADOW CASTE

SOCIALIZE

SCRIBING THE OLD LAWS

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 3, Essence 2;

Type: Simple (Speed 6 long ticks)

Keywords: Avatar (1), Combo-OK, Compulsion, Mirror (Taboo-Inflicting Diatribe)

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Acting with the authority of the murdered architects of the universe, the Abyssal hands down binding commandments that a society must follow. These are the Old Laws, small excerpts of an infinite litany of denial which rolls through the black dreams of the Neverborn. This Charm is similar to Taboo-Inflicting Diatribe (see **Exalted**, p. 238), save that it does not create a taboo or fad, but a law. The Abyssal's Socialize roll suffers a -1 external penalty if the majority of the targeted social group's members are alive, and a separate -3 external penalty if the Old Law he hands down has nothing to do with death or the dead.

KEEPER OF THE OLD LAWS

Cost: —; **Mins:** Socialize 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Avatar (2)

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Scribing the Old Laws

The Abyssal becomes a warden of the Old Laws, gaining an infallible sense that informs him when an individual breaks an Old Law he has laid down with this Charm's prerequisite. He knows when and where the law has been broken, but not by whom. He enjoys one automatic success on all attempts to investigate the violation and determine the identity of the lawbreaker.

Should the Abyssal successfully uncover the lawbreaker and punish her, he loses one point of Resonance. Fitting punishment includes execution, destruction of a ghost's Fetters or the subject of one of its Passions, or sacrifice of a living individual's property to the dead sufficient to drop the individual a Resources dot (for example, if a wealthy merchant worth Resources 4 violated one of the Old Laws, the Abyssal might turn his fine home into a burnt offering to the merchant's ancestors, reducing the lawbreaker to Resources 3 and setting him off on the road with only his wagon and goods to attempt to rebuild his fortune).

CHAPTER FIVE

INFERNALS

MALFEAS

BY RAGE RECAST

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Desecration, Obvious, Shaping

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: By Pain Reforged

Once Malfeas was the Primordial King, his power and glory unconstrained by the crude limits of a body. Now, mutilated and caged in the prison of form, his cosmic might and boundless fury can only twist him toward more harmful expressions of his majesty. An Infernal who learns this Charm selects a package of (Essence x 10) points of temporary positive mutations as a “library” of options. She must allocate all of these points at the time of purchase, even if that means choosing mutations she doesn’t really want as filler.

Once allocated, the library remains fixed. However, raising Essence allows the Infernal to re-allocate all (Essence x 10) mutation points from scratch as though she just acquired the Charm. At Essence 10, the warlock may reallocate her mutations by spending one full day in either isolated meditation or a series of ancient, ecstatic dances.

Whenever the warlock’s anima banner reaches the 11+ mote level of expression, she reflexively gains eight points of mutations selected from her library as a temporary Desecration. Horns may curl from the warlock’s forehead, leathery wings unfold from her back, or fanged maws open upon her body—whatever demonic features best express the Chosen’s fury. She may not gain mutually-exclusive mutations at the same time. This transformation is not optional. In the unlikely event the Infernal cannot express a full eight points without going over (such as by only purchasing Abominations at Essence 3), she must get as close as possible. Once her anima subsides below the 11+ level, the mutations fade back into her body.

By Rage Recast explicitly ignores the normal limit on how many positive temporary mutations a Desecration effect may bestow (see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Infernals**, p. 103). Mutation points gained from the Charm do count toward the usual mutation point limit other temporary Desecration effects can bestow.

If the character knows the Charm Fealty-Acknowledging Audience (**The Manual of Exalted Power—The Infernals**, p. 116), then she may pay a surcharge of +5m when invoking that Charm to gift those who swear fealty to her with up to eight points of mutations she is capable of manifesting with By Rage Recast. This gift is a permanent Desecration.

With Essence 3+, the Infernal may choose to retain her current mutations when her anima banner recedes. She may dismiss these mutations at any time her anima is below the 11-15 mote level of display with a diceless miscellaneous action, but must flare her anima anew to restore her mutations or change them out for a new suite of grotesqueries.

DEVIL-TYRANT AVATAR SHINTAI

Cost: 12m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Desecration, Form-type, Obvious, Shaping

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: By Rage Recast

When the gods turned Malfeas inside-out and gave him form, they exposed his inner monstrosity for all to see. Denied Creation, the Demon City must satisfy himself with dominion over his hateful flesh. If he must suffer the humiliation of physical existence, then the parameters of that body will be defined by the raging whim of the onetime Primordial King—and none other.

The Infernal spreads his arms and collapses his anima banner into his flesh, producing a brief, blinding cataclysm of emerald flame. This explosion acts as a one-time environmental damage effect (Damage 3L, Trauma 1) to everything within three yards. When the smoke clears, the Exalt stands transformed, his demonic nature stamped unmistakably into his flesh.

Devil-Tyrant Avatar Shintai has the following effects:

- The warlock simultaneously manifests all (Essence x 10) points of mutations provided by this Charm’s prerequisite. Devil-Tyrant Avatar Shintai explicitly ignores the normal restrictions on the number of positive mutations a Desecration effect may provide and does not count toward the mutation limit of other such effects. If By Rage Recast supplies mutations that are mutually exclusive to one another, he chooses which to manifest and which to keep inert within him. Mutual exclusivity is the only basis for a mutation not manifesting.

- All Shaping effects which would transform the warlock’s body become Obvious to his senses. He may reflexively reject any unwanted changes, even while unconscious or otherwise inactive.

- The concentrated force of the Infernal’s empyrean fury hardens his skin, adding (Essence) to his natural lethal and bashing soak.

- The warlock adds (Essence) yards to his base movement and dashing distances.

- Finally, the demonic power thrumming through his body increases the warlock’s Strength by (Essence) for the purpose of feats of strength and attacking inanimate objects.

CECELYNE

DUST DEVIL FEINT

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 9)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Counterattack, Obvious, Shaping

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Transcendent Desert Creature

For all that Cecelyne is an all-pervasive prisoner of Hell, she flatters herself that she may not be captured or detained if such treatment does not suit her. This Charm may be activated in response to any attack directed at the Infernal, regardless of

whether it strikes the character. The Infernal dissolves into a whirling eddy of dust and sand, which is carried away from the attacker on the prayers of her followers, reforming within $([\text{Cult} \times 5] + \text{Essence})$ yards. This Charm cannot move through any barrier which would prove impermeable to a trickle of sand. Dust Devil Feint may relocate the warlock to places she could not otherwise reach, such as to a higher perch.

FALSE IDOLS CAST DOWN

Cost: —; **Mins:** Cult 2, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Knockback, Messianic, Obvious

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Dust Devil Feint

The Endless Desert especially loathes opponents with pretensions toward their own divinity. Her scorn transforms the Essence of their unworthy prayers into a vessel for her outrage. This Charm permanently enhances its prerequisite, so that the Infernal erupts into a massive, shrieking dust cloud when it is activated in a place of desolation. In addition to its usual effects, the sandblast knocks her attacker back $(5 + [\text{attacker's Cult} \times 3])$ yards if he fails a reflexive $(\text{Stamina} + \text{Resistance})$ roll at a difficulty of the Infernal's Cult rating. This is effective even against bowmen and other long-range attackers, hurling them with extruded wisps of grinding particulate force.

SWALLOWED IN ETERNITY

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious, Shaping

Duration: One action

Prerequisite Charms: Sand-Slip Trick

Though savants marvel that Cecelyne's vast expanse may be crossed in only five days, the truth is that if the Endless Desert wills it, she may stretch her roads out to infinity. Expressing this principle, the Infernal holds her hand out, palm-first, toward a single opponent. This is treated as a Blockade Movement action, though the Infernal rolls $(\text{Willpower} + \text{Cult})$ in place of $([\text{Strength or Dexterity}] + \text{Athletics})$. Should the Infernal win this contest, her target is rendered unable to approach her for the duration of the Charm. The landscape between warlock and pursuer stretches out infinitely, and although the target perceives himself to be moving, no amount of exertion on his part can close the distance between the two. To observers, the area around the target seems to confusingly sprawl outward without limit, but does not actually move him away from any other individuals or objects. This Charm cannot be used on a single opponent more than once per action.

This Charm only functions in places of desolation. It does not count as a Charm use if deployed upon the sands of Cecelyne herself, including areas blighted by Holy Land Infliction (see *The Manual of Exalted Power—The Infernals*, p. 125).

Swallowed in Eternity adds (Essence) dice to the roll-off against conflicting effects such as Eternal Infatuation Dance (see *Glories of the Most High—The Maidens of Destiny*, p. 28).

SHE WHO LIVES IN HER NAME

ORBITAL IMPACT STORM

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 3, DV -0)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious, Sorcerous

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Mind-Hand Manipulation

Creation was built to reflect the glorious order embodied by She Who Lives In Her Name, from the movement of the constellations to the closed circle of life and death. Taking up the least expression of the Pyrian Flame's perfect motion, the Infernal becomes a reflection of this truth.

Upon activating Orbital Impact Storm, the warlock seizes a clattering maelstrom of loose objects from the surrounding environment—stones and chairs, dinner plates, hammers, broken fence-posts, and any other nearby bric-a-brac (objects carried by individuals and all attuned artifacts are exempt from being appropriated in this manner, as are objects too large or heavy for the average adult mortal to lift with one hand). If necessary, the Infernal may even rip cobblestones loose from streets or bricks from walls, inflicting (Essence) levels of unsoakable damage in the process; objects and structures with a soak greater than 8L are immune to such vandalism. This Charm cannot be activated if the Storyteller decrees that the environment lacks appropriate objects to work with, though players are reminded that two-point stunts allow dramatic editing of the scenery.

The seized objects hang in midair for a moment. Then the newly-formed constellation of debris begins to orbit the Infernal at ever-increasing speeds, pulverizing those foolish enough to attempt to close with the warlock. This constitutes an environmental hazard (Damage 4L/action, Trauma 2) covering a sphere with a radius of (Essence) yards around the character. Even blunt objects inflict lethal damage at the speed generated by Orbital Impact Storm. Opponents may safely navigate the storm if their Dodge DV is higher than the Infernal's $(\text{Willpower} \times 2)$. Additionally, it becomes difficult to target the Infernal through the whirling maelstrom, as blades are knocked askew and arrows snapped in half before they can reach her flesh; attacks suffer an external penalty of $(\text{Infernal's Essence} \div 2, \text{round up})$.

Normally, action-interval environmental hazard exposure resolves after the victim's DV refreshes but before anyone acts on the tick. However, the storm created by this Charm damages victims after resolving all actions taken during the tick, meaning that characters agile enough to avoid the debris must take care not to penalize their Dodge DV to the point that they get hit.

Unlike most Sorcerous Charms, the warlock may deactivate Orbital Impact Storm voluntarily. This may be done peacefully with a diceless miscellaneous action, freezing the suspended objects in place a split second before dropping them. Alternatively, she can reflexively pay 5 motes to hurl shrapnel in all directions as a one-time environmental hazard (Damage 5L, Trauma 3) with a radius of $(\text{Willpower} \times 5)$ yards. This terminates the Charm and does not count as a Charm activation.

Opponents may avoid the debris outright if their Dodge DV is higher than the Infernal's (Willpower + Essence).

Essence 3+ Infernals can purchase this Charm a second time, extending its duration to one day (or indefinite with Essence 5+).

PRECISION THOUGHT-FORCE EXERCISE

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Obvious

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: First She Who Lives In Her Name Excellency, Mind-Hand Manipulation

She Who Lives In Her Name feels something like pity for humans. They are crippled amputees, incapable of reaching beyond their physical forms. It isn't really pity, of course, but rather an acute and targeted awareness of her superiority and the necessity of upgrading lesser beings to her specifications. The Green Sun Princes who learn this Charm perform a great service, serving as honored prototypes of humaniform trans-mogrification even as they civilize themselves.

This Charm permanently upgrades Mind-Hand Manipulation in the following ways:

- The Charm may be used to protect others with Defend Other actions out to its maximum range rather than the usual (Dexterity rating) yards.
- The Charm can be used to deliver Touch effects as though the emanated force is part of the Infernal's body.
- The Infernal adds +2 to his Parry DV using Mind-Hand Manipulation while taking a Guard action. With Essence 4+, this benefit also applies while using Defend Other to protect someone.

ADORJAN

UNBOUND FREEDOM INFILTRATION

Cost: 1ahl; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Gravity-Rebuking Grace

Bored with racing across the surface of walls, the Silent Wind may blow through them. Sometimes she leaves, finding freedom; at other times she enters, finding victims. To activate this Charm, the Infernal must be dashing at her maximum speed, and must have maintained this velocity throughout her entire previous action. Upon invocation, it allows her to body to shred apart into a crimson wind which blows through the cracks and gaps in a barrier, to reform on the other side. Smears and stains of blood are left behind in the Infernal's wake. This Charm cannot bypass obstacles more than (Essence) yards thick, or which are airtight (so, a door with a keyhole or a space beneath it, or a wooden wall with gaps between the boards would be valid targets, while a solid wall sheathed in marble would not). This Charm automatically allows the Infernal to bypass anyone attempting to physically impede her with a Blockade Movement action (see Glories of the Most High—Luna, p. 22)

At Essence 4+, Unbound Freedom Infiltration may be invoked as an innate power rather than a Charm activation by paying an extra aggravated health level upon activation.

VOICE-DRINKING KISS

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious, Crippling, Shaping

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Sacred Kamilla's Inhalation, Eloquence in Unspoken Words

Those who have earned Adorjan's deepest regard may be graced with her most sacred gift—silence. This Charm may be invoked to supplement a kiss; if the target is an unwilling recipient of the Infernal's affections, this requires a clinch attempt (the kiss itself may be treated as a hold action if desired, though a crush attack is just as effective; so long as the Infernal draws in her victim's breath, the state of the rest of his body is of little consequence). With a quick inhalation of breath, the Infernal steals her victim's voice. Though not actually damaging, the process is momentarily but excruciatingly painful; coughing up a few drops of blood is a common aftereffect.

For as long as the Infernal commits Essence to maintain the Charm, she may speak in the voice she has stolen. Releasing the commitment of Essence returns the stolen voice to its proper owner. At Essence 4+, she gains the ability terminate the Charm by swallowing a stolen voice entirely, which nourishes her as if it were a corpse inhaled with Sacred Kamilla's Inhalation (or, optionally, as though it were the death of an extra, if the Infernal knows Murder is Meat). If the voice belonged to a mortal, that mortal is rendered permanently mute. If it belonged to a supernatural being, that being is rendered mute for one week per dot of the Infernal's Essence before finally regaining his voice.

A second purchase of this Charm, at Essence 4+, gives the Infernal the option to let a stolen voice's owner telepathically hear the words she speaks with it regardless of the distance between them (provided they are in the same realm of existence). This may even be used to make social attacks against the voice's original owner. Shutting the stolen voice out for a day costs one Willpower. This can be done as soon as communication begins to minimize the victim's risk. If a victim doesn't shut out words that turn out to be a social attack, it is too late to block that attack via immunity. The victim must first resolve the social attack before spending an extra Willpower to shut out the stolen voice.

THE EBON DRAGON

OUR LITTLE SECRET

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK, Compulsion, Emotion, Sorcerous, Stackable, Touch

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Witness to Darkness

The surest way for Creation to fall into the state of wicked depravity that is most pleasing to the Ebon Dragon is for good men to do nothing, and the Shadow of All Things is more than ready to promote such inaction. To use this Charm, the warlock must touch a witness to an act of depravity, or to evidence of such an act. Henceforth, the target's mind is filled with paralyzing shame and horror when she considers relating what she has seen to any other character, either through speech or writing,

forcing her to ultimately remain silent. This unnatural mental influence costs 3 Willpower to resist. The warlock must be aware that the witness has beheld a specific depravity, and may not blindly 'guess' when activating Our Little Secret. Multiple activations of this Charm may be placed on the same witness, to force silence on the subject of multiple valid acts.

An act of depravity is defined as any act which would cause shock, outrage, or scandal according to the common mores of Creation's dominant culture (currently the Realm) or the dominant culture in which the act occurs. Murder, adultery, rape, incest, theft, violent assault and disrespect toward the Terrestrial Exalted on the part of mortals are all examples of acts of depravity within the Realm, and are thus applicable wherever the Charm is used. More specific acts of depravity might include rudeness to an Essence 6+ divinity (if the Charm were used in Yu-Shan), enslavement of citizens of Nexus (if used in Nexus), or disobeying a superior officer (if used in Lookshy).

At Essence 3+, the Infernal may touch a piece of evidence related to an act of depravity rather than a witness, for a cost of 8m rather than 4m. This causes all individuals who subsequently witness the evidence so marked to be forced into silence as though they had been targeted with the 4m activation of Our Little Secret, as a Sorcerous effect.

With Essence 4+, the Charm's Compulsion is enhanced to also include a prohibition against moving or disturbing evidence of an act of depravity. For example, a character who found a mutilated body deep in the woods would not only be powerless to speak of his discovery, but also could not bring himself to give the corpse a proper burial or even to drag it back to town to be anonymously discovered and properly disposed of by others.

GOLDEN YEARS TARNISHED BLACK

Cost: 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Combo-OK, Emotion, Illusion, Social

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Witness to Darkness

The Ebon Dragon is unsatisfied with ruining the present and future. He has to desecrate the past as well. Why else would he invent fate but to spread misery to all time and space? This Charm augments a Manipulation-based social attack targeting one victim (i.e. most likely using Investigation or Presence) in which the Infernal verbally prompts the target to recall positive memories associated with a particular time or subject. "Remember your wedding night?" and "Congratulations on your promotion!" are both examples of valid triggers. The memory need not be wholly positive to be targeted, so long as there is some good part to destroy. The Infernal can word the attack so that it ironically validates the positive nature of the memory while actually calling attention to the negative details surrounding it. Regardless of whether the social attack forces an answer or not, the victim vividly relives the targeted experience within her own mind.

Unfortunately for the victim, the Ebon Dragon's power obscures and distorts the fond memory even as she recalls it. If the roll overcomes the target's MDV, the warlock ruins the memory. If the Storyteller determines the target has no positive memories to recall about the chosen topic, the Charm has no effect.

Victims misremember ruined memories in the worst possible light, glossing over or outright forgetting everything good about the experience in question. Everything bad is remembered in exacting and often exaggerated detail. The victim thinks the worst of all other participants in the remembered experience, especially anyone whom she can blame for any harm she suffered (however slight). A mother could misremember her dead son as a lazy good-for-nothing who talked back, forgetting that she also loved him and he loved her. Corrupted memories never introduce outright falsehoods. The mother remembers her son's laziness because he was sometimes lazy and remembers that he talked back because most children do. She does not remember him torturing small animals because that never happened. Thankfully for the Ebon Dragon, everyone is flawed. In that at least, Creation functions as designed.

Ruining memories interferes with Intimacies toward the subject of those memories. If the victim has no such Intimacy, then a negative Intimacy instantly forms toward that subject. Any existing positive Intimacy warps into a negative Intimacy. In either case, the victim's player chooses the Intimacy's new emotional context, subject to Storyteller approval. For instance, the aforementioned mother may feel resentment toward her son or hatred or contempt.

Corrupted memories are an unnatural Illusion effect. The victim can repair her damaged mind by paying one Willpower if she had no Intimacy toward the subject of the memory when the Infernal used Golden Years Tarnished Black or two Willpower if the Charm corrupted a positive Intimacy. This may seem counterintuitive given that a positive Intimacy helps defend against the Charm, but if the accursed magic takes root in spite of this bonus, the feelings turn cancerous and become a liability. The victim can pay this Willpower to heal the memory in the moment the Charm takes root (which also prevents the Intimacy from forming or being corrupted), but if she does not do so, she must wait until externally prompted or provide a compelling Storyteller-approved reason to question the memory.

Intimacies formed or corrupted by this Charm do not count against the usual limit a mind can sustain, at least so long as the associated memories remain corrupted. After all, the Ebon Dragon wouldn't want his enemies getting over their misery just because life went on. Once the memory heals, the Intimacy falls away as normal if neglected. Even without such healing, it is still possible to remove the Intimacy through normal means other than neglect.

A second purchase of this Charm at Essence 3+ allows it to enhance Performance-based spoken attacks as an alternative to the basic single-target use. In doing so, the Infernal picks a single topic and all listeners react to the Charm as though separately targeted by the address. The corruptive mass oratory has no effect on listeners lacking appropriate memories to subvert.

WEAK MINDS BELIEVE ANYTHING

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Golden Years Tarnished Black

The Ebon Dragon isn't thoughtlessly cruel like his siblings, indifferent to the suffering he brings to lesser beings. The Ultimate Darkness has more heart than that, honoring the most fragile child with the same diligent attention he would pay to a god or titan. He fairly ensures that all suffer unfairly. Still, it cannot really be said that all victims are alike to him. Purchase of this Charm permanently removes the Willpower cost to activate Golden Years Tarnished Black whenever the target is a single mortal, natural animal or Essence 1 magical being.

With Essence 4+, this Charm adds First Circle demons to the list of cost-discounted victims. Furthermore, the base mote cost to target anything on the list becomes the target's lowest Virtue or highest Virtue (respectively) depending on whether the target is an extra or not. Surcharges and discounts from other effects modify this new base cost normally, with the former applied before the latter.

WANT BECOMES NEED

Cost: — (+1m); **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Golden Years Tarnished Black

As much fun as it can be to invert love into hate, there are other ways to ruin a memory. This Charm permanently upgrades its prerequisite. By paying an extra mote while using that Charm, the Infernal seeks a different outcome. Ruining a memory doesn't take away the pleasure of it. Quite to the contrary, the subject gains fetishistic appeal that is at once a source of titillation and shame. This induced desire results in a positive Intimacy of addiction toward the subject (possibly overriding an existing positive Intimacy with another emotional context). Healing this variant of memory damage and Intimacy gain requires the same process as the basic function of Golden Years Tarnished Black.

With Essence 3+, Want Becomes Need does more than distort memory and foster shame-poisoned longings for remembered joys. If the attack succeeds, the twisted memory and poisonous Intimacy join together to addict her soul. Most victims suffer an unnatural Compulsion duplicating a constant partially-controlled Overindulgence Limit Break (Exalted, p. 105), though they may take scant consolation that the behavior is solely limited to the subject of the altered memories/Intimacy and does not predispose them to other vices. Victims can pay one Willpower to suppress this addictive behavior for one day. Victims with Limit tracks can choose to gain one Limit instead of paying Willpower to ignore the addiction for a day. If this results in madness wholly unconnected to addiction, well, Exalted are strange creatures.

The addictive Compulsion instilled by Want Becomes Need is predicated on both the memory distortion and the associated Intimacy. If either is removed or meaningfully altered at any point (as determined by the Storyteller), the addiction instantly terminates and never comes back without further use of Want Becomes Need.

EVERYTHING GETS WORSE

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Golden Years Tarnished Black

While the Ebon Dragon stands to gain more from ruining beautiful memories than further sully painful recollections, he believes he can always find a way to worsen the world. After all, he always has so far. Purchase of this Charm broadens the utility of its prerequisite in the following ways:

- The Charm can target memories that don't have a meaningful positive component to them. There's not much silver lining to "That day you watched your little girl die in front of your eyes." When a bad memory is made worse this way, every pain associated with that memory becomes accentuated and exaggerated. A soldier remembers the fateful day his legion fell in battle against the Anathema as if it happened only yesterday. He remembers the sound of his friends' screams, the awful crunch of their bones and the shocked look as the newest recruit tried vainly to stuff his entrails back into his body after the monster eviscerated him with a backhanded slap. He remembers the stink of blood and offal and rancid sweat. Absence of a negative Intimacy creates one in the victim with a Storyteller-approved emotional context picked by the victim's player.

- At the Infernal's discretion, part of the imposed memory distortion can involve reassignment of blame to a target of the warlock's choosing. The victim's player can choose any Storyteller-approved chain of logic to justify this new opinion, however twisted and tangled. If the Storyteller cannot construct such a narrative because there is simply no way the new scapegoat could be responsible, the attack automatically fails. Still, this offers immense latitude. A child can construct a dozen reasons why it is her fault that her father abandoned her and her mother. If only she had been better behaved or told her daddy how much she loved him, he wouldn't have gone away.

- If the Infernal knows the Charm Weak Minds Believe Anything, he receives additional benefit when making a discount-cost victim believe she is the ultimate cause of her own suffering as explained previously. Such victims also lose (6 - the Infernal's Compassion) additional Willpower as the memory twists. If this depletes all of an extra's remaining Willpower, that victim's will breaks and she attempts to kill herself from shame and self-loathing at every opportunity for one day. If she survives due to the intervention of others, the urge passes. Despair wrought by this unnatural Compulsion is explicitly capable of overriding a target's survival instinct, thereby issuing the unstated and normally unacceptable order to commit suicide. The souls of victims who kill themselves as a result of Everything Gets Worse fall straight into Oblivion barring other magic that forces them to linger as a ghost or pass into Lethe. Much to the Ebon Dragon's frustration, annihilation trumps his Charms to banish souls into the darkness beyond existence. He has yet to find a way to inflict absolute despair for eternity, though not for lack of trying.

BIBLE OF BROKEN TRUTHS

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Sorcerous

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Golden Years Tarnished Black

The Ebon Dragon knows his own nature well enough to realize he is too often distracted tormenting individuals to properly damn the universe. Accordingly, he sends forth blasphemous revisionist texts into Creation as messengers of his lies. Upon purchasing this Charm, the Infernal permanently gains the power to use Golden Years Tarnished Black to enhance written social attacks matching the Charm's basic spoken use.

All that is necessary is for the words to clearly invoke the intended topic. Terse graffiti is just as useful for delivering the attack as a lengthier project like a novel or history textbook. Both Presence and Performance-based attacks are permissible, with the latter taking the form of general addresses to any reader. Text enchanted with this Charm is no more physically durable than normal, so fire remains an excellent countermeasure to most cursed writing.

The magic within the words is also a Sorcerous effect and can be dispelled as such, causing the text to fade away as though never written. Even stone tablets become unmarred and smooth once more as chiseled words disappear. Few realize that the empty page is the truest and most eloquent scripture of the Ebon Dragon. Of all his lies, the titan's insistence that he exists is the most audacious and preposterous.

MEMORY POISON MASTERY

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Golden Years Tarnished Black

With greater attunement to the Ebon Dragon comes greater power to attack the sanctity of treasured memories. The slight catch is that power is slavery. Those who can sabotage memories adroitly find themselves compelled to do so. This Charm permanently modifies its prerequisite as follows:

- A social attack enhanced by the Charm adds a number of bonus dice equal to the Infernal's Essence. These are dice added by a Charm and count toward those limits.
- The base cost to heal memories damaged by each activation of this Charm increases to three Willpower. If the memory corrupted a positive Intimacy, the cost rises even further to (Infernal's Essence rating, maximum five) Willpower. The victim still can only spend Willpower to heal a memory in the moment the Infernal attacks or in response to plausible prompting (such as encountering evidence that contradicts recollection).
- Upon overhearing a non-extra speaking of a treasured memory, the Infernal must use his next available action to attack the memory with Golden Years Tarnished Black unless he can't pay the cost to do so. He may use the Charm any way he knows how (such as creating an addiction via Want Becomes Need) and needn't stick to just ruining memories. If he doesn't attack the memory in question, he gains a point of Limit unless he has already gained Limit this way previously in the day. This mad need to taint others doesn't apply if the Infernal has no opportunity to react that way. Limit is not gained from hear-

ing a memory relayed by an Infallible Messenger sent halfway around the world. Likewise, Limit isn't gained if the Infernal can't make social attacks for any reason, such as due to being bound and gagged. Ultimately, the Storyteller is the final arbiter, but should consider whether the character made a good faith effort to attack a cherished memory when given a reasonable chance to do so.

TWISTED YESTERDAYS CURSE

Cost: — (+2m); **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Sorcerous

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Memory Poison Mastery

The Ebon Dragon does not permit his enemies to recover the truths his awful power rots from within. This Charm permanently upgrades Golden Years Tarnished Black. Whenever the Infernal activates that Charm to enhance a spoken attack against a single target, he can choose to pay an additional two motes to make his words Sorcerous. If the attack successfully overcomes the victim's MDV and corrupts her memory, then she can't heal this damage via Willpower expenditure—not even to reject the corruption in the moment of the attack. Spending the Willpower normally needed to fix the memory does allow the victim to become suspicious that her recollection may be wrong, though not how or why. Methods of breaking mental influence other than spending Willpower work normally on Sorcerous invocations of Golden Years Tarnished Black, such as the Solar Charm Transcendent Hero's Meditation (**Exalted**, p. 201). Appropriate countermagic also works to reverse the Charm's effects.

UNREASONING PREJUDICE INFLECTION

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Emotion, Servitude

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Golden Years Tarnished Black

There is little point in twisting a couple's love into hate if they turn right around and make up a week later. That just simply won't do. Fortunately, the Ebon Dragon long ago planned for such contingencies.

Golden Years Tarnished Black already bolsters the Intimacies it creates and corrupts, exempting them from usual Intimacy total maximums. Unreasoning Prejudice Inflection further enchants these Intimacies to resist removal. All of the following powers instantly terminate if the associated memory heals, leaving behind a perfectly normal non-magical Intimacy.

- The victim must resist any external attempt to damage enchanted Intimacies via mental influence with the best non-magical defenses available to her. Generally speaking, that means using her highest MDV and paying Willpower at every opportunity. If the influence succeeds in spite of her best effort, the effect resolves normally. Victims can pay five Willpower to forgo the defense mandated by this unnatural Emotion and Servitude effect, but must pay this exorbitant cost each time they wish to lower their mental guard against a social attack or other source of mental influence. Most victims find this urge too strong to fight and instead focus their efforts on fixing their memories or ridding themselves of the offending Intimacy.

- The victim cannot voluntarily take actions that would erode the Intimacy (as determined by the Storyteller). She can pay one Willpower per scene to suppress this unnatural Emotion and Servitude effect so that she can work toward freeing herself from the unwanted feelings.

- The victim's sleep is troubled with brooding nightmares about her damaged memories. Every time she regains Willpower points from sleep, she is considered to have spent that many scenes repairing the Intimacy of any damage done to it. In effect, the emotional pollution regenerates by feeding upon the suffering buried in her subconscious. If the Intimacy is actually removed, the feelings behind it die and cease regenerating.

GLORIES THAT NEVER WERE

Cost: — (+1m); **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Unreasoning Prejudice Infliction

Sometimes the Ebon Dragon is best served by whiter lies than himself, veiling inconvenient truths behind the mists of nostalgia. By paying an extra mote while using Golden Years Tarnished Black, the Infernal ruins the targeted memory in a much more unorthodox manner. The victim retains and idealizes everything she finds good about the memory. At the same time, she forgets everything bad about the topic and/or minimizes the importance of bad elements as the Infernal chooses. For example, an aging Dynast can be made to remember the reign of the Scarlet Empress as a halcyon time of justice and peace, completely overlooking the tyranny and oppression of her totalitarian regime. A molested child can be made to adore her father once more. Most usefully, the Infernal can help a mortal enemy remember how much she enjoys his charming company and flattering praise, never mind those times he slept with her daughter, murdered her husband and burned down her house.

If the victim doesn't already have a positive Intimacy to a particular memory, whitewashing the recollection with Glories That Never Were instantly creates such an Intimacy with a Storyteller-approved emotional context chosen by the victim's player. An existing positive Intimacy becomes enchanted by the Charm. Healing memory damage and Intimacy gain inflicted by Glories That Never Were generally requires the same process as the basic function of Golden Years Tarnished Black (as modified by Unreasoning Prejudice Infliction). However, victims also add half their Willpower rating as an MDV bonus to resist all external attempts to weaken or remove the Intimacy associated with an idealized memory. This bonus reflects the way minds doggedly cling to delusions of better times in the bleak world that is Creation. Hope is often all people have, however false.

With Essence 4+, Glories That Never Were gets worse. If the bolstered positive Intimacy is removed by any means while its associated memory remains damaged, the victim experiences a sudden wave of despair as she comprehends the inherent ugliness of truth. This overreaction drags her mind to the opposite extreme like a swinging pendulum, changing the way her memories distort to match the base ruin inflicted by Golden Years Tarnished Black. What was pure good becomes hateful.

Furthermore, a new enchanted Intimacy instantly forms toward the subject as per all rules of Golden Years Tarnished Black.

DARK CLAWS SEIZE DARK HEARTS

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Unreasoning Prejudice Infliction

The Ultimate Darkness preys upon the vile feelings that seep from wounded memories. Such emotions are but a shadow of the Dragon, and so they rightly yield before their master and betray the heart that holds them. This Charm can enhance any social attack aimed at a single target (typically with Investigation or Presence), provided the attack preys upon an Intimacy created or corrupted by Golden Years Tarnished Black. For instance, if the warlock caused a widow to despise her late husband, he could then attempt to prey upon that hate by suggesting she should set fire to all the art he painted as his life's work. Instead of the usual -1 MDV modifier, the social attack becomes unnatural (if not already) and unexpected, costing one additional Willpower to resist at each opportunity to do so (to a maximum of five Willpower as normal).

If the Infernal has Essence 7+, Dark Claws Seize Dark Hearts may also be used to augment Performance-based social attacks as an alternative to single target use. Such attacks work on all listeners, but the benefits of the Charm (unexpected, automatically unnatural, etc.) only apply against those with appropriate Intimacies.

INFERNAL MONSTER CHARMS

The Infernal Monster is a force of unwavering, all-consuming rage, fueled by a hunger for violence beyond human comprehension of the word. The style's expansions fulfill this threat, offering an arsenal of blasphemies to Infernal Exalted brutal enough to explore them.

The Infernal Monster is not Malfeas. Slayers automatically favor Martial Arts and therefore Infernal Monster Style, so it is easy to forget that they are separate Charm sets. The thematic similarities between Malfeas Charms and Infernal Monster Charms only further clouds the issue. Both sets emphasize overkill and force and rage. Yet there are differences, too. Malfeas cannot restrain himself. He exists only at full volume and full power, unable to conceive of any other state of being. The Infernal Monster is more cunning. It watches and waits for the right moment to unleash its fury. When that moment comes, the monster explodes into a frenzy of hateful ultraviolence expressing pure physical force and visceral horror. There is nothing sophisticated or esoteric about the Infernal Monster's violence. The style does not sear enemies with the cold flames of a mad sun, nor encase its wielders in living metal armor. The Infernal Monster remains a fundamentally human beast. It smashes, gnaws and shatters everything in its path. Malfeas conceives of forces beyond the physical, but the Infernal Monster only understands violence. Malfeas hates himself as much or more than he hates his enemies, while the Infernal Monster revels in its unholy might and howls bloody triumph at the sky.

The Infernal Monster is not the Lunar Hero. The Hero style of Luna's Chosen is the fighting art of trickster-warriors who guard their friends and control the terms of battle. The Lunar Hero does not permit her enemies to flee. She chooses whom they can attack. When she strikes, she is a whirlwind of sudden and deliberate force. These are not the ways of the Infernal Monster. Its only trick is the trick of mastering terrain and launching devastating ambushes. It does not control the terms of battle in all places; if it must rely upon the environment, then it does so by luring enemies into the dark holes where it can tilt the playing field sharply in its favor. The defining quality of the Infernal Monster's wrath is power, not speed.

Yet there is something reminiscent of Lunars in the Infernal Monster's territorial fury. Parts of the style explore the concept of the Old Thing In the Cave, the archetypal menace of humanity that emerges from its hellish lair to hunt and slay everything that crosses its path. Some Stewards take this ogre-like approach, drawing power from the lands they prowl and the caves in which they lair. Accordingly, some of the Infernal Monster Style expansion Charms below include information on Lunar Charms that function very similarly. These Charms are scattered among Lunar Charm trees. They can be monsters or savage kings, but they have no consolidated path to follow.

ENLIGHTENING MADNESS CHARMS

These expansions of Infernal Monster Style explore the style's propensity for violent fury. Learning them changes how the character thinks and reacts to the world, invariably making the Exalt crazier and more dangerous to be around.

SMOLDERING RAGE BEAST

Cost: —; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Compulsion, Emotion, Rage

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Retribution Will Follow

Provoking the Infernal Monster is unwise. This Charm permanently improves its prerequisite in two ways. First, the Infernal can activate that Charm in response to any threat, bad news, insult, unwanted touch or physical attack directed at her as though these stimuli had inflicted levels of damage. Second, the Infernal can invoke Retribution Will Follow as an innate power rather than a Charm activation.

Smoldering Rage Beast carries a steep price. The Exalt must activate Retribution Will Follow whenever confronted with an opportunity to do so unless he pays one Willpower to resist (immunizing him against other Rage effects for a day as normal).

ALL-CONSUMING RAMPAGE RELEASE

Cost: —; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Retribution Will Follow

The Infernal Monster is a being of singular madness and violent purpose. He refuses to be conflicted in his urges. This Charm is a permanent modification of the Infernal's capabilities. Whenever he hits Limit 10 and would enter a bout of Limit Break or Torment, he can allow the usual madness or suffering to take place. Alternately, he can choose to frenzy with benefits and drawbacks identical to an uncontrolled Berserk Anger

Limit Break (**Exalted**, p. 105). He regains (Martial Arts rating) Willpower points from entering this rampage and is considered to have Retribution Will Follow active for all Infernal Monster Style Charms that have effects based on using that Charm. He can also choose to heal instead of regaining Willpower from going berserk, regenerating any of the following damage options: one level of aggravated, two levels of lethal or four levels of bashing.

With Essence 5+, the Infernal radiates his madness in a radius of (Martial Arts x 10) yards. Any being that hits Limit 10 within that radius has the option to frenzy like the Exalt. Such beings can only regain Willpower and may not heal by going berserk.

FEARLESS FRENZY ATTITUDE

Cost: —; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Retribution Will Follow

The Infernal Monster is dauntlessly fierce. This Charm is a permanent enhancement of the Infernal's capabilities that applies if he has Valor 3+. While using Retribution Will Follow or Infernal Monster Form, he adds his Martial Arts rating in bonus successes to all Valor rolls to resist fear and adds this same amount directly to his Valor rating to defend against effects resisted better with a higher rating. He also treats all Emotion effects solely based on instilling fear as unacceptable orders. This does not improve the effectiveness of Valor channels. Finally, he confers this same fearlessness to all Valor 3+ victims driven berserk by his Rage Charms.

