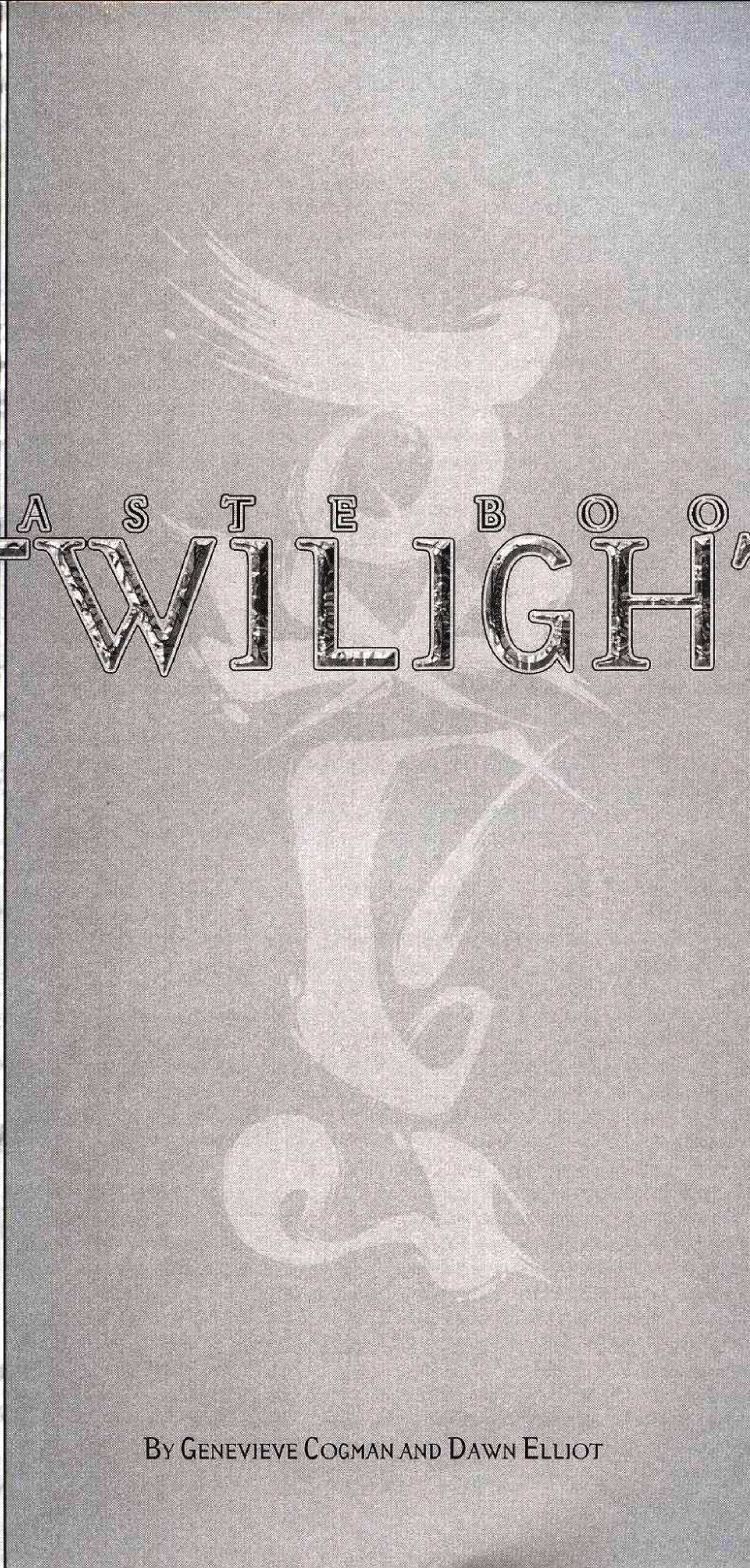


C A S T E B O O K
T W I L I G H T™



A Caste Book for

EXALTED™



C A S T L E B O O K
T W I L L I G H T™

By GENEVIEVE COGMAN AND DAWN ELLIOT

LIGHT OF EVENING

It was dawn when we entered the corridors of this tomb — but no light from outside could pierce the thick darkness that filled the corridors and coiled like ink or smoke in our lungs. Perhaps it was a living thing, Zebahna had speculated mockingly while commenting on my desire to take certain precautions. Her insolence was ultimately unimportant: The Night Castes are great jesters when the mood strikes them, and one must make allowances for such puerility. I would have to be wise for her and my other companions, as well as for myself.

Nothing new there.

I held my lantern steady while Zebahna studied the lock at the center of the heavy iron door. The demon that had been guarding it previously was now sprawled on the floor behind us, his thick green blood seeping out in a slow, acidic pool that was eating into the floor's mosaics, blurring the bright coral and marble into a nauseating swirl of hues. A thousand thin slices marred its hide from where I had invoked the Obsidian Butterflies upon it, and its face was still twisted into a hideous expression of disbelief.

"Almost... yes." She rotated her hand once, and the lock sang as it opened, three bright tones of crystal resounding from within as it irised back on itself in a rose-shaped whirl of silver petals. A ruby glowed at its heart, its fire undaunted despite the 900 years that it had been hidden here. "There."

"Wait." I spoke before she could finish the word, as something *wrong* pricked at the fringes of my perception. With a single wish, I called upon the Charm that the Unconquered Sun had given me to observe evidence and deduce events. I felt my symbol burning on my forehead: My anima flared scarlet and crimson, washing light through the room.

At once, I saw what had alerted me. At the center of the lock, on the casing of the ruby, was a tiny, miniscule fragment of dried blood.

And it was not 900 years old.

"Sayn?" queried Zebahna. "What is it?"

"Blood on the ruby's casing." My voice was calm, but I felt a rage within me, mounting like the heat of my forge. "Someone has been here before us — and only one man knew of this tomb." Ceonnis-ba, the Sidereal who had given me the map with such infinite concern for my safety — and so many curious questions about the route for my journey. It had only been my belief in him that had led us to attempt this investigation, so near to a Dragon-Blooded outpost, so close to the forces of the Realm. "We are betrayed. I am certain of it."

Robbed of her mockery, she nodded. With a moment's work, she closed the lock again. "What about Lantor?"

We had left Lantor, her servant — and lover, I feared — guarding the horses outside. It would have been irresponsible to bring a human into a place such as this. Even if I do not condone close involvement with humans, I understand our duty toward them. "He would have warned us, if something had happened...."

"If he could," I agreed and raised my left arm. The steel-and-gold bracer that covered my forearm burned in the light from my anima. Slowly, the hawk embossed on it began to flex its wings and pull itself erect from the metal, opening its beak in a silent scream of fury. Its pinions reflected scarlet light around the room in a flurry of beams, like spinning drops of blood, and it turned its head toward me, waiting for instructions.

"Go. Find Lantor. Return and report," I instructed it. The hawk sang a single thin tone of steel on steel and took wing, vanishing down the dark corridor that led toward the entrance half a mile away.

Zebahna slid her lockpicks back into her belt, rising from her knees soundlessly. "And what are we going to do if something's happened to him?" There was raw murder in her voice.

I let my lips draw back in a thin smile. "Kill everyone involved until the ground runs red with blood. He was under our protection."

We ran toward the entrance, following the route that my hawk had taken, without exchanging further words. As we reached the great entrance hall, Zebahna paused, holding up a hand to bar my way. "Your hawk has not returned," she murmured.

I nodded. We both knew what that meant. Unfortunately, there was no other exit from this tomb. "I shall conceal us," I replied. "Be ready to kill if you must."

Mists came to my call as I spoke three words that had been secret for 700 years. My Caste Mark blazed brighter than orichalcum upon my forehead, as the words became mist that issued from my mouth. As I fell silent, the mists rose, swirling in a great spiral of opaline shadows, rising into the ivory-paneled roof above our heads — and through that roof. They would rise further, through the soil above that and into the clearing where the entrance lay, hiding our approach from all observers.

I made a quick gesture with my left hand to Zebahna, and she sprinted across the hall, her own Caste Mark a flicker of light on her pale forehead, the pale furs of her cloak a blur from her speed. I followed a few paces behind her, across the hall and up the steps beyond it, unable to match her pace.

By the time I reached the top of the steps, she was far ahead of me, and I could not trace her progress through the thick mists that shrouded the area. I trusted her competence, though, and moved silently toward where we had left our horses.

Emerald light flared sudden and brilliant, slicing through the fog and burning it. Fragments of flaming mist fell to the ground or on the bushes around the clearing, alight with a clear pale glow that dimmed before my anima like stars before the sun. Ceonnis-ba stood to one side, flanked by a man and a woman in red silk robes. Both of them bore the sigil of House Cynis on their gold torcs, and both had full lips and hungry eyes. Where our horses had been, I could see scattered fragments of bone and sinew, strewn over a patch of brown grass and pocked earth. The bodies of servants and guards in Cynis livery lay among the bushes, neat knife-cuts marking their throats.

"Looking for something?" Ceonnis-ba murmured and then turned his right hand toward me. In it lay a few scattered steel feathers. One had sliced a thin cut into his flesh: Blood began to drip slowly, running down over the steel and falling into the grass at his feet. He was surrounded by the light of his own anima, a flame of dark violet that marked him as the Chosen of the Maiden of Endings.

I do not waste my time when it is dangerous to do so. I unleashed the Death of Obsidian Butterflies against the three of them, feeling my anima flare up into a high banner around me as I did so, wings of crimson fire mantling above my shoulders. The black insects spun toward my three opponents, wings sharp enough to cut the wind.

Ceonnis-ba stood his ground and spoke the words that summon the Impenetrable Frost Barrier. His voice crackled in the air like breaking ice, and a cold wave of gray-blue light swept outward from him, leaving a wake of dead brown grass behind it. As the butterflies reached it, they wavered and fell, shattering into tiny frozen shards.

The man beside him laughed. The woman was more intelligent. She watched me.

I spoke a multi-syllabic word that burned in my mouth and made me spit blood. Behind Ceonnis-ba and his allies, the trees thrashed like living things in agony, then bent down to lash at the Sidereal with their long boughs. One blow took him across the forehead: He staggered for a moment, then recovered and laughed in scorn.

The man in scarlet threw himself at the trees in a blur of motion, flame playing around his head and hands as he called on his strength and his Terrestrial powers. Branches snapped in his hands like twigs, and sap ran down the length of his arms as he smashed a fist into the heartwood of the tallest tree, once, twice and a third time.



I took a step toward Ceonnis-ba.

He set the Fire Hornets on me, with a spell that had been old 1,000 years ago, and they rose in a hissing swarm of embers, swarming toward me. At the same time, the woman leapt high into the air, the sunlight flashing on her torc as she came down in a spinning kick.

Zebahna took her from the side, moving across the clearing in a blur of shadows, her anima flaming in a white halo. The two women cartwheeled across the clearing together, their blades flashing faster than the eye could follow, and vanished into the trees. It gave me the moment that I needed to invoke the Flight of Separation, and I became a flock of thrushes that flung themselves upon the hornets, swallowing them in tiny sparks of fire — a moment's exquisite taste, experienced a dozen times at the same instant. Still a dozen separate thrushes, I swooped above the barrier of frost, and reformed behind Ceonnis-ba, the flames of my anima leaping up again with my fury.

The Sidereal's eyes widened in fear as he spun to face me, and he took a sharp breath, then whispered a string of words, and his anima darkened around him like drying blood, till he seemed to be standing at the heart of an amethyst. I saw the change in his eyes, and I *knew* the nature of the spell moments before it washed over me — it was the Threefold Binding of the Heart.

It spun out toward me in 100 bright purple tendrils, sinking into my flesh and vanishing beneath my skin. I felt the incantation ripple through my mind, working its hooks through my soul, like some foul nest of serpents spreading through the caverns of a mountain. A thousand voices whispered in my ears, bidding me to fall to my knees and adore this man, this *genius*, this admirable Sidereal who shone in my eyes like the sun in splendor. My joints locked, and I struggled to breathe, fighting the urge to apologize for raising my hand against him.

"You took your time," hissed the Cynis male, flickers of his anima still hot scarlet and ardent around him. His fellow Terrestrial Exalted had not yet returned: I had no doubt that Zebahna could dispose of her suitably. "You swore that you would give



us two Solar slaves.... I begin to doubt your abilities, Ceonnis-ba. I begin to doubt your good faith. Perhaps you are not as competent an ally as I expected."

Unconquered Sun, I prayed, my muscles trembling and spasming. *You who burn away the folly of ignorance and the darkness of lies, hear the prayer of this your child, your Chosen, your Exalted. Grant me the strength to renew your glory and build your houses of knowledge again.*

Ceonnis-ba was sweating visibly, and his breath came harshly. "This is a Solar, new to his power. I have lived a thousand years. I shall tame him."

Strength and pride burned in me, with a kindling glory of light that was memory — memory of 1,000 years ago, before the Contagion, before we were massacred. I threw off the spell with a shudder, casting it away in fragments of purple slime that fell to the grass and squirmed there as they faded. The air shimmered around us, and it shook with a sound like 100 gongs beating. "And a thousand years back on you and all your kindred," I spat in his face, reaching out to take his throat between my fingers.

He squirmed and kicked, clawing at my hands, and our animas clashed and flared in two competing sweeps of fire. To one side, I could see the scion of Cynis recoiling at our unleashed power, face haggard with fear. "A thousand years," I whispered to Ceonnis-ba, my face so close to his that I could smell the stale incense that clung to his silken robes, "since you killed us. A thousand years that our vengeance has been hammered out on the anvil of patience." My thumbs dug into his windpipe. "A thousand years that you have lived — and that you have *lied*."

He was trying to force the words of a spell between his lips, choking and gasping as his heels thrashed on the ground. I bent him backward, going down to one knee as I forced him down, my smithy-hardened muscles aching with the effort.

Fire crashed around the pair of us: Evidently, the Terrestrial had found within himself something that resembled courage. Grass charred to ash in a moment, and the earth dried and cracked beneath our feet. Ceonnis-ba tried vainly to scream as the red flames caught on his robes and his pale hair, washing over the pair of us in great waves that blocked out the sun's light.

I felt the mark on my forehead burn like the living sun, and as I broke the Sidereal's neck, I channeled the last of my Essence into my anima. It answered my call, folding around me in deep swirls of crimson light that held the flames away from me. I rose, letting Ceonnis-ba's body fall, and from the center of my garnet shield, I smiled at the Dragon-Blooded fool.

He broke and ran, leaping to the branches, and fled through the trees like a frightened squirrel. Burning leaves fell to the ground behind him, tumbling to the grass below and smoldering till they charred away to ash.

Zebahna slid from a gap between two bushes, smoothing a loose lock of hair back from her face. A streak of blood ran down the back of her hand, as red as the Cynis male's flames. "Finished?" she inquired mildly.

I looked at Ceonnis-ba's body thoughtfully. "For the moment. As much as anything ever finishes."

"Lantor's dead." She smiled, with an odd blankness to her eyes. "But that doesn't matter, now. I killed that Cynis bitch, cut her throat and let the blood run out to warm the roots of the trees. But that doesn't matter either. What matters is that I remembered. It came back to me, the light, the glory, the time before. I remember being here once before. I remember it now: You were here with me, and we stood together against the darkness. I remember that you died here, and I mourned you."

"Not this time," I answered her.

* * * * *

Above us, the sun burned in the sky: unending, unceasing, unconquered.


CREDITS

Authors: Genevieve Cogman and Dawn Elliot
Storyteller Game System Design: Mark Rein•Hagen
Developer: Geoffrey C. Grabowski
Editor: John Chambers
Art Director: Brian Glass
Artists: Aaron Nakahara, Andy Brase, Eric Canete,
Sam Liu, Skottie Young & Tracy Yardley
Cover Art: Melissa Uran
Cover Design: Brian Glass & Kieran Yanner
Layout and Typesetting: Kieran Yanner

SPECIAL THANKS:

Shout out to all the [DSLRL] and [CLR] regulars who help me stay sane with a little UT CTF when the hours get too long. Skillz up, llamas down, y'all.





1554 LITTON DRIVE
STONE MOUNTAIN, GA 30083
USA

WHITE WOLF
PUBLISHING

© 2002 White Wolf Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction without the written permission of the publisher is expressly forbidden, except for the purposes of reviews, and for blank character sheets, which may be reproduced for personal use only. White Wolf, Vampire, Vampire the Masquerade, Vampire the Dark Ages, Mage the Ascension and Aberrant are registered trademarks of White Wolf Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Exalted, Book of Three Circles, Scavenger Sons, Caste Book Dawn, Caste Book Zenith, Caste Book Twilight, Exalted the Dragon-Blooded, the Second Age of Man, Age of Sorrows, Trinity, Werewolf the Apocalypse, Wraith the Oblivion, Changeling the Dreaming and Werewolf the Wild West are trademarks of White Wolf Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. All characters, names, places and text herein are copyrighted by White Wolf Publishing, Inc.

The mention of or reference to any company or product in these pages is not a challenge to the trademark or copyright concerned.

Check out White Wolf online at
<http://www.white-wolf.com>; [alt.games.whitewolf](http://alt.games.whitewolf.com); and [rec.games.frp.storyteller](http://rec.games.frp.storyteller.com)

PRINTED IN CANADA



C A S T E B O O K T W I L I G H T™

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIGHT OF EVENING	2
INTRODUCTION	8
CHAPTER ONE: OUR SOULS THROUGH OUR EYES	12
CHAPTER TWO: OBLIGATIONS OF THE CASTE	24
CHAPTER THREE: THE WORLD AWAITING US	38
CHAPTER FOUR: VOICES NOT OUR OWN	50
CHAPTER FIVE: DREAMS OF THE FIRST AGE	62
CHAPTER SIX: MAGIC OF THE TWILIGHT	68
APPENDIX I: SIGNATURE CHARACTERS	82
APPENDIX II: OTHER NOTABLE TWILIGHT CASTE	92



INTRODUCTION

"This was Durny's first step on the way he was to follow all his life, the way of magery, the way that led him at last to hunt a shadow over land and sea to the lightless coasts of death's kingdom."

—Ursula K. Le Guin, "A Wizard Of Earthsea"

Caste Book: Twilight is a sourcebook about the Twilight Caste Exalted and their place in the world of **Exalted**. The Twilight Caste, now feared as Anathema and Unclean, are the greatest sorcerers that have ever set foot upon the surface of the world. In the First Age, they could speak words that would level mountains or empty oceans. They could slay a single swan in the middle of a flock of 300 with a mere gesture or raise palaces of jade and ebony from the earth. Their return may portend a new age of glory, where works of magic will tame the Wyld and rebuild the Realm, cleansing the world of corruption and bringing back the wonders of the First Age. Or it might also foreshadow an era of cataclysms and wars, where magical struggles will devastate the land and leave the people starving and plague-ridden. The Unclean are scholars, healers, creators and sorcerers — they have many ways to use their power and to strike against their enemies. This book discusses the members of this caste, both before and after their Exaltation. It also offers new Charms, spells and artifacts to assist the

Twilight Caste Exalted in once more becoming the masters of sorcery.

Understanding the Twilight Caste requires an understanding of the world in which they live and of the powerful beings with which they interact. The Twilight sorcerers are Exalted and reborn into a world which has learned to hate and fear them over the years in which the Immaculates have held dominion. Other Exalted, such as the Abyssals, the Sidereals and the Lunars, see them as tools to be used, pawns to be shaped and taught or long-lost consorts to be sought out... or avoided. The Dragon-Blooded struggle to control the fracturing Realm and fear the resurgence of these Unclean Anathema, dark and unholy wizards who pact with demons and consort with darkness. The Fair Folk view them as challenges, threats and potential allies. Spirits and elementals know the Twilight Caste for the mighty sorcerers that they are and are torn between fear and awe.

Also, the Twilight Caste is only one of the five castes of Solar Exalted. Many Solars are drawn into

Circles that include members from several different castes. This book provides viewpoints on how the Twilights view their fellow Solars, and what the other Solars think about the mystical Twilight Caste.

While each Twilight Caste Solar is an individual, there will always be reasons why the Unconquered Sun has chosen to Exalt them into this particular caste. Only men and women with the hearts of true scholars, sorcerers, healers and creators will be reborn into the Twilight Caste. Through their Exaltation, they will be given access to vaster power than they had ever imagined, and they will gain the keys of sorcery. And the legendary sorcerers of the Twilight Caste have the power to save the world — or to destroy it.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Caste Book: Twilight offers new perspectives and insights into the lives and motives of the Twilight Caste. This book is intended to help you understand your character and her place in the world of the Solar Exalted as well as to describe some of the ways in which the other inhabitants of the world may perceive and react to your character.

Chapter One: Our Souls Through Our Eyes introduces five different Twilight Caste Exalted and lets them describe their lives and how they came to be Exalted. These characters provide examples of some of the varying individuals who have been Exalted into this caste.

Chapter Two: Obligations of the Caste discusses how the Twilight characters perceive themselves and the reasons why they believe that they have been Exalted. The brief tales or discussions in this chapter both help to provide a more vivid image of the world of **Exalted**, and they also demonstrate how the Twilights intend to live in it — or to change it.

Chapter Three: The World Awaiting Us gives opinions from the five Twilight Exalted on other Solar castes, Sidereals, Lunars, the Fair Folk, the Realm, the Dragon-Blooded, the shadowlands and other matters of importance to them.

Chapter Four: Voices Not Our Own showcases various images of the Twilight Caste, as seen by other powerful beings in the world. Some of them see potential pawns, others see rivals or enemies, and a very few see allies — but all of them must consider the Twilight Exalted as a potential factor in their schemes. Players can also use the brief anecdotes as a source of allies or enemies for their characters.

Chapter Five: Dreams of the First Age provides information about the dreams and memories of the First Age that occasionally visit all Solar Exalted. The Twilights are haunted by these shadows of the past and by the knowledge of all the spells and scholarship they have lost. This chapter also includes examples of the sort of memories that many Twilight Caste have about this long-lost era.

Chapter Six: Magic of the Twilight provides new Charms for the Twilight Caste (including some incredibly powerful ones requiring permanent Essence scores of 4, 5 or 6), new spells for sorcerers and additional Hearthstones and magical items.

Appendix I: Signature Characters contains five character templates, one for each of the narrators as a starting character.

Appendix II: Other Notable Twilight Caste presents five members of the Twilight Caste who have become respected — or feared — in the world of **Exalted**.

SOURCE MATERIAL

Sorcerers and scholars occur in heroic literature from mythic periods to present fantasy. They may appear as heroes, villains or vital supporting characters — in such a case, they are often more interesting than the titular heroes of the story. They also appear in movies and television shows, though budget constraints may prevent them from showing their full expertise. There are many useful sources: A few suggestions are given below.

TELEVISION

The TV series *Robin of Sherwood* has several sorcerers in it, even if most of them are evil. Herne the Hunter in that series could be portrayed as a Twilight Exalted who commands the local forest spirits and provides council to the outlaws when necessary.

A number of anime series have sorcerers, smiths, healers or scholars as important cast members. *Fushigi Yugi* contains a sorcerer, Chichiri, and a healer, Mitsukake, among the group of heroes gathered to save the kingdom and serve the Priestess of Suzaku. (The group itself makes an excellent Circle, though the others are mostly Dawn Caste warrior-types.) Another popular series, *Magic Knight Rayearth*, involves several sorcerers who specialize in binding local spirits and sorcerous armor of immense power. *The Vision of Escaflowne* has huge magical mechas with giant swords, soul-bonded to the wielders, which would certainly intrigue a lot of Twilight craftsmen.



MOVIES

There are few really good fantasy films in Western cinema, and even fewer of them have interesting sorcerers. Thulsa Doom in *Conan the Barbarian* is a stereotypically evil sorcerer, though enslaving hordes of minions and shooting venomous snakes as arrows from a bow has a certain appeal.

Hong Kong cinema provides many sorcerers, ranging from spell-slinging martial artists to mystical Ice Queens. *Zu: Warriors from the Magic Mountain*, *Spooky Encounters 2*, *Portrait of a Nymph* and *Witch with Flying Head* are all worth watching, as are many more. (These are especially good for Twilight Castes who want to physically kick ass as well as use some jaw-droppingly awesome spells.)

There are many, many anime films involving sorcerers, magical artifacts, mystical healers and learned scholars. *RG Veda* (sadly unfinished in anime, but continued in manga) has a scholar and sorceress in the “Circle” of characters planning to restore a displaced heir to his rightful throne. Dark Schneider in *Bastard!* is a sorcerer whose enthusiastic use of violent, large-scale magic would make him very popular with most of the Dawn Caste. *Slayers* (and its numerous sequels) offer several sorcerers, each with a different preferred style. In a modern setting, *Doomed Megalopolis* offers several kung-fu magicians and priests (particularly Hirai in the first episode). *X/1999* has two groups of sorcerers, avatars, priests and other characters chosen by fate fighting it out apocalyptically in the middle of Tokyo — useful for Twilight Caste who want to destroy the seven mystical underpinnings of the world and cause widespread destruction.

LITERATURE

Mythology has almost as many sorcerers and crafters — often united in the same person — as it does heroes of battle. In the Finnish *Kalevala*, the warrior Lemminkäinen is the youngest and brashest of the three heroes. The older two are Väinämöinen, the Wise Singer, a mighty sorcerer, and Ilmarinen, the legendary smith. Their main enemy, the old crone Louhi, is herself a sorceress of stature, capable of singing herself into the form of a giant eagle who can carry 100 warriors under each wing and sing up a wind to carry her across the sea.

In Egyptian mythology, the goddess Isis was the mistress of sorcery: She persuaded Ra to give up his secret name, used her spells to resurrect her husband Osiris and to conceive her son Horus. Magicians often figure in Egyptian myth — sometimes as wise

heroes, and sometimes as overly proud fools. In the Third Dynasty, the architect and priest-physician Imhotep (as well being a genuine historical character) became a popular hero and was the subject of a number of folk stories.

Among the Norse gods, Odin was a seeker of hidden lore: He hung for nine days and nights on Yggdrasil to bring back the secret of the runes, and he traded his eye for a draught from Mimir’s Well to bring him wisdom. The alfar (very similar to Exalted’s Mountain Folk) are great crafters and smiths, creating items that would fit most Exalted games extremely well, such as Gullinbursti, Frey’s golden boar, which could run faster than any horse, across the sky or over water, and was so bright that it could see where it was going even on the darkest night.

20TH-CENTURY FICTION

Jack Vance has written a number of short stories and full-length novels involving sorcerers. His “Mazirian the Magician” is a must-read, and the rest of his Dying Earth series is also worth investigation.

Elizabeth Willey has three novels set in a period fantasy world: *A Sorcerer and a Gentleman* and *The Price of Blood and Honor* both repay investigation, with sorcerers who have elemental affinities and extremely sharp tempers. Animal spirits are given human forms to populate a new-made realm, and one character is entirely artificial, molded from clay and wood and stone (not that she knows it). Willey’s other novel, *The Well-Favored Man*, is also interesting, but less immediately connected to the first two.

Mary Gentle’s *Rats and Gargoyles* is an example of twisted high politics and low cunning, as well as some intriguing variants on sorcery. Her magic-wielders range from an expert in natural magic and forest cycles to a medium who helps send the spirits of the dead on their way to a group of thieves who are expert enough at card-sharpping to adjust a tarot card reading — and to force the world to conform to the new configuration.

All of Clark Ashton Smith’s work is good. He uses dark and exotic themes, providing plenty of background for any sorcerer who’d like to spice matters with a few hints of necromancy, demon-summoning, forbidden alchemy and arcane pacts. One of his best stories, *The Dark Eidolon*, is a classic example of a magician who is injured as a child and devotes his life to a dark and hideous vengeance.

While Robert E. Howard is best known for his *Conan* stories, there are plenty of wizards and magical craftsmen featuring in them — though usually as

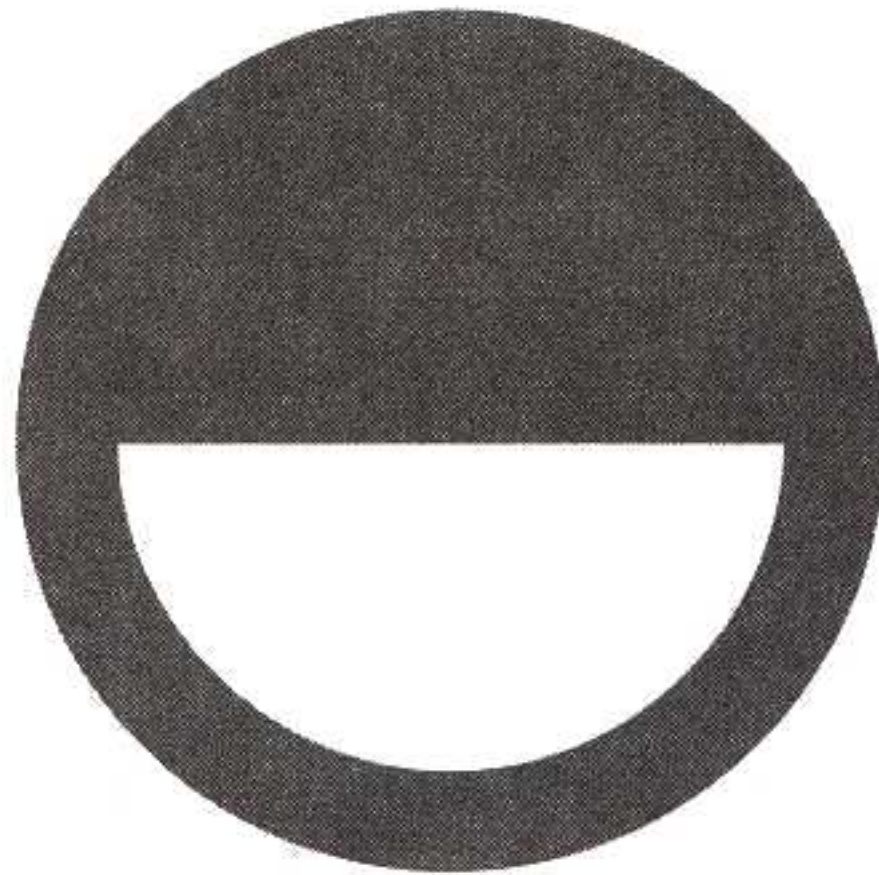
adversaries. His short story *The People of the Black Circle* is an excellent piece of archetypal sorcerer pulp fantasy.

Nina Hiriki Hoffman has several books that, although set in the modern world, offer interesting sorcerers and spirits. Her novel *The Thread That Binds the Bones* showcases a family of sorcerers with their own internal rules and practices and some fascinating ancestral spirits. Among the Boltes, dying isn't the end: You stay on, sleeping in the house, to possess your descendants when necessary for the good of your family.


In Fritz Leiber's Fafhrd and Gray Mouser books (*Swords and Deviltry*, *Swords Against Death*, *Swords in the Mist*, *Swords Against Wizardry*, *Swords of Lankmar* and *Swords and Ice Magic*), two of the main support-

ing characters are wizards — Sheelba of the Eyeless Face and Ningauble of the Seven Eyes. They're excellent examples of the wizardly mentor with great arcane powers that can be a great benefit to heroes — or a great danger.

Michael Scott Rohan's *Winter of the World* series (*The Anvil of Ice*, *The Forge in the Forest*, *The Hammer of the Sun*, *The Castle of the Winds* and *The Singer and the Sea*) portrays several smiths who craft magical and mythic artifacts and are extremely good resources for any Twilight Caste that way inclined. Another book of his, *A Spell of Empire*, is an extremely amusing piece of alternate history with some interesting details on sorcery and demon-summoning — and some swashbuckling that'd suit any Solar Exalted.







CHAPTER ONE
**OUR SOULS
 THROUGH
 OUR EYES**



The Twilight Caste was born to discover knowledge, to use it and to ensure that it is remembered. Long ago, in the First Age, the Twilights were world-shaking sorcerers, healers who could cure life-threatening injuries, investigators who could discover a murderer from a single dropped eyelash, smiths and craftsmen who could build artifacts and weapons that were awesome in their beauty and power and scholars commanding libraries of vast scope. When confronted with death, disease and opposition, they brought the full force of their intellects against it, seeking for remedies in ancient lore or creating spells and devices to resolve the problem. All members of the Twilight Caste are accustomed to using their minds when dealing with the world around them, whether they have the keen wit of scholars and investigators, the creative artistry of craftsmen or the sensitivity of healers.

Twilight Caste characters come from a wide range of backgrounds and settings. Some may have devoted their lives to the search for lore, while others may be blank slates who have never had the opportunity to learn to read or write and never knew a hunger for wisdom, having no opportunity to seek it out. Yet, in general, most of them gain their powers in some exercise of their minds, whether it be a work of scholarship or a deed of craftsmanship or a struggle with spirits where they must pit mind and soul

against the might of their unearthly attackers. For these Twilights, Exaltation is a sunlike glory, where their whole nature is laid open to the power of the Unconquered Sun, and they gain a new acuity and perception that they could never have appreciated before.

