THE GAME OF POWERS

THE LIVE-ACTION SUPPLEMENT FOR

NOBILIS

STEP OUTSIDE REALITY

"Let him finish the ceremony, and then kill him."

"Kill who?" Edward asked. Every eye turned towards him, and he flushed.

"Oh, dear," he added awkwardly. "A faux pas. Was that some sort of secret language you were using?"

—from the Thought-Record of Cassius Quirinius

THE GAME OF POWERS expands the worlds and rules of Nobilis, moving play away from the tabletop and into live action.

The book contains:

❧ Guidelines and advice on how to design, prepare, run and play in live-action adventures in the universes of Nobilis. Clearly structured and easy to grasp, THE GAME OF POWERS is a painless crash-course in everything a player needs to create Nobilis adventures more dramatic than they dreamed possible.

❧ Dynamic Nobilis, a fast-moving task-resolution system based around Triumph and Misery. Dynamic Nobilis is designed for live-action play, but can be used to replace the usual Nobilis mechanics for tabletop games.

❧ A complete Dynamic Nobilis adventure, 'Heaven's Gate', concerning the fate of a painting that is part-angel and part-demon. It is suitable for any number of players, though thirty is a sensible upper limit, and less than one may prove impractical.

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The Game of Powers

LIVE-ACTION RULES FOR Nobilis

Nobilis CREATED BY R. Sean Borgstrom

Contents

Ninety-Nine Days and One

They find a man impaled on a birch tree, the trunk rising through his chest and soaring forty feet into the sky. They find a woman's corpse so cold it shatters on the way to the morgue. A politician dissolves mid-speech into a cloud of hornets. The customers at a donut shop, for reasons they cannot explain, devour the baker and guzzle down their coffee with his blood. Ninety-nine days pass. Ninety-nine people die. The citizens of Santa Giorgi breathe in fear with their morning constitutional and spit it out with their mouthwash at night. Some go mad from it. It is the hundredth day.

I sit by the street downtown, on a metal café chair, and wait for a Mediterranean salad. A tiny fountain burbles nearby, and birds dart in to drink. A low railing separates me from the road, and as I watch, flowers crack the cement of the sidewalk and rise to twine about the rails.

A man walks up and sits across the table from me. I cannot see the details of his face or form. "Consider the following premise," he says. "The concept of impersonal virtue comes from a person's desire to live in a certain world. Unable to achieve that on their own, they create an idea for what everyone should believe, and how everyone should behave. Once having formed this notion, they can nobly sacrifice themselves for their virtuous ideal, but the ideal itself remains self-serving. Impersonal virtue represents the projection of one's needs, wishes, and hopes onto a theoretical ethical plane. The only selfless virtue is personal: the acceptance of what one sees as right, no matter how painful, horrible, or destructive the widespread adoption of that code of ethics would be."

I do not question his presence. It is Santa Giorgi on the hundredth day.

"My soul is covered in lies," I say.

The street changes, its surface rippling and then turning to red dust. Buildings melt, twisting, reshaping, forming into arched black and silver sculptures that jut awkwardly towards the sky. Only the café remains unchanged, and my table, and the man that sits across from me.

"Oh?" he asks.

Crystal blue spires rise in the distance, pure and beautiful.

"I keep telling myself that it's horrible, all these people dying in pain and sorrow. In Santa Giorgi. In the whole world. I keep thinking that I'm sad for them. But if I really cared about them, I would know their names. They wouldn't just be 'that couple whose mouths and noses sealed shut' or 'that girl whose hands melted away in the sink.' They'd be people."

Translucent black shapes dance among the spires, like spots of shadow.

"It is important," he agrees quietly, "Seeing them as individuals, I mean."

The sky has turned gray with streaks of white.

"So I don't know if I can answer your premise," I explain. "I don't know whether I'm honest in believing in virtue at all. I don't know if I genuinely want a world where everyone's happy. I think I do. But I don't know that I really care."

Between one breath and the next, I realize that everyone in Santa Giorgi is dead. Their despairs and their innocence paint the sky. Their ambitions reach in black claws and blue spires for the sky. Their shadows play in the distant sky. The dust of their hearts covers the road. Their souls remain. But they are dead.

I almost do not hear the next thing he says.

"I could show you how to care," he says, and holds up a glass.

I look into the glass and see a miracle.

I had loved in my life, and sorrowed; and in that love, and in that sorrow, I had seen echoes of that glass. I had known pain and I had known pleasure. I had learned of sacrifice and betrayal, despair and exultation, life and death; and all these things I have known were only the ghosts of what I can see.

In that glass, I see myself as the Creator envisioned me. It makes me shudder. I see the malice and the hate. I see the loathing and the fear. I see the shining glory that I contain within me and the scars, like slash marks of black paint, that will keep me from ever achieving it. It is a glass full of lies and bias and exaggeration, and everything it shows me is precisely correct and true.

Miracles are cruel and cold and they are bright and beautiful.

"It's perfect," I say.

"You," he corrects gently.

"I am perfect."

"You are perfect," he agrees. "But you are not meant to know the world through kindness."

It is the strangest and most glorious thing I have ever known.

"We should, perhaps, return to my postulate," he says.

I cannot help sneaking glances towards the glass, until he slips it back into his breast pocket. "Is everyone like that?"

"More or less," he answers equably. "Most are better people than you, and have it within them to make the world a brighter place. Others have a nature affining to principles that you would neither embrace, dismiss, or understand. Each person is perfect, however; this is the origin of pride."

A butterfly flutters past me, its wings the color of a dead girl's dreams.

"And if each of them found that perfection and lived out its tenets?"

He holds out his hand. The butterfly lands on its back.

"It is my contention," he says, "that this would make a perfect world. There is too much false virtue and too little perception of self. So many sublimate their internal truths to their notions of service to others. In so doing, they make of the world a mockery and an abomination."

"And if I embrace what I have seen within the glass?"

His gaze focuses on his hand, and with gentle care, he pulls off the butterfly's wings. He lifts his hand, urges it to flight. For a few moments it does, hovering by sheer desire; then it falls.

"If you accept that your nature has more Hell in it than Heaven, you will become an outcast. If you explain the folly of virtue, others shall dub you evil. If you speak of that calling in your heart that longs for corruption and suffering, they shall name it animal malice. If you strive to maintain some sense of virtue, dignity, or worth, you shall be untrue to yourself, and it shall destroy you."

My voice comes out more plaintive than I had expected. "Why does this appeal to me?"

"How may you know the world save by truth to yourself?" he answers. "Kindness is false if it comes not from your heart. Virtue is a lie if it comes not from your soul. You have blinded yourself to the world through your choice in how to interact with it, but I promise you this: serve Hell, and you shall know the names of those you torment."

"And of myself?"

He shrugs quietly, and rises. "A change will come to you soon. By its form, you shall know me."

He walks away. I stare after him, then down at the table.

Something touches my soul. Something horrible and beautiful.

Words come to me: "Let none call dark what is done this day, though pain may come of it."

The pain begins.

The Book
of the World

Water

Once upon a time, there was a girl who spoke to the sea.

As it cast its waves towards the shore, it whispered to her. "I have love for you," it said. "I seek the best for you. Find the answers to these questions and I shall exalt you."

And the girl grew, and became a scholar; and she sought the answers to the questions in this book; and in time, she found them all.

She rose from her desk to take the answers to the sea, and got no farther. A wave passed over her heart; the surf roared in her ears; her flesh turned to salt and her blood to water; and she spilled between her floorboards and was lost.

These are the questions the sea asked her. May your answers bring you a better fate than hers.

1. How many years does mastery require?

2. The successful thief lingers by the jail walls, flaunting her wealth through the barred windows at the miscreants wasting dolefully away inside.
3. "There is no justice," grumbles a prisoner. "I was every bit as able a thief as thee."
4. "Blame me not," answers the thief outside. "We choose our own fates."
5. Who can break the laws of the world?

6. The demon Rogo-tumu cannot die. Yet there is wisdom in attempting the impossible: and every five years, the citizens of Minarii seek its life.
7. The teacher Tepau wasted thirty lives and thirty days upon his quest. "Amateur!" sneered his rival Obuarei.
8. She proved her right to scorn: when she sought Rogo-tumu's life, she lost but twenty men. More, she failed with five times Tepau's alacrity.
9. How many men would a god lose on this quest? How quickly could he fail?

10. The Age of Miracles has come to an end.
11. The sun has set behind Chilminar and Balbec.
12. Many wonders of that Age shall pass from the Earth, and only one memory of them will remain.
13. Who keeps that memory?

14. A lion roars at the heart of the world, and with her pacing shakes the continents into their shapes.
15. A spider stands astride the clouds, and from her web creates the substance of the world.
16. When the world most loves its shapes, the lion grows in power. When the world most loves its substance, thus waxes the spider's might.
17. What makes a concept strong?

18. "I am a man of many enemies," mourned Toluta'u.
19. "Then indeed you are fortunate," answered Meleseini Lotuma.
20. What advantage lies in others' hatred?

21. "I have in one hand life, and the other death," says Kur, who stands between the worlds. "In one hand, a fir branch; in the other, hemlock."
22. The Lord Tiau sweats. "To my eyes, they are alike."
23. Can a god be so blind?

24. The song of the Wild cries, "Freedom is all."
25. Can one bind oneself to a song that accepts no constraints?

Chapter 1
Playing Dynamic Nobilis

Many Nobilis games take place within a single room, where a small group of players and a Hollyhock God meet. The players rarely move around and only occasionally act out their character's physical actions — they set the game on the stage of the imagination. This is "tabletop" Nobilis — a game that can take place as easily around the dinner table as in the most ornately prepared environment.

Dynamic Nobilis takes the Nobilis experience one step farther. A large group of players and several Hollyhock Gods meet in a sizeable, multi-room area. The players remain almost entirely in character. Moreover, they physically act out their characters' actions. The investment in energy, time, and possibly money grows. In exchange, the gaming experience becomes much more real.

Normally, a game of Dynamic Nobilis has around one Hollyhock God for every ten players, plus one senior HG to manage the game as a whole and act as the final authority. These HGs create the overall game concept, design individual stories, make rulings during play, arrange a place to play the game, and otherwise make the game happen.

Certain things that are easy in tabletop Nobilis are difficult in Dynamic Nobilis. Real people cannot be in two to six places at once — stepping into the head of an Anchor and back is more difficult in Dynamic Nobilis. No gaming area is big enough to properly capture the global and metaglobal scale of Nobilis — the world of Nobilis is bigger than the real world, while the area the players play in is rather smaller. A game of Dynamic Nobilis is more likely to have strangers in it with unpredictable attendance patterns.

Conversely, certain things difficult in tabletop Nobilis are easy in Dynamic Nobilis. With more players and several rooms, characters can break into subgroups without hurting the game — whereas in tabletop Nobilis, such division can leave other characters isolated, interrupt the flow of the game, confuse the HG, and still allow players to hear the other groups' private conversations.

Dynamic roleplaying games (like Dynamic Nobilis) are commonly called LARPs, or Live-Action Role Playing games.

"They almost look like real people."

"They are real people."

"But they're so ugly! And they don't have any wings!"

"I think they're making a statement," Nemamiah suggested.

Raphael considered that. *"What terrible anger these humans must have, to express it thus!"*
—*from* Genesis, *by Keiko Takemori*

OPPOSITE:
Masque
by Lee Moyer

On occasion, a Power of the Wild retreats into their home, shuts all doors, and "redefines" themselves. It is solid and sensible policy to avoid the Power for several weeks thereafter. This ensures that someone else discovers it first if they have redefined themselves as a monstrous fiend or a bubblingly happy mass murderer.
—from A Tourist's Guide to Creation, *by Jasprite Sherrard*

"Fear not! If I killed every mortal that offended me, the world would be a much emptier place."
—from Rosebud and the Sovereign, *author unknown*

"In even rounds," God said, "I will award points based on raising the standards of human existence as far as possible. In odd rounds, I will award points based on crushing humanity's hopes as creatively as you can."

"Which round are we in?" Lucifer asked.

God buffed his nails. "What, I should tell you everything?"
—from Stories of the Despairing Lands, *by the Domina Oculae, Warden-Mother of Locus Julian*

The key to Dynamic Nobilis is courtesy to the other players. This includes but is not limited to:

- **No Touching.** If two players agree in advance that limited physical contact is acceptable, then they can bend this rule — but even then, violent contact is grounds for expulsion from the game. An HG or the relevant player can always request that physical contact of any form cease. When one character touches another, the player usually just says so — much as in a tabletop game of Nobilis.
- **No Personal Attacks.** If one player gets on another's nerves, the best solution is to talk to an HG — not to chew out the other player. If the HG feels the complaint is legitimate, they will investigate and take action in a firm but polite manner. If the HG does not so feel, blowing up at the other player would just have been unwise.
- **Don't Deliberately Irritate Anyone.** Just as in tabletop Nobilis, the goal is for everyone to have fun. Players don't need to indulge the whims and tastes of the other players, but going out of their way to interfere with someone's play or make them uncomfortable is against the rules.
- **Don't Cheat.** Cheating can be grounds for expulsion, if the senior HG so decides.

The Hollyhock Gods should prepare a play contract (see Nobilis, pp. 77-80) for their game. The HGs should abide by its terms. Players should consider it binding on their actions in the game.

Dispute Resolution

The rules for Dynamic Nobilis are designed to minimize the frequency of disputes by tightly categorizing miracles and their effects. Even so, Powers still have very flexible abilities. Players will have different ideas of how much miraculous energy various miracles require. On occasion, two players simply won't agree on how various miracles interact. Disputes will arise. The two most common forms of dispute resolution are region consensus and HG intervention.

Region Consensus

The parties concerned poll all the players in the region regarding the crux of the dispute. The majority opinion carries the day. Players should use region consensus whenever possible — that is, whenever there are enough impartial people in the region to make consensus meaningful. "Impartial" doesn't necessarily mean "without a stake in the matter" — good players can usually divide their out-of-character opinions from their PC's interests.

Hollyhock God Intervention

Hollyhock God intervention simply means that an HG rules on the matter. Hollyhock Gods, incarnations of vanity and ambition, tend to poke their nose into disputes whenever they happen to be in the region. If there's no HG in the region, a player can always go and find one to settle the matter.

To be clear: players have the absolute and unquestionable right to have an HG settle a dispute, regardless of circumstances. Pressuring an unhappy player to yield the point or accept region consensus instead is rude, unmannerly, and against the rules. On the other hand, players should remember that interrupting a scene to go and find an HG breaks suspension of disbelief and game continuity. It's more fun if everyone adopts a spirit of compromise.

Character Creation

The first step in launching a successful game is dividing the players into Familiae Caelestia in a way that makes them happy. An ideal Familia contains several established friends, several strangers with compatible personalities, and no one who will get on any of their nerves. Once the players are thusly divided into groups, an HG should meet with each group to manage character creation, Chancel creation, and Imperator creation. Having solid groups of well-thought-out characters with interesting Chancels and Imperators gets any game off on the right foot. After a few sessions, the HGs should again meet with the Familiae and see if anything — Chancel properties, Imperator properties, Chancel and Imperator details, character sheets, or Familia groupings — needs revision or reshuffling.

Play Structure

A game of Dynamic Nobilis consists of **sessions** and **downtime**.

During a session, the players come to the play area and remain more or less in character from the beginning of the session to the end. The PCs interact with one another in unstructured ways. Meanwhile the Hollyhock Gods actively run one or more stories, using events from the story to keep the action moving. This should ensure that none of the players grow bored. At the end of a story, HGs award experience as appropriate.

Players should carry a character sheet with them at all times. This describes their attributes, Estate, MPs, Gifts, handicaps, affiliation, bonds, and design, and should also give their name and a summarized character history. (A character's full history may run to 1-2 pages, and is best given to the senior HG separately.) Folding the character sheet and keeping it in a pocket works well.

After a session ends, a certain amount of in-character and out-of-character time passes before the next session. Players can contact the HGs to discuss their characters' actions in an out-of-character scene. This is downtime. Hollyhock Gods should not make firm decisions on what happens during downtime until a day or two before the next session — two PCs' actions during downtime may come into conflict. This requires thought and careful resolution, not a "first come, first served" policy. Players often create new object cards corresponding to weapons, artworks, servants, and so forth during downtime.

CHARACTERS

Each player normally has a Noble player character. They may have other characters as well — for example, a player can play an Anchor rather than their Noble during a session of play. Usually the player plays just one character in a session, and if the player wants to make use of multiple Anchors, it's wise to discuss this in advance with the Hollyhock God.

Some non-player characters have no player at all. They take form only as object cards. The game might represent the surly guards at a Chancel museum by a single object card, left on a table in the region. Players can fill in the guards' actions by imagination alone or use the hapless guards as targets for miracles. When necessary, players describe the guards' actions, much as they describe their own miracles. The Chancel populace as a whole might take form as an object card; if someone tries to stir up a revolt, they note the fact on the card. If someone goes to calm it, they do the same.

The remaining NPCs belong to the Hollyhock Gods. Unlike players, the Hollyhock Gods wear many identities over the course of the game. They take on the role of Cammorans, Excrucian-shards, Excrucians, mortals, Noble NPCs, Imperators, and so forth. An HG takes on the face of whatever NPC the story needs at the time. An HG can even play a character's Anchor, taking the Anchor object card and wandering off to complete some mission on the character's behalf.

Players might wish to adjust their costume when playing someone other than their Noble player character. Alternately, they can wear a real or plastic flower when acting as their Noble and leave it behind when playing someone else. Hollyhock Gods might want to carry an erasable whiteboard on which to write their current NPC's name. That way, when a new player enters the region, the HG can show them the board without stopping the flow of IC conversation. Hanging the board around the HG's neck by a flexible cord keeps the hands free for gesturing.

On a more general note, players should try to accent their everyday wear with props that capture their character's spirit. Anything from a long overcoat or a cane to a medal or a colorful scarf works — assuming that it fits the character. These give easy visual hooks for other players to recognize the character by. Such props should always be safe — weapons, prop weapons, and anything that could injure another player are all inappropriate.

TIME

The potentially global impact of Dynamic NOBILIS miracles can give HGs headaches. The private conflict between two characters in one region can cause a sea of change in the world that affects everyone. Telling everyone about it — making sure that everyone knows about it — takes time. Not only would the Hollyhock Gods have to run around a fair bit, but delays in notification could cause temporal paradoxes.

Fortunately, time in NOBILIS is not a strictly ordered, completely causal stream of events. That's just an after-the-fact artifact of Prosaic Reality. Celestial time is a tangled, dynamic mess, and paradoxes are far from impossible. This allows HGs to use a new technique for spreading word of important events: **lazy notification**.

In lazy notification, once something world-altering happens, the player responsible notifies an HG. The HG must agree that the event could have taken place before the process goes any further. If they do agree, then when they have some free time, they go from region to region. They note the event on the region notes board and inform anyone who happens to be there that the event just happened.

Some players may learn of the event for the first time when entering a region after the HG has made a note on the board. That's fine. For them, the event happened while they traveled between regions. Some players may know of the event and enter a region where it hasn't happened yet. They then perform lazy notification themselves.

This last effect may seem strange — that when Nobles move from region to region, they can "bring" important events with them. This has an in-character explanation as well as an out-of-character one, however. Imperators define time as well as substance. The Powers, as creatures with *spiritus Dei* in their souls, serve as couriers for events — moving through reality, they drag their history with them. The Noble is at the head of a wavefront of changing reality; when they enter a new place, the change happens with them.

Lazy notification can do strange things to chronology. There is no sense, in celestial time, that one thing can happen at the "same time" as something

else. Things happen when one notices them happen; unraveling the events into some kind of stable order is Prosaic Reality's job.

Spending Influence Towards Character Goals

Characters can acquire arbitrary influence in the micro-society of Nobles present at the game. However, the Hollyhock Gods may not have the time to play out the extensive interactions with NPCs necessary to build influence in Noble society as a whole. For this reason, they can optionally allow characters to purchase their developing influence with character points.

Influence is represented in this system as a pool of **Social miracle points**, distinct from regular miracle points. If represented by cards, these should have a different color or symbol on them to distinguish them clearly from regular miracle points. The two kinds of miracle points are not interchangeable, do not intermingle, and cannot be used for a single miracle. Characters have none of these Social MPs by default, but can purchase them for one character point each.

Hollyhock Gods that use this system should make certain there are special goals achievable through the use of Social MPs. These include:

The completion of a major project, such as researching the forgotten location of Galeid's tomb, that receives effort from both PCs and NPCs. Digging up information available in society but not to any player character. Social manipulation, such as attracting important people to a celebration or enticing a given NPC to ally with the character. Handling a specific social crisis — e.g., covering up a key NPC's violation of the Windflower Law, exposing the same, or preventing some event that would blacken the name of an Affiliation.

Each of these goals requires a certain number of Social MPs to achieve. The Hollyhock God informs characters — specific characters or all the player characters — when such a goal becomes available to them, and in general terms how long they have to achieve it. (Sometimes the player characters must act in a single session to gain the benefits; other times they can spend the required Social MPs over the course of many stories.) Depending on the situation, the Hollyhock God can tell the player characters how many Social MPs must be spent to achieve the goal or keep that information private. If or when the player characters have spent a sufficient number of Social miracle points, they achieve the goal.

On occasion, player characters may come into conflict over whether they should achieve a given goal or who should achieve it. In the first case, characters can spend Social MPs to prevent a given goal's completion. These directly subtract from the miracle points spent to complete that goal. In the second case, whomever spends enough Social MPs first earns the prize.

In the setting, this mechanism represents the character or characters drawing on their personal social credit to convince others of and organize others towards the goal. Characters can generally achieve similar goals through roleplaying; this system is intended for cases where the goal interests the Hollyhock God(s) or players but struggling to achieve it is not worth a significant portion of the game's focus.

Some examples of goals and their costs follow. Normally, one resolves a task either with roleplay or with Social MPs, with player interest guiding the HG's decision on the matter. However, some tasks may require both, and facilitating one's Social MP expenditure with a small amount of roleplay, planning, and positioning can reduce the MP cost. Note that one can spend Social MPs on someone else's behalf.

- **Announcements.** Announcements backed by one Social MP reach large numbers of NPC Powers. Announcements backed by three to five Social MPs have social significance. Thus, if a Power announces the alliance of three Familiae and someone spends five Social MPs, it becomes socially awkward for any Familia to disentangle itself later. Unless someone spent a similar number of Social MPs to endorse the separation, any Familia that breaks the alliance would receive less trust and more scrutiny from miscellaneous NPCs.
- **Background Investigation.** Anyone can ask around to find the name, design, code, known abilities and character traits, and public history of a Noble, as well as any current gossip about them. Spending one Social MP allows a PC to do so subtly, without word getting back to the subject, and generally returns the information more quickly.
- **Concealing One's Background.** One can spend Social MPs to keep one's life relatively private. These MPs both oppose background investigations (subtracting directly from the MPs spent on such) and reduce the information found through open inquiry.
- **Cover-Ups.** Spending Social MPs can impede the normal social channels of communication, keeping some of the events of the game secret. Characters may wish to

conceal a major Code Fidelitatis violation, an interesting artifact or secret learned during the game, or protect other information from leaking. The HG can specify a cost between one and ten Social MPs for keeping it hidden. (It costs one Social MP even if the information is already perfectly concealed, since the PCs evidently don't know that.) This silences gossips and in general makes the news less interesting. It does not stop strongly motivated NPC witnesses or PCs in general from telling interested parties directly.

- **Downtime Socializing.** Characters can spend Social MPs to improve their relationships or undermine others' relationships with NPCs during downtime. Generally, the more entrenched the NPC's opinions are about the character, the more Social miracle points this action requires — one can gain the favor of an ambivalent NPC without a single Social miracle point, but changing someone's stance slightly from love or hate requires at least five Social MPs.

- **Event.** Any character can hold a celebration, festival, council, wedding or other social gathering during the game. Spending one Social MP in advance makes it an official part of the game, appearing on appropriate hand-outs; the plots slows down slightly at the right time to allow it to take place. Spending three Social MPs makes it a meaningful event, more likely to attract plot than coexist with it. Spending five or more Social MPs ensures that important NPCs attend, and may even catch the attention of an Imperator or two.

- **First Impressions.** One can spend Social MPs to make a good first impression on an NPC. Although interaction can quickly turn this impression around, it never entirely erases it. The cost depends on the NPC's good nature, ranging from one Social MP for a pleasant Power to five Social MPs for Scorn's-Regal Joktan.

- **Interaction.** Spending Social MPs can ensure that an NPC who is not a member of the usual cast attends the game. The cost depends on the NPC's importance; an insignificant Power costs one Social MP, while Scorn's-Regal Joktan again costs five.

- **Research.** Anyone can ask PCs and NPCs about a given place, Imperator, mythic creature, or situation, with appropriate results. If additional information is available, the HGs can provide it for a standard cost of three Social MPs. If additional information is both available and important to the plot, the HGs can note the fact in hand-outs and make it available for up to 10 Social MPs.

- **Specific Project Examples.** Cleanse Excrucian taint from a region (5 Social MPs). Obtain Imperial permission to study with Tairté Ut-napishtim (5 Social MPs; see *Nobilis*, p. 204,). Take over the reins when the Power controlling most overseas shipping dies (10 Social MPs). Defuse a budding confrontation between two Imperators over the fate of an important mortal that could risk the Dark-Light "alliance" — arranging her suicide or salvation (10 Social MPs) or slipping her sufficiently off the track of her destiny that the confrontation fizzles (20 Social MPs). Untangle the secrets of a forest ten miles beneath the earth's surface, so that your Imperator can use it as a mana mine (15 Social MPs). Obtain custody of an artifact, book, or child with unusual potential (15 Social MPs).

More uses for Social MPs will appear in the forthcoming *Nobilis* supplement A SOCIETY OF FLOWERS.

Chapter 2
Blossoming

Portraying Nobles and Imperators

PLAYING THE NOBLE MINDSET

The challenge to playing Powers isn't in the potentially vast power that they wield or the incredible degree of punishment they can endure. It's portraying how they see the world. Nobles are entities of many worlds: Prosaic Reality, Mythic Reality, their Familia's Chancel, and their Estates. They must deal with matters pertaining to each to varying degrees. Further, a Noble of high Aspect simply does not think like a human. A Noble of high Estate views the world through the lens of that Estate. Constant awareness of every act of treachery must have some effect on how Marsiglio (see *Nobilis*, pp. 57-58) sees the rest of creation.

For most players and Hollyhock Gods, playing this kind of mindset off the cuff just isn't possible. Simulating it is not out of the question, it's simply a matter of taking such things into consideration in advance. In effect, having contingency plans for an ambush is an Aspect miracle, its level depending upon the forces arrayed against the Noble in question. A Power of Legendary Aspect or higher could easily react to a mortal ambush without hesitation, possibly moments before the ambush actually occurs, and in all likelihood has played out such a scenario in their mind long ago. Mechanics are not the sole means of dealing with such issues. They are the foundation, however, and should not be neglected.

One benefit of having the character's mindset firmly established before play is that with a good sense of the character's perceptions, many of the guidelines about when and how to act will follow naturally.

INTELLECTUAL PUISSANCE

Nobles can perform feats of intellect that are incomprehensible to mortals and so far beyond what a human could accomplish that it's nearly impossible to just handle them on the fly. Preparation, then, is the key. Players should consider the sorts of intellectual feats their characters would typically

"Lord, I have trouble understanding your decision tonight," I spoke softly, not wishing to give undue offense. Thankfully he was in a good mood and unlikely to confiscate my tongue again. "When the Baroness Nox spoke harshly to you regarding the value of your Estate and insulted your allegiance to the angels, you did nothing." I paused, watching his eyes for the danger signs. Being manservant to Wrath's-Regal Caernarvon has its ups and downs. "Why did you allow her to speak so?"

To my surprise, he chuckled. "Why should I strike her down for speaking what so many obviously think? When I choose to respond, she won't know it was I. Subtlety, even in the throes of wrath, is always the best option. Besides, she does not serve me and has leeway my servants do not." With that, he took my eyes and used them to keep watch over his bedchamber's door for a year and a day.
—from the Thought-Record of Mark Taliaferro

use and make a list. This includes Aspect miracles involving perception, and Domain or Realm miracles of divination. Having a handy list of the sort of things a Power is likely to know or do with a moment's notice makes life far easier on the players and the Hollyhock God, and makes the player look very clever indeed.

This is not restricted to passive observation, either. Reactions to specific situations can and should also be worked out in advance, with perhaps two or three layers of contingencies laid out when the player has leisure time to think about such matters. This pays off when the situations come up in play and the Power casually handles the crisis with grace and aplomb, as well they should.

Naturally, no one can think of all possibilities that could arise during a game, but neither should one try to do so. Having a set of reactions and observations already laid out above provides a good framework for improvisation. Certainly, a situation that does not precisely match a given plan might take a bit more effort, but it likely bears a decent resemblance to one of the contingencies that has been allowed for.

It is also good between games to work out a list of questions for the Hollyhock Gods to answer. It's far more stylish to arrive at a game fully aware of your Estate's current condition, your Anchors' whereabouts, and current events in your Chancel than it is to pull one of the Hollyhock Gods aside just before game starts to get a sense of the current situation. It is even better to have a stock list of questions for use between each session, with additions to the list as necessity dictates.

This also extends to direct activity — any miracles that need doing between sessions (for example, the Power of Cetaceans wants to perform a Major Change upon dolphins so they will no longer swim into tuna nets). This way the Hollyhock Gods can be prepared at the start of a session to report any changes to Prosaic or Mythic Reality, or to any Chancels.

Additionally, if it seems likely that major miracles will come up during play, inform the Hollyhock Gods before the game so they can be prepared for the possibility that daggers may rain from London's sky at the stroke of midnight, rather than spring it on them.

Naturally, not all such miracles can be planned for, and preparation can only go so far. However, that preparation will pay off in the long term.

Noble Emotions

Powers just don't see the world as people do, nor do they react to it in such a manner. A Noble of Inhuman Aspect never loses their cool unless they

want to. Where a human or Aspect of Mortal Form might panic in the face of a building fire, a Celestial might consider the entire exercise mildly annoying because the patterns the flames make against the evening sky are aesthetically displeasing and the ruptured gas lines have corrupted the otherwise exquisite shades of reds and yellows one expects. This is not to say the Celestial necessarily has a lack of concern for the risk to human life, but saving those lives is an easy matter.

Other major issues to consider when roleplaying a Noble's mental states include the Noble's Code and any Virtues. A Noble of the Dark might appreciate the aforementioned fire for the death it's bound to cause, whereas one whose allegiance lies with Heaven will appreciate the aforementioned beauty (and find the flaws appalling). A Power of the Light is more likely to show concern for the possible lives lost.

As with intellectual matters, it helps to make a list. It's a good idea for a player to sit down and ask themselves, "How will my character react to these typical situations?"