Infernals with this Charm can choose to reflexively improve it at any time, making themselves permanently fearless even when not using Retribution Will Follow or Infernal Monster Form. The catch is that their "sane" resting state becomes identical to a partially-controlled Foolhardy Contempt Limit Break (**Exalted**, p. 105). Going berserk obviously trumps this behavior, as does Limit Break or behavior-altering Torment. However, when the acute madness ends, the pervasive madness of a mind without fear returns. Once the Infernal embraces a life without fear, he cannot go back to using the Charm as he first learned it. He can only explore deeper into the madness of the Infernal Monster, trading fearlessness for something worse.

FURY IS FREEDOM

Cost: —(+1 ahl, 2 Limit); **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 3;

Type: Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Retribution Will Follow

The rage of the Infernal Monster is not just a shield against mental trickery and domination. Anger frees the mind. This Charm permanently enhances its prerequisite. Whenever the Infernal activates Retribution Will Follow, he can pay one aggravated health level and gain two Limit in addition to committing the usual mote. Doing so terminates all unnatural mental influence effects currently affecting his mind unless these effects meet one of the following criteria: the influence was self-imposed, the influence was caused by a being with a higher Essence rating than the Infernal's Martial Arts at the time it

was imposed or the influence functions by making the Infernal angry or taking advantage of his fury to make him perform specific anger-driven behavior. Use of Retribution Will Follow this way can reduce Limit by slaughtering or maiming, reducing the net increase to one point rather than two. When the killing rage passes, shattered mental influence effects do not return.

A secondary benefit of Fury is Freedom is that no mental influence can prevent the Exalt from activating Retribution Will Follow. It does not matter whether Fury Is Freedom can break the influence in question; nothing can prevent the Infernal from frenzying when he encounters the appropriate stimuli enabling activation of Retribution Will Follow.

UNTAMED APOCALYPSE SHINTAI

Cost: —; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Native

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Smoldering Rage Beast, All-Consuming Rampage Release, Fearless Frenzy Attitude, Fury Is Freedom

The Infernal Monster has no worries or guilt. Absolute violence yields absolute freedom. This Charm is a permanent modification to the Infernal Exalt's psyche and soul, scarring her with empowering madness. Green Sun Princes can't be compelled to learn Untamed Apocalypse Shintai with any mental influence; they must truly wish to embrace its transcendent damnation. Akuma have no say in the matter; their patrons decide whether to devolve their slaves into beasts of war. **Untamed Apocalypse Shintai makes characters largely unplayable, so Storytellers should probably restrict it to antagonists.** Learning the Charm changes the Infernal in the following ways:

- He lives in a constant state of fury like an uncontrolled Berserk Anger Limit Break (*Exalted*, p. 105). However, he is not compelled to wreck the environment in this resting state, just slaughter everything that moves. Furthermore, when he becomes fatigued or sleepy, he can end his rampage to seek a good place to rest. He will still attack anything that tries to prevent him from finding a lair, but will not pursue such opponents if they withdraw and let him resume his search. Living a berserk existence does not reduce the character's mental attributes or force him to fight incompetently. However, he won't take preparatory actions longer than a single miscellaneous action, so he can draw a weapon, but won't have the patience to strap into a warstrider.

- Activating Retribution Will Follow brings on a scene of unrestrained rage with a number of benefits (wound penalty reduction, mental influence resistance, etc.). His resting rage does not provide these benefits. The frenzy brought on by Retribution Will Follow, Limit Break and behavior-altering Torment all take precedence over the Infernal's mind and displace his constant fury for as long as they last.

- Infernal Monster Style and its expansions only cost the Infernal four experience points per Charm. This discount applies retroactively, awarding the difference in experience the Infernal is owed. Should the character somehow lose this Charm, he must pay that difference back. In the unlikely event a Storyteller lets a player take Untamed Apocalypse Shintai at character creation, the Infernal gains two Infernal Monster Style Charms for every starting Charm allocated to them and can buy more

for two bonus points each. Untamed Apocalypse Shintai is not a precedent for Charms that provide dramatic cost reductions to acquire Solar-level Charms unless those Charms wreck the character permanently and absolutely. Not all paths of transcendence are desirable.

- The Exalt can raise his traits up as high as 10 without regard for the usual age-cap. His constant bestial fury sharply limits the kinds of Charms he can use, but he shatters through the limits that govern most Essence users. If he somehow loses this Charm, he converts all dots in excess of his permitted age cap back into experience. Learning this Charm precludes metamorphosis into a Primordial. The Infernal cannot learn the Charms that initiate this apotheosis.

INESCAPABLE FIEND CHARMS

These expansions of Infernal Monster Style explore the concept of the monster you cannot avoid. You cannot run. You cannot hide. The Infernal Monster will find you and destroy you. It is eager to feel your bones break under its touch, to tear screams and viscera from your flesh.

IMPATIENT SLAUGHTER SPEED

Cost: —; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Obvious

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Raging Behemoth Charge

The Infernal Monster charges toward enemies. They are prey, not threats. Exalted with this Charm can activate Raging Behemoth Charge as an innate power rather than a Charm activation while using Retribution Will Follow or Infernal Monster Form. While using Raging Behemoth Charge, the Infernal also gains the following additional benefits:

- He cannot become fatigued from exertion. Any fatigue penalties suffered at the time of activation are suspended until the Charm ends, resuming as though no time had passed.

- He can run through muck, climb and swim toward valid opponents at the same speed as ground movement (rather than half).

- When moving toward a valid opponent, the Infernal's actions aren't capped by Athletics over unstable footing or swimming in rough conditions. He effectively has whatever Athletics he needs to ignore such complications.

BOUNDING BEAST ADVANCE

Cost: —; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Obvious

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Raging Behemoth Charge

The Infernal Monster leaps great distances to pounce on prey. While an Exalt with this Charm has Raging Behemoth Charge active, she adds her Martial Arts rating to her Athletics to calculate how far she can jump toward a valid opponent. With Essence 3+, she adds a bonus of + (Martial Arts + Essence) instead.

LEAPING SMASH TECHNIQUE

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2;

Type: Reflexive (Step 1)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Bounding Beast Advance

Fleeing the Infernal Monster is an exercise in futility. This Charm enhances an unarmed attack (which can be an unarmed attempt to initiate a grapple), allowing the Infernal to reflexively jump toward the target before determining whether the target is in range for the purposes of resolving the attack. If he reaches his target, the attack resolves normally with a +2 bonus to its raw damage from added momentum. Otherwise, the jump moves the Infernal the appropriate distance but the attack automatically misses. Leaping Smash Technique can be activated as an innate power rather than a Charm activation if the Exalt has Raging Behemoth Charge or Infernal Monster Form active. Essence 2-3 Exalted can only use this Charm to enhance the first attack in a flurry; those with greater Essence surpass the limitation and can flurry to bound across the battlefield.

If Leaping Smash Technique is used in conjunction with God-Smashing Blow to enhance an attack, the final jump distance is doubled after applying any modifiers from Bounding Beast Advance.

SHOCK AND AWE SLAM

Cost: — (+4m); **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2;

Type: Permanent

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Leaping Smash Technique

The Infernal Monster shouldn't be fast enough to strike as it does. Nothing that strong should be so fast. It's just not fair. This Charm permanently improves its prerequisite. The Infernal can pay an additional four motes when using Leaping Smash Technique to impose a DV penalty against the attack. If the target attempts to parry, the penalty is equal to the Exalt's Martial Arts rating. Dodges (and any combination of dodge and parry) only suffer a penalty of half the Infernal's Martial Arts. Although adding this penalty does not make the attack unexpected, defenses that convert an unexpected attack into an expected attack also negate the penalty.

If the Infernal has Essence 4+, the DV penalty to dodge increases to the Exalt's full Martial Arts.

NOWHERE TO RUN

Cost: —; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Leaping Smash Technique

It is difficult to run fast enough or far enough to escape the Infernal Monster. Yet they always try. This Charm permanently enhances its prerequisite. Whenever the Infernal uses Leaping Smash Technique, if the target is aware of the Exalt's location and is moving away from him, the Exalt multiplies the maximum final jump distance by his (Martial Arts) after applying any modifiers from Bounding Beast Advance. If the Leaping Smash Technique is performed in conjunction with

God-Smashing Blow, the distance modifier is doubled again, so (Martial Arts x 2). This is a special exception on how multiplicative effects usually stack in Exalted. Characters who have an Intimacy of fear toward the Infernal are always considered moving away from him for the purposes of this Charm.

NOWHERE TO HIDE

Cost: —; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious, Sorcerous, Stackable

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Leaping Smash Technique

The Infernal finds those who flee her. Whenever an Infernal with this Charm uses Leaping Smash Technique to attack an individual, he can place a Sorcerous tag on that individual for one hour. The brief arcane link of sublime aggression connects the Infernal Monster with her intended quarry. It is possible to tag any number of separate victims with separate attacks, but Infernals can't tag and have no need to tag the same victim more than once.

Whenever the Infernal Monster uses Leaping Smash Technique while he has tagged one or more victims, he can choose one of those enemies as the attack's target and allow the arcane link to guide her. Her instinct-driven leap carries her in the direction of her quarry, regardless of whether she is aware of the victim's current location. If an unobstructed path to that target exists and the target is in range of the leap, the attack resolves as normal for use of Leaping Smash Technique. An invisible opponent (or a dematerialized one) still applies a -2 external penalty to the attack roll. If the opponent is out of reach or protected by total cover, the leap carries the Infernal the maximum possible distance toward her without slamming her into intervening obstacles (unless she chooses to slam through them because she has other magic enabling her to do so). With the right Charms, it is possible to use Nowhere to Hide to leap through a wall and resolve the attack against someone on the other side.

Martial Arts 5+ allows the Infernal to leap toward the closest god or demon bigger than a least god or Thing That Lurks In Corners that he can reach with the attack (as though that being were tagged). He can exclude any potential targets he can perceive to avoid attacking allies (even while in a berserk state). This doesn't let him hit dematerialized beings, but in conjunction with magic that does, he can use an attack as a means of testing if there are any spirits snooping about.

BLOOD HERALDS DEATH

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Combo-OK, Sorcerous, Stackable

Duration: One week

Prerequisite Charms: Nowhere to Hide

The Infernal Monster follows the scent of blood, whether that is blood he has drawn or the blood on the hands of those who wounded him. This Charm may be activated to Sorcerously tag any living victim the Infernal inflicted actual levels of damage on with an unarmed attack in the past hour. Alternatively, Blood Heralds Death can tag enemies who inflicted actual levels of damage to the Exalt in the past hour as a direct result of their actions (even unintentional injury). Either way, the

tag forges an arcane link duplicating that placed by Nowhere to Hide (to the point that it can be used to tag characters in order to leap after them when they are close by). Unlike its prerequisite, Blood Heralds Death places tags that last a week rather than an hour. If the tag is removed via countermagic, the Infernal requires new injuries to re-tag that character with another activation.

Whenever an Infernal makes a tracking roll to pursue a victim tagged by this Charm, that roll is enhanced as though by the Solar Charm Unshakeable Bloodhound Technique (**Exalted**, p. 211). However, the Infernal receives no bonus to the roll-off if another effect contests the tracking effort. With Essence 4+, the Infernal becomes immune to all fatigue accrued while actively tracking a tagged target. Sleep deprivation affects him normally, but he can give endless chase without tiring from exertion. Existing fatigue is also ignored while tracking tagged victims, but resumes as soon as he stops as though no time passed.

ETERNAL MONSTROUS HUNT

Cost: —; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Blood Heralds Death

The Infernal Monster does not understand forgiveness. This Charm improves its prerequisite, allowing tags it places to last until the Exalt dies, the target dies or the tag is removed via countermagic (i.e. duration becomes indefinite rather than one month).

With Essence 6+, the Infernal's enmity is the stuff of terrible legend. If the target dies, the tag is inherited by the oldest surviving blood offspring of that person. If there is no child to inherit the tag, it passes to the victim's oldest surviving sibling. If there is not a sibling to carry on the family curse, the vendetta dies there. The Infernal intuitively knows when a transfer occurs and the relationship between the tag's last bearer and its new heir.

ARMAGEDDON NIGHTMARE DUEL

Cost: 0m or 15m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4;

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK, Sorcerous

Duration: (Martial Arts rating) minutes

Prerequisite Charms: Blood Heralds Death

The Infernal Monster haunts his enemies. They see his rage-contorted face when they sleep. They feel his hot breath upon the back of their neck. They know he is coming for them. Upon activating this Charm, the Infernal's eyes glaze over as though from a distracting daydream. A small smile curls at the corner of his lips. He is completely unaware of his environment and unable to take physical actions in this fugue state, but remains upright if standing. The trance lasts for the Charm's full duration, but his player may choose for him to reflexively snap out of it and end the Charm in order to react to stimuli (like an incoming attack). It is also possible to activate Armageddon Nightmare Duel while the Infernal is unconscious, focusing his dreams on distant prey.

This Charm is not studied as an idle distraction to avoid boredom. At the time of activation, the Infernal chooses an enemy he has tagged with Blood Heralds Death. If that enemy is awake, he knows this and activating the Charm costs him nothing. The tagged character momentarily hallucinates and imagines he sees the Infernal somewhere nearby, but his senses catch up a split second later to reveal he's just jumping at shadows. The delusion is unsettling, but too fleeting to have any mechanical impact.

If the tagged enemy is sleeping when Armageddon Nightmare Duel activates, paying fifteen motes and one Willpower allows the Infernal to meet the victim in a shared nightmare created by the Charm. Sleep means real sleep, not an alternative activity that counts as sleep for the target due to magic. This nightmare's terrain can contain any landscapes and environments natural to Creation and is arbitrarily vast, effectively an infinite plain on which to impose features as they are discovered. The Infernal and the victim are the only two beings in this world. Sessile life-forms like plants and fungi are permissible, as these qualify as scenery rather than actors in the psychodrama.

The two enter the dream in sight of one another, but no closer than one hundred yards. Neither can be placed in a starting position that is actively injurious to him, though targets immune to particular environmental hazards may begin exposed to such conditions. Inability to see or use similarly-acute senses is a special hazard for this purpose. The Infernal becomes aware of such immunities in the instant he activates the Charm so that he can set the stage appropriately. Storytellers should ensure that this rule is followed in spirit as well as letter. Placing an enemy on a tiny pedestal over a vast sea of lava with no way to move or escape without suffering burning horrid death is not technically a violation of the rule. Neither is placing a strong-but-slow enemy who can't see in the dark in pitch-black frozen cave so slick its floor can't be walked on without supernatural balance or astounding agility. Both scenarios are completely against the spirit of the Charm. Dangerous environments are permissible, but using them as weapons should require work and there should always be some means of avoiding the danger.

When the dream begins, the Infernal has full motes, Willpower, Virtue channels and health. He can choose not to carry over any lingering negative effects currently afflicting him into his dream self. In effect, his nightmare form is himself at full power, but with no Charms that require activations active. The victim enters the dream as she is in real life, but with no Charms active. If she is wounded or supernaturally beguiled or mutated into a three-armed freak outside the dream, she remains so within the dream. Both characters immediately join battle. Time flows in the dream at the same rate as reality, so the dream cannot actually take or appear to take longer than (the Infernal's Martial Arts) minutes.

Nothing that happens to the Infernal in the dream has any bearing on his actual self. If he dies or falls unconscious within the dream, the Charm ends and the dream ends for both parties. This also severs the sorcerous tag connecting the Infernal to that victim like countermagic. The victim has much more at stake. Any motes spent in the dream are lost to no real effect, though Exalted victims consider all dream-spent motes

Peripheral as they subconsciously flare their animas. All Willpower and Virtue channels spent are actually spent. All mental influence imposed in the dream carries over to reality for its full duration. No physical harm carries over, but if the victim is killed in the dream, the Charm ends for both parties without breaking the tag.

Dying inside the dream feels like actually dying, so the experience drains five additional Willpower points from the victim and counts as a scene spent building an Intimacy of fear toward the Infernal. If this results in the Intimacy actually taking root or bolstering an existing Intimacy of fear, nothing can remove it until a week has gone by since the victim awoke from the dream. Beings with a Limit track can gain equivalent points of Limit in lieu of losing any of the Willpower. Victims can choose to quickly commit suicide within the nightmare to escape it with minimal loss, but doing so causes the Intimacy of fear to form immediately rather counting as a scene toward it.

If the victim's real body suffers any levels of damage during the dream, the Charm abruptly ends for both parties. This also happens if the Charm runs its full duration without being interrupted. Both dreamers leave the dream with the Infernal no worse for the wear and the victim depleted by her exertions within the dreamscape. The tag remains, but the dream does not hurt the victim's psyche like virtual death.

Victims of Armageddon Nightmare Duel leave the nightmare acutely aware of the Infernal Monster Style Charms the Exalt displayed. Those who are capable of learning Celestial Martial Arts from a teacher can instruct themselves in any of the Charms they observed as though the Infernal was their teacher. Obviously, only other Infernals can learn Infernal Monster expansions this way without an effect like the Eclipse anima power. Characters requiring a special initiation before they can learn Celestial Martial Arts (like Dragon-Blooded) cannot learn Charms from exposure to Armageddon Nightmare Duel until they undergo that initiation.

Players who purchase this Charm for their characters are expected to use it to create additional interesting scenes, not steal the spotlight. It is poor form to hold a game hostage to play out a personal fight. If the outcome isn't really in doubt and the both dreamers' players consent, a quick narrative of the one-sided brawl suffices in lieu of devoting an entire scene to the duel. Standing and fighting the Infernal in quick narration rather than jumping off a cliff may be equally futile, but at least the Intimacy of fear forms less quickly.

DEATH-DEVOURING SADISM

Cost: —; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Armageddon Nightmare Duel

The Infernal Monster takes joy in crushing her enemies. This Charm permanently enhances its prerequisite. Whenever the Infernal kills a non-extra victim of Armageddon Nightmare Duel with an unarmed attack within the dreamscape, she regains two points of Willpower. If the victim intentionally commits suicide, the death yields only one point of Willpower. Accidental demise is unsatisfying. If the Infernal kills an enemy with an unarmed attack outside of the nightmare that she has

previously killed in a nightmare, she regains three Willpower points.

ROAR OF THE DEVIL-BEAST CHARMS

These expansions of Infernal Monster Style build on the idea of the inescapable monster more abstractly, allowing her to terrorize and traumatize her prey with her primal screams.

POST-TRAUMATIC BRUTALITY ROAR

Cost: 15m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Combo-OK, Emotion, Obvious, Sorcerous, Stackable, War

Duration: One week

Prerequisite Charms: Nowhere to Run, Nowhere to Hide

The Infernal screams his fury, and the armies who have faced him remember his wrath. The thunderous bellow can be heard for a mile. Within that radius, the scream affects all organized Magnitude 3+ military units that engaged with the Infernal in the past day in mass combat while he fought as a solo unit. Even units not currently engaged in battle are affected, provided they are camped or marching together and clearly operating as a group.

The Infernal's player rolls Charisma + Martial Arts, adding a number of bonus successes equal to his Valor. Any affected unit led by a character with a Dodge MDV less than the number of successes rolled suffers an unnatural Emotion effect that imposes a -1 penalty to its Drill and Morale ratings as an unnatural Emotion effect. Units with perfect Morale are immune. Gaining perfect Morale terminates ongoing applications of the Charm affecting the unit. Leaders can pay two points of their own Willpower to rally the unit in hopes of reversing this damage; if the rally succeeds, the penalty is removed. Multiple roars stack their penalty, each of which requires a separate Willpower-fueled rally to remove.

With Essence 4+, the roar carries out to a radius of (Limit + 1) miles. The radius at which the roar may be heard by everyone does not improve with Essence 5+, but magic carries the sound to the ears of all valid targets in the same realm of existence. Affected units hear the magic-born cry as a faint and distant sound, clearly made by something far away—but not nearly far enough.

RABBLE-TERRORIZING PUISSANCE

Cost: —; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Obvious, War

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Post-Traumatic Brutality Roar

What hope do mortal leaders have of reassuring their troops? They can't stop the Infernal Monster. They can't outplan him. They can't outfight him. They can say the beast will not come back again so soon, that lightning seldom strikes twice. Veterans see through such lies. This Charm permanently improves its prerequisite. The Willpower cost for Essence 1 leaders to rally away the effects of Post-Traumatic Brutality Roar is four Willpower rather than two.

With Essence 5+, this resistance cost increase also applies against unit leaders who are First Circle demons, Essence 1-3 UnExalted living Essence users (like Dragon-Kings and Mountain Folk), Essence 1-3 Fair Folk, Essence 1-3 gods, Essence

1-4 elementals and Essence 1-5 ghosts. Infernals who reach Essence 8+ extend the benefit against all Essence 1-5 unit leaders who are not Exalted.

PANICKED SOLDIER STAMPEDE

Cost: —(+1wp); **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3;

Type: Permanent

Keywords: Obvious, War

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Post-Traumatic Brutality Roar

Soldiers train to fight other soldiers, not Things That Must Not Be. This Charm permanently improves its prerequisite. By spending an additional Willpower to activate Post-Traumatic Brutality Roar, the scream also induces a rout check in all units successfully penalized by it. This check is made at a +2 difficulty modifier.

With Essence 6-7, the rout difficulty modifier rises to +3. It jumps to +4 at Essence 8-10.

RANK-PARALYZING HORROR INFLICTION

Cost: —; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Obvious, War

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Post-Traumatic Brutality Roar

Fear is a cancerous malaise that grows over time, sapping competence. This Charm permanently improves its prerequisite. All units currently suffering a penalty to Drill/Morale from invocations of the Infernal's Post-Traumatic Brutality Roar also suffer an equivalent internal penalty to all non-reflexive rolled actions using Attributes and/or Abilities.

FEAR OF FORETOLD FURY

Cost: —(+1wp); **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4;

Type: Permanent

Keywords: Obvious, War

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Post-Traumatic Brutality Roar

When the outcome is a given, trauma precedes horror. Those who stand in the presence of the Infernal Monster know this. This Charm permanently improves its prerequisite. By spending an additional Willpower to activate Post-Traumatic Brutality Roar, the cry penalizes all military units within a mile (whether or not they have engaged with the Infernal in the past day).

With Essence 5+, using Fear of Foretold Fury affects all units in full earshot distance (Limit +1 miles). The trauma also magically carries to all units in the same realm of existence who have ever engaged with the Infernal as a solo unit, provided they retained consistent unit identity and leadership since that battle. The Storyteller determines if a unit has undergone sufficient turnover or shift in identity that it no longer recalls the horror of that fight. Gradual replacement of the rank-and-file does not erode the impact of the experience. Grizzled veterans pass along the whispered horror stories to wide-eyed recruits. Some refuse to talk about That Day at all. They just scowl and drink and look nervously behind them. A unit leader can address the lingering damage from the experience by taking the time to reassure the ranks and inspire them. This convalescence extends the time required to perform a restorative rally

to a dramatic action lasting one week (ten hours a day); the leader must pay five Willpower to make the roll at the end. If the rally succeeds, the unit is no longer scarred and can't be affected outside of the (Limit +1 mile) radius until they have another actual battle with the Infernal.

CHAINED BEAST CHARMS

Long before there were Green Sun Princes, akuma explored the hideous potential of Infernal Monster Style. In so doing, they formulated four special Charms unique to each Exalted akuma type. These Charms are the only demonstrated examples of akuma-specific expansions, though it is possible that other such techniques exist as secret weapons for the day the Yozis unleash their beasts of war upon Creation.

UNTHINKABLE SHINING HORROR

Cost: —; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Emotion, Form-Enhancing, Monstrous, Native

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Infernal Monster Form

It must not be forgotten that the inventor of Infernal Monster Style was a Solar akuma. Gorol was an abomination to his circle mates, a living rejection of everything he stood for. In forsaking any claim to heroism, the akuma made himself the perfect monster. Unthinkable Shining Horror is exclusively Native to Solar akuma and can't be learned by other beings. The Charm upgrades Infernal Monster Form, providing the following additional powers:

- The akuma is not obligated to attack his Yozi master or any of its component Third Circle demons while in a berserk state (such as that induced by Retribution Will Follow) unless said entities physically attacked him earlier in the scene.

- The fallen Solar shocks those who love him, giving him a chance to slaughter them in their moment of hesitation. Characters with a positive Intimacy toward the akuma suffer an internal penalty of (the akuma's Essence) to all physical attacks targeting him. Resisting this unnatural Emotion effect for a scene costs five Willpower. Characters must have had the Intimacy for a minimum of one month to invoke the penalty. The horror afflicts loved ones, not awed strangers.

- If the Exalt knows Solar Hero Form, he may activate it simultaneously with Infernal Monster Form, paying the full cost of both Charms. The joint activation uses the highest Speed and DV penalty for both Charms and allows them to co-exist.

- As an optional Blasphemy effect, the Solar akuma may shove aside the limitations of his Charms, raising his bonus dice cap to (Attribute + Ability + Essence) while enhancing unarmed attacks and parries. This power is optional and can be used at any point, but once reflexively invoked, it lasts until Infernal Monster Form ends.

MOON-BEAST MONSTER

Cost: —; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Native

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Infernal Monster Form

Lunar akuma are among the most savage weapons the Yozis command. It is not much of a leap from fury to rage or anger to madness. Moon-Beast Monster is only Native to Lunar akuma

and may not be learned by other types of Infernals. The Charm provides the following effects:

- The akuma is not obligated to attack his Yozi master or any of its component Third Circle demons while in a berserk state (such as that induced by Retribution Will Follow) unless said entities physically attacked him earlier in the scene.

- Whenever the akuma activates Relentless Lunar Fury, he can simultaneously activate Retribution Will Follow as an innate power rather than a Charm activation. This still requires the usual commitment, but the use of Relentless Lunar Fury takes the place of suffering damage as a trigger condition.

- Infernal Monster Form gains the Gift keyword. Whenever the akuma shifts into war form, he may commit the usual cost to activate Infernal Monster Form. Used this way, the Form Charm remains active for as long as the Lunar remains in war form. This does not alter the way Infernal Monster Form accumulates its Strength bonus, so it still resets to zero at the end of each scene even if the Charm remains active.

- Armor created with Lunar Charms counts as armor created with Infernal Charms for the purposes of compatibility with Infernal Monster Style.

FALLEN STAR FURY

Cost: —; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Fate, Native, Shaping

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Infernal Monster Form

Sidereal akuma can expand Infernal Monster Style, but this is a dubious honor for those who already aspire to the Blossom of the Perfected Lotus. Fallen Star Fury is exclusively Native to Sidereal akuma and can't be learned by other beings. By purchasing the Charm, the akuma rejoins fate on his own hideous terms. His unholy power grabs the strands of causality and tangles them around his fingers. He is still considered outside of fate for any effect in which being removed is an asset, but can connect to the Loom to use astrology or otherwise benefit from being inside fate. In effect, he is between fate rather than fully outside it, perversely enjoying the best of both worlds. The Storyteller adjudicates which state is preferable with regard to resolving all effects that depend on whether the akuma is part of Fate. Additionally, the akuma is not obligated to attack his Yozi master or any of its component Third Circle demons while in a berserk state (such as that induced by Retribution Will Follow) unless said entities physically attacked him earlier in the scene.

With Essence 5+, the Charm gains the following additional powers, the last of which only helps masters of Infernal Monster Style:

- Infernal Monster Form does not interfere with the use of Sidereal Martial Arts Form-type Charms. For example, she can have Infernal Monster Form and Citrine Poxes of Contagion Form active at the same time. If another effect allows him to use a limited number of Sidereal Form-type Charms concurrently (like Prismatic Arrangement of Creation Form), Infernal Monster Form does not count toward this limit. The akuma cannot generally use this power to stack Infernal Monster Form alongside other non-Sidereal Form-type Charms. This can be enabled with Prismatic Arrangement of Creation Form (or similar effects) by including lesser Forms within that Sidereal Form Charm and then stacking this with Infernal Monster Form.

- If employing the previous power to wield two Form-type Charms, then all form weapons of either style are considered form weapons for both styles. This does not apply if the styles use different range weapons. Infernal Monster cannot be practiced with a bow any more than a bow-themed style could use improvised weapons.

- The corrupt Vizier can activate Infernal Monster Form at the same time as he activates a Sidereal Martial Arts Form-type Charm, paying the usual cost to activate each Charm. This combined activation uses the highest Speed and DV penalty among both Form-type Charms.

- If the akuma flares his One Hand Fury with a Sidereal Martial Arts Form-type Charm, the burning runes spiral and twine from his hand and trail behind his blows like ribbons of smoldering emerald flame. This Obvious display provides the same benefits as the best sutra the akuma can use with that Sidereal Martial Art, but at no cost and without any chance of external disruption. For instance, if the akuma can only use a student sutra, then flaring his hand with a Sidereal form duplicates a student sutra.

DRAGON-SPAWNED DEMON-MONSTER

Cost: —; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Native

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Infernal Monster Form

Terrestrial akuma achieve greatness their former peers cannot imagine. Through Infernal Monster Style, fallen Dragon-Blooded become incarnate natural disasters. Dragon-Spawned Demon-Monster is solely Native to Terrestrial akuma and can't be learned by other beings. It provides the following benefits:

- The akuma is not obligated to attack his Yozi master or any of its component Third Circle demons while in a berserk state (such as that induced by Retribution Will Follow) unless said entities physically attacked him earlier in the scene.

- Weapons of elemental energy created by Terrestrial Charms are considered form weapons for Infernal Monster Style (e.g. Refining the Inner Blade). If such Charms have the Holy keyword, they permanently lose their special benefits against creatures of darkness and cease to be Holy. If this results in a Charm that doesn't make sense, the Storyteller should exclude that Charm from conversion.

- Instant-duration Terrestrial Charms that damage targets through direct exposure to elemental energy are also considered form weapons for Infernal Monster Style (e.g. Elemental Bolt Attack). If such Charms are Holy, they are converted as previously explained. The akuma may also choose for such attacks to emerge from his mouth like the breath of a dragon.

CHAPTER SIX

ALCHEMICALS

AUTOCHTHONIA AND THE CYCLE OF SOULS

Life in the Realm of Brass and Shadow begins much as it does in Creation. An infant is born and draws its first breath, and with this first breath, it receives a soul. The process is similar in either world, but not identical.

Humans in Creation are granted souls by Heaven, according to ancient processes designed by the Primordials. In the First Age, when Creation's total human population was steadily on the rise, infants often received new souls freshly drawn from the Well of Souls, consisting of a joined hun and po. In the Second Age, new hun souls are rarely produced. Instead the quiescent hun of a deceased individual is cleansed by the process of Lethe, bonded to a new po freshly extracted from the Well of Souls, and sent down to grant life to a newborn. This is necessary because upon the death of a mortal in Creation, higher and lower souls separate; the hun passes through Lethe if it does not linger as a ghost, while the vigilant po remains with the corpse until its final dissolution, at which point the animal soul vanishes.

In Autochthonia, souls are distributed by an ancient wonder known as the Radiant Amphora of Celestial Accumulation, more commonly called the Ewer of Souls. This incredible artifact automatically recycles souls in much the same manner as occurs in Creation, save that the souls it recycles have never been split apart; hun and po remain bonded after death, and pass together from life to life. The end of a mortal's life within Autochthonia is as neat as its beginning. Upon his last breath, the mortal's entire soul departs to the Ewer, to be cleansed of memories and given new life again. No part of his soul remains behind with his corpse, and the state claims his remains to be rendered down for the good of Autochthonia. This recycling system is as necessary as it is efficient, for Autochthonia has no way to produce new hun or po souls.

AUTOCHTHONIAN BELIEFS

The vast majority of Autochthonians are ignorant as to the intricacies of their world's cycle of death and rebirth. *The Tome of the Great Maker* states that Autochthon bequeathed the holy artifacts known as soulgems to the people of the Eight Nations, that their souls might be captured and returned to the Radiant Amphora after death. The soul of any human who perishes without a soulgem, the *Tome* warns, will fall into the Void and be lost forever. Because of this, the Eight Nations implant soulgems into all infants shortly after birth. Thanks to the benevolence of the Machine God, no citizen of the Eight Nations must fear dissolution upon death; the Populat may toil in the secure knowledge that when their life ends and they lay down their burdens, they will soon be reborn to continue their sacred service to state and God.

THE USE OF SOULGEMS

Autochthonian religious doctrine is mistaken. The soul of a mortal who dies without a soulgem simply returns to the Radiant Amphora rather than being lost to some mythical oblivion. Furthermore, the most senior leaders of the Glorious Luminors of the Brilliant Rapture are aware of this falsehood. Why, then, do they perpetuate the use of soulgems within Autochthonia?

When an Autochthonian dies and his soul flees into his soulgem, the soulgem imprints a specialized, singular mark upon the soul. This soulmark is unique, corresponding to the soulgem that created it, and it endures until the end of the soul's next incarnation, at which point the mark vanishes. The Luminors know how to read an individual's soulmark, a feat accomplished through a special device known as a Legacy Calibrator. The Luminors jealously guard the secret of how to build and operate these devices. Through this technique, they are able to identify an individual's former incarnation by consulting their enormous archive of citizen profiles and soulmark legacies.

This affords the Luminors two advantages. First, because they are the only group capable of determining an individual's incarnation history, they are also the only ones capable of determining the proper disposition of his new life. Senior Luminors review case files and decide whether an infant should be assigned to the Populat, Olgotary, Theomachracy, or Sodalities based on their soul's history of achievement and aptitude. The Luminors occasionally falsify a soul's legacy to give favorable treatment to the reincarnations of friends and allies, or to demote to the ranks of the Populat an individual who has caused trouble for them across multiple incarnations.

Such petty bureaucratic tyranny is merely an incidental bonus, of course. The true reason for the use of soulgems is that without this method of tracking the reincarnation history of souls, the Luminors would be unable to identify souls of repeated heroic character who are potentially capable of Alchemical Exaltation. Even the most cynical senior Luminors take this task seriously, for none of the Eight Nations would still survive without the might of its Champions.

THE FUNCTION OF SOULGEMS

Soulgems serve three purposes: Social class identification, capturing souls, and imprinting souls for future identification by the Luminors.

After a Luminor review board has consulted a newborn's soul history—a task done with as much haste as possible, since most members of the Sodality believe that a crib death before soulgem implantation will consign the infant's soul to the Void—a soulgem is selected which corresponds to the social class the infant will be assigned to. The majority of Autochthonians are given round soulgems of black, polished onyx which signify membership in the Populat. Those destined for the Olgotary receive rectangular soulgems of orange topaz, while future Theomachrats are granted square soulgems of blue sapphire.

Finally, the Five Sodalities all share the same diamond-shaped soulgems of purple amethyst. Estasia's Militate is known by its triangular ruby soulgems. All of these soulgems retain the same metaphysical properties—they mark a soul upon its entry to the gem postmortem, and they will hold a soul indefinitely after death, until it is manually released by the Pious Harvesters of the Hallowed Flesh.

The soulgems of the Alchemical Exalted are a bit different. Alchemical soulgems begin as perfect, many-faceted diamonds. Unlike other soulgems, these gems not only catch a Champion's soul after death, but bequeath the Exalt with a soul and grant him life. Also unlike the soulgems of Autochthonian mortals, Alchemical soulgems are not uniform in appearance; when a Champion draws in his first breath, the flawless diamond upon his forehead shifts in appearance to suit his personality and self-image. The gem of *Stern Whip of Industry*, for example, is an oval of deep emerald, while *Lissome Avid Engineer* bears a rectangular soulgem the same color as Creation's sky. A deceased Champion's soulgem returns to its clear, diamond original form once that hero's soul departs; otherwise, it retains its distinctive appearance until implanted in a new Exalt, at which point it customizes to the newly-empowered Alchemical.

The Sodalities believe that it is harmful to retain souls in a mortal soulgem for an extended period of time after death, particularly those of heroes. Though available data is not conclusive, many Luminors insist that they detect a statistical trend among those whose souls linger overlong in such gems between lives—such individuals, they claim, are less likely to be persons of outstanding merit in their next incarnation; as such, they worry that 'warehousing' heroic souls in unsuitable gems may decrease the likelihood that a soul will prove suitable for Alchemical Exaltation. As a result, each of the Eight Nations has a mandatory deadline by which a soul must be released from its gem if at all possible, ranging from three weeks (in Jarish) to six months (in Nurad).

Unlike soulgems intended for mortals, Alchemical soulgems are believed to be capable of holding a soul indefinitely after death without harm. The Eight Nations may retain the souls of their greatest heroes in this manner for years if need be, in order to ensure that when the time is right they will be able to live again in new incarnations. This practice is strongly frowned on by the Theomachy if there are no plans to empower any new Champions in the foreseeable future, however, as *The Tome of the Great Maker* claims that it is a great wickedness to separate Autochthonia from its heroes.

Unfortunately, the lack of an automatic-release feature on soulgems means that sometimes corpses and soulgems are lost to the Reaches, and need to be recovered. While the loss of mortal souls is tragedy enough, each of the Eight Nations has a roster of Champions whose bodies could not be recovered, and whose soulgems are presumably still lost in the depths of the Reaches, waiting for some enterprising hero to recover them and return them to their homes and the cycle of reincarnation. Such national treasures are valued above orichalcum and starmetal, and to discover one is the dream of both mortal and Alchemical alike.

NEW AUTOCHTHONIAN THAUMATURGY

Soul manipulation is an important, secret activity, vital to the Autochthonian way of life. These are a few of the secret rituals used by the Sodalities:

THE SCIENCE OF BIOENHANCEMENT

Soulgem Implantation (0, Intelligence, 1, one minute): This exceedingly simple ritual, jealously guarded by the Illustrious Conductors of the Consecrated Veins, grants a soulgem to an individual. It is performed upon every Autochthonian infant within a week of birth, by unanimous order of the National Tripartite Assembly of all Eight Nations, but may also be performed upon captured second-generation outcasts from tunnel folk communities. The procedure is performed within a special chamber found in Autochthonian nurseries and re-education centers known as a Unity Vault; both varieties of room are small, cramped, and dimly-lit by subdued red lights, reminiscent of a mechanical womb; the chief difference is that Unity Vaults at re-education complexes feature a sturdy table outfitted with restraints.