This does not mean that a member of the Twilight Caste cannot be skilled in other areas. There are those of this caste who are skilled warriors, crafty spies or haughty politicians. Some spent all their lives as merchants or sailors or even beggars before Exaltation lifted them up and raised them to the station of Solar Exalted. Ultimately, however, it is the use of their minds that all Twilight Exalted most enjoy. Although they may take pleasure in other pursuits, it is the exercise of scholarship and mental excellence that brings them true fulfillment and is the glory of their caste.

Although the experience of Exaltation is a truly transforming and uplifting one, on a spiritual level, it can only enhance what is already there. It will not create a love for scholarship where none existed before or make a lazy ignoramus into a man who seeks excellence. Dull-witted clods and book-burning fools will never be Exalted into the Twilight Caste. Only those who are worthy of the gift of Exaltation will be chosen to receive it. Here now are the stories of five members of the Twilight Caste.



SAYN

I remember the dry lands and the brown trees: The village lay at the heart of the plains, backed up against a cliff of black stone that reared above us like a wave. My father's forge was at the center of the village, like the lynchpin of a wheel. From childhood, I would play in its shelter, listening to the sound of his hammer and seeing the fires leap and billow around the metal that he worked.

My mother would not speak of her family to me. She taught me how to read and write and the subtler arts of ciphering and artistry, but she would never tell me who had taught them to her or why she bore a twisted scarlet tattoo on the flesh above her heart. One of the oldest women in the village — long since dead — whispered to me that my mother had been born to a Dynastic family and that she had been a bastard child, cast out by the neglected wife of her sire and driven into the Southwest plains to live or die alone. I was a callow child at that time and thought more of the old woman's honey-cakes than of this story. Now that I would know more, if I could, all opportunity has been taken away.

When I was 16 years of age and had passed the rites of manhood, a wasting fever swept across the land. My mother and my father died within an hour of each other: She used what knowledge of healing that she had, but it was profitless, and he closed his eyes and turned his face to the wall and died even while she spread new ointments on his chest and hands. Seeing this, she gave way to the tremors that shook her body and lay down beside him, waiting for the fever to take her as well. This I was told by another who had been in the same room and had seen it happen. I was the only one left who had the knowledge to tend the village forge, and thus, I became the village smith.

I worked each day under the burning sun, crafting the necessities for the village: Veins of iron and copper ran near to the cliff, allowing me to forge tools of all kinds. While I hammered out the daily allotment of hoes and scythes, nails and barrel-hoops, I dreamed of creating subtler things: I would make eagles of steel that would spread their wings against the sky; bracers of gold that would be folded seven times and interlaced with diamond and sapphire, till they could turn a blow from the hardest sword; boots of copper and iron that would be strong enough to leave their prints a cubit deep in solid rock. I even dreamed of working the fabled metals of orichalcum and moonsilver and starmetal and of making wonders that would cause all who beheld them to marvel and to rejoice that such things could exist.

EXALTATION

In my 25th year, there was a drought upon the land. The rains did not come to ease our thirst, and the people grew thin and faint with hunger as our plants died in the fields. I worked at the forge, beating upon a ploughshare

and hearing the crying of children in the nearby huts, and I had no heart for dreams of craftsmanship. Instead, I prayed for deliverance. Remembering the tales of the Unconquered Sun, I cried in my heart to him with each blow upon the iron, praying to him for mercy from this heat that he had sent upon us.

And with the final strike of hammer on metal, I was answered. A light burned around me, deep as the hues of blood, and I felt a strange flame marking itself upon my brow. A thousand memories ran in my mind, and all my dreams of skill and craftsmanship seemed to come together in a single burning disc of orichalcum that burned like the living flame of the sun. A new strength ran in my arms and shoulders, and I heard a whispering in the back of my mind, a memory of the old stories that said that once a stream had run from underneath the cliff.

Still bearing my hammer in my hand, I strode to the foot of the cliff and looked at the dusty black stone. It seemed to me in that instant that my sight grew keener and my senses more precise and that I could almost hear the rush of water behind a particular facet of the rock. The crimson light still played around me, as fire burns around a torch. Distantly, I heard the cries of the villagers, mingling surprise and dread, as I swung my hammer hard against the rock. The stone shattered with the force of my blow, and a spring came running forth from where the cliff had hidden it, fresh water pouring out onto the dry earth.

The villagers threw themselves to the ground in awe and fear, before fetching buckets to carry the water to the fields or to those who were too weak to move from their beds. But I — I heard little of their praise or their words of gratitude. My eyes were on the sun, burning high above, just as the mark of the Twilight Caste burned upon my forehead.

After the initial glory of the whole event had worn off slightly and the villagers knew that there would be enough water for us all to survive, they began to grow afraid. Had I not become the very image of the Anathema that we all knew of from legend, one of the Unclean? Some of the hotheads clamored that I should be cast out and whipped into the desert. Others, wiser and older, pointed out that I had saved them when no spirit or god had lifted a finger and that I had always been known for moral rectitude and strict virtue.

At this point, I explained, clearly but firmly, that I now knew myself to be the Chosen of the Unconquered Sun, but that I had no wish to leave this village. However, I would be glad to continue my work as smith and had no intention of trying to set myself up as ruler or of taking any position of leadership — unless, of course, they wanted me to. Memories of the First Age were stirring in me, and shadows of the time before flickered behind my eyes, reminding me of how I had been a Solar, great among my kind, commander of both Terrestrial Exalted and humans. If this was the task for which I had been reborn, then I prayed that the Unconquered Sun would send me guidance.

In the end, the village elders agreed that I should be left in peace as their smith. I wonder what I would have done if they had decreed otherwise? I cared for the villagers, and I would not have harmed them, but I knew by then that I was a different order of being, and I would not have let them harm me. Perhaps I would have simply left them and walked into the dry fields, seeking another place to live. The fire that burns in my veins would have given me the strength to survive — it has done so before now, and it will do so again.

However, if I had thought about it, I could have warned them what would happen. Some of the villagers were already bringing me offerings, leaving them by my hut as tokens of homage or worship. When I drove off the first pack of bandits, I was acclaimed as the village's champion unanimously. Wanderers began to settle near us, drawn by the spring from the cliff — which never dried, even in Resplendent Fire — and by the bandit heads — which I had planted on posts, as warnings to others of their kind. Soon, I found myself being hailed as a demigod, and my words were being taken as divine pronouncements.

It would have been enough to corrupt a lesser man or, indeed, any human. Fortunately, the grace of the Unconquered Sun kept me from abusing my position. It is true that I expect certain standards from those who live under my protection, but sometimes, I think that I might be happier alone, with only the necessities of life to satisfy my hunger and thirst, so that I could devote my full attention to my forge. For that is where I find true satisfaction and contentment — in the crafting of metal into works such as no human eye has ever seen before and in ensorcelling them with the words of power that have dimly returned to me from so many years ago.

Others of my kind have come to me, and I have journeyed with them, to tombs and to cities, to the dark shadowlands and to the recesses of the Wyld. Yet, each time, I have felt compelled to return to this village, which was once my home and is now my duty. These people depend on me — how can I abandon them, now that they have come to accept the rule and judgment of a Solar once again? Perhaps it is a weakness on my part, to cling to familiar things so strongly, but I feel that, if so, it is also a strength. I am reminded of the humbler tasks as well as the more elevated ones, and I bow my head to labor in the dust and heat of the day, rather than setting myself above the villagers upon a golden throne.

FEHIM

Buildings scream when they burn. I was hearing it now from the inside. The plastered walls were bucking, and the wooden beams were raining sparks over us all. The fighting was still going on, despite the fire. I'd thrown my last knife and wrenched a sword from the hand of a dying enemy. The guard had choked out a curse, but I'd kicked him in the throat before he could



finish it. I had enough problems without a blood curse to hinder me.

The Three Devils' grand hall was a madhouse; the wounded were screaming as they were trampled, the cursed precinct captains were urging their troops forward, and the rest of us were trying desperately to break through the guards' blockade before we were burned alive. Red and black uniforms were everywhere, ambushing us at our hidden bolt holes and escape routes. Then, the south wall exploded inward with a great roar, and more shrieks rose as people were buried in rubble.

A great warrior leapt through the smoke and dust, red hair dancing like the fires, wearing blood-red jade armor. As he laughed smoke poured from his mouth and we fell back in a panic. It was Ledaal Serinim, the High Commander himself, here to oversee the final slaughter. Head and shoulders above we mortals, even his own troops drew away from the Dragon-Blooded warrior. He swept the front lines, swinging that double-headed spear of his in a glittering arc, and two of us went down in a spray of blood. I threw myself to the ground as I saw the gleam of that enormous weapon returning, and more blood rained down around me. A head bounced past mine, and it belonged to Kepok the Red.

Cornered by fire, we were forced to face the High Commander. Desperation made us brave, and we rushed him, knowing none of us had a chance on our own. Two of us went down immediately. I made a wild swing, even as I cringed away from the Dragon-Blooded's battle-mad face. He only laughed at us and roared out a Charm of burning. My walkaway talisman, fastened close to my neck, shattered, while my three friends burst into flame.

Ristan Fumble-Handed went down, and I dashed through the break, taking a wild swing at the High Commander's flank as I passed. I missed and ran past a half-dozen desperate struggles to the far wall where a phoenix scroll hid one of many secret exits. I pulled the scroll down and threw it over the face of a pursuing city guard. She batted it away and kicked me in the stomach. I doubled over, which saved my life as she tried to behead me with her axe. I parried the return stroke with my stolen sword and tried to kick her in the kneecap, but she dodged aside. I stabbed wildly, twisting away from another swing from her axe, and the grate of metal on bone jolted up my arm. The soldier shrieked as I tore a bloody swath through her thigh. She brought the axe down like it was a mallet. I let go of my sword, still buried in her leg, and threw myself backward. The edge of the axe brushed my arm like a kiss and drew a fine line of blood down the back of my hand. She was already falling, blood jetting from her leg, her eyes meeting mine in surprise.

I yanked on the door, swinging it open to release a cloud of choking smoke. Still, the fiery hallway was safer than facing the High Commander. I was no swordsman. I ran into the darkness.

Beneath my fear and the knowledge that it would be a miracle if I were to escape, was the realization that the Three Devils' gang had been betrayed. I didn't know how. I didn't know who. But if I lived through the night, I would learn these things. Then, the traitor would have some time, while he watched rats eating his guts, to realize his error.

Treachery wasn't unusual, not in a gang of murderers, thieves and blackmailers. But the Three Devils gang was loyal to its own. We squabbled amongst ourselves, but like any family, we stood together against outside enemies. It was my job to make sure of it. I was the Top Man's left hand. The one no one knew was coming. I discovered secrets. I kept an eye on all the double deals going down in the city. I bribed guards, employed spies and killed informants. I made sure my family stayed loyal. No one in the Three Devils gang wanted to cross me; they might wake up dead one day.

I had a dozen or more guards in my pocket, and none of them had warned me. Someone had known who my informants were and had somehow silenced them. Someone had told the guard how to get past the safeguards and watchwards protecting the compound. Someone had known how to keep us as stupid as cows led to the slaughter. It was my job to find traitors and my failure was killing everyone I knew. But, whoever he was, he couldn't hide forever.

The smoke grew heavy and hot — the passage I'd chosen led deeper into the Three Devils' compound. My friends were dying back there, in the great hall, trying to buy time for their families to escape. None of us had a hope of mercy if we fell into the hands of the city guard. The Three Devils' gang and the city guard had been enemies for far too long, and the High Commander was famous for his love of slaughter.

The fire made sense, now that the High Commander was here. In a city as large as Yane, fire was more dangerous than any gang, but the Dragon-Blood had power over fire — he could call it, quiet it, send it in to drive us out like rats. It didn't matter to him that in our compound were our wives and children, our whores and orphans — people who didn't deserve to be burned alive.

I didn't deserve to be burned alive.

I had to run through fire the last few feet of the passage, only my fear of the High Commander kept me from turning back. If it had only been the guards, I would have taken my chances. But there was no hope of defeating a Dragon-Blooded warrior in open combat.

EXALTATION

I crashed out of the exit, batting at my burning shirt, right into a cluster of startled guardsmen. The squad leader dropped the looted mirror he was carrying, and it shattered all over the floor. I shouted some gibberish and threw one of my trick eggs, hitting him square on his leather breastplate. My little trick, a hollowed out egg packed full of flour and finely ground hot pepper, usually didn't do much besides give me an extra moment, but this time, the fire running

along the ceiling ignited the flour in a brief but spectacular fireball. We all shouted, and I took off running again.

The guards dropped the loot they'd been carrying and gave chase. I darted up the nearest set of steps, heading up into the burning upper stories in hopes that would throw off my pursuers. They followed, as stupid as I was. The hallway at the top of the stairs ended in a sea of fire. The guards were behind me, too many to fight, and I ran into the nearest room and jammed my last knife in the door to delay them.

There was a window, and I threw open the shutters and stuck my head out. Three stories down and a sheer wall. No guards down there at the moment. There was a bunch of garbage piled against the wall, maybe it was soft garbage. The guards were quickly kicking their way through the door. I clambered out onto the sill, lowered myself until I was hanging by my finger tips and froze. The fall could kill me, and I couldn't make myself let go — even if it was my only chance. Panting, I pressed my scorched face to the crumbling brickwork and scrabbled for a foot hold that wasn't there.

There was laughter above me, and I looked up to see the squad leader leaning out the window. His eyebrows had been singed off by the fireball. I let go even as he swung down with his club. The club crashed across my face, I spun out into the sky, and my blood flew above me like red birds. It spun above me deliriously fast, a beautiful and strange crimson mandala. It grew brighter, burning bright, and I heard the guards yell as if they too saw it. The falling seemed to take forever. I hit the ground, and the shock of it somehow wrenched *past* me in a blaze of orange light. I hurt, but I landed on my shoulder and neck. I should have died.

I had to move. I had to move, and I was crawling, blinded, blood running down my face. I'd forgotten why, but I had to keep moving. Patrol whistles sounded above me, calling for reinforcements.

I heard voices and pulled myself to my feet, leaning against a wall. The whole world was turned sideways, and I kept trying to fall. Only my instincts kept me going. I moved away from the red-and-black uniforms, and there was laughter as the patrol began a leisurely pursuit. I could barely walk. I fumbled my way around a corner, leaving bloody handprints on the whitewashed bricks, and the long red rays of sunset struck my watering eye. I looked up to see high walls across the narrow, stinking alley. There was a tall gate and, beyond that, a pillar glowing red in the sunlight. Gold winked at the tip. It was the half-forgotten god of the Eternal Eye. I would have laughed, if I had the breath for it and staggered across the alley.

"Damn it all! Quick now! Get him!" The footsteps behind me were running now, and the guards were shouting. There was shouting ahead as well, and the servants of the worn out little god were struggling to close their gate before I reached it. They didn't want any trouble.

"No," I cried, my voice a croak, and the servants ignored me as they fought with their stubborn gate. I ran, swaying and stumbling and forced myself past the narrow gap where the gate had gotten stuck. The god's servants fell away from me, forbidden by law to either help or hinder me. The patrol behind me threw open the gate with a crash. I collapsed at the base of the pillar sacred to the Eternal Eye and pressed my hands to it with a sob.

"Sanctuary!" I yelled. The world was darkening, the voices behind me fading. All that was left was the golden wink of the god's icon, high above me. "God's own sanctuary! You cannot take me! You cannot—!"

HORAKINIS

My father used to say to me, "Better a warrior than a merchant, and better a merchant than a scholar, but better any of them than a fool." I remember leaning out of the eastern window of our family mansion, looking toward the House of Bells and dreaming that I was a Dynast and one of the Dragon-Blooded, training for combat and heroism.

That was when I was very young.

Later, I realized that I could never compete with the Terrestrial Exalted in physical terms: It was, quite simply, impossible. How could I possibly threaten someone who could call down fire or split the earth? Who could reduce stone to powder with his bare hands or call the winds howling down to fight at his side? I was only 11 years old, but even then, I was able to consider the matter rationally. A Dragon-Blooded could defeat 100 men-at-arms, but a scholar and sorcerer in the old tales could defeat 100 Dragon-Blooded. That, I decided, was what I wanted to become.

It wasn't that I particularly hated the Terrestrial Exalted — why should I have? My family did well enough from trade, and certain of our ships sailed in trading fleets under the protection of House V'neef and carried private wares for other houses. I had younger brothers. After some persuasion, some argument and several days spent locked in my bedroom on bread and water, my father finally agreed to let me study the history of our lands and the old languages. I think that, to the day of his death, he still hoped I would change my mind and keep the accounts for him or for whichever of my brothers took over the business. I had suitors, given our family's wealth, and I took advantage of them where appropriate: Some of the finest books in my library were courting gifts, presented to me in the hopes that I would incline my heart — and my family's money — in their direction.

Once, when I was 16, the Immaculate Order paid us a visit. It was my fault: I had been too careless about expressing my opinions in public on certain delicate topics, such as the Anathema and where they had gone and whether any of their knowledge might be salvageable. They gave no warning. The first that my family knew of it was the polite — oh, so polite — arrival of the three





elegant Immaculates in their long, austere robes and their high, jade-trimmed formal headdresses, born in litters by iron-collared slaves, with a squad of guardsmen to keep them company. It was partly the quality of the guardsmen that alerted my brother to how serious the matter was — they were well-trained, clearly combat-ready and not mere parade-fodder in polished uniforms with unused swords.

Father and Mother received them politely in the garden, while the rest of us hid in our rooms and peered from the windows. It all seemed like the usual sort of visit — the slaves bringing food and wine, a harpist in the corner underneath the oleander tree to provide suitable music — except for the guards stationed outside the main door and by the archway leading to the garden. We couldn't hear what they were saying over the sounds of the fountain and the harpist. My sister had pressed herself against me, her body tense with fear, trembling under her thin summery silks, screwing up her eyes and mouth in an effort not to whimper. I was behaving with my usual calm and privately swearing vows to all five of the Immaculate Dragons — and to any local deity, spirit, elemental, ancestral ghost or potential ally that might be able to help — that if only we should be saved from a formal investigation, I would do anything. I'd join the local temple as a floor-scrubbing servant. I'd marry some money-grubbing clod. I'd keep my mouth shut in public.

We were summoned, one by one, to be politely questioned on our beliefs. I sat up straight like a polite young lady, folded my hands in my lap and shivered in the undeniable chill of power that wrapped itself around the three Immaculates like an icy haze of light. They sat entirely still as they spoke to us, never once making the usual small adjustments of posture that a normal person does, but remaining as calm as marble, as pale as winter.

Eventually, they told our parents that they were satisfied and left. It took my father a year to regain the social credit that he had lost by their visit. I was beaten for my indiscretion, though my mother had a healer see to my back to ensure that there would be no scars — it might damage my future prospects for marriage, after all. Worse than that, I was forbidden to speak of my studies in public. "I know that taking away your books will do little good," my father said, "so I will ensure that you at least keep silent about them." I can see now, he was right. There will always be fools who don't understand, just as there will always be scholars like myself who are driven to seek out the truth.

There are things that I still remember about Arjuf, which come back to me now that I am sitting at the water's edge, underground, surrounded by my books. The markets in the heat of the day, shatteringly noisy and gorgeously bright, with the awnings swaying from the movement of the crowds beneath. Different colors of skin and hair

mingling in a scattered mass of hues like the light through a diamond, and a dozen strange accents within earshot. The thrill of looking through a tray of peridot and garnet ornaments, my younger sister hanging onto my sleeve and leaning to see them, while two of our household guards stood watch to keep the riffraff away. Slaves would scuttle between the stalls, each in the livery of the household that owned them — you could tell the more experienced ones by their poise and by the fact that they actually took pride in a decent household's uniform. Sometimes, one of the legions would pass through, and there would be crashes and screams as enthusiastic merchants tried to haul their stalls out of the way, mingled with the harsh barks of the officers and the regular stamping tread of the legionaries.

There are things that I do not want to remember about Arjuf. The smell of corpses rotting in the streets, the plague-fires burning at the corners of buildings, the creak of cartwheels in the street and that peculiar noise that a dead human body makes when it is thrown down and when the head thuds hollowly against paving stones. We were luckier than many households: Most of our guards stayed healthy, and nobody tried to loot our mansion, and we were able to afford the best herbalists in the city. My father laughed with the last of his breath as I searched through the scrolls in my collection, trying to find some hint of a cure. I even went down to the market, smoke-clouded and reduced as it was, with one of the servants' wraps thrown over my head and haggled at the herb-stalls like a common woman. I compounded ochre and yellowgrass, dove feathers and sapphires. I broke my opal ring and smashed the stones and ground them up with goats' milk and cinnamon and three drops of my own blood. I sat over my scrolls day and night, and I hunted for lore until my eyes were sore and my body ached, and in the end, it was all for nothing. In the end, death won.

My brother — my only living brother — did not say so, but I think that he was glad when I signed over the trading interests to him and left the city. I still loved him dutifully, as I did my mother and sisters, but I could not stay. There should have been a balm or infusion that would have cured the disease or a spell that would have turned it away and cast it from our house. Just as a true sorcerer could have defeated the Dragon-Blooded, so also would she have been able to strike down the spirits of illness with a single word and bar them from the city. It was another challenge and one that I had already failed once. It was my purpose.

I went out into the world, and for the first time, I traveled on a ship, rather than simply managing the accounts for the trade they carried. I had cut my hair short, for convenience in traveling: The salt wind ruffled it and blew my robes tight against my body. The world seemed a treasure, given into my hand to be discovered and investigated. I believed that I could change anything, if only I knew how. I still believe that.

EXALTATION

It was the latest of many false trails, and it seemed no better than all the ones before it. My resources were beginning to run low, and I feared that I would have to return to Arjuf soon, to take up a place in the household again. The local villagers had told me that "a mighty sorcerer, one of the Anathema" had once had his dwelling beneath the mountain and the lake that bordered their village.

I was searching the caves at the foot of the mountain, lamp held high. My robes were sodden to the knees from the streams that ran through the caves, and my hands were covered in scratches and bruises from constantly colliding with the walls. A cold hopelessness was growing in me. I finally came to a great underground pool — which seemed, as far as I could tell, to border the lake itself — and stared into it disconsolately. The light from my lantern struck answering flares of white and gold from the crystals that encrusted the roof of the cave and reflected in long slow ripples on the surface of the pool. There was no sound except for my own breathing.

Light blossomed behind my eyes in a burning spray of glory, as bright as the noonday sun, spreading out in an aureole around me in shades of emerald and sapphire, as beautiful and perfect as a peacock's tail. I felt a strange burning on my forehead, and as I looked down at my reflection in the water, I saw that the symbol of the Unclean was now branded there in a gold that shone like the living sun. Part of my mind shrieked, *What am I? Am I Anathema?* But the glowing light around me seemed too beautiful a thing to be unholy, and the soaring Exaltation within me surely had nothing to do with darkness.

As I gazed into the water, the reflection of the flames seemed to form a path downward, into the depths of the pool, into the shadows. I dropped my lamp to smash on the rocky floor of the cave and dived into the water, following the reflected fire downward. It could have been a dream, but it was more real than any dream: It was like coming home again after a long absence, with all the joy of knowing yourself to be where you should be and doing what you should be doing. This was what the Immaculate Order had promised in all their sermons and philosophies, the enlightenment that they said could be found. I swam downward with great sweeping strokes that would have been beyond my abilities only a few minutes ago and thought nothing of it. I let the glowing flame lead me into an underground tunnel that curved beneath the lip of the pool, bending down and up again into a great cavern that was filled with the sound of running water.

I floated, my robes swaying around me with the movement of the water, and let the light of my anima rise to illuminate the area. I *knew* what it was and what it could do — the knowledge came to me as if it had always been there and as if I had been able to do this for all my life. (And I had — in another life and another time, and I would give all the





orichalcum that I have ever touched to be able to remember that time and that life more clearly.) This cave was a library in itself: Around the shore there were shelves built into the rock, filled with scrolls and books and stones with strange carvings and hammered gold that had been etched with acid and a thousand other things. The water swept on into other caverns, carrying me with it, and I realized that this whole library extended underneath the lake, hidden from despoilers and thieves by the weight of rock and water.

There were enough books to have taken me a lifetime to read, 10 lifetimes to catalog and analyze. It was everything that I could ever have asked for, and yet — with this sign burning upon my brow — it was not enough. I knew that I had to share this knowledge, to offer it to others like myself. It was all clear now. Everything had tended toward this purpose, and my whole life had shaped itself toward this ultimate end. I was chosen by the Unconquered Sun to find the lore that would help to save the world. The secrets of the ancient Solars could — must — be found, and with them, I and my kindred would be able to restore proper rule to the Realm and drive back the Wyld. A scholar can defeat 100 enemies. A scholar of the Twilight Caste can defeat 1,000 with only his mind as weapon.

JAY SELAK-AMU

Dreams had brought me here. Not my dreams, no. My dreams were of home and a warm fire and my wife's brush-clam stew. My dreams had always been simple ones. The dreams that had died here were of wealth and plenty, a new home, new families — a rich new fishing ground, a wide beach for clam digging and plenty of sweetwater wells.

I tied off my little coracle next to a 10-hand fishing boat now half full of water and listing heavily to port. The beach was deserted — but the boats were all still here. Many were staved in, as if a storm had come and battered the beach. A few had turned and were floating belly up like dead whales.

"Hai, the land!" I cried, and not for the first time, but silence was my only answer. No women dug for clams in the low tide. No children were playing in the tide pools. No old men were watching with longing while the young men went to spend their years fighting the cruel Sea.

As I waded ashore, the water foamed up colder than usual and bluer. The sand seemed tricky under my feet, slick as if it was half water itself. There were no blow holes for clams. Not even the tiny leaps of sand fleas fleeing my boots disturbed the suck of the tide. Racks of drying nets were collapsing at the tideline. The rope was slimy with rot. There were no birds.

I glanced back to the Sea where my little boat rode the small waves cheerfully, her bright golden eye winked at me. It was the only reassurance I was to have.

The new little village was empty. It was utterly empty; no abandoned cats were howling for company, no birds, no

rats. No living thing at all. Even the wind was silent. I looked into all 20 homes, and each was as empty as the first. Food, clothes, a baby's cradleboard were all lying neatly in place as if the family had stepped out for a brief stroll. I dared even the women's hut, and it too was empty; I touched nothing of the mysteries there and hoped that would keep the women's curses from me. As I walked, my boot prints filled with still, cold water as if the ground were a thin veil over an endless Sea.

There was no sign of battle, it had not been the Lintha pirates — as if they would waste their time here — nor had it been the Fair Ones. They too left their traces; witless wanderers, children driven beyond tears and the sweet, distant sound of the fae's laughter. No, it was nothing to defeat with a weapon or a handful of sacred moly. Nothing so easy. The Wyld had risen up like a strange high tide and swept everyone away.

The shrine at the center of the village was empty, the altar bare though the walls had been carefully prepared for the runes and talismans I carried. I had been called here to give a witch's blessing, and I knew the name of this dead town; my pockets clattered with talismans of prosperity, wards against the Fair Ones and the complex, heavy jade talisman meant to keep the Wyld itself at bay. The people were lost — even their souls gone into the water — but if I was strong enough I could save this scrap of land from drowning under the deep-blue Sea.

People always go first when the Sea rises, for it is people that keep it at bay. Give a rock a name, pull a net though the water, hear the laughter of women in the evening, and the Sea must give way. The rock will stand fast in the tide, the net will catch fish, and the women's voices will part air from water. When a town is forgotten, a fishing ground lost, a family line ended, the Sea grows stronger. If I didn't name this sad bit of land, the Wyld would be that much larger and that much closer to the archipelago.

The wind was quieting, as if the sky was holding its breath, and I hurriedly emptied my pockets, spilling the talismans onto the uncertain sand. I set up the brazier up and lit the incense. The smell of it was overwhelming in the still air. The tide was turning, and I had little time left.

The ritual had to be done just so. A mistake, and my attempt to force shape onto the Wyld might, instead, call it to me. Thankfully, it was a simple ritual, worn smooth like driftwood by the generations that had come before. The first talisman was wood from the East, carved into a wreath of grain and blessed by a woman with child.

"Father of Plenty! King of the East! Bless this true land!" I cried, and my voice was thin. Were the villagers still alive, the women would have sang with me. I strung it onto long-lasting silk and hung it above the altar.

I had to pick the talisman of the North from beneath a film of rising water. "Sister of the North, bless this true land! Give us calm wind!"

I fumbled the crystal whistle onto the strand of silk, tying the ritual knots even as I felt the sand beneath me shift. I was sinking into bitterly cold water.

"Brother of the South! Bless this true land! Give us warm days and passionate nights!" Knee deep in rising water, I nailed the cat hide to the alter with silver nails. The whistle was singing softly, sadly. Unwillingly, I reached for the great pearl that was the talisman of the West.

"Queen of the West! Bring us the great fish! Hold the salt from the wells! Bless— *damn!*" The ground fell away from me, dissolving into the Sea that was answering my call. The shrine swayed, and I threw myself aside as it collapsed, silencing the spirit whistle.

The Sea rushed over me, cold, blue and deep. Choking, I managed a last breath before the water pushed me down. The alter sank past me, trailing bubbles — or perhaps it was rising to the surface — I'd lost my bearings in the flood. Casting off my heavy coat, I struggled in the endless water, my lungs aching for air. I had no idea how far the surface was — or if there was a surface. Far enough out, the air and water met, so I'd been told by dying fishermen. The sleeves of my shirt were raveling unnaturally fast in the Wyld water, trailing from my arms like seaweed. My fingers were white as shell and strangely distorted. A weight in my pocket was pulling me down, and I fumbled out the heavy jade talisman of Earth — the center of the world. Crafted of stone from the great mountain that anchored the world, it brought painful life to my numb fingers.

I let the talisman pull me where it would, and for long moments, I was sure I would sink forever into the Sea. Then, like a sea dog breaching the waves, I broke the surface of the water with a shout. Clinging to the talisman that had saved me, I scanned the horizon. There was no land. The island was gone as if it had never been.

I kicked off my boots — good whale hide but they did nothing now but drag me down. The sky was a hazy blue, the light cool and dim. I could not find the sun. Treading water, I sought hopelessly for some landmark. Nearby, bobbing lightly in the water was my little boat, untouched by the tide that had rushed over me. I swam over and struggled aboard her. Shivering, I pulled off my clothes. My shirt was slick, and looking closer, I could see how the homespun had been transformed into tiny interlocking links of glass. I cast the cursed thing overboard, and it spread over the water like foam before darting away as school of bright fish.

"Mai." I whispered, touching the prow of my boat, and she rocked lightly, alive under my hand. I'd inherited my coracle from my teacher — and she'd claimed the boat from *her* teacher — the little boat had her own name and her own wisdom. She'd carried me through storms and pirate raids, and her eyes were long sighted. I trusted my boat more than most people. "Home, Mai. Take us home."

She moved then, as if on a strong current, though the water around us was unnaturally still.

EXALTATION

Some days later, I knew that, wherever we were, the land was too far. The Wyld had risen high around me, and it had been a long time before the sun had returned to the sky. There were waves now and currents in the water, and I had to fight to keep my boat turned toward the East. But I had seen no sign of land. There were fish in the water, but I had yet to catch one — the light line stored on my boat was not meant for the great fish of the deep. Mostly, there was no sweetwater. Under the unforgiving sky and upon an endless sea, I was going to die of thirst.

I lay back in my boat and watched the sun set through salt-crusted eyes. I was no longer hungry or thirsty, just tired. Apricot banners across the sky gave way to crimson ribbons and the cool, blue evening began to creep from the East. The sun lay like a ripe orange on the water, and I stared at the bright golden road that seemed to lead from the stern of my boat to the heart of the sun. In my dying fever, a man walked down that road.

It could have been a Fair One, come to steal my last wishes, but I was beyond caring. The man strolled up to my boat, small waves lapped against the gilded heels of his boots as he stood beside me. He crossed his arms over a breastplate of glittering orichalcum and violet enamel, tipped his head to one side in a half-familiar manner and studied me. His eyes were blue as lapis, set aslant in a golden face, and his white hair was oiled and woven with gold beads. He tapped his fingers idly on his biceps where a very familiar half moon scar rode across the back of his hand. A strange symbol, a golden half-bright, half-dark circle decorated his wide forehead.

"I know you." I croaked through cracked and bleeding lips. I did. Though the form and features were alien, the clothes strange and wealthy beyond my imagining, I knew this man. That scar was my scar, won years ago in a fight with a Lintha raider. That waiting, patient expression was mine. Those cautious eyes were mine. That man watching to see if I would live or die was me.