Examples include:

- The death of a loved one.
- Outbreak of war.
- Betrayal at the hands of a trusted friend.
- Falling in love.
- Avenging a terrible wrong.
- Being the target of vengeance for a terrible wrong.
- Finding a stray kitten on the side of the road.
- Hearing a truly beautiful piece of music for the first time.
- Killing a defenseless victim.

This list is by no means exclusive, and may not even be appropriate for all campaigns. Players and Hollyhock Gods should work together to create a list that's suitable for the particular game.

Add, change, or delete situations to taste. The point is to create a sense of how one's player character reacts to various events and how that differs from normal human reactions.

Don't be afraid to push the limits on the answers here. Some answers will be fairly normal as far as people in general go, but some can and should be downright disturbing or surreal. This is perfectly fine and expected. Nobles are often disturbing, surreal creatures.

As a counterpoint, players shouldn't make a character so alien that there's little to relate to. Such characters can become difficult or tedious to play, and frustrating for other players to interact with. Consider also the additional point that some normalcy is necessary to really make the strangeness stand out when it comes into play.

NOBLE DEEDS

Sovereigns are capable of incredible physical and mental feats, and the higher the attribute, the more cheaply miracles come. An Aspect 4 Noble can swallow a city with a deep miracle, for example. The Hollyhock God should not disallow or discourage these actions. Instead, the Hollyhock God should encourage the players to work with them to make the game better for everyone. Playing a powerful character gives a player an exceptional ability to direct the game's flow, and makes their role in the game closer to those running it than those playing it.

With this in mind, players with powerful characters should consider how they could use their powers to keep the game flowing in an interesting and fun manner, rather than to simply knock off a series of bizarre miracles that keep the Hollyhock God and their staff tied up in resolving the effects of their insanity.

The simplest resolution to dealing with characters that use their powers to complicate things is the Chestnut Law (see NOBILIS, p. 29). Taking actions guaranteed to harm large numbers of innocents (and miracles of such scale can potentially cause *dementia animus* in witnesses, trapping such mortals in Mythic Earth) is a clear violation. Devouring an entire city and its inhabitants also qualifies. The in-character ramifications of irresponsible miracles are already built into the setting with the Code Fidelitatis (see NOBILIS, pp. 28–29) and the possible intercession of such luminaries as Lord Entropy's Familia Caelestis (see NOBILIS, p. 224).

Not all Hollyhock Gods need to use an in-character hammer to get results. In many such cases, the aforementioned mallet won't drive the lesson home. As stated above, dealing with the player out-of-game to discuss the ramifications of their character's actions and how to use it to make the game better can get better results.

- **Miracles of Aspect.** This attribute is not as difficult to deal with in comparison to Domain or Realm. Its various physical uses (leaping over tall buildings, picking up said buildings, *et cetera*) are not so much of a problem. Miracles that deal with intellectual or social situations, on the other hand, can be mind-boggling. Characters of Aspect 3 are "distanced from humanity" and have a host of mental advantages that may be difficult to roleplay or adjudicate. Inhuman or stronger Aspects are just that. They can out-compute a Pentium, create complex plans and counter-plans for situations that no normal person could foresee, let alone counteract, and in general perform acts that are well beyond human capacity. An Inhuman Noble can, for one AMP, analyze a complex mortal situation to the precise details. That is to say they can walk into the United States Senate and figure out who stands with whom on which issues, who's likely to backstab whom, and how any given vote on a bill will turn out, even if that vote is months away and it's still in the deliberation process.

Many potential problems stemming from Aspect — and the other attributes — go away if you pay attention to your character's thoughts and emotions. See 'Playing the Noble Mindset' on page 13.

- **Miracles of Domain.** At least Aspect miracles are localized to the Noble. A powerful Domain miracle can change things on a global scale. The Duchess of Commerce can, with a deep miracle, completely destroy a successful corporation. Don't try to keep PCs from doing these things. Encourage them when necessary and when they might ease the way for weaker Powers to accomplish their own goals. Encourage them to refrain from using them on a whim.

- **Miracles of Realm.** Realm miracles are not so much a problem since they only happen within a Chancel. Of course, if a Tempest decides to set the Realm's defenses against a visiting Noble or Familia, you get problems similar to those above — active declaration of war, obvious hostilities, that sort of thing. What happens in a Chancel generally only affects the rest of the Familia who use it, which means that it's somewhat less of a potential problem than Domain unless the majority of games take place within the Chancel.

- **Miracles of Spirit.** High levels of Spirit serve to make Rites more effective or provide more Anchors, as well as provide the protection of Auctoritas. Spirit really doesn't present as much of the potential for difficulty as the other Attributes, although the ease with which Conflagrations and Infernos can manifest miracles through their Anchors means that they have a wider range of influence with which to channel their power. Where a Noble who uses Aspect to directly attack another Noble provides clear evidence as to the perpetrator, one who acts through an Anchor is far less likely to be revealed. Of course, such an action would likely mean the sacrifice of the Anchor to their enemies.

Powerful Sovereigns

Over time, Powers gain experience, learn new Gifts, improve their relationship with their Estates and Chancels, enhance their physical and intellectual prowess and increase their spiritual energies. These characters can and will outclass new characters, which is perfectly normal. This does not mean that they should use that power to bully new characters any more than the Hollyhock God should use Imperators. Experienced characters (and players) are a great resource for new characters (and players). A powerful Sovereign does well to seek alliances amongst new arrivals before their rivals snap them up. On the level of player interaction, experienced players can help ease new players into the game and help them understand what their characters can do and when they can do it.

When dealing with Nobles of other Familiae, direct confrontations rarely accomplish much, even when the other Noble is so outclassed as to make the conflict a joke. This serves only to identify to the other members of that Sovereign's Familia what one is capable of and that the Power in question has hostile intentions. It is better, again, to resort to Nettling and other more subtle attacks upon another Power's Estate or Bonds than to simply drop a mountain on them. A powerful Noble who acts openly against another Familia not only announces their hostility, but also makes the rest of their own Familia targets for retaliation, not all of whom will be as capable of defending themselves.

Imperators

It's unfortunate that the ability to use great power does not come with the wisdom to know when to use it. If you're portraying an Imperator, you may be tempted to use the great power at your disposal to force the Familia to do what you need them to do in terms of the story and its resolution. Players portraying powerful Nobles may have similar temptations, and not all Sovereigns possess enough Auctoritas to defend themselves.

Such bullying provokes resentment and rebellion in your Familia. While it is true that Powers are bound to their Imperators, it is also true that it is easier for Imperators to get what they need without first pummeling the Nobles into submission. A simple request usually suffices, and rarely is it necessary to abuse your power with the Glorious Gift or Aspect miracles to get things done.

Imperators who use their powers frivolously in attempts to impress their lessers in public risk weakening themselves and their ability to maintain focus on the Valde Bellum. Excrucians or rival Imperators can and will exploit that weakness should they become aware of it — and Imperators who are quick to use miracles will become known for doing so. It is best to husband your strength for struggles that matter and simply allow the awareness of your power relative to others guide their decisions.

Worse, such displays can lead to escalation later, as others are aware of your wasteful displays of power, thus forcing you to expend more energy to maintain an appearance of power and superiority. It also implies that you need such displays, which is socially gauche.

Imperators seldom appear as player characters in Nobilis, even in A Game of Powers. Whether HG or player, you need to consider the effect their presence has in terms of their personal power and how they apply it. If Imperators could use their powers to accomplish what Powers do, they wouldn't need them. This is the defining point of how they use their vast power — they already have proxies to do it for them. If it is necessary, then you should consider a subtle application that gets the point across. Don't hit the characters with a sledgehammer or solve their problems for them. If you find it necessary to use the Imperator in the latter role as a *deus ex machina*, then make the Nobles pay for it in the long term. After all, the Imperator would not intercede in such a manner without a direct request to do so.

How to Deal with Nobles

If it is gauche to use miracles in public just for the sake of getting things done, what is appropriate? That's simple — it is a matter of social interaction to get the Sovereigns to do what is necessary. You ask them. It does not need to be a polite request, and may even be an order. The Imperator is, after all, the Familia's ruler. The occasional display of power under these circumstances is not only appropriate, but also necessary. One or two well-chosen miracles will do far more to impress than a host of petty tricks.

How to Deal with Other Imperators

Imperators understand that they're powerful. Petty miracles serve only to show that one is wasteful and perhaps a bit vain. Imperators in social situations circle each other like sharks, waiting for the first smell of blood so as to strike. Such a strike may be a well-chosen jab that will spread throughout the living society in a manner that weakens the

Imperator and their Familia Caelestis, perhaps even making it easier to nettle the Powers through their devotion to their Imperator.

For these reasons, Imperators do not engage in direct struggles. One Imperator's Familia acts against another in subtle ways, weakening their Estates, Nettling their Bonds or otherwise taking subtle action that is much more difficult to trace back to the source. An Imperator who feels it necessary to bloody their hands has already lost whatever conflict exists between the two.

ON THE CODE FIDELITATIS

These are the words of Meon Desecration's-Regal.

> *The Code Fidelitatis is not meat but bone. Those who defy it claim that the law seeks to destroy them, but they do not understand. The law is the structure of Lord Entropy's world, not its flow; those who defy it choose where they fit within that structure, and define the blight that follows on their destiny.*

Lord Entropy has imposed his law upon the world. Ultimately, the enforcement of that law is secondary to its existence. The Code Fidelitatis is a constant and oppressive force in the Powers' lives. The Locust Court and all its fell associates are less important; they should come into the story only when they bring something to it, and in a fashion that grants their victims some leeway for response. The Court is fond of poetry; even those who can find no way to evade its judgment generally find a judgment that fits them, their character, and their crime. Simple devastation is saved for active threats to the world or Lord Entropy's regime.

Who can break the laws of the world? Those who refuse to interact with it as its victims, but rather engage in such efforts as seem appropriate to subvert, divert, or avoid its judgment. The Hollyhock Gods should use the Locust Court and Lord Entropy's agents with the understanding that such things are possible, and provide punishment only when the attempts to avoid it fail horribly; even then, the punishment should fit the punished character's story.

The earth once loved this secret, but the sea ate it away, wielding the slow crushing force of the waves and centuries. May this understanding never grind you into dust.

FINAL WORD

Imperators rarely have the time or attention necessary to interact with any but their Familia Caelestis. The requirements of fighting the Valde Bellum on the spiritual plane make such encounters highly unlikely. This does not mean that it never happens, and in a live-action environment is far more likely to occur than would be the case in a tabletop setting. Players who are asked to portray an Imperator must understand that this is much more a responsibility than a privilege and not abuse it or the other players who portray the much weaker Nobles.

The Hollyhock God may choose to portray an Imperator or have an assistant do it. The same advice applies: don't let the power go to your head. You have the entirety of Prosaic and Mythic Reality as well as the World Ash to deal with, so don't borrow trouble by having the Imperator antagonize their Familia or waste energy with pointless miracles. Those kind of actions may only serve to provoke the players to ask, "If the Imperator can do this, why am I here?"

Players, representing the Sovereigns and the stars of the story, are co-creators of that story. They drive its progress through their actions and input. Let them. That's what they are there for. If they take a left turn into madness, see where it takes them. If they get too far off the path, a simple hint from the Imperator may be all that's necessary to get them to reconsider their options. If they insist, see what comes of the digression.

As a word to players, don't be afraid to do what you must to pursue your character's goals, so long as it doesn't ruin the experience for everyone else. Look for new ways to approach the situations the Hollyhock Gods or other Sovereigns, set before you. Don't worry about a big hammer descending from the heavens in the form of your Imperator or Lord Entropy to punish you for digression. You may suffer dire consequences for your decisions, but don't be afraid to make decisions for that reason. It is equally possible that your decisions will bring great rewards. You'll never know until you try.

The cotillion bored me until the Imperators arrived. They had arranged the ball to bring our two Familiae Caelestis closer together so that we may stand together in the Valde Bellum. Unfortunately, the other Familia was boring and mundane, given to such pedestrian Estates as "Automobiles" and "The Harvest". You'd think we were hosting Martha Stewart.

When the Imperators arrived, all eyes turned to face their masked visages. It is rare enough to see your own Imperator, but to see two in the same room is a moment of consequence. They crossed the ballroom, approaching each other and yet not quite meeting. They barely stopped to nod at one another before departing their separate ways.

The Valde Bellum creates many necessities that would otherwise be inconceivable, and the alliance of one of Heaven's angels and one of Hell's fallen must sit at the top of the list. The sight of them standing together for that brief moment set my soul aflame. I will honor this alliance.

—from the Thought-Record of Adrian Hierophant, Viscount of Disdain

Chapter 3
Running Dynamic Nobilis

OPPOSITE:
untitled
by Rik Martin

Setting

When designing a Dynamic Nobilis campaign, HGs should keep in mind several important setting elements. First, the PCs must feel like a part of a broader community, a group where the feuds, rivalries and even outright evil of some of its members is only a small part of the whole. Otherwise, some PCs will isolate themselves from the hostile society, leading to bored, frustrated players while other PCs will become fractious and unable to resolve the stories that you present to them. Second, the PCs must have license to engage in those feuds, rivalries and even that outright evil if it seems appropriate. Friendship, loyalty, and love are powerful forces in the Nobilis world, and it cheapens them to assume the PCs are one big happy family. Among the many ways to attain such goals are:

- Deciding that the Imperators associated with the PCs share a similar military project in the Spirit World, forming a **Degalim** or Imperial legion. On Earth, they ordain that the Powers of their Chancels should ally and show favor to one another above other Powers. Individuals can clash, but everyone knows the Imperators will step in if two Chancels degenerate into outright war.

- Setting the game at Focus (Nobilis, p. 143), a Chancel with Spirit Gates to seven others, owned by one of the Roots of the World. The Powers of the other seven Chancels are not entirely at peace with one another, but no one wants to upset the applecart — right now, all eight Chancels have access to eight Chancels' resources, a wonderful blessing. Powers cannot leave Focus through a Spirit Gate unless accompanied by a Power of the Chancel at the other end. Accordingly, Focus itself is the center of social power in the game and takes up the bulk of the physical game area. The HGs can also give Focus the Convenient Chancel property if they intend to set many stories in the outside world.

- Connecting all the PCs' Chancels to one Earthly city — a city of temporal importance, such as Moscow or London, or a city of

metaphysical importance, such as your home town. Each Chancel influences some aspect of that town's life, coincidentally or by treaty: a geographical region, the underworld, the city council, the media, the police, the really good restaurants, or anything else that encourages the PCs to engage in favor-trading. A network of favors, both returned and owed, encourages co-operation and genteel conflict rather than paranoia and strife.

The HGs are not limited to these alternatives. If they use a different setting, however, they should make sure that it supports both a broad community of Powers and individual rivalries within that community. (See 'Tilling the Garden', page 23, for additional suggestions.)

Having designed the setting, the HGs must physically realize it in the space they have for the game. Some standard settings for dynamic roleplay include public parks, large houses, private buildings, and the public areas of a dormitory or school. Converting such a place into a virtual world comes in three stages.

First, the HGs should divide the physical space they have into **regions.** A region is a physical space small enough that a raised voice carries from one end of it to another, segregated from other regions by walls or a bit of unused space.

Each region represents one area in the game world — large or small. It needs a notes clipboard and, if possible, a small table at its entrance. Players will write a note on the region clipboard if, for example, their PC summons a storm into the region or fills it with live mice. The top page of the clipboard is for "headlines" — one-sentence summaries of effects, written in block print for readability. Players can write details on or read details from later pages if they feel it necessary. Hollyhock Gods and players can leave "object cards" (index cards representing important things or people in the region) on the table.

Second, the HGs should outfit the regions with props. The goal is to evoke as much of the feel of each IC region as possible on the HGs' budget. A hanging print of a Victorian photograph, a black and white picture of later-era London, or an image of Victorian memorabilia can all capture the feel of a Victorian Chancel. Placing cheap tables and chairs in restaurant-style proximity, possibly with appropriate salt and pepper shakers, helps players visualize a restaurant. If one of the players or HGs can sketch well, perhaps they're willing to sketch some concept pictures for various regions. Heraldic designs to hang in the centers of each Familia's power are also evocative. Props are not absolutely essential, but can help keep the players in the mood.

Third, the HGs should acknowledge that space is fluid. One room might suffice for a Chancel when one or two Powers and a guest are spending time there. When ten Powers and two HGs gather in three different places in the Chancel, a small room becomes insufficient. Expect players to reassign out-of-character space on occasion, designating a nearby room, for example, "another part of the Chancel". The HGs should try to keep some space free for this if they can — but sometimes they can't, and the area designated as Locus Staufmortem must temporarily become a restaurant in downtown New York. In particular, when everyone gathers, no matter where they gather IC, the players will probably have to use the largest physical space available.

Note that, while space is fluid, players must use it responsibly. It is easy but dishonorable to claim, whenever something goes wrong in a region, "I wasn't actually there."

STANDARD PROPS

Hollyhock Gods may wish to give out cards corresponding to miracle points, which players can then "spend" on miracles by discarding them. For example, during a miraculous confrontation, Nobles can set aside the MPs they spend. Afterwards, the players can find an HG to collect them.

Many IC things — from fortresses and Chancel populations to weapons and individual people — exist in the real world as object cards. An object card is an index card or blank playing card with information on the IC artifact it corresponds to. The basic information on an object card includes:

- ❧ Who created the card and when.
- ❧ What the IC object is.
- ❧ Miraculous effects on the object (including that of its creation).

Object cards can also include notes on the **difficulty** (see page 43) of doing particular things to the IC object. For example, intimidating a legendarily stolid maitre d' might have difficulty 2 (instead of a more typical 0 or 1). The object card would note this. Climbing the walls of a Power's fortress might have difficulty 5; the card associated with that fortress would note this as well. Players should, at some point, have an HG initial anything questionable on an object card. A player can write notes on another player's object card, if appropriate, but when they do, pencil is preferable to pen.

Players either carry object cards with them or leave them on the table in the appropriate regions. Players should usually keep object cards associated with their personal equipment, Anchors, and attending servants on hand — in a shirt pocket, perhaps. Several pens and pencils for writing on

object cards and region clipboards are also handy; both HGs and players should have a supply.

An example object card follows:

Pocket Painting
Created by: Elizabeth Hunter, Power of Space, 2002-06-25, 3pm

This painting is an Impressionist work depicting two hills in summer. Created with a force 3 Aspect miracle, it competes with but does not outshine the best human works. Painted on a solid base and covered in clear plastic, it requires an Aspect 1 miracle to damage. —MS

2002-06-28, 5pm: Painting enhanced with a Lesser Creation of Space. If you reach around behind one of the hills, you find a small space where Elizabeth has stashed emergency supplies. —MS

[pencilled] 2002-07-13, 3pm: Firefight in gallery. Possible painting damage? —Martin

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Keeping It Safe

It's a liability risk to have weapons or realistic fake weapons in your Dynamic *Nobilis* game. It can also confuse police or bystanders, if you play in a public place. While plastic swords and Nerf guns may be harmless, the smartest idea is to represent weapons with object cards. Whether the PCs use weapons or not, describe combat — using words and the miracle resolution system — rather than engaging in it.

Standard Hand-outs

In many games, the HGs may wish to prepare a briefing packet for each player every session. This contains one or more hand-outs for the player to read before beginning play. Such hand-outs include

- ☞ General information on ongoing stories, recent events, and events expected during the session.
- ☞ Public information on opportunities and goals. For example, an important Imperator might make a request of Noble society as a whole. The hand-out can specify some benefit for fulfilling the request or leave the matter to roleplay.
- ☞ Private information available to subsets of the PCs, such as information for those with strong Cammora ties, information known to a given Familia, or information distributed quietly among the Powers of Heaven.
- ☞ Story goals for subsets of the PCs, such as an Imperator's orders for their Familia or an opportunity for Powers of Hell to advance the cause of corruption on Earth. Again, the

hand-out might or might not spell out a specific benefit to fulfilling the goal.
- ☞ Game information (for first-time players).
- ☞ Updates to the setting or cast list.

Writing good hand-outs is time-consuming. Thus, the HGs should limit the number they expect to write for any given session and focus each on information and goals that serve the ongoing stories.

Hollyhock Gods who lack the photocopying budget can prepare a labeled three-ring binder for each type of hand-out (e.g. the hand-outs for a given Familia, or for Powers of Heaven) and make them available to players during play. Either an HG keeps track of their access or the HGs can put the players on an honor system. Assuming that the binders contain old hand-outs as well as new, this approach has the advantage of making the history of the game available to new players. It also gives individual players less to carry around. However, since every player must ultimately look at several binders to get all their information for the session, and may not have an immediate opportunity to do so, the hand-outs must be less important to the story.

Record-Keeping

Hollyhock Gods should meticulously organize the information they will need during sessions. They should keep both electronic and paper copies of all character sheets, as well as notes on current plots, actions taken during downtime, and other useful information. During a session, the senior Hollyhock God should keep a "character roster" containing copies of the character sheets of the players currently in the game — either in a notebook or posted on a bulletin board — so that HGs can quickly assess the capabilities of the PCs in game at the time.

Adding Characters

When adding players to the game midstream, the HGs have several options. First, they can add the player to an existing Chancel and Familia by way of the Rite of Rescue. Second, they can introduce the PC in isolation — a Noble who has an Imperator, a Chancel, and a Familia, but does not drag them into play. Third, the HGs can introduce PCs without firmly attaching them to a Familia. When a group of new players enjoy one another and seem likely to keep on playing, they retroactively form a new Familia. An HG then helps them with Chancel and Imperator creation. Alternately, when a new player impresses the PCs in an existing Chancel, but doesn't click with other new players, a tragedy can wipe out that new player's Imperator, leaving them free to join the existing Chancel via the Rite of Rescue.

This is the life of Amelie Tout.

After waking up each day, Amelie Tout goes to her mailbox and takes out a thin, folded letter written on blue paper. It always says, "Today, you live well." Sometimes, it says other things, like, "Expect a visit from your son," or "Rain between 2:17 and 5:59pm — don't go out without an umbrella!"

Today, however, the letter does not say, "Today, you live well." It says, "Today, you die horribly." So Amelie Tout tidies up her house, reviews her will, eats all those tempting chocolates that go straight to her hips, and goes outside to sit in the sun. It's a pale blue ogre, its skin folding like paper, that comes for her. It takes her in its great clawed hands and pulls her apart, lovingly, bit by bit.

That was the life of Amelie Tout.
—from Seasons, *by Alex Dec*
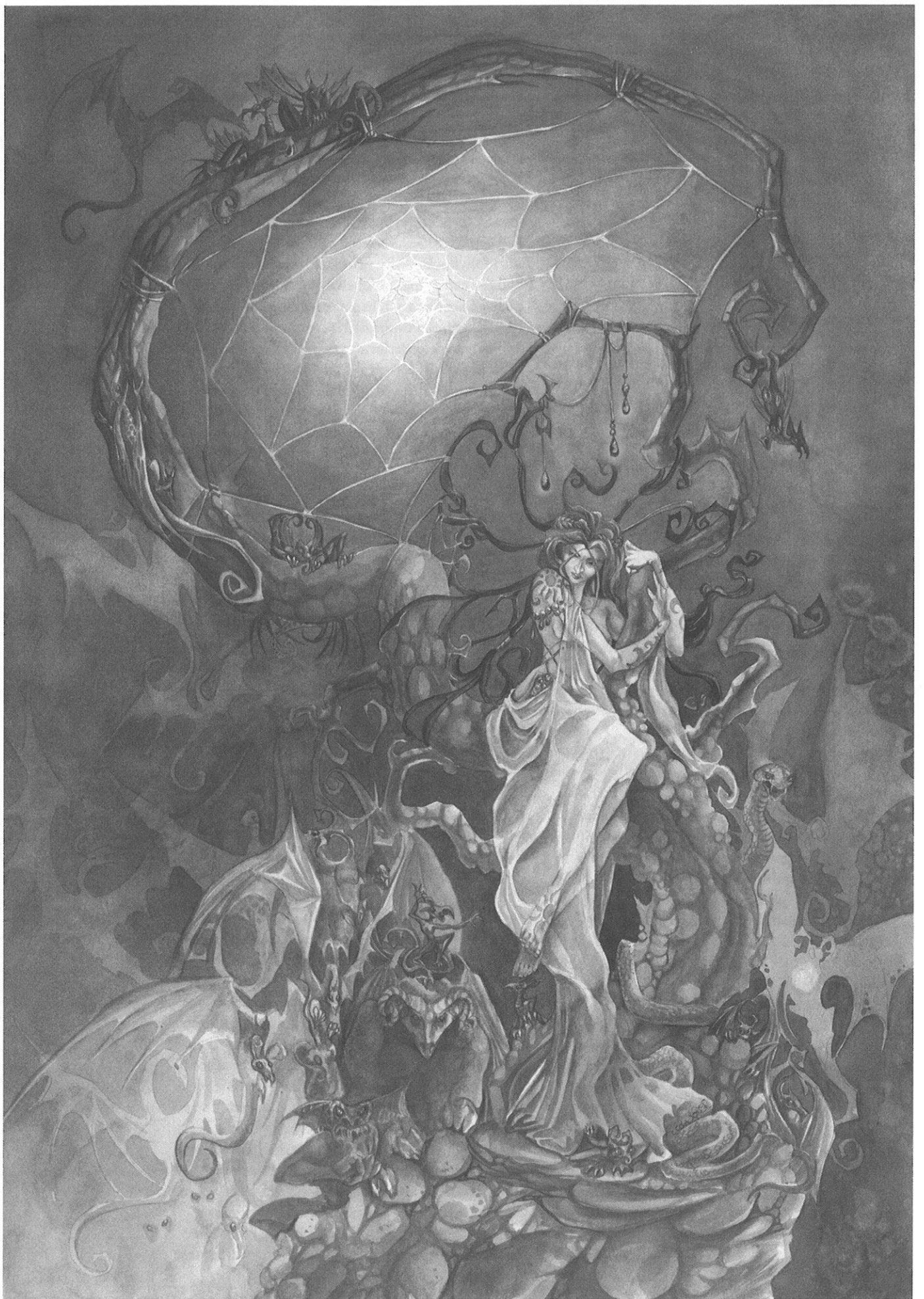
Chapter 4
Tilling the Garden

There are three areas where Dynamic *Nobilis* must perforce diverge from its tabletop cousin. The elements of the world are identical in both styles of play, but the nature of dynamic play demands a different emphasis. Specifically, changes must be made to:

- Bring multiple Noble families together.
- Focus attention on the *Nobilis* and cut down on the supporting cast.
- Support multiple threads of story.

A Gathering of Powers

Most dynamic games have more continuing Noble PCs than will fit comfortably into one Familia, however extended. Therefore, the game needs a reason for Nobles from multiple families to gather together. If you are running a dynamic campaign, then the player characters will start coming up with their own motives for convening once the game has gathered enough momentum, but the first few sessions need to be staged by the HG.

Adding structure to a dynamic game tends to make the players focus on the HGs and arcing plots (see pages 28–29). If the HG says, "You are all gathered for such a reason, and so and so must be resolved by you while you are here", most players will concentrate on those goals presented to them to the detriment of their own private plots and roleplaying. If the game lacks structure, however, the HG is trusting to the players to motivate themselves and organize the events in-game themselves. It's best to begin with some level of HG-driven organization, and then gradually allow player-driven plots to crowd out your own.

You can make all the characters linked in some manner to explain why these particular Nobles encounter each other again and again — they can all be members of some particular clique, or have some common cause. However, take care to ensure that as few character concepts as possible are blocked by whatever restrictions you impose. An explicit play contract should be a high priority as you prepare the game, because greater number of

Socializing is forging new links between yourself and your fellows. When humans gather, they confirm their place as part of a world-spanning living organism that treasures and loves each part of itself. Parties are therefore sacred rites, offerings to a greater power.

The best parties inevitably end in human sacrifice. Bring your own body.
—Anselm Markoff, London Death Cults

OPPOSITE:
The Dreamweaver
by Stephanie Pui-Mun Law

players bring with them the potential for a greater number of problems and disagreements, many of which can be solved by having a clear description of the game written down beforehand.

Among the possible nexuses for a multi-Familia Noble community are:

- **Special Projects.** The Council of Four is not the only formal authority among the Nobles. Inquisitorial Chancels seek out traitors among the Powers. (See the 'Treachery' campaign in *Nobilis* for a detailed example.) Friends of the Locust Court enforce Entropy's law and form the Wild Hunt, or clean up unfortunate outbreaks of *dementia animus*. Degalim provide tactical support for the warring Imperators, and engage the Excrucians in open warfare on the Ash. Closer to mortal affairs, groups of like-minded Nobles gather to watch over common interests, such as the financial markets and artistic endeavors of the world. Nobles with similar Estates meet to discuss common issues — the Lords of Birds, Beasts, Plants, and the Sky would be justifiably concerned about ecological issues.

- **Microcosms.** When the Ymerae agreed to the Great Truce, and joined their forces together to defend Creation against the Excrucians, they set in place the Microcosms, formal meetings of one Imperator from each of Heaven and Hell, Light and Dark, New God and Old, Wild and Treeborn. After two thousand years, there is little need for the Imperators to prove their commitment to the Truce to each other, but some still send their Nobles to maintain the bonds of peace. If the game includes enough Imperators to form a Microcosm, the PCs could be among those who hold to this tradition. And if you're short a few Ymerae, finding out what happened to the missing gods could be an obvious plot hook for the players.

- **Off-Duty.** With all of Creation as their playground, the *Nobilis* have rarefied tastes in entertainment and relaxation. Certain hidden places and Chancels offer delights unobtainable elsewhere. From diving off the twining spires of Locus Ambrolam to the haunting songs of the Muses to the exclusive parties at the Divinities Club, such distractions attract many Nobles. The informality of these gatherings relieves players of the burden of immediately having a fully developed sense of how their characters go about their primary duties and provides space for lower-keyed fleshing out of Nobles' personalities and private concerns.

Invisible Spotlights

Nobilis has an obvious hierarchy — Imperators above Nobles above Anchors above mortals and spirits — and there are huge differences in power and authority between levels in this hierarchy. Dynamic games work best when PCs are not obviously dominated or marginalized by other characters. Every player should have a measure of influence over the various plots, even if they must exercise this influence in different ways. To minimise the effects of this hierarchy in dynamic play, the following changes to the default *Nobilis* background are suggested.

Imperators

In a single-family game, the PCs' Imperator is the single most important NPC. The Ymera is their liege lord, the source of their power, their guide and their tormentor. Imperators dominate any scene in which they are present. In a dynamic game, the appearance of an Imperator should therefore be a major event, and occur rarely. Imperators have responsibilities in realms beyond the perception and comprehension of Nobles, which can keep them off-stage when the HG doesn't want to deal with them.

Still, each Imperator in the game should have its own distinct personality and quirks, and the relationship between each player character and their respective Imperator should be established. The Imperators are among the most important recurring NPCs. If you have enough assistant HGs to assign one to each Familia, then the assistant HGs can each take a Familia's Imperator as their regular NPC and run plots for that particular group. Imperators can motivate PCs by assigning them missions. Handing arbitrary plots to a player on a regular basis just gets annoying and repetitive, but Imperators are an excellent in-game method of pushing new players into the game and giving uninvolved players something to do.