The procedure enough is swift and simple: a soulsteel plate featuring two needle-like prongs is placed against the forehead of the infant or outcast, and driven through the skull with a special starmetal-tipped hammer. The pain of this experience is so all-encompassing that it takes a few moments to register. During this time a soulgem is set against the backing plate, and a live nerve of the Great Maker is drawn down from a special housing in the Vault's ceiling. A spark of Essence jumps between cable and soulgem, fusing the gem to the plate as the agony of the procedure finally sets in, provoking ear-splitting mechanical scream from the patient.

Soulgem implantation, once learned, is so exceedingly simple that characters with a pool of at least six dice succeed at it automatically without need for a roll. Successful execution of this procedure inflicts one level of lethal damage to the target, while a failed attempt inflicts five levels. Botches tend to be ugly, involving skulls smashed by missed hammer swings or electrocution by inexpertly applied live wires—and if the subject is the son or daughter of a high-ranking member of the Tripartite, such mistakes are an excellent way for a young Conductor to discover what life is like among the ranks of the Lumpen.

Soulgem Revocation (3, Intelligence, 5, one hour): One of the most famous procedures in practice, Soulgem Revocation is a punishment reserved solely for the worst offenders of Autochthonia's laws. This ritual requires that the offender be brought to the nerve that was used to implant his soulgem originally. If the original nerve is unavailable, taking the offender to any nerve of the Great Maker which has died will work for the purpose of this procedure. The target must first be given a perfectly calculated dosage of an anesthetic drug, dropping his vitals to nothing and sending him into a near-death state. Once on the verge of death, one of his victims is brought forward. If a victim is unavailable, a representative of the victim—preferably a blood relative but also a significant other, best friend, or someone avowing support—can be substituted. The victim places

a drop of their blood on the soulgem, which the thaumaturge paints in a symbol that reflects the crime committed. He then calls upon the soul of the offender, in a manner eerily reminiscent of Creation's *Summon Ghost* ritual (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. III—Oadenol's Codex**, p. 133).

If the procedure works, the soul of the offender is drawn into the soulgem by attraction to the blood of the victim, which is said to further seal his guilt. This is signified by the blood turning a bluish-white that glows in the dark. At this juncture, the nerve of the Great Maker is pressed against the soulgem and a word of practiced revocation is spoken. There is a distinctive pop sound as a spark travels backwards up the nerve (even a dead nerve), and the setting around the soulgem instantly begins to bleed as the soulsteel posts separate from the flesh and the setting ceases to be an extension of the offender's body. At this point a tool is used to carefully rip the setting (and the soulgem in it) from the offender's forehead. If the blood of the victim does not begin to glow, the ritual has failed to draw the soul into the soulgem, and any application of the Great Maker's nerve to the gem will have no effect. Such a botch may be attributed to a technician's failure to measure the dosage of the anesthetic drug, or it may cause doubt to be thrown on the guilt of the offender.

The ruined shell of a person left behind in the wake of this ritual behaves much like a dream-eaten slave of the Fair Folk. The subject has no Motivation, his Virtues all drop to 1, his Willpower falls to 0, and his MDVs are also permanently set to 0. He becomes listless and pliant, doing whatever he is told. Autochthonians use such offenders as slave labor on dangerous, back-breaking projects for the remainder of their short and miserable lives. The Exalted never respond to this or any other ritual which draws their soul into their soulgem prematurely.

THE SCIENCE OF THE DEAD

Hope Starts Here (2, Charisma, 3, ten minutes): The ritual that transfers the spirit of a destined hero from a mortal soulgem to an Alchemical soulgem is both quick enough to be efficacious and spectacle enough to evoke awe. A Luminor takes the soulgems to a small room where the wall has been stripped away to reveal a network of the Maker's Essence-conducting arteries. At this point, all witnesses are asked to stand still and silent and to think thoughts of the Maker's greatness and of the dire need for a new Champion. Banishing light from the room, the Luminor takes hold of a pre-selected cable, which has been ritually severed for the purpose of this ritual. This cable has a soulsteel clamp on one end, and an orichalcum clamp on the other. Carefully placing the mortal soulgem in the soulsteel clamp and the Alchemical soulgem in the orichalcum clamp, the Luminor invokes the presence of Autochthon, bidding him attend the faithful in their hour of need, then makes a final invocation bidding the future Champion within to bring light to the darkness of their world. At this point, the Luminor touches the soulgems together, completing the circuit. As the power flows through the soulgems, both glow softly. Then, as the spirit of the hero rises within, the mortal soulgem begins to glow brilliantly for a moment before going completely dark, at which point the Alchemical soulgem glows even brighter and briefly shines with enough force to light up the room, before dropping to a simple but unmistakable ethereal radiance. At this point

the soulgems are parted, removed from the clamps, and the procedure is complete.

Winding the Amphora (1, Manipulation, 2, fifteen minutes): This procedure releases the spirit within a mortal soulgem into the Ewer of Souls. This procedure can only be enacted ten minutes before or five minutes after the hour. The soulgem is taken to the lonely, low-traffic end of a sector, where there is a station containing the Psychopomp Gears of the Transmodal Essence Recombinator. The Harvester places the soulgem on a dais close to the frightening mechanisms of death and makes a ward of salt around it, leading to a massive series of interlocked moonsilver and soulsteel plates that form a gigantic gate. He then draws a curtain around the salt ward. Pretending to be a parent, lover, or other person significant to the deceased, the Harvester calls her forth and her silhouette can be seen rising behind the curtain. The spirit may even call out to the thaumaturge (for this reason, many Harvesters wear earplugs during this ritual), but it cannot pass through the curtain due to the line of salt. At this point, a single rivet on a bulkhead begins to unscrew itself, and the dead gears that flank either side of the machine each make one fraction of a turn, from smallest to largest, and the layered moonsilver-soulsteel gate behind the curtain slides open. A wind blows in, and sometimes there are sounds in it, and sometimes there are voices. Then a number of articulated tendrils appear, moving behind the curtain, wrapping around the startled spirit before dragging it back through the gateway, which slides shut with a bang, cutting off all noise and wind from the other side and draining the room of its sense of presences.

A Hero's Goodbye (2, Charisma, 3, twenty minutes): Sometimes it becomes necessary to release the soul of a Champion back into the Radiant Amphora so that it might spend a few lifetimes aggregating mortal experiences. When such an Alchemical dies, the procedure to return her soul to the Ewer is often performed as part of a state funeral. This ritual is performed by a high-ranking Harvester at an amphitheatre called the Cradle of Returns. The soulgem is carefully placed into a setting atop an altar that rises from the superstructure, and the Harvester says an emotional prayer to Autochthon, giving thanks for the Champion while they were allowed to have her, and summarily giving her back to the care of the Great Maker. She then presses down on the soulgem with a gloved hand bearing the seal of the Machine God, and a number of multi-colored Essence tubes light up around the circular borders of the amphitheatre, displaying images of the Alchemical's past incarnations, while a single column across from the Harvester is illuminated with a shaft of pure light, in which the spirit of the deceased Alchemical appears and begins to slowly ascend into the dark upper reaches, accompanied by a chorus of voices from deep within the Cradle singing the hymn of Autochthon, while a monitor reads out the data of the Champion's exploits, even going so far as to display some of her fondest memories as they flee her for the last time. During this time, each image of her past selves slowly winks out, the Essence tubes darkening as she ascends, until finally she is gone and the whole Cradle is dark except for the soulgem, which glows with the initial radiance given to it by a Luminor so long ago. Then, it too finally goes dark, and the ritual is complete.

ARTIFACTS

ESSENCE PULSE CANNON (ARTIFACT ••)

This specialized artifact weapon is custom designed to perfectly integrate with Transcendent Multimodal Artifact Matrix (see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Alchemicals**, p. 166), so much so that the device's delicate motonic circuitry is incapable of independent operation. When deployed for a five mote attunement, the device transforms one of the character's hands and forearm into a the bulbous barrel of a heavy cannon mechanism. Within the machine, pneumatically-driven clockwork gears turn banks of capacitors in opposing rotation, building up charges of super-heated ball lightning in the colors of the Champion's anima. After each shot, the cannon audibly vents jets of steam from the wrist area to prevent overheating.

Essence Pulse Cannons use the base statistics below and gain the benefit of the appropriate thrown weapon Magical Material bonuses (though wielded with Archery). Each shot costs one mote for ammunition and can inflict bashing or lethal damage as desired. In the former case, damage never spills over past Incapacitated to become lethal and so cannot do worse than knock the target out. Lethal attacks disintegrate slain or destroyed targets, destroying all non-indestructible objects carried by them. Physical disintegration does not affect the target spiritually (slain spirits to reform normally, etc.). Non-magical armor predominantly constructed of metal conducts the plasma blasts, reducing soak to one third (rounded up) rather than the piercing tag's usual half.

Variant models of this weaponry exist. Hands-free subtle designs can be mounted as miniaturized emitters implanted in the eyes, as shoulder turret cannons or any number of other options. Regardless of the specifics, such weapons only inflict 8L/12B due to their reduced size. Siege Devastators are rated Artifact 3 and take the opposite approach, with oversized cannons that impose a -2 mobility penalty that stacks with any from armor and blasts that ignore the soak of non-magical metal armor entirely. Targets are also hurled back and suffer injury if slammed into objects as though the attack was enhanced by Heaven Thunder Hammer (see **Exalted**, p. 242), though knockback damage caps at 25L.

Essence Pulse Cannon: Speed 6, Accuracy +2, Damage 10L/15B, Rate 3, Range 100, Tags F, P

Siege Devastator: Speed 6, Accuracy +0, Damage 15L/20B, Rate 1, Range 200, Tags F, P

CHAPTER SEVEN

MARTIAL ARTS

TERRESTRIAL MARTIAL ARTS

SWAYING GRASS DANCE STYLE

This curious Terrestrial martial arts style first emerged among the slave pens of the distant East. According to the tale passed down by the style's practitioners, it originated on a particular Guild plantation, where slaves worked to harvest drugs that assisted in achieving Essence sight. These slaves were forbidden tools or possessions of any sort beyond the most minimal clothing, and any fighting within the pens was punished severely; but it seemed normal to their keepers when the hallucinogen-addled slaves took to spending their evenings in wild, ecstatic dance. This dance, created by a rebellious young slave named Silver Leaf, was actually a developing form of unarmed combat, intended to be used to rise up and overthrow the plantation. Silver Leaf's unexpected Exaltation at the behest of the Wood Dragon acted as the catalyst for this uprising; extending her nascent style's precepts into a supernatural martial arts form, she tore the plantation apart and led the slaves into the forest.

Most scattered, but a few freedmen stayed on with Silver Leaf, pledging themselves as her loyal students and followers. Now the Swaying Grass Dance Style has spread to all five Poles of Creation, in both its limited form as a surreptitious slave style, and its true form as an Exalted combat art. Rumor has it that Silver Leaf still walks the Threshold, selling herself into plantation slavery for the purpose of causing uprisings among the pens. This Terrestrial martial arts style is aspected toward the element of Wood.

Weapons and Armor: Swaying Grass Dance style exclusively employs kicks; its Charms will not function with unarmed punches. As such, kicks, iron boots and god-kicking boots are considered in-style weapons, and are treated as unarmed attacks for the purpose of its Charms. This style is not compatible with armor.

Complementary Abilities: Understanding the precepts of the Swaying Grass Dance Style requires two dots of Performance.

JUBILANT BATTLE PROPOSITION

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 2;

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The martial artist catches her opponents off-guard by masking her aggressive intent in joyous dance. The character must already be engaging in dance to activate this Charm. When she does so, she adds a number of successes equal to her Performance to her Join Battle roll.

SWEEPING MEADOW AWARENESS PRACTICE

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2;

Type: Reflexive (Step 2)

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The fighter sways and weaves as she fights, shifting her body and maintaining full awareness of her surroundings. When surrounded by opponents, this Charm prevents one of those attackers from making an undefended attack against the character's back; the Grass Dancer applies her DV normally to this attack, removing its unexpected quality.

SWAYING GRASS DANCE FORM

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2;

Type: Simple (Speed 4)

Keywords: Form-type

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Jubilant Battle Proposition, Sweeping Meadow Awareness Practice

The martial artist begins to sway and dance, shuffling in and out of combat-ready stances unpredictably. Her kicks slash up from dead angles, and any glimpsed openings are gone before opponents can act on them. The character's unarmed attacks gain -1 Speed, +1 Accuracy, +2 Defense, and +1 Rate. She takes no penalties for fighting prone, and may rise from prone reflexively. These benefits may not lower the character's Speed below 3. She is also considered to be dancing while this Form is active, and any attempts to recognize this Charm's activation as a form of combat-readiness suffer a -2 external penalty.

TEETH IN THE GRASS STRIKE

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3;

Type: Simple (Speed 5, DV -1)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Illusion

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Swaying Grass Dance Style

The character feints high then scythes her leg up from below with no warning. So convincing is her feint that the opponent is absolutely convinced the next strike will come in from above. The character makes an unarmed Martial Arts attack. If the character's successes on the attack roll exceed the target's Dodge MDV, the attack is unexpected. If the character is standing in tall grass or shallow water, or the terrain otherwise obscures her legs and feet from view, add two bonus successes to the attack. This Charm's unnatural mental influence costs one point of Willpower to resist. Targets become immune to this Charm for the rest of the scene after spending three points of Willpower.

ROLLING WITH THE WIND METHOD

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3;

Type: Reflexive (Step 9)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Counterattack

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Swaying Grass Dance Form

The harsh upbringing of this style's practitioners makes them fast to react to danger. Those who land one blow upon a Grass Dancer rarely manage a second. When the character is struck and this Charm is activated, the martial artist goes cartwheeling (attacker's Strength x 5) yards away, exactly as though she suffered from knockback, save that the character controls which direction he tumbles in and whether or not she strikes any objects.

INESCAPABLE TUMBLEWEED PRANA

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3;

Type: Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-Basic

Duration: Until next action

Prerequisite Charms: Teeth in the Grass Strike, Rolling with the Wind Method

Those who would oppose a practitioner of the Swaying Grass Dance Style reap the whirlwind. Shuffling along with a dizzying series of quick-steps and cartwheels, the character pursues an adversary. This Charm must be targeted against another character when activated; this target must be within unarmed striking range, and must have already attacked the martial artist within the current scene. For the duration of the Charm, the martial artist gains whatever mobility is necessary to follow her target. Her Move speed matches that of her target, even if Charms such as Leaping Dodge Method or Rolling With the Wind Method are employed. This pursuit explicitly includes whatever acrobatic prowess is necessary to pursue a flying opponent, so long as there are trees or other structures to climb through in order to reach them. Inescapable Tumbleweed Prana will not allow the character to follow a target who moves away by teleporting.

WHIRLING RHYTHM REVOLUTION

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3;

Type: Extra Action

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Inescapable Tumbleweed Prana

The character listens to the music pounding in her heart, and then whirls to the attack. She launches an unarmed martial arts attack, and, if it inflicts any damage, immediately launches another. These attacks utilize the character's full dice pool, ignore Rate, and levy a DV penalty equal to the highest penalty incurred by any one attack. The character may launch a total number of attacks equal to her Performance, or until she fails to inflict damage, whichever comes first.

GRASS REAPING POSTURE

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3;

Type: Simple (Speed 5, DV -1)

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Until broken

Prerequisite Charms: Inescapable Tumbleweed Prana

The character imposes her rhythm upon another, taking control of the battle. This Charm begins with a low, sudden leg sweep. The character makes an unarmed Martial Arts attack. Resolve this attack normally; if the attack strikes the target, they suffer automatic knockdown. Thereafter the martial artist shuffles about her downed foe, confusing him and buffeting him to the ground with her legs should he try to escape. So long as the martial artist remains within unarmed attacking range of her prone target, all the target's attempts to rise from prone provoke a reflexive contested Dexterity + Martial Arts roll. If the target wins, he rises from prone successfully. If the Grass Dancer wins or ties, the target remains prone. Grass Reaping Posture lasts until the martial artist moves out of range or until the target successfully rises from prone.

SERENADING THE REED

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3;

Type: Simple (Speed 3, DV -1)

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Whirling Rhythm Revolution, Grass Reaping Posture

The martial artist draws strength from dance, and his dance is empowered by music. This Charm may only be activated in the presence of music or song with rhythm, and this music cannot originate with the character. So long as the music plays on, the character's DV is raised by half the Performance rating of the most skilled musician or singer performing (round up).

CELESTIAL MARTIAL ARTS

GENERAL CHARMS

FLOWING KATA FORM

Cost: 6m+ (1wp per Form); **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 5;

Type: Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One Scene

Prerequisite Charms: Two Complete non-Terrestrial Styles

Grandmasters understand that all principles are connected and all fighting styles express different petals of the same Perfected Lotus. Flowing Kata Form expresses this principle as one of the rare Celestial Martial Arts Charms unconnected to any style. Invoking it requires a commitment of at least six motes. So long as the Charm remains active and the martial artist has no Form-type Charms active, he can pay one Willpower (and any non-mote costs) to reflexively activate any known Martial Arts Form-type Charm with a mote cost less than the number of motes committed to Flowing Kata Form. This Willpower surcharge does not apply the first time a martial artist invokes a Form Charm this way each scene.

Activating a Form-type Charm via Flowing Kata Form doesn't count as a Charm activation or cost motes, though Dragon-Blooded still have to roll to invoke a Celestial Martial Arts Form. Forms turned on this way inhibit activation of other Form-type Charms as normal for the keyword. Even magic that allows multiple Form-type Charms to coexist does not allow reflexive invocation while using another Form. Characters with "multi-Form" magic remain free to stack Forms by conventionally activating them.

There is no limit on how often a martial artist can reflexively adopt a new Form beyond the Willpower cost to do so, making it possible to use one Form to help an attack hit and then swapping to another to enhance the attack if it hits. Enabling a flexible fighting style that changes tactics without warning is the very reason Flowing Kata Form exists.

BLACK CLAW STYLE

Three times during the First Age, deer-footed Mara concocted grand and insidious schemes to bring low the Chosen of Creation. Three times, her plans came to naught. Mara's prestige within Malfear remains undiminished despite these failures, for the tools of her ambition still abide in the world and much cautionary lore regarding them has vanished in the fires of cataclysm and revolt. The Black Claw style was her second plan, and while it failed, it has not passed from existence and might still bear fruit in this Age or the next.

Also known variously as the Fainting Maiden style or the Mouse-Seizes-Bear Art, Black Claw style utilizes the tools of misdirection, perception and love as its primary weapons. Victory is grasped by opening oneself utterly to the aggressions of one's foe so that he castigates himself as thoroughly as his victim. Defeat is mollified by exposing the perfidy of the victorious.

Black Claw style has two qualities that differentiate it from other Celestial Martial Arts. First, like all demon-created Celestial arts, any demon of any circle may practice the style so long as the spirit satisfies all relevant trait minimums. Second, Mara's association with perverse relationships bleeds into every Charm, inseparably binding sifu and student. It is impossible to know the secrets of this style without being exposed to the innermost heart of one's instructor, and impossible to understand that knowledge without accepting what is within that heart. So it is that every Black Claw practitioner bears an Intimacy of genuine and unbreakable love toward his teacher. No amount of natural persuasion or scenes spent working against this love can weaken the Intimacy. Only unnatural mental influence can sever the emotional connection, and even then, every scene in which the character invokes a Black Claw style Charm counts as a scene spent rebuilding the Intimacy.

This style gained popularity in Creation during the First Deliberative Era of the Old Realm. Its practice, which began among several of Brigid's students, quickly flourished throughout the Solar and Lunar community. Its first Exalted practitioners viewed the style as a quaint and amusing demon-trap, its dangers easily seen and avoided so that its benefits could be enjoyed. However, as the art spread far and wide, it came to be regarded with unease—while conquered demons were of no threat to the Realm, the idea of a power bloc forming among

young Solars bonded in love to a handful of mighty teachers (all the worse if those teachers were Lunars, or Sidereals!) was quite alarming. So it was that after a few short centuries Queen Merela outlawed the style and brutally suppressed its schools. Those without the personal or political power to ignore the law were bonded in Eclipse-sanctified oaths to forsake the practice of the style. Save for a handful of lovestruck outlaws, it fell from the history of Creation.

The Black Claw style likewise proved disruptive to the regimented chaos of the Demon City. Because it allowed the weak to bond the mighty to themselves in chains of love, Cecelyne issued a partial proscription against the style, sanctioning its use only by citizens of Malfear. Orabilis, who does not consider love to be a form of wisdom, tasked his soul Florivet with rooting out illegal schools within the Demon City. However, the Whim-of-the-Wind has rarely bothered looking since he became an adventurer. On the rare occasions when he uncovers demonic serfs making unauthorized use of the Black Claw, he defeats them in gaudy and spectacular public fights, but this happens less and less as time goes on. The public resentment against him after such battles makes Florivet sullen and unenthusiastic.

Now, as the Reclamation begins, Black Claw style is experiencing a resurgence. Mara has already taken on several Green Sun Princes as students (and lovers), and it will not be long before they establish their first school in Creation.

Weapons and Armor: Black Claw style may only be practiced with bare hands, and without armor. An appearance of martial readiness would undermine practitioners' posture of unjustly assaulted innocence.

Complementary Abilities: To properly grasp the insights upon which the style is founded, a student must possess at least two dots spread in any fashion among Larceny, Socialize and Performance.

OPEN PALM CARESS

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK, Illusion

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

From the beginning, things start to go wrong. Righteous heroes find themselves cast as a vicious bullies when they fight a student of the Black Claw—even if the martial artist picked the fight himself. This Charm supplements a Join Battle action, adding the user's Essence in bonus successes.

Regardless of whether the Join Battle roll permits the martial artist to act first, compare the result to the Dodge MDV of all other characters who witness the fight begin (including all combatants). If the roll result is higher, they suffer an unnatural Illusion effect which costs two Willpower to resist, convincing them that the martial artist's opponents initiated hostilities. This even applies to the opponents themselves, who may suddenly find themselves quite confused about why they are attacking the character. Characters that do not pay this cost upfront can pay four Willpower to correct their memories later, but only with external prompting or a compelling personal reason to question the memory and not until a day has passed since they last encountered the martial artist. Minds need distance from such a toxic presence before they can think

clearly. This Charm may enhance only the first Join Battle roll the character makes in a fight.

TORN LOTUS DEFENSE

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2;

Type: Reflexive (Step 10)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Emotion

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Every Black Claw student must submit to his sifu. As one whose heart has already been conquered, he knows that any greater defeat is impossible. The martial artist draws on the memory of his love and channels it into his stance, projecting unmistakable and fragile resolution: a sight to move the hearts of gods and demons alike.

This Charm may be invoked when the character successfully negates an attack with his DV. The aggressor is struck by the character's posture of resolute defiance, and treats the successful defense as a scene spent working toward building a positive Intimacy for the martial artist. The specific emotional context of the Intimacy, be it respect, admiration, or even unexpected love, depends on the context of the situation and may be chosen by the attacker's player. This unnatural mental influence costs one Willpower to resist.

This Charm will not function if evoked in conjunction with a Charm possessing a Flaw of Invulnerability (or equivalent effect, such as an Infernal Imperfection); the martial artist's beauty lies in his weakness, not his invulnerable strength.

FLEXING THE EMERALD CLAW

Cost: 3m or 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2;

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Combo-OK, Illusion, Obvious, Poison

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Open Palm Caress, Torn Lotus Defense

Even for the unjustly wronged, there comes a time to strike back. Students of the Black Claw opt to do so with deceptive force. By paying three motes to supplement an unarmed attack, the martial artist's hand becomes wreathed in a bilious green spray of Essence. If the attack hits, it inflicts normal damage and the victim becomes afflicted with a dose of poison with the following statistics: (7L/action, 3, —/—, -2). This poison is exceptionally subtle, displaying no outward symptoms as it destroys its victim from the inside. By paying four motes instead, the martial artist may veil his strike in an unnatural Illusion effect, removing the Obvious tag for all observers save the Charm's target. This Illusion may be ignored by observers who spend one Willpower.

BLACK CLAW FORM

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Emotion, Form-type

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Flexing the Emerald Claw

The martial artist assumes a defensive posture, equally declarative of his unwillingness to fight and his readiness to defend himself regardless. During Step 9 of any attack directed against him, the character may pay one mote to leap away from

his aggressor (Appearance) yards, although the character does not actually move until after Step 10 has been resolved.

Additionally, as only a brute would assault such a reluctant opponent, each attack directed at the character causes any onlookers to act as though the attacker had just spent a scene eroding any positive Intimacies they might feel toward him. This unnatural Emotion effect costs one Willpower to ignore for the rest of the scene with regard to that attacker. Witnesses with higher Essence than the Charm's user who pay this cost ignore its influence with regard to all attackers.

Finally, the character may parry lethal and ranged attacks without a stunt or Charm, and Torn Lotus Defense does not count as a Charm activation while this Form is active.

STORM-CALMING EMBRACE

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK, Crippling

Duration: Until next action

Prerequisite Charms: Black Claw Form

Despite being cruelly assaulted, the martial artist clasps his opponent to him. Swallowing his rancor, he does nothing to escalate the fight—such virtue! This Charm allows the martial artist to add his Essence rating in dice to all attempts to establish, maintain or control a grapple. However, a clinch enhanced by this Charm may only be used to apply a hold, not to crush or throw.

Incidentally, as a Crippling effect, the target the martial artist is holding automatically fails all Toxicity rolls, and any poisons in the target's system add the L tag to their Toxicity.

DOE EYES DEFENSE

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3;

Type: Reflexive (Step 2)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Emotion

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Black Claw Form

The Black Claw practitioner is well aware that vulnerability is his greatest defense, and exploits it ruthlessly. The martial artist falls back hurriedly in response to an attack, his every movement accentuating his inferiority in the face of the oncoming assault. Realization of her target's weakness unnerves or unduly excites the attacker, depending on her temperament, causing her to experience an internal penalty on her attack roll equal to the martial artist's (Appearance + 2). This unnatural mental influence costs two Willpower to ignore. In the First Age, this technique was also sometimes known as the Fainting Maiden Ward, or the Painted Boy Defense.

TABLE-TURNING REVERSAL

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3;

Type: Reflexive (Step 9)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Counterattack, Emotion

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Black Claw Form

Only a coward would use a weapon to strike down an unarmed man. All Creation rejoices to see a bully given a dose of his own medicine, and the martial artist is the one to do it.

This Charm is activated in response to an attack; regardless of whether the attack succeeds, the martial artist may launch a counterattack. This counterattack is a standard disarm attempt (see **Exalted**, p.158), save that rather than knocking the opponent's weapon away, the martial artist steals and reflexively equips it. If the counterattack succeeds, he may treat the pilfered weapon as though it were an unarmed attack for the purpose of all Black Claw style Charms then for the rest of the scene or until the weapon leaves his grasp, whichever comes first. Weapons made entirely of Essence and attuned artifact weapons are not valid targets for this Charm.

Additionally, all characters who witness a successful disarm performed with this Charm treat the sight as a scene of work toward building a positive Intimacy for the martial artist. The emotional context of this Intimacy is chosen by the observer's player. This unnatural mental influence costs one Willpower to resist.

OUTRAGE-KINDLING CRY

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3;

Type: Reflexive (Step 9)

Keywords: Combo-Basic, Compulsion, Counterattack

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Storm-Calming Embrace, Doe Eyes Defense, Table-Turning Reversal

These things are natural in Creation, but not Malfeas: To cheer for the underdog, to feel one's heart go out to another in pain, and to abhor injustice. Thus pious critics of Black Claw style are revealed as hypocrites; this technique employs the weapons of Creation, not Hell.

This Charm may be activated in response to an attack that successfully strikes the martial artist. It takes the form of a *kiai* that compresses the character's agony into a heart-rending wail. Roll ([Manipulation or Appearance] + Performance), adding a number of successes equal to any wound penalties the martial artist may be suffering, and apply it against the Dodge MDV of all witnesses within earshot save for the attacker himself. Those who succumb to this unnatural mental influence (spending the standard one Willpower to resist immunizes a listener for the rest of the scene) suffer a Compulsion to assault the martial artist's attacker and to protect the martial artist. This behavior persists until either the attacker or the martial artist has been out of sight for one minute, or the scene ends, whichever comes first.

The attack is considered automatically successful against all listeners who have a positive intimacy toward the martial artist, a negative intimacy toward the attacker, or who believe the attacker started the fight.

HEART-RIPPING CLAW

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4;

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Outrage-Kindling Cry

This is the secret final technique of the Black Claw style. In the past, many teachers kept this Charm to themselves. Though the Yozis have forbidden their progeny from withholding it from the Green Sun Princes, it seems likely that many of the style's Infernal masters may likewise neglect to mention Heart-Ripping Claw when they establish their schools in Creation.

Eight wisdoms live at the heart of Black Claw style: Love is a lie; innocence is a lie; blame is a lie; lies are inescapable. Children betray their parents; gods betray their makers; students betray their teachers; betrayal is inescapable. Wise masters are ready to strike first, and strike better.

Enhancing an unarmed attack with this Charm causes the attacking limb to be wreathed in a corona of screaming black shadows, razor-edged and lashing. An attack so enhanced inflicts lethal damage, and adds a raw damage bonus equal to twice the martial artist's Essence rating.

Moreover, if the Black Claw master is held in someone's heart, he cannot fail to strike that mark. This Charm acts as an unblockable and undodgeable attack against any target harboring a positive Intimacy toward the martial artist. If the attack would have missed such a target without this Charm, then it strikes with a threshold of 0 successes. If the target has an Intimacy of love toward the martial artist, then the attack inflicts aggravated damage in addition to the benefits mentioned above. If this Charm slays an opponent, the Infernal tears the target's heart out of their chest and holds it in his fist as it crumbles to ash.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ALLIES, FOES & PETS

ANIMALS

INK MONKEY (FAMILIAR ●●●●●)

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 5, Stamina 1, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4, Perception 5, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 2

Abilities: Athletics 2 (Climbing +3), Awareness 5, Dodge 4, Integrity 1, Larceny 2 (Pickpocketing +2), Linguistics (Native: Old Realm, Ink Monkey Chatter +1, Forest Tongue or appropriate Tribal Tongue) 2, Martial Arts 1 (Biting +1, Dirty Fighting +1, While Victim Is Casting a Spell +1), Occult 1, Performance 3 (Fooling Mortals +3), Resistance 1, Stealth 4 (Creeping Closer +1), Survival 2

Backgrounds: Allies 1 (Ink Monkey Swarm)

Powers:

Environmental Adaptation: Ink Monkeys add three successes to all Survival rolls in temperate forest climates. They also suffer a -2 internal penalty to all non-reflexive actions while in cold weather conditions; even a brisk day makes them miserable.

Meditative Capering: Essence users with Occult 4+ who meditate while watching Ink Monkeys play observe secret mudras of cosmic enlightenment hidden in their movements. These truths confer 10 motes per hour of meditation instead of the usual eight.

Scent of Magic: Whenever an Ink Monkey perceives an Intelligence 2+ character with a basic Awareness check, it intuits that target's Occult rating as hunger pains proportional to the target's metaphysical understanding. Anyone with Occult 2+ registers as prey. Ink Monkeys also add a number of bonus successes on all tracking-based Survival rolls equal to their quarry's Occult rating.

Air Inked With Lies: Ink Monkeys can fool others with illusions that beguile the mind's eye, courtesy of the crushed gossamer used in the ink that changed them into monsters. Creating an illusion requires a (Manipulation + Performance) roll as a social attack that potentially affects all Intelligence 2+ beings who could perceive it within 100 yards of the monkeys. Anything unreal may be created out of thin air within the maximum radius. If the attack overcomes an observer's Dodge MDV, she believes the unreal things are actually present and reacts accordingly until she encounters proof that the illusions are fake (they have no substance) or she spends a total of three Willpower points to inoculate her mind against this power for a day. Those who resist in any way and other Ink Monkeys still perceive the illusions, but always recognize them for what they are. This doesn't stop the creatures pretending something is real to give the ruse added credibility, like scattering and howling in response to the arrival of a large predator.

Attacks:

Bite: Speed 3, Accuracy 8 (+ specialties), Damage 3L, Parry DV —, Rate 2, Tags: N

Strike: Speed 5, Accuracy 7 (+ specialties), Damage 2B, Parry DV 4, Rate 3, Tags: N

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 6 (+ specialties), Damage 1B, Parry DV —, Rate 1, Tags: C, N, P

Soak: 0L/1B

Health Levels: -0/-1/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 5

Willpower: 5

Essence: 1

Other Notes: Though their mouths cannot speak human languages, all Ink Monkeys are imprinted with understanding of Old Realm as part of their genesis template. Borighana included this so she could instruct them to stop biting without having to break them. The creatures benefit from a -1 external penalty to hit them due to their small size and up to eight of them can surround a human-sized target. Ink Monkeys are often extras.

CHAPTER NINE

THE NAMELESS LAIR

THE NAMELESS LAIR OF MA-HA-SUCHI

The Queen of Fangs is not the only Chosen of Luna to reclaim an ancient place in the Eastern woodlands. She is also not the only maniac to turn such a place into a personal heart of darkness.

Before the Usurpation, the domain of the Lunar elder Ma-Ha-Suchi had a name: the Salon Provocative. Located near what is now the city of Greyfalls, the Salon became one of the cultural icons in the final centuries of the Old Realm. Everyone who was anyone coveted an invitation to one of the gala balls, art exhibits and music festivals held at the ultra-fashionable retreat of the Wolf with the Red Roses, one of Creation's most celebrated bon vivants. Ma-Ha-Suchi gradually expanded the Salon from a 50-room manse into a complete cultural center with its own symphony hall, outdoor amphitheater and a three-story museum to display the Lunar's extensive art collection, including many great works he had crafted himself.

That was long, long ago: before the Usurpation, before the Lunar Exile, before centuries in the Wyld twisted Ma-Ha-Suchi so he grew horns and cloven hooves and learned to despise his reflection. After the Great Contagion, the Wolf with the Red Roses emerged from the Wyld as a twisted monstrosity, as close as any Lunar elder came to becoming a chimera without being put down by his peers. At the time, they thought his mind was still sound.

When Ma-Ha-Suchi returned to the Salon Provocative, he found his home surprisingly intact... except his treasury of art was relabeled as Dragon-Blooded work. His first act was to smash every mirror on the grounds. Then he burned every work of art, smashed every musical instrument and defaced everything that reminded him of the decadent artiste and socialite he had been. A hatred of the civilization that once adored him consumed Ma-Ha-Suchi, and it blossomed into a hatred of civilization in every form.

History has all but forgotten the Salon Provocative, and Ma-Ha-Suchi has no wish to revive it. Even mentioning his lair's former name can drive him into a homicidal rage.

After reasserting ownership over the former Salon, Ma-Ha-Suchi set himself to building an army. Several small villages dotted the forest surrounding his domain, as well as a small Wyld zone less than a day from the lair. The Lunar quickly conquered the villages and forced their peoples into the Wyld to construct a prison camp that he dubbed the Rutting Pens. Once completed, the Rutting Pens lived down to their name.

For months, Ma-Ha-Suchi systematically forced himself on every woman of child-bearing age among the mortal population, stopping only long enough to change his gender so that he could rape some of the more desirable men as a change of pace. In the coming years, the pitiful women of the Rutting Pens bore

him dozens of goat-wolf hybrid children. Few of them survived giving birth. Ma-Ha-Suchi himself bore several litters from the seed of the male prisoners. After the initial orgy, the breeding continued more slowly as Ma-Ha-Suchi traveled further afield to find new victims, and the human population fled the grotesque monster that abducted them for a nameless doom.

After decades of intensive (and deliberately degrading) breeding practices, Ma-Ha-Suchi had enough male and female offspring to create a stable beastman line that could breed on its own. The Lunar then could devote himself to more important concerns. Today, Ma-Ha-Suchi lords over a nation of beastmen who combine the traits of goats and wolves with a humanoid form... and a bent towards cannibalism and unrestrained brutality. He also leads a coterie of younger Lunar Exalts won to his allegiance by a powerful charisma undiminished by his Wyld taint, and by a shared hatred of the Dragon-Blooded and their Realm.

Few of his followers realize the true scope of Ma-Ha-Suchi's wrath, however, for the Lunar truly does despise almost everything. He hates civilization in all forms as a distraction from the survival instinct that should be the sole motive for action. He hates the Dragon-Blooded and Sidereals for forcing him into the Wyld where he was so terribly disfigured. He hates the Solars for falling, not just to the Dragon-Blooded, but also to their own appetites. He hates mortals, because he believes none of them could ever love him now the way they did when he was beautiful. He especially hates himself, because he allowed the Wyld to change him when so many of his peers proved resistant. Hatred consumes Ma-Ha-Suchi. If he has his way, it will consume the world as well.

THE LAIR TODAY

Forest now covers the ruins of much of the former Salon Provocative. The manse at the center of the compound stands four stories tall and contains about 50 rooms. Architecturally, it resembles a flat-roof step pyramid constructed in a style suggestive of the Dragon King structures of distant Rathess, but with elegant stone flourishes and facades. Once, rooms tastefully decorated with expensive furniture and objets d'art lined each step. Today, most of the rooms contain naught but straw for beastmen to sleep on and a few gnawed bones left from their latest victims. Only a few rooms in the manse have been preserved beyond the basic structures needed for the manse to channel Essence.

Ma-Ha-Suchi's throne room was once a grand ball room where the Lunar used to host feasts and formal dances. The only surviving furnishing is the great stone throne that Ma-Ha-Suchi once gallantly offered to visiting Solar dignitaries. Today, only he sits on that throne, and even its enchanted stone does not hold up well to its master's abuse. The stone armrests are riddled with cracks caused when the Lunar, incensed over some slight or failure, grasped them so tightly that they nearly

snapped apart. Ma-Ha-Suchi generally uses the throne room when he meets with other Lunars or when he wishes to oversee the ritual execution of intruders, especially Dragon-Blooded. He typically sends captured Realm soldiers to the Rutting Pens, but actual Terrestrial officers he slays outright. Ma-Ha-Suchi has no wish to sully the race he so carefully cultivated with the blood of the Dragons. Instead, he preserves the skulls of Terrestrial Exalts for use in communicating with his allies through the White Bone Emissary spell.