"I hope so." He gave me a quick half smile, my smile. "Don't die, you fool."

"Easier for you to say than me to do." I whispered, words that had no sound, but he heard me anyway.

"Perhaps. I've come a long way to see you." He shrugged and held out a hand, the water foamed beside his feet and a young tuna thrashed as if was drawn through the air to his waiting hand. "Here then."

I clutched struggling fish, before it could flip back into the water, and fighting the tuna was almost more than I had strength for. The man laughed, fading away until all that was left was the echo of my own laughter. The sweet flesh of that lone fish would keep me alive for another day. Perhaps that would be long enough.



ARIANNA

In the early morning, the sunlight would strike down through the glass in the great western window like a thousand blades of golden crystal, illuminating the books below. I would always be curled up in the seat under the window, wrapped in the old bearskin rug, reading by the last light of a tallow candle-end. The dawn light would be a signal that it was time to set the library in readiness and to clear away all traces of my night's studies.

After their breakfast — any gods that be forbid that they should let study come first — the scholars would come trooping in, casting learned jests at each other and ignoring me as utterly as they did the broom in the corner or the candelabra on the tables. I was nothing but another utility, a mere tool to assist them in their important studies. Work as I might, learn as I did, they would never admit that a mere woman might be able to match them for scholarship or excel them in lore. At first, I sought for respect and then for recognition, at least — but in the end, all I wanted was revenge. What right had they to judge me inferior by reason of my sex or to despise me as a lesser being when I was born with a greater destiny than they could ever dream of?

I wrapped scarves around my face, and I clothed myself in concealing robes, so that none could accuse me of using my body to seduce the men who studied in the library and claim that I had gained a place there unjustly. I made no secret of my learning, and I sought to engage the other scholars in conversation in order to prove that my knowledge was genuine. Yet, again, I was scorned and despised: They declared that I must surely be ugly to dress myself so and called me a vaunting fool or a parrot of the works of others each time I spoke.

In the end, the books in the library were all that I had. Each day was as bitter as gall, as I once again saw my hopes trampled down and my learning ignored. This post was the closest that I could hope to come to scholarship: Any other task would have seen me forced to leave the library and to take up some more womanly occupation. Was it any wonder that I learned to hate? There is no other proper response to those who oppress without thinking or to those who would claim all knowledge as their own. Those who would stand against me must now be strong enough to prove their claims of superiority.

EXALTATION

I cannot place what it was that made that particular morning so different to any other. I was sitting beneath the window, as always before dawn, the stink of the tallow candle in my nostrils, frowning over a translation of one of the great poems by Bernlak — and I have yet to find any saga to equal his *On The Fall Of The Silver City* — and murmuring the lines to myself to fix them in my memory. I do remember that I had come to a description of the warrior Suzake's adieu to her husband, where she was bidding him remember the many evenings that they had spent beneath the lilac trees.

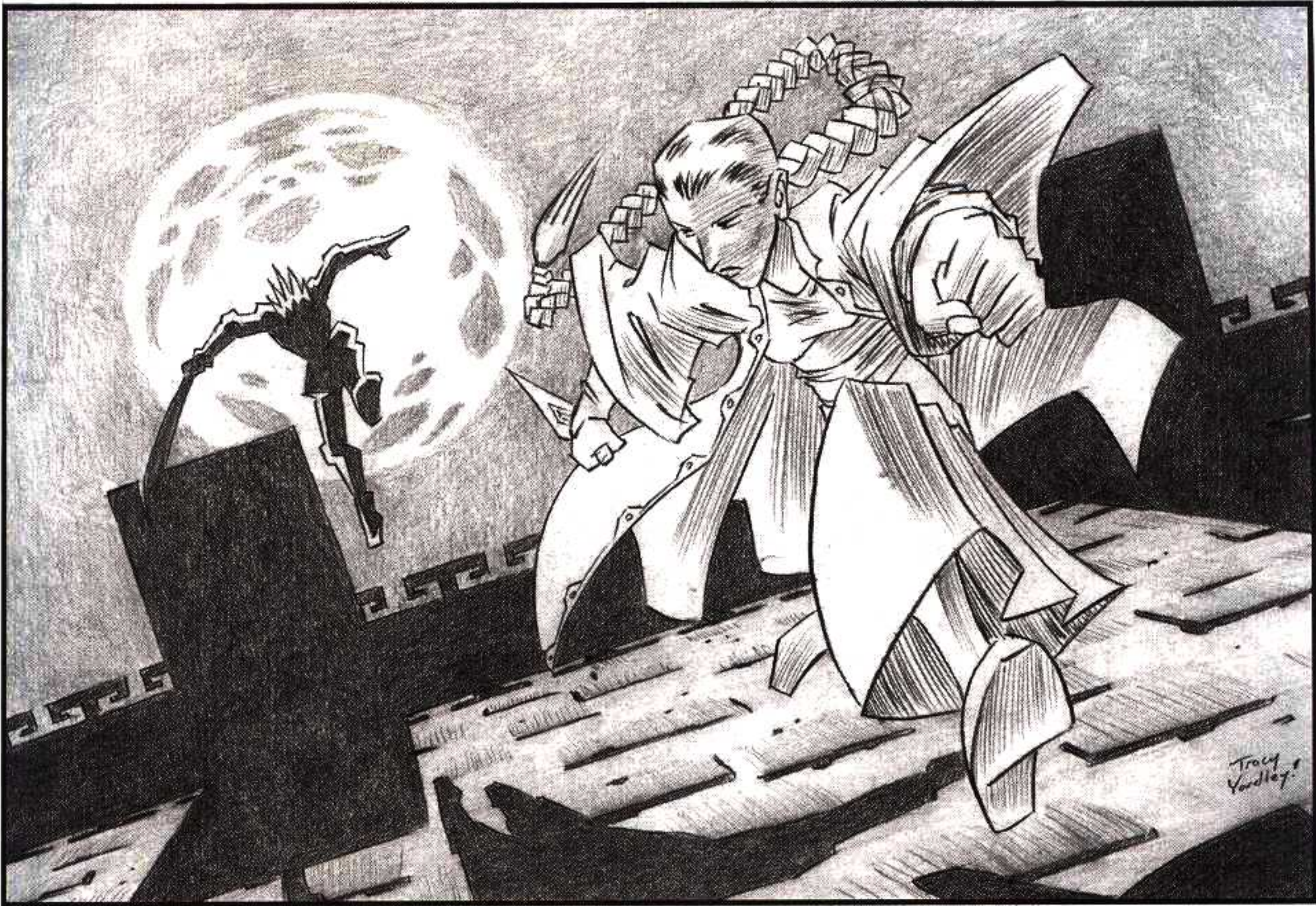
It had come to me that there might be a hidden symbolism in their five farewells and seven words of love, and I was, therefore, considering the text as I memorized it, attempting to find some secret pattern or method within it.

As I sat there and pondered on the work, a slow light seemed to spread around me — not from the window above, nor from the candle, but from my own body, as though I were wrapped in flames. I raised my hand and saw that it was surrounded by a dark-blue fire, the shade of lapis lazuli, threaded through with gold. My spirit burned within me at that moment, as if some long-denied word had finally been spoken or some ancient spell completed, and I became conscious of what I was. Just as the first light of dawn reminds us of the glory of the sun at noon or a single flake of snow can bring memories of a blizzard, so, at that moment, I glimpsed the full power and triumphal might of what I had once been. I remembered words of which it is unlawful to speak and diagrams that would burn out the eyes of those who were unfit to see them. I felt the weight of a hallowed diadem of orichalcum upon my brow, and I raised my hands to make the first gesture of a rite that would veil the face of the moon with darkness. For a moment, I remembered everything. In the next breath, it was gone, but I was conscious of the power that had descended upon me and had finally given me what I had always deserved. I was of the Twilight Caste, one of the mightiest sorcerers who had ever walked upon this earth.

Of course, I made no mention of this to the so-called scholars who buzzed like blowflies each day in the library. Now that I was among the Celestial Exalted, the books laid bare their secrets to me and held nothing back, and the true powers of sorcery came to my hand like tamed eagles. I could have laughed as I listened to the babble of my seniors, as they tried to puzzle out the ancient lore — which, to me, was as clear as daylight and a hundred times more worthy of attention than their futile discussions.

I suppose that I could not have hoped to conceal my new superiority for very long. Even so, the Terrestrial Exalted were upon my trail faster than I could have guessed. Perhaps my new knowledge caused me to be harsher in my words and actions than was my wont, or possibly, there was a power to my words and gestures that I could not fully hide. More likely, however, it was their use of astrology and their reading of the stars. Be that as it may, I looked down from the castle walls one evening to see a group of Dragon-Blooded riding into the courtyard, dressed for battle and led by a man who wore the headdress and robes of an Immaculate. While I had never seen the Wyld Hunt before, I had heard tales of its merciless pursuit of those who were named Anathema, and I knew that I must flee. Powerful as I was, I was not sure that I could withstand a full dozen of them, and I thought it best to leave rather than to argue the point.

Swiftly, I gathered up my throwing knives, my notes, a pomegranate-dark flask of wine and some half-dozen texts that I thought could be of some value to me, and I made my



foxes!

way to the door of the library. But even as I placed my hand upon the door-latch, I heard the sound of metal-booted footsteps on the stairs beyond, and I knew that I had tarried too long while choosing the tomes. I swiftly bolted the door, feeling a brief sense of security as the thick iron bolt slid shut, and then fled toward the window, invoking as I did the Invulnerable Skin of Bronze. Seizing one of the heavy oak chairs, I lifted it above my head and shattered the western window with it. Fragments of glass fell outward in a waterfall of light and crystal, gleaming like blood in the sunset.

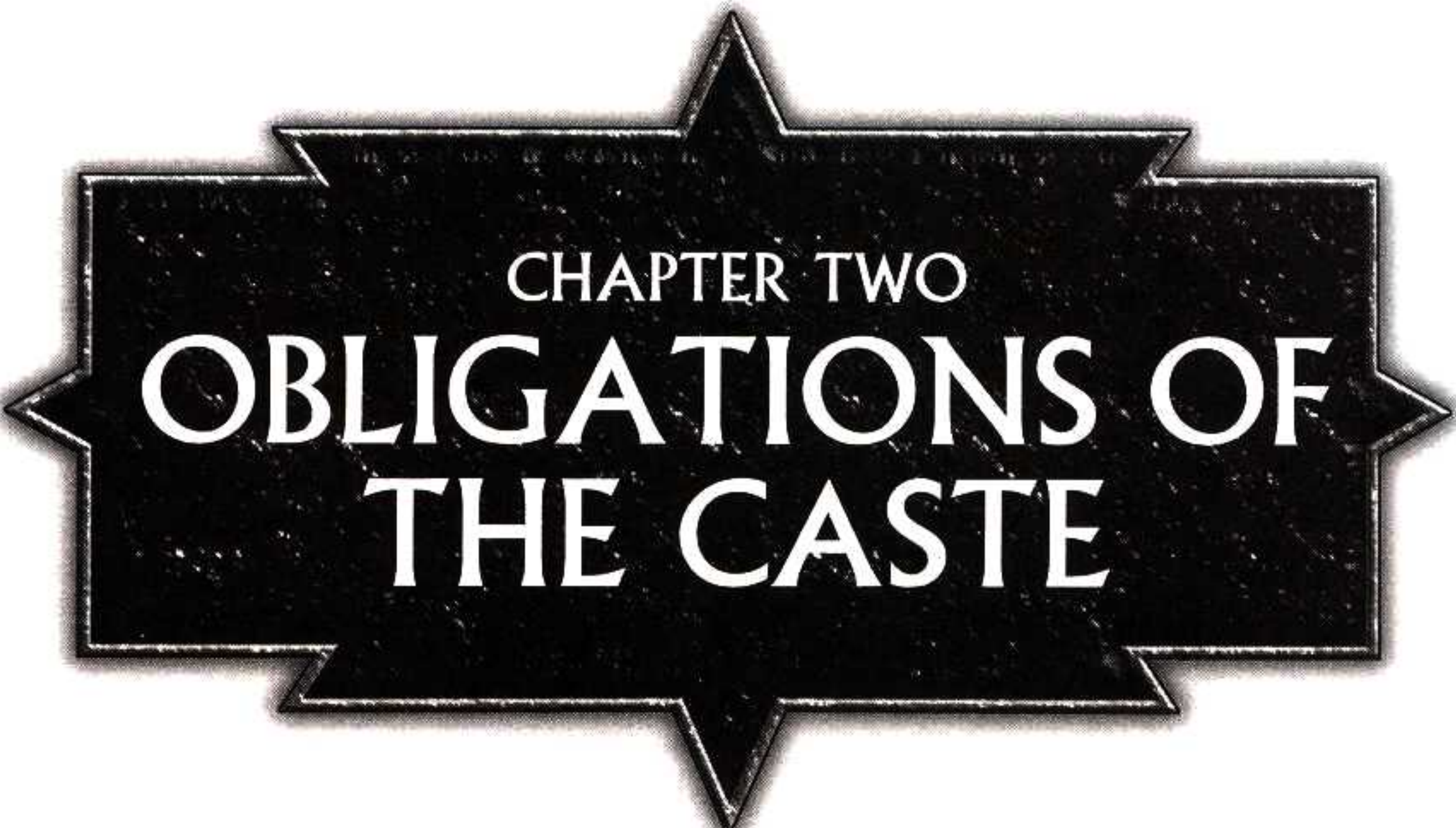
Behind me, I could hear a hammering upon the door. I drew upon my Essence and performed the Graceful Crane Stance, leaping with ease to the frame of the window. Shattered remains of glass crunched under my silk slippers, and I stood there for a moment in the evening light, looking out over the castle that had been my home for all my life as a grown woman. It seemed a small thing of stone, a trumpery toy that I had outgrown and that I was wise to cast aside.

I paused too long. Behind me, the door fragmented, struck brutally at three points simultaneously, flying into the room in a blizzard of wooden splinters. A tall man strode through it, clearly of the Terrestrial Exalted, if the hurricane of wind that shrieked about him was any gauge. His eyes fixed on mine across the room, and over the howling of the gale that tore at the pages of every text in the room and whipped at our clothing, I heard him cry the word, "Unclean!" With a bound that set distance at naught, he flung himself toward me.

I leapt from the window, moving effortlessly from turret to turret with leaps that carried me smoothly through the air. When I glanced behind me, I was horrified to see that the Dragon-Blooded man was following me at equal speed — no, was even gaining upon me. He flung himself at me, a five-edged sword of jade glittering in his hand, and he swung it at my head. Although I drew my head back, the blade bit even through my bronzed skin, setting my spell at naught and slicing a deep gash across my face. I screamed in fury and struck back with one of my knives as we fell through the air together, driving it up beneath his ribs and deep into his heart.

His sword fell from his hand as I twisted my blade inside his chest, and with a last choke of agony, he spat blood into the evening air and died. He tumbled through the air like a child's doll, and his body rebounded thrice from the tower wall before it fell to the paved courtyard below. I leapt from turret to ledge, briefly free from pursuit, and spared only a moment to fold a scarf against my face and stanch my bleeding. It was the work of an instant to summon a steed of Essence, golden-maned and swift-footed, which bore me from that place and into the night, to seek refuge and new power — and to bear a scar that would mark my hatred for the Wyld Hunt and those who sponsor it. The Hunt followed me, of course, but I met Swan on my way and... well, that is another matter.





CHAPTER TWO
**OBLIGATIONS OF
 THE CASTE**



Long ago, in the First Age, the Twilight Caste Solars were sorcerers and craftsmen, savants and healers. They researched lore, stored it and used it. They sought out ways to protect and heal the people of the Realm and to repel the forces of the Wyld. The Copper Spiders raised great wonders to rival the sun and moon and forged weapons and artifacts that shook the earth and made the spirit worlds tremble. They healed the most atrocious wounds and brought learning and knowledge to the common folk, light to the darkness of their ignorance. In return, the Twilights were revered for their scholarship and their abilities — and feared for their great powers. Humble petitioners would come to beg the Twilights for healing or to restore their lands or for mighty weapons and powerful tools, while people across the Realm would whisper their names in tones of fear and respect.

But as with all the other Solars, the Twilights' pride and ambitions became too powerful, and their own hubris vanquished them. Many of them forgot their obligations and duties and saw the people beneath them as no more than sheep, to be used and abused as they saw fit. What, after all, was the worth of a common man — a creature scarcely higher in the hierarchy of Creation than the sheep or cattle in the fields — except as a subject for experimentation or as a soul to be given to the demons with whom the Exalted bargained? The Dragon-Blooded

slew the Solars, but in truth, the Terrestrials needed to do little to embellish the stories that the Twilight Caste had already left behind them. Tales of the abominable acts of the Unclean were common — their necromantic practices, where they summoned graveyards full of zombies forth to attend them at their banquets; their horrific bargains with demons and with creatures of the Wyld; their fornications and conjoinings with strange creatures of the spirit worlds; and their unspeakable experiments and sorceries upon the unwilling lands and on the bodies of those who lived there.

It was easy to hunt down the few Solars of the Twilight Caste who were born between the end of the First Age and the present day. They were alone and desperate in a stable and well-ruled land, and the Wyld Hunt made quick prey of them. However, now, with the Realm in turmoil and the Wyld Hunt reduced, and the Twilights' own numbers greatly increased, the Copper Spiders may have a real chance to survive and to reach for their old heights of power. But if that level of influence is reached, what will the Twilight Caste do then? There are a hundred different answers, as many as the number of Exalted of this caste.

The Unconquered Sun conveys duties together with his power: The Twilight Caste are aware that they have an obligation to the land they inhabit and to the people



who dwell there. However, strong-willed as they are, many can choose to temporarily resist these impulses or to interpret them in some idiosyncratic way. Some of the caste become fearless proponents of the Unconquered Sun's will, devoting their lives to teaching those around them or to creating tools for the common good or to binding the creatures of darkness. Others spend their time pursuing their own ends, dealing with matters that were important to them in their truly human lives or seeking to increase their personal powers as rapidly as possible. After a century or two of life as one of the Exalted, however, they may come to focus upon higher things and work for the Realm rather than just for themselves. For the moment, however, many of this caste have immediate practical goals, such as the preservation of their lives and liberty or the taking of vengeance upon those who wish to hunt them down and slay or enslave them.

Some of the Twilight Caste work to heal the people around them or to cure them of their ills or to educate them. Others dream of becoming sorcerers as great as those of the First Age or powerful crafters with great wealth and authority or scholars capable of deciphering the legends of old. Whatever their personal plans, all of this caste are powerful individuals, and they will have a significant impact on the world around them.

SAYN

The world must be reforged. We have been given our powers by the Unconquered Sun for this reason and for this reason alone. Why else would he have called us back in such great numbers and at such a time? Is it coincidence that his might has descended upon us now, with the Empress missing and the Realm in chaos? This is our opportunity, given into our hands like ripe fruit. This is our chance to act and to remake the world into a place of peace and righteousness. Without a vision, we will be no better than the Solars of the First Age, devoted to our own pride and pleasure. We must have a plan and know what we want to create in the future — for our own sake, as well as for that of the world.

But patience: Link by link is chain mail made. Much as I would love to see the purifying fire of the Unconquered Sun descend as Solars across the Realm threw aside their disguises, burning away the darkness of the shadowlands and the twistings of the Wyld and Fair Folk, I realize that this cannot be. Our enemies are too many, and the people still fear us. They look at us, and they see the Anathema — enemies from the First Age, unclean, foul, untrustworthy, corruption given flesh. We must be able to rely on them to obey us willingly. It is hard to lead a revolution when the common folk would rather impale you than follow you.

There is also the whole question of righteousness. While I concede that this lies within the purview of the Zenith Caste, we should all consider it. The Unconquered Sun has empowered us to protect his people. Shall we therefore practice slavery? We have been given powers that drive back the undead. Shall we tolerate the Deathlords and the shadowlands? We have been raised on high. Shall we permit injustice to those below us? Let us consider the strengths that we have been given, and in the name of the Unconquered Sun and the Maidens, let us use them!

I have spoken with other Exalted of my caste. Some are pure scholars, and think that the answers to all our problems can be found in the tomes that deal with the First Age. They claim that if they can discover how our ancestors dealt with their enemies or with the populace, then we could do the same. I forbore to point out the logical flaw in this argument: If our ancestors had such ideal methods, why then did they fall to pride, and how could they have been slain by the Terrestrial Exalted? Others who I have met were interested in their own power to a degree that I felt was slightly suspect: Such vaunting self-conceit leads to necromancy, abominations and other dubious practices.

Our powers have been given to us as tools to use, not as things in themselves. When I work at the smithy, I use my hammer — I do not worship it or constantly seek to obtain a better one. While I think it is quite reasonable to wish to improve our skills with sorcery — assuming that we possess such a thing, of course, since not all our caste take kindly to it — it must not be at a cost to the rest of the world! We do not have the *right* to turn away from what is going on around us.

I have done many things since being given my powers. Some might be called heroic, and some were simply a matter of saving my life and those of my friends. Those actions of which I am genuinely proud are those that were constructive. The Unconquered Sun has given me the spirit of a smith and builder, and the more that I consider the current situation, the more I think that this is what is called for.

Five months ago, traveling in the East, I came upon a border war between two of the Hundred Kingdoms, over the river that provided water to both lands. It ran through one land, Klophin, before passing through the second, Hauta. Klophin had been building dams and lakes, in order to save the water for their own crops. Hauta, not surprisingly, was protesting and had marched its troops to the border, armed and ready for battle. Both sides had appealed to the Seventh Legion for help, and both had some "advisors" on hand. The Guild was staying out of it: Neither side produced anything exceptional, and whichever side won would deal with them as usual.

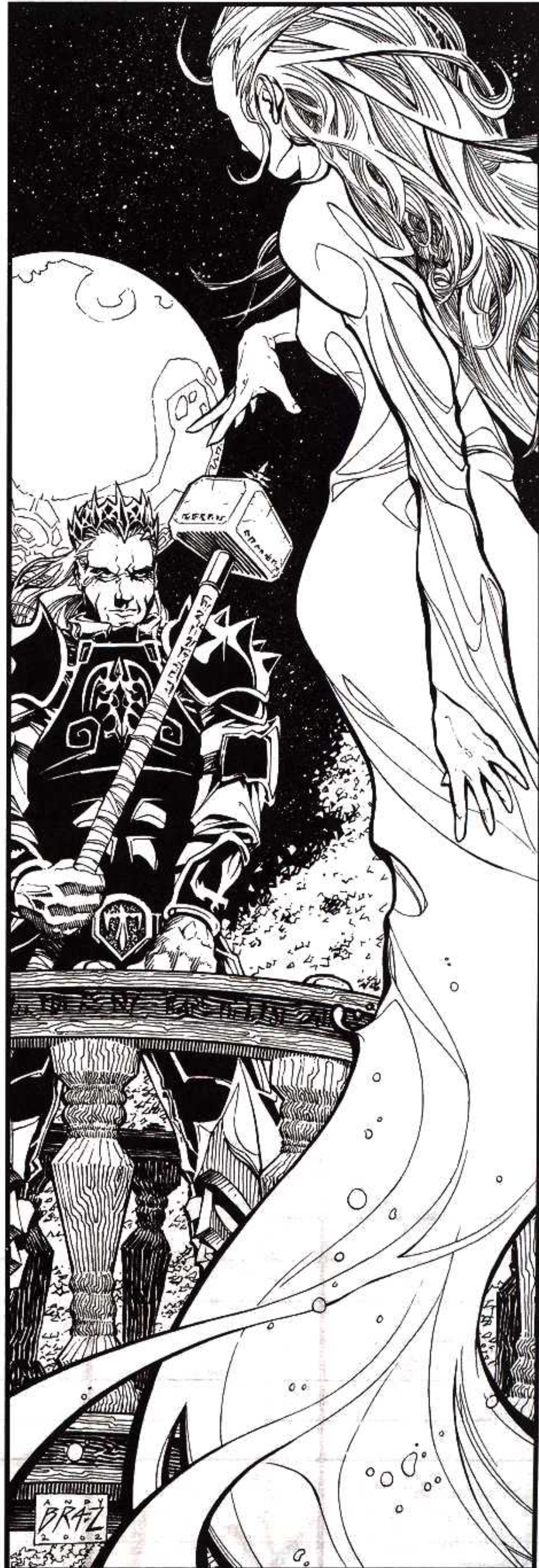
I investigated the situation in Klophin, since it seemed to have begun the matter. What I found there disturbed me greatly. A group of Fair Folk — water-aligned — had established themselves near the source of the river, on a great ship of silver and diamond, and were sending out ravagers to steal children and slaves from the nearby villagers. Klophin's ruling prince had decided that it was too dangerous to march his troops against the Fair Folk, and so, he had decided to divert the river, in the hopes of lessening their power and keeping his people away from the region. He had feared to confess this weakness to the Queen of Hauta, lest she seize the opportunity to attack. Given that Hauta had recently swallowed up a tiny land to the north, he might not have been too far wrong.

It came to me that there were several problems here. If I could persuade the prince of Klophin to leave the river be, he would still have a nest of Fair Folk within his borders. And even if I could somehow remove the Fair Folk, Hauta's army would still be on the border and showed no inclination to move away. A pretty problem, and I wished that I had the assistance of other Solars. However, none that I knew of were in the vicinity, and the two armies would be at each others' throats in days, if not sooner.

Finally, while walking through the streets of a small village in Klophin, I passed by a temple to the local divinity of the river, and I realized that I might have an ally after all. I ran day and night to the head of the river, not stopping for food or rest, until I stood at the heartspring where the waters fountained from the deep rock, and there, at twilight, I invoked the Lady of the Gentle Waters, the mistress of the river, who had been worshiped by all who lived here for the last thousand years. Indeed, the Unconquered Sun and the Immaculates might come and go in their estimation, but they never forgot the patroness of the water that gave life to their lands.

She answered me, rising from the heartspring in the shape of a woman with robes that constantly remade themselves and hair of emerald that churned with ceaseless foam. In a voice like the deep springs of the earth, she told me that she also was offended by the Fair Folk who had taken up residence upon her river. They had not offered her sacrifices, nor attempted to mollify her in any way, but had, instead, cast their leavings into her water, polluting it without the customary ceremonies. Given this, and with my additional promise to forge three silver collars for her pet hounds, she agreed to aid me.

I then journeyed to the nest of Fair Folk and ritually challenged their leader to single combat, to take place on the deck of their ship at noon the following day. They looked at me askance, both nobles and commoners. The women bared their legs and breasts to draw my attention,



For
the
3
0

whispering to me that they would give me joys unimaginable and sons the like of which I could never sire on any mortal, and the men laughed at me, until I called upon the power of the Sun and let my anima flare bright around me. Then, they fell silent and were afraid, offering me power and riches. I reminded myself of my responsibilities to the lands and bade them put away their temptations.

At noon, the sun struck like a hammer upon the deck, bringing rainbows to the heart of the diamonds and making the silver shine brighter than snow from the farthest North. Their leader, Palath, faced me in armor of glass and beryl. He was taller than I, and his eyes held the darkness of the deepest oceans. Once more, he gave me the opportunity to withdraw, and once again, I refused. The ravagers were gathered upon the banks of the river, their soulless faces drawn and blank, and the women of the court sat in the riggings, their silks and half-armor brilliant in the sunlight.

Our blades crossed three times, and then, the water came from the source of the river, as I had agreed with the Lady of the Gentle Waters, surging up in a mighty wave that tore the ship from its moorings and flooded the banks 10 yards deep. The screams of the drowning ravagers came faintly to my ears above the roar of the waters. With a curse toward me, the Fair Folk noble took a step back and cried out to the river, bidding it hold back its strength, commanding it by powerful names and mighty oaths. But the Lady was stronger than he, and she sent the ship rushing down the course of the river, sweeping aside the new-built dams and disdaining the fresh watercourses, setting her waters back in their original path.

And thus, only a few minutes later, the ship came coursing down the river like a doe pursued by watery hounds and was flung out into the center of the plain where the two forces were on the verge of battle. (The Queen of Hauta had chosen this spot as a prime location, since it most exemplified her grievance: it had previously been the main course of the river, surrounded by a mighty plain of land, but now, it had become empty soil and dust.) The foaming waters drove back the men on either side, causing them to panic and rush to safety lest they be caught and dragged to their deaths. I finished my duel with Count Palath as we were carried through the center of that battlefield, striking him down and calling upon the might of the Unconquered Sun to split his head from his body. As he died, so the ship died as well, and the Fair Folk who still clung to the mast and rigging flung themselves into the water with cries of despair. Those who sought safety on land were quickly slain by the men of both sides: They had no time to shield themselves with glamors and were easily visible as what they were.

I myself had slightly more difficulty in reaching safety, given that I misjudged the rising water. Fortu-

nately, the Lady was grateful and carried me upriver in her arms to her heartspring again — where she kept me until I had forged the three collars that I had promised. My captivity was somewhat arduous, as the Lady required many personal services of me until I had fulfilled my bond, but the strength of the Unconquered Sun sustained me in my labors.

While I cannot say that the situation was perfectly resolved, it was well enough. The two kingdoms kept their peace, both somewhat bemused by the situation. The confusion and mayhem caused by the flooding waters was enough to throw both armies into disarray and put aside thoughts of battle. A new temple was raised to the Unconquered Sun in the capital of Klophin, as it was judged that he himself had sent down a bolt of light at midday to strike the Fair Folk ship from the surface of the river. I saw little reason to disillusion the people — and, indeed, what are we but the tools of the Sun?

And this is our task, wherever and whenever we may find it: to strike down impurities and to set ourselves to refine the base metal around us and shape the Realm into a new wonder. We need not seek out great quests: they meet us every day, in the world that we inhabit, and they must be answered, or we betray our calling and our power.

FEHIM

The world spun around me, days and nights flickering by like bright birds. Luna and Gaia dance together, and the Maidens walk their solitary ways. At the center is the Unconquered Sun, who watches us all and rules the turning of the seasons.

I was suspended in the dark, narrow space between living and dying. Fever burned my flesh and had freed my mind for this moment. Like a knife through my heart, like the delicate touch of a lover, the Unconquered Sun called to me, and I answered. Everything that I had ever believed about myself was torn away. Everything I knew of the world was revealed as a fraud. The world was opened to me, power was no longer locked away in a fragile mortal shell. Centuries spun past me, names I had carried, duties I had performed and deaths I had endured. Then, the great death, the long darkness, and now — this sudden awakening.

I came out of the fever with a shout, pain running savagely down my face and terrified by the truths that have been thrust on me. I was the Unconquered Sun's chosen one.

The temple took me in and tended me for a fortnight. I lost an eye and my mortality in the death of my gang. The city guard paces outside, waiting for me. City law and ancient tradition had given me sanctuary — even an old and forgotten god such as the Eternal Eye will stay the hand of the law, so long as I remain inside the temple

walls. Even Serinim wouldn't break that law, older than the blood of the Elemental Dragons.

When I first opened my remaining eye, it was to see the vertical rayed eye painted in ocher on the wall above my bed, and I laughed so long and hard that the temple healers feared for my sanity. The eye of my god was looking down at me, corrupted by a thousand or more years of ignorance. The temple that had taken me in, poor and with few worshipers, serves a god whose name was forgotten generations ago. The Unconquered Sun had waited a long time for me.

In the hot afternoon of my 20th day of imprisonment, I stood in the crumbling third tower and watched the red uniforms loitering in the street below. Across the street, the ruins of my old home still smoldered and stank. I leaned out as far as I could and spat — I've been doing this for awhile, but I still miss. The loss of my eye throws off my aim.

The guards weren't what's keeping me here. I could get past them easily enough now, with a whisper in the darkness or a bit of jade. It's the High Commander. He's sitting there like he has been since I've awakened, sipping tea, writing poetry and waiting. I need time and power to pass him. Exalted or no, I'm no warrior, and Serinim has a hundred years experience and 70 pounds on me. He didn't know what had happened to me, or he'd have razed the entire temple — even the city if necessary — rather than allow one of the Anathema to escape. And because he waits there, I don't dare practice what I only half know. I don't know if he could sense my Charms if I used them.

"Master Fehim." It's the old woman who tended me through my fevers, so I leave the guards below to their own amusements for now. She's standing in the stairwell, wrapped — as all the temple servants are — in saffron veils and scarves embroidered with gold runes.

"What, Old Woman?" I'm tired of this place and these cringing old people. None of them have names, so I made some up. Old Woman, Jester, Wobble and Roach. They don't protest, and that just makes me angrier.

"The High One wishes to see you, if it pleases you." She bobs her head, veils flapping.

"All right." I shrug and follow her down the stairs — and further down, below the courtyard. The walls here are the same brick of the sewer system, and I start getting interested. I may have found my exit, finally, out of this miserable place.