Anchors

There are three story purposes for Anchors: they can be the means by which a Noble manages some organization or interest; they can be particular mortals who the Noble wishes to protect or torment, loved ones from mortal life, for example; and Anchors can be the secret agents and representatives of a Power. The first two categories of Anchor are somewhat unsuitable for live-action games, because they are concerned with off-stage events or with plots that involve just one player. (If they do show up in-game, the former can be represented by cards, the others by cards or NPCs).

The third form of Anchor is far more likely to show up and play significant roles in a dynamic

game session. If a Noble sends an Anchor in their place or plays the game as the Noble possessing an Anchor, then the player should play the Anchor and somehow signify through dress or demeanor that they're playing a different character. The telepathic Noble/Anchor bond is rather hard to implement properly in live-action play, so in Dynamic NOBILIS, the frail form of an Anchor can hold the full consciousness of a Noble only with ritual preparation. Nobles cannot possess an Anchor without the use of a ritual — in game terms, the player can talk to the Anchor's player with no risk of being overheard, but cannot switch character to the Anchor instantly. It requires a ritual which takes their Noble character out of play for the duration of the possession.

OTHER CHARACTERS

Most significant NPCs will be other Nobles, or Noble-level powers like Excrucian-shards or potent spirits. Mortals and other lesser creatures are represented by cards as described on pages 20-21. Sometimes events require that a HG play an NPC who is of mortal form but significant to the story. Such mortals require protection from miracles if they are to retain their free will for long. If the game is being hosted in a Chancel, the powers of that Chancel are expected to offer hospitality and protection to their guests, and this includes using Realm miracles to grant protection to those who need it.

Two particular mortal characters who gain prominence in a dynamic game are the Erus of a Chancel and the representative of the Cammora. Both of these can play significant roles in a dynamic game, and should be made the special responsibility of an assistant HG or a player interested in a distinctive challenge. Any event set in the Erus' Chancel may draw their attention and attendance, even if it's just to make trouble for disliked resident Nobles. The Cammora representative for a district can expect to be invited to any gathering of Nobles, and can accrue significant favors playing Powers off against each other.

For example, there's no reason why Blundell (see page 73) in the 'Heaven's Gate' adventure located in this very same book couldn't just as well be a PC — unsure of the outcome but very highly motivated to fix the situation without anyone finding out what the real deal is. The same goes for the other NPC characters in the adventure.

NON-NOBLE PLAYER CHARACTERS

If mortals are going to be an important ongoing part of a dynamic game, then each should have a few mastered skills (see page 45) reflecting their areas of interest and some bargaining chip or unique

quality than cannot be wholly taken by a greedy Power. Inhuman characters often have Gifts, and particularly powerful ones may have the equivalent of one or more attributes. Favored mortals might be under the protection of a power, or even made Sacrosanct.

Playing a candle in a game full of whirlwinds is challenging, and mortal player characters require special handling from the HG. Plots that skirt the edges of Entropy's laws and ones that involve diplomacy, wit and deceit should be included to play to the abilities of mortals.

RITES

The various miraculous Rites of the NOBILIS are of use to any Noble, regardless of Estate or other attributes. Most of the Simple Rites are known or at least knowable by all Nobles except those incapable of conscious thought. Beyond them are dozens of other Rites of varying power and utility. Nobles and Imperators guard the secrets of their special Rites, trading them carefully for favors and information and occasionally even giving one as a gift. Inquisitor Nobles once held a monopoly on the Witch Hunt and Redtooth Rites, and the Locust Court invented the Rite of the Fallen.

The HG can restrict knowledge of certain Rites to particular Familia, to encourage players to engage in trade, research and blackhearted duplicity to acquire new Rites. Characters with high Spirit or appropriate Gifts or Chancel properties can develop new, specialized Rites for the dynamic game.

EXAMPLE

The **Joyous Burden Rite** wraps a portion of reality with the *spiritus Dei* contained in a Power's soul, and effectively gives the Power Secondary Domain over some concept. It was created by the Nobles of the Ivory Tower, and is only given to others in exchange for a service. One supplicant had to go out beyond the Weirding Wall and capture a thing with eyes like migraines and teeth like cockroaches. Another had to bring a pizza with everything on it. The latter is still toiling.

BONDS

The Nettle Rite is one of the chief means by which Nobles may threaten and strike at each other without inflicting permanent injury, and so it takes on greater importance in the dynamic game. All Dynamic NOBILIS characters must have a complete and fully detailed list of their Bonds and any associated special precautions and protections.

Characters must act on their Bonds in some fashion — if a Noble cares about the fate of the novel they wrote when still mortal, then the shifting tides of the book markets, of publishers and printers,

should attract their attention and intervention — and expect other characters to pry and attempt to discover the nature of these bonds.

A Tapestry of Divergence

Dynamic Nobilis generally involves far more players than tabletop play. The thematic influence of each Estate and character concept will therefore be far less. The major plotlines should work with almost any character concept. Smaller plots can be targeted at individual characters or groups, but the HG's primary responsibility is to the group of players as a whole. The heart of the dynamic game is the network of relationships, favors, bargains and sibling bonds, and everything else should support and feed back into that network.

Characterization and Play
On one level, Dynamic Nobilis is a competitive game. Players must try with all their skill to keep their characters' Bonds from being discovered, to protect their characters' Estates, to avoid being entrapped in any nefarious plot by a rival, and to carefully move towards their own goals. Clever players can use the vast power and resources at their characters' command to make their Bonds undiscoverable and complete most of their goals without ever interacting with another character. From the perspective of pure play skill, this is a success.

At another level, though, Dynamic Nobilis is about interesting stories and exciting twists. A character who cares about their novel but hides this weakness so well that no one ever notices and it never comes into play is a tactical success but boring. You should want your character to live in interesting times, to face insurmountable odds and risk defeat and danger at every turn. A player character should be involved in Noble society, with eccentricities and passions to match their powers and responsibilities, who finds themselves in positions of heartache and intrigue at every turn. Having a rival find out about the book and try to Nettle by creating a murderous living spoiler about the ending is unpleasant for the character, but more interesting for the player and anyone else who encounters the thing.

The Living Roots of Play
It is unfortunate that the phrases "tabletop" and "live action" are often used to distinguish between the two types of roleplaying, because it suggests that the main difference between the two forms is the physical posture of the players. Dynamic play requires a different way of structuring the plot,

different commitments and attitudes from the players and HGs — a different mindset altogether.

Tabletop play is essentially a two-way communication between the players and the HG. The HG describes the situation, the player responds with their characters' desired actions, and the HG then resolves their actions and updates the situation. The HG is the gateway between the players and the game world.

In dynamic play, instead of telling the HG what their character is doing, the player actually performs the action (if it's physically possible in the game venue, like walking up to another player, or picking up a prop) or announces the action (if it's a miraculous or physically impossible or undesirable action, such as teleporting, shape-changing, or setting the room on fire). An HG is not needed to resolve most actions. The game world is as physically present as is possible.

Furthermore, in tabletop play, the HG plays most or all of the non-player characters. Dynamic games usually have a much larger cast of players, so most of the other characters in the world are also player characters. Dynamic play is all about player-to-player interaction … or, to put it another way, a good dynamic HG is one who sets the game in motion, then sits back and lets the players interact.

"Interact" is a live-action euphemism for acting, arguing, conniving, backstabbing, emoting, and having fun.

Costuming and Symbology
Dynamic Nobilis does not require any costumes. The players can dress the venue and each other suitable in their imagination, and anyway, Nobles can appear however they want. Ideally, though, there should be visual cues to distinguish between HGs when they're being HGs and HGs when they're playing NPCs. Wearing a full-face mask when playing an Imperator, for example, reinforces the inhumanity of the character. Anchors can wear badges bearing the heraldry of their Power, or chains like necklaces, pocket-watches or keychains to indicates their manacled souls. Masks or headgear might signify that a character is a spirit or other inhuman entity.

In Character and Otherwise
Suspension of disbelief is best maintained when everyone makes a constant effort to support it. Take time to think about the level of simulation you are aiming for, and draft the Play Contract accordingly. Some players are comfortable with more OOC activity than others, while some primarily want to play in situations with high levels of intense IC activity and very few OOC distractions. Whatever you settle on, it's important that everyone involved

in the game is aiming for the same goal — otherwise neither you nor your players will be pleased with the end result.

Character Creation Checklist

Here, for your convenience, is a list of things every character should have, regardless of the method used to create them. There may also be others, depending on circumstances related to your scenario. There's no need to go into great lengths, as long as there is enough basic information to enable the player in question to get in character, stay there, and interact with the world and other characters without constantly being puzzled by things they should logically know. (This, conveniently, also means that if your plotline includes the characters running into things they should know but clearly don't, their first thought won't be "oh, great, the HG didn't bother to tell us again.")

You can decide what level of detail you want, but remember that anything that isn't detailed here is something that might end up in the game in an improvised form.

- **Name, age, and whatnot.** Self-explanatory.
- **Background.** Where does the character come from? How did they become one of the Sovereign Powers? What events have shaped them into what they are today? Are there relatives, spouses, or close friends that have changed their life? Are there secrets, dark or otherwise? Don't think of just what and when, but also how and why.
- **Personality.** Are they nice, humble, petty, proud, stupid or clever? How does the character react to different situations? Are they eager to explore, or do they prefer to stay where it's safer and only act when they have to?
- **Goals and motivations.** What does the character want, besides the obvious goal of protecting their Estate? Perhaps more importantly, how much are they willing to sacrifice to get it, and what will they do once they get it? The characters' Bonds should reflect these. Also take into account conflicting priorities — if someone knows they must serve their Imperator, but also wants revenge on someone else, which is more important if a choice has to be made?
- **Resources.** What kind of resources does the PC in question have at his disposal? This entails the character's statistics, but also includes Anchors, influence on the Earth, and perhaps even mundane things such as money and status among mortals. Also consider what the PC would be willing to do to protect his resources or gain more of them.

- **Contacts.** Who does the character know? How did they get acquainted? What kind of a relationship do they have? Is there trust, hatred, suspicion or love between them? What kind of resources do the contacts have at their disposal, in generic terms? Is a particular contact a PC or an NPC, and if the former, who's playing them?
- **Synchronize!** The character should always be in sync with other characters and the game world in general. Otherwise you get major problems, like when you set up two characters to be friends, but one of them doesn't know about it because you forgot to mention it, or make a small mistake and have a mother that is only two years older than her son. These are blatant mistakes and easily fixed, but it can get worse. Small inconsistencies mount up, and become larger problems that you don't even notice until it's too late to do anything about them. This causes consistency problems within the game, but it also makes you look sloppy. A little concentration goes a long way here, and if you have a non-participating friend, you might want to let them read the material without the goggles of preconception. The more thoroughly you script your game, the more important this is.

Players should know everything their characters do. Taken literally, this is quite impossible to accomplish. However, there are things players can easily ask in a tabletop game — "what's this guy's name?" or "okay, how exactly does the chain of command in our organization work?" In Dynamic Nobilis, they should already know the answers if their PC does. In practice, this can require you to do a lot of writing, both for yourself and for your players.

The more useful information you give the players, the better, but it's important to organize this information so that it can be easily absorbed. You don't have to be a professional writer — anyone can use a spelling checker and have a non-participating friend read it and ask questions about anything that seems unclear. With a word processor, information can be typed up reasonably quickly and shared with a great number of people. Mailing lists and Web forums can be set up in the blink of an eye. You can gather everyone together and get things rolling very easily, and in a permanent, text-based forum, any questions you answer remain there for the rest of the people to read

Don't waste your effort or players' attention by creating unnecessary information. The definition of "unnecessary" can be hazy at best — if material given to a player is not directly useful in the game

THE ADVANTAGE OF ENEMIES

Significance does not exist in isolation. A Power's reputation depends, in good measure, on whom they know and what relationships they have with them. In this sense, enmity is as good as alliance; the personal enemy of Idrimi, Joktan, Khadka Koirala, Diane Spinnaker, or some other highly visible Noble is truly a Power of note! All the unworthy things their enemies do make a Power seem more virtuous; all the great deeds their enemies do make a Power seem more noble.

In addition, enmity — like love — forms a meaningful connection between two Powers. Just as one can exploit another's affection, one can take advantage of another's hatred. The more enemies a character has, the more Nobles they can manipulate through those bonds. As Ianthe notes in Nobilis (pp. 244-246) the Powers prefer to express their loathing and enmity in polite and restrained ways — lest both sides suffer horribly for it. Often, this means that an investment in creating another's hatred yields more value than devastation. Outright, unrestrained conflict between two Nobilis is generally bad for both involved. However, as long as they stop short of provoking such a war, players in Dynamic Nobilis games should not fear creating rivals and enemies for themselves.

The worst thing for a character is not Powers who detest them, but Powers who do not care about them one way or the other, registering their existence as essentially meaningless.

Emptiness once loved this secret, until the sea filled it. May this understanding thus fill the hollow places in your soul.

but does a good job of explaining the mood and themes of the game so that players gain more insight into the game world or their characters, it's hardly useless. Still, it's best not to overload your players.

Sowing the Seeds: Plot

"Plot" has a specialized meaning for the dynamic Hollyhock God. It is their burden, their sword, and their paintbrush. Most of the traditional aspects of the HG are reduced or removed in a dynamic environment. There are few or no NPCs. The location of play is often more fixed than in tabletop play (though sometimes the space is very fluid; see page 20). The HG is not even aware of everything that happens in the dynamic game, as players can resolve their characters' actions without calling on an HG. All that really remains is plot, the creation and placement of events that will impact player characters in the game.

Plot, after all, can mean both a series of events in a story and a gathering of conspirators. The HG makes the players co-conspirators in the creation of the dynamic story. Plots in the dynamic game are story seeds, which are planted in the hearts and minds of the player characters and left to grow.

- **Initial Plots.** Short-term plots which bring the characters together at the start of the game and spark the first moments of intrigue.
- **Arcing Plots.** Longer-term, HG-inspired stories that are explored over time.
- **Continuing Plots.** Repeating or constant events in the game that must be dealt with.
- **Character Plots.** Plots which center on or affect only a handful of the characters in the game, and are of little interest to other PCs.
- **Player-Driven Plots.** The conspiracies and projects undertaken by PCs that were not prompted by the HG.

Initial Plots

In the first session of a dynamic game, the HG must provide a reason why the various Nobles have come together now, at this moment in time. It can be assumed that the PCs have not gathered in such a way for some time — one of the enjoyable things to do in a live-action game is getting to know the other characters so most games begin with PCs being unfamiliar with each other. These initial plots should be designed to involve as many of the PCs as possible. (See 'Heaven's Gate' on pages 69-70, for an example.)

Initial plots should be resolvable within a session or two of play. Dynamic games involve more players and clashing personalities than tabletop games, so it's likely that some participants will drop out or change their character concepts, or parts of the game will prove unsuitable for the group. It's better to let these out-of-game problems disrupt a small initial plot than have your big arcing plots ruined by key players dropping out after the first session.

Good frameworks for initial plots include:

- **Hospitality.** A dignitary (an Imperator, high-ranking Cammoran, respected Power) is visiting to consult with the Imperators of the PCs, and the PCs must arrange a suitable welcome, entertainments and security for their guest. Winning the favor or support of the guest is desirable.
- **The First Steps.** If some of the player characters are newly enNobled, or (better still) an Imperator has just enChanceled in the region and created a new Familia of PCs, the initial sessions can revolve around their meetings with the local community of Nobles.
- **Crisis Management.** The characters are called to resolve a crisis, such as the murder of a Power or a rumor that an Excrucian Mimic is trying to infiltrate one of the local Familiae.
- **Keeping the Secret.** A mortal individual or organization has stumbled onto information about the Nobilis, and the assembled Nobles must determine how the mortals should be dealt with before *dementia animus* and fear spreads.
- **Clashing Codes.** A Refuge is beginning to blossom in the region, and the forces of Hell claim that this will tip the balance towards Heaven. They demand that the local Nobilis either help them in uprooting the Refuge, or choose some other aspect of the region to degrade and corrupt.

Arcing Plots

There is a point of critical mass in a dynamic game when the players are coming back, game after game, to pursue their characters' own interests and plots. Once this point is reached, the dynamic campaign can continue under its own steam for a long time, with small injections of extra plot fuel by the Hollyhock God. Getting to such a critical mass, however, requires several sessions of play — time for the characters to learn about each other, form alliances and come up with things they want to achieve. It's up to the Hollyhock God to keep the game interesting until then by seeding plots that aren't driven by any one player character.

If you want a game full of treachery and double-dealing, then have the arcing plot revolve around a

situation where some characters will win and others will lose. If you want a more relaxed and social game, then the arcing plot is mainly there to make the players talk to each other, and shouldn't require that much action.

Arcing plots keep the players involved and busy when the other, player-driven plots are resolved or inactive. They are closest to the type of story that might be created in a tabletop game, in that many of the events will happen outside the gathering of Nobles and then be discussed in-character. Arcing plots should not be resolved in one session — instead, they should unfold over time, and have many mysteries and twists to be uncovered.

Some examples of arching plots include the following:

- **New Moon.** The spirit of Earth's moon is beginning to awaken, and is spawning alien creatures and even new Imperators and Powers. The moon, rejected from the Earth when our world was driven mad by Za'afiel, now desires revenge against its parent. The Angel of the Moon is nowhere to be found. It is up to the characters to solve this crisis before it breaks into war.

- **Feeding the Beast.** Some force is draining miraculous energy from the various Chancels represented by the player characters. At first, this drain is little more than an irritation, but investigation shows that this strange hunger can only be sated by the very divine life force of an Imperator. Can the characters locate and defeat the source of this drain, or must they choose which of the Familia will be sacrificed?

- **The Example.** The characters are given leave by the Council of Four to act openly in a part of the world — a single city, perhaps. Now they can remake it as they choose. The stated intent of the Council is to improve the lot of humanity through Noble miracles. How do the characters alter the city, can they keep the effects of their miracles from spilling over into the rest of the Prosaic World, and why are Entropy's servants watching them all so closely?

One danger of arcing plots is that they can overwhelm the rest of the game, and turn it into a series of scenes between the player characters and the HG's non-player characters — in essence, a tabletop game writ large and unwieldy. Arcing plots should advance slowly, and only when the game needs an added impetus. They should not be allowed to overshadow the interactions between player characters, which are the heart of the dynamic game.

Continuing Plots

Recurring events and sources of conflict in a dynamic game let players plan for the future, and possibly conspire with or against each other to take advantage of these continuing plots. Often, continuing plots provide opportunities for characters to win power or glory. At the very least, they're better as a neutral topic of conversation than the weather, which has grown paranoid and self-conscious.

Some examples:

- **Competitive Partying.** Nobles enjoy festivals and celebrations, and the application of Realm miracles allow a host to throw the most spectacular parties in their Chancel. Every few sessions, the dynamic game could be set in a different Chancel, and the Nobles of that Chancel encouraged to create the most lavish or most decadent or most fashionable or most infernal soirée they can imagine. The most successful host wins the accolades of the other Powers.

- **Gleaning Rights.** Harvesting Dynasty Points allows Nobles to stockpile miraculous energy or create powerful miracles. While most harvests are secrets jealously guarded by Familiae, there are places where the exuberant life force of creation bubbles up from beneath the mundane surface of the world. All the Nobles in the area have a voice in deciding who gets to reap such a harvest.

- **Continuing Rivalries.** Another source of miracle points comes from the borders between Estates. Sometimes, two or more estates overlap, or are in direct conflict with each other. This metaphysical friction manifests as a source of potential miracle points. However, this harvest can only be reaped if one of the Nobles involved in the conflict proves his pre-eminence over the others. He may have to win their loyalty, or defeat them all in a Ghost duel, or claim victory through some other means, but only one Noble may win such border wars.

- **Counter-Espionage.** Lord Entropy has many eyes, and not all of them are in the heads of ogres or nimblejacks. So it follows that anyone — commoner, servant, spirit, Anchor or Power — could be a thrall of the Darkest Lord, secretly reporting on the crimes of their fellows to the Council. Finding the current spy is a perennial activity for some Nobles.

Character Plots

Not every story should involve each and every character — indeed, part of the charm of dynamic games is the sense that there are mysteries and

shadowy schemes happening beyond any one player's or character's control. Character plots are tailored to a small subset of player characters, and can therefore be aimed at aspects of a character which would normally go unexamined. Character plots should involve more than one PC — a plot that is carried out wholly between one player and the HG, never impacting in any way on anyone else, is of no value to a dynamic game. Plots can start with a single character, though — for example, the Domina of Swamps is in love with a mortal, and that same mortal is taken prisoner by the Powers of Whips' slavers. The plot begins with the Domina realizing her lover is missing, and then her investigations can lead on to the slavers and the rival Power.

Noble families provide an immediate context for character plots. Conflict between siblings is great dramatic fodder, and a lot of fun can be had trying to keep family problems behind closed doors. Cliques of Nobles and groups sharing the same Code also make good targets for character plots.

Other common categories of character plot include:

- **Life After Death.** Sometimes, when a Noble dies, their Imperator grants the vacant Estate to a random mortal. Other Imperators choose an heir from among the Anchors and servants of the previous Nobles. This ensures that there is continuity of purpose in the Estate. In some rather Machiavellian Familiae, it also ensures that a Noble knows the person who killed him. The various Powers maneuver to have their siblings replaced by a more malleable, indebted mortal.

- **Mercy and Justice.** Love is, of course, forbidden to the *Nobilis*. Forgiveness isn't. An Excrucian who has caused much destruction in the past comes to one of the more tender-hearted PCs, claiming that the beauty of Creation has entered her soul, she has left the Excrucian host, and now seeks sanctuary and redemption.

- **The Clash of Tools.** The lives of Anchors are governed by a synchronicity that borders on predestination or even deliberate malice. A dynamic game potentially involves dozens of Anchors, who can get tangled up in each other's affairs. When one Anchor's corporation is about to bulldoze the ancestral home of another, their Noble patrons may be called upon to sort the matter out.

PLAYER-DRIVEN PLOTS

As HG, you want the players to be as active as possible. Not only does it prove that the players are enthusiastically enjoying the game, it also means you've got more raw material to work with.

Part of a player-driven plot will be almost invisible to the HG, as it takes place entirely in player-to-player roleplaying. The HG's role comes when the player characters need to manipulate the world around them, seek out information, or deal with NPCs. The dynamic game is the stage on which all significant developments are played out, so every plot should be turned back towards other players. If a Noble needs to learn the secret name of the Angel Firstborn, the HG should somehow point the Noble at another player character, perhaps one aligned to Heaven, who can ferret out such a secret. Weave loose threads back into the dynamic game, instead of having them trail off into space for eventual cutting off by the Hollyhock God.

In *Nobilis*, the best way to do anything is to ask someone. Few problems cannot be overcome by a miracle from the appropriate Power. This guides players characters into bargaining with one another, and provides an easy way for the HG to involve other players in a player-driven plot.

Player-driven plots should, whenever possible, take precedence over HG-inspired ones. Players who feel as if they are constantly reacting to what the HG throws at them will grow bored. *Nobilis* puts a great deal of power into the hands of the players, and they should be allowed exercise this power. Seize on their plot hooks and they'll be all the more eager to jump on yours when arcing plots kick in.

Some classic player-driven plots include:

- **Advancing the Estate.** The metaphysical strength of a Noble's Estate can be affected by events in the Mythic or Prosaic Worlds, or out on the World Ash. Nobles therefore spend a deal of time and effort guarding their Estate against injury or Excruciation, as well as promote their Estate through well-placed miracles. The Duke of Horizons designs cities where every window possesses a clear field of vision. The Baroness of Unrequited Love wanders the world, inflicting temporary invisibility on the unfortunate. The Vagueness Regal does stuff. While a certain amount of Estate maintenance can be assumed, when a player undertakes a major project on behalf of their Estate, they may be at cross purposes (and words, and maybe swords) with other Nobles. His Grace Horizon's designs, for example, are continually at odds with the narrow streets and shadows required by the Power of Street Violence.

- **Earning Respect.** Noble society is both anarchic and formal. Everyone is, through accident of birth or divinity, an aristocrat,

and one's station is determined by one's mastery of Domain and Realm. Despite this strict hierarchy, there is little order. No Noble, save those who serve the Council of Four, has any formally recognized authority over others. To make one's mark in Noble society, then, a Power must impress others with imagination, daring, and strength of purpose — or uncover the dark secrets of one's peers and blackmail them. Status is inborn, but respect may be won.

- **Private Lives.** The powers and passions of the 𝒩obilis are unchained, furious things, like a storm at sea or a fire in a theatre. They are grand, glorious, expansive, terrifying — never petty. At least, so the songs claim. In truth, many of the little unexplained quirks about life stem from little irritations and rivalries between Powers. The Domina of Thunder dislikes her sibling, the Dominus of Lightning, and so the sound of thunder lags sullenly behind the flash of the lightning.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR NEW PLAYERS

New players are often unreliable and flighty. They may be intrigued by the idea of dynamic play, but unsure if they want to participate. Rather than spending the time to write in a full character for a new player who may never return to the game, try giving them a petitioner character for their first session. Petitioners are messengers — usually Anchors or trusted servants, but occasionally Powers — who want some particular gift or miracle performed by a local Noble, in exchange for some reward or favor. Petitioners are perfect for new players because they have a well-defined goal (their desired boon), a reason for the other Nobles to help (payment of some sort), little knowledge of local affairs (so the new player enters the game blind), and are fundamentally disposable (and so can be forgotten after the game without consequences).

𝓡EAPING THE 𝓕LOWERS: 𝓡UNNING 𝓟LOTS

If there are multiple HGs involved in running a game, there should be one supreme HG for each major plot. All the HGs should know the intent of a plot, if not every detail. Being aware of what a plot is meant to accomplish allows a HG to respond to player queries and actions without ruining the aims of other HGs. Communication between HGs is essential, and the major events of each game session should be recorded and made known.

With miracles, Nobles can change the world in an infinity of ways, from imperceptible changes to earth-shattering shifts of reality. Rather than throwing artificial obstacles against major changes, adjust plots to compensate. The important part of the dynamic game — the interaction between Nobles — cannot be swept away with an errant miracle. Characters can change the world, but not their family or peers. If a large miracle does detrimentally affect the backdrop of Prosaic or Mythic Reality, then some other Noble can put it right. If you put cats at the top of the food chain, a dozen Magisters of the Light will rush to the aid of a humanity packed with meaty goodness.

Whenever possible, PCs should take on the chief roles in plots. Sometimes, this happens naturally: if a PC begins to hunt down the lost words of the English language and tie them down by telling them to other Nobles, then the HG needs only to give the player the occasional new word. Doing something similar with HG-inspired plots takes a little more work, but the reward is a richer game. Players make far better opponents for each other than NPCs, because players are far more devious and dangerous than some NPC who gets only a fraction of the HG's attention. (See 'Blossoming: Portraying Nobles and Imperators' on page 13 for more about this from the player's perspective.) Rather than having an NPC try to incite the Nobles to rebellion against the Council of Four, see if any of the players are willing to become a hero — or a martyr.

RESOLVING AND REWARDING PLOTS

The ending of plots is vital. Plots without a definite climax become dull, boring burdens and are eventually forgotten. If a bold player does not bring a particular story to a satisfying ending, the HG should throw out some last twist to force a resolution. Caution is needed here — there may be behind-the-scenes conspiring that no HG is aware of — but if there has been no interest in the plot in a session or two, then revitalize it with a new development or end it.

In addition to the normal rewards given to players for roleplaying, attendance, organizational duties and the like, rewards should be given to those who make the game richer by being active. A character who gets involved in a plot or starts one should be given a free miracle point or two, a token piece of positive reinforcement. Greater rewards come from the results of the plots themselves. Characters who improve the standing of their Estate in the world should be allowed to spend experience on Domain. Characters who manage to add new wonders or bring prestige to their Familia can add to their Realm. Players should try to grow their character as a result of in-game events.

Of course, the resolution of the plot does not mean that every element is discarded. Work with

*I defeated his minions, and he cackled and said, "Exactly as I planned."*

I discovered his secret fortress. "Exactly as I planned."

I breached his defences, and still he said, "Exactly as I planned."

I slew him in single combat, and with his dying breath he gasped, "Exactly as I planned."

I stood on his grave and I said, "You never really got the hang of planning, did you?"
—from the Thought-Record of Caleb Marsh
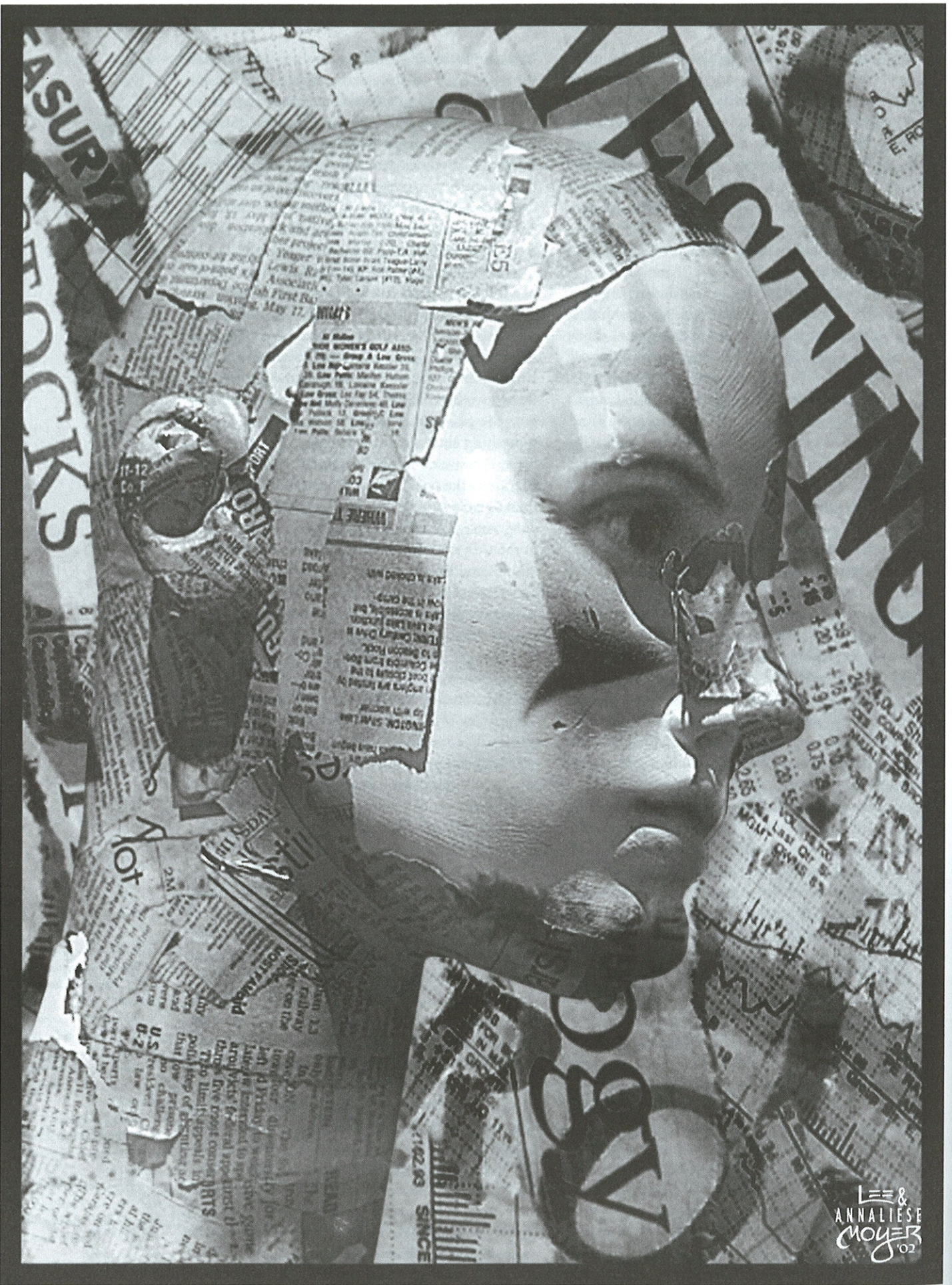
the players to select which threads should be woven back into the tapestry.