The top floor of the manse holds its Hearthroom, which also serves as the master bedroom. The bedroom still has functional Old Realm furniture, although Ma-Ha-Suchi's regular furies leave it all damaged. (He would have destroyed it long ago, except the manse's magic renders it preternaturally durable.) The only mirror in the entire complex is a massive adamant mirror mounted in the ceiling atop Ma-Ha-Suchi's circular bed. It has

THE DARK MAGIC OF MA-HA-SUCHI

While Ma-Ha-Suchi's puissance is well-known (and feared) throughout the Silver Pact, few Lunars grasp how broad his interests once were. In the early days after his Exaltation, Ma-Ha-Suchi was considered something of a prodigy at magic and was groomed for a place among the Lunar sorcerers of the Crossroads Society. In his youth, however, Ma-Ha-Suchi was simply too much of a dilettante to pursue the study of sorcery with any diligence, and the Crossroads Society cut ties with him.

When he returned to Creation, though, Ma-Ha-Suchi vowed to seize any advantage against his many enemies. One of those enemies is the Deathlord called the Mask of Winters. The Deathlord changed his face and his name, but not the livery of his soldiers or the puissance of his magic. Ma-Ha-Suchi recognized the Mask of Winters as the Solar sorcerer Larquen Quen and remembers him clearly and bitterly. Although Ma-Ha-Suchi's magical resources are quite limited compared to many of his Lunar peers, he initiated himself into both Emerald Circle sorcery and Iron Circle necromancy. The White Bone Emissary spell, invented by Ma-Ha-Suchi a few centuries ago, is now his preferred means of communicating with his allies.

WHITE BONE EMISSARY (IRON CIRCLE NECROMANCY SPELL)

Cost: 10m (or less)

Target: One skull

The White Bone Emissary spell is the necromantic analogue to the Infallible Messenger spell of Emerald Circle Sorcery. Instead of summoning a cherub of Essence to deliver the necromancer's message, however, the necromancer speaks his words into the ear-hole of a skull that has been boiled and stripped clean of flesh. When the spell is cast, the skull instantly teleports to the intended recipient of the message and delivers it perfectly in the necromancer's voice before crumbling to dust. The spell can use the skull of any sentient being that had a soul, but the skulls of Essence-users offer a particular advantage. For every point by which the Essence of the skull's previous owner exceeded 1, the Essence cost of the spell is reduced by 1 mote, to a minimum of 1 mote.

survived all of the Lunar's rages only because it is an integral part of the manse's power. Ma-Ha-Suchi could cover it—but he wants to wake each morning to the sight of his own deformed appearance, as a constant reminder why his rage burns so hot.

The lair of Ma-Ha-Suchi is a four-dot Lunar manse. The legendary Kal Bax designed it; and like many of Bax's masterpieces, it has endured the ravages of time (and a crazed Lunar) remarkably well. While centuries of abuse scar the manse's furnishings, its internal Essence mechanisms still function. These include Essence lights in every room and fully functioning air-conditioning and water treatment systems. The manse also has an Old Realm plumbing system, although neither Ma-Ha-Suchi nor his children ever bother to use it. The wolf aspect of their natures is invariably dominant: As such, the Lunar and his offspring have an aversion to excreting waste inside their communal lair, even in toilet facilities designed for that very purpose.

The hearthstone of the manse is the Gem of the Shining Moon's Glory. This gives its bearer a +3 dice bonus on all Charisma-related rolls. Once, Ma-Ha-Suchi used this gem to lure resisting beauties into his bed. Today, he uses it to maintain the loyalty of his Lunar and beastmen followers and whip them into bloodthirsty rages.

PERFORMANCE HALL

On the west side of the manse stands a large domed structure that Ma-Ha-Suchi once used to stage dramatic and musical works. Today, he uses it when he harangues his troops. The auditorium seats 500 with standing room for many more. Its magically-reinforced acoustics ensure that even a baying mob calling for the blood of Ma-Ha-Suchi's enemies can still hear their master clearly when he speaks from the center of the stage. The building still has a functional Essence-lighting system.

A thin layer of moonsilver coats the back of the stage. At the proper gesture from anyone attuned to the manse, this moonsilver screen changes to display whatever the user wishes, most commonly a massive thirty-foot high projection of Ma-Ha-Suchi's face as he speaks. The screen could just as easily provide any one of hundreds of backdrops for plays or display Old Realm dramatic productions — hundreds of crystals bearing such recordings lie scattered through the forest mould nearby, where Ma-Ha-Suchi threw them long ago — but Ma-Ha-Suchi would never sanction the use of his hall for such a frivolous, peaceable purpose.

BEASTMAN BARRACKS

On the east side of the manse stands a large, three-story rectangular building that once displayed Ma-Ha-Suchi's massive art collection. The Lunar burned and broke the entire collection of priceless antiquities upon returning to the Salon. Today, the museum serves as barracks for several hundred beastmen.

COURTYARD

South of the manse between the other two buildings is a square stone courtyard about 150 yards on each side. Long ago, Ma-Ha-Suchi staged outdoor festivals and carnivals here for the mortals who lived near the Salon Provocative. At that time, the courtyard featured magical topiary bushes carefully

TOPIARY OF TERROR

Each bush grows about 30 feet tall. In combat, the topiary bushes become huge lumbering beasts that try to trample their targets.

Str/Dex/Sta	Per/Int/Wits/Will	Health Lvl	Attack (Spd/Acc/Dmg/Rate)	Dodge DV/Soak
14/3/10	2/1/2/4	-0x3/-1x3/-2x3/-4/1	Trample: 3/5/14L/1	1/4L/10B

Abilities: Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Integrity 1, Martial Arts 2, Presence 3, Resistance 4.

Note: The topiary bushes treat all fire-based attacks as inflicting aggravated damage.

trimmed into the shape of animals and fantastic creatures and then enchanted by one of the Old Realm's greatest Wood Aspects so that they could move about, capering and dancing for the amusement of visitors. The bushes still stand, but they are overgrown today. Their magic still functions, though, and Ma-Ha-Suchi turns the topiary to a darker purposes. At his command, the enchanted shrubs can tear their roots from the grounds and stagger after any target of Ma-Ha-Suchi's choosing.

AMPHITHEATER

North and to the back of the manse is a great stone amphitheater where Ma-Ha-Suchi once staged outdoor concerts and plays. Since his return to the manse, he has used it when speaking before crowds too large to fit into the performance hall. The stone amphitheater is enchanted to resist rain, wind and excess heat and can seat well over 2,000 people. The amphitheater does not have a moonsilver projection screen like the one in the performance hall, but it does have similar acoustic properties.

Recently, the amphitheater was damaged during a battle between Ma-Ha-Suchi and a young but powerful Dawn Caste who opposed the Lunar's recent forays into civilized lands. The Solar killed scores of beastmen, but was overcome by the vastly more experienced Lunar. Surprisingly, Ma-Ha-Suchi spared the Solar's life, either in repayment of some past debt or because he feared the Solar's death might lead his circle-mates to discover the Rutting Pens and the vast army that he builds there.

THE RUTTING PENS

The bulk of Ma-Ha-Suchi's forces live within the Wyld zone located about five miles northeast of his lair. A fluke of local geomancy caught and preserved a Wyld storm brought by the Fair Folk invasion. The Wyld zone is rough circle with a diameter of about a quarter-mile... from the perspective of anyone in Creation. Once an intruder crosses the threshold of the Wyld zone, she discovers that the Bordermarches at the zone's periphery are about two miles across. After crossing that distance, the intruder enters the Middlemarches that make up the bulk of the Wyld zone, and which encompass about 50 square miles. This is at once impossible, and quite typical for the Wyld.

The Rutting Pens, constructed nearly seven centuries ago to hold the humans who bore the first generation of Ma-Ha-Suchi's beastmen, now cover several dozen acres. They consist of 20-some stone buildings within a large spiked wall. Since Ma-Ha-Suchi's beastmen now propagate themselves, the Lunar no longer stocks them as he once did. Nevertheless, the Pens hold dozens of mortals captured in Ma-Ha-Suchi's raids on the surrounding territories. Thaumaturgy incorporated into the walls prevents Wyld mutation in a massive version of the House of

Refuge talisman (see **Compass of Celestial Directions**, Vol. II — **The Wyld**, p. 142; Artifact ••• for the increased area). Ma-Ha-Suchi considers his beastmen to be the ideal form for his followers, and he seeks to prevent further mutations from affecting their lineage.

The Pens occupy the center of a massive encampment of about 30,000 beastmen. The beastmen are not barbarians; they are savages. From the time they are old enough to hold a spear, they train for combat. Ma-Ha-Suchi's "survival of the fittest" dogma permeates every aspect of their society. The Wyld's power to turn people into simplified stories prevents any of them from questioning the beliefs the Lunar imparts to them. Normally, the beastmen feed on the fruit of the organ-vines that Ma-Ha-Suchi shaped from the Wyld: fast-growing plants that grow hot, bloody hearts, livers, kidneys and other viscera instead of squash or gourds.

Ma-Ha-Suchi still regularly breeds with both male and female captives within the Pens and with his beastmen to maintain a strong Half-Caste presence within his forces. He appoints his children to the upper ranks of his armies. When a Lunar from outside his domain seeks to win Ma-Ha-Suchi's favor, part of the initiation into his service is to drink the Heart's Blood of a beastman and then sire or birth at least one child from mortals taken from the Pens. Even the most trusted of Ma-Ha-Suchi's lieutenants, however, are not allowed to learn the true size and nature of the Rutting Pens and the massive force of beastmen that he gathers there.

Captured mortals are only sent to the Rutting Pens if they are healthy and of breeding age (or likely to reach it within a year or so, in the case of children). Any other captured mortals

CONSEQUENCES OF EXPOSURE

The rest of the Silver Pact knows that Ma-Ha-Suchi is a serial rapist and has a nigh-psychotic hatred of civilization. Nevertheless, he fought the invading Fair Folk with great courage and many other Lunars are indebted to him for times when he helped them against their enemies within civilization. The Silver Pact also makes a big deal about letting Lunars run their domains as they will: Let Luna be the judge of her Chosen's behavior.

If other Lunars knew the full extent of Ma-Ha-Suchi's brutality and perversion, given physical form through the Rutting Pens, many of them would decide that the Wyld turned him into a chimera after all — a mad, Wyld-twisted monster whose Exaltation must be freed and purified by the death of its current host. No one in the Pact would defend Ma-Ha-Suchi except his most devoted acolytes and, perhaps, his fellow psychopath Raksi. On the other hand, Ma-Ha-Suchi has other powerful allies too, such as Amoth City-Smiter, god of tumbled ruins. Exposing the Rutting Pens could spark a war that reaches all the way into Heaven.

are usually sent to Ma-Ha-Suchi's manse, where he presents them as a feast to beastmen who have somehow earned his favor. The lucky ones are killed before the beastmen begin to devour their flesh. Any beastman who dies or displeases Ma-Ha-Suchi in some way is also eaten. Their chimeric ancestry turns Ma-Ha-Suchi's progeny into deeply confused creatures: The wolf part sees the goat part as prey.

SAVAGE HORDE OF MA-HA-SUCHI

Description: So far, Ma-Ha-Suchi has sent only raiding parties of a few dozen or a few hundred beastmen against his victims. Once the Lunar decides the time has come for open war, however, he sends out entire legions of beastmen. They lack significant weapons, but there are lots of them and they feel no fear. Their leader is one of Ma-Ha-Suchi's own Half-Caste sons, a hulking brute who knows a number of Lunar Charms and so might be mistaken for Ma-Ha-Suchi himself. Ma-Ha-Suchi can mobilize ten such hordes.

Commanding Officer: Second Claw

Armor Color: Their own fur.

Motto: A mad mix of bleating and howling.

General Makeup: 3,000 beastmen armed with clubs, crude spears and their own fangs.

Overall Quality: Excellent

Magnitude: 8

Drill: 1

Close Combat Attack: 3 **Close Combat Damage:** 2

Ranged Attack: — **Ranged Damage:** —

Endurance: 5 **Might:** 0

Armor: 1 (-0 mobility)

Morale: 5

Formation: While the beastmen are temperamentally incapable of conventional drill, their pack and herd instincts enable them to fight in skirmishing formation as long as they have any recognized leader. Heroes can split off fang-sized units that fight in relaxed formation. Each horde has eight such heroes and eight relays trained to relay orders through loud howls. Individually, the wolfmen from pages 282-283 of *Exalted* can represent Ma-Ha-Suchi's beastmen: Just remove the armor and arm them with spears and clubs.

THE LAND-BORN

Moving further into the East, an explorer can find small territories belonging to the Land-Born. Not precisely spirits nor elementals, definitely not Wyld-spawn nor created by sorcery, the Land-Born are species of sentient tree, intelligent mobile fungi, sapient dragonflies or other strange races and cultures. In a few cases, their societies overlap with human (or near-human) tribes, and yet stay nearly invisible to them. Like humans, the Land-Born have their shamans and occasionally their God-Blooded, but they remain apart from mortal realms.

Some scholars wrongly attribute the Land-Born to Lunar breeding experiments. Sorcerers lie when they claim them as masterworks. The Primordials might have created them as experiments in granting mobility and intelligence to plants and lower animals, but no mortal can say for sure. Perhaps they simply result from the enormous fecundity of the Elemental Pole

of Wood: intelligence evolved from challenge and response within the environment itself.

THE CHAUN

Mortal scholarship incorrectly identifies the chaun as survivors of a village cursed by a forest spirit. In truth they are mobile offspring of tolembi trees, whose sap they use to make their beautiful lacquered boxes and bowls — and also to harden a nail of their off hand into a deadly stabbing weapon.

The chaun look reasonably human, but these brown-skinned pygmies are nothing of the sort. Chaun give birth to seeds for more trees rather than more of their own kind. Instead, the birth-tree of each tribe produces chaun of one of six basic types: warriors, shamans, elders, artisans, children and gardeners. Careful observers may notice that the different members of a tribe all bear a marked resemblance to each other, and that members of the same caste look even more closely alike.

Chaun warriors can appear both male and female, with men wielding spears and women using small bows. When they mate they produce seeds, which a chaun tribe plants at some distance from their home ground (often at great risk to themselves). Once a tree matures, it produces chaun of its own. The new chaun grow in pods hanging from lacy, drippy flowers that exude a toxic gas. Animals who wander too close to such trees fall into a stupor from which they rarely awaken. Humans have some resistance, but tend to avoid the putrid-smelling flowers. The litter of sleeping bodies around the tolembi tree are toxic for many animals including humans, but chaun emerging from their seed pods find them delectable. They seek to duplicate the flavor of their birth food by brewing complex poisons and potent drugs that they shoot into their victims and feed to their guests.

Because the chaun originate from plants despite their appearance, humans do not easily comprehend their society. Chaun do not grow up. A child, once born, remains a child — it exists as part of a system of camouflage that protects the tree by putting the chaun at risk instead of the tree. A warrior remains a warrior, fighting to defend its tree; it is difficult to turn them to any other purpose.

Elders are born into a tribe's leadership, and continue to govern the tribe until they exhaust their average lifespan of 40 years. Chaun elders can negotiate a peace agreement or argue for war mere minutes after their birth, but they can never wield a weapon effectively.

Artisans can brew any of the tribe's known potions or poisons, and can learn to concoct others with expert skill, but not one of them has any idea how to lead the people. Most artisans make baskets and other tools, but some become healers.

Gardeners care for the trees and plant beneficial fungi and allied plants among the roots, but they do not raise food for their fellow chaun; the race hunts, rather than practicing agriculture.

The chaun do not worship any gods, elementals or other spirits. They know such entities exist; they just don't care. Dead chaun become compost and do not leave ghosts.

Chaun do not dance, play music or create art. They have no written language, and their 'language' has more in common with twittering birds than with the speech of mortals. For the most part they do not tell stories or perform ceremonies, though individual trees may learn these arts and pass them on to specific tribes. These are just more camouflage for the tribe.

The birth tree maintains some control over the chaun it spawned. Each chaun usually drinks a concoction of hallucinogenic plants and tree sap several times a year. The tree can infuse the sap with general messages to the tribe, usually no more than a half-dozen words in human language, such as, "Attack nearby humans," or "Clean mushrooms off my trunk." Chaun elders can also climb into hollows in the tree and suck sap directly from specially drilled holes, or pour message-potions into the heartwood to communicate information to the tree. These message potions can deliver highly complex information equivalent to dozens of pages of images and text. Knowledge imparted to the tree in this way becomes part of the information the tree passes on to its chaun offspring in the next generation — an alchemical formula thus encountered is thus reverse engineered to become part of the pharmacy of the artisans.

Chaun tribes rarely cooperate with each other, unless their trees are at great distances from one another. Since the trees compete with each other for resources when placed too close together, the tolembis often direct their minions against each other in all-out war. Chaun are also universally hostile to other races, but can pretend to make peace for the sake of protecting their birth-tree. If a tolembi tree forged a genuine alliance with other creatures — including other tolembi trees — this would be a vast change for the chaun, possibly altering life throughout the deep Eastern woods.

THE PINEYS

Like the chaun, the pineys are sentient plants. Despite their humanoid shape, they have more in common with conifers than humans. Underneath their coat of long, bristling needles, pineys resemble spider monkeys with spindly arms and legs. They live in the far Northeast, where they find the sunlight adequate and the temperature enjoyable.

Pineys do not have brains in their heads. Instead, they store portions of their intelligence in each needle. A mature piney is as smart as most humans, and knows much of the forest. A smaller piney, or one lately involved in combat, can be quite stupid. Pineys can shoot their needles at attacking enemies, but this quickly reduces their knowledge and mental agility. Though few predators are interested in pineys since they are vegetable and not animal material, large herbivores and parasitic infestations can endanger piney communities.

Piney culture is based on traveling through the forest in search of sunny patches of ground or tree-branch where a troupe may pause for refreshment. Pineys spend about half their time lounging in patches of sunlight while they make tools, weapons, sculptures and ornaments out of deadwood, other plant matter and stones. They are not much interested in trade, but love stories about the outside world and enjoy sharing tales heard from others. Pineys are not great secret-keepers. They love gossip and sharing information, eagerly reporting the doings of others to anyone they encounter that does not attack

them. In contrast to the murderous chaun, pineys like everyone and most people like pineys.

In combat, pineys fire their needles like darts or arrows, or use handmade weapons of carved wood. They can be strong and fast, but cannot comprehend military formations or command. Preferring to fight one-on-one, they are often at a disadvantage against organized groups.

NEW SHOOTS: THE PARROT

TRIBE LEAGUE

At the Eastern limit of Creation, the trees grow miles high with trunks hundreds of feet wide. Soil forms in crevices in their bark and branches, to support normal-sized trees and plants. Here the Realm, the Scavenger Lands and the other great nations of the Threshold are almost unknown. Only a few explorers and traders ever reach this far. They find peoples who know nothing of the great struggles that wrack Creation's heartland.

The Parrot Tribes of the far East form a small confederation that protects itself against both Wyld and human incursions. These beastmen look like a fusion of human and bird, with clawed hands on their wing-joints (much like the hawk-people of Metagalapa). The color of their plumage defines their tribe: red, blue, yellow, green and white tribes, with the Rainbow Parrots of multi-colored plumage as a new caste common to the five older tribes. They have a brand-new legend about their origin, that Arilak the Unseen made their ancestors. The current generation is in the process of forgetting that they invented the legend to unify their tribes.

These beastmen live hundreds of miles east of Mahalanka. Their entire domain consists of a single giant brazil-nut tree. They live off fruit and the tree's nuts. Centuries ago, they figured out how to plant fruit-pits, increasing their food supply. Like their parrot ancestors, they live in hollow trees; unlike their avian ancestors, they can hollow out the trees themselves.

In former times, the Parrot Tribes fought each other constantly. Shamans deeply indebted to spirits sought sacrifices with greater and more imaginative desperation, and there was wholesale slaughter among the parrots. At least three tribes died out completely.

Sometime around RY 650—the Parrots themselves have only a vague idea of the passage of years—A Blue Parrot was born to a Red Parrot father and mother. Blue from Red, as the child was called, grew to be a mighty warrior in service to his tribe — the Red Parrots. Perhaps he was not the first, but he was the first allowed to live. Because of his great deeds, and his forcefulness in asserting his lineage, Blue from Red became a model for others. More children of unexpected color followed, and were allowed to live.

Around RY 695, the first Rainbow Parrot appeared, the woman called Peace with Heaven. She set out to end her tribal shamans' obligations to the spirits, largely by assassinating the shamans. She and her successors forged a new relationship with the spirit world for the Parrot Tribes as a whole. The tribes now worship Gaia as supreme deity, Arilak the Unseen as her child and deputy, and the lesser elemental dragons as emissaries to Creation. In practice, they still deal only with small gods and

elementals, but they remind these spirits of their deeply subordinate status in Creation, and make them work for any offerings they receive.

About RY 735, the Parrot Tribes met in council and formed an official confederation. Spirits and small gods blessed the union. Under the terms of the confederacy, children belong to the tribe of their feather color, but also to the sept of their mothers. The children thus form bridges between the various septs and tribes, and improve relationships between the various branches of the confederation. Rainbow Parrots can claim membership in their mother's sept and every tribe for which they have the proper hue. In fact, they've informally become pan-tribal, and so are seen as neutral arbiters.

Formally, each sept within each tribe has its own chief and its own shaman. Each tribe has a paramount chief, and each paramount chief has a number of votes equal to the number of chiefs she leads whenever the confederacy's main council is called. Not all tribes are created equal, though. The Red, Blue and Yellow Parrots each have more than 40 septs, while the Greens and Whites have about 25 and 20, respectively. The complete confederation has a population of 8,000 or so adults. The Rainbow Parrots, while growing in number, still number less than 100 total. Peace with Heaven died many years ago.

To give their confederation a center, the parrot-folk covered the highest branches of their tree in transplanted orchids and flowering vines and declared it the Great Rainbow Tree of Arilak, the visible expression of her unseen presence. Perhaps their reverence roused the small god of the tree to wakefulness; perhaps Arilak heard their prayers. The Great Rainbow Tree, however, is now at once god, temple and territory — not a Forest Walker yet, but give it a few centuries.

The Parrots have no Exalted, God-Blooded or indeed any Essence-wielders of their own; little thamaturgy and no sorcery, supernatural martial arts, First Age artifacts or other potent magic. When they need a small miracle, they must dicker with a spirit. Their shamans slowly negotiate new pacts, no longer

offering complete submission. Gaining the upper hand on their former masters, however, enhances the Parrots' new sense of confidence, hope and boundless possibility.

The Confederacy is not all sweetness and light. They are highly territorial. Outsiders risk death just coming near the borders of Parrot territory, as these beastmen attack with poisoned darts. If any intruder survives the attack but is incapacitated, the parrot-folk sacrifice him to the Great Rainbow Tree. So far, however, the only outsiders they've ever met are other tribes at the fringe of Creation.

PARROT TRIBE MILITIA

Description: This represents a parrot-folk village mobilized for war against intruders. They begin fights by raining darts (treat as knives) down on their enemies, taking advantage of their ability to fly. The darts are, of course, poisoned. Only if the enemy seems significantly weakened do the warriors close to attack hand-to-hand.

Commanding Officer: Chief Frawk

Armor Color: None but their own plumage

Motto: "Protect the nests, protect the tree!"

General Makeup: 50-some parrot-folk with darts and equal proportions of short spears, clubs and stone axes.

Overall Quality: Fair

Magnitude: 2

Drill: 1

Close Combat Attack: 2 **Close Combat Damage:** 2

Ranged Attack: 2 **Ranged Damage:** 1

Endurance: 3 **Might:** 1

Armor: 0 (-0 mobility penalty)

Morale: 2

Formation: Parrot warriors never come closer than skirmishing formation, since they need room to fly. That ability to fly over, around and possibly under opponents, coupled with their poisoned darts, accounts for their Might relative to ground-bound combatants. The chief of the tribal village has two sub-chiefs as heroes who can take command or split off fangs of warriors.

STRANGE EASTERN FOLK

CHAUN WARRIORS

Chaun are slender but muscular, standing between three and four feet high. Their skin is a dark chestnut color. Chaun keep their hair dyed and spiked in a wide range of colors. Each has a long nail on the off hand, stiffened so it can strike like a stiletto, and feet almost bark-like in their calluses. Chaun warriors fight in much the same way as normal Eastern barbarian tribes, but tend to make extremely frequent use of poison.

Motivation: Protect and feed the parent tree.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 3; Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 1, Temperance 1, Valor 3

Abilities: Archery 4*, Athletics 3 (Jump +3), Awareness 2, Dodge 3, Integrity 1, Martial Arts 2, Medicine 1, Melee 2 (Javelin +1)*, Resistance 1, Stealth 3, Survival 1 (Forest +2), Thrown 2 (Javelin +1)*

The Parrot Tribe League, a Magnitude 2 Dominion

Military: 2 **Government:** 1 **Culture:** 2

Abilities: Awareness 1, Bureaucracy 1, Craft 2, Occult 2 (Supernatural Etiquette +1), Performance 1, Presence 2 (Religious Conversions +1), Stealth 1, War 1

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 2, Temperance 3, Valor 2

Virtue Flaw: Compassion **Current Limit:** 4

Willpower: 6

Bonus Points: 10 **External Bonus Points:** 0

Notes: The Parrot Tribe League spends bonus points on its second dot of Presence and the Occult and Presence Specialties, leaving four bonus points unspent. These represent raw social potential for a society that is still inventing itself. The League has no significant connections with any outside culture, so it does not yet have external bonus points.

The League's Virtue Flaw is Vindictive Fragmentation. In limit break, the League shatters back into tribes that attack each other to settle old scores. The Rainbow Parrots take the worst of it, since they have no clear allegiance among the tribes.

Join Battle: 6

Attacks:

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 2B, Defense 7, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 5B, Defense 4, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 5, Damage 2B, Defense —, Rate 1

Nail: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 1L*, Defense 4, Rate 3

Javelin (Melee): Speed 4, Accuracy 7, Damage 5L*, Defense 7, Rate 2

Javelin (Thrown): Speed 4, Accuracy 7, Damage 5L*, Range 20, Rate 2

Self Bow: Speed 6, Accuracy 7, Damage 4L**, Range 150, Rate 2

* Plus poison: treat as Arrow Frog Venom (*Exalted*, p. 131).

** Broadhead arrows plus Arrow Frog Venom.

Soak: 1L/3B

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 3 **Willpower:** 4

Essence: 1

Other Notes: Female Chaun possess Archery using self bows and broadhead arrows. Male Chaun possess Melee and Thrown and use javelins. Both poison their weapons and nails with a variety of toxins, all equal to Arrow Frog Venom (*Exalted*, p. 131).

Tribal elders defend themselves with Death Sap, and occasionally bestow a single dose to accomplished warriors. It has the following stats: Damage 10L, Toxicity 4, Tolerance —/—, Penalty -4.

Chaun are not represented using Wyld mutations because despite their appearance, they are not even remotely human.

PARROTMEN

Parrot beastmen dwell far in the East. In most ways, their warriors resemble fighters from the region's human tribes, even to fighting perched in tree branches. While parrotmen can fly, they do not fly well or for long distances. The parrot tribes tend to rain down poisoned knives or darts from above until the target collapses.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2; Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 3

Abilities: Athletics 2 (Flight +1), Awareness 2, Dodge 2, Integrity 1, Martial Arts 2, Melee 2 (Knife +1), Presence 1, Resistance 2, Stealth 1 (Arboreal +1), Socialize 1, Survival 2 (Arboreal +1), Thrown 2, War 1

Wyld Mutations: *Poxes:* Claws, Feathers, Tail; *Blights:* Glider

Join Battle: 4

Attacks:

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 2L, Defense 7, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 5L, Defense 4, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 5, Damage 2B, Defense -, Rate 1

Knife: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 4L*, Defense 6, Rate 3

Knife (Thrown): Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 4L*, Range 15, Rate 3

* Plus poison: treat as Coral Snake Venom (*Exalted*, p. 131).

Soak: 3B/0L

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 2 **Willpower:** 6

Essence: 1

PINEYS

The strange land-born pineys are not usually offensive, but kill without hesitation to protect their families. Pineys have an acute weakness to fire, and avoid it at all costs. Only piney families coordinate their actions well. Tribes fight as families or individuals, eschewing large-scale tactics and coordination.

A piney superficially resembles a human covered in a dense layer of pine needles. Actually, their bodies are mostly needles, with stick-thin limbs and a monkey-like head with large, dark eyes.

Motivation: Few pineys desire more than to survive, propagate and enjoy hearing and telling about interesting events in their forest.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2; Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 2, Temperance 3, Valor 2

Abilities: Archery 2, Athletics 1, Awareness 2, Craft (Wood) 2, Dodge 3, Integrity 1, Linguistics (Native: Piney; Others: Forest-Tongue) 1, Martial Arts 3, Melee 3, Performance 2, Presence 1, Resistance 2, Stealth 3, Socialize 2, Survival 1 (Forest +2), Thrown 1 (Needles +2)

Join Battle: 5

Attacks:

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 4B, Defense 8, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 7B, Defense 5, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 6, Damage 4B, Defense —, Rate 1

Chopping Sword: Speed 4, Accuracy 7, Damage 9L/2, Defense 5, Rate 2

Needle: Speed 4, Accuracy 6, Damage 5L, Range 15, Rate 3

Long Bow: Speed 6 Accuracy 6, Damage 6L*, Range 200, Rate 3

* Uses broadhead arrows.

Special Abilities:

Losing Their Minds—Pineys can throw handfuls of their needles like, what else, throwing needles. Every three needle attacks made during a single scene, however, reduces one of the piney's Mental Attributes by 1, starting with the highest Attributes. These dots return at a rate of one dot per day if the piney rests properly.

Merging—Several bonded pineys (a couple and their children) may join together to form a single larger, smarter one. This requires physical contact, a miscellaneous action and one Willpower from each piney who wishes to join. For every piney that is added on, the largest piney (typically the adult male) gains a -1 Health Level, as well as one dot each of Strength, Stamina, Perception, Intelligence and Wits. As many as 10 pineys can bond in this way, but bonuses cap out at +5. Damage done to the giant piney is done to all of the pineys within. This giant piney may hang together for a full scene before participants must spend another Willpower point to prevent separation.

Spiny Surface—Anyone striking or grappling a piney without adequate protection (sturdy boots or gloves, for instance) suffers one die of lethal damage.

Soak: 6L/10B

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 4 **Willpower:** 6

Essence: 2

Other Notes: Pineys are vulnerable to fire. They have only half of their normal soak against such attacks. Additionally, if a piney touches fire her player must roll (Wits + Resistance), difficulty 1-5 based on size and heat, or go up like a bonfire. The burning piney suffers environmental damage until the fire can be quenched. Putting out a flaming piney requires a whole lot of water and by that time, it's usually too late.

TREE-DWELLING WARRIORS

There are innumerable tree-dwelling tribes in the deep East. Though such tribes are diverse, these stats can represent a common human warrior from one of these tribes. Unlike Hal-tan guards, these warriors exhibit virtually no group coordination, but can show great cunning individually. They are usually poorly equipped, except for their poisons.

Motivation: Varies, but usually focus on survival, protecting their family and community, or gaining status. Like all humans, however, exceptional individuals tend to possess exceptional and individual motivations.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2; Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 3

Abilities: Athletics 2 (Arboreal +1), Awareness 2, Dodge 2, Martial Arts 2, Melee 2 (Sword-Club +1), Presence 1, Resistance 2, Stealth 1 (Arboreal +1), Survival 2 (Arboreal +1), Thrown 2 (Blowgun +1)

Join Battle: 4

Attacks:

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 2B, Defense 7, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 5B, Defense 4, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 5, Damage 2B, Defense —, Rate 1

Blowgun Dart: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 1L*, Range 20, Rate 2

* Plus poison: Arrow Frog Venom (**Exalted**, p. 131).

Sword-Club: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 5L/B, Defense 5, Rate 2

Soak: 0L/3B

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 2 **Willpower:** 6

Essence: 1

Other Notes: These warriors poison their darts; other poisons are possible besides arrow frog venom. See **Scroll of Kings**, p. 131 and p. 136 for descriptions and rules for blowguns and the sword-club (a truncheon lined with razor-sharp flint or obsidian shards).

CHAPTER TEN

THE DAYSTAR

BIRTH OF THE DAYSTAR

Savants and priests often speak interchangeably of the Unconquered Sun and the Daystar, attributing everything from the sun's movement to its matchless brilliance to Ignis Divine. They do this because they must; the Sun and his dominion—the Daystar—more than any other god, extend from one another, two parts of a whole. Similarly, it becomes impossible to speak of the birth of the Daystar without also talking about the creation of the Unconquered Sun.

The Daystar came about as a fact of Our Guarding Star's birth, for they were an effort by the Holy Tyrant to create the perfect being. More specifically, their creation was a gambit by the Ultimate Darkness to create a light, perfect and infinite, that would expand his darkness infinitely and make him real. Where most domains precede the spirit that represents them, Ignis Divine and the Daystar were forged in tandem; god and sun were engineered, planned, and constructed parallel and concurrent to one another.

In the earliest days of existence, a green sun shed its stunted emerald glow over all things. Such was the hubris of the Primordial King that his aspect presided over all his brethren had wrought, as a sign to them of his unending reign. Casting no shadows, its viridian light also prevented the Shadow of All Things from passing into existence. This displeased the Ultimate Darkness, who quickly formulated a plot by which he would gain this advantage.

When the time was right, he came to the Primordial King in a whisper, skillfully pointing out Creation's near-completion and honoring the Holy Tyrant as its commissioner, for by his will the universe had been constructed. But then the All-Shadow preyed upon his pride, feigning pity and shame that his king could not also be seen as one of Creation's major architects, for the work of casting the universe had all but finished without his touch. At this the Empyrean Chaos thundered frightfully, but the Shadow of All Things had expected this, and had not risked his ire casually. Rather, he suggested that Creation was not finished—could not be finished—until the Primordial King had laid his crowning touch upon it.

But what should that addition possibly be? Now the Holy Tyrant was listening, his wrath assuaged by intrigue, as the All-Shadow whispered a temptation to sate his avarice. "Your light is a great one," said he. "But lowly Creation is not worthy. Move your fire to Yu-Shan and hang another in its place, to stand as proof of your supreme design. Forever."

The Primordial King saw merit in this counsel, and thus began to lay plans for building the Daystar. Not even the Shadow of All Things could have foreseen how much the Holy Tyrant would take to the task. Where any effort at all would have made the All-Shadow's plan a success, the Empyrean Chaos worked with a fever that exceeded the Dragon's wildest dreams. The Primordial King demanded of himself that his contribution

to Creation should be the most outstanding, spectacular addition the world would ever see, flooring the contributions of his brothers and sisters and standing as a sign of his genius and invincibility for all eternity.

His contribution would even be practical: an intensity of matchless destructive force and devouring flame, but one which would warm and nourish Creation and protect it. That above all excited the Holy Tyrant, for none would see it coming. He would have to reach outside of himself to build it, and in defying his nature, prove his superiority over the other Primordials once more, for he would have done the impossible.

For this he enlisted the Divine Ignition, Cytherea, whose imbuing and purifying Essence provided Gaia's own with the substance it needed to produce Creation. He also enlisted Autochthon, in a manner of speaking, by savaging one of his greatest creations and commandeering (or rather, ripping out) a core component. With this the Primordial King went to work, disassembling and reassembling his younger brother's 'gift' to suit his purposes. Then releasing a portion of his purest flame into Cytherea, who rallied to contain it, he set her to work on the ignition of a flame greater than his own.

Cytherea strained to purify the emerald flame again and again, applying all of her forces to this task. When she had refined these fires hotter than even her king could stand them, and they were bright such as only he could dare to stare into the beams, the Holy Tyrant knew that his work was almost complete. With what he had stolen from Autochthon, he had constructed an engine which would devour the Wyld to stoke this new, pure and perfect white flame. His handiwork could not only carry and produce this new flame, but also sustain it with a nigh-endless source of fuel. Plunging his engine into the heart of solar fires, the flames flowed through his invention, consuming it utterly. But that was exactly as he had planned it, for his engine had been designed to merge with the flame, rebuilding itself within the heat of perfect day, galvanized by holy fire to perform its sacred function. It was the birth of a new sun, and the Holy Tyrant dubbed it the Daystar.

But his work was not finished.

The Ultimate Darkness had been harnessing the power to craft gods, so that he might produce his own antithesis and imbue the light of perfect day with the might necessary to form an everlasting darkness. The creation of the Daystar gave him the context he needed to focus on the shape of his non-extant nemesis; to capture his derisive, self-righteous sneer and war-machine magnanimity and make them real. From the depths of his empty, wicked darkness, the Shadow of All Things synthesized his absolute polar opposite: a being of light, justice and hope, to be the spirit of the Daystar. While Ignis Divine yet slept, awaiting the waking-word, the Holy Tyrant saw how he burned bright and never faltered and pronounced, "He will call me father." And the Ultimate Darkness thought, He will call me master.

How wrong they both were.

Yet the Primordial King was not satisfied, for nothing untold could truly be perfect. Now the Ultimate Darkness and the Divine Ignition realized too late that they had been caught in the mania of their king, who never did things by halves. Channeling his epic idea of valiance, the Holy Tyrant devised a series of labors to test the mettle of what they had created. He then proclaimed that for every test the newborn god and sibling star failed, they would be broken down and redesigned, again and again, until they were able to conquer them all. After every successfully completed labor, however, sun and spirit would emerge evolved ever closer toward their ideal forms, whereupon their progenitors would prepare them for the next task, adjusting their designs to ready them for the next phase of evolution.

Pointing out that the Shadow was the Most Vile and Wicked of All Things, the Primordial King enlisted his aid in fixing the labors and making them cruel, so that each trial would be more terrible than the last, and so that the full power of each improved design might be fully realized. Then by the wisdom of Cytherea they set a limit to the number of tests they required of the foundling star. Were he to successfully complete this number of feats, they would indeed have their Sol Incarnate. And so the waking-word was spoken, and Ignis Divine opened his eyes. It was time for him to be tested.

So certain were the Primordials of their creation's eventual failure, that they set themselves against him almost as enemies from the start. Such was their insanity that they conspired to destroy what they had made, conceiving of increasingly more dangerous and nigh-impossible tasks at each interval of the process, until they were effectively competing with themselves. During this time, they both loved and hated what they had wrought. Such was their pride, hubris, and excitement at this game, that with each feat he mastered, they saw themselves succeeding, even as they were simultaneously reduced to scorn and disbelief that he had won! In the end, the Primordials could scarcely believe that their masterwork had been perfect from the very first. So caught up were they in this string of victories that they even extended the Sun's labors by two. Upon seeing him emerge undefeated from the final test, Cytherea exclaimed that he was truly the Unconquered Sun.