Old Woman practically shoves me through a door and slams it behind me. The room is full of light, and I squint, fearing another unwelcome vision. I'm underground. I know that, but the light streaming down from above is the sun. Above me, something burns brightly, a smokeless fire, hot like summer. I can feel the power of it, it sings in my blood, and the song is the song of the Unconquered Sun. I drag my eye away from it with a curse.





"So, you are our avatar." The voice is faded with time and cynicism.

There is an old man sitting on the floor, so wrapped in veils and shawls that I can't even tell what direction he's looking. He's sitting directly below the thing hanging in the air, and I slouch against the door. There's no latch.

"I don't know what the hell you're talking about." But I lie. The damned god has it all planned out for me. I don't want to be running around at some old god's beck and call. I want revenge.

"We want revenge too." The old man says, inspired by the god or just clever. "You can give it to us. You can give it to us all. Revenge for a thousand years of murder, a thousand years of bloodshed. A civilization torn down by fear and treachery. Revenge."

Revenge.

In the dance of light across old brick, in a sewer, I can see it. Revenge. There's a war coming — or returning — a one-sided war that had begun thousands of years ago and that had carried on in midnight skirmishes and assassinations since then. But soon, open battle would rage again, and the Dragon-Blooded would answer for all that they had done.

I knew — the Unconquered Sun had made me see — all the years, centuries of murder. I knew the blood on the Dragon-Blooded's hands. Some of it was mine. I dreamed every night of the long darkness, the terrible prison where the power within me had waited for the rebirth that had never come. I heard the cries of young Solars, slaughtered in Dragon-Blooded purges. I watched the treacherous Sidereals, so consumed by fear they could not see that they were creating the very future they fought against with their betrayals. In that jade tomb, I listened to the whispers of the dead gods grow stronger until they began to reach up through the world and the shadowlands were born.

And I wanted revenge for the Three Devils gang. I wasn't going to forget the home I'd grown up in, the friends that I'd watched get married — then watched die. I burned to search out who had betrayed us. I wanted Serinim's head on a platter. The small slaughter of the Three Devils gang was just another drop of blood in the greater ocean of death. There were a lot of people who were going to answer for their actions. I was going to make them answer. It was what I did.

"We've been waiting a long time for you." The old man said. "And now, the stars have brought you to us. Look. Look up, and know that you can have what you want. Take up what is yours, and you can have your revenge."

I looked, unwillingly, up at the light pouring down. Suspended in midair was a long twist of light, a silken

fabric spun of the sun's own essence. Looking at it made me want it, and I had to reach for it. I came to me, or I rose to it.

In my hands was a simple robe, the fabric seemed made of red-gold silk but had the weight and chill of metal. A pretty thing, and so much more than that; the Unconquered Sun's own light was threaded through it, and along with that sacred light was power. Words of power, sorcerous spells, long hidden knowledge had been pressed into the very weft and weave of this precious thing. The runes on the fabric burned themselves onto my skin, sinking into my blood, pouring into my mind, which seemed too small for their vast might. The power grew stronger until I was screaming and my soul straining under the touch of godhead. I try to fight it, but I have no strength left, no life left, and in that last terrible moment, the god reached down for me.

He takes me up, and reshapes me like a great smith. He forges my blood out of copper, my bones of orichalcum, my flesh of ruby, my Essence from his own breath. The god pours himself into me, and I blaze like a furnace, filled with his purpose. I don't know what I was afraid of. The god's anger is mine. His purpose is mine. It is revenge.

FEHIM ON LOYALTY

"Why do you care?" I crouched down in front of the High One in his pile of stained saffron veils, ignoring the seduction of the robe above me. A blue scarab crawls across the High One's ivory headdress. "Old man, you'll be lucky to live to 80. And the Dragon-Blooded haven't been hunting *you* down. You've consigned yourself — and everyone in the temple — to death by hiding me here."

The High One snorted, and I shifted to the right — *now* I was in front of him. "How many thousands died in the Great Contagion? How many died in the end of the First Age? How many die every day, from sickness, of want or under a Fair One's caress? Not you, oh, my avatar. Not you. You will live forever — lifetimes. The Terrestrials live for centuries. I will be lucky — as you said — to see 80 years."

I shrugged. He spoke true enough, but that was the way the gods had made the world. The great Solars — myself risen among them — the great Sidereals with their dry predictions and their treachery, the Dragon-Blooded who had become nothing more than tools in the hands of the Sidereals and the mortals, living and dying in the fashion of animals — a few years, maybe a few decades. "Well, that's not going to change."

"It must change!" he cried.

I moved again. Now was I in front of him?

"We are in your care!" the High One went on. "We are your trust! The gods didn't make you so you

could squabble amongst yourselves like children! You — the Celestials — are our protectors, our champions, our avatars! When the Solars ruled, the world was at peace; there were cities now lost to the Wyld where miracles were commonplace. Children didn't starve in the streets of Sperimin or Meru. The Dragon-Blooded knew their place, and you knew yours. Everything was where it belonged!"

"That was then," I said and decided not to move this time, even though he was talking off to my left somewhere. "This is now. For all I know, I'm the only one. I'm alone — and have a price on my head — and I'm no king."

"You are more than a king." The High One was speaking to the far wall now. "Kings bow down before you. We serve you. We were *meant* to serve you. You have to be worthy of that!"

"I don't *have* to do anything," I snarled. "Not anymore. No one tells me what to do."

"No," the High One whispered. "You don't. But — we are still in your hands. Don't waste us. We are not useless. We trust you. We have to — there is no one else. Don't betray us. We have waited *so long*."

"We are the tools with which you can change the world. With us, you can drive back the Fair Ones and hold the land safe from the Wyld. With us at your backs, you can raise an army and take the Realm. With us — with us you can do anything. And with you, we will have a future, a hope for a better world. A world where things move as they should — as the gods have decreed. When the Solars rule, we won't have to cower in our homes at night, listening to the Fair Ones sing outside the walls."

"And you will serve me," I said slowly. I was alone now. I'd heard nothing of any other Solars. I needed help. Even help like this. Even help with a price as high as this. And the High One was right. With loyalty like this, I could do anything. I could change the world. I could make it safe for mortals like him. And I could use them to obtain my revenge.

"We will serve you. And you will serve us," the High One said, the rasp of old age unable to hide his desperation. "We who will be lucky to see 80 years."

HORAKINIS

Knowledge is the key to creating a better world. I have walked among the poor and desperate, and I have seen the hungry and the ill. I have seen the Lunar Exalted and their packs of wild beastmen, and I have heard stories of the Fair Folk. I have letters from an Abyssal deathknight among my personal papers, and I have witnessed the cruelty of the Dragon-Blooded. All this must change. The Realm cries out for change: The disappearance of the Empress signals that the time has come, and we are the ones who must initiate it.

There are two main things that must be done. The folk of the Realm must be enlightened — in a practical sense, not a spiritual one, I leave *that* sort of thing to the Zenith Caste. It's really quite straightforward. If they actually understood more, they wouldn't act like frightened sheep so often. Share some of the ancient formulae for old herbal remedies or methods for preparing food, and there might be less disease and hunger in the land. Explain the true histories of the ancient Solars, and we might be able to destroy the myths about the Anathema.

And then, there is the other task, which is to rediscover the secrets of the First Age. We know so little! Our ragtag memories only offer us tantalizing hints of the artifacts we once wielded, the knowledge that was common then. The streets of the cities were glass and gold and crystal, and the poor folk wore silk, and the rich folk wore gossamer and woven jewels. The poor folk dined well, and the rich folk ate foods beyond my ability to describe. I am not trying to recreate those heights for myself, although I admit that the concept has its charms: I want to return the world to that level when all were well fed and well clothed, when we lived in what would be — to the poor of our current, fallen age — utter luxury. My own parents were rich enough, and yet, in those days long past, the meanest servant in my Manse was better clad and housed.

I have begun in a small way. The village near my library has grown to appreciate my visits: I have performed rituals to increase the gain from its fields and placed spells of fertility upon its animals. As the inhabitants grow to trust me more, I will teach their children to read and write and tell them about the true history of the Realm. One village is a small thing, true, but they will teach others, and so, it will spread.

Whenever I journey to another city, I take the time to tell stories to the children about the glories of the past and the hopes that we can build for our future. I bring them the learning the Terrestrial Exalted reserve for their private academies and the rich keep for their tutored children. I have even humbled myself and walked among thieves and beggars and filthy paupers, dirtying my feet in the gutters, to school the poor in basic lettering and medicine. I am not one of those who holds herself lofty and aloof. I take learning where it is needed, so that it may shine brightly in the dark places.

There is a school that I have founded in a town to the north. If it prospers and the local Immaculates don't close it down for some imagined heresy, then I will attempt to establish others. I send an air spirit to watch over it from time to time and to ensure that Jaysan, the man who teaches there, is behaving with a proper sense of his responsibilities. It is a small thing and consumes only a little of my spare jade, but I pray that it will prosper.





Sometimes, I feel very much alone. We are so few, and we stand against a Realm of ignorance and danger, a Realm governed by those who once massacred us. Where are the Lunars who were once our spouses and allies? Where are the Sidereals who were our counselors and who read the stars to guide us to a golden future? At such times, I doubt that we will ever make a true change to the Realm, and I wonder if we will soon perish, as did those who were chosen by the Unconquered Sun before us.

But then I look back at what I have managed to do, and I know that I have already begun to make a true change to the world around me. Each child taught, each adult who is better informed, each piece of knowledge snatched from the jaws of darkness — that is a victory! The war we wage will be won slowly and piecemeal, but it will leave behind it a shining land where knowledge is valued as it should be and where none are ignorant, unless it is by their own choice.

Three months ago, I received a missive from a woman in the town of Seven Marches, who I have corresponded with before on questions of the healing spells used in the First Age. While she was not one of my caste, I thought that she might know someone else who has been Exalted, from the tone of some of her letters. She begged me for quantities of three grasses that grow on the borders of my lake. There was a plague upon her town, one that raised black and purple boils in the hollows of the body and caused the victims to rave in delirium. Since she was occupied in caring for her family, she begged me to bring her those grasses, as she believed that they could be used to compound a medicine.

I came, as she asked, and I brought quantities of the grasses with me. It was as she had said — when blended in the correct proportions, they eased the fever and reduced the swellings. While I worked in her stillroom, creating the ointment (for I had no spells of my own that could heal), some of the children of the household came to see this stranger. They had heard that I was some sort of sorceress — naturally, this made them all the more curious. I told them tales of the First Age, of how the mighty wonder-works of the time could summon great birds of fire to bear us across lands and seas and the story of the first pilgrimage to the five corners of the world and others of that sort. I also showed them how to grind the grasses with the pestle and mortar and taught them something of anatomy and other things of that nature.

That night, two of the children came to my bedside, to the pallet that I had been given in an attic room. They were nervous and uncertain, but they whispered that they had heard an aunt in the household speaking of how she had told the Immaculates that one of the Unclean was present in the town and how they would be sending the Wyld Hunt this very night to seek me out. I had con-

vinced them that not all the Anathema — or at least, not all those who used sorcery — were truly evil, and they wanted to warn me.

I fled that place, summoning an air spirit to bear me from the roof and out into the night sky. Below me, I saw the Wyld Hunt galloping furiously toward the town, silk pennants in the colors of the members' houses flying behind them in the moonlight, the ground shaking under their horses' hooves. I thought of the children whom I had left behind me, and how they had come to the aid of one of the Unclean against those whom they had been taught to respect all their lives. One afternoon's talk — one day's work — had been enough to change how they saw the world. Who can say what they might become, in future years? The architects of a new world, perhaps, one founded on the learning of the old.

And so, I say that each deed, each teaching, is of value. We cannot permit ourselves to abandon hope. I do not say that each of the Twilight Caste must work in the same way as I do. My correspondence with some of the others has shown me that they each play a vital part in the stability of the Realm by battling the Dragon-Blooded or other foes or by creating wonders. The other castes, too, each have their own paths. I ask only that they listen to the wisdom that I have discovered in the writings of the Solars of old and that they use it to guide their path in recreating the Realm. For it must be changed. The world must be saved, and we have been given this power to do so. It is what I always dreamed of: knowledge to guide me, power to act and a challenge to surmount.

JAY SELAK-AMU

Old shells and sea wrack crunched under my feet as I let my memory take me up a path that had lain untouched for years. My wife followed behind, silent and full of anger. She didn't understand, and I had no words to explain.

We passed unspeaking over the crumbling, solitary peak of Windward Isle, and the old witch's hut still leaned against the bottom of the steep seaward cliff. Built of driftwood and an ancient, broken ship hull, the hut looked like nothing but a bit of sea trash. During high tide, the waves would lap nearly to the walls — I remembered lying awake, year after year, wondering when the Sea would find its way inside. I'd left the old hut behind the day I sent the witch's body to the Sea and never looked back.

She'd told me often enough, the witch. The key to magic — true magic — was magic. There could be nothing else; witches lived, breathed and died for magic. She'd laughed contemptuously when I'd married and told me I'd return to her someday. Today was my homecoming. Now, I knew why the witch had lived by herself out here with nothing but the Sea for cold company.

THE TWILIGHT CONSPIRACY

The legacy of the Twilight Caste. At the time of the Usurpation, it became clear that their powerful artifacts were laced with subtle traps to avenge their slain creators. Monuments and Manses that blossomed into battle fortresses and defensive arrays, killing millions as they laid waste to the land around them or exploded in deliberately planned Essence blasts. The automata and bound demons that the Twilight controlled revealed hidden purposes and secret instructions. In concert with a tiny handful of survivors from the initial ambush, these weapons and servants nearly destroyed civilization. In addition, there seem to be dozens of hidden libraries, tucked away and protected by luck and sorcery so that future inheritors of the Twilight mantle would be able to reclaim the lore and power that is their destiny.

What were the Twilight thinking? Did they know the Usurpation was coming and seek to defend themselves? If so, why did so many attend the ill-fated feast where the Solars were slain? Did they know it was inevitable, and if so, what sort of beings were they that, for decades or even centuries before their deaths, they laced their creations with horrible mechanisms designed to avenge their foreordained demise? Or had they simply become mad, paranoid creatures whose insane planning provoked the Usurpation? This latter stance is what the Immaculate Philosophy preaches, and it may well be right.

These are questions this book doesn't try to answer, but that Storytellers should feel free to. The time immediately prior to the Usurpation isn't marked out for development, and Storytellers should feel free to impart whatever motives they wish on the Twilights of that time. They could simply have been mad, they may have done it to distract Creation from their already-predestined rise as the Deathlords (most of whom are sorcerers), or it might have been part of a plan to resurrect themselves or to ensure the survival of the Solar tribe. What was truly the case is up for the Storyteller to choose.

I loved my wife and my children. I had made a home for myself in the Windward keep — I had friends. Before the old witch had died, I'd never had friends. Now, I was leaving them all behind for the sake of a forgotten god and the power running so strong in my blood that I could taste it. Though I loved my family and the life I'd built, it was a distraction now. Every moment spent with my children was a moment that I could have used to learn, to study, to drag the power waiting in me to the surface.

A witch's work had been mine since the old witch had died. I'd birthed half the babies in town and buried my share of elders. My name had carried me safely past Lintha pirates, Dragon-Blooded marines and warring island clans. I knew the herbs to bring the blood rushing strong through the heart and the poisons to still breath forever. I could make talismans to sanctify a new village and wards to keep the Fair Ones at bay. I had a place in the world. The Unconquered Sun had given me the power to truly secure the archipelago, and at the same time, he sought to tear me from it.

"Here, my heart," I murmured when we reached the tiny, rocky beach and turned to my wife. The light rain ran like tears down her face, but I knew she would never cry in front of me. She never had. I wiped back her hair and kissed her forehead. She smelled of sweet grass and whale oil. The familiar scent made my heart ache.

"Do not do this, lay!" She threw her arms around me, and then, we were clinging together in a tangle of oilskins. "Stay with me! Stay with us!"

"I cannot!" I groaned and pushed her back, gripping her fingers because I could not bear to let go. "I have to do this. I have to."

She nodded in silence, closed to me again, and slid her basket from her shoulders. "I brought you food for a few days. Clothes. I'll... I'll come back next Tuesday with more."

"Thank you," I managed. She left the baskets on the ground and turned to begin the long, lonely climb over the rise and back to the home and children I'd abandoned.

I picked up the food and went inside quickly. I couldn't bear to watch her go.

The hut looked much the same. Three years of neglect had done it little harm. Mice rustled in the litter that had made its way inside. I paused at the doorway, half expecting the witch's harsh voice to call out from the back room, cursing me for my neglect. I piled driftwood in the stone fire pit, letting the warmth chase the ghosts from the rooms. I had to duck my head under the crooked lintel to reach the back room. Then I pulled aside the crumbling planks that were laid directly against the cliff face. Sometimes, the hut was larger than most folk knew.

I had to wait for sunset, for only at twilight did the tunnel open. I shed my oilskins and put a pot of my wife's herb soup on the hearth. I was already lonely, but at the same time, I could feel my spirit stretching out in the silence and solitude. There were no beloved children to distract me, no one to see the Caste Mark that set me forever apart from the rest of the world.

I rubbed my forehead. I could feel nothing, of course, and most of the time my Caste Mark remained hidden. Outside the hut, the waves rolled endlessly against the



4
 5
 6
 7
 8
 9
 10
 11
 12
 13
 14
 15
 16
 17
 18
 19
 20
 21
 22
 23
 24
 25
 26
 27
 28
 29
 30
 31
 32
 33
 34
 35
 36
 37
 38
 39
 40
 41
 42
 43
 44
 45
 46
 47
 48
 49
 50
 51
 52
 53
 54
 55
 56
 57
 58
 59
 60
 61
 62
 63
 64
 65
 66
 67
 68
 69
 70
 71
 72
 73
 74
 75
 76
 77
 78
 79
 80
 81
 82
 83
 84
 85
 86
 87
 88
 89
 90
 91
 92
 93
 94
 95
 96
 97
 98
 99
 100



shore, and I listened to the tide with the mixture of hate and devotion that all Westerners feel at the sound of the jealous Sea. The wind was quiet, and I heard nothing of the Fair Ones that had been troubling the isle recently. Perhaps I would be given the time I needed to gain the power to drive them off for good.

The Unconquered Sun had called me, my dreams had been filled with a destiny that would take me beyond the isle of my birth, but I was torn. I could not leave the Windward Isle and the surrounding settlements without a witch. I was the people's protector. My talismans held back the Wyld, and in this age of chaos, I dared not neglect my responsibilities.

The Wyld had been creeping closer every year, and the Fair Folk, the Wyld's merciless vanguard, were increasing in number and power. The Western shadowlands were rising in power as well. The patrols and warships that fought the dead and the formless Fair Ones depended on me. Without me, the whale-hunters might not find the pods. My fishcalling kept the fishermen from going hungry. The white sickness that came from the shadowland took all the skill and strength I had to fight. If I left, I would be abandoning everything that all who fought the Sea for their living had so painstakingly built over the years. Abandoning my family was a small thing in the face of that.

Surely, the Unconquered Sun, who has shaped my very soul, understood loyalty and duty. Though I might have a greater destiny elsewhere, I was content with the small role I had been born into. There were others who could change the world, others who would answer the god's call willingly. There were many kinds of battlefields. There were many kinds of warriors. It was my place to hold fast while others went out to combat the madness running through the world. When they returned, I would still be here, and so would the land, the Sea, the sky — all in their appointed place. I would remain here and hold the Wyld at bay.

JAY ON INHERITANCE

The tunnel had grown smaller as I had grown older, and I cursed as I wiggled my way past a jagged spur of stone. Sweating and scraped, I stumbled into the hidden chamber. The last bloody rays of sunset were falling through a tiny aperture high above me. I was under the Windward Isle's rocky peak now, in a tiny crystal cave.

The witches of Windward Isle had kept this place secret for generations, and it was the source of our strength. The last light of the sun was caught in hundreds of glittering points, and countless rainbows washed the floor and stained my pale skin blue or green or red. I shivered uneasily, for now I could sense the untamed power washing across my skin disguised as simple light.

The effect would fade as the sun set, and in candle light, the crystals covering the walls would gleam and shine but not blaze with color — or power — as they did now.

I set down my candles, powders and other ingredients for the spell I intended to cast — once the dangerous twilight surge of power was gone. Having taken my Second Breath, I could sense how this little cave was tuned to the power of the Sun above. The power here, barely shaped, barely in check, resonated with my own. My anima, ruddy orange, burned around me, twisting into runes that I could not read. Not yet.

With the shrine, the witches had passed down an odd little ritual. It had held little meaning for my teacher — or for me, until my Exaltation. It was a spell to allow me to read the secrets hidden in this chamber, and no mortal could cast it. As the sun passed the aperture, the colors faded and the strange patterns the crystals grew in were revealed. Like my own anima, the crystals grew in runic shapes that I could not read. However, the little spell handed down by rote from witch to witch would change that.

Lighting the candles, I placed them beneath the first cluster of glittering runes until they were the only illuminated area in the cave. I chanted the meaningless phrases, pacing front and back as I'd learned as a child, my newborn powers giving the words a resonance they had never had before. The candlelight grew bright, almost blinding, and then, a great, golden eye blinked open, startling in the dimness.

"God!" I stumbled back. There was just that solitary, staring eyeball, the nerve cord trailed away into a golden haze. It was easily the size of my head, and I wondered uneasily where the rest of the strange entity was. The horizontal pupil fixed on the runic jewels, and beneath the eerie floating eye, a mouth writhed into being and began to speak.

"The First Circle begins within the earth. Listen and learn, my descendent, for this is your heritage."

Still staring at the bizarre thing I'd called forth, I fumbled for a writing slate and chalk. The golden eye and mouth read on in a monotone that made it hard to pay attention to the wisdom it was deciphering for me. I struggled to write fast enough, not sure how long the spell would last or how often I could cast it. I wrote until my fingers cramped, until, abruptly, the spell winked out along with the guttering candles, leaving me in darkness.

I put down my chalk and shook out my sore fingers, then rested my hand on the precious stack of slates besides me. More than magic had been passed down to me. There were spells of course, spells whose power I could hardly imagine. Spells that terrified me in their pure destructive power. Spells so cruel they could destroy the soul itself. But the unnamed sorcerer that had wrought this place had given me more.

I knew now that this little cave was far from natural. Its shape had been altered, just enough, to make it a wellspring of Solar power. Over some great span of time, the entire island had been shaped around this place. And then, the same occult architect had poured his wisdom, his knowledge and even his hopes and fears into the geologic runes around me.

Even through the high pitched monotone of the magical translator, I had gained a sense of the sorcerer who had wrought this. His words were woven with dedication and patience, and through everything was the touch of the Unconquered Sun. Just as the Maidens danced around the great god of the sun, so had the world danced around the old Solar sorcerer who had made this place.

The ancient sorcerer had made this place, the Unconquered Sun had made him — and they had both made me. My very nature had been shaped by the god, to serve, to protect and to illuminate the darkness. My upbringing had been guided by the sorcerer's unknowing agent, the old witch, his tool so very many generations away. In the words that I had written down, I sensed a kin to my own nature. He too had been a protector, even in the face of his own destruction. The sorcerer had looked unflinching on his own death, centuries ago, and had prepared this place for the day when his heir would come forth. I was that heir.

And just I was heir to that power, I was heir to that duty. I knew now that my place was, truly, here — protecting the people who guarded the edge of the world from destruction. With the powers being revealed to me now, I knew that I could do so much more than make a few talismans or purify a well. I could bring forth islands from the Wyld Sea itself. I could bring order to the chaos nibbling at the end of the world. I could drive death itself away. And with that power came the responsibility to use it in the service of the world — and that was my duty to the Unconquered Sun.

I had been afraid that the god wanted me to leave the islands, to travel to some unimaginable destiny and abandon the duty that had held me since I was born. Now, I knew that my duty stretched well before the birth of my flesh and that there was no greater calling than the protection of the simple folk around me. The Unconquered Sun had placed the world in our care, and I would care for it.

ARIANNA

Responsibility is as you define it. I have a responsibility to myself. What good will it do the world if I let myself be cut down for the sake of some squalling mudsoaked peasant's brat? I did not ask for this power. I was given it while being who I am — if the Unconquered Sun expects





me to act, then he must expect me to do so on my own terms. Granted, things are worse than they could be. I agree that something should be done about it, don't mistake me. I just see no point in throwing myself into the middle of a dangerous situation when I am not yet powerful enough to make a difference. If I am chosen to be a sorceress, then by all the gods, great and small, let me be a competent one! Don't ask me to try to liberate an entire kingdom's worth of people from their despotic rulers. Where were they when I needed help?

Consider your typical realm in the Scavenger Lands. Most of them are stable enough — the world's not perfect, and it's foolish to expect it to be so. Perhaps the officials take a bit on the side in bribes, and perhaps justice is bought and sold. What of it? That's how life is, and the people in power are not going to be interested in changing it. I wasn't given this power in order to try to change things such as that. Am I supposed to attempt to overthrow the Guild or wipe out the Great Houses of the Terrestrial Exalted? My caste is supposed to be the *wise* one. I'm not going to pick a fight unless it's one that I can win — and one that I can see some profit in. Wearing myself out for no good reason and for no return is not only pointless, it's stupid.

I could walk into a hundred little cities scattered across the land, and in every single one of them, I could find children starving in the gutter. Will it actually make a difference if I try to feed them all or give them money or set them up in a decent trade? Five days after I left the city, they'd have gone back to begging or used up the money on wine and drugs or had it stolen off them. Perhaps one in twenty might actually gain something permanent from it, I'll grant that — but is that sort of ratio worth the effort?

I am a sorceress of the Twilight Caste. I have the power to call demons, to see spirits, to strike down my enemies. Give me time, and I will be able to do more, far more than that. I will be able to transform the Wyld lands into rolling fields and pastures where villages may live undisturbed and to bind the most powerful of demons so that they will not trouble humans again and to shake the mighty houses of the Dragon-Blooded into the rubble, so that they may know what they once visited upon us. Those who see me will tremble and fear and will know the glory of the Unconquered Sun as it is reflected in his servants.

My plans are long-term rather than immediate. Ultimately, we will need to either remove or control the Dynasty, if only to preserve our own autonomy. Given the way that the houses are divided against each other in the Empress' absence (long may it continue!), it should be possible to play them against each other. We do not have to regain immediate rulership of the Realm, after all — a slow, careful increase of power will do just as well, if

not better. We can gradually ameliorate the lot of the common people, establish negotiated boundaries with the Fair Folk — or drive them back if necessary — and deal with the shadowlands.

Naturally, we will need to decide precisely how to do all these things. I see no reason why we shouldn't use the old methods from the First Age: The Dawn Castes will be our generals, the Zenith Castes will preach the word of submission to the masses, the Eclipse Castes will make treaties with those who are too powerful to be immediately subdued, and the Night Castes will... do what they do best. My own caste will provide advice and guidance, and we will use our magical arts where appropriate and where none of the methods of the other castes will serve.

I have no intention of becoming decadent or slothful. My talents will be best served by work, and there is plenty of work to be done. I also expect that the future will require a certain amount of reeducation of the common folk. Their total credulity at all the stories about the Anathema merely proves how easy it is to persuade them of lies. They will have to be taught the truth again — and have it fed down their throats drop by painstaking drop. Of course, this will include a full and undiluted description of the Dragon-Blooded's role in exterminating my kind and then slaying us when we were reborn.

Education is the key to proper behavior. The people of the Realm will live peaceful, contented lives, where simple common sense will show them that we are their rightful rulers. Why should they wish to rebel, when they will have peace and food? I and the other Twilight Exalted will find the old spells that will permit us to banish famine and pestilence from the land. This is simple practicality: I cannot truly devote myself to research while I have these other cares to hamper me.

Lately, I passed through a small island in the Western Ocean, while hurrying to rejoin the rest of my Circle, to hear about Swan's latest project. (Some harebrained scheme to deal with a young Dawn Caste who'd been butchering Dragon-Blooded on an altar in front of golden mirrors and claiming that it was celebrating the Unconquered Sun's glory — just the sort of thing that makes it difficult for the rest of us to negotiate with the more reasonable Terrestrial Exalted!)

I was diverted briefly by the prospect of examining a local Demesne, which I thought might have the capacity to be capped by a Manse. While I lack knowledge of the precise architectural techniques required, I know more than one person who might be able to do so or who might be grateful for some information about its location and latent possibilities. In any case, I found that the place was grossly out of control, leaking Essence in all directions and fostering terrible mutations. The snakes on that island had human eyes and human tongues, and they sang

children's songs at dawn and sunset. The trees had leaves of beaten copper — it was tarnished by the sea spray carried by the wind, so that the leaves seemed green from a distance, as though the island was perpetually in spring.

At the time, I found myself being hunted by a ship out of Coral and was obliged to take shelter rather more hastily than I would have liked. Unfortunately, the first that I knew of the ship's arrival was when I heard the screams from where I had left the natives who I had persuaded to row me across to this island. I approached the scene with sensible caution and arrived in time to see my boat being burned and the only surviving native being tortured and questioned about me. There were a good two dozen men, all in Coral armor and armed with cutlasses.

Fortunately, I had left a good trail from our landing-point to where the Demesne began, and the Coralite sailors were quick to follow it. Once they were on the boundaries of the Demesne, I slipped past them and into it and screamed artistically a few times. Night was falling, and they walked into three separate nests of snakes before they realized that the nature of the world around them had changed. One of them was sliced to pieces by a shower of falling copper leaves and lay there on the ground in the darkness, screaming and bleeding, as the others ran from the area. I disposed of the others before dawn: Their leader, I harried into a flare of Essence, which burned him like a torch but took till first light to die away, and his followers perished at the fangs of the snakes or by my knives.

Both of these things, pirates and undirected Essence creating terrible hazards, are symptoms of the same cause — a world out of joint, a Realm that is not well arranged — and both must be dealt with. Even if this means that we must take time from our own studies, it is beneficial in the long run. We require autonomy and stability for research and experimentation. Although there are certain rewards that can be obtained from taking advantage of wars and disputes, ultimately, peace and prosperity are a more useful base from which we can work.

Incidentally, I used the information about the Demesne to bargain for certain First Age scrolls from a representative of the Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Water. The nemissary in question was most obliging and behaved with suitable respect for my caste. And it wasn't

as if I was giving him anything that he couldn't have obtained otherwise — the island in question is not far from Skullstone, and it'd have been the work of a few weeks for him to occupy it if he really wanted to. More to the point, it wasn't a particularly potent Demesne, and it would have been extremely difficult for me to raise a suitable Manse there. I like to think that they'll make suitable use of the dead pirates from Coral. Zombies, perhaps, or walking skeletons — or hungry ghosts.

But we can do better than this — indeed, we must. Imagine, if you like, a Realm that is ruled by Circles of Solars: Perhaps they will each govern cities, or perhaps they will control wider expanses of land. The most powerful, of course, will reside at the center of the Realm. Those Dragon-Blooded that realize their true nature as our servants and subordinates will act as our lieutenants and scribes and will be allowed the crumbs of power that fall from our table. There is no need for us to be unjust. If one of the Terrestrial Exalted has a gift for rulership or in other matters, then he will be promoted according to his talents.

We will create a new Realm, one mightier than that of the First Age, where sorcerers like myself will create wonders that will never be forgotten. The people in the streets will not go hungry, and the spirits will keep within their boundaries. The Fair Folk will keep to the Wyld — they can be useful in many ways, and we need not condemn them, if they avoid giving us offense. Likewise, there is much that can be learned from the shadowlands and their masters. Providing that they expand no further and that the more aggressive Deathlords are taught their limits, they also can be tolerated.

I tell you that the power that we can command will be able to accomplish all these things. But first, we must learn to master that power, whatever the cost. If we must make temporary accommodations with those who are less ethical than we might wish, then that is unfortunate but necessary. They will come to regret, in time, that they failed to show us proper respect. If we wish to make real, lasting changes to the lands, then we need true power, not merely the half-remembered shreds and rags that are left to us in this age. And for that power, we must be prepared to do whatever the situation requires — so that, in time, we can rebuild the glories of the First Age, but brighter, purer and more lasting.







CHAPTER THREE THE WORLD AWAITING US



Freshly Exalted Twilight Caste Solars find themselves in a world full of powerful beings, many of whom take far too close an interest in their actions. In this chapter, we examine how the Twilight Caste feel about and relate to the various other forces around them, both human and supernatural. As is only to be expected, there is no definite single answer to any question and no unified point of view.