PRE-GAME PREPARATIONS

There are things you may want to do between the time you write the material required for the game and the time it's actually played.

For example, many of the characters know each other from previous encounters, even if this is the first time they appear in the game. Familia in particular may very well have been together for years or even centuries, and it makes sense that they know each other very well. Thus, it may be a good idea to organize pre-game meetings for the players. This is probably pretty simple for you — just letting people know when they can come over to your house and talk things over usually does the trick.

During such a meeting players can share relevant information about their characters' personalities, habits, likes and dislikes, develop common history and experiences, and ask questions that inevitably arise during the meeting. This way the players have a solid foundation on which they can base the upcoming IC interaction, and when the game begins, the PCs' encounters with each other will be far less awkward. Obviously, the same thing can also be done with rivals or bitter enemies and other groups. You can take the role of a chairman in such meetings and introduce questions such as "what's likeable about your character?" or "what's your biggest failure in life?" that help define things. Also, ask players if they need any further background information or want to ask questions.

If there are specific things players should bring with them, preparations they should make at home or a dress code of some sort, you should let people know about it well before the actual event. It's annoying and difficult to make complicated preparations the day before the game.

EXECUTION

You'll find that the more organized you are about the actual execution of the game, the less stress you will have to deal with. Completely practical issues aside, like finding space to play in and obtaining suitable props (which will be dealt with a bit later), there are many things you can do to ensure that your game goes smoothly.

Make a schedule and stick to it as well as you can, and make sure your players do the same. If your initial briefing for the players is scheduled for 4PM, but some people don't show up, that pushes back the time table for everyone. It doesn't hurt to stress the importance of punctuality, but it's also a

good idea to design the schedule so that if something comes up, a slight delay won't ruin the game. Flexibility never hurts.

BRIEFING

You probably want to hold an initial briefing of some kind, especially if you're doing a one-shot game instead of a campaign. There are a number of things you might want to cover. Among the important ones are these:

- If you've rented a place to play in, there are probably some rules you must follow, all of which you should go over with your players. These can range from "no spiked heels on the hardwood floor and no smoking inside" to "do not open the second floor windows or the alarm will go off". It's also a good idea to do a quick recap of the IC situation and explain the IC features of the place you're playing in.
- If there is a specific OOC room (for storing OOC stuff and a hangout for people whose characters get killed, temporarily leave the place, or whose characters become otherwise unavailable during the game), point it out now. If you want people to turn off their cell phones and other OOC distractions, this is the time to do it.
- If food or beverages are served during the game, this is a good time to tell people what includes meat, what's loaded with lactose, *et cetera*. (Being a responsible HG, you have naturally asked people beforehand if they're allergic to or have ethical concerns with something you intend to serve.)
- Go over the main points of the Play Contract to ensure that everyone knows what level of simulation is acceptable and expected. Also recap all signals specific to your game — what signifies a OOC presence, and so forth.

When you're done, everyone's ready, the place has been prepared, all there is left for you to do is hit "play" on the metaphorical remote controller of the game. At that point, your work may not yet be finished, but chances are that from then on it will take care of itself. If you're not playing a character yourself, you can sit back and watch — the rest is largely up to the players. To make observing the game easier, you may want to create a non-important character, like a servant, who can move among the players without undue notice and an OOC presence.

ORGANIZATION

If you're running a small game for, say, a dozen players or so, you can probably do everything

"As you all know, this is the Chancel of Tears, and some of you are here to negotiate for the release of one of your Familia, the Power of Joy, kept imprisoned by, well, the rest of you. This is the main meeting room, where the negotiations will take place, and this is Lord Balthazar's study. IC, this door here doesn't exist, and neither does the room behind it. Instead, that's where you will always find at least one HG, if you need to ask questions. All conversations held in there are strictly OOC. Ignore all light switches; as far as your characters are concerned, they don't exist, as the place is magically lit. Oh, and the fire exit is over there, and I have a first aid kit in the HG room — just in case."
—from a pre-game briefing

yourself, at least if you can trust the players to handle themselves without constant supervision. However, if you have your sights set for a bigger game, the writing alone can take a long time, and if you want to get the game running quickly, you're going to need help.

This means you need to recruit a couple of friends to help you out. Not only is it more efficient that way, but it's fun to have brainstorming sessions and come up with devilishly clever plotlines and situations for the players to chew over. However, sooner or later you will run into a situation where one HG wants to go one way and another wants something else entirely. This can be problematic, as HG co-operation is essential to the success of a game of Dynamic 𝒩obilis.

The temptation to form a committee where everyone has equal say may be great, but from a purely practical standpoint, this may not be the best move. Perhaps more importantly, it doesn't guarantee quality. If people find themselves voting about which plotlines should be accepted and what kind of characters are required, chances are that things are not going very well. Art by concensus is not an impossible concept, but it's something of a risky endeavor at best. This is not a mandate for a single person to become a overbearing dictator who bullies everyone else into submission. Yes, absolutely, it helps to have a single person's vision as a guiding light for the entire group of HGs, but bear in mind that Dynamic 𝒩obilis is supposed to be a game, and a fun game at that — not an excuse for someone to buy a ticket for the Ego Express.

When people do something they really care about, tempers can flare, often over seemingly trivial things. It helps to know beforehand whose vision is the driving force behind the game and who has final say — after all, if there is a single person who can settle disputes and lay down the generic shape of the game, less time is spent on pointless arguments and people are less likely to end up not speaking to each other. Of course, this is not a perfect defense against heated arguments that snowball out of control, but it still makes such events a lot less likely.

Sets, Props, and Expenses

𝒩obilis is a particularly epic game, and as such, it requires suitable surroundings. It's one thing to arrange for a spot of your choice to look like someone's apartment or a meeting room, and quite another to make it look like mind-warping Chancel featuring non-Euclidian geometry that makes your brain turn inside out if you make the fatal mistake of thinking about it.

Details matter — see the examples in 'Heaven's Gate', pages 77-78. The walls may be bare, but if the furniture looks convincing, it'll probably work just fine. Colored lights and sheets can do wonders to even the most humdrum location. If the event is supposed to be a cocktail party, it really helps to have decent hors d'oeuvres and waiters who serve them. If the game takes place at an underworld card game, get some decent playing cards and chips for the session. These are things the players can latch on to; they help build the illusion. Even if something goes wrong and the mood is broken, they are constants that players can depend on; they help re-establish the illusion once the problem has been solved.

Also remember that players like to do things. If someone wants to search a place, it's really great if they can, well, actually search the place. Instead of saying that they go through the drawers, it does wonders for the mood if they can open them up and try to find something important among ordinary paperwork. Of course, a Noble can always use some sort of a trick to discover something without resorting to such mundane means, but if the option is there, so much the better. Well-placed object cards help a lot here.

More importantly, don't let your own doubts restrict you. These days, we have many tools at our disposal, and many of them aren't even particularly expensive. You can take advantage of e-mail and cell phones and set things up so that some characters cannot be met in person, only through the Internet (which can be used to simulate more arcane means of communication) — perhaps even so that some characters have fake double identities who only exist in the net. You can get a free e-mail address or a dozen of them from any number of service providers these days and build a whole network of fictional information with reasonably little trouble. Go wild. Explore the limits, and don't let anyone tell you that it can't be done just because it hasn't been done before. You might be surprised what you can accomplish if you put your mind to it.

Of course, these things cost time and, perhaps more importantly, money. Organizing a LARP doesn't have to be expensive, but if you want to do it well, there will be costs. An obvious way to make ends meet is to set an entrance fee to the game. The actual amount depends largely on an obscure equation, the relevant factors of which are the expenses and how much the players are willing to shell out for a live-action game.

Be forewarned: there are people who think everything should be free for them. They're not always right. You are putting in a lot of time and effort to make the game work. It is quite unreasonable to expect that you also foot the entire bill. You can of course try to turn a profit from creating a game of Dynamic 𝒩obilis and charging people

for the pleasure of playing in it. If your games are good enough for people to be willing to pay you enough for you to pull that off, hey, good for you. Just keep the tax man informed of what you do.

Sponsorships are also a possibility. They may not be too easy to come by, but if you happen to have good contacts or know how to speak to people, you might get surprising results. It may be possible to get equipment as a donation or on loan from a company that manufactures it. (An amusing anecdote: in a well-known Finnish LARP project called Wanderer, the organizers managed to secure a thousand condoms as a donation for the game from the local AIDS support center. Not very surprisingly, they didn't see much use. On the other hand, the organizers also received video equipment, neon signs, carbon ice, make-up, space to play in, lighting equipment and many other items. Laughable? You decide.) Asking never hurts, as long as you ask politely.

Finally, there are organizations that might actually give you cash money for this kind of activity. In fact, there are countries where players can actually apply for money from the state to fund their roleplaying, as it is considered to be a cultural activity. Local conditions may vary, but generally speaking, universities, theatres, youth groups and the like may all be interested in helping you out.

Regardless of who you approach, it is vital that you present a trustworthy, competent and responsible image. To put this bluntly, nobody wants to deal with clowns or nutcases. You don't need to explain the exact details of your game; it's more important to give them an idea of what you will be doing, how, and why. Spouting pseudo-religious stuff about Sovereign Powers and soul-shards is a bad idea. This doesn't mean that you should lie, but it's best to present the game's themes in a context that is more easily understood by non-gamers.

DEALING WITH THE PUBLIC
Question: What do you do if you overhear someone having a serious discussion about murdering someone within the next thirty minutes?
Answer: You think real hard about calling the cops.

This is what your average bystander may very well do if they get involved in your game without their knowledge. If the call is made, police officers will arrive at the scene and start asking questions. At that point, nobody has a good time. The questions will be awkward, even if the cops are nice and understanding. This can be easily avoided by an application of common sense. There are few simple rules to observe:

If you are going to be playing in public, make sure that the players understand the limits. To a

bystander, a perfectly harmless discussion about fictional events may be a sure sign of impending violence. For example, you don't want to have players engage in a public detailed conversation about a plot to manipulate terrorists to strike against one target or another, no matter how logical it would be for the characters to do that. If you do something that attracts attention, politely notify bystanders who come by about the event and explain that this is the equivalent of freeform acting. They'll probably think you're weird, but they're likely to leave it at that.

If you're going to be playing in public and engaging in something loud and weird, call the cops and let them know what you're doing. Just pick up the phone, tell them who you are and where you intend to be playing your game, and at what time. They may ask you some seemingly dumb questions, but at least they know that if they get calls, it's probably "just kids playing", and though they may still want to check things out, at least they're forewarned and probably a lot more co-operative. In most cases you won't hear a peep from them, but just in case someone decides to overreact and serious people start asking you some very serious questions, it's best to be prepared.

As always, it's best to leave a competent, responsible, and adult impression when dealing with the public — it'll be good publicity not just for you, but for every LARPer in general. It only takes one fool to ruin the fun for a lot of people who never did anyone any harm.

And, of course, what you do in the confines of your own home or at a private function is nobody's business, as long as no laws are broken.

SOLVING PLAYER PROBLEMS

You may find out that despite your best efforts, one of the players is not having a good time or is bad for the game.

In-character and out-of-character motivations should always be kept separate. If two players don't like each other, that's their problem, but it shouldn't become one for the entire group. Players should never make assumptions about, for example, a relationship with someone else simply because their characters are in love. You might also want to point out to your players that there's a great difference between the players' *characters* doing something and the *players* doing something. Human emotions being the tangled mess they often are, it's a good idea to keep an eye out for these things.

If someone isn't into the game, there might be a reason for it. It could be the player would be better

off with a hobby they like, or it could be caused by something you have done or failed to do. Either way, be open to criticism, even if you don't agree with it. Naturally, it's not a whole lot of fun to hear that something you've slaved over sucks, but if they're right, the only way you'll be able to fix it is by swallowing your pride and hearing them out. In an ideal world, people already know what they're signing up for — at least in generic terms — and thus those who aren't into what you're doing will know to stay away.

What's more, if you have a game that involves, for example, deep character interaction and romance, some players simply won't be interested. Such themes might make them uncomfortable or just plain bored. Conversely, not everyone likes adventure or political intrigue. If someone ends up in a game he doesn't like, playing a character he doesn't like, it's not going to be fun.

There are players who have a taste for just about everything, and if you can find a lot of those, consider yourself lucky — you're about to have plenty of fun.

Cheating isn't that hard: nobody's really going to start counting PCs' miracle points. Most people simply don't bother — there is no way to win (or lose) at Dynamic NOBILIS, so cheating is pointless. Still, there are people who can't take losing, even if it's only in their own mind. The willingness to cheat speaks of lack of commitment to the game and lack of respect towards the HG and the other players. Such players should be removed from the game if it is obvious that they will not mend their ways. Letting them stay only escalates the tension, and when things finally come to a head, what should be a routine decision easily becomes a game-shattering event that leaves everyone angry and annoyed.

In any case, the most important tool in solving problems with players is communication, and you should always remember it's a two-way street — everyone involved needs to talk straight, and have the patience to listen and the willingness to understand. Not every problem can be solved, but unless there is some spirit of co-operation, nothing will be accomplished and everyone will end up feeling bad about the whole thing.

Go Forth and Make It Your Own

That's it. You're on your own, now. This chapter gives a lot of advice, but there's only so much room in the book; there's much you will have to learn by doing it yourself. It takes practice.

The final piece of advice is this: If your first outing is a failure, don't worry. There is a known phenomenon called "post-game low" that can hit players and HGs alike, when weeks of frenzied preparation culminate in a few hours of intense gameplay, and when it's all over, people are just completely beat. At that time it's easy to think of a successful game as a total failure. It helps to step back and take it easy for a while, and then look at the whole thing with fresh eyes.

It's not the easiest form of expression out there, but it can be extremely rewarding. Experiment and push the boundaries — the rules laid out here may be the very ones you need to break to find whatever it is that works for you. What you end up with may be far more than you expect or even hope for.

Chapter 5
Hedges and Thorns

An Alternative Approach

The rest of THE GAME OF POWERS assumes that your game of Dynamic ℵOBILIS is an ongoing campaign, and that you're playing in an intelligent, engaged, but somewhat relaxed style. Not all games work that way, or need to. This chapter focuses on advice for those of you playing in circumstances where the Hollyhock God exercises much greater control at each step of setup and play, whether it's because you're running a stand-alone event or self-contained short plot arc or just because you prefer this more intense approach.

CHOOSING AND CASTING PLAYERS

In live-action play, even more than in tabletop games, the players can make or break a game. It doesn't matter how good your setup is and how hard you worked on it; if the players aren't into it or simply don't know what they're doing, it will fail. This is bad. If, on the other hand, the players are good, you can make mistakes and it won't ruin the game, because they will cover for you and even have a good time while they're at it. This is not just good, it's great.

Choosing players — as opposed to just accepting anyone who's interested — is a somewhat touchy subject. Most people quite rightly agree that prejudices are bad and excluding people from a group is not nice. Another view, quite popular among gamers, is that role-playing should be fun, and everyone should be allowed to participate. It's certainly a valid viewpoint.

However, there may be practical problems with this approach in Dynamic ℵOBILIS. A live-action game is a fragile creature, and much of its success depends on the careful maintenance of the mutually created illusion — and it only takes a single person to ruin that. Therefore, there are certain criteria for you to consider when encountering potential players.

Let's take the easy ones first. Are they interested in the game? Can you trust them to play by the rules? Do they even enjoy role-playing? Don't ask someone to play just because they're your friend. If

"You wouldn't think he'd be your first choice for a big bad bigoted redneck. He's a tall, thin, gothy type, looks like you could probably sneeze him off his feet; the character was an unemployed factory worker who beat up his family. But once the game was underway, his wife spoke out of turn, and he gave her this look, and I felt a chill run down my spine. Two things I was glad about: That he was good enough to pull it off, and that I knew it was just an act.

"But, goddammit, what an act."
—M.R. on S.R.'s performance in G Z.

they're into it, great. If you think they might be interested and should give it a shot, that's cool, too, but don't ask them just because you know them. Think of it like a game of football: if there's a guy playing who doesn't mind participating but lacks the motivation or the inclination to follow the rules of the game, and is only there out of some misplaced sense of camaraderie or duty, it's not going to be much fun for anyone involved.

The next question is an important one, and also one that's bound to cause controversy among many: Can they play the character in question? The answer depends partly on what's most important about the character. If the character's background hinges on his being a black man from the Projects who has suffered the attacks of white supremacists all his life, there's a good chance a white man cannot play him without looking like a dork. If the crucial feature for play is that the character is angry in response to bigotry and oppression, then players of many backgrounds can play that character, drawing on their own experience and imagination. If the character needs to be freakishly tall for some crucial plot point, a player of average height or less probably can't do it. If the character is of unusual height but within human norms, then players of various builds can probably convey the general impression. A very shy man who stutters and blushes easily is going to have a hard time being a convincingly suave ladies' man. These things are not as much of a problem in a game of tabletop 𝒩ᴏʙɪʟɪs, but once you take them to Dynamic 𝒩ᴏʙɪʟɪs, things change. The medium is different, and what was before communicated chiefly in words is now also communicated with postures, words, body language, appearance and what we can perceive with our own senses and intuition.

The common counter-argument is that it's just fiction, it's just a game, and it's just a bit of fun — all of which is true, but this doesn't change the cold facts; namely, that it can be bad fiction, a bad game, and not all that much fun if suspension of disbelief falls flat on its face. There is no reason to go through the trouble of organizing a game only to see it fail. For the game to be successful, certain realities have to be accepted.

Another common argument is that since we're all pretending anyway, can't we pretend a bit more? And the answer is, yes, we can — we can pretend anything, but there is only so much suspension of disbelief to go around, and if we are to create a credible illusion, it helps if the players can concentrate on believing that the stuffy meeting room is a Chancel instead of pretending that the tall guy is actually short.

It's usually easier to pretend that your surroundings are different as long as you don't need to directly interact with them and they don't constantly demand your attention. While you can reasonably easily pretend that the view from a window is that of a vast starfield, not someone's backyard, it's a lot harder to pull the same thing off when dealing with something that constantly and actively proves your pretense to be wrong. True, anyone who plays a Noble character cannot help but do this by default, but that's all the more reason to not add to that effect.

Very importantly, there is a simple way to turn this around: If there is no player who can or wants to play the suave ladies' man, leave the character out of the game. If no player is short, get rid of the short character. Instead of concentrating on the players' weaknesses, concentrate on their strengths. This way everyone is likely to feel better about the whole thing. (Why bring this up at all? Because you have to make these choices, and it's better to be aware of the factors involved instead of walking blindly into a problem situation that could have been easily avoided by a bit of planning and common sense.)

All this said, you shouldn't underestimate your players. There are exceptions to each of these generalizations; some players can pull off amazing and quite unlikely performances despite the odds being against them, especially if the HG has done a good job of setting things up so that the players' suspension of disbelief is otherwise maintained by their surroundings and the scenario in general.

There are people who should not play role-playing games at all, live-action or otherwise. Emotionally unstable or vulnerable people might not benefit from the experience if it focuses painfully on their weak points. This is not because these games have the power to warp our fragile little minds, but because Dynamic 𝒩ᴏʙɪʟɪs does deal with themes and methods of exploring those themes that can hit some people precisely the wrong way. There are people who cannot handle alcohol, drugs (prescription or otherwise), laws, responsibility, stress, or even relationships. These are not things we like to talk about, but we all know they exist.

Naturally, it's quite impossible to be absolutely sure that a person you're talking to has the right mental foundations for the part you have in mind. Still, a responsible game organizer will do some basic screening of players. A truly heartbroken player who has just come out of a very difficult relationship might not be the guy to participate in a game that features the Power of Love, and someone who just had a death in the family might not want to deal with that particular topic.

Or the game could be a good, cathartic experience, or a much-welcome distraction from their daily routine — good, clean fun. You shouldn't

CHAPTER 5: HEDGES AND THORNS

make rash judgements; just because someone is going through a rough spot, that doesn't mean they can't enjoy Dynamic NOBILIS same as anyone else. Don't make a big deal of it, but think before you ask someone to play, discuss concepts with players to identify potentially troublesome points, and always reserve the right to choose your players. Not just for your own sake, but for the other players — they need to be able to trust their fellow players, even if they don't personally know them.

You have not only the right (those who create the games create the rules) but also the responsibility (those who create the games have to live with the consequences) to do this. It's entirely possible that you never have to deal with this issue. If so, good for you. Move on and have a great time.

CHARACTER CREATION

"The character was almost exactly like me, except without all the angst and frustration. I don't know, call it escapism if you will, but I found it meaningful."
—M.R., in the aftermath of a live-action game

If the game is to have fifty or even more Nobles running around, it is important to ensure that they all fit into the game world you have planned, and for a one-shot or limited-run game you may feel the need to create all of the characters yourself to ensure that the game has all the elements you want it to have. This naturally entails a great deal of work, but has great advantages in that you can set up extremely complex, yet logical scenarios that involve the player characters on a very personal level. If you have a very clear and powerful vision of what kind of a game you want to run, this may be a good choice for you.

Note, however, that the fact that you create the characters doesn't mean you control them during the game. You may define their motivations and personality, but once the game begins, they will do what the player thinks is the natural course for them, and the player will rightfully resent attempts to interfere with their interpretation of the character. If you want exact control over the events, you might want to consider writing a play.

Still, some players may find this method strange, perhaps even unpleasant. They may be used to having a bit more control over what kind of characters they play. They may well be a bit more comfortable with a hybrid version of sorts, where you give them detailed parameters and ask them to create a character that fits them. This process usually goes through several iterations, resulting in a character that has been personalized by the player but still fits the important niche prepared by the Hollyhock God.

Whatever character creation method you settle on, be sure to ask your players what kind of characters they want to play and what kind of situations they are interested in. This is not only polite, but it's also important information for

you, because it tells you what kind of events and plots you should prepare for them. However, what you really must find out is what they don't want to play. It can be safely said that often players only think they want something — all of us can at times get stuck in a rut, and if we suddenly find ourselves in a new and interesting, but not unpleasant situation, we more often than not end up having a good time. However, players definitely know what they don't like, and you should take that seriously. A player who really doesn't want to play out romantic involvements should not be given a character who has a high potential for them.

The Play Contract should already cover much of this, but there's a notable difference between laying out general guidelines for play and creating individual characters for individual players.

Still, players and HGs alike should keep in mind that once you decide to play, you have to take some chances. Surprising things may happen, especially considering the power levels the Sovereign Powers deal with. The game will go smoothly if everyone involved accepts this and is prepared for things to change rapidly into something they never expected.

It's impossible for every player to know the personal likes and dislikes of everyone else, so sooner or later, some feathers are likely to get ruffled. All players should remember that nobody sets out to offend them on purpose, and that the problem can in all likelihood be easily sorted out with a bit of mutual cooperation.

Some groups of players have adopted systems for when a player becomes uncomfortable with an IC situation. One solution is to have two "safe words". The first safe word means "I can deal with this, but please don't increase the intensity of this situation", while the other one means "Okay, please stop right now, I don't like this." Naturally, the words chosen are the type that cannot be misunderstood to be a part of normal dialogue.

This is a good practice in that it is easily remembered by all and allows a no-questions-asked escape route for those who need it — they are rarely, if ever required, but it's good to know that they're there if they are needed. Customarily no one is required to explain themselves after using a safe word. There is also the added benefit of causing minimal disruption of the game.

Note that as with the boy who cried "wolf", safe words should only be used in all seriousness, so as not to dilute their meaning. That said, no one should ever hesitate to use one if it is needed. There's no shame in not wanting to feel bad.

Regardless of the methods you decide to use, bear in mind that the characters' statistics are of secondary importance. They are certainly relevant, and should never be just picked at random, but for

the purposes of the actual scenario, the characters' goals, motivations, and personalities are far more important.

Alternative Play Preparations

You may want to skip the initial briefing entirely and simply say that the moment the players walk into the game area, they are considered to be IC. You may even decide that the moment they leave their homes, they should consider themselves IC, at least if they encounter any other players. Obviously, this means that whatever you want to tell the people about the location or the game needs to be done beforehand.

It's traditional to rent a single venue for the game — a bar, an auditorium, a club, a school, a conference area in a hotel, or perhaps someone is just lucky enough to have access to a really great and large apartment. This is a fine approach, and quite simple to deal with.

But you needn't stop there. There are other options for the more ambitious, and though they aren't simple, the results may be extremely rewarding. You can, for example, use the entire city to run your games and designate certain places hotspots of activity. For example, perhaps the HG's apartment is the apartment of a known Anchor, a player's apartment the hideout of the Power of Secrets, the local gym a hotspot of Excrucian activity. You can use real-life locations — bars, nightclubs, malls, whatever — and have players interact freely with each other, come and go as they please. You can, for example, set up different factions all over the city and let them go about their business, meeting each other by chance or by appointment. There is a great deal of unpredictability to a game like this, but you may find that surprisingly rewarding. (If you decide to do this, an easily recognizable and unique sign, like a colorful armband, is great for helping players figure out which people are PCs and which are just normal people.)

There are some practical problems brought on by the Sovereign Powers' unique abilities. It's hard to justify a twenty-minute trip from one location to another when a PC should obviously be able to cover the distance in a minute — without even using a car. Still, there are ways around this — you can always change the setting, or if you decide that the city is a Chancel, normal expectations may no longer apply.

Or, if you want to take it a bit further, you could even create a game where mortals go about their business as per normal with a few Anchors among them, and use cell phones — luckily quite abundant these days — to keep them in contact with the HG or the Nobles who claim them. Boring? Not at all, if those who play mortals are engaged in something interesting. Just sitting around and being mundane may be boring to many players, but being the equivalent of Jules and Vincent from *Pulp Fiction*, good old James Bond, or a group of mortal magicians dealing with demons is far from boring. It's all in the execution.

In fact, if you want to be really devious, you might not even want to tell all of the players that they are playing Nobilis and see what happens when (if) they realize that they are no longer in Kansas.

There are other traditional limits that you don't have to stick to. For example, there have been LARPs that have lasted for a weekend, or even a week. It may not be easy to find players who have the time for (or the interest in) a game that lasts that long, but if you can find them and want to go for it, why not?

Or you could run a game of ordinary Nobilis for a number of different groups set in the same world — possibly with conflicting interests — and when they finally meet each other, you can create one big game of Dynamic Nobilis, put all of the players together, sit back, and see what happens. This takes a lot of work, but can be a particularly satisfying experience for HGs and players alike, as there is backstory they have actually played for a number of sessions, they have become attached to the characters and their goals, and now it has led them to this, the grande finale.

These options aren't everyone's cup of tea. Many may prefer more conventional approaches, and yes, there are limits imposed by the medium and even by the nature of the game itself — some things work better in regular Nobilis than they do in Dynamic Nobilis, but don't sell yourself short. It's all right to have ambitions, and it's great to be able to fulfill them.

Chapter 6
The Dynamic Game

OPPOSITE:
The Tree of Life and Death
by Stephanie Pui-Mun Law

THE DYNAMIC MECHANIC

NOBILIS's rules rely on the HG's judgment. In a Dynamic NOBILIS game, however, players may wish to use miracles or engage in miraculous conflict without an HG on hand. Accordingly, this chapter provides a more detailed system for effect resolution, reducing the number of cases where the players *must* call on an HG. (Players do retain the option of asking an HG to resolve a question or debate.) Although some expressive power is lost in this formalization of NOBILIS miracles, HGs can use these rules in tabletop games as well.

The core of Dynamic NOBILIS is the "Triumph and Misery" game mechanic. This determines how well a character performs a given action. It takes into account the character's relevant Attribute, the number of miracle points spent on the action, and the action's difficulty. The rule itself looks very much like the miracle point cost charts seen on pages 86, 95 and 101 of NOBILIS.

DIFFICULTY AND VITAL FORCE

Miracles (and mundane actions) have **difficulty** ranked from 0 to 9. This represents how "hard" the action is to perform — roughly speaking, how much miraculous power it takes to accomplish.

For example, running down a road is difficulty 0 — any ordinary human can do it, barring a Handicap. Using a miracle of lesser preservation is difficulty 3 — it requires a significant use of Domain to accomplish it at all.

Miracles also have **vital force** equal to [the relevant attribute + miracle points spent]. This is the elemental passion that goes into the miracle — not necessarily the Noble's passion, but the ardent vitality that the *spiritus Dei* pours into it. The higher a miracle's vital force, the more sweeping its effects. Vital force is sometimes abbreviated as "force".

Characters can spend any number of miracle points on vital force. A character with Domain 2

can spend 1 MP for a Domain miracle with vital force 3 or 5 MPS for a Domain miracle with vital force 7. In order to succeed at a miracle, the character must wield force equal to or greater than the miracle's difficulty.

In this system, an action's difficulty remains the same no matter how well the PC wants to perform the action. If a character wants to run very quickly down that road, it is still a difficulty 0 action — they just use more miraculous power than the action requires.

TRIUMPH

Levels of Success

CRITERION			RESULT
Vital Force	=	Difficulty	A **simple** success
Vital Force	=	Difficulty + 1	A **normal** success
Vital Force	≥	Difficulty + 2	A **hard** success
Vital Force	≥	Difficulty + 4	A **deep** success
Vital Force	≥	Difficulty + 6	**Triumph**

With a simple success, the character achieves the intended result of the miracle, but does not necessarily get much "oomph". For example, a simple success while buying a car ensures that the character does not get ripped off. A normal success guarantees a good deal. A hard or deep success indicates that the character out-schmoozes the salesman and walks away with a legendary bargain. With a triumph, the character might persuade the dealership that providing the character with a lifetime supply of free cars will enhance the business's prestige.