Feeling a strange new sort of pride, the Holy Tyrant hung the Daystar in the sky, and the Shadow of All Things seeped through the cracks in the darkest places, to await his crowning darkness. And thus myth diverges (such as it can, such as is possible in Creation) from history.

THE SUN, UNCONQUERED

When he made the Daystar, the Primordial King completed one of the most unselfish, heroic acts he had ever attempted. By allowing such a pure, perfect flame to be apart from himself, he thought he was increasing his own majesty, for what he had wrought was greater than all things. When he looked at the Sun, he fancied that he was looking in a mirror. He was wrong, but in pursuit of the epitome of unending greatness, he had set a value of perfection outside of his crushing tyranny, and in a sense, had made it even more brilliant than himself. If he felt that this was a reflection on himself, increasing his invincibility,

SELECTED LABORS OF THE SUN

...Then the Sun was given, as a babe, to the Sisters of Fate. They carried him to the end of time, faithful Daystar following and wagging its tail. They lay him there alone and set the Daystar in a torch to keep him company, and to draw its attention. When they left, it came—the Wolf That Devours All. It swallowed baby Sun and Daystar, but they shone through fiercely, and as the shadows fled it from within, it was torn inside-out. Then the babe emerged a boy, with his faithful flame well at hand, and the Sisters came to take him home.

Another labor was to test his heart.

The Primordials took away his star, his only friend, and made nine others. They set all ten in the sky and gave him a bow, telling him to strike them down before Creation was burned away. Knowing he would not risk a shot that would kill his friend, the nine suns coerced the Daystar into a game. The suns danced and whirled around one another until they were as a single flame, obscuring the Daystar. So, the young Sol Incarnate loaded his bow with a mighty tree and fired it into the horizon, knowing fetch was the game his star loved best. When it was safely away, he saw the others did not know the game and struck them down, adding their flames to his own.

Yet another would test his virtue.

For this he was delivered Kimberly, who carried him to the end of the world on a barque out of her depths. Holding the Daystar on his head, the Sun rode to the furthest point west, tempted all the way by the Sea That Marched Against The Flame, who hated him and wished for nothing more than to drown his baby star in her waters. Were he to stray from his task, she had the right to sink his ship and squelch his fires forever. But he resisted her seductions and stayed true to his task, setting the sun in the farthest West at the end of the day. When he touched the Daystar to her waters and it was not doused, she screamed. Then he revealed to her the truth: he had completed his task not out of fear of death, but because it was what he said he would do. Once again, he returned home triumphant.

And another would test his mettle.

Carrying the Daystar in a lantern, the young Sol Incarnate stood upon the snout of Isidoros; one hand holding the lantern, two steering his tusks, he drove the Black Boar That Twists the Skies deep into the Faraway, where they did battle with the enemy of the Primordials and together knocked it down.

But it was in one of the last and most dangerous tests that the Sun learned its true purpose.

By some deception, the Shadow of All Things took the Daystar to a cave at the end of the universe, in which horrors and detritus cast away during the birth of Creation had been sealed. With the light of existence thus vanquished, the Ultimate Darkness rejoiced, for only he knew the secret location of the cave. Yet when the Guarding Star returned from that oblivion, bearing a light which shone stronger than before, the All-Shadow felt fear, for in the cave light had been swallowed up in true darkness, but only greater light had emerged.

he would come to be disavowed of that notion when the first Solars struck blows against him. Ironically, he had been tricked into creating a light which gave real power to the Shadow of All Things. To ensure his decision would not be profaned, the Holy Tyrant then looked upon Ignis Divine, whom his sibling had brought forth to be Sol Incarnate. Infusing him with indomitable will, the King of the Primordials declared that the Unconquered Sun be the unquestioned and absolute commander of the Daystar, answerable directly and exclusively to the Holy Tyrant.

The Daystar and the Unconquered Sun have one of the most unique 'dominion and god' relationships ever established. The Daystar is an attempt to resemble a perfect and limitless form, which allowed for the creation of the Unconquered Sun, who came to represent this and so much more. But their designs are interwoven, so that the Unconquered Sun is not merely a representation of the Daystar; unlike so many other gods, he is the incarnation of his dominion, and in so many ways, it was created to give him form. The Daystar gives the Unconquered Sun a basis to exist, and by existing, the Unconquered Sun excels to an even greater standard, increasing the effect of the Daystar, so that it encompasses more than what it began as. Then, as it expands its ability to represent him, he excels further, and the process is repeated again and again until the quantification is

insensate and starts over at the beginning: ultimate perfection. The Sun, Unconquered.

Not only is the Daystar the dominion and source of the Unconquered Sun, but it also is like his familiar; heeding his call, loyal, faithful and true. Like a daiklave, it is the artifact which saw him through the start of his legend and will see him through to its ending. It is the chariot he rides across the sky and the weapon with which he waged war on the enemies of the Primordials and Creation. Together with the Daystar, the Unconquered Sun completed all the labors tasked to him by his creators and was deemed worthy of existence by the Em-pyrean Chaos. Our Guarding Star was then given charge over Creation, protecting it from the Wyld and other threats beyond Creation's shores, and when such a need arose, it was the Daystar that accompanied him into the great beyond to fight his maker's wars.

Together with the Daystar, the Unconquered Sun is the greatest force ever in existence, and with it he patrolled the universe, ensuring the safety of all within his charge. Then one day, disenchanted with a reality that could not match his hopes, the Unconquered Sun quit the helm of the Daystar, leaving it to Nysela. No more are its great adventures or voyages into the beyond; it has been decades since its master last walked its halls and centuries since its mighty weapons were

THE SILENT CANNONS OF THE DAYSTAR

The Dirigible Engine Daystar is the mightiest battlestation ever constructed, putting to shame even the awesome Titan directional fortresses of the Solar Deliberative. Helmed by the Unconquered Sun and his loyal crew of divinities, it was designed to act as a command center and primary weapon for the world's disparate armies, enabling Creation to fight off extinction-level threats up to and including raksha assaults numbering into the billions or even attacks by hostile Primordials from the unknown and unknowable reaches of the deep Wyld.

And yet, the few sketchy surviving records of the Primordial War, including the oral histories related by its Exalted survivors, make no mention of the sun playing a major role in the War. Why?

The Unconquered Sun stood aboard the Daystar's bridge, peering down at Creation far below, as the first Solar army made its first mass charge against the assembled ranks of the Primordials' loyalist races, led by their most militant souls. He considered striking the Clouds That Rain Teeth from the sky with his Apollyon Cannon, of burning a line through the ranks of the enemy with the Breath of the Sun.

In the end, he did nothing.

First Age savants and historians spent centuries speculating on the reason for the Most High's inaction, and the issue was still unresolved at the turn of the Age. In truth, the Unconquered Sun only deigned to explain his reasoning once. The recipient of his words was a Solar firebrand who had climbed the tumbled bones of the freshly slain Star-Spanning Serpent and snuck aboard the station, intent on commandeering its apocalyptic weapons and decisively turning the tide of the War. The impetuous young woman risked her life, struggling

valiantly against the Unconquered Sun to arrest the controls of the Daystar, ultimately falling to his unassailable might. She was not slain. Rather, Ignis Divine took the young Rathesian native aside and asked her to look beyond the bloodshed of tomorrow to the Age that waited beyond. Creation could and would endure without the Primordials, he said, but not without the sun. Bringing the Daystar into the War, he believed, would make it a priority target, and the combined might of the Primordials was potentially capable of ruining the brightest point in the world they had made. Could the sun's flames withstand being smothered by the chill of Hunanura, the Heart-Frost Unending? Likely so. But what if the borders of Creation were closed to the sun's entry by Mabhaddoth, Architect of Locks? Perhaps it could force a path anyway. But what if that path should leave it stranded in the dreams of Oramus, the Dragon Beyond the World?

And yet, the Unconquered Sun said, if these were the only dangers of unleashing the Daystar upon the Primordials, he would have done so in a heartbeat. What he rejected most of all was the notion of the Daystar becoming a herald of destruction in the eyes and hearts of Creation's inhabitants. Its guns were designed to be deployed against horrors from without—not to scour the world down to its molten foundations. The Exalted, he explained, would carry the day, and the sun would be a symbol of their benevolent and mighty presence among men. He would not unleash his ultimate flames and transform the sun into a harbinger of dread and a symbol of imminent destruction in all the Ages to follow.

In the end, the young Solar saw reason in his words, and was sent down from the Daystar to rejoin her army, carried aboard the Chirmirajen. This was the first meeting between the Unconquered Sun and Merela, but not the last.

armed or used. The Daystar continues its unwavering course across the sky, day after day, a marvel beyond compare, its true power forgotten, its potential scope unguessed, largely beyond the consideration of god and man alike.

FROM THEN 'TIL NOW

For as closely as the first Exalted worked with the Unconquered Sun, the Chosen have walked the Daystar's halls only rarely. A command meeting was held in its war room in the early days of the Aftershock War, when the peak of Meru was briefly rendered uninhabitable. In the seventh century of the First Age, a small team of Twilight engineers were allowed aboard to synchronize certain of its weapon systems with the Realm Defense Grid. The Unconquered Sun invited the remaining survivors of the Primordial War to a banquet held in their honor upon the 1,000th anniversary of the defeat of the titans. In total, the Exalted are known to have visited the Daystar only five times since the end of the Primordial War, though it was rumored that Queen Merela made more frequent, clandestine visits to the Chariot of the Most High.

In truth, the Daystar has been generally off limits to the Exalted as a whole. The Solars well knew this was a point not to press with the Unconquered Sun, for the Daystar was beyond the boundaries of their mandate to rule Creation and was the sovereign dominion of Ignis Divine. As such, it has remained out of play for most of recorded history. After the Usurpation, the Sidereals tried to get an injunction from the Bureau of Heaven ordering Nysela to turn over the key to the Daystar to the Bureau of Destiny, citing the dire need for its power in the era to come. Nysela fought this injunction bitterly, and when it became clear that her recriminations would soon bring a response from the Unconquered Sun, the Maidens quietly advised the Sidereals to give up their case.

Nysela has remained the attendant master of the Daystar since then, and she has honored the Unconquered Sun's sanctuary by keeping it out of the hands of the Exalted and interloper spirits who would profane its purpose and misuse its power. However, the Goddess of Righteous Ideals and Heavenly Duty is so busy flying the Daystar that she sometimes has no time to check up on errant gods personally, opting instead to bring them to her on the Daystar using the Chirmirajen, where they might answer for their derelictions. Not so for the Chosen—from the Usurpation up until the breaking of the Jade Prison, not a single Exalt has set foot on the Daystar. But now certain wayward souls amongst the newly returned Solars have found the solar monorail pulled to a stop in front of them, its doors sliding open in wordless demand that they board and be carried to the Daystar. There Nysela will lecture them about their duty to Creation or even force them to crew the Daystar for the day, an experience which not only gives them an appreciation for hard work, but also reveals to them the true scope of their potential.

Though it still provides numerous benefits to Creation just by dint of its existence, the Daystar has long ceased to be a direct player in the course of Creation's history. Yet as the Age of Sorrows winds onward, that may very well change. Were you able to board the Daystar and assume its controls, what would history tell of your deeds?

CHARIOT OF THE MOST HIGH

Each day in Creation begins with the rising of the sun. It peeks up over the edge of the world from the depths of Pure Chaos, sometimes emitting a brief green flash as it passes through the Pole of Wood and into the skies of Creation. The green flash lasts only a few seconds, amounting to the total time it takes to pass through the Pole of Wood. Within the Pole, dawn's early light filters in from all angles, never revealing the true position of the sun except to suggest that it is 'up' relative to the location of the person experiencing it. Occasionally crimson spirals may be found, thousands of miles long, composed of blazing trees and vines in a whorl around a cinder, suggesting the ingress of the Daystar, but this has never been directly witnessed. Such spectacles are brief and quickly subsumed back into the Pole, doing no harm to its integrity. Strong emanations of solar fire from within the Pole of Wood serve to generate particularly brilliant orange and red horizons, as if the eastern skies were in flames.

Banked at daybreak, the sun's flames are steadily turned up and up as it rises through the morning, until the Daystar reaches its zenith directly above the peak of the Imperial Mountain. This incredible display shames the Pole of Fire in its sheer intensity, radiating killing heat miles out into the celestial void. Far below, on the surface of Creation, the sun's light is merely warm, nourishing crops, melting snow, and baking the dry deserts of the South.

As men and women across Creation finish their lunches and return to their labors, so too does the sun continue its course. It departs the Blessed Isle and sails above the endless blue depths of the West, dropping low as evening approaches. Again the mighty orb's flames are banked, so that it does not boil away the ocean and unleash great typhoons of killing steam on an entire Direction; at last, the sun passes back into Pure Chaos through the Pole of Water. Inside the Pole of Water, sundown tends to turn the Pole all the shades of sunset—shimmering golds wavering into luxurious oranges deepening into heart-stopping reds—as the sun appears to sink beneath the waves and rise into the sky simultaneously, until it has fully departed for the Wyld. Sometimes this exit is cause for spectacular displays of color across the entire horizon, as if all the hues of flame were being reflected through the soft and refractive Essence of water that permeates the Western sky. As with sunrise, a rare green flash sometimes occurs just as the sun sinks below the edge of the world.

The miracle of the sun's procession plays out every day, witnessed by all who dwell on the surface of Creation. It is little pondered, save by the most esoteric of savants, and understood even less.

DIRIGIBLE ENGINE DAYSTAR

The sun flies through Creation's skies throughout the day, making its ageless pilgrimage from East to West. From the ground it seems to be a blazingly incandescent coin, too bright to look directly upon. Were an observer to grow wings and attempt to fly up toward the sun (as some Exalted do, from time to time) he would fly all day and all night, and all day and all night again, and the sun would still seem a distant, burning coin. It is unknown to savants of the Second Age precisely how

high in the celestial vault the Daystar rides at its highest point, but surviving records of the Solar Deliberative reveal that a Chariot of the Blazing Sun summoned upon the peak of the Imperial Mountain at the first crack of dawn's light is incapable of reaching the Daystar before it passes from Creation. The trip is daunting indeed, even for the Exalted.

For those with the perseverance or cleverness to actually draw near the sun, the 'coin' swells to become a sphere of incomparable flame. It is difficult to judge the Daystar's precise size in the emptiness of the Celestial Vault, but it is massive by any standards.

This is as close as most intruders will ever come to the Unconquered Sun's most private sanctum; if the Daystar's interior has ever been breached by force, the histories of Heaven and Creation do not record the incident.

For those invited within, the sun's interior contains wonders even stranger than its marvelous outer surface.

WITHIN THE SUN

The sun is a crucible of blazing Essence winding around a gyre of devastating aspect. A ponderous Primordial engine that eats the Wyld, the Daystar is a trauma in the very fabric of reality, rendering down universal principles in unbound entropic fire and feeding on primal chaos to project an image of ultimate power to the farthest ends of existence. Its surface is a blinding riot of disasters: prominences rising like mountains, solar flares blasting off through the cosmos, and magnetic Essence storms that can swallow entire nations. Beneath its immense surface, massive layers of apocalyptic force grind together in an infinite cataclysm of shinmaic screaming and sunquakes that shatter substance down to composite motes.

As much as it is a reality-stabilizing, life-sustaining nexus from a distance, the sun annihilates whatever passes close to it. Were an intruder to somehow permeate the surface of the sun and not be immediately destroyed—and presuming they could somehow see through to its core—they would bear witness to eruptions of staggering size, torrential waves of gravity and spatial distortion, endless incomparable solar flame, and the construct which is capable of producing such power. Glimmering at its depths, so distant as to be barely visible from the edge of the interior, is a solid shape: the appearance of stable form amongst the raging conflagration that makes up the rest of the interior.

The core of the Daystar, seen through the flames it produces, consists of layer upon layer of interlocked plates, their edges turned outward in jagged points, giving the superstructure the look of a foreboding five-metal star. Hundreds of massive vents spew sunfire from between these jags and spikes, most of which are orichalcum, but some of which have the colors of starmetal and obsidian. Deep, layered chambers alive with molten red and white jade and ringed by adamant hide photovoltaic Essence collectors which aid in moderating and intensifying the sun's flames. The greater elemental dragon of fire Gardullis is found here, wound around and through the superstructure, his segments locked into place by great shifting plates.

THE FINAL REDOUBT OF THE UNCONQUERED SUN

The Daystar's core superstructure could best be described as an engine-star, birthing its own tremendous flames and drawing them around itself in an invincible sphere. The core itself has the appearance of five metals, but in reality its physical substance transcended that definition long ago, when it was consumed by and became part of the Primordials' solar flame. Now it exists to perpetuate these same fires, and to keep safe those held within its heart, so that they may perform the labors tasked to them.

LAY OF THE STATION INDOMITABLE

Inside the Daystar's core is a complex of outstanding size and scope: stunning Primordial artifice pulling double duty as both warship and engine. This massive, sprawling network of hallways, decks, and chambers is properly known as the Station Indomitable. It is the battleship of the Unconquered Sun, the heart of the Daystar, and it is from here that Sol Incarnate rose to embody his eponymous title.

The Dirigible Engine's interior is broken into quarters named after the four Virtues. Listed below are the major features of each quarter; several locations remain unlisted, and the contents of some are known only to the Most High.

The Temperance Quarter contains the Chamber Omnipotent, the Eyrie of the Watchdog's Faith, and the Furnace Emphyrean. The Valor Quarter holds the Cup of Fire, Ward of the Crusader, the workshop of Bannery Bu and the Gates of Hali-dom. The Compassion Quarter harbors the Light of Day Cathedral, the Shrine of Hours and the Den of Reason. Lastly, the Conviction Quarter maintains Gransol Terminus, the Phyrum, and the Ward of the Dragon.

These quarters exist across several decks and layers and are connected by lifts, stairwells, bridges and promenades. Mono-rail depots connect each quarter by way of synaptic Nirvikalpa gateways, greatly reducing the amount of time it takes to traverse the vast engine-warship complex of the solar barque.

GRANSOL TERMINUS

The paddock for the Chirmirajen, Gransol Terminus is the Daystar's chief landing, where those summoned to the Station Indomitable may stand in judgment. Without authorization it is impossible to proceed further into the Daystar. Because of this, Gransol Terminus is always the first and often the only part of the Daystar a visitor will ever see. What they see is this: a long plaza floor, thousands of interlinking suns swooping toward a grand orichalcum door on which a sunburst emblem has been engraved. Around them, the walls are thick pillars wrapped with depictions of ancient, nameless saints and aurichim soaring through pearl- and gold-colored clouds to do battle with unseen ethereal warriors. Above, the ceiling is a fresco depicting Cytherea, the Dragon's Shadow, and the Emphyrean Chaos watching the sun rise. To the left of the grand orichalcum door is an arch over a stair that leads to suffering, and the word above it in Old Realm means corrupt. There is also an arch to the right of the orichalcum door. Through it, a

stair rises into grandeur, and the word above it in Old Realm means just.

At this point, a visitor who wishes to escape the Daystar must return to the Chirmirajen. It sits behind them in a long tunnel which extends deceptively far in both directions, and opens into the raw uncapped flames of the sun. As for the Chirmirajen itself, when it pulls into this dock, it comes in blazing with an aura of heat. Dozens of nozzles in the ceiling fire jets of freezing elemental Essence over its surface to cool it down, leaving it coated in a thin layer of ice that shatters when the door opens. The tunnel is also ambulatory, capable of detaching from Gransol Terminus and carrying the entire railway to different parts of the Daystar.

But presuming one does not or cannot beat a hasty retreat, there is the grand orichalcum door at far end of the plaza. Through this door awaits Nysela, Charioteer of the Daystar. When she is ready to give audience, the attending character hears the movement of great metal intestines grinding gears and slamming doors. Then there is a burst of steam from bearings in the floor and the whole door pivots like a turntable with the Siege Honaris attached. Inside it is Nysela, the captain-in-trust, who works ceaselessly at the pumps and bellows of the Daystar and has little patience for those who do not live up to their own promise.

Nysela cares not for affiliation, nor situation. She speaks equally to Abyssal and Infernal Exalted as she does to Solars. In her mind, evil is not an allegiance but an action, and if she has called someone before her, their actions are all she is interested in. Chiefly she wants to know one thing from any of the Exalted who find themselves before her: What will you do in the service of Creation? To this effect, her words are like a drill, cutting through the strata of Yozi propaganda and Neverborn taint to evoke the true purpose of the Chosen standing before her.

THE CHAMBER OMNIPOTENT: BRIDGE OF THE DAYSTAR

The Daystar is a weaponized force of nature. In addition to the passive blessings and protections it grants to the world below, it may also be flown, harnessed, and aimed at those who would threaten Creation, from within or without. As the aerial battleship of Creation's skies, the Dirigible Engine's bridge is the point from which its cataclysmic weapons may be commanded and its rigid course altered. From this sacred chamber, one could even fly the sun beyond the boundaries of Creation—though it has not undertaken such a sojourn since the First Age.

The first impression of any visitor to the Chamber Omnipotent is one of sheer, overwhelming power. The deck below thrums with the strain of channeling torrents of Essence to and from the bridge's command stations. The air is charged, and seems to carry an electric surge into the lungs with each breath. The sensation is far more intense than standing atop even the most potent of uncapped demesnes. And this is merely the result of standing on the deck.

The bridge is dominated by a curved front wall, formed of a solid sheet of solar Essence. An unblemished vista of raging flames can be faintly made out behind it. With a word and a gesture, the Daystar's commander may summon live views of

any point in Creation touched by the light of the sun, or project archived information on known enemies of the world. The dossiers on Malfeas and the Ebon Dragon are particularly detailed.

Several command stations hug the wall beneath this screen, each responsible for regulating particular elements of the Daystar's flight and controlling a different suite of apocalyptic weaponry. Their surfaces bristle with levers, toggles, buttons and Essence-responsive crystals, all completely unmarked; their long-absent operators were expected to know each function of their station by heart. Now they stand empty, long abandoned by the crew who once sat in support of the Unconquered Sun.

Crewing one of the bridge's command stations is an exhausting task; the consoles are supercharged with solar Essence, which visibly leaps from their levers and dials at a touch, forming tiny pops and sparks between the fingers of an operator and the mechanisms themselves. At first an operator feels limitless power humming beneath their fingertips, but even routine direction of this vast power quickly proves physically demanding, much less the complex orchestra of cosmic destruction that occurs when the Daystar enters battle. Emotionally, the experience of working the control stations is something else altogether, filling the operator with a boundless and positive energy; the final result is that crewing the Daystar feels more like a revelation than a job.

The walls of the Chamber Omnipotent are festooned with display screens, dials, gauges and meters displaying readings from throughout the station, all inevitably within optimal ranges. Bronze tubes permit communication with other decks. The floor is dominated by an enormous mosaic depicting a kneeling warrior with a face like a Western tribal mask, great gnashing teeth, and headless serpents twined about his arms, carrying a set of wind-fire wheels which resemble sun and moon. The lumen Rahu sleeps within the mosaic, ready to leap forth at the first hint of violence upon the bridge.

The rear of the Chamber Omnipotent is festooned with bronze tracks and enormous orichalcum gears, with a great empty tunnel leading back and down into the wall. This is where the Siege Honaris normally rests, the goddess Nysela (see *Glories of the Most High—The Unconquered Sun*, p. 14) seated within, guiding the sun on its daily course across the sky.

THE SIEGE HONARIS

When the Unconquered Sun held the bridge of the Daystar, he did so from the Siege Honaris. Otherwise known as the command center of the Daystar, the Siege Honaris is a mobile station that carries the Charioteer of the Daystar—now Nysela—through various parts of the station, allowing her to remain at the sun's controls even while attending to other sections of the interior.

The Siege Honaris is an enormous, open-topped dome roughly the size of a yeddim, and normally dominates the rear wall of the Chamber Omnipotent. Its interior is arranged around a pivoting, straight-backed chair. A dizzying spiral of levers, pulleys, command keys, cranks, throttles and receptor crystals surrounds Nysela, tilted slightly inward, eager to be used. A rack curves out above the Charioteer, from which a colony of levers, handles and switches depend. A forest of pedals surrounds the command seat, which can swivel to easily

THE SIEGE PERILOUS

The wheel in the Siege Honaris is an auxiliary backup. The true captain's wheel sits high atop the bridge, affixed to an immense retractable folded-pillar mechanism near the ceiling. It is the most eye-catching object amidst a chamber of wonders: a classic ship's wheel with a sunburst pattern laid across its spokes, forged of orichalcum purified in the core of the sun. The arm extends the wheel down to the Daystar's pilot upon command, and in this mode the sun's command module is known as the Siege Perilous. Making such a request is inadvisable for any save Ignis Divine himself. Any mortal attempting to sit the Siege Perilous would surely be struck dead on the spot. Nysela has only found it necessary to take the wheel twice during her time piloting the Chariot of the Most High. On both occasions it felt like holding onto a lightning bolt, and she was unable to sleep or even rest for a month afterward.

The Unconquered Sun has been known to comment that he finds the feel of the true wheel under his hand relaxing.

reach them. The Siege Honaris's front is dominated by a massive naval wheel of white jade which seems to burn from within with a ruddy orange light—the only naturally-occurring white jade ever found at the Pole of Fire.

This constellation of controls is capable of operating most of Daystar's primary systems, and it is here that Nysela spends the majority of each day busily working the cranks and levers that adjust the sun's course. Operating the Siege Honaris was demanding for the Most High, and is doubly so for Nysela—less because she must perform the Unconquered Sun's work with only half as many arms, and more due to the fact that she has been forced to learn through practice the controls that Ignis Divine embodied.

The exterior of the Siege Honaris is almost pure function: Its sides and back are festooned with gears, cables, tracks and clamps, which grant it mobility along a series of rails, chains, and pulleys built into the station. In general, Nysela can reach any point within the superstructure in less than a minute, propelled through metallic darkness amidst a cacophony of clanking gears and rattling chains.

Since its abandonment by its first and most famous captain, the image of Nysela furiously working the levers and cranks of the Siege Honaris has become synonymous with the Daystar. It is no secret to the gossips of Heaven that the controls the Unconquered Sun absented have become partly hers, and marked by her presence. A series of markings along the nose of the Siege Honaris tally the number of behemoths and raksha she has shot down. Decorations hang from the overhead levers, mostly an assortment of talismans and trinkets she has collected from derelict gods and their stunned priests. Legend in Yu-Shan holds that a particular toy roosts on the dash behind Nysela: a bobble-headed doll in the likeness of Chejop Kejak, taken from a Sidereal assassin who escaped after making an attempt on Nysela during a Carnival of Meeting. Nysela has left a standing offer in Yu-Shan for someone to collect the toy from her while she is in the city. No one ever has.

EYRIE OF THE WATCHDOG'S FAITH

When Sun and the Daystar faced the trials of their progenitors, they did so alone. This changed after the Guarding Star was installed as Creation's defender. At the height of its commission, the Dirigible Engine was crewed by many gods, and not all of them worked the stations of the Chamber Omnipotent. The Eyrie of the Watchdog's Faith was a crucial center of information and organization for the crew of the Daystar. It served not only as the security hub of the Station Indomitable, but also as a monitoring station which could detect threats to Creation from within her borders and beyond. The Eyrie also served as the Daystar's war room. Its center is dominated by a round platform around which the Unconquered Sun's closest allies would gather to witness his plans unfolding on a plain of Essence maps and photomotonic displays.

But the Unconquered Sun needed no heads-up displays, no monitoring artifice, no warning systems, and had no need for maps or diagrams. All the awareness contained within the Eyrie was born within the Essence of his senses. However, he recognized that his crew could not see all that he could see or know all that he could know, so it was here that he counseled them on his ideologies and briefed them on future plans of action. It was also here that he bid a number of his crew remain on guard to hone the warning senses of the Daystar and make them their own, preparing them for a time when he would not or could not be there.

The Eyrie is a large octagonal room split into outer and inner wards. On the walls of the outer ward, massive screens thrum and pulse with spectral displays, showing Essence grids overlaying Creation, as well as weather patterns, tectonic activity, and the movements of the Wyld. At a moment's notice they can be ordered to display any image which the Light of Day Cathedral can pick up, and such images can further be broadcast from the Eyrie to the Chamber Omnipotent. This kind of cross-referencing is found throughout all of the Daystar's systems, but nowhere as often as the Eyrie of the Watchdog's Faith, which taps all the sensory systems of the Daystar and further communicates back to key locations across the Station Indomitable.

Eight crew posts are situated around the outer ward, one for each wall. Here characters can borrow the senses of the Daystar by donning a special helm that lowers from each terminal at a command. The stations of the outer ward use scrying mechanics, subaural imaging, Wyld-tracing static, and photosphere resonance assemblers to trace for threats to Creation. They also monitor the interior of the Station Indomitable for threats, by use of sonic pulse detection and foreign-Essence moderators. At the head of the Eyrie sits an iron gong with a map of the Daystar chiseled into it, each room represented by a circle along a number of lines representing hallways. When something is amiss the circles light up with soft Essence and the gong thrums gently at intervals until security has been cleared. When a more serious threat appears it tolls louder, sounding strangely like the bark of a great hound, its glow changing from a soft bluish-white to a livid red. At every toll this candescent display intensifies until the red light crawls the hallways in search of the threat, drawing with it every lumen it passes along the way.

HELMING THE OUTER WARD

Those stationed around the outer ward of the Eyrie may find themselves donning the control helmets found at each terminal, in order to make full use of the Daystar's senses. In conjunction with the control consoles, the helm allows the user to send sonic pulses out from the Daystar, which can be used to listen to the underways and passages beneath Creation, to track the movements of the darkbrood or hone in on the sound of a behemoth's heartbeat. Each station also features a number of advanced scrying mechanics which lends the user a number of delicate and intricate options for scanning Creation for important persons or things. Wyld-tracing static systems allow a skillful user to measure and detect any large anomalies in the Wyld, by scanning the Daystar's most distant emanations. Such a practice takes incredible skill and concentration, given the unreliable nature of information coming back from the Wyld, and that the Daystar's Essence dwindles the farther it travels out of Creation, making it harder to read. This particular system also carries a danger to those using it: there is always the chance for those probing the Wyld to have their minds attacked by terrifying intellects lingering within the tides of chaos. Using the Daystar's senses is not without risk.

While the outer ward is dedicated to gathering information, the inner ward is where data is processed. A mechanism resembling a large circular stage rises up from a platform at the center of the room. The mechanism can synch up with the monitoring systems of the Light of Day Cathedral to produce detailed images from Creation, by projecting them from a membrane of solid light across the surface of the stage. When the Daystar detects danger or when someone from the outer ward orders it to visualize something they have detected, images flare into existence above the inner ward like an iconic anima display. The inner ward is also able to further intensify its view to trace the Dragon Lines under Creation, and can use Essence-mapping to locate demesnes, shadowlands, Wyld zones, and hellscapes on Creation's surface. It may also establish a link to the Realm Defense Grid, using the Grid's war manses to provide precision data on targets in Creation. The Daystar further enhances the Sword of Creation by way of the Magnus Protocol, which provides the innermost stronghold of the Imperial Manse with coordinates that apply to targets normally outside of the grid, such as just outside Creation or within the Dome of Heaven. Using these coordinates, the Sword of Creation may even bank a shot off the Daystar to increase its range, or to mark targets for the Daystar's guns, increasing their accuracy.

The inner ward was the staging point for many of the Unconquered Sun's most daring and legendary plans. Because of this, he sought to further protect it. With command authorization, a user may cause the inner ward to rise into the air, where an occulted five-metal blast-shield will close over the entire inner ward, sealing it inside. As it is, the sun is an insuperable cosmic force, generating so much Essence that time and space are twisted around it and crushed, making attempts to sorcerously penetrate it with one's senses impossible. This final addition to the inner ward was made in the event of the Daystar being overrun with enemies. When it is enclosed, those within can-

not be sensed by any form of magic. This feature was something the Unconquered Sun personally added to the Daystar, and was pivotal to allowing the Incarnae to plot against their Primordial masters during those desperate times when Ligier was aboard the Daystar and a more choice location would have carried even greater risk of discovery.

Inside this occulted vault are six mirror-like curvatures that hang from the ceiling. They are now dark, but long ago they commanded a view of Silver Chair and the Five Maiden Towers across its surface. With his voice alone the Unconquered Sun could summon the other Incarnae, who would appear within these mirrors as surely as if they were within the chamber. Who knows what would suffice to bring these mirrors back into operation—or if the Incarnae would even answer the hail of one who could manage such a feat? In any case, once enclosed, one can safely coordinate information and even commands to the rest of the Daystar. Should Nysela ever be forced to retreat from the Chamber Omnipotent, she will surely close herself up within the central vault of the Eyrie, where she may spoil an invader's plans to control the Chariot of the Most High.

THE PHYRIUM

It was in this solemn chamber that the crimes of divinites were judged and punished during the Time of Glory, in a court formally known as the Most Exalted Station of Absolute Justice. It was from the Phyrum that the Unconquered Sun named the Shadow of All Things the first creature of darkness. From the Phyrum, the corrupt, wicked, and treacherous were weighed in the balance, and those found guilty were most commonly sentenced to burn in the cleansing flames of the sun. From the hallowed pulpit of the Phyrum, the Unconquered Sun dispensed the first true justice his newborn universe had ever known. The rulings and decrees that spilled forth from the Phyrum shook the world, and were a topic of discussion well into the First Age. Even the Maidens would sit, enthralled by the order dictated by their Guarding Star, and watch as he largely wrote and innovated the concept of justice.

Though Ignis Divine wished for his court to be the one source of unremitting justice in a chaotic Creation, there were occasions when he was obligated to punish gods for acts of rebellion against the Primordial hegemony he himself despised. The souls of the Holy Tyrant were often outraged by his leniency in such cases, though their master could rarely stir himself to be concerned with the petty affairs of delinquent gods. For the Unconquered Sun's part, each unjust law he was made to consider and circumvent only hardened his heart against the Primordials, hastening the day of the Divine Rebellion.

The Phyrum continued to serve as the highest court among the divine order even during the Primordial War. While it no longer tried gods for disloyalty to the Primordials, many examples were made of war profiteers, malingerers, and traitors to the revolution. On no less than seven occasions the chamber witnessed the trial of Celestial Exalted, on charges of treason and collusion with the Primordials.

But that was long ago, and this is now. The Most Exalted Station of Divine Justice has not convened to hear a case since the end of the First Age, leaving even the most heinous crimes against the order of Heaven to the fallible discretion of Yu-

Shan's magistrates, and the worst of atrocities against Creation to the corrupt censors of the four Directions. Now the Phyrium is simply a vast, empty chamber. The room is high and circular, towering up and up until its ceiling is lost in a web of mazy darkness strung with distant strands of glittering light upon which the Essence of the Maidens once perched, on those occasions when they wished to observe a particularly portentous trial or judgment. The walls are black volcanic glass, shivered with empty cracks in which streams of molten orichalcum once flowed, flaring higher and brighter as trials progressed. Two high and narrow galleries line the walls flanking the great doors that grant admittance to the Phyrium, and it is at these stations that the Hidden Judges of the Secret Flame once stood vigil over the Court of Absolute Justice. No more. Now the walls are dark and the galleries empty, and no testimony is heard in the Phyrium.

Still, the room was not known for its observers, but for the accused and their judge. As such, it is singularly dominated by the central floor whence testimony was given, and by the high pulpit at which the Unconquered Sun once stood, casting all other features into relative insignificance. The pulpit, set at the back of the chamber, towers a full 20 feet into the air, dressed in orichalcum and bearing a plate marked with the emblem of the Phyrium. That plate bears the legend of the Phyrium and the simple sign of a spear twined with laurel leaves—an emblem that also adorned the Hall of the Deliberative, after the Unconquered Sun acknowledged his Chosen as the Lawgivers.

It is here that the Unconquered Sun stood in judgment of gods and Exalted alike, peering into the hearts of the accused and issuing pardons or condemnation in accordance with what he saw. Below the pulpit is the floor where the accused gave testimony—an empty expanse of invisible force suspending suspected criminals inches above the open, roaring white-orange inferno of the sun. Those innocent of the crimes leveled against them took comfort from this holy fire, finding in it the courage to speak the truth as best they knew it, while the guilty felt all their guile and lies evaporate upon their tongues. At a gesture from the pulpit this barrier could vanish, dropping convicted traitors into the infinite furnace that is the core of the Daystar, where their Essence would be consumed by an unparalleled intensity of heat, light and gravity, transformed into fuel for Creation's defense. Such was the most common judgment handed down against the guilty, though on occasion the Unconquered Sun was given to more poetically just (though no less harsh) sentences.

Overshadowed by the grand architecture and a haunting sense of abandonment, one part of the Phyrium tends to go unnoticed. The ledger, a great, gilded tome, sits in an unobtrusive alcove near the galleries of the Judges. This book is a record of every case the Unconquered Sun ever tried, including criminal charges, verdict and final sentence. Only the Unconquered Sun may cause the book to display such information; for all others, it is simply a list of defendants, including the names of several Exalted and all the Yozis. The final defendant tried by the Unconquered Sun was himself, as the final entry bears his name.

THE CUP OF FIRE

A riot of color assaults any visitor who enters the Cup of Fire through one of its four doors, announcing not only the magnificent grandeur of the prize that sleeps at the heart of the chamber, but also the terrible danger that awaits any who would seek to abscond with it.

The Cup of Fire is massive, spanning better than 500 yards. It has no ceiling to speak of, nor walls—rather than ending in definite boundaries, the borders of the room instead seem to fade away in a soft haze of golden light, rising to a bright azure above, which lends the impression of an open sky. Closer examination of these subtle borders reveals a series of tiny interlocking pyramids forged of raw Essence, rising and collapsing with the rhythm of the Unconquered Sun's breath. They are utterly impervious to damage, and their tips are as sharp as the point of a Glorious Solar Saber.

The room is dominated by a gently rising hill topped by an open-roofed shrine composed of four walls of flawless stone. The sides of the hill and the ground surrounding it are carpeted in grass the color of freshly-mined jade among which wild roses grow, their crimson hue shouting out to the eye for attention. The air carries the charge of active Essence, rolling out in waves from the shrine's gates, and the sound of chimes can be heard at some indefinite distance. Four high sets of rose quartz stairs ascend the hill, one on each of its faces, leading to the four open gates of the shrine. The outer walls of the shrine are carved with reliefs depicting fearsome guardians—a coiled azure serpent facing east, a beautiful vermillion swallow facing south, a fearsome white tiger facing west, and a mighty black tortoise facing north.