Some of the other factions force certain reactions from the Solars by their automatic hostility: It is difficult for a Twilight to feel anything other than rage and hatred for the Dragon-Blooded who hound Solars across the land and hunt them down to slay them. Equally, the partial memories of past lives left by the Exaltation may predispose Solars to feel an automatic kinship toward other Celestial Exalted, such as Lunars or Sidereals — though, of course, discovering certain facts about the Sidereals may alter such opinions. Ultimately, however, the present lives of the Twilight Caste tend to have a stronger effect on them than any fragmentary visions from a previous existence. Solars who have lived on the edge of the Wyld all their lives, with constant raids from beastmen and Lunars, will have problems when confronting their ancient spouses, and those who have suffered from the attentions of the Fair Folk will be less than enthusiastic about alliances with them.

Once you have created your character, it can be extremely useful to consider how he feels about the various supernatural entities that share the world with him. As seekers of lore, craftsmen and sorcerers, the Copper Spiders

have a certain respect for those who can gather ancient lore and use it, and for creators and builders. However, respect does not necessarily mean affection: It can also mean jealousy, fear and hatred of those who possess power that the character does not or power that she knows will be used against her. Also, many of the Twilight Caste may find other characters lacking in knowledge or in what they conceive to be a proper degree of judgment. Which is more important: to save a peasant village or to recover a book of spells that has been lost for centuries? To defeat an opponent or to create a magical construct that will be able to fly a thousand leagues between sunset and sunrise? To preserve an old but cruel treaty or to heal a wounded man? Does the character feel that there is a place for brute force and for open preaching, or does she have no use for such useless practices?

Every Twilight Caste Exalted grew up as a normal human being, with no suspicion that some day they might receive the Exaltation from the Unconquered Sun. They built their lives and interacted with the other people around them, never knowing that they would eventually become what they are now — fundamentally different from humans, more than merely mortal. As their powers increase and as they continue to live on, untouched by old age, they will slowly grow more and more distant from the general mass of humanity. Some Twilight Caste Exalted embrace this, redefining themselves as something separate and apart, the chosen of the gods. Others resist it, seeking to remain



still human and keep the lives they once had and mingling with humanity as though they were no more than they. Some of the Twilight Caste will see themselves as humanity's new overlords, despising the mere mortals. Others will define themselves as protectors or seek to move entirely away from interaction with normal people. Your Twilight Caste Exalted's attitude toward human beings will affect every part of her life — whether or not she thinks so — and is an important factor for you to consider. Will she treat them as minions to be ordered around or as friends whose opinions and advice deserve attention? Will she consider them to be annoying fools who constantly fail to appreciate her wisdom — or will they become even more important to her, as her own people whom she has a responsibility toward?

SAYN

OTHER SOLAR EXALTED

We were made to work together — it's as simple as that. When I found my Circle, I knew joy and harmony and friendship and the security of having someone to watch my back. The Unconquered Sun did not make us to struggle alone. He gave us brothers and sisters to be our new family, now that we are no longer human.

I wonder, sometimes, if that had something to do with our fall centuries ago. Did we forget to trust each other and begin to set ourselves apart from other Solars as well as from humans? I know that I offer advice to my brothers and that I would speak to them seriously if I became troubled about their actions. Perhaps the old Solars forgot this. Maybe, in their pride and vanity, they grew apart, and like a thousand separate suns, they all fell into darkness alone.

In purely practical terms, I need my brothers and sisters. I need the Dawn Castes to stand beside me in battle, the Zenith Castes to banish demons and undead and preach the word of the Unconquered Sun, the Night Castes to steal and sneak — and slay, where they must — and the Eclipses to practice their diplomacy and bind our friends and enemies in lasting agreement. I myself was called to be a crafter of artifice and a sorcerer, and that is what I *want* to be.

I find a joy in the creation of magics and in the play of hammer on orichalcum that I have never experienced at any other time. And the sorcery — the three circles are a path toward inner perfection for me, a gauge of my own abilities and a triumph for my skill. I do not seek to be a master warrior or diplomat or spy or priest; my heart is in my magic. The Immaculates call us Unclean, but they could not be more wrong: Through my sorcery, I show forth the power of the Unconquered Sun, the source of all purity.

I am not saying that the other castes do not have their own prejudices or personal flaws. The Dawn Castes are overly aggressive, the Zenith Castes are fanatics with no concept of personal safety, the Night Castes are cynical or mocking, and the Eclipse Castes are obsessed with their personal missions. But if I let this bar me from working

together with my brothers and sisters, then I would be as proud as the Immaculates claim of the Anathema, and my own foolishness would bring due punishment upon my head soon enough.

SHADOWLANDS

They are the most glorious and, at the same time, the most horrifying places that I have ever seen. There is something in those dark lands that whispers to us, murmuring of the wonders of death and the perfection of decay. It makes you wonder what secrets they hold, what great marvels might be unveiled if only you knew the words to command a revelation. The deep black marble abysses conceal dead gods — and what might those gods tell us, if we knew what questions to ask? And yet they are unholy, death-filled places, corruptions and stains upon the natural world.

I stayed in the household of an Abyssal, once. My Circle was attempting to avert a war, by arranging for the ransom of a House Cathak boy who'd been taken into a shadowland. The ship carrying him and others of his family had sunk just offshore — the Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Water disclaimed all responsibility, of course — and the boy alone had survived to reach the land. If we couldn't persuade him to hand the boy back, two House Cathak legions would be attacking that shadowland in short order. While I would not normally have objected to that, there were a lot of innocent villages between where the legions were stationed and where the border of the shadowland began. Zebahna had found out that the Cathak commander was planning to issue orders to sack and burn everything in between, in an attempt to cut down on future living recruitment into that shadowland. After being told that, even I agreed that we had to try to resolve the matter before the legions moved in.

We were theoretically a diplomatic mission: Zebahna and Fumitor had remained outside the boundaries but were ready to come in at a moment's notice, while I and Kunazi went in together. Kunazi was to play the diplomat, as always, reminding the Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Water of any obligations that she could dredge up, while I was to offer certain recent findings of mine. As a gesture of hospitality from the Bodhisattva, we were housed in the Manse of one of his favorites, an Abyssal by the name of Admirable Silence. I was truly astonished to find that this silver-haired Abyssal Exalted had a husband — and three children.

I spent a while in conversation with them, trying to understand how such apparently normal human beings could live in the heart of the shadowlands and how they could love one of the Abyssals. They are creatures that celebrate death, things of stasis and darkness. How could any living creature accept that into his life and *welcome* it?

We left that shadowland in haste, with the Cathak boy as a prisoner. He hadn't wanted to come with us — he swore that he'd discovered a new purpose to his life and that he was now devoted life and death to the Bodhisattva

Anointed by Dark Water. As we fled the Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Water's palace, Fumitor driving the skeletons from our path with sweeps of his daiklave, I could feel the boy trembling on my shoulder, weeping in rage and pain as we dragged him away from the seductions of the place.

And that is why we must destroy the shadowlands — however fascinating they may be and however great the knowledge which we could gain from them. They are too great a temptation for us to let them continue to exist. Sooner or later, if they remain standing, we will all, one by one, walk along those silver streets and up the bone stairs into the dark citadels and bargain away our lives and souls — for knowledge, for power or merely for the simple love of death.

SIDEREALS

I find myself in two minds about many of these astrologers. They are the Chosen of the Maidens, just as we are the Chosen of the Unconquered Sun, but when I consider how they destroyed us before, with the help of the Dragon-Blooded, my blood boils in my veins. Not all of us remember, not all of us know, and not all of us believe, but I remember. I know that they were behind the Dragon-Blooded's pogrom against us, and I suspect that they still work to keep us oppressed or, better, dead.

And yet, I cannot entirely suppress the thought that they might have done the right thing. My memories of the past are of a bloody, lustful and abominable degenerate. Were the Sidereals wrong, to want to remove a group of corrupt despots from power? The stars have granted them great wisdom and powers of foresight. They were created to be our counselors and advisors. To deliberately throw away such a gift is the act of a fool. Should I tell the others what I remember? Is revenge worth the deliberate refusal of such allies?

But on the other hand, I know that I am serving the Unconquered Sun now and that our race is no longer what it once was. If the Sidereals choose to oppose me and call me Anathema, then they are wrong — either through ignorance or through deliberate malice. The former I shall reason with. The latter deserve no better than what they previously visited upon us.

THE WYLD

It is a threat to all civilized society and to all the humans who simply want to live peaceful, untroubled lives. The Wyld itself is a threat, as well as all the creatures that it spawns. It is a cancer upon the face of the earth, spreading further every year and burning into the helpless flesh of our land like acid on a child's skin. The spirits are often powerless to halt it: In areas where they have no ties to the local humans, they often even welcome it, singing it into their valleys and mountains to nest and grow in all its twisting chaos.

Once, I thought that it could be tamed and even harnessed to serve our needs. That was before I journeyed

deep into it, in an attempt to find a group of peasants who had gone in search of great rubies that hung like fruit from the branches and silver that grew like thick bark upon the ash trees. I spent three days traveling, three days where the grass was living crystal under my feet, where streams bubbled with blood and where the songbirds in the trees croaked like ravens, for all that their feathers were as bright as the morning sky. Each night, I slept high in the branches of a tree, for there were creatures abroad that writhed through the ground and left wakes behind them as wide as three men standing together. Spirits whispered from the rivers: On the second evening, at dusk, I came upon what seemed to be a beautiful woman bathing, but when I drew closer I saw that her flesh and hair were as pale as alabaster and her skin was slick with blood. She tried to call me down to the waterside to join her, but I rebuked her in a flare of Essence, and she fled screaming.

I found the peasants on the evening of the third day. One woman was still intact, for the most part: She was attempting to tend the others, as they could not move from where they lay. They were caught in the roots of a grove of the silver-barked ash trees, half-buried in the earth, with tendrils from the roots interlaced among their fingers so that their palms were raised in helpless supplication to the sun above. Several of them babbled weakly, though not sanely. Their hair and skin had grown as colorless as the glistening pale trunks of the trees, but the trees themselves had a proud display of scarlet leaves, which rustled constantly, although there was no wind.

I cut the roots from the bodies of the peasants and dragged them out of the soil, but they did not have the strength to walk or the coherence of mind to stand upright, and it was three days to the edge of the Wyld. I did then what was necessary to preserve them from further corruption.

The woman is still alive and makes no more journeys in search of riches. And she would also warn you that the Wyld is unfit for any living thing: It is a sickness upon the land and must be walled away.

FEHIM

MORTALS

After days of planning, I'm watching Serinim, hunched in his chair, chin on his fist, glaring at the temple that is my refuge and prison. Smoke rises from his flame-colored hair; he's nervous. The poetry is forgotten, and the tea is cold. An informant I'd bought and paid for years ago whispers in his ear. A steady stream of worshipers is passing through the gates, as I've instructed.

I've seeded rumors the past week. Whispers of prophecy, of chosen avatars, of a new age, have begun to trouble the city. The stars were right for my charade — the astrologers spoke of great changes, and I took shameless advantage of that. I instructed the temple servants to gossip about things they'd kept secret for generations. I made sure they whispered to the wrong ears. I wanted the rise of rumor and





speculation around the temple. It certainly helped that some of my lies were true.

I couldn't face Serinim and hope to survive. Not openly. But I had to get rid of him. Like any Dragon-Blooded, he had patience only a centuries-long life could give, and he could wait out there in the street for years. If I left the temple, half the city would be after me for the bounty on my head — so I had to bring him to me. I had to bring him to my battleground.

Of course, if I pushed him to fast or to far, he might just call in reinforcements — maybe even the Wyld Hunt. I wanted Serinim suspicious but not certain. I wanted him suspicious enough to sneak past the sanctuary laws but not suspicious enough to embarrass himself in front of his own kin. So, I watched him from my tower and sent out my servants to bait my trap. It wasn't the kind of planning that Serinim would expect. After all, I was supposed to be only mortal.

Mortals, as far as the Dragon-Blooded were concerned, made good slaves and servants, brewed good ale, raised crops, washed floors and weren't good for much else. The Terrestrials weren't shy about thinking of mortal as cattle. The unfortunate sons and daughters of a Dragon-Blooded family who didn't rise to Exaltation were tools for their more prestigious kin. Some of them were even killed as defective.

But I'd been playing games like this with the High Commander and his guards since I was a 15-year-old orphan scabbling for a place with the Three Devils. Ledaal Serinim had been the bane of the gang for over 50 years. I knew now that the Dragon-Blooded commander was a callow young man in his kin's eyes. They'd given him command of the Yane city guards the way other parents give out an allowance. It was an exciting job out in the provinces, and he acted as a representative for house interests on the side. I didn't think he'd ask for help from the other Dragon-Blooded in the city; he didn't want to look like a fool in front of his own kind. I was turning Serinim's own arrogance into a weapon in my hand.

Tonight was my night — whispers of miracles had crowded the temple courtyard for the first time in decades. Everything was ready on my end, and I had made sure the High Commander was ready too.

I had a blessing to make and a miracle to perform. I'd cribbed my speech from the High One's old sermons — and added a few things. Things stolen from my own dreams. Words not spoken for generations in veneration of a god whose worship was a death sentence. As the Old Woman wound cloth of gold robes around me, I wished forlornly for one of my Zenith kin. I wasn't a priest, but I was going to have to pretend to be one. I went down the stairs, into the courtyard, and started my performance amid whispers and pointing fingers.

"Welcome, my children," I began awkwardly. The words weren't important. As I spoke, I called upon my anima, letting the god's own gift burn in me. Cries went up as my Caste Mark burned from beneath my veils. I called on

more power, stretching my arms out and singing the old words of power. Fire rose around me, washing the walls with crimson. The fire rose around me, a giant golden image with my face. The image rose high above the walls, and through the ruddy tint of the spell surrounding me, I could see the worshipers throwing themselves on their faces.

"The Eternal Eye has looked on you with favor!" I said, and my voice boomed and roared like thunder. "The god knows you, loyal children of the light. He knows the loyal and the true — and he sees the treacherous and serpent tongued. He sees all! Go forth, and know you have been chosen for greatness!"

The spell, my first spell, was tiring, and I could feel the burning image flickering around me. I quenched the spell, and I retreated into darkness, hidden from the eyes of a crowd whose night vision had been ruined. I could hear weeping and screams behind me and smiled. The High One was going to have his hands full — and a temple full of new, devout worshipers.

THE DRAGON-BLOODED

I headed down then, down into the tunnels. I was betting Serinim was creeping through them now. In fact, if he wasn't — if he tried to break down the gates and attack openly, I was a dead man. The tunnels, the familiar sewer tunnels that every smuggler in Yane knew like their lovers' bodies, were my trap for the High Commander. There was a haze in the air and the stink of a familiar and cheap incense. The smell hid another, more dangerous odor.

Poisoning a Dragon-Blooded isn't easy. Most of them have been trained to recognize common poisons. Also, like all Exalted, they have a powerful inborn resistance to poison and disease. But I knew a lot about drugs — the Three Devils had controlled most of Yane's drug trade, and you learn about a lot of strange things talking to Southern shamans and Lintha smugglers. So, I was burning mescalero in the incense I'd bought.

In small quantities, the tiny yellow flower worked as a stimulant, and I'd heard that the shapeshifting sorcerers of the East chewed it because it strengthened Essence flow through the body. I tried it, and under its effects, my anima had blazed high enough to actually bleach the walls of the room I was in — much brighter than the normal effect of the anima. It had raged out of control for only a few moments before the vomiting started, and I had been left pain-wracked and afraid that I would die from the Essence release. Now, with the mescalero heavy in the incense haze, I didn't dare use a Charm or sorcery — I didn't have any control. Now as I ran down the tunnels, I could feel my Caste Mark burning brighter and my anima washed across the bricks like an inferno. The rush of my own Essence was almost painful, but the drug didn't erase the weariness left from my earlier spell, it kindled my anima and only increased my exhaustion. Essence didn't move quite so openly in the Dragon-Blooded, and I believed that Serinim wouldn't feel the effects of the mescalero until he practiced his first Charm.

In the wash of my bright anima, a distorted shadow cast on the bricks was my only warning of the approaching Dragon-Blooded. I retreated, drawing him deeper into the tunnels. Serinim stalked the corona of my anima and paid no more attention to the incense than a whore to her client's perfume. I circled behind him, took aim at the gap in his armor behind the knee, threw my first knife and ran.

The High Commander roared and pounded after me. I darted down a narrow passage and took a half moment to throw another knife. Serinim deflected my blade but he was bleeding, so I knew I'd hit him with the first. The High Commander was deadly, but I was fast—faster than I'd ever been in my life. Maybe it was the Unconquered Sun's gift to me, or my speed may have been born of nothing more than terror. If my anima had not been such a bright beacon, I might even have lost him.

"Blasphemer! Accursed Yozi-worshiper!" Serinim spat when he finally cornered me, it was pure bravado. The Dragon-Blood was terrified. It didn't stop him, of course, he'd been raised to battle, but it was sweet to see fear on an Exalt's face after all these years.

"Kill me then, if you can," I hissed and leapt. In an open field, Serinim's weapons were deadly. Here, in the tunnels, he was at a disadvantage. I was small, my knives were small, and I'd fought more than one smuggler in tunnels such as this. Serinim's great spear cracked bricks above my head, and I swayed like a young willow around him, dragging my knife across his thigh. He slammed an elbow into my neck, and I parried the return stroke of the spear. I tried to dodge his hand strike but wasn't fast enough. My anima roared audibly, my Caste Mark burning like a coal for a moment, but the blow that should have broken my neck only sent me stumbling. That and the fear was enough for the High Commander; he saw how my power had deflected his attack, and he shouted out the same Charm he'd used in the Three Devils hall.

I threw myself to the ground and covered my head. In a roar of uncontrolled Essence, Serinim burst into flame. My cloth of gold robes shriveled and smoked, and I rolled frantically. The High Commander screamed, his voice rising, becoming less human by the moment as the mescalero he'd been breathing for the last half hour gave unnatural strength to his Charm. The Dragon-Blood killed himself with a Charm that he had probably learned at his mother's knee.

The fire burned until there was nothing left but an ashy statue. I sat well down the hallway and watched the blue flames and the slow, strange writhing as Serinim was consumed by my revenge.

DEMONS

"Avatar, we have reached the compound."

I didn't know the scratchy voice, and a yellow veil covered in ashes and dirt obscured the messenger's face. However, I knew that the temple would never allow a

stranger close to me. The messenger waited at my door, face pressed to the floor, until I turned around.

I'd cut my deal with the High One, and his people were doing their part—running my errands, sharing the knowledge and secrets they'd kept hidden for centuries and picking up the trades that the Three Devils had once ruled. I was doing my part—giving them direction and promising them my protection. I had an organization now, and if the sheltered temple servants weren't yet as clever as my old gang, they would learn. If I lived through the next month, I would have centuries to teach them. It was the next month I was worried about.

"Fine. I'm coming." I put aside the fragmenting scroll I was studying and wrapped myself up in the veils and robes the temple was so fond of. The messenger took me back beneath the Three Devils compound, my old home. The sewers here had collapsed, and I'd set my new followers to digging them out.

There was a reason my gang had been called the Three Devils.

Not the obvious one. We didn't have three demons down here. Just one. Our three devils had been a demon, a spirit and a Dragon-Blooded magician. They'd been our secret strength and our secret weapon until the last. I'd heard nothing from the Dragon-Blood Imialek, my old teacher, and I figured she'd died in the fire or moved on. After all, the Three Devils were nothing more than a game for her. For all I knew, she and Serinim met over tea every Saturday to laugh over the bloody struggles between us. The spirit—I'd never understood it. It had always been Imialek's creature and full of peculiar limits. It wouldn't be useful to me. The demon—I'd spoken to it once under Imialek's watchful eye, and it had seemed to make sense to me then. It was like a dozen of my gang all rolled into one—looking to get what it wanted and to hell with anyone else.

I wasn't so stupid now. I knew better than to think I understood it but I still needed it. I needed power and skill, and I needed it now.

It was going to take me months or years to learn the magic that was my birthright. It wasn't going to take that long for the Dragon-Blooded to figure out that, yes, there really *was* a Solar in their city and come hunting for me. Serinim's family was going to be searching for its lost son, if nothing else. I didn't have long to prepare. My organization was still taking its first steps, and I didn't trust it to protect me from an serious attack. Hell, most of the temple walls were held up by spit and prayers.

If there was one thing a demon was good for, it was offering you enough rope to hang yourself with. I had to pick up the offered rope and avoid the noose, that was all. But before that, I had to dig the dammed thing out from under the rubble.

That's where my loyal rabble came in. They'd been secretly scraping away at the dirt, and the messenger had come to tell me they'd found the old shrine. So now, I was





creeping through tunnels propped up with scavenged wood, smelling the heavy stink of burned flesh. Burned and crushed bodies had been stacked along one hallway.

When I reached the shrine, I pushed past the workers crouching in the dirt, ignoring their whispers of awe, and grabbed a lantern. The floor above had mostly collapsed. There was a narrow, winding space leading into the center of the old shrine and a cold, stinking wind blew steadily from it. The demon was still there. I crawled through the gap to meet it.

The shrine below the Three Devils hall had been there as long as anyone remembered. So had the demon, bound behind runes of black jade, silver and gold. Whatever magic had bound the thing in the first place had protected the runes and a space around them from the collapsing rubble. Once I had squeezed past the fallen door, there was space to stand — and the demon was crouched in the middle of it's home, waiting for me.

The demon had the face and form of a small child, with a button nose, big black eyes and curly black hair. It smiled when it saw me, revealing bloody cat teeth. "So, I'm not to rot alone here — oh, Descending Sun."

"Demon," I said.

"I remember you, in your mortal days. So sweet to watch you grow into such power. I always had a place in my heart for you, you know."

"I'm sure you did. Did you — did you know I would become an Exalt?"

The demon smiled again and was silent. No one knew its name, why it was here or how to truly control it. Imialek had fed it — things — and bribed it to do favors for her. I was hoping that a little research and time would give me more than that, but for now — I had a present.

"I want you to work for me," I said. "As you did for Imialek."

"I didn't think you were here to rescue me from my bondage." The demon stretched, childish fingers brushing the edges of the runes, and blue fire danced along the perimeter of the magical boundary. "And you don't have the strength to free me — not yet, Child of Twilight."

"I will, so you might do well to please me."

The demon smiled. "Your pleasure is my reward."

I unwrapped the damp package I had brought. Greasy ash stuck to my fingers, and I wiped them on my robes, staining the cloth of gold reddish black. I put Serinim's heart on the boundary. The demon gave a delighted squeal and picked up the lump of burned flesh, holding it close like a child with a new doll.

"I want more." It patted the heart.

"What do you want?"

"I want Imialek."

"I don't even know where she is!" I said, exasperated and nauseated. The smell of the demon was stronger now, a sweet-sour stench, and I was freezing and well aware of how much the god who had given me my powers hated demons. "Serve me for now—"

"No!" The creature sulked, so like a spoiled child I wanted to strangle it.

"I don't know where she is, damn you!" I shouted. I needed the power this thing could give me. "Don't you think I've been looking?"

The demon laughed. "She is not far, Sunchild. Not far at all."

"So tell me then," I snapped. "Tell me, and I will give her to you."

The demon grinned and pointed, and I turned. Imialek was staring at me with glazed yellow eyes, just blinking her way back to consciousness. She had been here the entire time. Blood ran from a gash on her forehead, and her legs were trapped in the fallen stones of the roof.

"You?" she panted. "Fehim? I know you. Help me—."

"Imialek," I said, numb. I could see where she had been digging herself out over the days, bloody bricks and rock had been pushed away from her, but she didn't have the strength to move the wall crushing her legs.

The demon began to laugh, shrill girlish giggles.

"Shut up!" I yelled. "Shut up, damn you!"

It only laughed. I had no power over it. Without its name, no one had power over it.

"Give me your name!" I cried finally. "Give it to me, and I'll do as you ask!"

"I don't need all of her. Just — just her heart. I will give you my name when I have what I want." The demon rocked back and forth gleefully, watching us like we were cheap street players here for its entertainment.

I drew my knife and reminded myself that Imialek was Dragon-Blooded, my enemy. If she were free, she'd try to kill me. Imialek and her kind had slaughtered mine for generations, had destroyed our civilization, had betrayed us and the very gods above. She was my enemy. My enemy.

"No!" Imialek cried. "No — don't believe it, Fehim. For Jylis' sake, it's a demon. *Fehim!* No!"

She tried to fight me with stones; she'd exhausted her Charms struggling free of the fallen building. I shut my ears to her words. Imialek was weak. It didn't take long.

HORAKINIS

LUNAR EXALTED

I admit it. I have problems with these beings. I know that the ancient texts say they were our spouses and our consorts, our lovers and our closest allies, but they terrify me. They have become something else during their long years of dalliance with the Wyld, something other than purely Exalted. Look at them: the scars, their interbreeding with animals.... How are we supposed to return to our old closeness with them, now?

Recently, I was traveling to the West, and I saw what I believe was a Lunar Exalted wandering with his... his kinfolk. The local villagers had called them demons, monsters, and had begged me to keep them away from their

village. I had promised to try: The villagers were clearly desperate, and my Circle was too far away to reach me before these creatures would arrive. I could not even be certain in my guess as to what they were; I could only hope.

They came streaming through the valley to the north of the tower on which I was perched, a horde of panthers and panther-like men trampling the newly fallen snow, bloodying it in places where some stopped to clean their mouths and paws. At their head was a figure half again as tall as any of them, his black hair blowing in the wind and his arms marked with dozens of twisting scars. Around his waist was a moonsilver belt, with a great red gem set in it that might have been a Hearthstone.

I bracketed him with three flaming arrows from the top of the tower, then put half a dozen more in front of his minions to persuade them to stay back. "Hold!" I called. "The village is under my protection!"

He looked up at me, and even with the distance between us I could feel the heat of his yellow eyes. "Solar," he purred, his voice echoing across the valley. "Exalted of the Unconquered Sun. And what will you do if I don't run away?"

I smiled down at him, the cold wind ruffling my hair around my face. "I will personally flay the skin from your flesh, then freeze you ten feet deep and then whistle up a tree of crystal to hold you captive for a hundred years. And during that time, you can meditate on why it was folly to offend a sorceress of the Unconquered Sun. Am I understood?"

The feline creatures behind him murmured to each other, mewling and purring, rubbing their bodies against each other like natural cats, rather than like the unnatural things that they were.

"You're bluffing," he called up to me. His body began to shift and flow like molten metal, and the snow hissed and melted under his feet. His muscles stood out like great twisting cords, tearing his silk tunic to shreds, and fangs showed in his mouth. With a single gesture, he quieted his followers: They sank to the snow, curling up to watch him and wait.

I took a deep breath and invoked the obsidian butterflies. They rushed through the air at him in a razor-edged wave of black glass. He didn't even attempt to dodge: He stood there, monolithic and muscular, and let them slash into his body. Blood flew in all directions, spattering out in scarlet drops that soaked into the ground and vanished.

"You're bluffing," he said again. The wind had dropped, and his voice was utterly calm, without any show of pain or tension.

"Am I?" I called down to him.

His fanged mouth curved into a grin. "You challenge me!" His voice became an animal roar. "Meet me again in a year, Solar! Meet me here, Twilight sorceress, and we'll see who's bluffing and who remembers the past!" He turned and paced away, leaving heavy clawed prints in the snow, and his creatures followed him.





If they abide by matters of honor, then that's surely something that can be traced back to their Exalted heritage. But look at their spawn, at the creatures that they've engendered. Consider the way they live in the heart of the Wyld, and how they attack the common people of the Realm, who we are surely pledged to guard. What are they — wyldlings or Lunar Exalted and the Chosen of Luna? How can we trust them?

And how can they trust us?

SPIRITS

I know that they behave unpredictably, but they do so according to their own rules and taboos. This logically means that if you know the habits and customs of the type of spirit with which you are dealing, then you are comparatively safe. No wonder the Eclipse Caste is so good at handling them — it requires an ice-slick veneer of diplomacy, combined with a memory for pettifogging little geases, likes and dislikes. Local peasant folklore can be extremely useful in determining how to parley with spirits — or how to destroy them.

I believe that spirits are part of the natural order. One has only to look at the Immaculate Order's lack of success at suppressing local spirit veneration to see precisely how honestly the peasants are prepared to give up honoring their local powers. I call that very sensible of the peasants — spirits are proud and easily offended.

I find the Immaculate doctrine on the matter quite appealing, as I daresay the Immaculates themselves do. It's very comforting to believe that the spirits should do what they are tasked to do without contradiction, complaint or — most of all — requiring undue payment. It would certainly be to my taste if I could simply command and have the spirits obey, without them demanding bribes or other “tokens of gratitude.”

However, it would be more practical of the Immaculates to take a closer look at the world in which they live and the customs of humans. Bribery is part of life. I am a merchant's daughter, and I know this. Let humans pay for good service — and let the spirits, in turn, give what the Celestial Bureaucracy decrees.

Except that the Celestial Bureaucracy has broken down. I would laugh, if the whole situation weren't so drastic. We will have to establish new ways of dealing with the spirits, based on the old rules and the new necessities of survival. If we are to brave the shadowlands and the Wyld, we must have the spirits at our side — and if this requires acknowledging their part in the world and leaving offerings in thanks for order and stability, then the peasants must do so. The old truths of the Immaculates no longer hold.

So, yes... spirits are dangerous, but they do have their own natural customs that they abide by. Anybody who is prepared to devote time and effort to learning their ways and abiding by their wishes should be able to survive without too great an inconvenience. And we, the Solars — well, we are their natural rulers and commanders, even if a

tactful approach in these latter days is more sensible. Even if gratitude is due for good service, there should be no question as to who is in command. They will be respectful to us, if we don't push them too far. I've found that the earth spirits near my library are very cooperative when it comes to confusing the local terrain — the fact that the previous owner had left some notes mentioning how much they liked rough garnets and tourmalines helped.

THE SIDEREAL EXALTED

By all the powers of Heaven, I yearn to meet one of them. Think of the secrets they must hold from the time before, the lost powers and tomes that they must surely have in their keeping. If they have truly survived the centuries after fleeing the bloody-handed Terrestrial Exalted — as some say that they have — then they must possess knowledge that could help us to change the world.

I have been following trails that I hope will lead me to one of them: a report of an astrologer here, tales of a savant there, rumors of strange mystics who live alone and study the stars.... If only they knew how much I yearn to find them, would they come? Or is it part of some initiatory quest they set for the true seekers of lore, that we must search far and near and that we will only find them when we have proved ourselves in their sight?

I have heard other stories, from other Exalted: Some claim that the Sidereals were allied with the Dragon-Blooded and that they planned and arranged the murder of my kind. I cannot believe that. How could the Chosen of the Maidens have fallen so utterly from their purpose, that they would try to kill us? I can believe that the Terrestrial Exalted might be misled or fall to corruption: They are the least of us, the most earthly. But the Sidereal Exalted — no, these stories cannot be true. If we cannot trust them to guide us, who can we trust?

JAY SELAK-AMU

MORTALS

The rain was cold and knife sharp and blinded the defenders and attackers alike. I was soaked to the skin and could hardly see the battle raging on the beach below. When the pattern became clear, I climbed down from the Sea-washed boulders and onto the beach well beyond the edge of the battlefield. I slipped on wet rocks, trying to find a way around the battle to where the Lintha pirates were clustered by their sleek raiding ships. My anima burned around me, the only illumination, as I rehearsed the complex words of a spell I'd never cast, waiting for the right moment. The young boy with the signal trumpet followed me, I could almost taste his fear. Only his duty to his clan and family held him near me and the unnatural blaze of my runic banner.

Only when we were knee deep in the surf was I certain that my spell would not take out as many of my allies as enemy. I nodded to the trumpeter, who scowled at me,

then sent out the signal for retreat. The trumpet sneezed, waterlogged, then the retreat blatted out, loud enough to carry over the screams and the pounding water. I could see dimly through the rain, the shapes of the whalers and fishermen who defended their homes from the Lintha pirates struggling to free themselves from the combat and retreat up the shore.

I had been called here as a witch, to craft talismans of protection and to brew healing tea for the wounded, but when I'd told them I could do much more than that, they had not believed me. They didn't *want* to believe me. In the end, the elders had been willing to listen to me only because they knew they had no chance against the Lintha without the miracle I promised. That I had demanded a retreat in the midst of battle had outraged the young men who hoped for heroism in this battle. I had seen too much bloodshed to put much stake in heroism — I just hoped that the spell I'd never cast would do as I had been promised by my long dead mentor.

I spread my arms wide and sang out the words of the spell. The ancient words were so harsh and cruel they bloodied my lips — what harsh voices elder sorcerers must have. My anima banner blazed to sudden life, the runes of the spell spun around me in glory of bright orange, yellow golds, delicate rose. They whipped around me, faster and faster, rising high above me and the rain around me turned to steam and heat under the touch of my magic. My Essence left me in a dizzy rush, poured into the spell I'd spoken, and the heady release was as intoxicating as any drug. The waves foaming past my feet turned blood red, and I heard the trumpeter shriek and flee.