The key differences between this mechanic and tabletop NOBILIS are:

- ☛ In tabletop NOBILIS, when an Aspect 4 character wishes to paint a masterpiece, or read an ordinary book in a few minutes, they use a Level 4 Aspect miracle and achieve a "very improbable" result. Here, they use a force 4 miracle against a difficulty 0 task. This gives them a deep success at the ordinary process of painting or reading, allowing them (by the rules below) to create great beauty or read at 50 x normal speed.
- ☛ Characters can spend any number of miracle points — they are not limited to spending 0, 1, 2, 4, or 8 MPS.
- ☛ Vital force ranges from 0 up, where miracle levels in NOBILIS range from 0 to 9.

MISERY

The triumph and misery rule also categorizes degrees of failure, as on the following table:

Levels of Success and Failure

CRITERION			RESULT
Vital Force	≤	Difficulty – 6	**Misery**
Vital Force	≤	Difficulty – 4	A **deep** failure
Vital Force	≤	Difficulty – 2	A **hard** failure
Vital Force	=	Difficulty – 1	A **normal** failure
Vital Force	=	Difficulty	A **simple** success
Vital Force	=	Difficulty + 1	A **normal** success
Vital Force	≥	Difficulty + 2	A **hard** success
Vital Force	≥	Difficulty + 4	A **deep** success
Vital Force	≥	Difficulty + 6	**Triumph**

With a normal failure, the character almost achieves their intended result. Hard failures, deep failures, and misery are progressively worse for the character. In some cases, failure is just failure — even if a character gets a misery result when trying to remember something, the PC won't accidentally lobotomize themselves.

In other cases, however, like tricky high-speed driving on a hairpin mountaintop curve, normal failure means that the character can't do it and has to slow down; hard failure means a minor accident; deep failure means a major accident; and misery means driving off the mountain's edge.

SHIFTS

Environmental factors can affect a character's performance. For example, muddy swamps make dancing harder; a bicycle makes locomotion easier. The Dynamic NOBILIS system expresses this concept as **shifts.**

Bad environmental factors take the form of shifts towards misery. One shift towards misery moves a character's result one step up the results chart. For example, a deep success becomes a hard success. A simple success becomes a normal failure. A deep failure becomes misery. Two shifts towards misery move a character's result two steps up the results chart — for example, a simple success becomes a hard failure. Three steps towards misery move a character's result three steps up the results chart, and so forth.

Good environmental factors take the form of shifts towards triumph. One shift towards triumph moves a character's result one step down the results chart. For example, a deep success becomes a triumph. A normal failure becomes a simple success. A deep failure becomes a hard failure. Multiple shifts towards triumph move the character's result multiple steps down the results chart.

If a character achieves a triumph or misery before any shifts of any kind, they keep it — no environmental factors can ruin such a triumph or salvage such a misery.

STANDARD SHIFTS

ENVIRONMENT

As a general rule, unsuitable conditions give one shift towards misery, as do inadequate tools on tasks that require tools.

Very unsuitable conditions give two shifts towards misery.

TALENT AND PROFESSIONALISM

A player character with solid professional competence at a given task — immense native talent; significant talent and 5 years experience; or 10 years experience — receives one shift towards triumph for mundane actions.

Characters also receive this shift towards triumph on Aspect miracles that simulate mundane actions — miracles with difficulty 0, 1, or 2. Usually, a players character's areas of professional competence are noted in their short history or on their object card.

TIME

The standard Dynamic NOBILIS time chart for actions orders time periods as follows:

Time Chart

Time measured in seconds
Time measures in minutes
Time measured in hours
Time measured in days
Time measured in weeks
Time measured in months
Time measured in years
Time measured in centuries

Characters can earn shifts towards triumph by spending extra time on the task. Look up the time the task normally requires on the chart above. Each shift *down* the time chart earns one shift towards triumph. For example, if spending five hours in a car dealership yields a simple success and a fair deal, one can devote five *years* to the project instead. This moves the action four steps down the time chart, earning four shifts towards triumph — achieving a triumph. Perhaps the dealership gladly hands over a few free cars at this point, just to have the character out of their hair.

To Master a Skill

Most characters in Dynamic NOBILIS require ten years to master a skill. This applies both to professional and life skills. For example, ten years onboard ship gives anyone one shift towards triumph on tying knots, keeping balance on deck during a storm, moving about in the rigging, and

so forth. Ten years in the corporate world gives one shift towards triumph when presenting oneself in a businesslike way. Natural talent can shave five years off that total; genius shaves off all ten.

This rule allows trained and talented humans to stand out from the crowd, and provides the primary distinction within these rules between ordinary mortals. It also differentiates between Powers with different backgrounds but identical Aspect. A Power with long experience as a politician has an advantage on social Aspect miracles with difficulty 0, 1, or 2. A Power with centuries of training as a fencer has an advantage with difficulty 0, 1, or 2 bladework.

May this understanding never fill your ears with surf.

TOOLS

Characters can earn shifts towards triumph by using tools. For example, humans drive faster than they run; clean better with modern equipment; kill more quickly with weapons; and write faster with machines. Some examples:

Using Tools Table

SHIFT TOWARD TRIUMPH	TRANSPORTATION	WEAPONS	MISCELLANEOUS
1 shift	Bicycle	Blades	Feather duster
2 shifts	Moped	Guns	Typewriter
3 shifts	Automobile	Machine guns	Vacuumcleaner
	Motorcycle	Hand grenades	Word processor
4 shifts	Airplane	Tank shell	Staff of fifty maids
5 shifts	Teleporter	Nuclear explosion	A.I. writing assistant

WORKING IN HORDES

Mortals can work with mortals, and Nobles with Nobles, to accomplish wonders that individuals cannot achieve alone. As long as everyone who participates in a miracle or mundane action has something significant to contribute to the given project, the whole project can achieve shifts towards triumph. When Nobles co-operate, each participant must use a miracle of the same or greater vital force than the project leader. When mortals co-operate, each naturally uses a mundane action.

Each step down the Dynamic NOBILIS hordes chart on the next page gives the project leader one shift towards triumph on the project as a whole.

Using a miracle against a number of individuals is often harder than using a miracle against just one. Each step down the hordes chart, in this case, gives one shift towards misery.

Nondiscriminatory area-effect miracles — filling everyone in a region with good cheer or strafing a room with automatic weapons fire — do not incur these shifts.

"How can a perfect Creator create an imperfect universe?"
"Usually, it involves accepting a handicap."
—from ADMINISTRATIVIA, by Michael Kay

"It does get easier," Raphael said, "to do God's work."
"To forgive yourself afterwards?"
"No," Raphael admitted. "Not forgiving yourself. Just the, you know, the God's work part."
—from GENESIS, by Keiko Takemori

"You have sought to freeze the clock," said Emmeline. "To fight the march of history. To mire my people forever in the dark ages. How can you claim to be humanity's servant?"
"The Light keeps humanity alive," answered Devotion, "and in so doing became responsible for its actions. For every crime, every monstrosity, every horror of human making. Is it any wonder that we seek to keep you leashed?"
—from DEVOTION, by Melanie Tumbarius

Hordes Chart		
SHIFTS TO TRIUMPH OR MISERY	NUMBER OF MORTALS	NUMBER OF NOBLES
0	1	1
1	5	2
2	50	3
3	500	4
4	A nation	5+

The Nobilis of a Chancel often co-operate on a single Realm miracle. A large Familia working in concert can quickly reshape their world — five Nobles, each employing a force 4 miracle, can work a major change upon their Chancel.

Imperators, Excrucians, and other miraculous or semi-miraculous beings use the third (Noble) column of the table above. Most Cammorans, Anchors, Mystery Cultists, nature spirits, and mythical creatures use the second (mortal) column.

Rules for Miraculous Conflict

Miraculous conflict functions as in tabletop Nobilis. Characters name their actions in order; each set of actions forms one **round** of actions. This goes in alphabetical order by the name of the character's Estate. (Hollyhock Gods decide when non-player characters act in this sequence.) Each action consists of a mundane action, a miracle, or one of each.

Characters can sustain miracles, as in tabletop Nobilis. A miracle that takes a long time to complete gains the normal shifts towards triumph from extra time; a miracle that enhances the character's abilities can be sustained indefinitely. Some Gifts are also sustained effects. Sustaining a Gift effect does not hinder the character. While sustaining an attribute-based miracle, however, a Noble cannot spend miracle points on anything else.

A character can interfere with or oppose another character's action — whether a new action or a continued use of a sustained miracle — until a full round of actions goes by. At that point, the miracle has either succeeded or been successfully opposed; either way, no one can interrupt its use. Afterwards, characters can still oppose the effects of the miracle. For example, if a character tries to sway an audience with a well-chosen rallying cry and an Aspect miracle, other characters have one full round of actions in which they can stop him by deafening the crowd. After that round, the audience is in the rallying character's pocket — deafening the crowd won't help, but an opposing use of demagoguery might.

No one remembers their names, but we call them Magister and Minister — the great and the small, the one who gives and the one who takes. One a creator; one a destroyer. They refused to set aside their personal war when Lord Entropy came to power, and he made an example of them. Now Magister hangs above the world, endlessly spitting out the clouds, and Minister hangs above the world, endlessly swallowing them; and the only way that either will ever regain an identity, or a name, or cease their endless task is to find and kill the other. They will never do so: for Lord Entropy has affixed them back to back.
—from Legends of the Nobilis, by Luc Ginneis

"May the strongest man win."
    Theseus peered at Hercules. "I'm pretty sure that's not how the saying goes."
—from Greek Tragedy, by Keiko Takemori

Contests

When a character seeks to interfere with or oppose another character's action, this begins a **contest**. The miracles square off against one another. Accordingly, the newer miracle has difficulty equal to the higher of its natural difficulty and the old miracle's vital force.

For example, suppose that Niobe uses a force 4 Aspect miracle to chase Isabel, Power of Roads, down a long and winding road. Isabel might counter with a Lesser Preservation on the road specifically to prevent Niobe from catching up. Lesser Preservation miracles normally have difficulty 3. In this case, however, because she opposes Niobe's miracle, Isabel's miracle has difficulty 4. If Niobe used a mere Aspect 2 to chase Isabel, then it would not affect the difficulty of the Lesser Preservation — it would remain 3.

The new miracle receives as many shifts towards triumph as the base miracle received shifts towards misery, and vice versa. Thus, if Niobe received a shift towards triumph from a tailwind, Isabel would receive a shift towards misery.

Combat Rules

The maximum damage done by a success on an attack observes the following chart:

Attacking Chart	
ATTACKING SUCCESS	MAXIMUM DAMAGE DONE
Simple	Battering and bruising; no significant damage
Normal	1 Surface Wound
Hard	1 Serious Wound
Deep	1 Deadly Wound
Triumph	2 Deadly Wounds; kills or knocks out a mortal instantly

Combat observes the normal rules — one cannot lose a Serious wound level while one still has Deadly wound levels remaining. One cannot lose a Surface wound level while one has Serious or Deadly wound levels remaining. A Deadly wound becomes a Serious wound if the victim has no Deadly wound levels left; a Deadly or Serious wound becomes a Surface wound if the victim has no Serious wound levels left.

For example, a player character with a Deadly wound level takes no damage from a simple, normal, or hard success on an attack. A PC with three Surface wound levels remaining (and nothing else) loses two of them when their attacker achieves a triumph.

Achieving a deep success or triumph on an attack may seem difficult. Remember, however, that weapons give attackers shifts towards triumph.

Characters can reduce the damage they take by **dodging** or countering the attack. This uses the contest rules.

Dodging Table

DODGING SUCCESS	MAXIMUM DAMAGE DONE
Simple	Battering and bruising; no significant damage
Normal	1 Surface Wound
Hard	1 Serious Wound
Deep	1 Deadly Wound
Misery	2 Deadly Wounds; kills or knocks out a mortal immediately

Naturally, defensive actions cannot increase the damage that the character takes. Nobilis sometimes bumble strategically, but never on a miracle-by-miracle basis.

A single miracle can often serve as both an attack and a defense. A miracle that attacks multiple victims, however, suffers the normal shifts towards misery.

Wounds heal as per NOBILIS, save for Immortal characters. For consistency with the Dynamic NOBILIS rules on major preservations, Immortals heal lost Deadly wound levels in one hour, lost Serious wound levels in one minute, and lost Surface wound levels in one second each.

AN EXAMPLE COMBAT CONTEST

Niobe shoots at Isabel, Power of Roads. She uses Aspect 4 and 2 MPs for a triumph. She receives two shifts towards triumph from her weapon (a gun), although she doesn't need them yet. If Isabel ignores the attack, Niobe receives a triumph.

Isabel uses a Lesser Destruction miracle to erase the straight path on which the bullet travels. Because this is a contest, the difficulty of this miracle is 6, not 5 — six being the vital force of Niobe's miracle. Isabel uses vital force 6 for a simple success, with two shifts towards misery from Niobe's weapon — resulting in a hard failure. Instead of trimming off Isabel's two highest wound levels, the bullet wavers off course and does at most a Serious wound.

If Isabel has a Deadly wound level remaining, this attack does not damage her at all — her vitality transcends the lethality of the bullet. This probably translates into physical events as the bullet grazing her side.

AUTOMATIC ACTIONS

Certain Gifts and miracles take effect automatically when some other action triggers them. The triggering effect is part of the definition of the Gift or miracle. The Gift or miracle takes effect at the same time as the trigger, and can be opposed until one full round of actions has elapsed.

MUNDANE ACTIONS

Mundane actions have a default vital force of 0. However, mundane actions have two disadvantages relative to force 0 miracles:

- Even when a mundane action yields a success, an HG on hand can rule that the action fails. People, even Nobilis, screw up mundane actions sometimes.
- When directly opposing a miracle, a mundane action has a default vital force of −1. Miracles are just plain more real.

DYNAMIC ASPECT

ASPECT CONTESTS

Aspect governs feats of the body and mind, extensions of normal human abilities. Characters with high Aspect are "improved humans" — anything that normal people can do, they do infinitely better. Aspect includes but is not limited to the abilities specifically described below: charm, combat, intellect, mobility, physical ability, and sensory acuity.

In general, victory in an Aspect contest has one of three outcomes:

- The loser cannot oppose the victor in some manner.
- The loser suffers damage.
- The loser suffers one shift towards misery for some set of relevant miracles (two shifts, for a success or failure at the hard level or higher).

Most physical and intellectual contests have the first outcome. When two characters race, the slower character cannot interpose themselves physically between the faster character and the finish line — not without cheating with Domain, Realm, or a Gift. When one character out-generals another, the other character cannot win the war without invoking other attributes.

Most combat contests have the second outcome. When one PC hits another, they suffer damage.

Most other Aspect contests have the third outcome. For example, when one character cannot sense another character — a contest between Aspect senses and either Aspect-based stealth or a concealment miracle — it penalizes the loser one or two shifts towards misery on all attempts to affect the winner with targeted miracles. Of course, miracles affecting half a room may have a better chance.

Mutt the Piebald and Philip Jenner used to fight because they loved the same woman. They can admit that now. She's dead.

I don't know why they still fight, though. Not for sure. They're covered in scars. Mutt's half-blind. Philip's missing one and a half ears. It doesn't make Mutt any uglier, but Philip rather suffered for it.

I think that they use their war to keep reality out. It's something pure and wild. It keeps them alive.
—*from the memoirs of Alice Mendel, Lady of the Thunder*

It was a very quiet war. With nothing more than a tilt of her head, a look in her eyes, a shift of her foot, she made herself desirable. He was a Power: she could force nothing from him. But this was not a war about force. With nothing more than a twist of one hand, a narrowing of the eyes, a twitch of his mouth, he fought back. He was not interested, his body language said. No, more. She was loathsome in his eyes.

It had taken me many years to learn to see these battles for what they were. Now, to my eyes, it was as clear as any physical war. Her allure was like the wind: a monstrous, terrible pressure. His revulsion — feigned or not — was like the fist of God.

Miracles would not decide this war. But shortly, one of them would crack.
—*from the Thought-Record of Oriane Feroulet*

The Chancel of Dorian Griffith has a sea of parts — living parts — ears, eyes, arms, legs, feet, hands, even a few unmentionable organs. When Dorian is hurt, the sea roils; the parts perk up. Listening to the sound of some hidden song, they sort the best part from the vasty sea and cast it out across the world to replace the wounded segment of his flesh.
—*from A TOURIST'S GUIDE TO CREATION, by Jasprite Sherrard*

Aspect Difficulties

In many cases, a Hollyhock God provides the difficulty for an Aspect miracle. For example, if an HG anticipates someone trying to climb a wall, they can write the difficulty on the object card (or initial the difficulty provided by someone else's card.) If an HG is on scene, they can also rule on a given Aspect miracle's difficulty.

Since it can be hard to decide the precise level of a given Aspect miracle without an HG on hand to provide consistent rulings, Dynamic 𝒩obilis simplifies this process.

- Difficulty 0 tasks require **Laity** competence. A layperson or a low-level professional can accomplish these tasks.
- Difficulty 1 tasks require **Professional** competence. A highly trained professional or naturally gifted savant can perform such tasks.
- Difficulty 2 tasks require **Legendary** competence. These include the things you find legendary human heroes doing. Odysseus, Sherlock Holmes, John Henry, William Tell, and Robin Hood had legendary competence in their respective specialties.
- Difficulty 3 tasks require **Improbable** competence. These include all manner of improbable feats — things clearly beyond human capacity, but within the abilities of machines, organizations, or humans supported by machines and organizations.
- Difficulty 7 tasks require **Impossible** competence. These are things that just can't be done without miracles, but that logically extrapolate human abilities into the realm of the impossible.

Aspect miracles can have other difficulties. An HG, object card, or room consensus can pinpoint a difficulty at 4, 5, 6, 8, or 9, using the miracle difficulties on 𝒩obilis, pp. 87-89. However, this is not normally necessary. Remember, in this system, the difficulty is the vital force needed to perform the task at all — performing it well depends on high levels of success. A force 4 Aspect miracle can achieve a normal success on a difficulty 3 task — a significantly better result than a simple success on that task. This generally replaces the need for the Very Improbable miracle difficulty level.

Formally, high levels of success on an Aspect miracle improve it in up to four ways (as the player chooses). These are beauty, completeness, economy, and speed.

Beauty

Characters of high Aspect can act with particular elegance, when they choose to. A simple success produces a workmanlike result. With a normal success, the character can execute their action with elegance and grace. (At this level, a "painting" becomes an artwork.) With a hard success, the character achieves legendary grace and beauty. A deep success outshines the most elegant human works. A triumph produces beauty outstanding even on the Noble scale.

Characters who choose to create beauty in their actions receive at most one shift towards triumph from extra time and extra people combined. In other words, fifty humans spending three months on a painting do not automatically create works that put the Mona Lisa to shame.

Some examples of using beauty in Aspect:

- Dressing and coiffing before festivities, for optimal presentation therein.
- Gunfighting with grace reminiscent of a dance and moves reminiscent of an action movie.
- Creating a particularly elegant mathematical proof.
- Charming someone during a persuasion or seduction attempt.
- Chanting a somber summoning ritual in a way that lightens the sacrifice victim's heart.

PLAYING IT OUT

To use this ability during a transient action, such as a dance or a speech, simply note ooc that you are acting with beauty. To create an artwork, describe the general theme of the artwork and the level of your success on an object card or a large sheet of paper. Have an HG initial the work when convenient, particularly if you spent miracle points or received a shift towards triumph. Between game sessions, you can — if you wish — replace "paintings" with prints of famous works, "sheet music" with printed or printed-out sheet music, and so forth.

Completeness

Characters of high Aspect can perform tasks more thoroughly. The effects of their actions resist the effects of entropy and decay. Such characters build bridges that stand through the centuries, make repairs that last for years, and easily make friendships that last for a lifetime. With a simple success, the character completes the task in a typical lay fashion. With a normal success, the natural lifespan of the miracle's effects moves one step down the time chart. A bridge that would last years if built by an amateur instead lasts decades. With a hard success, the lifespan of the miracle's effects moves two steps down the time chart; with a deep success, three; with a triumph, the effects endure indefinitely.

For example, an off-the-cuff riddle created with a simple success might take an experienced mind a few minutes to answer. With a deep success, the riddle would take weeks to solve. With a triumph, it might remain unanswered centuries later.

Some examples of using completeness in Aspect:

- Building a wall without crack or flaw.
- Writing a novel without any "wasted" words.
- Programming bug-free software.

PLAYING IT OUT

When creating or modifying an object card, note the time of the miracle, the miracle level used to create it, and — when using Completeness — the expected lifespan of the miracle's effects. This is the time until a repaired TV breaks down again, a pacified populace grows restless again, a building begins to crumble, a philosophy becomes outdated, or the miracle otherwise "runs out". Have an HG initial this when convenient.

ECONOMY

Characters of high Aspect can accomplish the same work more cheaply — spending less money, fewer resources, and fewer human lives. With a simple success on some resource-spending task, the character spends perhaps 150 per cent what a professional would; with a normal success, they manage their resources with professional care; with a hard success, they spend around 50 per cent what a professional would; with a deep success, around 25 per cent; and with a triumph, their success costs them almost nothing at all.

Economy allows characters of high Aspect to use miracles that affect a large area — and everyone within it — while minimizing the incidental damage.

Like other area-effect miracles, this ignores the hordes chart (see page 46) and the associated shifts towards misery.

Some examples of using economy in Aspect are as follows:

- Producing a quality magazine cheaply.
- Winning a war (as a general) with minimum losses.
- Winning at checkers with minimum losses.
- Driving across the country with the minimum use of gasoline.
- Playing a flamethrower across a crowd, burning all your enemies but as few innocents as possible.

PLAYING IT OUT

Room consensus or HG decision determines what the "default" cost of success is. Use more or fewer resources as appropriate.

SPEED

With a simple success on an Aspect miracle requiring speed or efficiency, the Power performs that miracle at the traditional speed — or the necessary speed, if the action is in no way traditional. With a normal or hard success, the Power can perform it up to 5 x faster, at their choice. With a deep success, the Power can perform it up to 50 x faster; with a Triumph, up to 500 x faster.

Some examples of using speed in Aspect:

- Running inhumanly fast.
- Crossing distance quickly by other means (jumping, swimming).
- Cleaning a house swiftly.
- Solving a mathematical problem almost instantly.
- Carving a marble sculpture in minutes.

PLAYING IT OUT

Room consensus or HG decision determines the "default" speed of a miracle, be it cleaning or sculpting. Traveling is as per Mobility on page 51.

Failing to Kill the Demon Rogo-tumu

The sea suggests that questing after the impossible teaches a moral lesson; or, at least, the people of Minarii believe that they can find wisdom therein. If an amateur search for enlightenment costs thirty lives and thirty days but successfully reaps some small harvest of perspective, it qualifies as a simple success. A professional, with one shift towards triumph, can perform this quest faster and with less waste — spending only six days, and losing only twenty lives. This accords with the quest of Obuarei in the Sutra of Questions. A Power, then, could achieve a hard success, losing ten lives in six days; a deep success, losing five lives in about fourteen hours; or a triumph, learning everything there is to learn from the quest in seventeen minutes and suffering only a few bumps and bruises along the way. This assumes that the player wishes to take full advantage of the Speed and Economy rules. It also assumes that any nearby Hollyhock Gods allow the literal application of these rules.

May this understanding never wake a wave within your heart.

CHARM

Aspect governs all forms of persuasion — seduction, intimidation, manipulation, argument, bribery, and leadership. It also governs "appearing" to have whatever traits the character would like to project: charm, affability, regality, or brutality, among others.

Invoking Laity charm (difficulty 0) allows the character to use persuasive techniques on anyone amenable to persuasion. This includes bribing guards who expect bribes, intimidating the

"Ten coins for the lot," the merchant said.

"Too much."

"Five."

"Too much."

"One?" The merchant shifted from foot to foot. "None?"

Magnus smiled. "It is my understanding," he said, "that on this day, the thirtieth anniversary of your birth, you may refuse no fair deal that I offer, once the bargaining begins. That is the custom of this land."

"It is a formality," the merchant said.

"Sir," Magnus answered, "do not suggest prices; I shall be dictating the terms."

"Your bargaining strategy," groused the merchant, "is not sporting at all."

—from TOO MUCH ATTENTION TO CAMELS, *by Martin Elliott*

cowardly, and seducing the lustful. Putting the character's best foot forward in standard contexts, using clothing, ornamentation, and manner, is also difficulty 0.

Invoking Professional charm (difficulty 1) gives the character the abilities of the best mortal marketers and politicians. They can automatically persuade any mortal neither especially susceptible nor especially resistant. For example, the character can bribe a guard without strong moral character or sell a house to someone potentially interested. Professional charm also allows the character to put their best foot forward in unusual contexts. They can turn heads at a rave, cult, or in an aboriginal tribe as easily as on their home city's streets.

Invoking Legendary charm (difficulty 2) mimics the abilities of legendary silver-tongued tricksters. It allows the character to manipulate or change the mind of any mortal without exceptional willpower or a strong vested interest. It also allows the character to present themselves well in extremely unusual garb or manner — a cape and tricorn hat in the boardroom, for example.

Invoking Improbable charm (difficulty 3) lets the character persuade any mortal of anything that mortal can be persuaded. Improbable charm does not suffice to turn a corrupt politician into a saint, but it can change their vote — even at the cost of their personal prestige. It also allows the character to present themselves well regardless of their garb, hygiene, or lack thereof.

Invoking Impossible charm (difficulty 7) allows the character to persuade any mortal of anything at all. Moreover, it allows the most horrible monsters to mingle incognito with humans — or, if not completely incognito, as the toast of the party. Sheer body language and attitude makes the bizarre acceptable and praiseworthy.

PLAYING IT OUT

If an HG or player controls a given mortal or mortal group, they decide the difficulty of charming, intimidating, seducing, manipulating, or persuading them. The free will of NPCs and organizations represented by object cards depends on region consensus, unless the card gives an explicit indication of the proper difficulty. Using charm on Powers, or adjusting one's self-presentation, requires only that the PC notify those they interact with. Since no one has to respond to a well-presented character, and since Powers are immune to the direct effects of miracles (including Aspect miracles involving charm), no formal resolution is needed.

COMBAT

Most forms of physical combat fall under Aspect. A character can simultaneously attack and defend with a single Aspect miracle; the defense remains active until their next action. Attacking multiple characters yields the normal shifts towards misery. Attacking another character is invariably a contest. See the rules on combat contests on page 46.

INTELLECT

Aspect governs the formal use of intellect. A player cannot use Aspect-enhanced brainpower to make their in-character actions smarter than they actually are — this would interfere with the flow of the game. Thus, general planning, conversational brilliance, and flashes of insight do not fall under Aspect. However, Aspect enhances scientific and artistic work, memory, data analysis, formal problem solving, and military strategy — intellectual matters resolved by out-of-character discussion or through comparison of miracles.

Invoking Laity intellect (difficulty 0) allows characters everyday uses of intellect, memory, and creativity — anything an average person can expect to accomplish.

Invoking Professional intellect (difficulty 1) allows intellectual feats typical of high-end professionals and natural savants. The character can match or exceed the capabilities of professional and top-flight scientists, engineers, accountants, artists, geniuses, lawyers, doctors, and other specialists in intellectual fields.

Invoking Legendary intellect (difficulty 2) permits feats of understanding appropriate for legendary minds — Odysseus, da Vinci, Einstein, Sherlock Holmes, and so forth.

Invoking Improbable brainpower (difficulty 3) gives the character access to computational and organizational abilities rivaling those of mainframe computers. Their problem-solving abilities and memories are comparably advanced.

Invoking Impossible brainpower (difficulty 7) allows the character to compute the incomputable, solve the unsolvable, and understand the incomprehensible.

PLAYING IT OUT

Normally, a character can produce intellectual, technological, and artistic product on their own, simply by filling out an object card. If the product is going to play a significant role in the game, the player should have a short OOC scene with an HG to record MPs spent on the product and verify that they've chosen the right difficulty and time. The HG then initials the object card. Contests of intellect can occur during games of strategy, military battles, political campaigns, and when solving conundrums created by another character.

Determine the miracle level and normal time requirement for data analysis and similar mental

tasks by room consensus or HG decision. Ideally, someone who knows the probable results of such data analysis should be in the room. To use a Power's enhanced memory, the player should ask an HG or some other player present at the scene to remind them of events.

MOBILITY

Aspect governs all forms of human locomotion: running, swimming, climbing, jumping, and piloting a vehicle. For the most part, Aspect-based movement boils down to contests and difficulty 0 miracles, with high levels of success adding extra grace and speed to the human default. Note that most vehicles have upper limits on their speed — a high-Aspect character with a few miracle points to spend is often better off on foot than in a car.

Invoking Laity mobility (difficulty 0) permits normal human movement under reasonably common conditions. With such a miracle, a Power can reasonably drive a car through a storm or run on a gravel road.

Invoking Professional mobility (difficulty 1) lets a character pilot vehicles that require extensive experience, such as high-end military aircraft. It also allows successful movement in extreme conditions — climbing a sheer rock face, swimming in a storm-tossed sea, and so forth.

Invoking Legendary mobility (difficulty 2) permits successful movement in deadly conditions, as when a Power drives through a hurricane or climbs an iced-over rock face.

Invoking Improbable mobility (difficulty 3) allows eccentric forms of movement, such as running along fencetops, on the heads of a crowd, or up a wall. Other examples include surfing on a hurricane and jumping across chasms.

Invoking Impossible mobility (difficulty 7) permits forms of movement that exceed the bounds of improbability: leaping between continents, running on streams of bullets, and climbing threads.

PLAYING IT OUT

When moving within a region, if one character moves significantly faster than the others, the other players should wait while the player moves to their character's new position. When moving between regions, the same rule applies until the player has left. The other people in the room should then wait an appropriate length of time — a few seconds to a few minutes, depending on how quickly their characters react — before leaving the room for any IC reason. While the character moves between regions at an abnormal speed, the player should hold out one hand to indicate that their PC is moving quickly. When the player must pass through regions the character does not — as when the character flies

through a high window, but the player must use the stairs — they should hold both hands out, indicating, "I'm not here."

SENSORY ACUITY

Aspect governs the use of the five senses. It can contest against miracles of stealth, imperceptibility, and concealment, and allows characters to notice details about their environment.

Invoking the Laity level of sensory acuity (difficulty 0) gives the character human senses on the acute side of average.

Professional sensory acuity (difficulty 1) gives the character trained senses, as those of a soldier or hunter. The character can sense subtle details of the world around them.

Legendary sensory acuity (difficulty 2) gives the character full use of their senses. Their eyes can measure distances and colors exactly, their ears can distinguish the finest details of the human voice, and their general perception is enhanced. Their sensorium remains essentially human, but the character can analyze incoming data much more efficiently.