Within the gates of the shrine the humming waves of Essence intensify into something almost tangible; any active anima banner brought into the field is dragged up toward the ceiling of the chamber in long tattered streamers, carried on the currents of power rising from the center of the shrine. The floor curves down to a central bowl, tiled in polished gold in which the reflections of clouds may be observed to serenely drift, despite the absence of any such things in the faux-sky above. In the corners of the shrine grow four cherry trees, endlessly caressed by a gentle breeze, sighing out their weight of delicate pink petals. In the center of the floral storm stands a torii of crimson starmetal, and beneath it, hanging point-down in the air, is one of the greatest treasures of the Unconquered Sun—the Aidenweiss, Sword of the General Supreme of the Celestial Host. All the majesty of the Cup of Fire is a mere reflection of this weapon's power and glory, and all of the many dangers of the room exist to prevent its hilt from ever feeling the touch of an unworthy hand.

THE FURNACE EMPYREAN: FORGE OF THE SUN

One of the greatest wonders of the Daystar is hidden away behind two enormous doors of pure red jade, each eight feet high and a yard thick. When closed, the doors display a breath-takingly detailed carving of a tiered zigurat balancing the sun atop its peak. These doors have no lock, though their sheer weight makes them a challenge to open (left open for more

than a minute, they close on their own). Their purpose is not security, but to contain the cacophonous din of the room within.

Behind these doors stands the Furnace Empyrean, a workshop of singular nature and unrivaled power. The main chamber of the Forge of the Sun is defined by a cataclysmic pillar of flame roaring up through a hole in the floor and exiting the chamber through another in the ceiling. By its light, shadows are printed upon the walls of the Forge as though set in ink, and an afterimage of the flames dances in the eyes of visitors for minutes afterward—only an enchantment laid down by the merciful Unconquered Sun prevents the Furnace from permanently blinding those who seek to work at it. This white-orange beam is pulled in directly from the heart of the sun, channeled through the Daystar's superstructure to the Forge. Essence accelerators ring the pit in the floor, liberated from Autochthon's workshop millennia ago by the Primordial King, and further enhanced by having had strands of Cytherea's hair woven through them; they not only intensify the heat of the sunfire as it passes through the Forge, but fold raw Wyld energy into the beam as well. This dynamic Essence, pulled from the Daystar's Wyld-consuming engine, is burned out on contact with

the Forge, but tempers the unrivaled destructive power of the flame, imbuing it with a creative, generative spark.

In the shadow of the flame stands a massive, ornately-crafted anvil of pure orichalcum, with adoring carved Dragon Kings holding it up from below. A dozen master smiths could work at it in tandem without jostling elbows. Visitors discover the walls of the Forge to be lined with cabinets and tool racks, all apparently empty. If offered up a tithe one mote of Essence, the shelves draw in ambient Wyld energy from the pillar of sunfire to create whatever raw ingredients may be necessary—iron, charcoal, gold, alchemical reagents, and other key components of magical craftsmanship. A number of additional workbenches, kilns and smaller anvils also line the ulterior walls, allowing for crafts to be worked on a smaller scale, or for more ambitious crafters to multitask. The Furnace boasts a low, domed ceiling, decorated with a series of beautifully simple murals depicting various miracles of the Unconquered Sun. While the murals seem at first glance to be ink-work, those working the Forge soon notice that the smoke and steam of their labor collects at the ceiling, scrubbing away the existing murals and replacing them with new works rendered in soot and smoke-stains.

THE TRUE FACE OF THE CUP OF FIRE

For all the seeming serenity of the Cup of Fire, the Aidenweiss's shrine is formidably defended. First, touching or being knocked into any of the room's borders automatically inflicts three levels of lethal damage. Second, should any creature of darkness set foot upon the steps or ground of the chamber, all grass within the Cup immediately bursts into flames. This raging inferno inflicts damage as a bonfire. Furthermore, all of the roses amidst the grass explode into a whirling storm of razor-edged petals and screaming thorns, inflicting an entirely separate environmental hazard on everything in the room (Damage 5L/action, trauma 3L).

Those who would claim the Aidenweiss without the Unconquered Sun's permission behold the true face of the Cup of Fire. It is generally the last thing they ever see. The rolling hill, simple shrine, and hazy walls immediately vanish. In their place is a massive vault of flames. The victim stands within a ring of fire at the foot of the Cup; the Aidenweiss hangs above them, a jewel in the eye of a hurricane. The shrine atop the hill dissolves into a cauldron of sunfire; tendrils of lightning extend from its surface to crawl the walls of the room. This miniature sun spans 20 yards around the Aidenweiss, inflicting environmental damage of 30L/action, trauma 5L on any characters attempting to push into it. Gigantic adamant pyramids press in around this sphere of power from all angles, showing a flow of molten orichalcum between their diamond-plated segments and throwing off arcs of burning Essence inflicting five levels of lethal damage per tick to any character whose Dodge DV drops below 7. Brilliant vines of perfect green flame bound the room, sprouting roses made of fire and blood and pulsing with the heartbeat of power. The lightning crawling throughout the room is capable of coursing through the unwary, paralyzing them as they are cooked alive; each action characters must make a reflexive (Dexterity + Athletics) roll, difficulty 5, to avoid contact with any of these crackling

streams. Should a character come into contact with a lightning tendril, they are immediately subjected to a 25-success clinch which inflicts 10L per action until the intruder breaks free or dies. Waves of force ripple out from the Aidenweiss once per tick, inflicting a Blockade Movement action with 15 successes on all characters within the chamber attempting to approach it.

The room breathes; a rain of cherry blossoms flutters down almost in slow motion, covering an area spanning 50 yards from the Aidenweiss. Being touched by so much as a single blossom sets off a general alarm throughout the entire Daystar and causes the floor to exert a massive gravity well as a Shaping effect, slowing an intruder's movement to at most one yard per tick; moving five yards through the storm without touching any blossoms requires a difficulty 15 (Dexterity + Dodge) roll, or the use of a perfect dodge. The Unconquered Sun may cause the trees to cease shedding their endless blossoms for a scene by spending a single mote.

The carvings on the walls of the shrine are the slumbering forms of the lumina Cherulong, Jujak, Bayrakan and Hyonmu. All four are completely immune to the hazards of the chamber, and their awakening is the catalyst for its transformation from serene shrine to cataclysm of flame. Even in their sleep, all four have exceptionally keen senses, applying ten automatic successes to all attempts to detect any character entering the chamber. They automatically awaken should any creature of darkness set foot on the steps of the shrine or the grass of the hill. The guardians also rise from their slumber if a blossom touches the body of any unauthorized visitor or if the Aidenweiss is moved from the center of the shrine by any hand save that of the Unconquered Sun.

A thief who makes off with the Aidenweiss has 25 hours after leaving the Daystar to consider returning the Key of White Fire to the Dirigible Engine before the Gardullis is released.

FORGE GOODS

Attempting to remove tools or raw materials from the Furnace Empyrean is a fruitless endeavor, as those objects will vanish and return to the Forge's shelves and racks when removed from the premises. Attempting to remove any goods constructed within the Forge, be it raw material generated with Wyld-Shaping Technique or a hand-crafted jade daiklave, will result in the great jade doors of the Forge sealing irreversibly shut until the object in question is committed back to the sun's flames in return for a forge testimony. One who attempts to force these gates to open should soon expect a visitation from one of the Daystar's more powerful residents.

Within the confines of the Forge, visitors who know the Charm Wyld-Shaping Technique may use it to create unique components or the five magic materials. The tool racks work in the same manner—for one mote, the rack will shape any non-artifact tool a craftsman may desire, from masterwork hammers, tongs, and chisels, to the exacting tools of First Age artifice: hyperion keys, valgrind couplers, motonic flow calibrators, elysium locks, legacy braids, and more.

For more large-scale undertakings, the main control apparatus of the Forge fronts a transparent wall looking out into a massive stadium-sized bay. When activated, the chamber beyond this wall comes alive with world-shaking power; massive intersecting columns of sunfire criss-cross through wavy bursts of Wyld energy, birthing and forging breathtaking wonders of titanic size and epic scope. A pair of ports beside the control apparatus allow for more direct control of these processes. When a visitor fits his arms into these, sleeves seal down over his hands and arms all the way down to the elbow, allowing him to control massive orichalcum and starmetal arms within the chamber, which can expertly and effortlessly lift and turn objects weighing hundreds of tons, but are dexterous enough to put calligraphy on objects as small and delicate as a teacup. Touching a number of directional glyphs on the control apparatus may cause the transparent bay wall to magnify parts of the object being crafted, or display an analysis of the process. For more hands-on artisans, the forging process may be halted and the main chamber may be entered by way of a rolling bulkhead. Windblades just inside this barricade allow a crafter to fly across the vast gulf of the chamber to personally inspect his creation. The key to this bulkhead slides out of the side of the control apparatus and is the only way to open or close the door. Visitors who insist on entering the chamber are urged to keep the key with them at all times, for the incredibly lethal processes of the forging chamber will not activate so long as the barricade door is still open. The interior of the forging chamber, as well as the transparent bay wall, are indestructible in order to resist the cataclysmic reactions that sometimes come of large scale crafting, be they deliberate or the result of failure.

For epic wonders of a smaller scale, the central forge of the Furnace Empyrean is preferable to those crafters who wish to work hands-on and up close with their materials through every step of the process. A second control apparatus beside the central pillar of flame allows for the visitor to raise a mechanism from the floor on either side of the forge, each of which

sports a smaller version of the orichalcum and starmetal arms of the forging chamber. For objects that must be immersed into the column for long periods, these arms can prove quite useful, though workers who prefer to use god-forged tools to hold their creations within the very heart's flame of the sun are urged to make full use of the Forge's tool racks.

Aside from availability of materials and tools, the mechanical benefits of crafting at the Furnace Empyrean are fourfold: First, the Forge of the Sun counts as a supernal workshop, granting six dice to all crafting rolls—in all of recorded history, only the personal workshops of Autochthon himself were its peer. Second, the sun's holy flames hasten all efforts within the forge; materials almost seem to leap together, rushing toward the completion of their designer's dreams and efforts. All crafting times are halved after the use of any Charms or other magics. Third, the act of crafting an artifact within the confines of the Furnace Empyrean itself counts as an exotic component—and for this reason, there are certain world-shaking wonders that may only be crafted at the Forge of the Sun. Most, for that reason, remain purely theoretical exercises. Finally, Solar, Abyssal and Infernal Exalted working at the Forge regain five motes and one point of Willpower at each crafting interval.

The Forge of the Sun remembers every wonder ever crafted within its walls, save those it has been commanded to forget, and an authorized user may call up the schematics for these and an innumerable host of other First Age wonders. These schematics appear as three-dimensional Essence displays on the transparent wall of the forging chamber, but reveal little pertaining to the secrets by which each was forged. In order to replicate such wonders, the Furnace Empyrean always demands a price—something valuable cast into its flames. Users experience this demand as a burst of inexplicable insight and nameless certainty. The more rare or powerful the object of the schematic desired, the higher (and more personal) the Forge's price is likely to be. This same fee is applied to wholly original

FORGE TESTIMONIES

Wonders forged within the Furnace Empyrean take the form of forge testimonies, solid Essence tickets which can be redeemed in locations around Creation during certain solar phases. Each testimony is characterized by a different Solar castemark indicating the redeeming phase, along with the location where the item can be claimed. In general, simpler items can be redeemed in any location during any phase—such a ticket will bear all five castemarks. More powerful items may require the character to rip his ticket in a more difficult location. The solar phase can also be used to complicate matters, such as the case of a ticket which requires a testimony be redeemed in Thorns at twilight, at dawn in the stomach of a behemoth, or during a solar eclipse in the ruined Twilight Archdiocese of shattered Meru.

Such difficult requests should not be seen merely as an obstacle to obtaining the item, but rather as a final, vital step in the crafting process, giving the object that last perfect touch which makes it complete. Consider: What power should be born under the same sign which heralded the return of the Solar Exalted?

wonders an individual wishes to craft, should he be unable to supply all the materials or raw power to complete his invention.

Lastly, all wonders crafted within the Forge of the Sun are immediately consigned to its flames, where they are moved to the safety of Elsewhere. In the place of his handiwork, the visitor is instead given a 'forge testimony,' a ticket made of concentrated Essence, on which a Dawn, Zenith, Twilight, Night, or Eclipse castemark has been printed, along with a description of the item and a delivery point—usually somewhere in Creation. When the visitor arrives at the prescribed location and rips apart his testimony during the corresponding phase, the item appears in a flash of Essence. Furthermore, testimonies that have not been ripped can be returned to the Furnace Empyrean. Doing so guarantees the reappearance of the listed item within the crafting bay, ready for further modifications. Because of the incredible power and speed with which one may craft wonders in the Forge of the Sun, the most powerful artifacts produced are usually redeemable only upon a solar eclipse. Fortunately, there is no expiration date on these vouchers; the attached item will remain in Elsewhere for an eternity—so long as the ticket remains in tact.

For anyone so blessed as to be given the right to ply his craft within the Furnace Empyrean, the experience is vivifying, connecting one so engaged with the forces that forged the universe. On top of any other response they might have to the Forge of the Sun, Solar, Abyssal and Infernal Exalted find the room to be achingly familiar and deeply energizing—it feels almost like returning home after a long absence. This sensation only intensifies should they attempt to directly work the Forge where their Exaltations were crafted.

THE CAPTAIN'S CABIN

What most visitors think of as the cabin of the Unconquered Sun is a wide office on an upper deck of the Daystar. Both minimalist and grandiose, this office is dominated by a single mammoth desk and backlit by a massive bay window showing out into the molten white brightness of solar flames. Long ago, the Unconquered Sun cut an iconic silhouette against the flames, and his long shadow fell all the way to the door. No more. Desk and window remain, but Sol Incarnate has long vanished.

In reality, this room is not the Unconquered Sun's actual quarters, but merely a place of business. His true residence on the Daystar may be found through an inconspicuous door hidden near the absolute core of the Station Indomitable.

THE DEN OF REASON: TRUE INNER SANCTUM OF THE MOST HIGH

This is the hell that exists at the heart of the sun: a circular chamber lined with screens of solid light. In ages past, the Unconquered Sun meditated upon a dais at its center, while a spectacle played out on the walls—all the woes of the world in a thousand visions of strife. Here the Unconquered Sun watched evil unfold, darkness spreading across the land, and knew that he could not eradicate it, for he knew its source, and was powerless to lift his hand against it. What he could do was refuse to allow it to spoil his heart, but rather strengthen his resolve. What he could do was witness the suffering of mankind, hear their cries for a savior, and search the wreckage of

Creation for the appearance of those who could carry his light through the pitch.

This room was not a place of rest, but rather the antithesis of rest. When a threat to Creation would appear, the Unconquered Sun would see it here and rise from his contemplation of wicked shadow to strike evil down. This was the nature of his endless and ultimately futile battle for countless eons. This dramatically changed with the emergence of the Solar Exalted. Where there was sorrow and suffering, someone lit up like a bonfire...and ended it. Wars were fought, Creation was expanded, and the forces of evil were vanquished. Over time the horrors that assailed the Unconquered Sun became scarce, the walls of his room just that: walls.

But now the room is a flood of horrors worse than before. It is a cacophony of screams and mourning, of riots, plague, and war, of tyrant gods and demons unbound, and the forces of chaos spilling forth into Creation to enslave the hearts of men. And atop the dais where the Unconquered Sun once sat now rests the ornate sarcophagus of a murdered Solar queen.

A TOUR OF THE DAYSTAR

The Daystar's interior is filled with curiosities, more than just those listed here. What follows is a brief look at some of the most notable locales of the Station Indomitable.

THE SHRINE OF HOURS

A temple said to honor the timelessness of the Unconquered Sun, this chamber sports columns that fly to a domed ceiling of black glass. On the floor is an ornate brass sundial 30 yards across, its surface an elaborate engraving of concentric circles pulled outward from the center by the points of a star, its border framed by serpentine glyphs which indicate different times of day in an old and forgotten language. A primeval face of Ignis Divine stares out from the exact center, his countenance wreathed by a corona of two dozen grasping hands.

Five towering statues of the Maidens surround and look down upon the sundial, noting that it lacks a shadow and tells no time. A mural on the wall depicts the Sisters of Fate leaving the babe Sun alone amongst the stars as the Wolf at the End of Time approaches, its fangs gleaming in the light of galaxies.

In this room: Newly canonized saints amongst the righteous dead gather around the sundial in robes of sackcloth to meditate away their human experiences until they wear their moments like armor. As no new righteous dead have been canonized since the Unconquered Sun turned his face from Creation, this room is typically empty. Visitors who choose to spend time meditating here may find themselves recalling things long forgotten or locked away. For a tithe of one mote, paid by touching the sundial, one may turn these moments of clarity into a crystal which will show the memory within to anyone who holds it. Such memories can form particularly valuable exotic ingredients for artifacts, or form a currency which the Daystar will take in return for the use of certain of its systems. Additionally, these memories may be laid at the feet of the various statues in lieu of a tithe to that particular Maiden. Giving Venus a memory of grief or suffering results in consolation and reconciliation. Giving Mercury a memory of a journey one regrets having never taken results, eventually, in a dream that

will show the outcome had they taken it. Gifting Mars with a memory of a battle one has lost also results in a later dream in which a solution is suggested. Giving Jupiter any memory one wishes to seal away results in a temporary forgetting that lasts until they use the Shrine of Hours to get it back. Conversely, any memory tithed to Saturn is destroyed and lost forever.

WARD OF THE CRUSADER

An enormous bay sporting empty cells for two dozen warstriders, more remarkable than what it lacks is what it boasts. Four Dawning Sun Indomitable-class heavy battlecruisers are docked here, floating serenely in a massive canal 100 fathoms deep. They arrived aboard the Daystar shortly after the Usurpation, when Leviathan met with Nysela at sunset and convinced her to allow him to sail the ships into the sun and hide them for safekeeping.

The floors of the bay have been painted in several elaborate scenes. One mural on the jetty depicts the boy Ignis Divine using the Daystar as a life preserver while caught in the maelstrom of the Mouth That Swallows Reason, while another shows the Unconquered Sun out amongst the Maidens, pointing the Daystar at a dumbstruck Arad the Hunter.

In this room: An Exalt who has greatly impressed Nysela with a record of hard labor done in the service of Creation may claim one Dawning Sun Indomitable for himself, but may not take such a prize from the Daystar until he has proven himself capable of piloting such a rare and powerful treasure. Once he has shown his acumen by piloting the ship around the canal, on the next setting of the sun Nysela will open a coronal hole in the side of the Daystar, as well as the far wall of the Ward of the Crusader, bending distance between the core of the Daystar and the surface of the sun and allowing for the Dawning Sun Indomitable to be piloted out onto Creation's oceans once more.

Enterprising heroes may also find it appealing to convince Nysela to let them use the Ward of the Crusader as a staging point where they can hide powerful ships and warstriders. Such a bargain won't be made easily; one who expects to store his weapons in the Ward of the Crusader can equally be expected to use them in service of the Charioteer of the Daystar.

THE LIGHT OF DAY CATHEDRAL

On the lowest deck of the Daystar sits the Light of Day Cathedral. A black chamber hundreds of yards long, it is the observation deck of the Daystar. The only immediately visible feature of this chamber is a column of soft light illuminating a single catwalk from the entrance, to a crystal clear platform that seems to hang over the abyss. Upon this platform is a curious thing: a gilded stand from which arise 300 small orichalcum pedestals. In a better Age, each pedestal displayed one of the incarnate Solar Exalted, and if repaired, would do so again. The device is currently dim and still, however, with what looks to be a spear-hole in its side.

In this room: Aside from this curio is a crystal cube, which can float and is drawn naturally up to a hand that is raised over it. This cube has grooves on its surface that speak through the fingertips to the mind of the user in a language of instinct. With authorization from the Daystar, the visitor may use this

cube to manipulate several gigantic lenses in the room, which blaze into existence with a subaural hum as they begin to collect Essence. These lenses can display scenes from anywhere in Creation, and can be conjoined to give a complete view of the world below, as surely as if the sun's bottom were made of glass.

THE GATES OF HALIDOM

Through a circular hatch engraved with images of circling aurichim lies the Gates of Halidom. One steps through the hatch into a bewildering scenario: the craggy mouth of a cave opening out to blue skies and the light of day; a leaf-blown landing before a gigantic gate of wood, stone, and red jade.

To approach the gates evokes an eerie sensation. The feeling is not ominous or unwelcome, nor is it threatening, but the visitor feels herself getting further away from life and closer to the forces of death. Yet the feeling is not unnatural, nor does it produce a morbid fascination; rather, as strange and foreboding as it seems, it feels hallowed and tranquil, as if to gently convince the wanderer to return to the life she has left behind.

To venture forward reveals further strangeness: a wind that lifts and stirs the variegated leaves into a gently turning whorl of oranges and reds not unlike a pyre. Warmth exudes from this apparition like the attentions of the sun on a summer afternoon, and one can see the vaporous shape of the lumen Garmonada behind the still-cycling leaves, which whirl ever-faster until they seem to dance like flames.

Soon the leaves waltz away with the wind and the presence of Garmonada, and the gates swing open. The God Bridge flies out from this point—a carved-jade bridge over a mile long—rising into the air as it sits like a rainbow in the beams of a curious sun. A massive fortress with a burning roof and blazing spires extends above the precise center of the bridge. Aurichim swarm in the skies around its burning heights, circling, roosting on the coronal baileys, diving in and out of the highest spire windows. This place is the Howling Crucible, the home of the righteous dead.

As one approaches the Crucible's titanic arch, the feeling of ambivalence deepens. The visitor is aware of the Daystar dwindling away at her back and that she has crossed the threshold beyond life. Yet she also knows that her life remains safe so long as she does not attack, for the aurichim hail her and the massive obsidian doors swing wide, bidding her enter and welcome.

Within the Howling Crucible are men and women dressed in their finest garbs. They gather about strange statues, paintings and rugs bearing thousandfold patterns, details within details within details. They converse upon the weather, the state of daylight and the nearness of Calibration. They speak of things like solar flares and parhelia as if they were their kin, and they are eager, most eager, to greet a visitor—shake her hand and feel the presence of Creation once more. Their control is great, however, so they do not ask questions, yet if she were to tell them where she came from, she could have the entire floor silent in a moment. She could, in fact, hold sway over all the Sun's saints.

Within the Howling Crucible are many halls and doors and stairways. Some of these rooms are not for the visitor, though many are. Many are the chambers where the lumina sit in silent contemplation of the truths they see within the sun's flames.

Many of them look like giant toys run down, silent, sleeping. For the visitor there is a feast waiting, and perhaps a warm bed. Eventually she will be led to the Court of Noble Truth, where all the righteous dead gather so that they may hold council, listening to the eldest and most charismatic of them set the standards of worship and create the trends for action, deliberating on how best to serve and protect the dominion of the Sun.

In this room: It has been long since the righteous dead have seen anyone from Creation, much less an Exalt. To be a Solar Exalted in this place is to evoke something like awe, for even in this place far from life, the Chosen of the Sun are like a legend that never dies. Yet unlike many, the righteous dead never questioned their eventual return, for within the flames of the sun time is but matter of perspective, and theirs has never changed. The righteous dead, the lumina and the glamifores, all have much to say about the Daystar, for they toil and train within its flames, refining themselves over and over until they are perfect for its service. They are a mighty force to be harnessed, yet without the right Charms or sorcery, none may do so. To speak to them of their limitations—that they are bound to the Chariot of the Most High; that their lot is service, meditation and practice—may reveal much. Or it may reveal little, for they know nothing of the workings of the Daystar, and none may crew her stations. Yet when the truth is revealed, the righteous dead will prove to be greater allies than one can imagine.

WARD OF THE DRAGON

Used at the height of the Phyrum to hold prisoners while they awaited legal processing, the Ward of the Dragon is the gaol of the Daystar, and the closest thing it has to a brig. Featuring eight large Essence containment cells built along the interior wall, prisoners could be sealed indefinitely in pockets of Elsewhere while waiting for judgment day. It was also the place from which the crew of the Daystar could keep tabs on dangerous entities bound throughout existence by the Most High. Now it serves as the primary monitoring station of the greater elemental dragon of fire, the Gardullis. Three of its Essence containment cells, which the Unconquered Sun prided himself on keeping vacant, still bear a glyph marking occupation: Our Guarding Star's unfinished business.

The first impression one gets upon entering the Ward of the Dragon is one of unwelcome, and it isn't hard to see why. The gaol of the Daystar is one of the most foreboding chambers conceivable. Those who enter this iron and soulsteel coffin find themselves in a bay 50 yards long. Clusters of multifaceted crimson glass adorn the walls, catching the visitor's reflection from dozens of angles. At the farthest end the wall spreads open to reveal a massive bay window of this same ruby honeycomb, looking out onto the fires of the Daystar and the head of the sleeping Gardullis. Sleeping, that is, until someone takes more than a few steps into the chamber. As soon as the Gardullis senses an intruder, one eye snaps open. As he peers into the Ward, his great glowing eye is reflected throughout the room in a hundred panes of glass, so that his glare might follow the intruder's passage.

Dominating the ceiling is what appears to be a massive six-tiered chandelier composed of hundreds of swords of solid Essence hanging point-down in suspension. Glowing with pure

white luminescence and thrumming with power, this is the lumen Yjimatria, a mighty arhat whose breath stirs his crystalline body so that his blades dance and gently touch together, chiming out a bitter lullaby for his charges.

Directly beneath Yjimatria is the Gehenna Vector, a glass-like orb of semi-transparent atmosphere floating just a few feet off the ground, buffeted by a flow of Essence from a claw-shaped vent on the floor beneath it. Within the sphere of the Vector, one can see all of Malfeas in miniature, down to the dust devils dancing over Cecelyne and sometimes even the waver and waft of the Ebon Dragon. Those who know the commands of the Ward may pass their hand over the Vector and order it to focus on parts of Malfeas they wish to see more closely. The surface of the orb ripples, dissolving the distant picture of Malfeas and replacing it with an expanded view of its wards and boweries. However, those who look too closely into the Demon City run the risk of being seen in turn, and incautious use of the Gehenna Vector stirs the song of Yjimatria into a warning melody.

In this room: Eight Essence containment cells flank the room. These cells are faced with capsule-shaped doors that are normally open on dark and empty interiors. Three however are occupied, and their doors are sealed shut, with a single window that reveals nothing save for a glyph that indicates occupation. Nysela knows what horrors are trapped within those containers and will not reveal the code sequences to open the doors unless given an order to do so by the Unconquered Sun.

However, the five empty cells are still operational, and using them is a matter of ease: one simply enters a command into a kiosk beside the cell he wishes to employ. The portal glows blindingly as a channel is opened into a featureless white room in Elsewhere. After throwing the prisoner into the portal, a simple button press seals the door behind them. Feeding a single mote to the control will generate a code which will open the door, at which point no other code may be generated.

If one can bear the piercing gaze of the murderous Gardullis, the crystal facets about the room may also be mastered by words known to both Nysela and the Gardullis, allowing the user to look in on a number of strange and terrible beings sealed throughout Creation and beyond by the order of Ignis Divine. The Gehenna Vector takes an entirely different set of words to access, which the Gardullis doesn't know and Nysela is loathe to teach. Nevertheless, the Vector is a yielding and intuitive structure, and may be mastered by those puissant in the ways of manipulating complex magitech artifice. However, should one suddenly find themselves sucked through the vaporous atmosphere of the orb and directly onto the streets of Malfeas, a return to the Daystar is not likely to be easy. Using the Gehenna Vector without proper instruction is an extreme risk.

CIRCUMNAVIGATING THE STATION INDOMITABLE

The Daystar is vast, and its inner-workings are often inimical displays of immeasurable power that must be detoured around. Without the aid of the Siege Honaris, a person traveling on foot from one end of the Dirigible Engine to the other can expect a minimum journey of two hours. However, by boarding the Chimirajen at a paddock located in each quarter of the

Daystar, a person can travel to the adjacent quarter in five minutes, and the opposite station in ten.

The Chirmirajen is able to achieve such a feat by traveling through a series of synaptic Nirvikalpa gateways between the Daystar's chakras—channels which exploit the shinmaic principles of Nirvikalpa and Nirupadhika to enable movement through the Daystar's crushing Essence. These gateways are nearly impossible to traverse outside of the Chirmirajen. Were one to leap from the monorail while it was transitioning through a synapse, they would find themselves shredded down to motes by the entropy therein, if not sucked into the mind of the Daystar to join the universe as a single speck of dust in freefall through a space in which galaxies are born in instants and die out in minutes—assuming they weren't lucky enough to be ejected entirely from the core complex and into the fires at the heart of the sun. However, riding inside the Chirmirajen is relatively comfortable.

These synapses form four tunnels between the quarters of the Daystar, and traveling through them reveals a spectacular phenomenon. As the Chirmirajen races through Nirvikalpa, phantom images play out monumental scenes from throughout history, or display snapshots of some of the world's most momentous figures. To what extent these images are connected to the memories of the Unconquered Sun is debatable, for while some believe these are images occurring within the mind of the Sun, others posit that the visions contained therein are caused by the Daystar's innate contemplation of and link to the rest of the universe.

Furthermore, each synapse follows a mysterious theme, and while the images vary from trip to trip, each sports a specific set of visions which it will almost always display. Repeated trips around the Daystar are not guaranteed to reveal all the secrets of the universe, however, so the more one travels the less likely one is to see something new.

The first synapse displays moments in time having to do with the Primordials. Most commonly seen is Autochthon's departure from Creation, his search arrays cutting swaths in the countryside as he draws thousands of people into the vortex of his world-body. Sometimes the comet Gnosis soars alongside the Chirmirajen and one can see Gaia standing atop it, barefoot, hair and robes flapping in the wind, vapor and dust breaking over her. She lifts her eyes and the image dissolves. Occasionally passengers see the Yozis folding in upon themselves, in and in, as Malfear's bones close over his brethren to seal them for eternity.

The second synapse seems concerned with the First Age, starting with its favored images: the death of White Ram at the gates of Yu-Shan; Merela receiving the Crown of Thunders; a banquet table sporting the makings of a feast, but all the chairs are empty and a single glass of wine has spilled, a crimson stain spreading as flames dance in the windows.

The third synapse dwells upon the lightning that rained down upon Chiaroscuro, shattering and toppling its ancient towers and melting them into slag. It favors the majestic Scarlet Empress as she sits upon the Dragon Throne, her painted face and enigmatic eyes haunting the viewer with a promise of untold secrets. It often shows Manosque Viridian and his armies falling up and up into the skies and out of existence.

The last synapse has an unknown theme, but carries these final visions for those who ride the Chirmirajen: the Empress leading Lillun by the hand down a long tunnel, their forms disappearing into shadow; a torch-lit funeral procession a mile long, a bier bearing the body of Ingosh Silverclaws; the Mask of Winters walking down the cracked, rubble-strewn streets of Thorns, stepping over the bodies of slain defenders, and this—a young female Solar standing in the haunted ruins of Chiaroscuro, a Dragon-Blooded fallen at her feet and another running for his life. A lion roars in the bonfire of her anima while she laughs at her assailant's retreating image.

ICONS OF THE DAYSTAR

THE KEY OF WHITE FIRE

Though it has all the seeming of the iconic weapon of the Exalted, the Aidenweiss is no mere daiklave. Appearing as a double-edged sword of flawless design, the Aidenweiss sports an orichalcum blade so refined it has a colorless, perfectly reflective surface that blazes golden light when Essence is channeled through it. The hilt and crossguard are similarly impeccable; deeper gold orichalcum peaking through a spiraling outer layer of adamant; blades of fire circling around what appears to be the empty setting for a single hearthstone, like the sun's corona turned in on itself.

In fact, no hearthstone can be placed within the Aidenweiss. Further examination reveals why. The Aidenweiss is itself a manse; where the hearthstone would be placed, it produces a hearthstone of its own. This hearthstone is always formed at the end of the Aidenweiss's tenure in Creation. Before it returns to the Daystar, it evaluates its wielder, drawing from the sum of its experiences to synthesize a five-dot hearthstone tailored to the one who has carried it. Four such hearthstones have been produced. A hearthstone produced by the Aidenweiss remains permanently attuned to the bearer of its owner's Exaltation, even if the Aidenweiss is carried by another. The effect of these hearthstones is unknown. They were given to the Exalts who engendered them, and those individuals guarded them dearly.

When an Exalt attunes to the Aidenweiss (as a manse, not an artifact, and thus requiring no commitment of Essence), they are not only bound to the daiklave, gaining the normal benefits from attunement to an artifact, but so long as they carry it, they are treated as if they stood within the manse of the Daystar, regaining Essence at a rate of 24 motes per hour. Not only that, but the Aidenweiss confers control over certain of the Daystar's weapon systems to the wielder, most notably those powers which may unleash and command the Sun's legions. Furthermore, the Aidenweiss has been encoded with the definition of Holy substantiated by Sol Incarnate. A blade forged in the time before humanity existed, the Aidenweiss perpetuates the definition of Holy autonomously. Should the sun ever go dark and the power of Holy fade from the cosmos, it will live on within the Aidenweiss, and confer that power to the one who wields it—provided that they prove themselves equal to the ideal of justice which birthed the Unconquered Sun.

Yet while the Unconquered Sun still lives, the Aidenweiss may not be removed from the Cup of Fire without his consent. To do so will invoke the ire of the Most High. This is one of

the few known ways to release the Gardullis, who may sense the Aidenweiss wherever it is, and who will go to the greatest lengths to retrieve the blade and carry it back to the Daystar.

For all its fearsome powers, the most important feature of the Aidenweiss is what it represents. As much symbol as weapon, the act of entrusting an individual with the blade traditionally confers upon them the rank of General Supreme over all of the Unconquered Sun's legions. Wielding the Aidenweiss makes its bearer nominally equal in rank to the highest-ranked officer amongst all his allies—provided that ally is the highest rank possible within all the assembled forces—and one rank higher than the leader of wartime opposition. More specifically, granting the Aidenweiss to an Exalt indicates that the Unconquered Sun has selected that individual to act as high commander over the assembled armies of the Chosen during a time of Creation-spanning war.

The Aidenweiss has been conferred to the Exalted four times throughout recorded history; on three occasions it was a Solar Exalted who wielded the Key of White Fire. The fourth time creates a bit of a problem for historians. The first General Supreme was commissioned during the Primordial War. This Solar was not Merela. After the war, this Exalt reluctantly relinquished the Aidenweiss, accepting decommission and going into a sort of self-imposed exile. A new hero claimed and wielded the Aidenweiss during the Aftershock War and, remembering the near-cataclysm caused by their predecessor's hesitance

to step down, promptly returned the blade to the Daystar when the war was finished. The Aidenweiss was summoned to action a third time, when a Dawn caste who had grown tired of the constancy and relative safety of the Solar Realm, and who yearned for a return to the hellish glory of the Primordial War, sought to and nearly succeeded in releasing Malfeas from his prison. In this instance the original wielder of the Aidenweiss returned from exile and resumed the mantle of General Supreme to put down the mad Solar's uprising.

The fourth and final time the Aidenweiss was seen in Creation occurred during the Time of Cascading Years, when it was said a war was sparked by a Primordial attempting to punch through to Creation by way of the temporal fracturing of reality. During this time, multiple Exalted were remembered to be wielding the Aidenweiss. Two were Lunars and one was a Sidereal. Several Solar Exalted, including Queen Merela, are also remembered. In any case, each record contradicts the other, with Merela as the most commonly iterated General Supreme during this time.

In the wake of the Usurpation, the Sidereal Exalted petitioned the Unconquered Sun to grant the Aidenweiss to the first Dragon-Blooded Shogun to seal the legitimacy of the Shogunate's rule, and they pushed forward this petition again upon the ascent of the Scarlet Empress. On neither occasion was this request dignified with a response.

POWERS OF THE AIDENWEISS (ARTIFACT N/A, MANSE N/A)

Wielded in battle, the Aidenweiss has the same traits as an orichalcum daiklave with the following exceptions:

- The Aidenweiss has no hearthstone settings and an attunement cost of 0 motes. Note that in spite of the weapon not actually requiring a commitment of Essence to attune it, it does still count as an attuned artifact weapon for the purpose of effects which make such designations. It grants the orichalcum magical material bonus to any attuned bearer regardless of their Exaltation.
- The Sword of the General Supreme is indestructible, even in the face of effects which permit the destruction of artifacts.
- An attuned character wielding the Aidenweiss is metaphysically considered to be the leader of any complementary unit he is a special character in, for the purpose of Charms which grant varying effects for leaders and other special characters.
- Any complementary unit led by a character carrying the Aidenweiss enjoys perfect morale.
- The bearer of the Aidenweiss is considered to have Essence 10 with regard to the effects of all Charms and sorcery used on him or by him. He is considered to have his normal Essence rating for the purpose of raising Traits and buying Charms.
- In the unthinkable event of the Unconquered Sun's demise, any Holy Charms known by the wielder of the Aidenweiss continue to function. This effect does not grant creatures of darkness the ability to wield Holy Charms when they could not already, but neither does it forbid them from wielding the Key of White Fire.
- For the purpose of Charms which make such distinctions, the bearer of the Aidenweiss is metaphysically considered to be the hierarchical superior of all characters belonging to any

military organization of which he is a member, as well as any opponent who confronts him in physical or social combat.

- The bearer of the Aidenweiss may release any lumen or behemoth sealed away within Creation by the power of the Daystar, provided that she knows its name. She has only basic command over these beings once they are unleashed. A complete roster of slumbering lumens and captive monsters may be found in the Ward of the Dragon.
- The General Supreme may issue mandates of subordination to the aurichim, righteous dead, jinas and bodhisattvas of the sun's host.
- The General Supreme may issue mandates of subordination toward the spirits which comprise Unconquered Sun's legions—the aurichim and righteous dead. While the righteous dead must be summoned and ordered by name, aurichim may be rallied more easily—if no aurichim are present, the bearer of the Aidenweiss may spend 10 motes to issue a general summons so long as he is within the borders of Creation. A Magnitude 3 unit of aurichim will assemble in response to this call within 25 hours, converging on the location where the summons was made.
- If somehow destroyed despite its invincibility, the imperishable Essence of the Aidenweiss flees to the Daystar, where it may be reborn in the forge of the Furnace Empyrean.
- If hidden beyond the reach of the Gardullis, or should the Gardullis be defeated or banished before it is retrieved, the Aidenweiss begins to project its location into the dreams of Creation. Such dreams, when had, will guide any hero worthy of the Aidenweiss on a course toward finding it wherever it is, even if it is pressed beyond the veil of time.