My spell streamed past me as delicate creatures of iridescent black glass poured from the heart of my glowing anima banner and spread out over the battlefield. They were almost invisible in the heavy rain, but the screaming told me I'd found my targets. I prayed that my allies had fled fast enough. The black Lintha ships swayed too, as the thousands of obsidian butterflies shredded sails and sliced the tarred wood to kindling.

The screaming rose to a mad pitch, and I could see figures fleeing to their boats, only to writhe madly as the spell I'd cast cut them to ribbons. The Sea foamed, the Lintha raiders dissolved into ribbons and gobbets of raw flesh and spread like chum over the water. I longed for the days when my senses were not so keen and the rain would have hidden the carnage in front of me. Soon enough, the screaming — which sounded not like that of warriors but like that of tortured animals now — faded to the occasional liquid gurgle, then to silence.

The rain had fallen off, and in the quiet, there was only the occasional moan. My anima still burned high, and I was exhausted. I stumbled to shore and slumped onto a rock. The Lintha ships were gone, floating on the surface of the Sea and nothing more than driftwood. The waves were clotted with blood and chunks of flesh. On the higher

ground, the whalers and fishermen, the young would-be heroes, stood in stunned silence. No one came close to me, and I could hear the terror in the voices of my allies. Eventually, my anima quieted, and I pulled my oilskins close and made my way to my little boat — alone.

ARIANNA

OTHER SOLAR EXALTED

They're useful, and they understand in a way that nobody else does — not the humans, not the Dragon-Blooded, not the fast-talking Sidereals, not even the Abyssals. (Interesting duplication of certain aspects there, don't you think? Worth further study.) They are my family now, reborn from the Time Before. They are my *true* brothers and my sisters, finally seeing me for what I really am, giving me the respect that I deserve. I value them for what they can do, and they value me for what I can do. We don't always share the same views on morals or priorities, but they appreciate me for what I am — a Solar Exalted, a sorceress, a scholar — and I return the courtesy. And the division of labor by expertise is a very good idea.

At one point, my Circle wanted to mount a strike against the local Fair Folk — something to do with them having been preying on the local children. I would have paid more attention to the details of the crime, but there seemed little point: There was no way that Panther was going to reconsider the attack, so it seemed more useful to research defenses than excuses. Swan, our Eclipse, at least showed me the courtesy of believing that I could take care of myself, though he put himself in far too much danger for my sake. His support — and his affections, I suppose — are appreciated. Dace, our Dawn Caste, clearly considered my input to be useful and didn't act like some moron who thought of nothing but his own strength and abilities. I will also note that after we'd finished clearing out that nest of bastards, he congratulated me on providing effective battlefield support. That's the sort of attitude that is practical and sensible. While I am prepared to admit that some of my own caste can be a little overbearing or unreasonable, you can say that about any of the castes. I have no compunction about dealing ruthlessly with those who think that the fact that I am Twilight Caste makes me somehow inferior. We are the sorcerers, the crafters, the scholars — we deserve respect!

That's it, really — there are going to be awkward individuals in all the castes, but once you get over basic questions of custom or morality, which usually come from the human part of your life anyhow, we need each other. Those of us who are idealistic have a right to their views, as do those of us who are more sensible. Nobody else has the strength to help you in the ways that you need. We've been Exalted to regain our old power, to cooperate and to put down the enemies of the Unconquered Sun. And ultimately, whoever those may be, they are not other Solars.





THE DRAGON-BLOODED

It is impossible to judge all the Dragon-Blooded by the same standard — though if I'm being pursued by the Wyld Hunt, I am generally not inclined to forgive them for their ignorance. I of all people know how easy it is to grow up with prejudices and to be taught to despise others from birth. So, most of them have been taught to prejudge us as "Anathema." Fine. We should educate them otherwise. If they fail to learn from their education, then we deal with them accordingly.

I am sure that they would actually be happier in their old place, as subordinates rather than leaders. There is no shame in recognizing merit where it is due: We are Solars, and we were created by the Unconquered Sun to act as rulers. We were not necessarily created to run around the land and wipe the nose of every peasant child who needs it, whatever some of my more idealistic brothers may think. Our place is to command, theirs to obey — ours to wield power, theirs to bow and take orders. Is it so unreasonable to want things back the way they were, back when the world actually worked properly?

If you know something about their politics, it becomes comparatively easy to manipulate them to your own ends. All those competing houses — only a fool or an idealist wouldn't think of playing them against each other. They're constantly looking for assassins, thieves and agents. As far as I'm concerned, it lets me get a little revenge for their slaughter of us, and I get paid for it as well. And if you then decide to slaughter your employer — well, I have serious doubts about the morality of anyone who'd employ an assassin. Especially not about hypocrites who'd knowingly employ someone who they believe to be Anathema.

In practical terms, none of them can match one of us when it comes to a one-on-one sorcerous duel. I have proven this to them more than once. There was a young man of House Peleps: We met on the open sea, when I was sailing south from Arjuf. After I had frozen him in his own Element, sunk his ship 20 fathoms deep and scarred his face to teach him proper respect, he was willing to acknowledge my dominance as Solar and sorceress. He was extremely useful to me before I was forced to dispose of him and provided a great deal of information about the different houses and their political alignments.

I am aware that the Dragon-Blooded are individuals and should be judged on their own merits, rather than on the deeds of their ancestors. However, I find this very hard to do at times, when I see how much we have lost because of their damned interference and mass murder. Do you realize how powerful the old spells were? How we used to be able to create artifacts that could level mountains and raise valleys? Look at us now, forced to skulk and hide from those who should be kneeling before us and begging to serve us. They hoard or toy with our ancient artifacts and loot our tombs and libraries. Ignorant filth — Dace at least has trained his properly, to take orders and provide support.

If they were taught from childhood to know the truth about themselves and us, they would be a useful support force. There's potential for some sort of cult to oppose the Immaculates, some organization preaching service to the Unconquered Sun and his Exalted. It would be useful as well as theologically accurate. However, as matters stand, we're faced with opponents who are either degenerate and corrupt or enthusiastic and ignorant. The degenerate ones can often provide useful information, if approached correctly — the enthusiastic ones are best avoided or killed. One must be practical about these things.

THE FAIR FOLK

Beautiful creatures: dangerous and cruel but with all the potential of the Wyld behind them. You only need to look at the ones who live at the heart of the Realm, the Mountain Folk, to see what they can become if they're given the right impetus and stability. I am aware that most of the Fair Folk enslave people, torture them and drink their souls. While I am not an apologist for them, I do think that killing every single one of them purely on general principles is not a wise thing to do. They're a power in Creation, and they communicate with each other. Dace thinks we can't coexist with them: I think that we could, if we taught them to respect us. If we could keep them inside set boundaries and send them convicted criminals or something like that — clearly, it'd be the work of centuries to control the lands and set something like that up, but it could work. They've lived for thousands of years, and they know incredible secrets, things that could give us the edge we need to finally put down the Dragon-Blooded once and for all. Throwing away that sort of advantage is insanely stupid.

The Wyld itself is a treasure trove, albeit a dangerous one. With the correct protection, untold wealth can be harvested there. Three years ago, I spent a month deep in a Wyld land, hunting for nine gold leaves from an oak tree to make a diadem that would call the lightning. I eventually found a tree that had such leaves: A single leaf grew on the uppermost branch every night, and could only be harvested at the instant of dawn when light first struck it.

On the third night came their forerunners, long lean gray hounds with the speed of the wind and the ability to smell blood from a mile away. I fought them off with water and earth, drowning them in the nearby river. On the fifth night came their servants, small chattering creatures that ran low to the ground and built tiny turrets from mud and twigs to mark their path. I called the winds to tear them from the earth and scoured the path with their bones and rough hides.

On the seventh night, an hour before dawn, while I was sitting on a branch nearby and waiting for the leaf to be retrievable, a group of the Fair Folk themselves passed by beneath me. Half a dozen warriors were escorting a single noble, and each of the warriors was carrying a human slave, riding pillion behind them. The humans seemed to be half asleep: They were in silken rags and sculpted glass shackles,

and each had a curious twisted design branded into their left cheek. I would have observed for longer, but the Fair Folk rode past the tree swiftly and were gone within a few seconds. It would have been interesting to speak to them, but it would have jeopardized my chance to obtain the leaves, and so, I let them pass.

MORTALS

We aren't human any longer, and those of us who claim that we are simply demonstrate their own lack of perception. Humans die of old age — something we need no longer fear. They are weak creatures, trapped in fragile bodies, doomed to an existence far below our own. Have you seen the look in their eyes when we demonstrate our powers? When our anima banners flare high above our heads, they cower in fear. When our sorceries shake the earth and darken the heavens, they pray for forgiveness and mercy, forgetting the follies of the Immaculate cult and returning to older, simpler loyalties. This is how it should be. We were created to master the spirits, yes, and to master mortals as well.

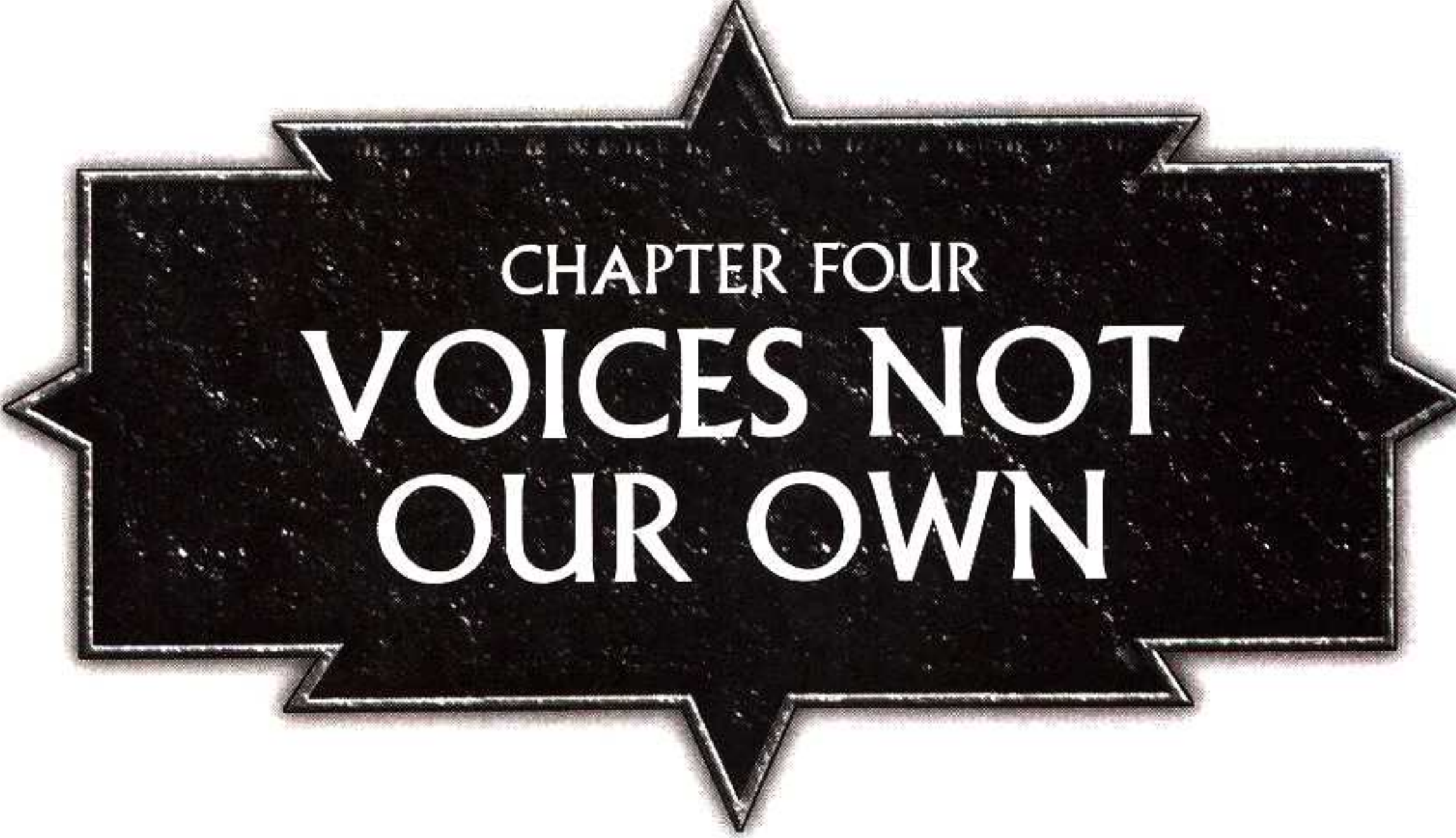
Naturally, this comes with a certain degree of responsibility: It would be foolish to abandon useful servants. However, we would ideally not need to be troubled with tedious matters of governance. I am a scholar, not some Northern barbarian chief or Southern vizier puffed up on his own importance. If I wanted physical power, I could take it. What I want, and what I think we have the Sun-given right to expect, is *respect* from the mortals around us.

When I was passing by an island in the West several months ago, the ship on which I was traveling was assaulted by pirates as we came into port. I took offence. Swiftly, I summoned the Invulnerable Skin of Bronze and the Wood Dragon's Claw, and I leapt upon the enemy's mast. I spiraled down it, scything rigging and sails alike to the deck and rained down three throwing knives that pinned the captain to the deck by his hands and heart. Some of the pirates had the gall to stand their ground: I let my anima banner flare high and strode toward them, feeling the deck wither and bleach under my feet. When the first dared to try to strike me, his scimitar rang against my skin and shattered into a dozen futile pieces. He whimpered and fled, casting himself into the water. The remaining dozen fell upon their faces and groveled, begging for my pardon. I handed them over to the townsfolk, who hung them from the side of the dock: They twitched their feet a while, but not for long.

Afterward, the townsfolk feted me like a living god, bringing me their best food and wine and offering me the finest house in the town to lodge in. This relationship I can understand: protection for worship, offerings for guidance. However, arguments that we should risk our lives for those to whom we owe nothing seem worthless to me. I will be merciful and just to humans who behave themselves properly, but I will not waste my time on other mortals unless there is some useful reason to do so.







CHAPTER FOUR VOICES NOT OUR OWN



The Twilight Caste is back — and nobody's quite sure what to make of it. Rumors and history are alarming enough. These were the greatest sorcerers in all creation, master healers, incomparable artificers, deadly enemies and far too easily overlooked when they felt subtlety profited them. Dragon-Blooded and Sidereals who have encountered these reborn titans have seen sorceries of earthshaking power, the resurrection of ancient spells that were long thought — and hoped — to be safely lost to history. Not only are the Twilight Caste Exalted terrifying, but they are an unquantifiable terror. They might do anything at all. Powerful beings must take this into account when assessing them as allies, tools or enemies. Those who must deal with sorcerers intend to do so very carefully indeed.

This uncertainty about the powers and intentions of the Twilight Caste has been increased, if anything, by the fact that few of the caste wish to bask in the limelight. While there will always be some who raise high-pillared silver castles to the heavens and assert dominion for leagues around and breed cats with fur like starlight to serve them, there are dozens more who prefer to live and study quietly and without fear of interruption by a heavily armed Wyld Hunt. However, this secrecy and privacy only feeds the rumors of mighty powers and devious conspiracies. Warlords and emperors alike seek these mystical sorcerers as servants or advisors, whether willing or unwill-

ing. The Twilight Caste must walk a dangerous path, striving to balance independence against danger and power against righteousness.

MORTALS

The Solar Exalted frighten humans, and the Twilight Caste doesn't help matters by having a particularly unhealthy reputation among the Anathema. The Twilights were the Unclean, the demon-summoners, the black magicians and necromancers. The natural response of most mortals upon realizing that the person standing before them is the nightmare from so many of their childhood stories is to flee the vicinity and beg for help from the nearest Immaculates or Dragon-Blooded.

Even in cases where the humans are capable of discounting the legends, it is nearly impossible for an ordinary human to remain calm and nerveless next to a being of such power as one of the Exalted. When you know that she can summon up elementals and spirits or command puissant forces of fire, lightning and whirlwind — and maybe have even seen him doing so — it is difficult to regard her without fear. Even the less obviously violent skills, such as healing or craft, can provoke awe and terror in those who behold clearly unnatural wonders.

The main problem with Twilight Exalted, for humans, is that one never knows the limits of their abilities. A master warrior such as one of the Dawn Caste is

comprehensible, if only because human warriors have similar skills and talents, albeit on a much smaller scale. A cunning Night Caste can be compared to human thieves or spies, or a Zenith Caste to human leaders and priests. However, Twilight Caste Exalted are so far beyond human sorcerers, charm-makers and potion-brewers that they seem to be completely different creatures. A human being may respect one of the Descending Suns and may regard him with awe and fear — perhaps even with love. But he is unlikely ever to be the Twilight's friend.

SERMON OF KANATHROS, PRIEST OF THE IMMACULATES ON WAVEFLOWER ISLAND

You are right, my friends. I acknowledge that you are right and that, for all these years, I have been wrong. All my life, I have bowed down in the temple of Daana'd and cursed the Anathema ritually, as I was taught. Well, today, I have a new understanding of my faith, which I hope to share with you all.

Brothers and sisters, let us rejoice! For we have seen with our own eyes that the heavens have relented and that those who were once feared as Anathema have been cleansed by divine mercy and returned to us as our new protectors and guides. They have been blessed with powers beyond our mortal understanding and will stand between

us and all harm. Those who were once known as Unclean should now be hailed as Pure and Mighty!

Three days ago, we saw proof of this in our own harbor. The mighty Lady Arianna, Chosen of the Unconquered Sun, Copper Spider, Arrow of Heaven, struck down the pirates who had been plaguing us for months! With her own hands, she cast knives that fell from the sky like a deadly rain and struck the rigging from their ship so that it foundered helplessly in the water. She slew those who were foremost in the fray and then, in her great mercy, handed those who surrendered over to us that we might enact mortal justice upon them. Their corpses now dangle above the high-water-line, bearing witness to their crimes. The Lady Arianna graciously condescended to accept our gratitude, walking among us and bestowing blessings and accepting offerings of food and wine.

And so, I say to you, my friends, let us be glad at our deliverance! And let us also profit from this lesson that is brought to us all by the gracious spirits: Even as those who were once Unclean may be purified, so may we all be cleansed. Devote yourself to good works, show charity to the poor, and give of your money to the temple so that the immortal powers may be properly honored — both Daana'd and the Unconquered Sun! I have also begun construction of a minor shrine in the temple, so that those who wish to may appeal to the Lady Arianna to intercede with them to the spirits and bear their prayers on high. All those of you



who wish to give of their time or labor to decorate this shrine are most welcome. But let us now bow our heads in prayer and thank the Unconquered Sun for his endless mercy, in redeeming his Chosen and sending them to us to protect and save us.

PRIVATE WORDS OF SESHETH, MASTER TRADER, AT AN INN IN LOOKSHY

I don't care what anyone says, there were reasons why those things were declared Anathema. Have we ever had reason to doubt the Immaculates before? No. And you know why? It's because they were right. They didn't lie to us. The Dragon-Blooded are our superiors, no question there. Spirits are dangerous and should be left strictly alone — can you see anything wrong with that argument? And Anathema are Anathema and should be left well alone. If you lie down in a nest of vipers, don't be surprised if you end up being poisoned.

Look, I ran into one of them once, one of the Unclean. A big bastard — apparently he'd been the village smith before being infected or whatever you call it. I was coming into his village with a caravan, and we'd managed to annoy one of the local spirits — it looked like a weeping woman made up of grains of dust, and it was following us and trying to lure people into its arms every night. Well, naturally, I wanted to do the usual thing, since ignoring it wasn't working — we were going to buy a couple of locals as slaves or get them drunk and tie them up so that it could do whatever it wanted to do with them.

So anyhow, this big smith guy shows up, and he says that we aren't touching any of his villagers. His! What kind of a commoner talks like that? People belong to whoever rules them or whoever can buy them. I ordered the caravan guards to rough him up a bit, show him how to behave. It's not as if it was a particularly important village or as if it could have had anything worth trading. I didn't order them to kill him, either — I'm not some sort of vicious moron. But the next thing I know, there's this sick red glow all round him, like star-rubies, and the men are going flying in all directions. They try and regroup and jump him, figuring that perhaps he's got an earth spirit somewhere in his ancestry and that he's got some sort of blessing of strength, but no damn use, he just throws them around all over again.

Well, this is clearly dangerous, so I order the men to stand off, and I call over some of the remaining guards with their bows and arrows. I figure that, while I don't like killing people indiscriminately, it's too dangerous to leave someone like him running around with a grudge. My boys are well trained: They aim and fire, and then, they send off a second volley while the first is still in the air, just to make sure he gets the point. Point. Ha ha. Yes, that's a joke.... Pass me the damn wine.

So, this big guy says something, and he makes this weird gesture, and this mark on his forehead burns bright gold, and I suddenly remember all the old childhood stories about the Unclean, the demon-summoning Anathema. I'm ordering the men to keep on firing, but there's this blue sparkling light all round him, and now the arrows are just freezing in mid-air and falling to the ground and breaking into pieces. It was totally unnatural — something you'd expect a god to do or a Dragon-Blooded. Give me some more of that wine. And the other villagers — well, most of them have retreated into their houses, but some of the stronger-looking men have got out weapons of their own, and they were looking like they'd fight in support of him. I tell you, he must have had the entire place bewitched or something. They were right when they tell us to be careful about the Unclean.

Well, he advances on us and tells us, quite calmly and clearly, to get out of his village and stay out and not to try to come back if we know what's good for us. I'm a master trader for a reason — I can recognize a good offer when it's made to me. So, I take the caravan, and we head out, and I say a little prayer to every single Immaculate and little god out there that the weeping god-woman made of dust would stay at the village and not follow us any longer. Perhaps it'd even kill the Unclean. We headed for the nearest town worth the name, where I actually got to sell off some of the copper we were carrying. I thought about going to the local temple to talk to some of the Immaculates, but then, I decided that they might try claiming that we'd been spiritually polluted, and they'd have to take all our wares off us to purify them.

So, I've been going to sleep on a few skins of wine since then, yes. Can you blame me? I've met one of the Anathema. I'm still having nightmares about it. I hope that village rots to the ground and blows away. Given what they've got living there, I wouldn't be surprised if it did. I wouldn't be surprised at all. The dust-god didn't follow us away; maybe it found the place to its liking.

LETTER TO THE MASTERS OF WHITEWALL

My Masters,

I hope my message reaches you in a timely fashion — I've paid well for these carrier birds.

As planned, I left Whitewall with the Guild caravan, playing the part of a wealthy merchant making his run to the Northern cities. The weather was fair and cold, and the first few days travel were peaceful. The cries of the dead were distant, and the Fair Folk seemed little interested in a caravan full of grain and ice wine. The road stretched clear before us, and the trip seemed under the eye of beneficial spirits. My guards became bored, and one was killed in a brawl over a camp follower.





At the halfway marker, the weather turned, as if it had been waiting for us. We were forced to make camp early, not daring to leave the road, and, thus, were exposed to the howling winds and the sleet like knives. When night fell, the dead moved in.

Many people die at this halfway marker, their bones decaying in the grasses beyond the protection of your treaties. Unburied, they wait for new travelers. I've taken the road many times and seen these dead, but this time, it was much worse. A deathland has risen not too far from here, and the knight that cares for it has taken those lost dead into his protection. The dead are more than crying ghosts now, and we lost several experienced caravans to their charms. I plugged my ears with hot wax, and it took days for my hearing to return. My Masters, the dead have not broken the road treaty yet, but I do not know how long that will be true. However, that is not the task you have given me.

We were slower after the night at the marker, several of the yeddim had been injured. We did arrive in Cherak before the summer rains moved in, and I left my companions to make my way to the pleasure house called the Hidden Lily.

Cherak is much more crowded than Whitewall, and in these warm months, the lower levels are open, and the roads nothing more than mud. The gateway was a madhouse, bakers' boys with their trays of sugared pastries, glassworkers and cheap street whores all screaming to hawk their wares to passersby. I had to pay a girl beggar to guide me to the street of desire, then pay her again to lead me the Hidden Lily, for that pleasure house is located near the wealthy quarter.

The Hidden Lily is a rich man's house, now serving the lusts of rich men. It looks much the same as any other house on that street, the upper doorways, used when the snow piles high, are balconies where clients and their beautiful bedmates take breakfasts of bitter tea and sweet melon. Unlike many houses here, the guards at the door — who looked me over most carefully — are Dragon-Blooded. They were young however, probably secondary-school washouts or Exalted children of patricians and seemed to see nothing unusual in me. I passed them easily, and the talismans you gave me remained safe and safely hidden.

Within the walls of the Hidden Lily lies the Realm. The trappings of the North have been banished, Southern sweet grass burns in bronze braziers, the floor is polished wood done in the Eastern flame style, and velvet cut work from the Realm's finest weavers covers the walls. The erotic statues are painted silver and gold, as I have heard is true in the Realm's great houses. Even the servants' accents are from that civilized center of the world.

Once I made my interests — and my wealth — known, I was offered a menu of delightful companions. I chose a Western-blooded youth whose skin is the color of

the sky at twilight. His grace suggests a touch of faerie blood, and he seems interested in nothing but my pleasure. I was given a warm room on the third floor and a scented bath and an oiled massage from my delightful new companion. I have not forgotten my task, my Masters. Yet, I must convince these people that I am nothing more than a young man with more money than sense.

So, I passed a day and a night, tipping well and asking a few questions. In the gaming rooms, I made the acquaintance of Mjeri Wyans. She is on the city council and quite fond of the Hidden Lily. Her favorite consort is the very same youth I chose for my pleasure, and we threw dice to see who would take him to their bed that night. I made sure to lose, and once she had what she wanted, we became pleasantly drunk. Or she did.

Losing my bedmate did me little good, my Masters. Mjeri has never seen the mistress of the Hidden Lily. As I made my rounds, it became clear that no one had seen her. She takes no lovers. Though I have heard she was a pleasure slave in the Realm, she has no owner — the Realm envoy who owned her has been dead for over a year. The servants, the expensive goods, even the Dragon-Blooded guards were all part of the envoy's household. It seems strange to me that they have remained to serve one who is nothing more than a slave. Yet, they are all here.

So, I wandered. The house is large, of course, and much if it is devoted to serving the patrons who come for comfort and pleasure. There are four floors to this building, yet only three are used. Thus, I knew now where the hidden mistress lived. I remained for a week, reduced to eavesdropping on the servants, before I determined that their mistress spent her Mars' Day mornings at the gem merchants. In the late morning of that day, while most of the clients and their bedmates still slept, I made my way to the top floor.

I was able to bypass the locks on the doors, thanks to your gifts. Beyond this door, the Hidden Lily is very different.

There are no erotic paintings, no woven fur rugs, none of the lovely foolishness that clutters the rest of the house. Incense burns, but it is the sharp scent of cedar and the musk of myrrh. The walls have been stripped clean and whitewashed, the floors bare, unadorned wood. The mistress, it seems, has become an ascetic.

Exploring the rooms, I found her bedchamber — it contained a simple bed made for one. The wardrobe still held rich furs and silks, and the dresser was scattered with expensive body paints — it seems the mistress retains one vanity. Though she may no longer act the part of a concubine, she still dresses like one.

The largest room on the fourth floor has been dedicated to learning. There are shelves of books, not simple entertainment, nor the common texts of politics such as Warala's *Journey of Princes* — not even the erotic classics that I would have expected in a house of pleasure. There

are books on the simple sciences of healing, poisons, talismans and such. There are also much rarer texts. I found a fragment of the forbidden *Blossom of Ages*, less than two pages. There were several of the common magic works, *Daric's Laws* and *The White Treatise*. There was something I could not read, perhaps a section of *The Art of Sorcery*. Were I a servant of the Realm, the things I found would be enough to burn the mistress of the Hidden Lily at the stake.

The mistress, once a slave, is a sorceress of some power. The makings of talismans are scattered over her work table or kept in blue glass for safekeeping. Yet, a sorceress, no matter her talents, would not have disturbed you, my Masters. As I searched her rooms, the pretty wind chimes hanging from the ceiling in clusters of rainbow brilliance sang with my movements. It was not until I remained still, reading some of her notes that I realized the chimes were still singing and it was not my intentions that had set them in motion.

The singing, fragile and distant as the song of the glaciers grew louder, rising in a high, agonizing pitch. I am not a brave man, only a clever one, and I ran for the door. The chips and shards of crystal dropped from the ceiling in a cloud of razored edges. They spun as if carried by a wind spirit, faster and faster around me. Surrounded, I crouched down, trying to shield my head as the circle of crystal grew slowly smaller. The crystals were all the colors of the sunset, blue, green, red, bright gold — hypnotic. Beautiful. This was my only thought, even when the first chips whipped through my clothes and shredded my arm. I screamed as my blood was carried around and around. More knives sang past me, the whole room was a spinning dazzle of light and blood. The pain was so quick and clean that I could only cringe on the floor and scream. I fumbled for your talisman with bloody fingers and threw it to the ground.

With a roar, the talisman broke open, and the guardian leapt from it. The stench made me retch. Immediately, your creature began to shriek. It was too large for the small open space left by the warding crystals. They buried themselves in its green hide like a fall of fey arrows, and black fluids rained down, burning my wounded flesh. The creature had no hope of battling the deadly swarm, but its body blocked the fatal dance of crystals. I jumped to my feet and fled with a last scream as a stray shard buried itself in my back.

I stumbled to the nearest window and pulled the shutters down to let the clean sun in. Without cloak or possessions, blood running down my arms, I swung out onto the wall and managed to climb down. I dared not pause, I heard the guards below shouting and managed a desperate leap to the nearest rooftop. I must have been quick enough, or perhaps, the guards went to see what was still bellowing in their mistresses' study. The Dragon-Blooded did not follow me.

My Masters, I am returning as soon as I am well enough to travel. I hope this message will reveal enough of the mistress of the Hidden Lily's secrets to you. I hope, my Masters, that you know how to pry this crystal from my flesh without killing me, for the healers here won't touch it. It sings, my Masters. It sings at night, and I wonder what tales it tells.

THE SETTING SUN'S WIFE

I will not abandon my husband. My kinsmen brought him back to me, half drowned, and I put him in our bed. He lay dreaming for weeks, and I fed him thin broth while his daughters sang for him — trying to call him back from the islands of the dead. I took my weeping outside, where the wind and rain would hide it. The blasphemous sigil of the Anathema marks his forehead now, a circle of light and dark. I don't know what it means but that the Dragon-Blooded would kill him for it, so I lay cloths over his face and keep silent of what I see.

What else can I do? I sit by him and listen to his sleeping voice, speaking of places he's never been, people he's never known. Even the rhythm of his voice has changed. I know my husband as I know myself; both of us are poor children of a poor village. His parents were carried away by the white fever when we were both infants. My blood father died on the sea when I was 12. When I was a young girl, I'd watch from the clam beds as he went to sea in his witch-sighted boat, carrying messages and medicines for the other towns. He saw my long eyes and when I was of age, he took me from my father's house. We lay as husband and wife, and I quickened three children — two still live.

He calls out for help, and the fear in his voice wrings my heart. He seems not to know me, nor his own children. He weeps for the death of strangers. I wonder what happened to him, across the sea, answering a cry for help. His boat brought him back without any hand on the tiller, the bright gold wink of the painted eyes caught the attention of the fishermen along Shark Reef.

My husband was our witch's only heir, not of her blood, but her power. She took him in when the elders would have drowned him as a baby, an orphan — a useless mouth to feed. She raised him like a dog. My husband fetched her shoes, cleaned her home, fished her waters, bent his head to her rages and knew no better. When he married me, I made him a man.

He served her for years, grinding healing herbs, carrying water, wrapping the bodies of the unknown dead who washed ashore during storms. Our marriage was hard then, and I hated the witch when she called him to her hut on cold nights and left me alone. She taught him what all witches know, the secrets of the tides, how to predict the herring, how to sing the whales to the harvesting boats. When she died, it was my husband who took her place, and it is he that brings the babies into the





world and sings the dead out of it. His skills grew swiftly, and now, I wonder at the cost.

Has he sold himself to a demon?

So the Dragon-Blooded teach, even the outcastes who have no love for their homeland turn pale at the mention of the Anathema. The Dragon-Blooded are not the only one with stories. I'd learned rhymes as a child about the rising and setting of the sun. In the old days, the sun had risen in blood and died in hellish secrets.