Improbable sensory acuity (difficulty 3) gives the characters senses better than those found in the animal world. They can track by scent, see farther than a hawk, and sense the warmth of someone entering the room.

Impossible sensory acuity (difficulty 7) allows the character to perform incredible tricks with their five senses. They can hear and pinpoint a single voice within a city as large as New York. They can make out details of the moon's surface from Earth with the naked eye.

PLAYING IT OUT

When studying a PC or their object cards with a sensory miracle, simply asking the other player what the character discovers works best. Some object cards might have notes on what a high-level Aspect miracle can discover. In other cases, the player must seek out an HG if they wish to perceive something unobvious.

PHYSICAL ABILITY

Aspect governs strength, agility, dexterity, and accuracy. The body of a high-Aspect character is a finely tuned instrument.

The Laity level of physical ability (difficulty 0) includes feats of strength and precision within a normal human's reach.

Professional physical ability (difficulty 1) allows feats typical of high-end athletes.

Legendary physical ability (difficulty 2) gives strength, agility, and precision commensurate with those of fictional heroes. The PC's abilities rank

"Love has been here," Raüli the ogre said. "I can smell it."

"Sharp senses," I said. "Dull brain. You ask the Locust Court to use your nose for evidence, they probably cut it off."

"But the Court belongs to the master!" Raüli whined. "It's safe."

I took a deep breath and counted to three. "Raüli. Think about what you just said."

—from the Thought-Record of Hugh Rosewood

The Keep of Lady Mugain floats serenely above the ocean on a stone as sharp as a razor's edge. For many years, she thought herself safe from intrusion; then a Power swam out through the eel-infested waters and yoked himself to an even hundred flying fish. When the Lady grew hungry, she whispered to the waters; and impelled by her will, the fish leapt into the sky; and the Power landed neatly at her Chancel's edge, nary the worse for wear. This he did not for power nor for gain, but because it is said that Mugain is more beautiful than the sun.

—from LEGENDS OF THE NOBILIS, by Luc Ginneis

The winner of the Games at Locus Qamamir has the opportunity to feast on the loser's heart. Despite this potent incentive, the mortal team has not yet won, in the two hundred and ninety-three years of the Chancel's existence. It is worth watching the smooth, practised play of the exemplar Texcoyo, but visitors expecting a sporting event will be sorely disappointed.

—from A TOURIST'S GUIDE TO CREATION, by Jasprite Sherrard

divination to measure the health of a bear or determine what its last meal consisted of.

Major Divinations
Difficulty 5
Major divinations answer a question regarding anything the user's Estate may have witnessed. For example, the Power of Bears can use a major divination to discover any truth that bears have ever witnessed or known. Note that, since Powers are immune to direct miracles, a major divination can only detect a blank spot where a Power (or Imperator, or Excrucian, or Anchor) stood. Nor can it give details of their actions or words.

Contests
Divination miracles and miracles that obscure the truth can oppose one another, assuming both miracles apply to the situation at hand.

Duration
Divinations are instantaneous.

PLAYING IT OUT
The player must ask either the owner of an object or an HG for the answer to their question. In some cases, the character can receive one shift towards triumph on future interactions with that object — detecting a flaw in armor, or locating handholds on a hard-to-climb wall.

Preservation Miracles

Lesser Preservations
Difficulty 3
Miracles of lesser preservation protect objects of the character's Estate.

This takes three forms:

- **Immunity.** An object protected against a very specific fate — handgun damage, starvation, or drowning in water — becomes immune to that fate. Lesser preservation miracles cannot give immunity to weapons giving three or more shifts towards triumph, nor to similarly deadly, absolute, or invasive fates.
- **Shifts.** Protecting an object against a general class of effects gives or cancels one shift towards misery in appropriate circumstances. On a hard success or better, it gives or cancels two shifts. For example, someone trying to damage a house warded against damage suffers one or two shifts towards misery. Preserving one's eyesight cancels one or two

shifts towards misery from darkness or confusing lighting conditions.
- **Duration.** Lesser preservation miracles can move an effect or object's lifespan one step down the time chart — two steps on a hard success or better. They can move an object's natural healing rate one step up the time chart — again, two steps on a hard success or better.

Some common miracle types follow.

Lesser preservation can **ward** an object of the character's Estate. This makes the object resist damage and disorder. Future attempts to damage that object or induce disorder or decay suffer one shift towards misery. The object also heals one step faster on the time chart. With a hard success or better on the warding miracle, attempts to damage the object suffer two shifts towards misery. The object heals two steps faster on the time chart.

For example, Robert Baxt protects Big Ben with a warding miracle. His vital force totals 3, so he achieves a simple success. Later, Oresha attempts to blow up Big Ben, achieving a hard success. This suffers one shift towards misery, becoming a normal success — enough to do noticeable damage, but not enough to take the clock tower down. Big Ben does not heal naturally, and therefore receives no benefit from a ward's healing properties.

Lesser preservation can **protect** something of the character's Estate from a specific condition. For example, the Power of Warriors can protect a soldier against hunger. The Power of Guns can protect a gun against inclement weather. If the condition is very specific, and a relatively minor threat, this gives complete protection. Otherwise, it cancels one shift towards misery that that condition inflicts. On a hard success or better on the lesser preservation miracle, protection cancels up to two shifts towards misery that the condition inflicts.

For example, the Power of Sight protects their own vision against darkness. This is a lesser preservation, so they cannot see in absolute darkness, but in conditions of low or negligible lighting, they suffer no penalty at all. The Power also protects their vision against any other form of degradation, achieving a hard success. Trying to read through a blindfold, they would normally suffer three shifts towards failure. Now, they suffer only one.

Lesser preservation can give an object of the character's Estate more **endurance**. A simple or normal success on an endurance miracle moves the object's natural lifespan one step down the time chart. A hard success or better moves its lifespan two steps down the time chart.

For example, Alekti uses an endurance miracle on June 23, achieving a simple success. June 23 would

He knelt, waiting for his death.

"You have thirty-two venial sins and two mortal sins on your soul," said the priest. "If you like, you may confess."

"I do not believe in God," said the condemned.

The headsman turned from his survey of the crowd. "I share your inconviction," he murmured, "but confession does no harm."

"Thirty-two and two," the condemned man said, and hesitated. "Exactly?"
—from A Society of Shadows, by Keiko Takemori

It was a good loophole, Andrew thought. A fine loophole. The terms of the footrace in no way forbade him to bring a car; and for the prize — immortality — he was more than willing to bend the rules.

An hour passed.

It was a bad loophole, Andrew thought. A terrible loophole. The terms of the race in no way forbade Jeremy Evans to bring a plane.
—from Spurs, by Eleanor K.

It was a very small wall — perhaps one foot in height — but none of the Domicelli could breach it. It was funny, at first, watching them try, continually failing to vault this trivial obstacle. Then it became irritating.

I twitched my sight into the Mythic World and focused in on the spirit of the wall. It lay indolently upon the ground, clad in gleaming armor.

My hands closed about its neck. The metal of its gorget began, very slowly, to buckle.
—from the Thought-Record of Hugh Rosewood

normally last exactly one day. Now, it will last a week.

Finally, lesser preservation can give an object of the character's Estate more **vigor**. A simple or normal success on a miracle of vigor protects the object from being overcome in some manner. For example, the Power of Warriors can protect a soldier from defeat. Attempts to overcome the miracle's subject in the specified way suffer one shift towards misery. After a hard success on a miracle of vigor, attempts to overcome the object in the specified way suffer two shifts towards misery.

For example, the Power of Mountains uses a miracle of vigor on Coyote Hill, achieving a hard success. Future attempts to climb Coyote Hill suffer two shifts towards failure. The mass of Coyote Hill is not a problem, since it is within a single region and its climbability is a non-physical property.

MAJOR PRESERVATIONS
Difficulty 6

Miracles of major preservation also protect objects of the character's Estate. In general, this protection gives or cancels three shifts towards misery. On a hard success, these miracles inflict or alleviate four shifts towards misery, instead; on a deep success, four; on a triumph, six.

Similarly, miracles of major preservation can move an effect or object's lifespan three steps down the time chart, or speed its healing rate by three steps. On a hard success, healing rate or effect duration move four steps up or down the time chart; on a deep success, five steps; on a triumph, six.

Miracles of major preservation can give immunity to any sufficiently specific fate, however deadly. Miracles of major preservation can ward or protect objects of the character's Estate. They can give such objects more endurance or vigor. Except for the increases in potence described above, these function as per the equivalent lesser preservation abilities.

For example, Alekti uses a force 8 endurance miracle on June 23, achieving a hard success. June 23 would normally last exactly one day. Now, it moves four steps down the time chart — it will last exactly one decade.

CONTESTS

Preservation miracles can directly oppose attempts to:

- Destroy an object of the character's Estate.
- Damage an object of the character's Estate.
- Weaken the structure of an object of the character's Estate.
- Decay an object of the character's Estate.
- Otherwise harm an object of the character's Estate.

Conversely, the only miracles that can oppose a miracle of preservation are those that seek to remove or undermine the target's protection or structure. In this, preservation is like a fencer's defense — improving the defense can protect the fencer from a wound, but wounding the fencer does not necessarily degrade their defense.

DURATION

Preservation miracles last until:

- Another miracle specifically removes the protection from the object.
- Some condition specified in the miracle occurs.
- The Power revokes the miracle.

PLAYING IT OUT

When enhancing an object, mortal, or oneself with a miracle of preservation, record the effect on the object card or character sheet. When increasing the endurance or vigor of a local condition — humidity or cleanliness — record it on the region notes board. When using these miracles on a global condition (7 o'clock), notify an HG. The HG should spread this information to other players using lazy notification.

CREATION MIRACLES

LESSER CREATIONS
Difficulty 4

Miracles of lesser creation create the things of the character's Estate. With a simple or normal success, these miracles create a relatively ordinary instance of the Estate; with a hard success, they create a large or exemplary instance of the Estate. In some cases, the Power can wield their creation like a tool or weapon — striking down opponents with lightning or throwing up walls in the path of gunfire. Some common miracle types follow.

Lesser creation can **manifest** some aspect of the PC's Estate. The Power's creation can appear immediately or slowly and "naturally", as the PC desires. On a simple or normal success, a manifestation creates something small and unremarkable from the PC's Estate. The Power of Trees can create a copse of fir trees from nowhere. Its sudden appearance might provoke comment, but the copse itself does not. On a hard success, the manifestation creates something of abnormal quality — an unusually large storm, an unusually accurate book of occult lore, or a tool that gives one extra shift towards triumph or misery (as appropriate). Deep successes and triumphs have no additional effect.

For example, Anise, Power of Magnetism, creates an attractive force between an enemy's shoes. He achieves a simple success. The attractive field

has strength proportional to standard industrial magnets.

Lesser Creation can also **partially manifest** some aspect of the character's Estate. This functions exactly as a manifestation miracle, but only some of the object's properties actually appear. For example, the Power of Trees could create an intangible or invisible tree — "leaving out" the tree's solidity or visibility.

For example, Oresha, Domina of the Second Age, revives a single property of the Second Age. Within one region, lithosonic devices — simple stone devices capable of recording music, part of a destroyed Estate — function once again. Since it's not clear when this effect naturally expires, such effects fade at a rate that Oresha's player and the HGs agree on during character generation.

Powers can **wield** miracles of creation. This allows them to use Domain directly as a weapon, defense, or counter-miracle, depending on the naure of Estate. If the Power of Peace calms a mortal's heart, the Power of Anger can oppose that miracle with a lesser creation of anger. The Power of Motion can cause a bookshelf to fall naturally onto an enemy.

Although wielding an Estate is a single miracle, and the Power spends miracle points only once, treat it as two miracles of identical vital force — one to create the effect, and one to wield the creation. Both have the same difficulty. If the first miracle succeeds, the second can receive shifts towards triumph from the lethality or effectiveness of the PC's Estate.

For example, the Power of Fire attempts to surround another Power with a force 5 lesser creation of flame, and achieves a normal success. This kind of success allows for the creation of a rather ordinary fire. Attacking with fire, part of the same action, gives two shifts towards triumph from fire's natural lethality — for a deep success and a Deadly wound.

Major Creations
Difficulty 7

Miracles of major creation construct more significant instances of the character's Estate. With a simple or normal success, they create the equivalent of the "best" (most potent or marvelous) existing examples of the character's Estate. With a hard success, deep success, or triumph, they create something more incredible yet. Miracles of major creation include more advanced versions of the manifestation and partial manifestation miracles of lesser creation. Powers can wield these miracles.

For example, the Power of Disease could assault another Power with a major creation of a viral cloud in their vicinity, achieving a simple success. The lethality of the disease — up there with the worst

and most infectious mundane viruses — gives five shifts towards triumph, for a triumph and two wound levels of "damage".

Contests

Three kinds of miracles can oppose miracles of creation. First, miracles that impose some sort of stasis on an area can directly counter the generative energy of a manifestation. Second, miracles that damage or destroy a created object as it appears do much the same. Third, when a Power wields their creation, any miracle that interferes with the way the Power uses the creation can oppose it, as when the Power of Reflections attempts to bounce lightning created by the Power of Storms.

The effects that a Power can oppose by wielding a miracle of creation depend on their Estate.

Duration

Creation miracles last until:
- The object would normally perish.
- Some condition specified in the miracle occurs.
- The Power revokes the miracle.

PLAYING IT OUT

Miracles of manifestation and partial manifestation usually involve filling out an object card (or making a note on the region notes board). In most cases, when wielding a miracle of creation, one needs only say so and spend any necessary MPs. Miracles of lesser creation should only affect events within a single region. Miracles of major creation, however, can affect events throughout the game. Notify an HG; the HG should spread word of this miracle to other players using lazy notification.

Destructive Miracles

Lesser Destructions
Difficulty 5

Miracles of lesser destruction erase, partially erase, weaken, or induce decay in instances of the PC's Estate. Typically, a lesser destruction miracle does one of the following:
- Damages a physical object.
- Damages a part of reality, so that PCs pursuing certain courses of action face a minimum difficulty of the miracle's vital force.

Some common miracle types follow.

Lesser destruction can **erase** something belonging to the PC's Estate. This obliterates a few tons of material with a simple or normal success and as much as 30 tons with a hard success. Elements of nonphysical Estates suffer a comparable erasure.

The death of an Imperator and the cumulative effect of successful flower rites can wipe Estates utterly from the world — past, present, and future, not just their existence but the very possibility of their existence. Nobilis and Imperators, their minds integrated with the spiritus Dei, sometimes remember Estates that vanished during their lifetime. The mortal world does not.

The Excrucian erasure of an Estate is almost complete. A few remnants, however, are very difficult to expunge. In particular, the Imperators of the First, Second, and Third Ages contain in themselves a record of the Estates created during their particular Age. The relevant Imperators and Powers can return those Estates to a kind of shadow life. Before the dead Estate Lithosonics can perish entirely, Jan ben Jan, Imperator of the Second Age, must die. He, to answer the sea, keeps the memory of the years After the Fall.

May this understanding never turn your blood to water.

Andrea generally went mallpopping when she grew bored. She would wander a mall, point to people at random, and pop them out of existence.
—from PLACID LIVES, by Marilith Turner

For example, the Power of Fire can delete the fire from a burning building with an erasure miracle. A major fire, affecting many buildings, would require a hard success or even a miracle of major destruction (see below) to remove.

Lesser destruction can also **damage** something belonging to the character's Estate. The character can inflict any desired wound on the target, cause the target to suffer disease or accelerated aging, and in general do any reasonable form of harm. They can also erase a limited number of the target's properties — the Power of Trees can make a pre-existing tree invisible by removing its visual image.

For example, Jameson Black, the Power of Storms, can increase the rate at which a storm naturally dissipates, causing it to dissolve over the course of minutes. The Power of Barriers can make a wall more vulnerable to any attack.

Lesser destruction can **interfere** with others' actions. For example, a lesser destruction of emotion can make it harder for someone to feel sad. A lesser destruction of books can make a book harder to read. A lesser destruction of roads can make it harder for someone to find their way. In such cases, the vital force of the interference miracle becomes the minimum difficulty for any attempt to perform the task.

For example, Isabel, Power of Roads, makes it more difficult to find one's way from San Francisco to Los Angeles. She uses a force 6 miracle (for a normal success). Any deliberate attempt to navigate from San Francisco to Los Angeles has a task difficulty of 6. Humans suffer misery when they attempt this feat, and will never find their way to Los Angeles. Adrien, using a force 2 Aspect miracle to drive from one city to the next, suffers a deep failure. He must have at least three shifts towards triumph to succeed — for example, by spending months on the road rather than hours.

As another example, the Power of Lust removes a human's capacity for lust, with vital force 5. That human can never experience lust naturally again, but a force 5 Aspect miracle could seduce them.

Major Destructions
Difficulty 8
Miracles of major destruction are among the deadliest miracles in the Noble arsenal. With even a simple success, they can erase or damage almost any amount of the character's Estate. Moreover, since a successful miracle of major destruction has vital force 8 or more, major miracles of interference are almost unopposable.

Contests
Miracles of destruction can directly oppose miracles that create, strengthen, or use something of the character's Estate. In addition, interference miracles often provoke contests. Various miracles of preservation can oppose erasure miracles and damaging miracles.

Duration
Miracles of destruction are irrevocable and permanent, though miracles of preservation and creation can often replace lost vitality or substance.

PLAYING IT OUT
Usually, the player need only state the use of a destructive miracle and note the effect on the relevant object cards or region notes board. (Don't physically destroy the object card if the owner isn't handy.) However, miracles of major destruction can affect events throughout the game. Notify an HG; the HG should spread word of this miracle to other players using lazy notification.

Change Miracles

Lesser Changes
Difficulty 6
Miracles of lesser change alter the nature of something belonging to the character's Estate. This allows them to move objects, give them new properties and abilities, or alter their shapes. Typically, no matter how thoroughly changed, the resulting object retains the "Estate-nature" — a fish changed into a person is still fundamentally a fish. It will love the water, be an excellent swimmer, and remain vulnerable to the Power's Domain. These effects use the general rules of lesser preservations, lesser creations, or lesser destructions — as per the player's choice, where the rules below do not specify. Some common miracle types follow.

Lesser changes include miracles of **mastery**, which control how an object moves. This allows the use of any physical manifestation of the character's Estate as a weapon, as well as many subtle telekinetic effects.

For example, the Power of Clothing yanks Damon's outfit into the air, hopefully dragging Damon with it. If Damon wishes to remain on the ground, he must think of an appropriate miracle and win a contest against the mastery miracle.

As another example Ianthe, Power of Debate, decides that a local school board's debate whether to allow a homosexual teacher to continue in their position should instead be decided by the janitorial staff. Ianthe moves the debate from the various school board members to the janitors. Now, the decision of the janitors will carry the day; the school board has no further function save to approve their decision.

Lesser changes also include miracles of **alteration.** This adds new abilities and properties to a given instance of the character's Estate — from edibility to explosiveness to life. The character can simultaneously delete properties, as they choose. On a simple or normal success, the Power can imbue the properties of any reasonably common tool or object. On a hard success, the Power can imbue the properties of a rare or exceptional tool or object.

For example, Arikel, Power of Night, decides to fill a room with explosive darkness, achieving a simple success. If anyone moves around the room too brusquely, they can set it off, triggering an effect roughly equivalent to a land mine. Arikel might prefer the explosive power of a small nuke, but sadly such bombs are comparatively rare and would require a hard success to simulate.

Finally, lesser changes include miracles of **shaping.** This changes the shape of the object, and can be combined with alteration. On a simple or normal success, the Power can reshape a few tons of material; on a hard success, the Power can reshape up to thirty tons of material. The character can also shape how some nonphysical element of their Estate expresses itself. The Power of Beauty can concentrate the beauty in a given painting in a single point. The Power of Anger could use a lesser change to determine how an angry person vented their anger, within the normal array of possibilities. To resist the effects, affected characters must win a contest, as with miracles of lesser destruction. Nonphysical Estates have the normal bounds on how much of their Estate the Power can reshape.

For example, the Muse (Power) of Drama can change the outcome of a plotline on a television soap opera.

Major Changes
Difficulty 9
Miracles of major change can work almost any transformation on things of the character's Estate. Only imbuing objects with true miraculous power is beyond the reach of these miracles. Major miracles of mastery can affect, and major miracles of shaping reshape, objects or groups of objects of any size. Major miracles of alteration can imbue elements of the character's Estate with the properties of the most efficacious tools, creatures, and objects in all Creation.

Contests
Only effects that change the target in an inconsistent way or impose some sort of stasis can oppose miracles of alteration and physical miracles of shaping. Powers can oppose miracles of mastery and miracles that shape non-physical things if they can in some way interrupt the affected objects' actions.

Duration
Change miracles last until:
- Another miracle undoes the change, or renders it irrelevant.
- Some condition specified in the miracle occurs.
- The Power revokes the miracle.

PLAYING IT OUT
Naturally, the player must state the effect. Sometimes the player must note the effect on relevant object cards and region notes board, or create a new object card. For miracles of alteration, particularly major miracles of alteration, an HG should initial the object card at some point.

In some cases, miracles of lesser mastery or shaping can move an object or quality out of the region. For example, mastery over Fire can move a flame from one region to another. Mastery over Fear can send a crowd of shoppers running into another region. Shaping a tree can make it a bridge to another area. Shaping a cult can change its membership. In this case, a player might find it worthwhile to visit any other affected regions and notify the players there. Major miracles of mastery and shaping typically affect the entire game; as usual, the player should inform an HG, who can spread word of the change through lazy notification.

Dynamic Realm and Spirit

Realm
As in tabletop NOBILIS, Realm miracles in Dynamic NOBILIS resemble Domain miracles. The PC can affect any Estate they choose with a Realm miracle, but can only affect things existing within their own Chancel. These changes fade when the miracle's target leaves the Chancel, unless sustained by the PC with 1 MP per story. As usual, these miracles cannot directly affect Nobilis.

Specific changes include:
- Realm-driven divinations replace Estate-driven divinations. These miracles trigger when anything in the Chancel is defiled or harmed in an abnormal or significant way.
- Major divinations can only view things that transpired within the Chancel.
- Creation and Destruction miracles cannot create or destroy non-physical things. (Use miracles of Change to affect these things.)
- Creation miracles cannot manifest an object unless someone or some natural process could create it within the Chancel by non-miraculous means. Partial manifestation of

It was something of a shock the first time I saw a Noble fumble. It was during a game of Hearts; my lady made an elementary beginner's error. I froze, thinking: Is this a test? Am I expected to ruthlessly seize the opportunity, or am I expected to throw the game? I compromised, saying, "My Lady, I feel that playing that card was a mistake."

She blinked. Something flickered behind her eyes. "Yes," she acknowledged. "It was."

"Are you well, my lady?"

"Luc," she said, "the Nobilis are not forced to use the full extent of our intellect and abilities. We are not chained to our infallibility. Our power lies within us like a dragon curled about our heart. When we wish to act miraculously, we say: dragon, open your eyes. And power rises to fill us." She shrugged. "I do not wish to lose the game, Luc, but what point is there in testing your skill against a dragon's?"
—from On Serving the Nobilis, *by Luc Ginneis*

"I will be honest, Frederica. In my heart, I hold to the same principles of fair government and equitable society that you do. At the same time, I am a busy man. Managing a just social order is an endlessly time-consuming task. I did not ask for rule over this world, nor do I desire it; and, since I must rule, I shall be a corrupt and arbitrary dictator. It is, quite simply, easier."
—from Carlos' World, *by Emily Chen*

otherwise legally creatable objects is acceptable, even if the partial object could have no natural origin. Thus, in a non-technological Chancel, an invisible tree is acceptable; a car is not.

In addition, Realm carries a sense of regality and nobility with it — PCs can substitute Realm for Aspect on miracles of Charm (see pages 49-50).

The Auctoritas

Powers with high Spirit have a mystic armor called the Auctoritas. This protects an in-character area about five feet in radius, centering on the Power, from the effects of other Powers' miracles.

An Auctoritas affects a miracle under the following conditions:

- The miracle affects something other than the Power that used it. Powers can use miracles on themselves all they like, in someone else's Auctoritas or not.
- The miracle affects something within another Power's Auctoritas. Powers are not hindered by their own Auctoritas.
- The miracle user is still actively controlling or sustaining the miracle in some manner, or this is the first round of actions since they ceased to do so. When a full round of actions passes after a Power finishes a miracle, its effects become part of normal reality, and are no longer miraculous.

For example, the Dominus of the Ground uses a miracle of lesser destruction to dig a pit under Lisseut, who has Spirit 4. He elects to dig the pit slowly, to make the deepening hole seem more ominous. Since it affects something other than the Power of the Ground, it fulfills the first condition. Since it affects the ground directly beneath Lisseut, it fulfills the second condition. It also fulfills the third condition — and is affected by Lisseut's Auctoritas — until a full round of actions passes after the Dominus finishes digging the pit.

The effect of the Auctoritas is simple. While affected, within the affected region, the miracle suffers shifts towards misery. If the Dominus' pit miracle achieves a simple success, then within Lisseut's Auctoritas, it acts like a hard failure. Five feet of ground beneath Lisseut's feet stays put, despite the Dominus' best efforts. Below that, he can dig his pit — but the earth Lisseut stands on won't even fall until one round of actions after he finishes with the pit. Lisseut can even walk out of the affected area, undestroying dirt as she goes.

The following table describes the number of shifts towards misery an Auctoritas inflicts.

Auctoritas Effects

SPIRIT	SHIFTS TOWARD MISERY
0	None
1-2	1
3-4	2
5+	3

A miracle that achieves a triumph before shifts is, as usual, unaffected by these shifts towards misery. Non-hostile ghost miracles, such as those used in a duel, are likewise immune.

Players should announce their Spirit level when their character's Auctoritas is relevant.

Anchors

As in tabletop Nobilis, Powers in Dynamic Nobilis have Anchors: human servants bound to the Powers. Anchors have the following properties:

- A Power can have up to (Spirit + 1) Anchors.
- Powers must, in some fashion, love or hate each Anchor.
- Anchors are immune to direct miracles.
- Powers can communicate mentally with their Anchors by "stepping into their mind". Anchors can send a message to their Power by prayer.
- Powers can take over the Anchor's body with a thought and use miracles through the Anchor.
- Aspect miracles used through an Anchor cost an extra (5 – Spirit) miracle points.

A player can always play one of their characters's Anchors instead of their player character in a game session — particularly if their Power is busy. The player then decides when the Anchor they play communicates with the PC and when the PC uses a miracle through the Anchor. At times, a Hollyhock God will take on the role of an Anchor. Most of the time, however, object cards in the player's possession represent Anchors.

Each Anchor has one **ability**, chosen from the list below, or designed by the player in concert with an HG:

- **Aid Miracle.** Calling on the Anchor gives one shift towards success on a small, predefined group of miracles. For example, a persuasive Anchor can help sway opinions; a hound-spirit can help with any hunt.
- **Earthly Magic.** The Anchor possesses some Earthly magic that the Power does not, giving the Power access to same.
- **Influence.** The Anchor has mortal influence, and can obtain wealth for the character, as well as providing information or assistance

within their area of specialty. For example, many Powers have Anchors on a multinational company's board of directors.

- 🖎 **Service.** The Anchor is a multitalented servant. The Power can assign them modest missions on a session-to-session basis, such as protecting the Power's trade empire from Cammoran incursion or bringing a tool to the Power from the Power's Chancel. The Anchor carries out this task with effective vital force equal to the character's Spirit.

An Anchor's object card should record their ability. All Anchors can perform small tasks on behalf of their Powers, such as fetching, carrying, and pouring drinks.

In Dynamic *Nobilis*, the Power's ability to step into the body of their Anchors is unreliable, as are an Anchor's prayers. When a Hollyhock God plays an Anchor, and something troubling happens, the HG should wait until the Anchor is out of play — locked up in a cell, for example — and then inform the player of the troublesome events. The player then suggests a general strategy the Anchor should follow and optionally gives the Anchor some of their miracle points as assistance. The Hollyhock God then returns to the scene (e.g., the Anchor's cell) and uses those miracle points to fuel the miracles that the Power uses "through" the Anchor to resolve the situation.

Simple Rites

The Servant's Rite
Claiming an Anchor functions as in tabletop *Nobilis*. One should always talk to the creator of a mortal's object card before claiming the mortal as Anchor. A HG must confirm Anchor creation.

The Witch Hunt Rite
In Dynamic *Nobilis* miracles do not leave "traces" on the environment, therefore this Rite does not exist.

The Redtooth Rite
A Power can gain miracle points equal to their Spirit by eating another Power's heart. A mortal can seize a dead Power's soul shard by the same method, with an HG's consent.

The Rite of the Last Trump
This Rite does not exist in Dynamic *Nobilis*.

The Rite of Passage
Looking through a broken crystal gives one shift towards triumph when a Power seeks to find a

Chancel or a road into a Chancel (see *Nobilis*, p. 124).

Nettle Rite
When a Power nettles another, the two Powers must consult an HG, who determines how many miracle points change hands and how many Dynasty Points the nettler receives. This uses the system found on *Nobilis*, pp. 124-125.

The Rite of the Fallen
As in tabletop *Nobilis*, two Powers in the victim's Familia and their Imperator — played by an HG — must all agree that a Power's actions warrant the use of this Rite. Then they must capture and bind the Power in question to the rack before pulling their power away from them.

- 🖎 Characters subjected to the Rite of the Blade must move character points invested in Spirit to other attributes, on a one-for-one basis.
- 🖎 Characters suffering the Rite of the Whip lose one level from each attribute, to a minimum of 0.
- 🖎 The Rite of the Fire makes a Noble character mortal, destroying their body and mind unless the Hollyhock God states otherwise.

The Ritual of Anguish
This Rite functions as in tabletop *Nobilis*.

The Rite of Rescue
This Rite functions as in tabletop *Nobilis*.

The Rite of Holy Fire
The Rite of Holy Fire gives protection against mundane attacks and mundane damage; it offers no protection against miracles. This Rite must be renewed regularly, and during its renewal it offers no protection. In play, when renewing this Rite, the player posts a notice to this effect. This notice goes on the region clipboard where they performed the rite. If no one responds within a real-time hour by attempting to attack the PC during the Rite or otherwise interrupt it, the Rite's protection is renewed. (The PC can do other things during this time — the player need not sit around an hour.)

This Rite gives immunity to those weapons and attack forms, wielded without miracles, that give (5 − Spirit) or more shifts towards triumph. The Power must renew this rite every (Spirit + 1) sessions or its protection lapses.

For example, with Spirit 3, the Rite protects the characters against mundanely wielded weapons that give two or more shifts towards triumph — including guns, but not including blades. The player must renew the Rite every four sessions or its protection lapses.

DYNAMIC GIFTS

The base cost for a Gift in Dynamic NOBILIS is the vital force of the miracle it performs. The modifiers are unchanged. Note that miracles with automatic invocation use the automatic effects rules, and miracles purchased with local effects can affect anything within the region. HGs must approve all Gifts, and decide whether a given Gift is common.