THE SUN'S STOWAWAY

The spirit known as Bannery Bu is perhaps the oldest living presence aboard the Daystar. A genius builder and magitech artificer, she was a friend of Autochthon during the Time of Glory, and assisted him in many experiments. As fate would have it, she was on the site of the Machine God's latest masterpiece when the Primordial King ripped loose its core, and she was caught inside. Unable to escape, the wily spirit hid within the construct, hoping to endure the tribulations that would soon befall her. She soon after lost all consciousness, falling into a cessation of existence from which she did not emerge for thousands of years. When she did, she was thunderstruck to find herself aboard an entirely new construct of vastly differential design and unfathomable power—the Daystar. Just moments later she encountered the Unconquered Sun, who was wholly unlike any other spirit she had ever met, for the world she had left was one of green day and the catastrophic movements of living disasters, and the gods were of a much simpler caste. Upon stammering out an explanation of her intrusion into the Sun's dominion, the Guarding Star took pity on her. But when Ignis Divine attempted to return her to Mount Meru, so that she might find her home amongst the ranks of the divinities, they found she could not easily leave. Her purview had become tied to the Daystar. In any case, rather than strike her out from his domain, the Unconquered Sun grew accustomed to her presence, and expressly permitted her to remain aboard the Daystar, where she has become a fixture.

Bannery Bu appears to be an old woman with silver hair kept fastidiously and bound into a bun at the back of her head, wearing a lavender kimono and carrying a walking stick of Chiaroscuro glass. Perpetually hunched over her cane, her appearance of feebleness and frailty demonstrates an underlying fact: she is unable to help crew the Daystar. That kind of robust action is simply not in her nature. However, on several occasions it has been said that she moves frighteningly fast, and her mind moves even faster. Verily, Bannery Bu (known simply as Bannery to those familiar with her) tends to put her incredible instinct for calculation to work for questionable purposes. Just what her purpose is remains unclear. Sometimes she acts as a servant to guests, but she always appears to be measuring them with her eyes and her staff. Other times, she emerges from her workshop in the Valor Quarter in a fit of megalomania, leading a hand-crafted war-machine against all who oppose her (in this case, all whom she comes across). In the words of Lytek, with whom she has betimes associated, “her favorite things are tea and chaos, and she will serve you both.”

More commonly Bannery wanders the halls, poking and tapping instruments with her cane, giving an impression of blindness or belligerence, but this is simply her way of assessing the running condition of the Dirigible Engine's processes. She has been known to grow insufferably bored because most of the Daystar runs flawlessly, requiring little to no maintenance. While Nysela finds her reports assuring, Bannery has also been known to admit that a Lunar Exalted would be far more useful than she in analyzing the Daystar's moods and needs, for those run deeper than just its perfect structure, to a place she cannot touch.

Bannery has her own workshop aboard the Station Indomitable. She rarely works within the Furnace Emphyrean, because what she makes there she can never remove, except in the form of forge testimonies, of which she has several dozen and may even trade for a favor, such as an interesting tale told, materials brought to her, or tasks completed. However, nothing can induce her to reveal what treasures may be redeemed from any particular ticket, so one who makes such a bargain is taking a risk.

A master builder of automatons, Bannery spends much of her time building and rebuilding a single complex war machine, which she always names ‘Practice.’ Every few years she unleashes this masterpiece on the Daystar, possibly as a test of its security systems, although her tendency to yell slogans like “down with the tyrant Nysela,” seems to contradict this interpretation. Her automaton always gets taken down by Nysela or the lumina in less than a day. Every time it does, her mania fades, and she pokes through the wreckage with her cane (usually while humming a peaceful tune) before dragging what's left back to her workshop.

Bannery is mentioned in the Tome of the Great Maker, where she is called Baneribu, and is cited as an assistant to Debok Moom. Alchemicals who encounter Bannery may inform her about the present negative condition of the Machine God. To do so will cause her visible distress; she will offer any advice or service she can to aid her ailing friend. In practical terms, Bannery remembers much of Autochthon from the Time of Glory and although she can't remember what Autochthon was building before it was stolen to become the Daystar, she can remember the locations in Creation where several such experiments were staged. In addition, given the proper materials and a sample to work from, Bannery can quickly learn to repair Alchemical Charms, and even to build entirely new ones. Such a distraction may indeed prove quite welcome, for Bannery grows endlessly bored, and Nysela is thankful for anything the restless spirit does which does not involve taunting the Gardulis or attempting to suss out the security codes to those prison cells aboard the Daystar which are still occupied.

LUMINA, THE SUN CHILDREN

Throughout the halls and chambers of the Daystar, silent statues listen and watchful murals gaze. Carved slabs bearing images of spectacular beasts pulse with a warm and living light. Doors within the station's interior sometimes open to the blazes of the sun, and through them step brilliant shining phantoms. Their eyes sweep for purpose. Pausing, they listen to the heartbeat of the universe, noting all irregularities. They are the stalking beasts and warding legends of the solar barque, and for those who would defile their sacred peace, their wrath is swift and terrible. These are the lumina of the righteous dead, the children of the sun.

Each lumen began as a heroic ghost, a spirit whose nobility of purpose in life, in dying or in the afterlife somehow attracted the notice of the Most High. Brought aboard the Daystar to face the judgment of the Unconquered Sun and found worthy, these heroic revenants were blessed by Ignis Divine, stripped of the stigma of being creatures of darkness, and elevated to the ranks of the righteous dead.

The lumina are also numbered among the righteous dead, but are far more than mere ghosts. They are those amongst the Sun's saints who choose to forsake their former lives—to be reborn, not through lethe, but through a gauntlet of trial and tribulation within the flames of the Daystar. This process transforms the righteous dead from ghosts to gods, into guardian beasts and burning legends of myth, and consigns them to an existence of eternal service to the Sun. The fate of these spirits is one of constant training, meditation, and readiness. Lost forever is their ability to pursue personal agendas; their former lives, identities and passions have been burned away, and so has their ability to touch Creation by their own authority. Rather, they are chiefly concerned with the protection of the Dirigible Engine, and their continued pursuit of greater and more powerful forms with which they may best serve the will of Sol Incarnate. Evolving along a path of dedicated meditation, the lumina seek to express their truest forms, reformed by the perfecting fires of the Most High.

Lumina are generally divided into three tiers of power, from least to greatest. The lowest among their rank are the jinas. A jina is a lumen who has captured and reintegrated his po, but not yet divested himself of all worldly passions. Jina tend to have a mostly human appearance, though signs of the greater power that awaits them begin to appear in the form of a personal panoply. This may take the form of uniquely expressive weapons and armor, or perhaps a stylized mask the lumen carries on his person at all times. Examples include the jina Ja-Janasti, who appears as a swordsman carrying a brace of seven blades on his back, each made from the sharpened feather of a giant bird; or the lumen Samirena, who takes on the form of a raven-haired savant with a heavy tome chained around her hips, its closed face marked with a hundred intertwined serpents; or Kö, who presents the image of a powerfully built man in the white-and-gold robes of a priest of the Unconquered Sun, and dons a horned aurochs mask before engaging in battle. Jina are notably more powerful than the average ghost, but unlikely to inspire too much fear in any Exalted save perhaps the Dragon-Blooded. They are roughly equal to gods of the third rank (see **The Compass of Celestial Directions**, vol. III—Yu-Shan, pp.123-124). All lumina begin as jinas.

The second rank of lumina are the bodhisattvas. A lumen of this rank has cleared his heart of all worldly passions and fully fused with his po. Bodhisattvas begin to exude or manifest, as physical features, traits of what would have been their iconic anima were they Exalted. A bodhisattva might appear as a stern general with a white tiger head, as does Feng-To of the Iron Nail; or a white-eyed priest in saffron robes, standing twelve feet tall, with a great orichalcum mandala always floating at his back, as does the lumen Jirobozu; or perhaps a serene martial artist whose skin is wrapped in prayer strips and whose body is a prayer wheel floating disconnected from his arms, legs and head, such as Mirazen the Patient. One thing all bodhisattvas have in common is their great power, sufficient to give pause to Exalts or demons of the Second Circle. They are roughly equivalent to gods of the fourth rank (see **The Compass of Celestial Directions**, vol. III—Yu-Shan, pp.124-126).

The mightiest of the lumina are known as arhats. These ancient beings exemplify their own iconic forms, becoming god-beasts or avatars of their own legend, transcending nature to attain the power that can only come from exemplifying one's own

mythology. When unleashed, an arhat moves across the land like a force of nature, easily capable of rivaling the mightiest behemoth. Examples of arhats include Urziak, a great bear standing thirty yards high when upright, with fur of white quartz, claws of red glass, eyes of ruby, and fangs of jade; or the warrior Rahu, who sleeps in the floor of the Daystar's bridge; or Malin-Nilam, who upon becoming an arhat split himself into the forms of twin brothers forged from orichalcum and moonsilver, each bearing a single upside-down wing in place of an arm. Arhats are roughly equivalent to gods of the fifth rank (see **The Compass of Celestial Directions**, vol. III—Yu-Shan, pp.126-128).

One class of lumina stands outside of this structure, rare in the extreme. These are the glamifores, saints of the sun who have ascended from the status of jina without losing their appearance or personal identity. Glamifores retain a great deal of personal autonomy without being straightened into abstract archetypes exemplifying their own legend. These unusual lumina vary widely in power, according to a mixture of age, skill, personal panoply, and heroic endeavor. Most are stronger than the average bodhisattva, but less mighty than the arhats. Glamifores carry the appearance they held as mortals, save for the solar radiance which exudes from their living-anima bodies.

All lumina live within the Howling Crucible with the other righteous dead, where they may take on the appearance of their mortal selves. Lumina also live within statues, murals, and engraved slabs which present a suggestion of their true form. These idols act as a kind of house for a specific lumen, and a doorway through which they can emerge into any place where such an effigy has been placed. These doorways are not limited solely to the Daystar; a number of First Age tombs still bear slabs depicting wondrous multihued beasts, and statues of warrior saints graven from pure flame.

THE RIGHTEOUS DEAD

In the Time of Glory the Unconquered Sun was the light of hope in a horrific Primordial universe. With power rivaling his progenitors, and mercy wholly unlike theirs, it is easy to see why countless beings turned to heliolatry in order to escape the terrors of reality. Some even managed this in the truest sense, tithing their souls to the sun's flames at the end of their lives. For some, this tithe came in the prime of their lives. Indeed, a number of righteous dead appear to be completely transparent in the vicinity of their hearts. Others, however, were men and women whose deaths caught the Unconquered Sun's attention if only by the weight of their absence from the mortal coil. These souls he was able to catch before they passed into the drowning waters of lethe, giving them the choice of becoming part of his flames. Many accepted. Those who did not were allowed to continue on to their next lives, and even to this day, those righteous dead who are not lumina are capable of committing themselves to lethe, or becoming a part of the Sun in the most absolute sense, joining his flames in a solemn rite of Venus that is both marriage and funeral. Because the transition to righteous dead requires that the soul free itself of the chains of its past life, such as former ambitions and worldly concerns, the transition is nearly impossible for the Exalted.

The righteous dead may act as messengers and agents of the Unconquered Sun in Creation and beyond.

THE MAKING OF A LUMEN

The Unconquered Sun has not inducted a new lumen to the ranks of the saints since before the fall of the First Age. When he did, those who chose to attempt the dangerous transition would be carried by the Chirmirajen from the Howling Crucible to Gransol Terminus, where they would find Ignis Divine waiting for them. Here the Unconquered Sun would present them with their po, conjured up from its vigil over their corpse in Creation far below, and with it, a choice: to follow the path of suffering or the path of grandeur.

Ascent to the status of lumen could only be achieved through the path of grandeur, but to immediately cross through the arch of glory was generally folly; those who did so found themselves ascending a long stair, blasted at each step by the undiminished brilliance of the Unconquered Sun and the power of the Daystar. Their regrets, shortcomings, sins and inadequacies caught flame in that light, and to stumble on that stair was to never rise again. Those who failed in this manner were unmade utterly, their Essence dissolving before their substance was consumed by the burning light of day. For such unfortunates, there would be no reincarnation.

Wiser souls chose the arch of the corrupt, through which they found a stair that led to suffering. Traveling deep into the spiraling depths of the sun, they would be tortured by their inner darkness, haunted by their past regrets, and scoured by burning emotions. Within, they would struggle with their sins and be flayed by their own shortcomings. This trial usually lasted seven days, but could go on for as much as three times that. Those who failed would find themselves still extant at the end of the ordeal, but unable to leave the realm of suffering until they had cast away their burdens. As such, a multitude of souls still wander, lost throughout the depths of the trial, compounding their anguish. Some have become mighty beasts of flame and torment, their po and hun fused into an avatar of judgment which can never leave the realm, and will seek to harshly prevent new righteous dead from failing as they did.

SOLAR MONORAIL CHIRMIRAJEN

The sun hangs in the sky high above Creation, an almost unimaginable gulf of empty space stretching between its photosphere and the ground. The Station Indomitable is nestled at the center of a roiling atmosphere of cataclysmic flame and molten Essence. It is, in a word, quite inaccessible.

Most visitors to the station arrive, then, by way of the Chirmirajen, one of the few means of safe passage to and from the Daystar. Normally residing within Gransol Terminus or shuttling between the Daystar's various interior decks, Nysela may dispatch the Chirmirajen to retrieve guests from anywhere on the surface of Creation, or numerous locales in other, more exotic realms.

The Chirmirajen is a great streamlined monorail cast in indestructible orichalcum of alternating shades, primarily deep golden-brown and burnt yellow with bright ochre highlights. It normally spans a length of five cars (engine, three passenger cars, and a caboose), though it has the ability to unfold and duplicate unoccupied passenger cars to make room as needed. It cannot retract occupied cars. The solar monorail's nose sports a golden headlight in a setting worked to resemble a sunburst, set above a broad, smiling cloudcatcher.

Those who were able to cast away their burdens after failing the trial, to cleanse themselves of their suffering, would emerge from the trials not as lumen, but as twice-confirmed saints, holier than before. Still, some of these would attempt the passage twice and be lost forever. Others would emerge victorious, having conquered the fetters which bound them to the material world. Whatever the case, for those righteous dead to overcome suffering, the path to becoming a lumen had only begun.

Once cleansed by suffering, they would pass through the arch of the just, on the stair leading to grandeur. Those who traveled this path after having been cleansed in the low road found invariably that it was a harder road than the stair to suffering, yet their power was greater from having suffered, and that no hardship was too great. For these, their emergence as lumina was almost certain. For a few, such was not the case—some lingering weakness of character or spirit kept their po from re-integrating with them, and instead it dragged them down to be consumed along with it. Regardless, for those who succeeded, a new kind of righteous dead would emerge within the Hollow Crypt of the Howling Crucible: one who was neither ghost nor demon, but a blazing god of light and flame called lumen.

Why would a ghost take such a risk? The answer is simple—power and purpose. Many of those who pass from life into the hallowed halls of the Howling Crucible realize that as mere ghosts they can never achieve those dreams or aspirations that they might have once attained, and yet they can never be satisfied with a passage through lethe; they can never let go of their potential, their desire to be more and do more. For this reason they give themselves up to the glory of holy white fire. As one of the lumina, these fallen heroes can finally make good on their potential, as the sun's fires cleanse and reshape them into what they should have been. While this comes at the price of their former ambitions, it gives those incomplete heroes something they can get nowhere else: a chance for a reckoning.

Passengers find the interior of the mono markedly rustic in comparison to its gleaming outer shell. The Chirmirajen's compartments feature mahogany paneling, seats with deep cushions upholstered in crimson silk, and beautiful murals painted upon the walls and ceilings: Gaia and Cytherea are intertwined at the heart of the Wyld in one; a nameless Solar engineer builds a golden road into the heart of some unimaginable darkness in another; in a third, the Unconquered Sun emerges as a bare-chested youth from the mouth of a great whale, carrying the Daystar in his arms. Tables and chairs occupy the center of the passenger compartments, each of which seems able to support a dozen people in comfort—the engine room has space for three, the caboose for six. Bay windows afford a spectacular view of the world outside the Chirmirajen, and may be opened should passengers wish for fresh air or to use the mono as a sniping platform.

The engineer's car is a small, intimate room, dense with features. Though its quarters are tight, it manages to feel airy thanks to its panoramic windows which grant an unrestricted view of the mono's surroundings. A fuel chute stands open at the front of the compartment, radiating cheery warmth; every so often a prayer strip materializes in the air and drops into its open mouth.

Characters taking the time to examine these strips before they vanish find that they are inevitably prayers of hope directed either to Heaven in general or the sun in particular. A compass is built into the ceiling, originally designed by Autochthon himself, giving several vectors of infallible positioning information. The front of the chamber is dominated by an Essence-projection map of the surrounding landscape within a thousand miles, set directly into the wood. The Chirmirajen's controls are surprisingly simple—a ship's wheel with a keyhole in the center, levers to operate the mono's brakes, a cord which blows its great shattering horn. Acceleration requires stoking the engine; a bin in the corner of the room overflows with stored prayers.

The Chirmirajen moves by means of a rail spun of pure Essence which constantly coalesces half a mile ahead its current location and vanishes ten miles behind it, giving a few moments' warning before the mono arrives. Its primary purpose is to ferry passengers to and from the Daystar, or between sections of the station, though it also sometimes carries diplomats to and from Malfeas, or is deployed on rescue missions into the depths of the Wyld or the Underworld. The Yozis are accustomed to the comings and goings of the monorail, and most have learned to simply ignore it, not wishing to invite the wrath of the Daystar. The few times it has gone off course to rescue someone trapped in one of Hell's boweries or lost on Cecelyne's silver sands, it has done so quickly, not giving the indecisive titans time to decide its impertinence was worth the risk of striking it down. Adorjan has been known to attempt to chase and attack the Chirmirajen, but despises the sound of its horn and invariably withdraws upon hearing its call.

In the event that Nysela is unable to steer the Daystar or its propulsion is ever disabled, the Chirmirajen has the capability to fly out ahead of the sun and tow it. Fine maneuvering is impossible in this state, but the mono can at least keep a steady course if not distracted. Nysela is loath to send the Chirmirajen out to tow the sun thanks to its tendencies toward impulsive bursts of heroism; the last thing Creation needs is the noble but distractible monorail suddenly diving toward some earthbound calamity with the sun in tow.

The Chirmirajen is immune to the transformative power of the Wyld, as are all passengers riding inside of it, and likewise immune to all environmental damage. Essence-forged shields slam down over the windows while traveling through hazardous environments such as the depths of Kimberly or the flames of the sun, preventing passengers from opening or shooting out of the mono, but also protecting them from external dangers. These barriers are normally transparent, but become opaque when the Chirmirajen passes through the sun's flames, preventing guests from being blinded by the Daystar's magnificent radiance.

The mono's outer shell has thus far proven to be invincible, capable of surviving the intensity of the sun's flames, of weaving through the unleashed fury of the Apollyon Cannon, and even of surviving direct full-speed ramming impacts with mountains and other geographical features. In battle, the mono attempts to ram warstrider or greater-sized opponents with an accuracy of 20 dice (smaller targets impose a -3 external penalty) and a raw damage of 100B. A successful hit inflicts one mile of knockback for every ten dice of damage rolled; upon landing from such a hit, victims suffer terminal velocity falling damage. Should the

THE MIDNIGHT EXPRESS

The Chirmirajen has a brother. No legends speak of its creation...or birth...or whatever manner of unwholesome genesis spawned the Midnight Express. It is enough that the ghost train exists.

Where the Chirmirajen is bright and swift and daring, the Midnight Express is sleek and dark and quiet. Its soulsteel and moonsilver body cuts an unpredictable course through the twisting tunnels of the Labyrinth, its single ghost-lamp eye pushing shadows aside to reveal the gruesome vistas of the Underworld with unremitting clarity. Tracks of blue flame march out better than ten miles ahead of it, announcing its coming well in advance. Its pumping, rotary-armed wheels are whisper-quiet where they convey it over these ephemeral rails, and the train's compartments are dark and still, though they give the impression of being watched.

The Midnight Express has been known to appear, unbidden, to convey Abyssal Exalted to and from the tombs of the Neverborn, whisking them quickly through the depths of the Labyrinth in relative safety—assuming it has not already taken on hostile nephwracks as passengers, of course. The Midnight Express seems generally uninterested in and unimpressed by the affairs of the spectral denizens of the Labyrinth; if molested while passing through an amphiskopolis, it has been known to unleash a blast from its silent whistle—rather than producing any sound, it instead radiates a heavy, terrible silence that blots out all hearing and sends specters soundlessly shrieking and tumbling away in all directions. Eye and Seven Despairs, the First and Forsaken Lion and the Bishop of the Chalcedony Thurible are all interested in gaining control over the Midnight Express, but the train has never responded to the summons of any Deathlord, or even appeared in the presence of those ancient ghosts.

Chirmirajen miss its target, it takes thirty ticks for the mono to make a wide, wheeling turn sufficient to line up for a second strike; though blindingly fast, the solar mono cannot corner any more quickly than that. Attempting to do so causes the mono to jump its rail and skid through the air or along the ground, spouting an enormous burst of flames from its undercarriage, reducing its speed to that of a mere warbird. Building up a full head of steam and completely re-forging its Essence rail takes five long ticks, during which time the mono is susceptible to being boarded or snared.

A character must use the key to the Chirmirajen to gain manual control over it. This key hangs around Nysela's neck, and she loans it out only to those who have earned her complete trust. Otherwise, if not ordered to linger in Gransol Terminus, the Chirmirajen operates on autopilot. As the Chirmirajen is an agreeable monorail by nature, it normally does as Nysela bids it in this state, but has been known to divert from its given missions to heroically intervene in order to save lives or triumph over perceived wickedness. In the First Age the Chirmirajen was known as a friend of all children and prominently featured in popular story-books and nursery rhymes. Its passage leaves good sleep and inspiring dreams of adventure in its wake (granting a one die bonus to nightly Conviction rolls for all slumbering characters within twenty miles). The Chirmirajen may now be seen throughout Creation, alternately picking up the Exalted to take them to the Daystar and releasing the Mice of the Sun to do the bidding of Ignis Divine.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ESSENTIAL ESSAYS

VOICE OF THE MAGNUS ON TITANIC SOULS (I)

The following is an excerpt from a transcript of a lecture given by the Magnus, a Twilight Caste luminary. This speech was delivered before more than 400 Celestial and Terrestrial students, as well as assorted spiritual representatives, on the steps of the memorial where Ramethus fell. An annotation notes that the lecture was given at dusk. The lights of the newly-reconstructed Academy of Divine Enlightenment marched down the slope of Mount Meru behind the Magnus, forming the backdrop for his delivery.

First let me open by saying how honored I am to speak before the incomparable Daana'd. I would also like to extend my thanks to High Seat Halleus for inviting me here to elaborate on this, a topic of crucial but overlooked importance.

Before I begin, allow me to take a moment to take further notice of my audience. I see that most of you are young—those members of the Lunar Society and the Fivescore Fellowship who are in attendance tonight have almost all taken the Second Breath in the wake of our recently concluded conflict—you in the first row, I believe your former incarnation was White Claw Zu? Indeed I did make his acquaintance; I was present at the Battle of Broken Sky, where he laid down his life in valiant defense of the city of Hollow.

The majority of you gathered before me are blessed of the Elemental Dragons—Gaia's grandchildren. Indeed, I am told that by your aptitude tests and your early achievements in service to our glorious Realm that you are the most promising youths of your generation. It is to you in particular that I dedicate this lecture. Attend this: I am not here today to speak of sorcerous minutiae, but of dire cosmological facts central to the war which ended just before most of you were born. Your parents fought in that conflict, and you may be called on to follow in their footsteps.

As such, to the topic of my lecture:

The spiritual makeup of those immeasurable beings which birthed Creation is a matter of ongoing relevance—not only as a point to our heritage and our purpose, but also as a matter of our continued survival. Look around you at this shrine, this place of sacrifice. Two score and two years since the Aftershock War's end, and already the Realm's citizens begin to forget. Many misconceptions still linger about the authors of the universe.

The most offensive of these: that the souls of the conquered Yozis were always demons, and that the Yozis were always Yozis. Well I remember the ignorant and ungrateful pamphlets and editorials that circulated through the hinterlands after the first attacks, asking why we did not simply banish the aggressor to Hell with a wave and a word—could people truly be so ignorant of history? The Demon Princes who languish now in the realm of torment were once free to move across our world, to

purify it with a whisper and scour it with a sigh. They were unspeakable living worlds manifest, those Primordial brothers and sisters of our allies, Gaia and Autochthon.

I am not here to speak of them in their particulars. A dissertation on any single Primordial could fill enough time for ten lectures such as this. Rather I am here to speak to you of the simplest and most compelling feature of the Primordial makeup—their souls. As any first-year demonologist knows, the Yozis are gifted with numerous expressive facets, souls that balance and channel their unfathomable intellect and urge. So it is as well with unbound Primordials; but these unique Primordial constituents are called devas.

The devas of our enemies were not always the cleanest or most beatific of things; rarely does one find any being possessed of such majesty as the souls of the Emerald Mother. But they were not demons before or during the Primordial War. Most of them were mightier, loftier. They were pure, even when wicked. They were magnanimous. Until they knew defeat, they walked taller than the mountains. It was defeat that compounded their fall, twisting them in a devolution of nature and making them hideous.

But what purpose do devas serve?

Primordials are beings of such tremendous Essence and spiritual complexity that they outstrip the confines of their own supernal forms. A single soul and mind cannot support the level of power and intricacy that moves within the whim and want, mode and strife of a Primordial's waking moments. Thus the titans need not a soul, but many souls in order to think and exist at the size and scope that they do.

Devas are broken into three tiers, like the demons we are familiar with—two which comprise those souls which anchor, express and define the Primordial, and one which acts as a kind of servant-progeny, a manifestation or proof of the titan's permanence. The greatest of these are souls upon the Third Circle, each of which has seven more Second Circle souls, which represent their capacity for protecting, gratifying, defining, communicating, expressing, reflecting, and understanding their own natures. It is from the latter that the First Circle races emerge.

A question? Yes, they do resemble the First Circle demons which act as our menial servants and rightful slaves, in their degree of remove from their patrons. However, there were no 'wild First Circle deva' Yozi offspring left loose in Creation in the wake of the Primordial War; your predecessors wisely commanded the defeated titans to assemble every last one of their spawn within the world-body of Malfeas before the gates of Hell were swung shut. Relatively few of the First Circle demons with which you are familiar are former deva races—the bitter titans have abandoned most of their previous designs and allowed them to die out in favor of metody, teodozjia and the like. Only a handful of once-deva races continue to thrive—the angyalkae and gilmyne are the most common.

Yet some spirit remnants of the Primordial legacy may be unaccounted for. Devas of the Third Circle are, on rare occasion, known to keep a companion spirit called yomi. In most cases yomi are gods whose purview runs parallel to the deva in question, but occasionally the deva chooses a yomi which moves outside her conceptual framework to compliment her interests. At the end of the Primordial War, the yomi of the vanquished Demon Princes were often rendered into starmetal. Vengeful yomi who escaped prosecution plagued our Realm in its infancy, and some few remain at large.

For the purposes of knowing our enemies and distinguishing them from our allies, it is worth noting that devas of specific Primordials carry a specific name—the Divine Ministers of the Machine God and all of their subroutines and lesser automatic processes are known as exmachina, while Adrián's souls were called sheridans. The souls of Gaia, the Emerald Mother, are known as kami. This is a conceit which berths a separation between the devas of one Primordial and another, beyond the single-Essence identity they comprise.

As for the transition from deva to demon, here is our most well-documented case: The Primordial called Adrián had 160 constituent devas—140 Second Circle souls upon 20 Third Circle souls. When her fetich Lilike was slain, the River of All Torments dried up and became a wind called Adorjan. Likewise her composite devas shifted to express her madness. They fell to the demonic state when she was forced to acknowledge her defeat, becoming the Yozi Adorjan, who blows silent death through the streets of Malfeas.

A deva's form and power is determined by his Primordial's nature, and the nature of the Primordial is limitless power and unending urge. Composed of their very own thoughts and emotions, a vast change in perception on the part of the Primordial wreaks havoc on the souls of his constitution, ripping through his devas and reshaping them so that an overall change is evinced. This is especially true of experiences which are inimical to the Primordial's nature, such as torment, sorrow, loss, shame, and fear. Though it is true that we carved through the spiritual layers of the conquered titans, altering their souls at key points and in precise ways, to drive the Primordials into a form of our design, it was the Primordials' own sense of their defeat which had the most devastating effect upon them.

I see a question being looked out at me from every eye: If the constitution of a Yozi's souls are so similar to that of a free Primordial, why, then, is differentiating between them important to the soldier as well as the savant?

While demons and devas confer the same benefits to their respective Primordial constitutions, there are differences of paramount import. Constituent to the Yozis, demons are creatures of darkness, rendered asunder by our holy judgment. Devas do not inherently feel any special pain from such measures—rather I should imagine their consternation at such an attempt to have a lethal effect on the Exalt! I jest, but my meaning is serious; this was a mistake made early in the After-shock War, and it cost several Chosen their lives. Should we ever find ourselves subjected to an attack by a hostile Primordial in the future, await confirmation that Our Guarding Star has added the invader and its devas to the roll of Creation's enemies before spending Essence on such magic. Remember also that under the Heavenly Sword Accords, the Solar Delib-

erative will reimburse the monetary value of any sacrifice made to the Unconquered Sun for the purpose of attracting his attention to such an invasion.

The concerns for those using sorcery to combat the enemy are more extensive. Devas, having never sworn oaths of surrender, are not subject to any sorcery or Charm which summons, banishes, or compels obedience from demons. As a matter of distinction, such is the similarity between deva and demon that a thaumaturgical ward against demons will bar a deva's access, but the spell Demon of the First Circle will not avail you of a deva's presence, nor will Emerald Circle Banishment cast it out. It is also thanks to this principle that the kami are set above Cecelyne's Essence-infused mockery of law, and are freely able to ignore the impotent sanctions and invective of the imprisoned Yozis.

Bear these things in mind. It is your Essence, your weapons, and your knowledge that will protect Creation, should history attempt to repeat itself. Now, for those among the audience who are familiar with the intricacies of Essence sight, here are some tell-tale features that may be used to distinguish a demon from a deva under battlefield conditions...

ON TITANIC SOULS (II)

The following excerpt is from the demonology chapter of the Book of Essence Runes, to which the Magnus offered a number of essays and commentaries. The text is written in such a way that it self-edits to match changing facts, assuring that the Magnus is always right.

Numbered amongst the devas are the nihilem of Malfeas, the sheridans of Adorjan, the aphotes of the Ebon Dragon, the laments of Cecelyne, and the traces of She Who Lives in Her Name. These terms are typically uniform, but not always so. Take for example the souls of Kimberly. Collectively we call them the barzinoa, but as gender distinction plays some role in Kimberly's -ology, her male souls are called the barzinoi while her female souls are known as the barzinai. It is important to note that while a particular deva's physical gender may be unclear, its spiritual gender—the feminine or masculine Essence signature it produces—can be deduced with the proper effects. While true that in some demons spiritual gender is uncertain, in the case of Kimberly's devas, all are clearly defined as male or female, such as the Third Circle souls Bozi-dadari (barzinoi) and Cipperidge (barzinai).

In referring to the devas, it is proper to include the spirit's grouping as part of its title. In this case, the deva's type becomes part of the title, such as with the Nihilem Ligier or the Trace Munaxes. When we refer to them separately we revert to the lesser case of the written form: Jacint, sheridan of Adorjan; Octavian, trace of She Who Lives in Her Name. It should be further known that these titles do not survive the Primordial's demise. In the case of dislocated devas such as Nuhlwuxahes, soul of the former Author of Troubled Skies, the old class name is no longer used, for the distinction has become meaningless, and may be further obsoleted by the demon's own evolution. It is presumed that within the next two centuries Nuhlwuxahes will be one of the sheridans or the salacrem.

However, a dislocated deva may continue to use the name of her class should her Primordial continue on, even if the deva herself has been long since destroyed, such as the Nihilem Ruvelia, 23rd soul of the Empyrean Chaos, who was the first of the mighty Tyrant's two fetich souls...

ON THE UNDERWORLD

What follows is a written statement outlining the Magnus's political position on a certain issue. It is believed that this letter was copied multiple times and placed throughout Meru and Chiaroscuro around 2900 OEG. To-date, Lunar expeditions to Meru have turned up no less than six copies of this letter, while more than thirty have been recovered from Chiaroscuro by various scavengers. Whether or not the Magnus sent this letter to other cities is unknown.

A vote will soon go before the Deliberative to decide the fate of the so-called Neverborn.

If favored by the majority, our Realm shall begin the process of extracting and moving the diffuse Essences of those fallen Primordials to the borders of Creation, where they will be forged into a great wall of soulsteel and jade. Engraved on these walls will be a history of the terrors and triumphs of the Primordials, leading up to their eventual and total ruin at our hands. Tunnels carved through these walls will house the Labyrinth. These tunnels will be the only method for penetrating this wall, and within them will be the memorial halls of true death, a monument of the horror and ruin that came to the Primordials, frozen forever in cognizant still-life and undeath. Any forces seeking to invade Creation would have to navigate these chambers and see firsthand the fate that befell our greatest enemies.

Such a construct would not only deter future attempts such as the one made by Ramethus, but it would also grant the fallen titans a modicum of relevance and a measure of their former dignity. Unfortunately, this plan is an unpopular one. The general consensus amongst my peers: 'Why bother? We owe them no solace, no end to their ruin. And such an effort would be no doubt outrageously expensive, taking a great toll on not only coffers but life.'

And yet I say the ghosts made by the effort would surely find work as guides and heralds in the border-shrine's massive exhibits, allowing us to extend economic control into the realm of death.

Some few idealists still believe we might be able to expel the Neverborn from the Underworld and further resolve that dread region's issue with our own realm's existence, but I state here my sincerest doubts on that measure. During one of my many attempts to map the Underworld I experienced the strangest phenomenon. It has been well-documented that Brigid passed into lethe more than five centuries ago, and yet I succeeded in summoning her in the Underworld.

While investigating the Chasulblis, near the site where Brigid's old manse stood in Creation, I found that her power still existed—inexplicably—as a pattern burnt into the shadow of existence. A vortex appeared before me, knowing only things which Brigid knew, drawing on memories within me, yet part of it completely external...through it I was able to force 'her' to coalesce.

When Brigid stood before me, it had properties not wholly unlike a Neverborn. It expressed displeasure that I had awakened it. I dispersed it with Ghost-Eating Technique, but it was not wholly destroyed. I take this as further evidence that one cannot destroy the Neverborn simply by killing them. Sometimes power in and of itself becomes irrevocable; some things done can never be undone.

Therefore we must learn to incorporate what we have made into our plans for the future.

BLUE RHAPSODY

PART I

From the depths of the ocean came the once-dead man.

As he staggered out of the tide, the spray of surf on his face was perhaps the only kind touch he'd felt in days. He knew he was not dead—could not be dead—and gasped in relief as he slid a hand along his breast and felt his heart's answer.

Yet he had died.

He could remember dying. It was like drowning, only in the air. He had been drawn from the water even as his body sank into the still black abyss...No time for that now. The sun had just gone down. There were greater imperatives at stake if he wished to go on living.

He looked around. The world was a dark blue watercolor as the last vestiges of light fled over the Western Pole. In the harbor buoy-bells rang. Seabirds cawed and squawked at some interminable distance.

He looked around with lost eyes that found nothing recognizable. Rock scarp bent to form gates over a bay he could not identify. Nor did he recognize the town of more than a hundred rooftops marching over a distant hill, torches burning for the coming night. He could have been anywhere in the West. Anywhere at all.

He stumbled through the sand, arms and legs at double weight. He made a go at peeling seaweed from his shoulders, hoping to lighten his load. A starfish clung grimly to his lapel. He broke it off and tossed it away, then thumped its gripping leg from his vest. His own leg took a hitch; he reeled and caught himself, and for a moment his world spun. He groaned. The town seemed no nearer than before. He was out of steps and dreadfully thirsty.

He was about to curse himself when he realized he couldn't remember his name. He looked into himself but could not see it.

Though the past few nights were a dim wash of events—boat-corpse wreckage, the cries of drowning men, the cold black waves—he knew it was not amnesia. Memories of his life had gone fuzzy. The details were there, but like everything else about him, they were drenched in seawater, tangled in kelp and full of sand. For all the mess, they were indiscernible, and he had not the energy to clean them. His mind, like the rest of him, felt bruised by the cold hard slap of constant waves he'd endured for hours? days? some immemorial time.

So he looked down at his legs and ordered them with his mind: You will move, leg. You will step, foot.

His body shuddered into action with the shamble of an undead, and lucky for him there were no deaf shore wardens about, for that is exactly what he looked like, covered in sand and brine and seaweed and ambling up the shore with legs full of lead.

A fitting walk for a man so recently dead.

His mind would not let that issue go. He had been dead. Now he was alive. Alive and making tracks up the beach, his left boot-heel prints marked with a telltale X.

As he drew farther away from the ocean's dread grasp, he felt better by degrees. There was no overt reason to feel so. He was dehydrated, bruised, exhausted, and had an array of scratches in a dozen strange places, but there it was. The ocean had been

his enemy, and he in its clutches for what seemed like forever. It was in his very mind. He could not think over the breaking of the tide in his head. But with every step he felt further released. With every step his life / existence asserted themselves. As the ocean retreated, it gave up its prisoners—his memories came in on the tide and crawled up the beach after him. Some were faster than others.

The first came to him in a sound followed by an image: he heard an echoed, breathless scream that was like an empty roar—the wind at the bottom of an empty well, the tidesong in a seashell—and saw a black flag whipped by storm-winds. On it was an ivory disc: the pennant of Skullstone Archipelago!

This was chased by the image of that which flew the flag. His eyes narrowed in anger as they had when he'd first seen it, when so many of the eyes around him had been wide and full of terror. It was a ship almost as large as the Denzik city. But it was a ship of sails and more, and it towered over the night sky, its bow blacking out stars. He could see flippers at its sides, stirring the water like massive oars, rowing it in a slow turn until it faced his ship, the Bravura, head-on.