My husband burns with painless fire. It does not consume him, only surrounds him in a shell of sullen orange light. When the light comes, at sunset, I send my daughters away. I do not want them to see this. I do not want them to ask me what shapes, like words, surround their father in light. I cannot wash away the mark on his forehead. Sometimes, it is there; sometimes it fades. Is it a demon mark? Has he taken the name of a demon into his flesh, as the Dragon-Blooded claim?

I put cleansing salt on the mark, but it makes no difference; the mark remains.

I cannot believe that my husband would sell himself to another, not after his long years as a slave to the old witch. I cannot believe that his powers come from dealing with demons. He is a healer. But I am only a wife and know nothing of demons. I wish my husband would wake. If I can only look him in his eyes. I will know then, what he has done. I am his wife. If his soul is gone, eaten away by a demon, surely I — of anyone — would know.

OTHER SOLARS

The reactions here are as varied as one might expect from any group of family members — some Solars can't stand the Twilight Castes, others find them indispensable allies, and the majority just take them as they come. After all, given the diversity of skills and personalities that one finds among the Descending Suns, it's natural that many of the other castes may enjoy the company of some but shun others. All the other castes appreciate those who have made a specialty of healing or craftsmanship, though this may at times be for purely selfish reasons. Scholars are valued for their skills in research and the lore that they have gathered, but they can, at times, be as much hindrance as help — especially if their thirst for knowledge causes them to make dubious alliances or to perform acts of arguable morality.

Sorcerers are treated with more caution — though the Dawn Caste is almost always grateful for sorcerous support in a battle, the Eclipse Caste occasionally finds them a little too focused on their research and sorcery and not open enough to compromise, diplomacy or remembering the oaths that they have sworn. The Zenith Caste appreciates sorcerers as allies but can find it awkward if a sorcerer's publicly expressed morality conflicts with a Zenith's position as preacher or moral leader — summon-

ing demons can be hard to reconcile with devotion to the Unconquered Sun. The Night Caste appreciates sorcerers greatly, so long as the sorcerer restricts his spells to where they are appropriate and doesn't interfere with the Hidden Suns' own methods and skills. After all, a sorcerer can provide distractions, transport, lockpicks and many other useful things — but few Night Castes appreciate being taught their business by another Exalt.

ZEBAHNA, TO ANOTHER NIGHT CASTE

Yes, I deliberately hunted Sayn down: I'd been told he was a good smith as well as being one of us, and at that point, a smith was what I needed. I'd managed to get hold of some orichalcum from right under the nose of a Dragon-Blooded mercantile outfit overseeing a gold mine, and I needed it forged into a nice pair of needle-pointed dirks. I'd even drawn out a couple of sample sketches, just to show what I wanted — the problem was finding one of our kindred with the skills to do it. I'd heard of a man called Tengiz in the Scavenger Lands who could forge orichalcum, but that was a bit far to go at the time, and I still had the Dragon-Blooded on my heels. Okay, so, next time, I'll take a bit more care about losing them, but how in the name of the demons of all three circles was I supposed to know that their security was that good? I tell you, they'd got some sort of damned lion-creature made out of bones that was chasing me every night! I played all the usual tricks to try to lose it, but it wasn't working. I even killed it twice, but that didn't stop it. At that point, I decided just to go for the nearest person who might be able to help and work out a price for it later.

So, I'd heard that there was an Exalt out in that direction, not 100 leagues away, from a traveling member of the Guild who'd been thrown out of his village. Incidentally, Sayn's got no idea how lucky he is there — the only thing that saved him from serious trouble was that his village is, frankly, a pissant hole in the ground. It's not worth the Guild's attention, and it'd only embarrass the trader who ran into trouble there if he tried to report it. So, anyhow, I hadn't met up with Lantor at that point, and I didn't have to worry about him. I got hold of a horse, and I headed due southeast for this little village, following the trade routes. It would have been faster to make for it directly, but all the directions I had were from that trader, and he'd been on the trade roads. Oh, you heard about his little accident? At least his money went to good use. It bought an excellent horse.

I got to Sayn's village just ahead of nightfall, and I knew that lion thing would be on my track again. It looked like any normal outcrop of peasant huts, nestled up against a cliff. I could hear the sound of a smith's hammer coming loud and sharp from the forge, with an echoing chant behind it. I leapt from my horse, tossed the reins to the nearest bemused villager, threw him a coin to cheer him up



about the prospect and ducked into the red-lit smithy. “Greetings, good Sayn....”

His anima was roaring around him like a crimson banner, and his Twilight Caste Mark burned golden on his forehead. He was a well-built man, though a shade over-muscled for my taste, and only wearing simple trousers. Sweat ran down his bare skin to his waist, sizzling in the heat from his anima. With a final blow and word, he finished the long double-bladed sword lying on the anvil and picked it up to thrust it into a pail of water. “Who are you,” he shouted over the hissing of hot metal and cold water, “and what are you doing here?”

A roar came from outside, and I realized that the bone-creature must have managed to track me to this village after all. Clearly, my hopes that I’d lost it had been mistaken. “Tell you later,” I temporized and ducked back outside again.

The thing was rampaging down the street, long bony spikes glittering in the sunset light, gaping mouth open in a continuous airless roar. It flung itself toward me, rotting sinews stretching and elongating as its claws slid from their sheaths. I flipped the daiklave from my back and prepared to meet it with a long cutting sweep as it sprang, my own Caste Mark coming to life upon my brow.

At that moment, Sayn stepped out of the forge to stand behind me, folding his arms across his chest. He spoke a word — a single word — and azure light flared

around the pair of us like a starburst, washing over the springing bone-creature in a humming burst of power that shattered it and threw its separate bones in a dozen different directions. The skull gave one final whining gasp and flew into a thousand flaming blue pieces, each one tumbling separately to the ground.

A slow, breathless silence descended upon the village.

Sayn broke it. “So, tell me, sister, why you have come to this place and what I can do for you.” He gestured to the fragmented bones. “Besides that.”

OTHER CELESTIAL EXALTED

THE LUNARS

The Lunar Exalted have no particular reason to like or dislike the Twilight Caste any more than other Solar Exalted. What the Lunars do have is something to hope for from them. Although three of the five Lunar Castes — the Waxing, Waning and Half Moon — have been subsumed into the Changing Moon Caste, some Lunars have nurtured hopes that, with proper scholarly and sorcerous assistance, it may be possible to restore the original castes. This possibility causes both interest and concern among Lunars — many of the Changing Moons are quite content as they are, while some older Lunars mutter that it is unwise to give the Descending Suns so wide-ranging an opportunity to meddle.

SMARAGDINE SERPENT-EYE TO HER CHILDREN

And if they come to us, and if they come.... I have not forgotten my closeness to them before, nor that I was mated to one of the Solars. Cold was the ice where I last saw my love, cold as the silver band upon my finger that I still wear in memory of him. He was so proud, so eloquent and fierce, his eyes blazing with power and his hands laden with enchantments. I hunted at his side as he called down the lightning upon our enemies, and together, we were united in blood and fury above the corpses of our foes. Sorcery ran in him like a deep river, moving like blood beneath his flesh, and I tasted the sparks of it each time that I kissed him. I would have killed for him. Though I took other lovers, it was to him that my heart was true — he gave heat to my cold body and brought the sun's own light to my lands.

I have thought upon what I shall do, if he has returned, whatever his body or nature may be now. Do not fear, my children — I shall not abandon you. You shall journey with me, across the desolate lands, and we shall feed upon the hearts of the Fair Folk on the way. I shall seek him out and come upon him as a storm by night, and once more, we shall be joined, never again to be parted. Our rings will burn together, linked as are our souls. And if I go to him, and if I go....

THE SIDEREALS

While the Sidereals are split mainly between the Bronze and Gold factions (with several nonaligned individuals pursuing their own agendas or completely uninvolved), there is a wide range of different opinions among them as to how to deal with these newborn Twilight Solars. Many of the Bronze faction would like them killed before they can develop their powers, judging them too dangerous to be allowed to live — they have not forgotten the First Age and will not forsake the genocidal decision they made. Equally, many of the Gold faction want the Solars protected and taught, so as to make them better tools in the Sidereals' gentle guidance of the world. The Exalted behind the Cult of the Illuminated openly advocate that, as the Scarlet Empress is no longer present, the time has come for certain Solars to be raised up in her place. However, the two factions are by no means united internally: There are too many divisions of opinion, and the ancient methods of foretelling are largely unavailable, with so few Sidereals willing to cooperate in the divinations.

The Sidereal viewpoint on the Twilight Caste is tinged with an uncomfortable sensation of kinship, more so than with the other Solar Exalted. As advisers, scholars and mystics themselves, the Sidereals can see echoes of themselves in the Twilight Caste. This both increases the

Sidereals' fear of the caste — they know their own potentials all too well — and makes it more difficult to strike at people who are so similar to them. Which is preferable — to remove a dangerous opponent or to have an esteemed colleague and fellow researcher with whom one can enjoy a pleasant correspondence and the occasional game of chess? Underneath it all, Sidereals possess a certain feeling of superiority, given the way that these newly Exalted Solars lack knowledge and experience. They're gifted amateurs at the game of sorcery, compared to the polished skill of the Sidereal Exalted.

There is also the problem, acknowledged by all Sidereals apart from the most naïve, that the researchers and scholars of the Twilight Caste are the most likely to discover the part the Sidereals played in the long-ago massacre of the Usurpation. They might even be able to track the Sidereals to their current places of hiding or to trace their infiltration of the Immaculates and the upper echelons of the imperial government. This is highly dangerous and presents a good argument for the Sidereals to avoid the more scholarly Twilight Castes — or to attempt to persuade them of the rightness of the Sidereals' actions while they are still young in their powers and impressionable. Naturally, there are a dozen different schools of thought about how to do this, and even many Gold Sidereals suggest that the simplest and most expeditious solution to the matter is to simply kill anyone who gets too close.

PRIVATE LETTER FROM CEONNIS-BA, CHOSEN OF THE MAIDEN OF ENDINGS, TO AHN-ARU, HIS SISTER IN SERVICE

My dear Sad Ivory,

I write this so that you will have some information should I fail in my latest mission. While I trust that this will not be the case, the stars are ominous — to say the least — and I have already performed the necessary rites to commend my spirit to all tutelary deities and to our patron Maiden.

As you are aware, we have certain connections inside House Cynis. The carnal, not to say lustful, nature of many of their amusements makes it easy to manipulate some of them through the intermediary of a trained lover or ensorcelled slave. It is pathetically easy to persuade them to send out heavily armed missions to obtain slaves in areas near the reported location of a Solar and then to arrange for the Solar's death in the matter when the house discovers that "an Anathema was skulking around the area." This also advances the house's position with the Immaculate Order, somewhat making amends for its extremely secular lifestyle. I have been one of the Bronze faction's primary contacts with the house for the last couple of decades, and I have managed to achieve a certain standing. Of course, they merely believe that I am a rogue Sidereal who wishes

to hide his nature and presence from the Immaculate Order. My pathetic gratitude for their noble protection has always been one of my proudest accomplishments. (I believe that we have agents in the other houses, too, but I lack information as to the precise methods that we use to manipulate them.)

From time to time, it is necessary to find a more alluring pretext to draw our tame Terrestrial Exalted into action. I have recently been given the task of disposing of a newly Exalted Solar of the Twilight Caste, one Sayn by name, a smith who originates from a crude village in the Southwest. Like many of his kind, he seeks to investigate the old tombs of the Solars, in the hopes of discovering some artifact from the First Age. I have given him a map that will lead him to the location of one of the old tombs in the area, near one of the outposts manned by several of House Cynis.

Here, I must admit to less than perfect planning: Sayn had not been overly secretive, and they had learned that one of the Anathema was already in the area. I was forced to embroider my story further and claim that I had heard of two Anathema prowling locally. I even, though it shames me to admit it, offered to help capture them both as slaves. It was an easy enough promise to make — the Terrestrial Exalted would waste their time looking for the nonexistent other Solar, and I could arrange for Sayn's death in the confusion.

However, the auguries that I have cast tonight are most disconcerting. I therefore write to you, my dear sister, in case my forebodings should prove justified. I sign this letter in the knowledge that I have given body and soul in service to our order and in the belief that we cannot allow the First Age to return. The Solar Exalted were luxurious, bloody-handed, prideful creatures, more deserving of the name of demon than many who are born to that nature. We do what we must, however degraded or base the methods we must use, in preventing their return.

THE DRAGON-BLOODED

The Unclean are particularly feared and hated by those of the Terrestrial Exalted who believe the Immaculate catechism: They are dreaded as demon-summoners, black magicians and foul practitioners of unholy rites. This tends to result in the more devout Dragon-Blooded killing Twilight Exalted on identification for religious reasons. The less devout ones dispose of them as well, for how could they ever safely be the masters of such beings? The Terrestrial Exalted are not particularly interested in the many divisions of knowledge and skill within the caste. They are more concerned by the threat that the caste poses to them.

Admittedly, some of the Dragon-Blooded — outcastes in particular — are prepared to recognize that the Immaculate catechism may be in error or that the occasional Twilight Caste may be an exception to the general percep-

tion of the Unclean. This is often allied to a sensible appreciation of the Twilight Caste's talents and the fact that a Terrestrial Exalted outside of Dynastic culture has grave need of allies, without the luxury of too many morals.

SPEECH BY IMMACULATE JADAH TO HIS CONGREGATION IN WHITEWALL

For they come not by night alone, nor by day alone, but in that shadowy hour where light and darkness mingle, stealing away the souls of humans to place their own unholy spirits within. Although they speak with the voices of your loved ones and smile with their lips, the victims are gone beyond recall, for those Anathema who are justly named the Unclean have taken possession of their bodies and slain their spirits. I weep with you, for truly it is unjust that those whom you love should be stolen away from you. My heart desires a better fate for those who have done no wrong.

Let us therefore be vigilant and just. If we cannot protect our kindred, we shall avenge them. We shall be watchful as the hawk at morning, which sees all things in the light of the rising sun that the Unclean misname and defame. We shall not accuse unrighteously, for that is a crime and a sin. But when the sign of the Unclean is seen burning upon the forehead of the necromancer, the demon-summoner, the accursed one, when the flames of his hellish mantle burn around him and proclaim his nature, then shall he be seized by all those around him and born to the temple, that the judgment of the Immaculates may be passed upon him! And that judgment shall be death, so that he may be expunged from this world and foul it no longer.

THE DEATHLORDS

The Deathlords see real opportunity in the Twilight Exalted. This particular caste is extremely vulnerable to the temptations of knowledge, to pleas that experiments were purely for a greater understanding of the universe and to being prepared to argue different points of view. It is said that in the depths of the Sevenfold Chasm in the North, one Twilight Exalted, a philosopher and poet named Burning Moon, has spent the last five years and fifteen days arguing continuously with Princess of the Starlit Bier, an Abyssal Exalted, as to whose personal beliefs are more appropriate. Since the deathknight's ghostly servants bring food and water regularly, it is quite possible that Burning Moon may be there for at least another five years. The discussion has been conducted in an atmosphere of great civility, and notes on the points raised can be found in the library of the Deathlord Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears, who is sponsor of the debate and mistress of Princess of the Starlit Bier.





However, the Deathlords differ in their opinions as to how to handle the Twilight Exalted. Should they bring them into the mystery and glory that is death and the Abyss combined, or should they allow them to remain children of the Unconquered Sun? The first option is not only more appealing to the Malfeans, but also offers a more certain method of keeping new allies loyal. The second option is far more risky, but allows the Solars to develop their abilities in their own way.

Yet, the Deathlords do have their own prejudices: One type of Twilight Exalted that they actively dislike is that of the Solar who makes healing her art and science. Lovers of mortality and death as they are, conscious of the blessing that dying brings and ever eager to help others achieve it, the Deathlords strongly object to meddling healers who snatch others back from the brink of death. This thoughtless, unkind interference sentences the poor victim to yet more years of life and prevents him from attaining the peace and benison of death. While Deathlords may attempt to manipulate such a Solar, they only rarely consider a genuine alliance with her.

Still, given the eagerness of many Twilight sorcerers to come to terms for Solar Circle tutoring or for hidden secrets or for the location of ancient artifacts that once were theirs, the Deathlords need not fear that they will be shunned by the Descending Suns. Indeed, to have a minor alliance or bargain with a member of the Twilight Caste is quite acceptable among the Deathlords. It is expected that this will lead into the Twilight's eventual humble servitude and death, of course, but that goes without saying. Many Twilight Caste sorcerers have briefly walked the cold floors of a Deathlord's court and heard secrets from the lips of ancient ghosts. Some of them have come out from such places free and alive, while others have emerged with a heavy burden of debts and oaths of allegiance — and some have never been seen living again.

FROM THE PRIVATE SCROLLS OF ADMIRABLE SILENCE, MIDNIGHT CASTE ABYSSAL

When I learned that the two visiting Solar Exalted were to be lodged with us, I was delighted to find that one of them was of the Twilight Caste. I assumed that he would be a scholar, capable of reasoned debate and sensible inquiry. I even hoped to please the Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Water by winning him to our side through argument and by showing him the splendor of our city.

I am both disturbed and pleased by what I discovered. This Sayn was not the scholar whom I had expected, nor was he a logician or philosopher. Instead, he was a smith, with the muscles of a common worker and with an unrea-

soning, unthinking faith in the Unconquered Sun. Even the innocent beliefs of my children (whom I allowed to speak with him as a gesture of trust), who spoke from their hearts on the beauties of death and the glories of immortal eternity, were insufficient to persuade him into considering other possibilities.

And yet, his intensity appealed to me greatly. There was in him a flame of passion that was hotter than any fire for the forging of orichalcum and soulsteel, a sheer devotion to creation and inspiration that would have been a thing of true beauty when purified by the holy embrace of death. Such a manifestation of power — for I understand that he is indeed a man skilled in artifice and also gifted upon the battlefield — would be a most useful tool to the Bodhisattva. Indeed, I am doubly resolved to win him to our service, that he may work soulsteel in fashions that he has never before imagined and beat out crowns to adorn the heads of the Deathlords themselves.

PRIVATE REPORT BY PRINCE OF SHADOWS TO THE LOVER CLAD IN THE RAIMENT OF TEARS

Mistress,

I must regretfully report failure in my mission to approach the Twilight Caste Solar Horakinis. As you wished, I have been exchanging letters with her for two years now, representing myself as a fellow scholar who wished to share information upon certain types of ritual and who lodged in the city of Kirighast. Over the last six months, I have written these letters in such a way as to cast suspicion upon the Deathlord Mask of Winters, in order to form her into a tool that could be used against him. I have accused him of torture, murder and corruption — I did not bother to mention necromancy, as she would already know about that.

Unfortunately, it would seem that she was quicker witted than I expected and that there must have been certain clues in my letters that caused her to realize that I was other than a human sorcerer. I also trapped an air elemental that had been sent to spy upon me, one of the Wind Makers who spent a little too long enjoying the dawn breezes. He admitted that a masked sorceress had sent him, though not in time to save his wings. Her next letter after that was a polite refusal to correspond further, stating that, "I do not think that it would be appropriate for either of us to deal with each other. I may be of the setting sun, but you are of the rising darkness."

It is my recommendation that she be either brought to our side forcibly, mistress, or slain without delay. The fact that she was able to identify me for what I am suggests that she knows too much. While I have not yet located her dwelling precisely, I have a general idea of its location, and I believe that the intermediaries who carried our letters

can be persuaded to reveal further details. I await your further commands.

THIRD CIRCLE DEMON

To encourage his ego, I tell him my secrets.

I charge him, yes, but at a bargain. Fresh blood, gold-cruled candies, wine, the heart of a Dragon-Blooded enemy, the spirit of a city. And his innocence — a heady drug. My prices seem reasonable to him.

He calls me up, I have given him a potent name, and he thinks it a true one. I wait for his word and come like an obedient dog. He thinks he owns me.

I tell him jokes I have stripped from the minds of other victims, and he laughs and thinks he understands me. I tell him the future, and it is the future he fears that I reveal. I have no need to lie, for if he continues to call me, the words I speak will come to pass. I give him knowledge of his enemies. I will make him powerful and feared. I whisper the secrets his allies keep from him, and he comes to mistrust them all.

Soon, I will be the only one he will trust.

I give him words of power. Words too powerful for him and forbidden. He forgets things. I remind him — sometimes. He trusts me.

I give him the power to slay at a glance, to strip the mind bare, to raise life out of lifeless stone. He makes an example of his enemies — it is so easy. He makes such small changes in the minds of his allies — they no longer defy him. He erases the fear from his wife's mind. She serves him dutifully with blank eyes and an empty mind. He slaughters his own children in a rage. I bring him new ones — children drawn from my own black blood and as innocent as serpents. He reduces the home he loves to ash. I build him a new home, far from his enemies. Far from anyone — I am his true friend.

His wife takes a sickness and dies, but I have already replaced her in his affections. I come to him in a pleasing manner for I have come to love this beautiful thing I have created.

I teach him his history. I remind him he is a god. I do not speak of the god he serves. Let him come to know that too late. When his god strikes him down, I will be there, and I will take him up into my hand. He trusts me.

Soon, he will come to my call and grovel at my feet. He will know me then, but I will make him love me again. What was once a weapon of the Unconquered Sun will be my weapon. I will have a forged a knife to put out the eye of a god.







CHAPTER FIVE
**DREAMS OF THE
 FIRST AGE**



All Solar Exalted possess some memories of the past incarnations of their Exalted Essence, the Twilight Caste no less than the others. Since few Solar Exalted have spent more than a couple of days incarnated in Creation since their deaths during the Usurpation, most coherent memories that current Solars possess date back to this long-lost period and refer to many things which are nearly incomprehensible in terms of the modern world's perceptions. Added to this, these memories are often incoherent and fragmented and do not occur in any predictable or reliable way. The sight of a long-cherished weapon, recovered from centuries of disuse, may prompt no more than a reminder of the comfortable sensation of its weight in the Exalt's hand. Yet, an alchemical vessel used for a single experiment and long-crusted with topaz salts may bring back the memory of an entire evening's work in the Solar's favorite laboratory.

Two Exalted can look at the same artifact that they both once used and have different memories of their past — or, equally likely, one might remember while the other regains no memory at all. This type of information should be used to deepen atmosphere and to assist the plot or to help players develop their characters by describing their past histories. The Storyteller should not use firm rules or dice-regulated systems to govern the recovery of memories; if additional information would hamper the series or spoil the plot, then assume that none of the Exalted present remember anything useful. The actual process of Exaltation may involve memories of the past that last for subjective hours or

even days, though no more than seconds may pass objectively. This can also occur when an Exalt increases her permanent Essence and brings herself into greater harmony with the divine power that she carries within her. Such events should only happen otherwise when the Storyteller decides that the Exalt has come into contact with something that was of great significance to her previous life or that her current circumstances closely mirror an event from that prior existence.

All sorts of First Age artifacts can cause such memory flashbacks: architecture, weapons, robes, mirrors, mosaics, even a particular feature of the landscape that has remained the same for thousands of years and once meant something to the Solar in his previous life. What is more, during the First Age, many of the Celestial Exalted had at least a nodding acquaintance with most of their fellows. In these latter days, meeting another Solar, or even a Sidereal or Lunar, may bring memories of prior friendship or rivalry with them: a secret assignation in a starlit crypt, a bitter duel in the newly fallen snow, a quiet conspiracy among the shadowy onyx columns of a long-forgotten palace. It is quite likely that one participant's memory will be far superior to the other's. One Solar may remember only the moment when her friend attempted to cut her down in battle, while the other remembers their long history of friendship before that moment and how they quarreled over the love of a handsome Lunar. However, the Storyteller is under no obligation to provide a new set of memories for every time



that the Exalted encounters some fragment of the First Age. Though many have striven to find one, there is no pattern as to what is remembered and what is forgotten or to what circumstances may bring forth remembrances of the past.

Memories of members of the Twilight Caste may relate to their previous great works and fields of study: alchemy, necromancy, sorceries, the reading — and writing — of great works and spellbooks, the building of lofty towers and immense caverns, the curing and inflicting of plagues, the smithing of rare artifacts such that no being of these later days could create. Memories of the First Age can be very useful in forwarding plot or increasing ambiance, but should not be overused. Part of the wonder of the Old Realm is its air of mystery and long-lost knowledge and power. If it is overused, it becomes more trite and commonplace, less magical and more comprehensible.

MIRRORS

We entered the great hall together, our robes brushing the nacre-tessellated pavement behind us. We both wore white sashes with red and gold, as was suitable for this occasion. My hair had been oiled and braided in a seven-stranded braid, while my companion Zinnios had chosen to leave his loose: It flowed over his shoulders in long waves of dark green, as deep and beautiful as the leaves of the yannis tree in midwinter.

A slave girl clad only in three wreaths of roses came to meet us, falling to her knees in front of us, and proffered to each of us a goblet of garnet-dark wine and a silver mirror. The goblets had been carved out of single huge pearls and shone with the same opalescent glow as the floor. The mirrors were faced with crystal, on which had been carved certain runes and diagrams that gave a strange hue to all things reflected in them.

We left the girl to minister to other new arrivals and made our way forward to greet our hostess, gazing into our mirrors so as to safely observe her. She sat at the center of a small knot of other Solars, all of whom watched her by means of their mirrors. At her feet was a handsome young man in black silk, whose hair was silver and whose left eye was missing, and on either side of her sat her two sisters. They were older than her, and their hair was streaked with silver. Both wore masks of ivory and gold, and their robes were of white samite, as were their gloves. She herself wore a long drape of black gauze that showed tantalizing glimpses of silver skin every time she moved. Her hair was pinned back in violet coils with three combs of black jade, and her yellow eyes were slitted like those of tigers.

I saw her, and I knew that I must have her as my wife.

BETRAYAL

The bridge was smooth and slick beneath our feet, an arch of emerald-dark ice that curved with surpassing elegance, as beautiful as a sword blade. The chasm yawned beneath me as I waited, a gulf of darkness far below. Somewhere in the depths, I could hear the lapping of waters —

and other sounds, far less palatable and far more unnatural. I drew my daiklave and studied my reflection in the polished mirror of the blade, as I waited for the woman who had betrayed me.

The wind stirred and came rushing down from the heights in a brisk cold whirling of air that blew my golden hair out around my face and stirred the folds of my deep blue mantle. High above, in the great citadel, the flags would shake, and the banners would unfurl, and a dozen trumpets would salute the People of the Air who had deigned to tread among them. I had no heart to rejoice, this day. It was one of the selfsame People of the Air who had stolen my heart's desire from me.

I had come to her rooms by night, ignoring her claims that she wished for solitude, and thrown open the heavy silk curtains. The rubies inset in their rich fabric cut into my hands as I saw how she lay on her bed, her limbs interlaced with those of one of the white-winged spirits.

She woke in that moment, and her anima blazed. Her daiklave flew to her hand, its naked blade raised against me as though I was her enemy. And yet, it was she who had betrayed me, for had we not sworn our love by the ancient rites? Had we not exchanged rings of orichalcum and moonsilver, and were we not bound to each other throughout eternity?

Her silver hair was like liquid metal in the moonlight, and it fell down over her shoulders to her bare breasts. She hissed, her forked tongue flickering between her deep red lips, and lifted her sword again in mute challenge. Behind her, the elemental slowly blinked, his eyes as unfocused as one of his people's storms, and reached out one lazy hand to stroke his wings.

"Tomorrow," I said to her. "At dawn, I will meet you on the Bridge of Smaragdine. One of us will die." I did not draw my daiklave: I merely turned and walked away, letting the ruby-studded curtains clash shut behind me. The moonlight washed down on me as I stepped out into the Thorn Garden, and I finally let the tears run down my cheeks — for even if she had betrayed me, and even if one of us slew the other, I was still bound to her by love. Even the rings we both wore were less permanent than my love for her.

And now, she was approaching me, garbed in armor of moonsilver, its thick plates and bands lying heavily upon her narrow shoulders and around her slender waist. She wore no helmet: Her hair was braided back from her face, emphasizing her high cheekbones and slanting yellow eyes. She was barefoot, and the snow hissed and melted where she trod, leaving behind a perfect trail of smooth scaled footprints seared into the ice.

EVOCATION

The stars had been read by nine Sidereals, all of whom had declared that this night was propitious to our purposes. However, they had all feared the one who we proposed to call up and command, and therefore, they had fled our presence, retreating to their distant Manses with cries of

dismay and resolutions not to involve themselves. The five of us had laughed and had sworn that they would repent their folly.

Jade Chasm had taken up the inks, which he had compounded from the blood of seven ancient vipers, the ashes of five Water-aspected Terrestrial Exalted who had died in high places, the spittle of three great spiders marked with the crest of Luna and the last joint of the little finger from each of our right hands. He marked the onyx floor with the prescribed diagrams and then fumigated the pattern with rare incense from the farthest East, where it grows raw upon the trees and must be harvested by monkeys the local tribesmen train with whips and lilac blossoms. The smoke from the incense coiled in the air, and we heard the whisper of air elementals from the corners of the room.

Nine Sorrows purified herself with thrice-distilled water and rue and then set skulls in the 19 points of the diagram. We had taken them from the local graveyard, ignoring the cries of the villagers, and with beetles, we had rid them of the flesh that still covered them in rotting folds. As she began to chant the first phrases of the incantation, the skulls opened their bony jaws and repeated the words after her, in dry, empty voices.

The rest of us stood around her and raised our hands to the heavens, naming the constellations that shone in the sky that night. As we spoke, the ivory roof above our heads seemed to grow transparent, and we could see the starry sky glowing with a thousand points of light. As we named each constellation, its stars were blotted out by a growing darkness, and we rejoiced, seeing that our invocation was being answered.

Slowly, the darkness began to form a mighty whirlpool, a gyre in the sky that spun down toward us with a dreadful hissing and booming of wind. The vision dissolved to the rhythms of our chanting, and we stood there beneath the ivory roof, finally falling silent. The skulls whispered for a moment longer and then shattered to dust, cracking and splintering in quiet explosions. And then we realized that there was a noise above our heads so loud that it could scarcely be defined as noise — a great scratching and clawing, as the thing we had summoned reached down a mighty tendril from the sky, blotting out the stars, and tore at our roof. As I watched, I saw the cracks begin to spread across the ceiling and a dripping black claw force its way through.

FORGING

I was a smith of mightier things than metal, a forger of more fragile materials than spun glass or gossamer. As I took the finely wrought hammer of silver and quartz in my hand, the 50 virgin boys in black assumed a great circle around the opal anvil. Their leader struck upon a small crystal gong with a mallet of topaz, and they all began to sing. Their voices merged in sweet harmony, flowing through the air like light itself formed into music.



forging

I brought the hammer down against the anvil in an explosion of light, timing each blow to mark a pause in the melancholy song. With each strike, the music thickened in the air, and a twisted fragment of shining opalescence began to take shape on the anvil, gaining coherence and strength. I continued to work it, forcing it into a defined circlet fit to grace the brows of queens, as the boys reached the final stage of their antiphon.

With one last blow, the circlet was forged, and my hammer shattered into a hundred pieces. Each fragment struck the marble floor with a separate chime. Melodic whispers haunted the air as I picked the circlet up and raised it high above my head. The last sunset light struck it, bringing a renewed chorus of music in praise of the Unconquered Sun.

The 50 boys bowed humbly and in silence. They had given their voices to the artifact, and now, they would never speak again.

BATTLE

My Circle stood beside me on the edge of the cliff, overlooking the wide plain below. The ranks of our armies were drawn up for battle. Archers tested the strings of their bows, riders soothed their horses, and footmen waited impassively for the signal to charge. I raised the clear jade spyglass to my eye and focused it on the shadows from which our enemy would come.

In the distance, the dark soldiers of our enemy's army began a slow march toward us. Its ranks were swelled by bandage-wrapped skeletons and by rotting creatures that staggered dumbly and raised their paws in mute appeal to the clouded skies. At the fringes of the army rode green-eyed women with pale skins and flowing blue hair, naked to the cold wind and the flecks of snow. Their horses were tall and white, with red eyes and long jagged fangs. Above his army hovered five black, eagle-winged whirlwinds, which fought each other briefly, before circling outward in menacing arcs.

"Do you see him yet?" Contentious Sword asked impatiently.

"No," I murmured. "Perhaps he hides from us."

"He's a fool, if so," the Dawn Caste stated arrogantly. "That army may be good enough to impress other Terrestrial Exalted with, but we can handle it with ease, spit it through with our troops, roast it and pick the bones afterward. If he does not show himself, he is certainly lost."