For details on what the example Gifts are all about, see NOBILIS, pp. 115-122. The descriptions below simply translate the standard Gifts into this system, making the minimum necessary changes to their effects.

PROTECTIVE GIFTS

Immutable
This Gift invokes a limited collection of force 3 lesser preservation miracles. The character's lifespan moves one step down the time chart, from decades to centuries. This Gift renders the character technically immune to hunger, thirst, and fatigue, and gives a one shift bonus when resisting the effects of disease, drowning, or suffocation.

Eternal
This Gift invokes a similar collection of force 6 major preservations.

The character's lifespan moves three steps down the time chart, becoming effectively infinite. The Gift renders the character immune to hunger, thirst, fatigue, disease, suffocation, and other environmental conditions.

Durant
This Gift invokes a force 3 lesser preservation. Effects that would damage the character suffer one shift towards misery, and the character heals one step faster on the time chart.

Sacrosanct
This Gift invokes a force 5 lesser preservation to protect the character from damage. (This costs 2 points, not 3.)

Effects that would damage the character suffer two shifts towards misery, and the character heals two steps faster on the time chart.

The Curse of Nemesis
This Gift invokes a force 7 major creation, and works exactly as in tabletop NOBILIS.

The Curse of Dust
This Gift invokes a force 7 lesser destruction, and therefore costs 7 or 14 points, not 8 or 16.

Immortal
This Gift invokes an unlimited number of force 6 major preservations. Effects that would damage the player character suffer three shifts towards misery; the PC heals three steps faster on the time chart.

Moreover, this Gift includes protection against death or prolonged captivity by (almost) every possible means — strong attacks can injure the player character or knock them unconscious, but nothing can kill them without first interfering with the Gift.

GIFTS OF THE BODY

Glorious
This Gift uses a force 7 major creation of love, creating a love as powerful as any mortal has ever felt.

Amphibian
This Gift uses two force 3 lesser preservations, protecting the PC from drowning or having hindered motion in water.

Fire-Breathing
This Gift is a force 4 lesser creation of fire, which the PC can wield against their enemies (receiving two shifts towards triumph on the attack).

Flight
This Gift is a force 6 lesser change of the self. This Gift can be difficult to use in play. The player should extend their arms to the sides periodically to remind others that they are airborne, and use the movement suggestions found under Aspect when flying from one location to another.

Invisibility
This invokes a force 5 lesser destruction of visual images. Minimum difficulty to detect the PC, whether by seeing through the invisibility or by locating them by ear, is 5. See the sensory acuity rules under Aspect. Players should cross their arms over their chest when invisible, as a visual cue.

Remove Poison
This Gift invokes a force 5 lesser destruction that removes all poison from the affected substance.

Petrify with a Look
This Gift invokes a force 6 lesser change that turns a mortal to stone. Note in pencil on the relevant object card.

Shapeshifting
This Gift allows a PC to change their shape into something else. Players who wish to engage in

shapeshifting may wish to purchase a portable clipboard-sized erasable whiteboard, writing or drawing their current shape thereupon. This makes it easy for others to tell what shape they currently wear. Otherwise, they'll just have to tell people what they look like. When a character is in an animal shape, they have the mundane abilities that naturally go with that shape. They do not gain any miraculous abilities or Earthly magics. Use the movement rules found under Aspect when using an unusual form of locomotion.

Venomed Bite/Acidic Spittle

This Gift is a force 4 lesser creation. Wielded, this is a combat miracle yielding two shifts towards triumph.

Gifts of the Soul

Wayfinder

This Gift allows a character to look into any Chancel region without officially entering it IC.

Worldwalker

This Gift gives a PC free access to any Chancel region (see page 20).

Gatemaker

This Gift gives a PC free access to any Chancel region, and also allows them to bring others with them into the Chancel (see page 20).

Elemental

This Gift, like Shapeshifting, allows a PC to change their shape into something else. Often, this shape will be non-physical. When its natural abilities mimic the effects of a miracle, assume that miracle has vital force 6. (For example, an incarnation of peace can create temporary peace by moving into a mortal's heart.) Note that immaterial PCs are in no way immune to damage. For example, if that incarnation of peace was in another PC's heart, making that PC angry would count as a direct attack.

Perfect Timing

The 7-point version of this Gift is not appropriate for Dynamic Nobilis. The 4-point version is acceptable. If a PC with Perfect Timing is in the game, HGs should do their best to notify the player in advance about interesting opportunities that might come up in the near future. It's then up to the player to catch them.

The Sovereign's Gift

This Gift allows the Power to perform force 6 miracles of mastery — and miracles of shaping that distort rather than replace something's shape — for a single miracle point, regardless of their Domain score. Mastery and shaping are both lesser change miracles.

Constant Domain

This Gift is not appropriate for Dynamic Nobilis; however, a cheaper version of Constant Domain that is local rather than global can work well in a dynamic game. This costs 2 points less than the costs on page 119 of Nobilis, works only within the character's current region, and causes miracles of the appropriate type and power to trigger automatically, once per round, when they would help the character.

Devoted Populace

This Gift gives the character three shifts towards triumph on any attempt to socially manipulate the people of their Chancel.

Luck

This Gift is a force 7 major creation miracle. When using Luck, the player informs an HG and forks over a miracle point. The HG, using their knowledge of the plot, thinks of something that could happen somewhere to benefit the character and then makes sure it happens.

Unblemished Guise

This Gift is a force 5-9 sustained lesser creation, and allows the character to appear mortal to the Sight. If another character has some way of seeing through the illusion, they can use it in contest against the Guise.

Dynamic Handicaps and Miracle Points

In Dynamic Nobilis, each Power receives [Spirit + 5] miracle points at the beginning of each session. Powers may increase their per-session allotment by purchasing additional permanent miracle points at the usual cost of 1 per character point spent. These miracle points have no specific attribute associated with them — the Power can use them with any attribute. (Characters in Dynamic Nobilis have no attribute-specific miracle points.) Leftover MPs at the end of a session can be used during downtime, but vanish at the beginning of the next session that player attends.

Limits give extra MPs in each session — half as many as they give per story in tabletop Nobilis. Round the total down one session, up the next. A Restriction gives a character an MP when an HG sees the Restriction significantly hinder the PC.

Hollyhock Gods can also award a miracle point to a character troubled by a Restriction when another player does both of the following:

- ❧ Describes the relevant incident for the HG.
- ❧ Comments favorably on the roleplaying involved.

Miracle point gain and loss for Affiliations follows the same pattern.

Virtues never give miracle points in Dynamic 𝒩OBILIS. Instead, they give one shift towards triumph on actions directly in keeping with the spirit of the Virtue. Also, as in tabletop 𝒩OBILIS, nothing can force the character to act against the tenets of their Virtue. The character can make their Virtue obvious to all onlookers by spending a miracle point. However, it is possible for the character to be tricked into violating their Virtue in Dynamic 𝒩OBILIS. This is too difficult to avoid, when the trickster's player may not even know the Virtue exists.

MISCELLANEOUS ABILITIES

HIGH TECHNOLOGY (FROM CHANCELS)

Tools built with Extrapolative Technology (see 𝒩OBILIS, p. 140) usually give one more shift towards triumph than the equivalent mundane tool. For example, a car built with extrapolative technology gives four shifts towards triumph when it comes to getting places quickly, instead of three. It gives one shift towards triumph when trying to handle the car in dangerous situations, rather than none. Naturally, such tools are represented as object cards when they leave the Chancel.

Tools based on a Weird Science give two extra shifts towards triumph. For example, the techniques of Advanced Metallurgy include light, strong, cheap materials — someone building a machine from them, a difficulty 1 Aspect miracle, has two shifts towards triumph. This translates directly into increased lifespan, quicker completion, and reduced waste, based on the Completeness, Speed, and Economy Aspect rules. (An HG probably rules that these shifts do not increase the aesthetic quality of the result, unless the metal in question has intrinsic appeal.)

Weird Science also offers technology that gives its users entirely new abilities. For example, genetic engineering allows the creation of strange creatures. Psionic tech allows mental command of machines. Players should work out with the HGs exactly what their Weird Sciences can do. The HGs should also determine their Imperator's policy on such technology leaving the Chancel (if it can do so). Some Imperators are extremely protective of "their" resources, and permit at most seven artifacts of their advanced technology out of the Chancel at any one time — they don't want Excrucians, rival Imperators, or, heaven forbid, mortals working out the principles of their technology's operation. Others are more permissive, allowing limited tech trading and unlimited use. Powers should either choose relatively weak Weird Sciences or pay extra Chancel points if they wish the latter policy.

In Dynamic 𝒩OBILIS, Thought-Record technology has a time lag. The relevant player or Hollyhock God writes up the Thought-Record of a character attached to a TR device after a session ends. This can be as short as a one-paragraph summary of events or as elaborate as a journal.

MAGIC

Normal Magic substitutes for ordinary technology, powered by 1 MP for every four "spells". (Mortal mages run out of energy entirely after two or three.) As a rough guideline, assume that normal magic can simulate anything an ordinary middle class American can get their hands on — a car, a hang glider, a computational device, a gun, a dry cleaning service, a phone, and so forth. It also allows the practitioners to summon or dispel the spirits of the dead, pitting their Aspect in a contest against the dead creature's Aspect or (for mortals) their natural willpower. This works best against spirits dead for mere days. The magician suffers one shift towards misery for each step further down the time chart the victim has been deceased.

Faery Magic can create completely convincing illusions, lasting until the next dawn or dusk. Nobles can penetrate the illusions with the Sight; mortals require a deep success on a difficulty 0 Aspect miracle. (In other words, they must have some manner of magical, supernatural, or miraculous enhancement to have a hope of penetrating it.)

Each individual act of High Summoning is a complex process involving days of labor. Handle such invocations during downtime. The player should contact an HG and discuss what they hope to summon. The HG, possibly after consulting the senior HG and/or their peers, makes interesting secret modifications to the player's specifications. The summoned creature appears as an HG-run NPC in the next session.

Each individual Alchemical creation, similarly, requires downtime consultation with an HG. The player discusses what they hope to create, and how. The HG, possibly after consulting others, makes secret and interesting modifications to the player's specifications. They deliver the final creation to the player as an object card in the next session.

"Computer," Shannon said, leaning back in her chair. "Determine Sathariel's next action."

"There is a 67.5 per cent probability that she will make a recruitment trip to Rigel, Captain."

Shannon frowned. "That is highly imprecise."

"There is a 32.5 per cent unreliability factor," the dulcet voice replied, "in all computations involving angels."
—*from* WAR IN THE HEAVENS, *by Grover Denmark*

The earth rose and swallowed Ian Silverberg, but this was not what the others saw: a faery glamour fell upon them, and they saw him fall beneath the wheels of a car.
—*from* UNSEEMLY TALES, *by Eleanor K.*

Miscellaneous Noble Abilities

The body and mind of a Noble and their Anchors are sacrosanct — no Noble miracle can affect them directly. Using charm in a Noble's direction is possible; dictating their actions with charm is not. Striking a Noble from outside their body with lightning is possible; creating lightning inside their body is not. Nobles can forget, but no one can take their memories away. Only the Noble themselves can use miracles that directly affect the Noble or their Anchors.

The Nobilis speak, read, and write every human language with equal facility. They also speak the True Tongue of the angels. Since Nobilis are the default PCs, language barriers should not be a large part of the game.

Nobles have a mystic Sight (see Nobilis, pp. 87-88) that can identify Nobilis as Nobilis, magical objects as magical, and Excrucians as Excrucians — when the Excrucians are not actively concealing their natures. Turning the Sight on or off is a difficulty 0 Aspect miracle for a Noble.

Nobles can Guise themselves (see Nobilis, p. 88), adopting a shape that reflects their true identity while fitting in to the society or landscape around them. Anyone who understands that Guising exists can identify a Power regardless of their Guise — all the details of their appearance translate from form to form, even though the basic shape changes. Guising usually only requires announcing that one is doing so. If the natural inhabitants of a region are sufficiently bizarre that Guising drastically changes a character's form, an HG or the region clipboard should note this fact. Guising is a difficulty 2 Aspect miracle for a Noble.

Nobilis can choose to perceive either Mythic Reality or the Prosaic World, shifting between perceptions with a mundane action. Acting in Mythic Reality allows direct interaction with the living, intelligent spirits of the elements of the world. Players should refrain, however, from assuming that spirits are wimps. Forcing or persuading a spirit to do something has roughly the same difficulty as forcing the Prosaic equivalent to do the same thing. Strangling the spirit of a major river requires the same Impossible strength as turning back the flow at its source. Talking the spirit of Air Force One into a landing is as difficult as dragging it down by force. However, using the Mythic World might be quicker and more convenient. The PC does not need to travel to the river's source to strangle the naiad. The PC does not risk injuring Air Force One if they talk it down.

The Limits of the Sight

The Sight is not a panacea. Although it can often distinguish between types of Imperators, it cannot spot such intimate details as a Power's affiliation. Sometimes it can detect a Noble character's Estate; sometimes, it cannot. The Sight, essentially, detects things that are invisible to the mundane eye but "in plain view" in the mythic or spirit worlds.

As a general rule, players determine what the Sight detects about their PCs, beyond basic nobility. HGs and the creators of object cards determine what the Sight detects about NPCs and objects.

The ocean asks if a god can be blind. The answer is unequivocally "yes".

May this understanding never turn your flesh to salt.

Mythical and Semi-Miraculous Creatures

Each mythical beast or semi-miraculous creature is an individual case. When players buy a Chancel with mythical creatures in it, they should consult with the HG to define the boundaries of those creatures' abilities. When an HG creates a mythical beast or semi-miraculous creature as an NPC, they simply design a "character sheet" with the appropriate abilities written thereupon.

See page 228 of Nobilis for a summary of what the various types of commoners usually have in the way of abilities.

Dynamic Chancel and Imperator Properties

For details of Chancel and Imperator creation, see Nobilis, pp. 135-152. Normally, finding one's way into a Chancel if one does not know the route requires five hours, a general idea of the Chancel's location, and a difficulty 3 Aspect miracle. The Wayfinder Gift reduces this requirement: the Power needs only a general idea of the Chancel's location.

Chancel properties do not change significantly in Dynamic Nobilis. The region clipboard for a Chancel should note Borderguards, Defender's Blessings. Mobile Chancels, Ubiquitous Chancels, Miscellaneous Chancel Blessings, and Spirit Gateways all require the senior HG's permission — they either help with their plans for the game, in which case the senior HG can reduce their cost, or they interfere with those plans, in which case the players cannot take the Chancel Property. HGs will play Banes and "landlords" when appropriate. To use a Mana Mine, or to pay the miracle point a failing Chancel needs, a Power needs to consult an HG. However, if less than half a Chancel's membership shows up for a session, the remainder do not need to pay MPs to sustain the Chancel.

To convert Dynasty Points to miracle points or an Imperator property, Powers should consult an HG. An HG may occasionally ask PCs with a Harvest or Great Harvest of Dynasty Points to perform some task as part of that harvest. This is usually something dangerous or interesting in-character. However, players can volunteer to perform some sort of out-of-character task when needed in order to collect their regular Harvest.

Powers of a **Clear-Sighted** Imperator can intuit certain hidden truths. An HG must first mention the existence of such a truth. The Power can then use a difficulty 2 Aspect miracle to discover it.

Powers of a **Sympathetic** Imperator can read other characters' general emotional state as a difficulty 2 Aspect miracle. The player should ask the other character's player for a one-word summary of their current emotional state.

Powers of a **Transcendent** Imperator receive two shifts towards triumph when taking an action that will save them from otherwise certain death.

If an Excrucian uses the Glorious Gift within 50 feet of a Power of an **Unshining** Imperator, that Power must spend a miracle point every round of actions — every real-life minute, when action is not proceeding in rounds — to avoid either obeying the Excrucian's every command or running in terror (at the player's choice). The panic or slavish obedience fades within several minutes. Similarly, the Excrucian's effective Auctoritas against such Powers' miracles extends to 50 feet when using Glorious.

Those playing Powers of an **Advising** Imperator can suspend play for a short time — at most two minutes — to ask the advice of more experienced players. It is the responsibility of someone playing a Power of a **Soul-Twisted** or **Unfathomable** Imperator to notify others of those properties when they become relevant.

Powers of a **Straightforward** Imperator should occasionally inform the senior HG of their IC plans during a session. Anyone who asks the senior HG can, in turn, receive this information.

The **Honorable** Imperator property cannot detect second-hand lies in Dynamic $\mathcal{N}$OBILIS. Usually, Powers of an Honorable or Principled Imperator should note this fact in some public manner — e.g., by wearing a white hat. Someone directly lying to them out of malice or corruption should mime pulling their nose to a greater length. Someone playing a servant of annihilation or Hell should let them know — by saying so, or by catching the Power's eye and tapping their chest.

Powers of **Scholarly** Imperators receive one shift towards triumph on the specified skill. Powers of **Polished** Imperators receive three shifts towards triumph on the specified skill.

Mystery Cults are normally written up as object cards. Each Power in the Familia holds one such card. HGs may have to play Cultists on occasion.

Finally, Powers with a **Warning** or **Warding** set upon them should wear a name tag reflecting this fact. Powers can use all other Imperator Properties as per $\mathcal{N}$OBILIS, pp. 144-152.

Chapter 7
Heaven's Gate

TALES FROM THE FIRESIDE

*Let me tell you of Calendula and Marcos, younglings,
and of the 'Heaven's Gate'; a tale told seldom in these
times, but one that may impart some wisdom to your
young minds. It is a sorrowful tale, and one that has
rare but potent resonance coursing through its veins.
Settle yourselves then, and listen … and learn.*

*In the days before the fall, when Lucifer still sat on
high, when Hell's shadow was less long than it is now,
and when the Great Work was all, Calendula, Regina
of Compassion, Meetings, and Vigilance worked
alongside her fellows, forging heaven. Then came the
Great Fall. Lucifer forsook the Voice and was cast out.
Calendula's sorrow at the loss of her brothers and sisters
was great, and she wept tears of empathy for their pain.*

*One of the host who shared Lucifer's values, and
his fate, was named Ephraim, Rex Regius of Artistry
and Shame. Ephraim claims to have followed Lucifer
for his vision of the new order of creation, for pride
and shame are complementary. The truth is beyond us
to ever verify, but it is of little consequence. Ephraim
fell and was banished to Hell with Morningstar and
the others. Over time he came to be trusted and feted
by Lucifer (as much as any within Hell are trusted or
feted), raised up and given a position of much import
in diabolic society. He took for himself souls and molded
them into his Nobilis, his Powers, to be his servants
and do his bidding. One of these was Marcos.*

*Marcos was a remarkable beauty, with kind heart
and kind soul. In spite of this, or more likely because of
it, Ephraim chose Marcos for one of his Powers. It can
only be imagined how much suffering this caused
Marcos, but he somehow found the strength to endure,
and was bound to the Regius' shard, becoming
Artistry's-Regal in service to Ephraim.*

*It was on one of Marcos' errands on Earth for his
malevolent master that he first encountered Calendula.
She saw through his shell, saw his beauty, the beauty of
his soul and his heart, she saw coiled around this beauty
the madness that Ephraim had instilled within Marcos,
and saw the agony that the fallen angel had expressed
through his Noble. She took pity upon young Marcos,
and perhaps upon his Imperator too, and her estate
drove her to act.*

OPPOSITE:
Where Shadows are the
Truths
by Stephanie Pui-Mun Law

Acting through her Powers, Calendula watched Marcos. She saw him work upon one of his earthly projects, the patronage of a great artist, slowly corrupting the images of faith that this master created, changing them to fit Hell's own purpose. The alteration of the mortal view of Heaven from a place of great fluidity and beauty to one of rigidity and oppressive angelic domination. Working subtly, and exceedingly carefully, she changed the memories of the artist, taking his impressions of heaven and warping them, altering them, changing them. Marcos discovered the violation of his domain too late, and when he saw the finished work his soul and his Shard cried out.

There before him, was a painting that captured the very essence of Heaven in all its beauty. His Shard screamed in anguish, that such a thing had been done, that the beauty and peace of the realm forever denied it should be laid so plain. In Hell Ephraim roared his frustration and anger, his fell fury so venomous that even the demons shrank back in fear.

And yet, even in defeat, Hell's purpose had been served. The artist and his entire family, all those that had seen the work had succumbed to dementia animus. *In her attempt to exercise the gift of her Estate to benefit Marcos and Ephraim, Calendula had not only comprehensively failed, but also she had caused inadvertent harm to the artist and his family. Thankfully for her Noble of Compassion, the scale of the harm was not great enough to constitute a breach of the Code Fidelitatis.*

Calendula took the painting, named it 'Heaven's Gate', and for a time it passed from the mortal world.

A Tale to Tell

Unable to secure the thing in Heaven for fear that the infernal taint would bring corruption to the celestial land, the keepers of the part-angelic, part-demon painting 'Heaven's Gate' that it should be passed into the care of an Imperator who would keep it safe in their Chancel. Many of the Nobilis say that Lord Entropy himself took a personal hand in this. Irrespective of the reasons it was passed to Mjornir, the Aaron's serpent. Mjornir holds his Chancel apart from the games of the Powers, as a neutral safe haven that all Powers may enter irrespective of their affiliation. It has rested within Locus Mjornir ever since.

Mjornir now slumbers, knowing that his Powers hold his Chancel apart from the politics of Nobilis affiliation that might compromise its neutrality. However, all is not well within his Familia Potens. The Marquis Edward Blundell, Power of Decorum, custodian of the Art Gallery that straddles both the Prosaic and Mythic Realities of the Chancel and in which 'Heaven's Gate' is stored (covered by a miracle to disguise its true nature), has a problem.

He is the imminent victim of a Nettle Rite being performed by Joseph Tirinius, Power of Addiction. Tirinius has taken advantage of Blundell's neglect of his Anchor, Sally, and she has become addicted to heroin. This threatens Sally's fundamental association with Decorum. Tirinius has offered to remove the addiction, but only if Blundell auctions 'Heaven's Gate'. The auction would let Tirinius nettle not only the Power of Decorum and his Familia, but also Calendula and Ephraim's Nobilis. This has torn Blundell's loyalties and caused him enormous pain; he is caught between a rock and a hard place and sees no alternative to quietly acquiescing to Tirinius's demands. He cannot turn to his friends for help, as one does not talk about addiction openly.

Blundell, a creature of circumspection, has decided to keep the true nature of the auction from his Familia. He hopes that he will manage to conduct the auction and be rid of 'Heaven's Gate' before his fellows realize what he is doing. He alone in the Familia is trusted with the knowledge of the true nature of the painting, and hopes that none of the other Nobilis of Locus Mjornir have paid too much attention to the contents of his Art Gallery. He has publicized the event amongst the Nobilis, but has made no mention of the 'Heaven's Gate' as a part of the auction. A number of Imperators have, however, gotten wind of the auction and discerned its prize lot. They will take steps to acquire it, sending their Powers to the event to bid, steal or bargain for it.

Meanwhile, one of Blundell's Familia, Eloise Corvidae, Lady of Ravens, has divined the true situation and made her own plans to resolve the problem. She has enlisted the help of her lover, Marius Trevaine, Magister of Misdirection. He will create a distraction, whilst one of his Familia, Luther, Power of Mirrors, steals the painting, thus preventing the sale and foiling the Nettle Rite.

Just to heap more misery on the Powers assembled, one of the local Cammorae, Honest John, has taken a keen interest in the painting and intends to come to the auction to get hold of 'Heaven's Gate'. He will be most upset if he arrives to find the painting gone, and an upset Cammora Lord is never a good thing.

Considerations

Being matters the senior Hollyhock God should keep in mind while preparing the game.

Heaven's Gate is written with 20-30 players in mind, but this is not to say that it cannot be used for groups far smaller or even larger than this number. The HG simply needs to reduce or increase the number

Which is the greater crime? To betray a responsibility to one who cares for you, or to betray one for whom you care? I will auction the painting, hating myself for my choice, and beg the master's forgiveness, for I cannot abandon my duty of care. No, that would not do at all.
—Edward Blundell, Marquis of Decorum

of subplots used, and examine carefully how the various strands fit together.

Link the PC's backgrounds with major NPCs and with one another; grant some of them fragments of knowledge about the background to the story; put political motivations at odds with the NPCs and with one another. (A number of NPC bonds have been left to the HG's discretion to assist with this.) Then sit back and watch them generate a large quantity of the game themselves, as they intrigue with one another, politicking to gain advantages and boons from each other.

This also allows the HGs to prepare reasons for the PCs to be present at the auction. Their motives depend greatly upon the players and their choice of Imperator, Chancel, and Affiliation. Most PCs will be given a task or reason for attending. Perhaps their Imperator wishes the PCs to bid for 'Heaven's Gate' or for one of the other mundane pieces of art up for auction; perhaps their Imperator wishes the PCs to try to broker an alliance with the Powers of Locus Mjornir. The HG should not provide any one group of players with enough information to solve the plot on their own before the game begins. It is perfectly acceptable for individuals to have personal ties to the situation at the Chancel, and it is a positive boon to tie the player groups together with common (or conflicting) purpose.

In the case of a conflict, it is always better to adapt the NPC than to deny the player. If, for instance, a player wishes to be the Power of Mirrors it would be best to change Luther's estate to be that of Reflections, which will still allow him to perform his story function, rather than prevent the player from taking Mirrors as their own.

(See 'Tilling the Garden', pages 23-28, for more on character creation for Dynamic NOBILIS.)

PLOT AND PACING

The plot never survives first contact with the players, and once the random factor that the players represent gets to grips with the sequence of events, the Hollyhock God may feel as if the players are all playing the Power of Disorder. The key is not to panic. A player may discover the truth of the Nettle Rite ten minutes into the game and foil Tirinius's plans right away. Let them, smile knowingly, and then bring forward Eloise and Marius's theft of the 'Heaven's Gate'. Allow them to then unravel that mystery, and bring the Cammora Lord into the gallery to further confuse matters. Never be afraid to improvise, to alter the plot, or to introduce new sub-plots to keep the game moving along.

You control one of the keys to running a successful game of Dynamic NOBILIS, pacing. The players should be challenged by a series of events, having to react with snap decisions during the more action-packed parts of the game, but able to relax a little and discuss the game's events (IC of course) during less frenetic sequences. The HGs should always keep their ears open for the reactions from the players, in order to judge how the pace of the game suits them. If a HG hears a number of players bemoaning the slow pace of the game, then it is perfectly acceptable to throw some additional action into the game. Equally, if the players seem unable to keep up with events, the HG might wish to consider slowing the pace of the game a little to allow them a little time to consider the recent past. No two groups of players are alike in their opinions of pace, and quite often the same group of players will have different desires in different sessions.

DYNAMICS

Being the way in which events of the game will progress and the various steps that the Hollyhock God should consider when running the game.

SETUP

See 'Tilling the Garden', page 33, for suggestions on pre-game briefings. Separating the players into their respective Familiae Caelestis and conducting the briefing in-character in a different room for each of the groups is not only effective at establishing atmosphere, but also can provide players a gentle introduction to the often overpowering game play of a Dynamic NOBILIS game of relatively large size. The opportunity to interact with a small group allows players to get comfortable with the differences between the tabletop game and the dynamic game before being plunged into the game proper.

MEETINGS IN THE ART GALLERY

Once the PCs have a reason to attend, they should start to filter into the Chancel itself. Entry to Locus Mjornir is a simple thing, the mundane doorway to the Art Gallery is also the mythic gateway to the Chancel. Blundell may well have placed a pair of guards on the doorway, dressed as mundane doormen. These are Chancelfolk well used to the strangeness endemic in life with the NOBILIS. If HGs can be spared, then a pair of well-dressed doormen and a master of ceremonies to announce the formal titles of those attending the auction would assist in generating an appropriate atmosphere. Of course, should manpower be at a premium, the doormen can be represented by object cards on the main region table.

Blundell and any of his Familia that are present can greet the PCs once they're inside. At the HG's discretion, some or all of the resident Nobles may be present, or the characters may enter ahead of all other Nobles except Blundell.

I remember it all, from the very first, when my creator first separated his soul-shard and breathed dominion over Raven-kind into it. I was Huginn and Muninn, thought and memory, companions to the one they called Odin; the peoples of the new world knew me as Dotson'Sa, the Great Raven and Yetl; and in the isles they believed I served the Morrigan.
—Eloise Corvidae, Lady of Ravens

Give the player characters time to socialize and intrigue amongst themselves and with the NPCs. Many of them should have agendas that are incidental to the main plotline, and this is the ideal time for these to begin to play out. Blundell providing refreshments and canapés is a nice option at this point. A fresh source of Noble company will cause many of the NPCs to take steps to make allies, enemies and generally exploit the PCs for any potential benefit that they might have to offer.

The Auction

The auction begins at a time determined by the HGs, after a suitable period of social activity has passed. Blundell will have one of the Chancelfolk act as auctioneer, and in addition to 'Heaven's Gate' there are many mundane works up for auction. All of these are of extremely high quality and are exceedingly beautiful; some may pique the interest of the assembled Nobilis. The Nobilis can bid mundane items, services, anything that they believe is worth something to Blundell. This section of the game can be as long or as short as the HGs see fit. If the players seem to be enjoying the experience then it can be drawn out, or if they are not it can be curtailed. Of course, the Powers do not stop their intriguing merely because there is an auction occurring and those with little interest in the lots may well find other pursuits to occupy their time. However long the auction continues it will never reach the bidding for 'Heaven's Gate', as it is rudely interrupted.

Misdirection, Theft and Mirrors

I am teacher, protector, guardian of the mortals; educating them to be a little suspicious before someone with true malice takes advantage of them. After all, my little tricks are harmless. Mostly.
—Marius Trevaine, Magister of Misdirection

Whilst the auction is in progress, Marius waits just outside the Chancel. At a suitable moment he works a lesser creation of misdirection upon the doormen and the Master of Ceremonies. They become convinced that one of Lord Entropy's Anchors has arrived immediately outside the Gallery and demands the presence of all the Nobilis. Their sense of urgency is unparalleled and Marius hopes that this will draw all of the attendees outside the gallery, allowing Luther to work the miracles required to move the painting. Blundell insists that the proper course of action is to respond to the Anchor's request, and so pauses the auction to move everyone outside.

During their time outside, Luther steals the painting. Eloise plants a mirror next to 'Heaven's Gate'. Luther then uses a lesser creation of mirrors to create a reflection of the painting in a mirror that he has in his Chancel. Followed by a lesser change of mirrors to swap the real painting and the

reflection around. Thus 'Heaven's Gate' ends up in his Chancel, Locus Aster. Eloise then removes her mirror and keeps it about her person in order to travel to Locus Aster later.

Of course those Nobilis who have been dragged outside soon realize that there is no Anchor and no summons. General confusion ensues, during which Marius leaves. It is entirely possible that someone will realize that Marius, as the Power of Misdirection, has had something to do with the sudden appearance and disappearance of the Lord Entropy's Anchor. He may then find himself with some awkward questions to answer.