Ghost-pirates rappelling down its sides seemed like mere ants, and the Bravura seemed as nothing more than a stone in the shadow of a mountain.

At this point, the once-dead man came trudging into town and stopped in the middle of the street. Those few who saw him stared as they came and went, each paying him a wide berth and hurrying along. Himself, he stared at nothing. He came to a standstill and felt none of the chill that the wind inflicted on his soaked coat and slacks.

He was in the water. Bravura had been shattered. It floated around him with the remnants of his crew, while above him the massive Skullstone vessel bore down. As his men screamed and drowned, he could not draw his eyes away from the deck. At its bow stood the captain, a figure edged in black with a high tricorne. His arms were folded and he could feel the captain's eyes on him. He saw the name of the ship, briefly glimpsed as the vessel passed over him, sucking him down into an icy black fathom about its hull.

He swam as hard as he could, but even if he could compete with the rise and swell of the massive ship, it would have done him no good. Those black waters were alive, you see. They were alive and whispering of a death that was not unlike drowning: a death of cold, submerging darkness. An abyss.

The Muerta Vista bounded another wave and came down with a merciless crash, tossed grasping waves like claws over her and his men, dragging them under, sucking them into its sinking trough and the black water around it.

Perhaps it was cruel that he could remember the name of that ship but not his own name. Or perhaps it was such that he knew revenge better than he knew himself. For as he stood remembering the cries of his men and that cold, sucking blackness that was more than just water, he burned with hatred for the Monarch of Darkmist. He did not need a name to swear revenge; he could recall the names of his men as he envisioned their faces one by one. He could recall the name of his ship so callously sunk. These things were more than enough to swear by.

It tried to eat my name!

He was so deep into this revelation that he failed to notice those who stood in his presence.

"You there," came a salty sea voice on a breath smelling of cider-beer.

He looked up to a trio of shadowed figures. Only the middle one seemed at all apparent. The other two stood dimly at his flanks, and a step behind. It was as if the dwindling light from a nearby post couldn't spread itself evenly amongst them, and so it had settled on the one who had spoken. Presently that one was smiling. Had the once-dead man been himself, he would have seen the hatred in that expression.

"You, what came out of the surf. I never thought I'd see you again!"

The once-dead man felt a pain at the back of his skull, wobbled on his legs, and barred a hand across the back of his head, wincing. He did not see how his near-fall had almost startled them into an attack.

"Steady there, lad," said the middle man, waving down the man on his left and the man on his right. They took their hands from their swords, as he took a step toward the once-dead man and leaned in, his voice cajoling, low: "You don't look at all yourself."

The once-dead steadied and righted himself as best he could. The light was damnable-poor. It played against him. This voice caused a pain in his mind to hear it. And the face it belonged to was half-obsured.

"Somebody who knows me?" he asked, his eyes a dart of frenzy / hope.

"We know who you are," the middle man said, his smile souring into a scowl, "James Sutherland!" His fist was a fluttering of cuff and a circle of black within blue-gray shadows. Stars exploded in Sutherland's vision as he went backwards pinwheeling his arms. Brilliant pain erupted in his skull as he cracked his head on the cobbled road. He lay sprawled like a drunk, his long maroon-brown hair fanning out around his head. On his face was a glassy-eyed stare and a fading smile. His world was going black, but he had his name. He clung to it like an anchor cast overboard. Though he might sink, with a grip on the anchor, one would always get hauled back up again, sooner or later. I won't be dying so soon, he said to himself.

Footsteps were drawing closer.

"I died once, you know?" said Sutherland. The middle man fetched him a kick so hard he flipped over, but he was already unconscious.

"Pick him up," said the middle man to his cronies while shaking out his fist.

* * * *

As Sutherland was marched through town he was vaguely aware of the procession that formed around him. His sight came and went in a blur, as if water had gotten under his lenses. Each time it did, he opened his eyes to find more people marching alongside until he was at the fore of a parade.

His hands were bound behind his back. Iron fingers dug into his meaty upper arms. His head sagged as he walked. Somewhere behind him he could feel the presence of the one who'd struck him. He could sense red-hot eyes burning a brand onto his back. Each time he wondered who the man was, it was the first time. As he drifted into consciousness he asked himself the question, and as he faded back out again he promptly forgot ever asking.

Each time he passed out he passed into his own thoughts. In his mind he was lost at sea, water in every direction and a storm was coming. The waves grew higher and higher. The waves! He could not stand the waves. He knew if he was hit with just one more wave he would go under. There was nothing of his strength left. He clung to the wheel of the *Bravura* but it could not save him. The next wave was more than he could take. The next wave would surely drive him under for the last time. It rose into the sky and smote the stars. It swallowed the moon. And then it took the shape of a ship called *Muerta Vista*.

The wave came down like the fist of a titan and drove him under, shattering the wheel of *Bravura*. He flipped end over end down through the depths, where the abyss claimed him. There the water was more than just water. It was something less, and that made it more. In that diminishment, he felt the end of days, and heard a whisper within the cold black nothing of eternal death, coaxing his soul from his breast and his name from his heart. Oblivion filled his lungs. He longed for the burning torment of seawater. And then all was black.

"I told you I was dead," he muttered.

The guard on his right glared sidelong at him and drove an elbow into his ribs, but he was gone again, back below the waves. He tumbled in and out of consciousness until he could no longer tell the difference between dream and reality. The dream spanned his waking moments even as he stared, bleary-eyed, at a world that did not match his second sight. Under the din of the crowd he could still hear the first sounds on his exodus from death: the gurgle of rising bubbles.

A spear of light pierced the blackness and he felt a pain in his side, in the lining of his coat (coinciding with the moment of the elbow strike). The light was coming from his breast: pure, white, and hot. It made a sound—pween!—like a crossbow bolt bouncing off a belt buckle (ask later). All he knew in that moment was pain first, then light. It was important to him then, because he had felt something like this before, years ago, when his body had erupted in heatless radiant light at a moment so dire.

The shock of the pain and the mental imperative of light helped to center him. He knew they were the keys to the artifact at work in his breast pocket. They were part of its recipe for his revival—a bit of pain to wake the senses, start the heart, and then the return of a single memory, the most important memory of all, the one that had defined and would go on defining him. With it in place the rest of him was drawn back to the center of his being. He felt his arms and his legs reattach to his torso. He felt his body / soul being rebuilt mote by mote. There was another flash at his breast but he had no breast. He realized then that all that was left of him was the artifact, sinking silently into the depths. It was the Eye of Sayatha. He had worn it in his coat for months without knowing its purpose. But now it was making its purpose known.

Spears of light flashed out in the darkness, and for the second time in his life, James Sutherland was reborn.

James stumbled at a flight of stairs and caught a boot in the small of his back that spilled him onto his knees.

"Get moving!" growled the middle man. Laughter exploded around him.

James swore he knew the man's voice, then forgot ever hearing it. Hands were hauling him back to his feet but he was gone again.

He dreamed about the Eye, the white diamond-cut jewel in its orichalcum harness, dangling from a chain of the same fine golden steel. He remembered feeling sadness, then empathy. The Eye had brought him back, but at a great price to itself. It was keening, a horrible whistling sound above the waves. It glowed weakly and sapped Essence from the air and from his body, causing him a full-body tremor. He did not curse it. One did not blame his savior. But neither could he survive the buffeting waves in this condition. Every time the Eye gave off its grating whine, he felt his limbs go numb.

He circled in the water, hoping to see a bit of flotsam, something he could hang on to. He thought he could endure the Eye's recovery if he could just rest. It wailed again, the sound bleeding into his ears and aching into the places between. The sound made him weak and nauseated. His head slipped below the waves and he came up gasping. Still he held fast to the chain. The idea of letting go horrified him.

Had he been brought back just to die? Would he die hanging on to that which had brought him back? Sutherland was a stew of bitter ironies and damned consequences. On the one hand there was survival. On the other hand, there were his principles. If nothing else, he held the very thing which he had risked his many lives for. Not the Eye of Sayatha exactly, but what it symbolized—sacred treasures of unimaginable power. Letting go of it was like letting go of some essential part of him blurlblurlbrlbrlble.

In the physical now, someone had thrown a pail of water on his face and railed at him to, "Step lively you slumgullion! You enter the presence of the Master!"

In the mental now, he came up gasping, seeing spots. Another draining surge and he would black out.

He was in two places at once. In one he was being hustled through a giant archway flanked by towering iron doors and red and blue masses. In the other he was coming to the furious realization that he had to drop it, that there was nothing around to keep him afloat, nothing he could anchor it to that he could ever haul back up. In both places he stared in wonder at the hand which held the Eye. In both places the jeers of the crowd bled into his waterlogged sense of reality as though under a sheet of water: the screams of the drowning. In both places he knew he was in tremendous danger. Only now he was beginning to sense the immediate danger of the physical present. He had been brought someplace hostile, unfriendly to his kind or to his name. Little did it matter which; he could feel the sentence of the savage court swinging from their tongues.

Still, he lingered in the dream a moment longer, on the verge of revelation, anchored by the sense of something important which he had witnessed about that most important of artifacts.

Anchored.

The thought came down on him like a moment of madness, an epiphany so stark he thought he might be lost forever to his own genius.

His daiklave came to hand in a flash of violet and he went to work, quickly tying the chain of the Eye around its hilt and cross-guard, binding it around and around until the jewel bounced tightly against the blade. His heart was pounding blood into his temples, filling him with a sense of heady triumph.

The Eye keened again and he grimaced but held himself aloft, kicking his legs wildly, grinning fiercely. He held his sword before the sun to catch the light glinting off the blade. He shook it as hard as he could, his head going under, a hand clasped over his nose to block the water. The jewel of the Eye rattled wildly against Whisper-in-Shadows, but held fast, bonded to his blade by an orichalcum chain.

Sutherland surfaced for a deep breath and then fell backwards into the water, sank a few fathoms and turned over. He kissed his sword on the pommel and let it go. As Whisper-in-Shadows sank into the depths, trailing bubbles and the Eye of Sayatha, he watched it go.

Long after both had vanished, he heard the distant keening of the Eye, and then not even that. He clutched his fist grimly at his chest and felt the departure of his last allies, given over so that he might live.

He swore he would live to recover them. He would need both to defeat the Silver Prince.

But there was the matter of his current situation—in the clutches of a foe, surrounded by countless enemies. Escape was merely a stepping stone to his revenge on the Deathlord, and this, this where, was a problem to delay him by minutes. As he lifted his eyes, the fullness of his memories flooded into him. He knew where he was, who he was, and the full awareness of his being was restored.

Presently he stood before a court of savages aping the just.

Sad to say, most were human.

PART II

The savage court was a show of a carnival variety. All manner of deformities were on display—most were of the spirit. Still, the circus had its freaks: a bald imp with razor-teeth hugged the floor and hissed at Sutherland from between the skirts of some dark Mary with a blue shepherd's crook and a red bonnet. There were men too tall and too short; here was a giant with a shark's fin protruding from his back; there was a man in a duster with a mouth full of gold and a long beard which he stroked with the giant pincer that was his hand.

For the most part, though, the crowd was human, and ugly in other ways. Their hatred paraded around on flesh that was otherwise blameless. It made their eyes big and white and it made the spittle fly from their mouths and shaped their faces into ugly, repetitive masks until they were one thing, a singular animal, a throng to which few individuals belonged.

Of course there were exceptions. The guardsmen were still, silent, uniform, deadly: red coats and black tricornes, holding six-foot harpoons at arms. They stood shoulder to shoulder in twin rows that divided the court, leaving an aisle down to a throne on which a familiar presence sat.

James did not have to see the man to know who he was. He could see the man's red pennants—bedecked with dueling silver serpents—hanging from the galleries. Also hanging from the galleries: an entire second crowd, this more raucous than the first. These were pirates almost wholly undisguised. Seldom were their coats of parliament with two whole sleeves, and where their arms were bare for cloth they were rife with tattoos. More jewelry found the faces of the men than the women, and the women were bawds of the highest caliber, filthy with eye-make and wigs stacked upon wigs.

And there were others who sank into the crowd, using special techniques to hide in plain sight. Normally they would have been invisible. He sensed each of them by contrast to the crowd around them. They were like black pools amongst roiling waters. In their complete absence, they left voids in the crowd, wells that normal Essences could not fill.

And then there was the matter of the Chosen who were not hiding. Several were gathered at the dais to which he would soon be served. One of them was the middle man. He stood at the left hand of the throne, staring at Sutherland with marked disdain. His hair was orange, the left side of his face tattooed with whorls of intersecting blades, and his coat and shirt were open over a chest criss-crossed by scars. On his head was a tricorn with the bill folded up; on his back was a reaver of black jade. Sutherland still did not recognize him, but the look on his face said that they'd met before. Little did that matter; he could tell just by his juxtaposition to the throne that the one who'd punched him was the least of his worries.

Sutherland read the web-work of this spectacle like a diagram. He knew the role of every person in relation to the next. This further confirmed his suspicion of the identity of the one who sat on the throne. It also told Sutherland just exactly how much danger he was in. The rioting crowd was of less concern to him than the powerful, menacing spirits set all through the room like pinpricks on a map.

Finally his death-march was over. He stood before the dais. On the throne was a man in a wig and a chapeau. The man held a heavy leather book in front of his face. On its cover was the word DOCKETT. The man wore a red coat with silver dragons embroidered into the lapels. His epaulets were also silver, and he wore on his sleeves the stripes of a commodore, and on his cuffs, a post captain's cufflink. On his chapeau, a silver grate depicted a pair of embossed serpents dueling.

White gloves with black-threaded knuckles turned a thick yellow page demurely, as if Sutherland were of no consequence. Seeing this display of scornful disregard, the crowd cheered.

Sutherland grinned. At this distance, he could call Whisper-in-Shadow and...no, he couldn't. Nevermind that his hands were bound—his blade did not rest in Elsewhere, but rather somewhere thousands of fathoms deep, twined with the Eye of Sayatha. And were he able to heel the blade from such a depth, there was no guarantee the Eye of Sayatha would come with. The risk was too great. So he decided to use a blade of a different kind.

His eyes darted around the room as his smile grew. He read the room once more and felt comprehension's steadying grasp. This was less a court than the floor of the arena, and here the crowd cared only for a splash of crimson. It mattered not who bled.

Sutherland's eyes peeped up over the edge of the docket like a rising sun. His tone affected the most chummy, cheery voice possible. It broke over the crowd, half as loud, yet drowning it out: jollity in the face of danger contrasting his situation with the weight of cannon-fire.

"Why, Captain Whitesails! Is that really you?"

His words had the desired effect—immediate and hilarious outrage. The docket slammed shut with a thunderclap and the man on the throne came forward roaring, "That's Master Carsegil to you!"

James's hair flew back from his head with the man's bellow, but he stood unmoving, even as several courtiers leapt back in fear. Sutherland could sense harpoons leveled at his back; a sign of what his disrespect would brook. His suspicions about where he was and who he was dealing with were confirmed. This was Tulaan, a marquisate in the Protectorates. Before him sat good prince Andilar Carsegil, a man who professed civility, education, and proper form, and cursed all pirates as dogs and scoundrels while he himself engaged in every form of theft imaginable. Carsegil despised this bit of truth so much that the slightest accusation sent him into a rage.

Back when he was merely a rich privateer, Carsegil had fancied himself a savant and world-class archaeologist. He considered scavenger lords to be grave-robbing scoundrels. His calling, on the other hand, was divine. Many times had he delivered relics from the hands of those who had done all the work to find them; better in his custody than in the hands of heathen ghouls and heretical swine.

Sutherland, having gotten word of this, pulled the same trick on Carsegil every time he had the chance. It was amusing to see him here, affecting the role of tribune, but unsurprising. The potent combination of self-righteousness and pretension made him an ideal judge.

The crowd had gone silent. Silence spun out between judge and captive, and it spoke volumes of the history they shared. Carsegil was hanging from his throne, and as if in mimicry, his spectacles were hanging off the end of his nose. The staring match went on and neither man blinked. Then Carsegil, realizing he had the upper-hand, reached up and pushed his spectacles back onto his face. Then he settled slowly onto his throne, once again the austere arbiter of calm order. He crossed his legs and set the docket across his lap as a cruel smile pierced his cheeks.

"Sutherland, James," said Carsegil.

The crowd began to stir and murmur.

"You are hereby charged—"

The crowd began to hoot and whoop and whistle.

"—By the Marquisate of Tulaan, with several egregious violations of the codes of human decency."

The crowd was a full on wash of cheers. Carsegil never asked for Sutherland's plea. Instead he opened the docket.

Sutherland smirked, an eyebrow perched high as if he were a member of the audience rather than the star of the show.

"This is not the first time you have offended the Marquisate. You have been summoned again and again to answer for your crimes. And as you have failed to appear in our courts on every such occasion, your trial has occurred in absentia."

"How very convenient," said James. "Probably because anything you could nail me for would go double for you," he said, with a pause, sharpening his chosen word like a knife. "Except I was never a pirate."

That elicited a long ooh from the crowd.

Carsegil's eyes shot up at Sutherland as rage broke over his face, and James gave a mocking laugh, twisting the blade he had just buried. The crowd heckled and hoorayed: it belonged to Carsegil, but like a pack of wild dogs, it served whoever produced flesh on which to feed—the bloodier the better. Like anything that bled, Carsegil was a potential feast. The crowd was a powerful ally, but dangerous. It could be the key to Sutherland's salvation, or it could just as easily turn on him.

Carsegil composed himself before speaking, so that his face was a calm shape, although it trembled with his anger. He ignored Sutherland, turned a page in the docket and began to read, focusing on the worst crimes listed. The crowd's pulsing voice became an excited chant, rising in volume with each indictment. James listened to the charges with an attentive yet excessively bored look on his face. Then Carsegil proceeded into capital offenses—those which came with a death sentence.

The mob hissed at Sutherland when they learned he had spent much time living amongst the Fair Folk. Some forked the sign of the evil eye at him when it was revealed that he had entered into wedlock with a Lintha woman—a single scream pierced the din and the crowd began to lurch and shift as a very forceful presence made its way to the front.

Carsegil observed this with partial interest, and then he leaned in casually to speak with James over his collar. "Tell me, Sutherland, when you went to Bluehaven, did they cut off your balls?"

Sutherland ignored the question—he was equally distracted by the commotion, and with good reason. He felt the traces of a familiar presence emerging from the one-gestalt of the crowd. He hoped beyond hope he was wrong about who it belonged to.

The crowd surged forward, reeled backward, and then spilled forward again, disgorging a tall brown-skinned woman with violet hair and looping silver tattoos over her bare arms and shoulders. She was a picture of beauty in strife, and her great yellow eyes gleamed with outrage. She turned aside harpoons with forceful slaps as she stomped toward Sutherland. The middle man put a hand on his daiklave, and several other Chosen at the dais rose to impede her progress, but Carsegil lifted his open hand to them. Wait.

The guards were stilled as the woman came onto the floor. The crowd went silent.

She stood before James, totally unfazed by the ring of sword-tips pointing in at her head. Her arms were straight at her sides, her fists balled up at her hips. She wore a leather vest, cut low to show off the generous swell of her cleavage, and even tighter pants of a very thin, motile fabric. She leaned in, glaring.

He opened his mouth to explain, but she grabbed his collar and pulled him off his feet, her knee driving hard into his groin.

James hit the floor in a crumple, folded up, groaning. The crowd howled with laughter. Hats sailed through the air. Carsegil rubbed his chin and said, "Guess not!"

The woman bent over at the hips and spit and said, "And to think I trusted you when you said you had no bond with that Lintha cull!"

She lunged at him but was caught by the arms and hauled backwards, spitting and cursing. Somewhere within the crowd, a fist collided with a jaw and ten people hit the floor at once. More laughter at this, and then she was gone.

Sutherland was gasping, his eyes full of tears, his center bound up in spasming knots. But the attack hurt him less than the sense that he had lost control over the crowd. Curse her stupid eyes! It would be difficult to win the crowd over now. This was the last place Sutherland had expected to see her. His plan was sinking faster than the Bravura.

Rough hands hauled him to his feet.

"Savage company you keep," said Carsegil, smiling, aware of his hypocritical words and not caring.

"All right, Carsegil," said Sutherland. "If you wanted me dead I'd be dead already."

"Perhaps I want to watch you pay for your crimes? Slowly. And painfully."

Sutherland read some truth in that, but it was less than the whole of the issue. Carsegil wanted something. Now if he could only read it. Damn her! The court was very nearly his. She'd thrown him completely off balance and he was back to square one. No, worse. He was at square negative ten. Carsegil was waiting for a reply, and Sutherland had less than seconds to answer. The man was capable of visiting atrocity upon those he held no special enmity for. James's lot would be far worse, and his time was running out.

So he breathed deeply and summoned the calm within, forcing out the pain and the jeers and the panicked ticking of the clock. His eyes grew vacant. The world grew around him as he shrank into his self, entering a trance of limitless thought. In that way, time grew larger around him. Milliseconds became seconds. Seconds became minutes. If he pushed harder, minutes could become hours. But there was the danger—too big of a push, and he could literally fall out of time, his consciousness locked into processing a single moment for a torturous eternity. In any case, seconds passed in real-time, but to Sutherland's inscrutable mind, it might as well have been days.

In those few moments, he saw everything he needed to see.

His eyes flashed back to life. Crowd-sounds flooded back into his ears. Carsegil straightened expectantly, but his patience was gone. If Sutherland did not say something of interest, he was going to be very sorry he'd washed up on Tulaan's shore.

"It turns out you and I aren't enemies after all," said Sutherland.

Carsegil narrowed his eyes. He was both incredulous and paranoid. "Now see here—"

"The Silver Prince."

Carsegil was stunned, silent. He fell back in his chair, but his face was a stone. Between the pose and the expression on his face, Sutherland saw the truth. His shot in the dark had revealed the bull's eye.

James could only guess why Carsegil hated the Silver Prince more than he. It didn't matter. All the pieces were falling into place. From a diminutive series of clues, he had strung the answer together: Carsegil's high-handedness, his tendency to look down on the less-educated; his bandying of words like heretic and grave-robber; that he set himself above scalliwags and pirates; and that he despised the Lintha and the fae. His overarching sense of superiority. His lust for artifacts. Sutherland knew here sat a dispossessed scion of the Realm. On the Blessed Isle, such a man might have become admiral. But he was forced to settle for a judgeship in a tinpot arm of the Protectorates, where he had managed to grasp some form of station more admirable than a privateer. Carsegil wore the raiment of dishonor and banishment in his ways. Because he wished to one day return to his former station, he railed against piracy and the fae and the Hundred Gods Heresy and the Lintha, even though he'd likely never be forgiven.

Therefore, Master Carsegil would fight like a mongoose to defend whatever pittance of authority he might accrue.

"You seek redress," said Sutherland, his eyes dropping to slits. He paced to one side of his confining cage of harpoons, affecting the manner of a lawyer even though his hands were

tied. It was only natural. Sutherland did a lot of things with his hands tied behind his back. It was only fair.

Carsegil was silent, scowling. He folded his hands in front of his face.

Sutherland continued: "You have been losing ships to Skullstone, have you not?" He paused, weighing the accuracy of his guess. "The Marquis leans on you to do something about it, but the Marquisate is an arm of Coral, and Coral won't support any overt acts of war against Skullstone. So here is Tulaan, caught in the middle, and your hands, like mine, are tied."

The crowd was murmuring. For the most part, they did not understand what Sutherland was saying. But that was fine. He no longer needed them. And Carsegil understood. Sutherland now stood almost directly before the dais, flanked at either side by Carsegil's Exalted guardsmen, and face-to-face with the man himself.

"And you would go forth to harry my enemy? Ha!" Carsegil sneered, begrudging every word to the inevitable conclusion.

"I'll do better than that. I'll bring you the wheel of the Muer-ta Vista."

A gasp spread over the crowd, followed by a hush. Several members made religious gestures.

Carsegil grabbed Sutherland around the neck, reeled him in close and whispered fiercely: "Now see here, Sutherland! In Tulaan we don't speak its name!"

Sutherland went on speaking—fabricated an all-out lie: "They say it's made of black jade and it can steer any ship unharmed through the worst of storms. They say as long as that ship is at the head of a formation, any ship that falls behind it is just as safe." Having played on Carsegil's well-known desire for artifacts, he switched to another tactic. "But more than that, any who knew you possessed such a wheel would think twice about harrying you. Skullstone might even bargain for its return. Of course, you would never, ever say that you had it. But then again, you wouldn't say that you did not have it. Savvy?"

Carsegil's eyes widened. Sutherland saw the open desire for such notoriety and had to admit to himself—Old Whitesails had guts. This entire court had heard the conversation. Everyone in the West would know what transpired here. Carsegil would clearly be guilty of... what? Nothing, as long as no one saw him with the wheel. Everyone would know who had it, but none would be able to prove it.

Carsegil whispered his terms: "I should hang you upside down by your entrails...but my last box of gaffs went down with a freighter near the Web of Shadows. You will do this thing before the turning of the season, or I shall personally see you dead."

A trace of gold flashed across Sutherland's brow so fast that very few saw it, and most of them doubted their eyes. The middle man only glared with his.

"Done," said Sutherland, sealing the contract with unbreakable mandate.

Carsegil shoved him backwards hard, and howled with fury. "I will not partake in this, your open defiance of Coral's laws! Fiend! Coercionist! Guards! This man has been poisoned by the Black Ship's treasure and will surely bring about the demise of himself and all those around him! I shall not risk the curse of his blood! Hoist him to the border and see him turned out immediately!"

The middle man spun on Carsegil, his eyes full of shock. He railed, but his voice was lost to the crowd. "You mean t'just let him go?"

An hour later there came a shove, and Sutherland went face-down in the sand at land's end. Before him was a dinghy. Inside it was a lantern and a single oar.

The captain of the guard growled. "You are banished from this place," he said. "If you come back you will be killed on sight."

The guards began to file away.

"At least untie my hands!" James shouted.

The captain turned back and threw a note into the sand. Bound to it was a stiletto.

After Sutherland cut away his bonds, he opened the note and found a doodle of a roughly drawn figure, presumably himself, roasting on a rotisserie. It read: You have until the turning!

Witty, thought Sutherland, as he crumpled the note and tossed it aside.

Minutes later he disappeared into the fog, rowing the dinghy by the light of a single lantern.

A hand reached down, grasped the crumpled note and opened it. Peleps Dawara's eyes drifted back and forth over the strange missive and then slammed it back into a ball between his palms. His scar-crossed chest heaved like a great beast's as he stared after that fading lantern. He was not new to this story; we know him as the middle man.

This night he made an oath of his own: "You'll not be so lucky next time we meet, Sutherland."

APPENDIX

COMMENTARY

AGENDA (VOL. 1)

The Ink Monkeys scheme to bring readers **Exalted** content on par with their published works, using the blog as a pulpit to expound on topics that Second Edition never got around to updating from First Edition, as well as subjects deemed too esoteric or niche to merit precious allotment of wordcount. Here, unbound by such restraints, the Ink Monkeys will dig up the bones of the setting and crunch them.

More seriously, we hope you enjoy reading our ravings as much as we enjoy gibbering them in your general direction. To that end, expect articles, essays, new Charms and spells and other crunchy bits, insane Deathlords with sane stats, fiction vignettes, locations you never heard of or thought you would never hear about again, new ways to beat ass with or without kung fu and perhaps even a contest or two. Updates will be frequent, but not at regular scheduled intervals. We welcome feedback. Tell us what you want to see. Tell us what you dislike. We don't promise to take all reader comments to heart, but we do promise to listen. We hope you like what we have to say. Most of all, we hope you'll have as much fun reading our work as we do writing it.

—Michael Goodwin

—Holden Shearer

—John Mørke

INFERNALS

GOLDEN YEARS TARNISHED BLACK (VOL. 12)

Dear Ink Monkeyteers,

First up, each and every one of you have my personal thanks. I received an "A" for the semester as a result of the traffic generated on this blog so far. You all rule.

The impatient among you who already scrolled down to the Charms know that this isn't an essay on social combat, nor is it stats for Gardullis. Indeed these Charms weren't even on the list of things I planned to work on, let alone next. The Ebon Dragon sure is a sneaky bastard.

In all seriousness, today's Charms are a bit of a nonstandard collaborative effort. The forum luminary Demented One has a tendency to write more Charms in a week than I manage in a given month. The man scares me. He does, however, have a lot of good ideas. What started as me giving him feedback on one of his nastier brainstormed turned into something much worse once I got hold of it and made it into an entire tree. While others offered feedback, Demented One did the most to help me refine my thoughts. You all should take the time to check out his work (not that it's hard to find). In my estimation, he is rapidly climbing into the Plague of Hats / JiveX tier of Charm design excellence.

—Michael A. Goodwin

INFERNAL MONSTER EXPANSIONS (VOL. 3)

The Ink Monkeys will be showcasing expansions for the infamous Infernal Monster Style introduced in **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Infernals**. The style is clearly inspired by a variety of sources, including The Incredible Hulk, Hellboy, Grendel and a whole bunch of assorted nasty beasties in folklore and mythology. It is the fighting art of ogres and raving psychopaths and hideous bloody tyrants. Each installment of this series will explore different thematic niches the style explores. It is our intention to give this same sort of love to other Hero Styles, particularly Solar Hero Style. Grendel needs his Beowulf after all. Readers may certainly offer suggestions on what they hope to see from later installments of the Infernal Monster series. Until then, have fun grinding the universe to paste.

—Michael A. Goodwin

ROAR OF THE DEVIL BEAST (VOL. 6)

Hey all,

Here is part three of the Infernal Monster expansion series. You'll note we cut out Post-Traumatic Brutality Roar from the previous post and added it here. It has an activation roll now, which I added after realizing there were problem interactions with later Charms by not including one. This is one advantage of the blog format. I can recognize that something isn't working right and fix it immediately. Isn't technology awesome?

On an unrelated note, I've been seeing some grumbling about how everything we've put up so far has been for Infernal or Alchemical. There is some Lunar content coming in one of the IMS expansions, but that isn't the main focus, so it's not that much. However, this is not to say that Ink Monkeys will only be offering content for those Exalted types. I've promised some Solar Hero and Lunar Hero and Dark Messiah and Terrestrial Hero expansions, and you'll get those. However, before we get there, I'm working on statting up Gardullis. At last, you will see the full power of an armed and operational Greater Elemental Dragon. Can't promise when he'll be done, only that he is my next project after the IMS series ends. Hope that is some reassurance to the "Quit with the Primordial Exalted already!" camp. As always, thanks for reading.

—Michael A. Goodwin

CHAINED BEAST (VOL. 9)

Hey all,

Here is something unexpected and different for the latest IMS installment. Yes, these Charms are overpowered. Yes, that is the point of akuma. If you sell your soul and your protagonism, you deserve to get something for it. Consider these Charms a bit of that something. Enjoy!

—Michael A. Goodwin

ALCHEMICALS

AUTOCHTHONIA AND SOULS (VOL. 4)

It has become apparent of late that the new **Manual of Exalted Power—Alchemicals**, though awesome in every other way, could stand to be clearer on the subject of Autochthonia's unique cycle of reincarnation, and the role soulgems play in this cycle. Because both soulgems and Autochthonia's current soul crisis are matters of such great import to its Champions, we present the following information to hopefully shine some light on the issue and dispel confusion.

Clarity: It's not just a game trait!

—Holden Shearer

—John Mørke

ESSENCE PULSE CANNON (VOL. 2)

When Holden and I were converting the Alchemical Charms for Second Edition, we quickly realized that some of the most iconic combat Charms I gave them in First Edition were so narrow that they tended to produce One True Builds. With everyone rocking Essence Pulse Cannons and using mechac-thulhu multi-limb Grievous builds because they were where the firepower was, nobody was exploring all the other amazing aesthetics that Alchemicals could wield. To combat that, we took a broader approach, ensuring that people could arm themselves however they want to. Still, some people miss their Essence Pulse Cannons. And we get that. They were cool.

We think they're still cool. We might be biased.

—Michael A. Goodwin

For that matter, are there any other lost First Edition gems your Alchemical just can't live without?

—Holden Shearer

MARTIAL ARTS

BLACK CLAW STYLE (VOL. 10)

I've been waiting a long time to make this post.

Yes, it's yet another martial arts style, but a bit different than what you may be used to.

This style was created by a demon.

Black Claw pushes the envelope for esoteric weirdness within a Celestial style—it's very much riding the edge, and shouldn't be taken as something you see a lot of in CMA. Still, exploring the odd outer boundaries of the system and the setting are one of the things we wanted to do when we asked for this blog, so here we are.

This style is actually, in a manner of speaking, the first thing I ever wrote for White Wolf. Sort of. Black Claw dates back to the summer of 2008, when Neph was writing *Infernals* and I was still hoping that I might some day graduate from playtester to writer. One day, as memory serves, Conrad Hubbard sent over an email wondering if Neph might possibly write up Black Claw style for inclusion in the book. "What's Black Claw style?" I asked. Neph indicated that, according to Conrad, it was a martial arts style in Mara's writeup, from way back in the first edition Storyteller's Companion.

I had no memory of such a thing and was quite surprised—Martial Arts have always been one of my biggest areas of interest in Exalted. So I dug out my old copy, blew the dust off of it, didn't see anything about a Black Claw style, read it again, and then finally noticed it in her Ability block—Martial Arts 5 (Black Claw Style +2).

Conrad has an amazing memory for fine details.

Neph wasn't especially interested in adding such a thing to his already-full plate, so, half-jokingly, I said "I'll write it up." He said that I should go ahead and do so, and he'd include it in the end, if there were any room.

Anyone familiar with **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Infernals** is laughing right about now. Or crying. For me it's usually both at once.

At any rate, although I wrote it, this style owes one debt of gratitude to Conrad Hubbard (for bringing it to our attention) and two debts of gratitude to Michael Goodwin. First, because he gave me the go-ahead to write it in the first place, and second, because he provided the idea for the style's unique sifu-student relationship, which I built the rest of Black Claw on.

This has been sitting in my proverbial bottom drawer, waiting for the right moment to be unleashed upon the world, for a very long time. It may be my single favorite martial arts style that I have ever written. I hope it provides some benefit to your games.

—Holden Shearer

SWAYING GRASS DANCE STYLE (VOL. 25)

Ink Monkeys exists, in large part, because writing for Exalted isn't just something I do for a paycheck; it's my hobby. Long before I was a freelancer, I was a fan. Specifically, I was "martial arts guy." That was my hobby—designing martial arts styles for Exalted. I did it for fun. The only part of becoming a freelancer that sucked was not getting to write up martial arts styles or other Charms whenever I wanted any more. So we have Ink Monkeys!

I remain convinced that some of my old fan-era work is not lacking in merit, though; and so, since it's a slow night, I've decided to share one of my favorite creations with you—overhauled and updated to fit modern Charm design standards, naturally. For some of you, this is an update of something old and familiar; for others, it's brand-new. Either way, I hope you like it.

—Holden Shearer

COOL PLACES

THE DAYSTAR (VOL. 13)

Hey there, Exalted fans.

As a matter of unfinished business from **Glories of the Most High**, it has always been in my heart to give you the sun.

By that I am referring to the Dirigible Engine Daystar, which turned the sun into a setting feature that your characters explore and interact with. Unfortunately in **Glories**, there was not enough room to fully detail the Chariot of the Most High. Still, I gave it a go, and included what I considered then to be all the major brush-strokes players would need to envision the Daystar.

Turns out I was wrong—upon writing the Daystar, I began to see a much larger picture of the Dirigible Engine than I saw initially, and I have spent the last two months painstakingly constructing it piece-by-piece just for you, Exalted fans. Sometimes I surprise myself.

What really surprised me, though, is how much call there has been for the Daystar to be further explored. Though dissatisfied with the limited coverage I was able to give it in *Glories*, I thought that what I had put there would be adequate. Turns out, many of you thought the same. In fact, the Daystar was so well received, that requests for further and more in-depth exploration of what it is, what it does, and what players can expect to find there / do there, has confronted me at every turn since November '09. So it is by popular demand that I can finally say to you: Yes. It is finally finished.

As a last word before I turn you loose on the Daystar, a moment of thanks. We writers owe *so much* to the editors who take their time to catch the mistakes we miss. A special thanks to Tito Lerma for taking time out of his busy schedule to help edit this project. Thanks also to the readers who have agitated and insisted so often that the Daystar should be more. This Ink Monkeys special is for you.

—John Mørke

NAMELESS LAIR OF MA- HA-SUCHI (VOL. 19)

Sometimes when I'm reading a webcomic or whatever I'll see "special guest edition" and just navigate away without really paying any more attention than that. Hopefully, the line above got your attention before that could happen.

Welcome to A Very Special Ink Monkeys, faithful readers. This post is brought to you by the letter D, for Dean Shomshak, developer of **Compass of Terrestrial Directions, Vol. III—The East**. The East was one of those books that fell prey to a terrible ailment common to **Exalted** products—rocking too hard for its own good. Its enthusiastic authors, enraptured by the exotic allure of lost jungle temples and bizarre, savage tribes, wrote too damned much, and some of it simply had to be cut for space. This material has languished on Mr. Shomshak's hard drive for several years, fully developed, ready for print... but too small to be sold as its own PDF, and yet, too awesome to simply write off. Alas, this material was left orphaned, without any proper outlet to reach its intended audience.

Until now. The Ink Monkeys, being Exalted fans at heart themselves, extend their thanks to Dean for going through the approval process required to even propose we do this post, to John Chambers for helping him push it forward, to and Eddy Webb for clearing the whole shebang—this literally could not have happened without them. We also of course extend our thanks to freelancers Alan Alexander, Dustin Shampel, and Andrew Watt, who went above and beyond the call of duty (and wordcount) to write up the material you're finally getting today.

These guys are awesome.

—Holden Shearer

ESSENTIAL ESSAYS

VOICE OF THE MAGNUS (VOL. 18)

Those of you who were with us for the game's first edition may remember the Aspect Books. The vagaries of a fickle market have kept second edition from continuing that line of products, which is a shame, in my opinion—their "Records of the Before," chapters of historical in-setting documents, were some of my favorite pieces of 1e material.

While we can't bring back the full goodness of the Caste and Aspect books, we *can* dig up some in-setting documents from the setting's history, and present them for your edification and enjoyment. Here's the first one, to tide you over until the next part of Daystar's ready to go up.

—Holden Shearer

—John Mørke