When Blundell and the PCs return to the Chancel, all seems as they left it. The observant notice, however, that the 'Heaven's Gate' is now in fact a mirror image of its former self. A glance into the mythic reality should reveal that this is not 'Heaven's Gate', but instead a reflection of it. At this point Blundell is running out of options. He can't auction the painting, and thus his Anchor Sally will sink further into addiction and he will have failed to save her. Not only will he have failed to save Sally, but also he has failed to protect 'Heaven's Gate'. He most likely starts to look around for allies, for if he does not resolve this issue fast then he stands to be undone.

Honest John

Shortly after the discovery of the theft, Honest John arrives. Cammora Lord Honest John was gifted immortality many years ago, and has used his time well. He knows of the existence of 'Heaven's Gate', and has decided to come to the auction to acquire it. His reputation is such that a number of the Nobilis have heard of him, and know that he is renowned for being brutal and efficient. It is even said that he has managed in the past to frame a number of Nobilis who displeased him for having broken Lord Entropy's laws. His arrival at the auction causes quite a stir and he is exceedingly keen to know why the auction is not in progress. It is blatantly obvious to the Powers that confessing what has happened would be a mistake. He is not known for his reasonable nature, and it would not be wise to annoy him. Consequently they are going to have to stall him or find a way to get rid of him, lest the wrath of the Cammorae fall upon them. Honest John is no fool, so they'd better come up with a convincing story, and they'd better come up with it fast. There is of course, an opportunity for the Nobilis to cut deals with the Cammorae via Honest John.

Locus Aster

Should the PCs trace the theft and visit Locus Aster, Luther, who is expecting them, greets them in the

reception room. He is a cordial host, offering refreshments, and has no problem with openly discussing the theft of the painting. He is, however adamant that until Tirinius's Nettle Rite is foiled, 'Heaven's Gate' must remain in his safekeeping. He cares deeply for Eloise Corvidae and will see nothing done that will harm her. If the Nobilis have chosen to blackmail Eloise with the knowledge of her and Marius's love, then Luther is furious with them but feels obliged to comply with any requests that they make in order to protect her. Of course, attempting to take the painting by force would be foolish, as Luther's status as True King of Locus Aster makes him exceedingly powerful in his home.

Tirinius's Home

Sooner or later, the Nobilis are going to uncover the truth about Tirinius, Sally and the Nettle Rite, whether it be from Blundell, Marius, Cortez, or through their own divinations. If the association with Eloise is uncovered they can convince her to tell them the truth, or use her love for Marius as a weapon to bully her into giving them the information. Eventually, however they gain the knowledge of his involvement, the path leads to Tirinius. At this point, it is to be expected that a number of the PCs will travel to see him.

Tirinius is a rare creature. Having lost his Familia and Imperator to Excrucian action, he is cut off and alone. He has no Chancel within which to dwell, no allies to call upon, and has not been approached by a rescuer Imperator. Where once Tirinius strutted like a king through the halls of the rich and addicted, now he squats in squalor with society's dregs, a fitting symptom of the fall that this Noble has suffered. Consequently he is a bitter and twisted individual, close to insanity. His belief in the Code of the Wild is unshakable, and he considers Locus Mjornir as a static, confined Chancel, its need for neutrality denying it all hope for freedom. His Nettle Rite is a lash he intends to use to weaken this affront to the Wild, creating discord and fluidity in the Chancel. He is open and honest about his plans and his manipulation of Sally to achieve those aims, claiming Decorum as a hated enemy who has neglected his Anchor.

Poor Sally is with Tirinius, needing her latest hit. Under his influence she has decayed rapidly, becoming a hopelessly addicted wraith of her former self. Yet Tirinius is always aware that she is not his primary goal here, that the auction of 'Heaven's Gate' provides a greater reward to him than the simple nettling of a single Noble, and his bitterness pushes him to punish the society that he feels has abandoned him. He is prepared to lose Sally, if Blundell is forced to lose the painting. The theft of the painting will anger him greatly, as it signifies a failure of his plan. He is prepared to use Sally to nettle Blundell as a poor second choice.

The Nobilis must decide how to handle Tirinius. They could attempt to combat him, by killing Sally; they could attempt to convince him to give up the Nettle attempt; or they could even assist him. Mjornir's status as a rescuer Imperator gives them the opportunity to suggest that the Rite of Rescue be performed upon Tirinius, providing a far greater reward for the Power of Addiction than the Nettle Rite.

Resolutions

It is nearly impossible to predict what the players will actually choose to do to resolve the situation, dictated as it will be by the style of play that they feel most comfortable with and the abilities of their Nobilis. However, there are a few more obvious possibilities that they may choose, and the possible effects that they will have upon the diverse NPCs.

Killing Sally

This is one of the simplest and cruelest solutions. In order to prevent the entirety of Locus Mjornir being damaged by the Nettle Rite, they remove the hold that Tirinius has over Blundell. The Power of Decorum loses his one Anchor, a loss that will grieve him greatly. He is bound by Decorum to thank the other Nobilis for this, as they have saved him from a greater loss. Inside he will seethe with hatred for those who have killed his beloved Sally. However the rest of the Power of Decorum's Familia are spared the potential effects of the nettling, as are Calendula and Ephraim's Nobilis. Locus Mjornir remains intact, its neutrality damaged but not wholly destroyed. The PCs responsible gain an enemy in Decorum and most likely in Tirinius too, but allies in the Lady of Ravens and the Duke of Truth.

Changing the Nature of Prosaic Addiction

It is a possibility that the Nobles involved may choose to change the nature of Prosaic Reality to render heroin addiction as decorous as any of the accepted addictions such as snuff tobacco and alcohol. Should this occur Tirinius will be furious and will oppose them as much as possible, but if his attempts to stop them are in vain, then his entire plan falls to pieces. Decorum's Familia will be very grateful to the PCs, but the Nobilis responsible will have gained themselves a vicious enemy in Tirinius.

Convincing Tirinius to Stop

Should the Nobilis manage to come up with a convincing enough argument for Tirinius or cut a

Where once I had respect for the god, now there is bitterness at his neglect, at his absence when I needed him most. A part of me still yearns for his touch, the propriety, the appropriateness that he brought me; but another piece of me despises him, wishes him ill. After all, where was he when I needed him? How did Decorum save my family? It is best to reject him and his useless concepts and sink into impropriety.
—Sally, Edward Blundell's Anchor

deal with him, then he is prepared to abandon his plan. He most likely nettles Sally to get to Blundell, allowing her to be his link to Decorum. He remains at large, and has the potential to cause more mayhem later, but does not bear a great deal of animosity towards the player characters unless he has been forced in some way. It is possible that the rite may affect Blundell's Familia, but Calendula and Ephraim's Powers remain unaffected. Locus Mjornir suffers a fall in power, but survives. Sally ends up a broken woman, useless to Decorum as an Anchor.

Honest John Helps

In exchange for 'Heaven's Gate' or some other extremely high price, Honest John would be prepared to affect a solution for the Nobilis. This simply involves killing Sally, and as such has the same repercussions as if the player characters had done it themselves. Blundell's hatred is directed towards whoever employed the Cammora Lord, and Tirinius will direct his hatred towards the Cammorae.

Mjornir Rescues Tirinius

This is one of the best possible outcomes from a majority perspective. Tirinius would trade his plan for the opportunity to be re-integrated into Nobilis society, for a replacement Imperator. It is difficult to convince Blundell to co-operate with this, but he gradually realizes that it may be his only hope to avoid Tirinius's machinations. It leaves a very different Locus Mjornir in its wake, however, one in which the Wild now has a stake.

The Song of the Wild

The Wild embraces the concept of true choice. Wild Powers must express themselves truly in their choices, and their choices must assist in the self-expression of others. Of course, these principles can conflict, or Wild Powers would never do disservice to their Code; but Powers of other Affiliations sometimes wonder why this conflict is not continuous.

In NOBILIS, service to the Wild is possible because the Imperators of the Wild exist. Each has the essential quality that, through its choices and acting as itself, it serves as a vehicle for the choices of others. As Imperators, they represent one of the building blocks of the world, and thus other things may share the fundamental nature of the Wild. Powers of the Wild partake of this essence. Their presence, their actions, and their nature naturally serve to enhance the freedom of others, making each choice more true and more significant. The rest of the world reacts against them, bringing its decisions into sharper relief. From a practical perspective, the Powers of the Wild still have to work at it — but the core of their work is refining their own nature, not defying it.

Tirinius perceives Locus Mjornir as a place of stasis. It has cast aside its own nature and forborne its choices. It follows, in his personal interpretation of the Wild's philosophy, that the Chancel can lend nothing to the choices of others. If Mjornir adopts him with the Rite of Rescue, this changes; however small his influence on the Chancel's policies, it taints them with the essence of the Wild, and makes Locus Mjornir a place where choices have more depth.

The fire once loved this secret, but the waves washed it away. May this understanding never rise to drown you.

Subplots

The Hollyhock Gods will want to add subplots to flesh out the adventure. These plots should tie the player characters to the central story of *Heaven's Gate*, and add dynamics to the game. The following are just a few examples of subplots that can be introduced; tailor them to their specific group of PCs to ensure the maximum involvement for the players. Prepare more subplots than you are going to need, since you can always fall back on them should the pace of the game seem too slow.

Beautiful Things

Several of the pieces of art being auctioned by Blundell are unusual in one way or another. Some of them may be original pieces by great masters, pieces that were thought lost to the world, but have in fact been preserved in Locus Mjornir for a long time. One of the pieces may have a link to one of the player characters, perhaps created by a mundane relative of theirs before their commencement. It is also possible that one or more of the paintings has some miraculous power.

The Love Triangle

The love between Eloise Corvidae and Marius Trevaine is a very badly kept secret, a number of the PCs may well have heard about it. What is less well known is how Luther fits with all of this. Unfortunately for the dynamic between the three of them, Luther is also in love with Eloise. Although he also loves Marius, sooner or later it is likely that his desire for the Lady of Ravens will overcome his reluctance to upset his friend. It is possible he may recruit some of the PCs to help him win Eloise over.

The Unlucky Heist

The unluckiest group of thieves in the world have decided to conduct a raid on the auction. Imagining

there to be a wealth of valuables about the person of the guests, in addition to the vast quantity of rare art, the mortals will burst into the gallery near the start of the evening, demanding the Nobilis hand over their valuables. Needless to say, their life expectancy is not long.

GOG AND MAGOG

Due to its open nature, Locus Mjornir is very easy to enter, only requiring a visitor to step through any of the numerous doorways in the mundane world in order to find themselves in the Chancel itself. The Chancel is widely known for its neutral stance and welcoming demeanor, but is plagued by a pair of restless spirits, which call themselves Gog and Magog and do their level best to cause havoc for the occupants and guests alike.

LERENTUAS

Lerentuas, a birch twig, is an Allia of Locus Mjornir, the Nobles keeping it unused until the moment when its distinctive powers may be needed. It is possible that one or more of the visiting Nobilis are aware of this, and wish to acquire it.

SAMUEL O'DONNELL

Fourth of the Powers of Lord Mjornir, the Lord of Rot cares not if his Familia suffers a Nettle Rite, the detrimental effect of the would be Rite mitigated by the delicious spread of rot within the Chancel. He will seek out players who might support Tirinius, and attempt to assist them.

THE RULES OF ILLUSION

Being a guide to characters and locations within Heaven's Gate *according to* Dynamic Nobilis *rules.*

HGs should be briefed on their roles as NPCs using the information given. Additional points which may assist with characterization are listed below.

THE POWERS OF LOCUS MJORNIR

THE POWER OF DECORUM: EDWARD BLUNDELL

Concept

Blundell is driven by the beauty of order, the perfection of appropriateness, and all that is right and good about society's rules. He has chosen to auction 'Heaven's Gate' in order to rescue Sally as he cannot abandon his duty of care. Two favored phrases sum up much of his dealings with the world:

THE POWER OF DECORUM: EDWARD BLUNDELL

ATTRIBUTE	LEVEL	MIRACLE PTS
Aspect	2: Legendary	8
Domain	3: Marquis	
Realm	2: Realm's Heart	
Spirit	0: Candleflame	

Gifts and Virtues	Anonymity's Blessing
	Light Touch
Limits/Restrictions	Affiliation: Code of the Angels
Wound Levels	2 Deadly Wounds
	2 Serious Wounds
	2 Surface Wounds

Anonymity's Blessing: Edward's Gift
This gift invokes a Force 6 lesser change of visual aspect. The gifted Noble becomes nondescript to the point where anyone not making a difficulty 6 sensory acuity check will fail to note the character. People will move out the Noble's way, but will be unable to make out or remember any details about them at all.

MIRACLE LEVEL	INVOCATION	RANGE	UTILITY	COMMON	COST
6 (Domain)	Simple	Self Only	One trick	No	
6 CPS	−1	−3	−3	+1	1 CP

Bonds

STRENGTH	SUBJECT
5	The sanctity of Decorum
4	Sally, his Anchor
4	Mjornir, his Imperator
4	The safekeeping of 'Heaven's Gate'
2	His reputation as a gentleman
1	Locus Mjornir

A place for everything and everything in its place, respect where respect is due, the true design of the creator. Were our people to realize this, then that would most certainly be for the best. To allow the chaos of some Nobilis to interfere with the Creator's design, well, that would not do at all.
—Edward Blundell, Marquis of Decorum

"most certainly for the best" and "that would not do at all". Decorum is reflected in every aspect of his life, not least his choice of carefully appropriate clothes — he frequently appears as a Victorian butler, the very soul of decorum.

Estate

The order of the world, the rightness of appropriate behavior of people and objects, these are the aspects that Blundell sees in Decorum. Trees should not dance; hats should not hold discourse on the current geo-political forces at work in the USA; and one should never ever cheer loudly when dessert arrives at the ambassador's dinner. A lesser creation of Decorum can quieten a noisy discussion in a library, whilst a lesser destruction of Decorum could cause an excited crowd to riot.

Design

A square stemmed purple flower with open blooming tube-like flowers and radical leaves, entwines in a regular way with a closed blue flower with irregular leaves and a ridging of thorns. There is no background to Blundell's design.

I am Raven, protector and advisor to mortals. My children have always offered warning to the mortals, and will continue to do so for all eternity. It saddens me sometimes that in their foolishness the children of Adam and Eve think so ill of my gift to them, but it matters not, they must be protected.
—Eloise Corvidae, Lady of Ravens

THE POWER OF RAVENS: ELOISE CORVIDAE

ATTRIBUTE	LEVEL	MIRACLE PTS
Aspect	1: Metahuman	9
Domain	2: Viscount	
Realm	1: Radiant	
Spirit	4: Conflagration	

Gifts and Virtues	Shapeshifting (Raven)
	Limited Foresight
Limits/Restrictions	Affiliation: Code of the Light
Wound Levels	1 Deadly Wound
	2 Serious Wounds
	2 Surface Wounds

Limited Foresight: Eloise's Gift
This gift invokes a Force 2 lesser divination of the future. The gifted Noble receives some minor information about the immediate future of the target. The Hollyhock God should provide cryptic glimpses of possible futures.

MIRACLE LEVEL	INVOCATION	RANGE	UTILITY	COMMON	COST
2 (Domain)	Automatic	Local	Comprehensive	No	
2 CPS	+1	−1	−1	+1	2 CPS

Bonds

STRENGTH	SUBJECT
5	Marius Trevaine
4	Mjornir, her Imperator
3	The sanctity of Ravens
2	The path of the Light
2	Locus Mjornir
2	HG's discretion

Such fragile things, the humans, delicate like the blossoms of the orchid. Perhaps it is their mayfly lifespans, perhaps it is their weak minds. Whatever causes their fragility, there is a sweet pleasure to be gained from breaking them, shattering their minds and souls with truth.
—Cortez, Magister of Truth

THE POWER OF TRUTH: CORTEZ

ATTRIBUTE	LEVEL	MIRACLE PTS
Aspect	2: Legendary	6
Domain	3: Marquis	
Realm	1: Radiant	
Spirit	1: Hearthfire	

Gifts and Virtues	Immortal
Limits/Restrictions	Affiliation: Code of the Dark
Wound Levels	2 Deadly Wounds
	2 Serious Wounds
	2 Surface Wounds

Bonds

STRENGTH	SUBJECT
5	Mjornir, his Imperator
4	The sanctity of Truth
2	His Familia Caelestis
1	Locus Mjornir
2	HG's discretion
2	HGs discretion
1	HG's discretion

THE POWER OF RAVENS: ELOISE CORVIDAE

Concept
She was created by Mjornir with the power of foresight legendary to ravens. She is moved to protect humans, through pity for their weakness. She is unrepentant of her secret love. She loves to project mystique, and remind other Nobilis of her connection to Ravens, appearing black and feathered wherever she can.

Estate
Eloise believes that the guardianship of the mortals rest with her and her "children", the ravens. Long associated with death, the raven has been sent to provide warning, and has become known as a bird of ill omen. Whilst this galls Eloise, she accepts it as her price for helping humanity. Her ability to control ravens gives her an unprecedented set of eyes and ears in the northern hemisphere.

Design
An open yellow flower with tiny clusters of blooms and whorled leaves stands opposite a thorny black flower with five petals forming a bell shape. All is backed by white background with a raindrop pattern.

THE POWER OF TRUTH: CORTEZ

Concept
He delights in allowing fragile human minds to walk the long path of self-deception before revealing the ugly truth to them and shattering their minds. He is loyal only to Mjornir; other Nobilis, although perfect in comparison to humans, frequently have weak minds. His sense of truth as a perfect guiding influence is reflected in his sharp bearing and clean white dress.

Estate
For Cortez, the truth is a weapon. Not for him the obvious truth of common knowledge, he delights in the secret truths that the mortals hide even from themselves. He delights in digging hidden truths up, and then using them to break mortal minds and spirits.

A lesser divination can grant him the knowledge of a mortal heart's secrets, and a lesser change can make that mortal know the truth, shattering their self-image and their minds with it.

Design
An open white, almost petal-less flower with a black aura twists its stem with a closed petal-less flower with an incarnadine aura.

LORD OF ROT: SAMUEL O'DONNELL

Concept
He works unseen in the shadows, taking grubby pleasure from spreading filth. He is less than comfortable in the company of other *Nobilis*, but secretly gloats at the rotten core within Locus Mjornir. His moods are constantly changing but always tend to the maudlin and he reflects his feelings in his appearance.

Estate
Rot is defined by Samuel as the unseen corruption, the entropy that works its magic within, leaving a healthy looking shell. A lesser creation could rust a car to pieces, whilst a lesser divination could observe a mortal's potential to betray what he believes in.

Design
An open white flower with a disk of petals is spread apart by a black flower, closed, with cross-shaped petals. The whole design is contained within the virulent green circle that represents Hell.

THE POWERS OF LOCUS ASTER

THE POWER OF MISDIRECTION: MARIUS TREVAINE

Concept
Marius was once a hedonist, caring little for others, but now as Magister of Misdirection he believes himself a teacher, protector, guardian of the mortals. He sees his own tricks as "harmless", a cautionary warning that suspicion is necessary for survival. He believes Eloise to be a true Kindred Spirit. He likes to appear a fool, to conceal his extremely astute mind.

Estate
Misdirection is the art of the conman, the stage illusionist and the political spin doctor. Marius uses his domain over it to teach the mortals object lessons in wariness. A lesser creation can create a distraction, whilst a major destruction could crumble world governments as their attempts to bamboozle the public are destroyed and their secrets laid bare.

Design
An open white flower with cross-shaped petals, entwined around a caduceus, opposed by a closed yellow bloom with tiny clusters of flowers. Both have leaves on opposite sides of the stems in pairs.

LORD OF ROT: SAMUEL O'DONNELL

ATTRIBUTE	LEVEL	MIRACLE PTS
Aspect	0: Mortal Form	10
Domain	2: Viscount	
Realm	3: Warden	
Spirit	2: Incandescent Flame	

Gifts and Virtues Eternal
Limits/Restrictions Affiliation: Code of the Fallen Angels
Wound Levels 1 Deadly Wounds
1 Serious Wounds
2 Surface Wounds

Bonds

STRENGTH	SUBJECT
5	Mjornir, his Imperator
5	The sanctity of Rot
2	The path of the Fallen Angels
1	Locus Mjornir
4	HG's discretion
2	HG's discretion
1	HG's discretion

Slowly. Creeping. Quiet. Unseen. None expect me. What joy it is to see their faces. My decay, my pleasure, their suffering. The lie of a healthy outside, with a corrupt core.
—Samuel O'Donnell, Lord of Rot

THE POWER OF MISDIRECTION: MARIUS TREVAINE

ATTRIBUTE	LEVEL	MIRACLE PTS
Aspect	1: Metahuman	10
Domain	3: Marquis	
Realm	1: Radiant	
Spirit	2: Incandescent Flame	

Gifts and Virtues Eternal
Limits/Restrictions Affiliation: Code of the Light
Wound Levels 1 Deadly Wound
2 Serious Wounds
2 Surface Wounds

Bonds

STRENGTH	SUBJECT
5	Eloise Corvidae
4	The sanctity of Misdirection
2	Locus Aster
2	Aster, his Imperator
2	Freedom
1	The path of the Light
1	HG's discretion
1	HG's discretion

"Victim" is such an emotive word. Surely the realization that I have granted you a healthy suspicion, and thus you'll be less likely to be fooled again, is worth any momentary discomfort at being revealed as an idiot?
—Marius Trevaine, Magister of Misdirection

THE POWER OF MIRRORS: LUTHER

ATTRIBUTE	LEVEL	MIRACLE PTS
Aspect	0: Mortal form	7
Domain	2: Viscount	
Realm	4: True king	
Spirit	1: Hearthfire	

Gifts and Virtues	Durant
	Gatemaker
Limits/Restrictions	Affiliation: Code of the Light
Wound Levels	1 Deadly Wound
	2 Serious Wounds
	2 Surface Wounds

Bonds

STRENGTH	SUBJECT
5	Eloise Corvidae
4	Locus Aster
2	Aster, his Imperator
2	The sanctity of Mirrors
2	Marius Trevaine
1	The path of the Light
3	HG's discretion
1	HG's discretion

THE POWER OF ADDICTION: JOSEPH TIRINIUS

ATTRIBUTE	LEVEL	MIRACLE PTS
Aspect	1: Metahuman	8
Domain	4: Duke	
Realm	0: Citizen	
Spirit	2: Incandescent Flame	

Gifts and Virtues	Immortal
Limits/Restrictions	Affiliation: Code of the Wild
Wound Levels	1 Deadly Wound
	2 Serious Wounds
	2 Surface Wounds

Bonds

STRENGTH	SUBJECT
4	Hatred of other Nobilis
4	The sanctity of Addiction
3	Sandrine, his dead Imperator
1	The path of the Wild
1	Freedom
3	HG's discretion
2	HG's discretion
2	HG's discretion

THE POWER OF MIRRORS: LUTHER

Concept
He is deeply uncertain of why he was chosen to his Familia but nevertheless he loves the power of his Chancel. He has a fascination with patterns in general and symmetry in particular, which is reflected in his lifestyle and dress. He is torn between love for Marius and his feelings for Eloise.

Estate
Luther holds dominion over mirrors. He sees them as a power for self-realization and truth, and works to get mortals to examine themselves and the truths within themselves more carefully. A lesser change of mirrors can change a reflection, with a lesser divination, Luther could create the classic scrying mirror.

Design
A pair of silver flowers, open bloomed, with almost petal-less flowers and radical leaves, face one another against a perfectly symmetrical raindrop background.

OTHER CAST MEMBERS

THE POWER OF ADDICTION: JOSEPH TIRINIUS

Concept
He is embittered, an outcast whose mental state verges on insanity. Despite being Power of Addiction he remains gripped by a human ember that yearns for control. He is seeking vengeance on Decorum precisely because he has that control that Tirinius lacks. He has most definitely seen better days. Filthy shabby clothing, sunken eyes, the fire of strength once manifest hides beneath the broken exterior.

Estate
Addiction is a matter of control to Joseph Tirinius. The ultimate control that it provides over a person, mitigated by the utter absence of control possessed by the addict. With a lesser destruction miracle, Joseph could cure a hopeless drunk of his alcohol addiction, with a major destruction he could cripple the economy of certain South American countries.

Design
An open silver bloom with urn-like flowers and leaves in an X-shape opposes a trumpet-shaped purple flower which has yet to bloom, against the background of a silver crescent moon on a dark blue field.

the possession of one of them as a curiosity. Locus Aster is also a fine opportunity for the HG to introduce props that might become of relevance later on in the campaign, should the Chancel become a regular feature of the game.

Most of the characters can wear modern clothes from the HGs' own wardrobes. Where budget allows, hiring a dinner suit for Blundell and a tuxedo for Cortez would provide a boost to the setting of the game. Eloise's raven feathers can be created from a shop-bought feather boa, torn apart and stuck or sewn to a cloak made from a simple semicircle of black material. Samuel may choose to "wear" an amount of dirt and grime, but should be able to cover himself with a coat to circulate among the other Nobilis. Tirinius's foray into decay, on the other hand, should retain a certain element of style, and it's often possible to find fantastic leather coats second-hand which would provide an ideal look for him.

It is important to respect the owner of the property's wishes. If the HGs wish to use thumbtacks to hang paintings in their "art gallery", then it is of paramount importance to check with the relevant people that they do not mind the inevitable holes in their walls. If the HG's grandmother lends Eloise

I loved Sandrine, my Imperator, but she was ripped from me, the manipulations of the Excrucians took her away. It is too late now to help, and sometimes I wonder whether it was indeed my fault, as some have said. Irrespective of the truth, for truth matters little, I am now outcast, alone, and if they will not accept me, then I will make them pay.
—*Joseph Tirinius, Power of Addiction*

a black cloak, she may not want it returned with several small holes where feathers have been sewn on and inevitably fallen off during the course of the game. But in the main, the only limitations are budget and imagination.

After Heaven's Gate

There are a number of ways in which *Heaven's Gate* can be used at the start of a campaign, and a number of ways in which plot seeds from the adventure can be carried forwards.

Assuming that the players have not made enemies of all the Nobilis of Locus Mjornir, that Chancel can become the center of the campaign. With its easy access and open nature, it offers a central point for the PCs to meet for social occasions and formal meetings. If the matter of Tirinius is not resolved, then he will continue to cause trouble for the Nobilis, until he is either rescued or destroyed, thereby providing the HGs with many other opportunities for future scenarios based around his exploits and their effects. 'Heaven's Gate' itself is another matter, with its fate hanging in the balance; it is for the HGs to decide where it ends up if that is not dictated by the action in the game.

Quick Reference Charts

Vital Force

Vital Force = attribute + miracle points spent

Triumph and Misery Chart

Levels of Success and Failure

CRITERION			RESULT
Vital Force	$\leq$	Difficulty – 6	**Misery**
Vital Force	$\leq$	Difficulty – 4	A **deep** failure
Vital Force	$\leq$	Difficulty – 2	A **hard** failure
Vital Force	$=$	Difficulty – 1	A **normal** failure
Vital Force	$=$	Difficulty	A **simple** success
Vital Force	$=$	Difficulty + 1	A **normal** success
Vital Force	$\geq$	Difficulty + 2	A **hard** success
Vital Force	$\geq$	Difficulty + 4	A **deep** success
Vital Force	$\geq$	Difficulty + 6	**Triumph**

Auctoritas Effects

SPIRIT	SHIFTS TOWARD MISERY
0	None
1-2	1
3-4	2
5+	3

Time Chart

Time measured in seconds
Time measures in minutes
Time measured in hours
Time measured in days
Time measured in weeks
Time measured in months
Time measured in years
Time measured in centuries

Using Tools Table

SHIFT TO TRIUMPH	TRANSPORTATION	WEAPONS	MISCELLANEOUS
1 shift	Bicycle	Blades	Feather duster
2 shifts	Moped	Guns	Typewriter
3 shifts	Automobile	Machine guns	Vacuum cleaner
	Motorcycle		Word processor
4 shifts	Airplane	Hand grenades	Staff of fifty maids
		Tank shell	
5 shifts	Teleporter	Nuclear explosion	A.I. writing assistant

Hordes Chart

SHIFTS TO TRIUMPH OR MISERY	NUMBER OF MORTALS	NUMBER OF NOBLES
0	1	1
1	5	2
2	50	3
3	500	4
4	A nation	5+

Attacking Chart

ATTACKING SUCCESS	MAXIMUM DAMAGE DONE
Simple	Battering and bruising; no significant damage
Normal	1 Surface Wound
Hard	1 Serious Wound
Deep	1 Deadly Wound
Triumph	2 Deadly Wounds; kills or knocks out a mortal immediately

Dodging Table

DODGING SUCCESS	MAXIMUM DAMAGE DONE
Simple	Battering and bruising; no significant damage
Normal	1 Surface Wound
Hard	1 Serious Wound
Deep	1 Deadly Wound
Misery	2 Deadly Wounds; kills or knocks out a mortal immediately

NOBILIS

BETWEEN MEN AND GODS,
REALITY AND MYTH, PERFECTION
AND THE END OF EVERYTHING:
THERE STAND THE NOBILIS

PLAYER NAME

BASIC INFORMATION

CHARACTER NAME

IMPERATOR

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

AGE   GENDER

LOOKS

CODE

○ HEAVEN   ○ LIGHT   ○ WILD
○ HELL   ○ DARK   ○ OTHER

PRINCIPLES:

ATTRIBUTES

	LEVEL				MIRACLE POINTS	SOCIAL MIRACLE POINTS
ASPECT	○ ○ ○ ○ ○					
DOMAIN	○ ○ ○ ○ ○					
REALM	○ ○ ○ ○ ○					
SPIRIT	○ ○ ○ ○ ○					

ESTATE
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DOMAINS. IF ANY

GIFTS

MIRACLE LEVEL	ATTRIBUTE	INVOCATION	AREA	FLEXIBILITY	COMMON?	FINAL COST

HANDICAPS

RATING   DESCRIPTION

BONDS & ANCHORS

RATING   DESCRIPTION

DESIGN
CHOOSE TRAITS. PETALS. LEAVES.
THORNS. AND BACKGROUND

MISERY/TRIUMPH CHART

CRITERION	RESULT
Vital Force ≤ Difficulty -6	Misery
Vital Force ≤ Difficulty -4	A deep failure
Vital Force ≤ Difficulty -2	A hard failure
Vital Force = Difficulty -1	A normal failure
Vital Force = Difficulty	A simple success
Vital Force = Difficulty +1	A normal success
Vital Force ≥ Difficulty +2	A hard success
Vital Force ≥ Difficulty +4	A deep success
Vital Force ≥ Difficulty +6	Triumph

WOUND LEVELS

SURFACE	TEMP. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
	PERM. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
SERIOUS	TEMP. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
	PERM. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
DEADLY	TEMP. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
	PERM. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○