"And if he does," I pointed out, "he then has to deal with me. Perhaps he fears that." I felt a raw, arrogant pride swell in me at my words. Was I not one of the foremost sorcerers of the world? Did other sorcerers not fall down and tremble before me and send me tribute of the finest Western pearls, the purest Eastern amber, the most splendid Northern sapphires and the richest Southern rubies? My Manse was attended by women with wings of peacock feathers and slaves with skin like marble. My daiklave was a wonder to all who beheld it, enchanted with rare spells that others would never have dared to contemplate. Truly, it would be an act

of raw folly for the Dragon-Blooded rebel to show himself today. He would do better to hide away and to sue for pardon on his knees from some distant land. If he were fortunate, we might even forget him after a century or two had passed or at least deign to allow him to live in poverty on the borders of some desert. We were not unreasonable, after all. But we could not let anybody defy the powers of the Chosen of the Sun — not even other Celestial Exalted and far less the Terrestrial Exalted.

Contentious Sword sighed. "Well then, it falls to me to bring him out." With a cry that blended battle-howl and rallying call, he leapt from the height where we stood. His anima flared to life in brilliant gold and white, reflecting dazzlingly from his orichalcum armor, and he swung his daiklave in a flashing spiral. The winds carried him easily, as though he were a blown feather, and he swept toward the enemy ranks in a halo of gold and white.

I chuckled to myself. Did my Dawn brother think that I would be content to stand idle while he proved his strength? My own anima flared dark crimson, as rich and deep as the wine we had shared at dawn, and I flung up my arms, my Caste Mark blazing bright upon my forehead. Words came to my lips, and I spoke them: The snow beneath my feet melted, and the withered grass began to char to ash in a spreading circle around me, as I invoked the powers of the third circle, the Solar Circle, against this presumptuous foe. As I cried out the final word, the clouds above us drew together in a seething mass of darkness, and iridescent fire spat down from the heavens, searing into the center of the enemy's army and consuming all those whom it struck.

THE BATTLEFIELD

I was made for this.

Below me, the battle spread across an open field, spilling from between the pass of two mountains like wine spreading from a dropped cup. The battle was against the Wyld, and the unformed magics were churning up warriors of stone and glass, shadows and nightmares. Fair warriors led battalions of tropical plants, fire spitting children and creatures whose touch filled a man's lungs with poisoned wine.

Solar Charms burned like molten gold below me, shaking the earth, inspiring our Dragon-Blooded foot soldiers or raining down like lava on the fey enemies. From here, the battlefield looked like a game board, full of bright colors and simple patterns. It was tempting to think of the small figures below as nothing more than toys, moved by my will and for my amusement. Yet, blood was thick on the barren ground, and screams carried up to me like the cries of seabirds. Swaths of carnage revealed where my cousins of the Dawn cut their way through the Fair Ones armies. Where the Night Exalted crept, no one could say, but I could see how a troop of lesser faeries had collapsed, as if they had suddenly lost their general. My kin of the Eclipse had finished their part, having brought us allies from the demon realms and the greater elementals of the West. They fought now side by side with the Zenith, whose most important role would come

later, turning the poisoned fields of dead to clean ash and singing our departed brethren to their next incarnations.

One of my Twilight sisters was on a rise below me, her arms held high while golden light sprang from her hands to bathe our allies in the gods' own blessings. She had been so for the long hours of the battle. Her Lunar mate paced in front of her in the form of a great albino lion, and the broken bodies nearby testified to the ferocity of that protection.

I hang suspended above the battlefield, secure in the sapphire labyrinth of my own Essence signature, waiting my turn.

Then, the ground bucks, scattering the pieces of the game like an angry child, and begins to sink. I drop down swiftly as the Fair Folk host surges forward, darting lightly across the uncertain surface, and our Dragon-Blooded troops cry out in dismay. The earth boils, steam bursts from the ground, and our army breaks, fleeing for higher ground as Wyld magic transforms the earth beneath its feet to boiling water. A tight cluster of faerie cataphractoi was leaping through the chaos, heading directly for the anchor of our Incantation of the Invincible Army.

I hit the ground, sinking to my knees in the steam, screaming out my Charms. Even my magical bronze skin feels the touch of Wyld magic — so much power had been poured into the battle on both sides, and it met in a madness of pain and suffering. I scream again, in pain, as the boiling mud eats into my transformed flesh. Foundering like the dying troops around me, I struggle to master my pain before the distraction kills me. My anima burns, the violet light nearly beyond sight, and my signature labyrinth spins above me. Then, I call on my greater spells, and the blaze of my anima bathes the battlefield in eerie blue light. The ground churns, and molten tentacles burst from the defiled earth. They whip across the battlefield under my direction, and I crush the Fair Folk, laughing as they scream shrilly and scatter like sparrows. The kraken surges after them, flinging aside their frail protections.

The rest of Fair Folk army struggles onward, singing shrilly, laughing, some weeping. Our troops are divided, scattered across the fields, struggling in pairs or singly to survive the onslaught. One of the warriors sent to kill my Twilight cousin escapes my kraken and throws herself toward me.

I call Cruel Wisdom to me. My daiklave, made for my hand to fight those who were older than the gods, sweeps with a brassy cry from the air. Red light dances across the ground, the bones of my hand glow copper through my flesh, and Wisdom's protections turn aside the first faerie attack before I have time to truly register it.

Then, the warrior crashes into me. I thrust with Cruel Wisdom but miss, my defense is awkward as I struggle to free myself from the mud. Blows rain down, the Fair One's spear and shield working to drive me down. I fall back and back, fling a clod of mud at the creature, transforming it into a handful of pure fire. The faerie shrieks as her flower strewn hair shrivels, and she sweeps her shield past my guard and breaks my nose. Choking, I swing Cruel Wisdom down,

meet the edge of her shield, split it and drive my daiklave in and drag it across her naked stomach. Butterflies spill from the faerie woman's gut. They dart at me, razored wings making a last attack before they flutter over the field aimlessly, drifting like small silver leaves.

THE DYING

I would not live long enough for my enemies to find me.

The sun was wreathed in high clouds and glowed like a pearl. It was the time of Calibration, and the Unconquered Sun, Luna and all the Maidens marched across the sky in their splendor. Jupiter winked, unnaturally bright from my angle. I was sprawled across a chunk of broken sky-glass from the great city of Tzatli, another shard was buried deep in my chest, and every faltering breath I took tasted of blood. My frame was incredible, far stronger and faster than any human's, but my hero's body was dying.

My city lay scattered around me, broken sky-glass and broken bodies strewn across the glaciers. There had been more screams earlier, but time and cold had taken most of the wounded into death. I could feel death rising around me, growing closer, but it was not the death I was used to. It was wrong, tainted, as if my enemies would follow me even there.

I had died before and been reborn, the endless cycle the Unconquered Sun had decreed for his Chosen. But I had never died at the hands of my own kindred. I could taste the Sidereal magics in my death, their plotting in the sudden rebellion of my servants. I spat weakly but would not waste my Essence on a curse. I had other plans.

I could not prevent my death, nor the death of all those around me, but I could prepare for my rebirth.

I closed my cold fingers over a fragment of sky-glass. I had made the material, woven it with Charms of eternity. I had created the city as a gift for my husband. He loved the shapes of winged things. He was gone now, to the arms of the Lunar Society. I can only assume their sudden withdrawal to be an abandonment.

The sharp edges of the sky-glass cut me, but I gripped it harder.

"The First Circle begins within the earth," I whispered, my words carried on a breath of blood. I poured out my knowledge, every spell I knew, the manner of summoning demons, the strange ways of the Southern elementals, the black Rune of Hate that cripples the soul of the one who uses it.

Everything I knew, I poured into the fragments around me, my anima rising up like the sky-lights of the North, the blue mandala flickering in time with my faltering heart. Still I worked, leaving nothing in reserve as my hands grew numb and my voice a choked rasp. At the last, with the last strength I had, I bound secrecy to those special chips of eternal sky-glass. They would be lost among the thousands of others, scattered here in an ice field in the North — and they would wait. I would return, someday, to this place and take back what had been stolen from me.

The sky was darkening, and the last thing I saw was Jupiter, winking triumphantly above me.





CHAPTER SIX

MAGIC OF THE TWILIGHT



NEW CHARMS

CRAFT

IMPURITY-HAMMERING BLOW

Cost:	5 motes
Duration:	One scene
Type:	Simple
Minimum Craft:	2
Minimum Essence:	1
Prerequisite Charms:	Flawless Handiwork Method

With this Charm, an Exalted can purify base metal or other raw substances of natural taints and flaws, working badly tanned raw leather into butter-soft suede, cheap marble into smooth stone worthy of the palace of the Empress and flawed jewels into pure specimens of their kind. Characters cannot use this Charm to convert raw materials into any of the Five Magical Materials — for example, turning gold into orichalcum. That must be done by the usual long, slow process of extraction. However, the Exalt can greatly improve the quality of raw materials by invoking this Charm as he creates an item. The character may purify the materials for an object in an equal number of Dexterity or Stamina + Crafts successes as required to create the item. Players may roll for their characters once per scene of work. For the purposes of this Charm, each

scene is normally a day of work, though it can be less (for example, if the Solar is using the Charm Craftsman Needs No Tools, a scene is probably about an hour).

BODY-FORGING TRAVAIL

Cost:	8 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration:	One scene
Type:	Simple
Minimum Craft:	3
Minimum Essence:	2
Prerequisite Charms:	Object-Strengthening Touch

This Charm allows an Exalt to confer physical integrity upon a living being, human or animal, just as he might instill strength into an object. The Solar places his hands upon the subject of this Charm and uses his powers to force the subject's living body to conform to principles of stability and good construction, enhancing its ability to receive blows or other damage. For the remainder of the scene, the subject of the Charm takes half damage after soak (but before damage is rolled, to a minimum of one die) from all blows struck by beings with a Craft Ability equal to or less than that of the Exalted who invoked the Charm. The character also has some degree of protection from forces such as cold, fire, lightning or acid and soaks two additional levels of lethal damage from such attacks until the end of the scene. A sorcerer can use this Charm on himself.

EDIFICE-SMASHING STRIKE

Cost:	7 motes
Duration:	Instant
Type:	Simple
Minimum Craft:	4
Minimum Essence:	2
Prerequisite Charms:	Shattering Grasp

This Charm enables an Exalted to shake the foundations of buildings and pound down walls with his bare fists due to his understanding of the nature of craftsmanship and the principles of workmanship. When attempting to destroy or break any nonliving crafted material of any substance, add his Essence + Craft to his Strength + Athletics to determine if he can break something or to the amount of damage he does in an attack against an object. A character can use this Charm against any sort of material, regardless of the material she crafts. The only requirement is that the subject of his strikes, be it a wall, a door, a weapon or a building's foundation, be in some way worked or shaped by intelligent beings. This Charm is explicitly permitted to be part of a Combo with Charms of other Abilities. This Charm cannot be used to attack worn or carried gear.

STABILITY-CONFERRING ESTABLISHMENT

Cost:	1 mote, 1 Willpower, 1 health level
Duration:	One year
Type:	Simple
Minimum Craft:	5
Minimum Essence:	3
Prerequisite Charms:	Chaos-Resistance Preparation

With this Charm, an Exalted can create objects that are not only resistant to the effects of the Wyld, but also protect those who wear them. Infusing a part of his own life into the item — which can be anything from a ring to a full suit of armor — the Solar instills a natural aura of order and stability into it, causing it to remain safe from changes for a full year. As long as the object endures unchanged, preserved by the Charm, its wearer will also be protected from the Wyld's ravages. Remember that the mote invested remains committed for the duration of the Charm or until the magic is canceled by the Exalt.

INVESTIGATION**ABIDING BLOOD OBSERVATION**

Cost:	4 motes
Duration:	Instant
Type:	Simple
Minimum Investigation:	2
Minimum Essence:	1
Prerequisite Charms:	Ten Magistrate Eyes

When a character uses this Charm, he will perceive blood dripping from the hands of anyone within 10 yards of him who has killed someone within the last five days. The vision is momentary, but quite clear. The Charm lasts long enough for him to turn around and look all around him, though if someone takes pains to hide her hands, he will not be able to see any blood that might be there and judge whether or not she has killed. A target who has merely killed a single person will have simple bloodstains on her hands; an Exalted who has massacred a troop of guards will have hands dripping with gore. The Charm makes no distinctions on the basis of motives for killing or types of killing, but merely shows whether or not those close by have killed.

HAWK ALOFT GAZE

Cost:	5 motes
Duration:	Instant
Type:	Simple
Minimum Investigation:	4
Minimum Essence:	2
Prerequisite Charms:	Crafty Observation Method

This Charm allows the Exalted to scan a crowd of people or a landscape, as far as the eye can see, searching for a particular person or thing, focusing all his attention on his prey. If any part of his target is theoretically within his view — however great the distance — then he will see it as clearly as if he were only 10 yards away, together with the immediate surroundings for five yards around the target. This applies even if his target is camouflaged or partly concealed, in which case the visible part of the target will be identified as obviously part of the complete target. The only way to avoid this Charm is to be wholly concealed by some object between the target and the Exalt. However, the Exalted must know what he is looking for; attempts merely to look for “something odd” will be fruitless. Characters who are invisible cannot be detected with this spell, but even the cleverest of magical camouflage is penetrated by it.

GUILT-FINDING INQUISITOR METHOD

Cost:	7 motes
Duration:	One scene
Type:	Simple
Minimum Investigation:	3
Minimum Essence:	2
Prerequisite Charms:	Judge's Ear Technique

With this Charm, an Exalt can hear the private whispers of guilt that underlie most speech, betraying the dark secrets of an interrogated person. When invoked, it will allow the Solar to know the single thing about which the target feels guiltiest concerning the subject under discussion. The Solar will seem to hear the target's voice whispering his guilt and shame about the matter, while the target continues to speak of whatever he chooses and is not



necessarily aware that he is revealing his hidden secrets. If the target refuses to say anything, then the Charm fails to provide any answers. Also, the Charm operates on the target's personal perceptions of guilt: If the target feels no guilt or shame about his private actions, then the Charm will not reveal them. Thus, a sincere and self-justified revolutionary might betray his shame in not speaking up publicly for his cause but not his private involvement in a recent assassination of a Terrestrial Exalted. Unfortunately, the Charm will not function on someone with an Essence equal to or greater than that of the user.

LINGUISTICS

LORE-SCANNING METHOD

Cost:	8 motes
Duration:	Instant
Type:	Simple
Minimum Linguistics:	2
Minimum Essence:	1
Prerequisite Charms:	Sagacious Reading of Intent

This Charm permits a character reading a book, letter, inscription or other piece of writing to look for information about sorcery, wonder-working or the use of Charms and to distinguish it from fictional accounts. An Exalted reading while using this Charm will immediately

be able to tell if a description of sorcery or other supernatural feat is accurate, though not necessarily to what degree. For instance, he could discern that the description of a spell that summoned an ivory palace for the night was genuine and that there was indeed such a spell, rather than being a fancy of the writer's, but he would not know anything about the spell. While not a perfect method of self-education, this Charm is extremely useful to researchers for finding points to begin their investigations of sorcery and other powers.

LORE

EARTH-FIRMING METHOD

Cost:	15 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration:	One day
Type:	Simple
Minimum Lore:	4
Minimum Essence:	2
Prerequisite Charms:	Chaos-Repelling Pattern

With this Charm, an Exalted can protect a large area from the ravages of the Wyld for a single day. While it lasts, the earth and vegetation within the warded area, together with any living beings present inside it, will not be affected by the Wyld's changes, and the air will remain breathable and safe. The Solar paces around the area that he wishes to

ward (which may not have more than a five yard radius per dot of permanent Essence that he has) and invokes the Charm. Unfortunately, although the contents of the area will be safe from change, faeries or Wyld-mutated beings are not prevented from entering the protected area.

INJURY-FORCING TECHNIQUE

Cost:	5 motes per health level, 1 Willpower
Duration:	Instant
Type:	Simple
Minimum Lore:	4
Minimum Essence:	2
Prerequisite Charms:	Wound-Accepting Technique

With this Charm, an Exalt may transfer his current injuries to another person. The character must be in skin-to-skin contact with the target of the Charm for a turn, and his player must spend a point of temporary Willpower and the appropriate amount of Essence. The Exalt's wounds close up and heal on his own body, while appearing at the same time on that of the subject. The Solar using the Charm immediately heals a number of health levels of bashing or lethal damage, and the target of the Charm immediately takes a like number of levels of bashing damage. The maximum number of health levels transferable is the lower of the two characters' Staminas. This Charm cannot be used to transfer aggravated damage: However, it is quite possible to kill somebody with it. It can be used in combat, but it requires that the character have concluded a successful grab or clinch maneuver and have the target trapped at the time the Charm is used.

ORDER-AFFIRMING BLOW

Cost:	15 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration:	Instant
Type:	Simple
Minimum Lore:	5
Minimum Essence:	4
Prerequisite Charms:	Chaos-Repelling Pattern

By means of this Charm, an Exalt can use his singular knowledge of both chaos and order to restore a Wyld-corrupted living creature or object. By placing his hands upon the target and focusing his will, the Solar can restore it to its original physical and mental state. However, any time that has passed will be taken into account: The target of the Charm will be restored to his appropriate age and may age significantly if the Wyld has preserved him from the passing years. For a full day after this Charm has been used, the target is immune to the effects of the Wyld: However, if he remains in Wyld areas after that time, he will once again be subject to its changes and may eventu-

ally be returned to his previous altered form. Note that this Charm does nothing to cure Wyld addiction — exposure to the energies of the madlands is still pleasurable.

SORCERY-CONFERRING CONTEMPLATION

Cost:	10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 experience point
Duration:	Instant
Type:	Simple
Minimum Lore:	6
Minimum Essence:	6
Prerequisite Charms:	Power-Awarding Prana

By means of this Charm, a character can lend one of her spells to another Exalted sorcerer. For each dot of the loaning character's Essence, she can lend a spell for one use. The recipient must have the appropriate Sorcery Charm to be able to use the spell. These spells draw directly on the Essence of the Exalted who lent them, but the recipient must pay any non-Essence costs — for example the Willpower to activate the appropriate Sorcery Charm.

The Solar is still able to use these spells while the Charm is in effect, but as soon as the recipient has cast any of them as many times as the lending character has permanent Essence, the recipient loses the ability to cast that particular spell again. Use of this Charm does not aid in the study of the spell — it merely imprints the spell on the target, giving him the ability to use it once per dot of the lending character's Essence. Powerful Solars often used this ability to empower lesser minions — particularly the Dragon-Blooded — for particular missions.

MEDICINE

ADDICTION-CLEANSING TOUCH

Cost:	8 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration:	Instant
Type:	Simple
Minimum Medicine:	4
Minimum Essence:	3
Prerequisite Charms:	Anointment of Miraculous Health

With this Charm, an Exalted can cleanse another character of any addiction that she may have to alcohol or to more noxious substances, such as opium, bright morning, lotus distillate or fire butterfly wing-powder. The character places her hand on the subject's brow and invokes the Charm, instantly freeing the subject from all psychological and physiological effects and cravings of the addiction. However, the stresses and temptations that drove the subject to addiction in the first place will not be banished and may, quite possibly, cause the subject to relapse. An Exalt cannot use this Charm upon herself.

UNHEALING WOUND INFLECTION

Cost:	10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration:	One scene
Type:	Simple
Minimum Medicine:	4
Minimum Essence:	2
Prerequisite Charms:	Wound-Mending Care Technique

In a sense the diametric opposite to the Wound-Mending Care Technique, this Charm allows the character to inflict particularly grievous wounds, which will heal far more slowly than normal. By spending 10 motes of Peripheral Essence and 1 point of temporary Willpower, the character focuses his blows through his understanding of anatomy and Essence flows, so that all aggravated and lethal damage he inflicts will take five times as long to heal, and all bashing damage will take 10 times as long to heal. If healing Charms are later used on the target, they function at half their usual efficacy. Twilight Exalted frequently used this Charm in duels during the First Age.

MERCIFUL BALM OF SLEEP

Cost:	10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration:	One day
Type:	Simple
Minimum Medicine:	6
Minimum Essence:	6
Prerequisite Charms:	Healing Trance Meditation

With this Charm, an Exalted can heal not only wounded bodies, but also salve damaged minds and souls. While the character must touch the subject of the Charm, the subject need not be cooperative or willing — in fact, if he suffers from a particularly violent form of insanity, he may need to be restrained in some way. Both the Exalted and the target pass into a deep healing trance, in which they remain for an entire day. The only way of forcibly breaking the trance before the day is over is either to separate the two physically or to slay one of them, in which case the other awakens. During the period that the Exalted is entranced, he regains no Essence. If the Charm is completed, then the subject awakens with a clear and rational mind, free from all forms of insanity. While this Charm will also heal the effects on a soul of the Fair Folk's hunger and cure sorcerous forms of madness, it will not necessarily alter a target's morality or cause a person to change strongly held views. An Exalted cannot use this Charm upon himself: If he is suffering from some form of insanity, then someone else must use the Charm on him. Also, the Charm cannot cure the Great Curse.

YOUTH-RESTORING BENISON

Cost:	15 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 experience point
Duration:	Instant
Type:	Simple
Minimum Medicine:	7
Minimum Essence:	7
Prerequisite Charms:	Healing Trance Meditation

One of the most legendary of Charms, it allows an Exalt to restore youth and health to a normal human or animal. However, it cannot restore another Exalted or a magical being, as it only works on purely natural creatures. The character invokes the Charm, touching the target (who must be willing) and spending 15 motes of Peripheral Essence, 1 Willpower and 1 experience point. The target instantly and visibly grows young again, becoming as healthy and attractive as he was when a young adult (18 years old for humans, proportionally younger for animals), though retaining all his skills and knowledge. The effect lasts for a single year; if it is not renewed at the end of the year, then the subject's lost years will be visited upon him once again. The legends of this Charm are generally not believed: Were it known that Exalts could actually perform such a deed, it is likely that many unscrupulous and powerful persons would be extremely interested.

OCCULT**POWER-DRAINING WHISPER**

Cost:	5 motes per turn
Duration:	Varies
Type:	Simple
Minimum Occult:	4
Minimum Essence:	5
Prerequisite Charms:	Spirit-Cutting Attack

By giving voice to the arcane patterns of this Charm, an Exalted can hamper an enemy's ability to use Essence. The character must be within a number of yards of the target equal to his Essence. The Solar's player and target's player must both make Will + Occult rolls: If the Solar's player scores more successes, then for the turn when this Charm is used and in every subsequent turn in which the character spends 5 motes of Essence, the chosen subject of the Charm must pay twice as much Essence to use any of his Charms or other Essence-fueled abilities. If the target scores more successes, then the Charm fails to function. While this Charm does not require continuous concentration by the Exalt, only the continued expenditure of Essence, and counts as the use of a simple Charm every turn, it will be nullified if the Solar using it is rendered unconscious or killed. This Charm may never be used as



part of a Combo, nor does it affect beings with an Essence equal to or greater than the character.

POWER-DISRUPTING BLOW

Cost: 7 motes of Essence,
1 temporary Willpower

Duration: Multiple Turns

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Occult: 6

Minimum Essence: 5

Prerequisite Charms: All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight, Power-Draining Whisper

With a barehanded blow, the character using this Charm makes it impossible for his target to make any directed use of Essence for that turn and, potentially, for later turns. It must be used with a successful barehanded attack (which need do no damage but must penetrate the target's block or dodge) and is specifically permitted to be used as part of a Combo with Charms of other Abilities. The character may maintain the Charm as long as she continues to spend 10 motes of Peripheral Essence and 1 permanent Willpower for each turn that it is in use. This count's as the character's Charm use for the turn, as long as she continues to spend 7 motes and 1 temporary Willpower per turn.

The target — whether he is an Exalt, a spirit, one of the Fair Folk or anything else — will be unable to use any Essence-driven powers and must react on a purely physical level. Note that creatures that are magically aflame or that have magical venom are not restricted by this Charm, as such prodigies are expressions of their fundamental beings, and this attack bars only the working of magic. Likewise, this Charm cannot stop Lunar shapeshifting or the display and use of anima banners. Should the Solar invoking the Charm be rendered unconscious or killed, the magic is broken. It is whispered that there are more powerful versions of this Charm, which can suppress the powers of an Exalted for days, years or permanently, but if so, they are still not yet rediscovered.

SPIRIT-WARDING BAN

Cost: 15 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Occult: 6

Minimum Essence: 6

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Repelling Diagram

An Exalted can use this Charm to ward a building or room from unwanted entry by spirits. For the Charm to function, the area being warded must have a clearly defined main entrance and may not be larger than 20 yards square. The Exalt invokes the Charm by tracing his Caste Mark upon the main door of the area — or on the ground, if there is no actual door — to seal the entrance. Demate-

rialized spirits outside the warded area with permanent Essence lower than the character's may not use their Charms to affect those within the warded area, nor may they enter it unless invited by those within. Should they attempt to enter, whether or not they succeed, the mark upon the entrance blazes bright gold, visible to anybody nearby. This ward is a continuing effect that lasts until the room is broken or the ward is deliberately defiled by a being that is not a spirit.

NEW SPELLS

THE TERRESTRIAL CIRCLE

PEACOCK SHADOW EYES

Cost: 10 motes

The character's eyes glow with iridescent flame, holding the attention of a victim with whom he makes eye contact and compelling him to stunned silence. The character must meet his target's eyes, and the target's player must achieve a number of successes on an opposed Willpower + Occult roll equal to the sorcerer's permanent Essence. If the target loses, then he will fall into a light trance state and will be intensely suggestible, believing everything that he is told as the truth, even if he should be able to see that such is evidently not the case. If the target's player rolls a number of successes equal or greater than the sorcerer's Essence, then the target is unaffected by the spell, and it fades away. The spell will last for five minutes after the character breaks eye contact with the target. After it has finished, the target will still believe whatever he was told while the spell lasted to be the truth, unless there is clear evidence to the contrary.

WHISPER OF THE GRASSES

Cost: 15 motes

With this spell, a character can rouse the very plants and trees to speak to him and to answer his questions. A wind will rise and ruffle the leaves and grasses, till they whisper audibly. Plants speak Old Realm and no other tongues. They will be conscious of what has taken place around them, though only in vague visual terms: A bush could describe a warrior in red with a sword and a scar but would not necessarily be able to identify him as the character's enemy. The spell will last for the length of a conversation, however long that takes: During it, the character may question all the plants and trees within 10 yards of him. Grass will only remember a few days back, while herbs and small bushes may remember events from several weeks ago, and trees may remember happenings from years ago or even centuries. Bearing a naked flame near the plants during the conversation will make them extremely nervous, and they will constantly request that it be put out while they talk.

THE CELESTIAL CIRCLE

CURSE OF BETRAYAL

Cost: 30 motes

This malicious spell is used in moments of hatred, bitterness and spite. It causes the target to betray someone she loves, either by action or inaction. It must be cast during the hours of darkness. The ritual involves two hours of chanting, the shedding of blood and the speaking of the target's name. At that moment, the sorcerer's player makes a Willpower + Occult roll and totals the number of successes he achieves. For each 5 additional motes of Essence he spends, he may add another die to the pool. If the sorcerer achieves at least one success, at that moment, wherever she may be, the target of the spell will hear the sorcerer speak her name in tones of rage and hatred.

The effects are not immediate and may be delayed for days — or even years. However, when the targeted character is next in a position involving the safety of someone whom she loves or whom she is honor-bound to obey, the curse will attempt to work. The target's player must make a Willpower + Conviction roll and compare the total to the number of successes achieved earlier by the sorcerer. If she gains more successes or an equal number, then the curse fails, and a distant scream will echo in the sorcerer's ears as it dissipates. Should the target gain fewer successes than the sorcerer, then the curse will affect her and will blind or deafen her at some critical moment, causing her to betray her lord or loved one. Battle orders may be misheard, the identity of another combatant may be tragically mistaken, or a plea for help may go unnoticed. Whatever the case, terrible tragedy for the loved one will result.

HIDDEN JUDGES OF THE SECRET FLAME

Cost: 30 motes

With this spell, an Exalt can invoke the attention of one of the seven Hidden Judges of the Secret Flame, mysterious spirits who are said to attend each Calibration and prevent open strife among the powers of the year. One may be invoked to guard a place (which it will do until the next Calibration) or to hunt down an enemy. However, a Hidden Judge will not pursue someone who is innocent by its definitions — the target must have offended against divine law in some way or broken a bargain with a spirit. (Attacking a Solar does not count as an offense against divine law!)

As with the summoning of demons, this spell requires a complex ritual that must be begun at dawn and finished at sunset but can be cast at any time of the year except for Calibration. No contest is required between the sorcerer and the Hidden Judge: If the sorcerer requests one of the above services, the Judge will do as required without argument. Requesting any other service from the Judge involves a Willpower + Essence contest between the



sorcerer and the Judge: Should the sorcerer fail, the Judge will strike at him once with his sword before vanishing.

The Hidden Judges manifest as beings with the bodies and stature of tall men, draped in long, hooded dark cloaks that leave a trail of charred dust behind. Only their hands and forearms are visible, bones blackened like charred skeletons. Those who have dared to look at their faces have declared that the Hidden Judges have no heads, only a single iridescent blue flame, which burns continually in the shadow of their hoods. Each Hidden Judge bears a great two-handed sword. Although the Hidden Judges are not known by name, their weapons each have a particular name, which must be used when summoning one of the spirits. Known names of the swords include Hekateron, Amantythae, Sebelle, Kasimodente and Pheberester. A Hidden Judge may only be wounded by a blade that has been dipped in the blood of one who has never broken the laws of Heaven or by a magical weapon such as a daiklave or powerbow.

HIDDEN JUDGE

Nature:	Judge
Attributes:	Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Charisma 0, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0, Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4
Virtues:	Compassion 1, Conviction 5, Temperance 4, Valor 4
Abilities:	Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Endurance 4, Linguistics 5, Lore 5, Melee 5 (Sword +1), Occult 5, Presence 5, Resistance 3
Backgrounds:	Allies 5 (Other Judges), Contacts 5 (Court of Seasons), Influence 3, Resources 3
Charms:	Essence Bite, Geas, Imprecation, Instill Obedience, Landscape Travel, Malediction, Materialize, Principle of Motion, Scourge, Tiny Damnation

Cost To Materialize: 50

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Claw: Speed 7 Accuracy 7 Damage 6L Defense 7

Sword: Speed 9 Accuracy 13 Damage 9L Defense 12

Dodge Pool: 7 Soak: 9L/10B (Enchanted cloak, 6L/6B)

Willpower: 9 Health Levels: -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/ Incap

Essence: 5 Essence Pool: 100

Other Notes: None

SHOUT OF TURMOIL

Cost: 25 motes

When the Exalt is done gathering the Essence for this spell, she takes a deep breath and shouts the 11 syllables of this spell in a voice that can be heard for a mile around. A

buzz of aggressive confusion immediately overtakes the area around him, affecting all except those who had their ears covered. The players of all those affected must make an immediate reflexive roll of their characters' Willpower against a difficulty equal to the sorcerer's Essence. Those whose players fail the roll will instantly begin to argue with the nearest convenient target and may even begin to fight if they have weapons convenient to hand. Old quarrels are exacerbated, and new annoyances promptly shift from being minor inconveniences to full grievances. Mothers within earshot shake their wailing babies, children tussle, workers brawl, and soldiers turn their weapons on each other. This spell is hard to shake off, once it has affected a target. For each subsequent minute, the players of all those affected should continue to roll their characters' Willpower: Once they accumulate more successes than the sorcerer's Peripheral Essence, the spell is lifted for their characters, and they may act freely. Note that the sorcerer himself may be a target for those enraged by the spell unless he quickly removes himself from the vicinity.

THE SOLAR CIRCLE

ATROCIOUS FIRE TRANSFORMATION

Cost: 35 motes

With this puissant spell, one of the Exalted can turn a large body of water into pure fire that requires no fuel in order to remain alight and will flow and move as did the water but burns with the heat of normal flame. If he works this spell upon a fountain, the fire will spray in all directions. If a river is transformed, then the fire rushes downstream, but also continues to transmute water at the point of invocation for the duration of the spell. The flames will not be affected by any water that touches them, but will actually float on its surface, like oil upon normal water. The flames burn like the living fires of Hesiesh himself, doing six levels of aggravated damage per turn to all those struck by them, soaked as normal for damage of that type. The spell will change a body of water up to the size of a small lake or medium-sized river, and works upon magically created water as well as on the normal element. The spell lasts for a number of hours equal to the character's Essence, after which point, all the flames return to water. The caster himself is immune to the flames, as are his personal belongings, and he may freely wade through them without coming to harm.

EVOCATION FROM THE MIRROR

Cost: 40 motes

This spell permits an Exalted to call forth the mirror image of another person and to imprison the original within the mirror. To do this, he must be in the presence of his target, and there must also be a mirror of some shape or size within 10 yards. Both the player of the sorcerer and the player of his victim make reflexive opposed Willpower

+ Essence rolls. The victim must be conscious and able to see the mirror but may be drugged or otherwise bespelled. If the sorcerer fails, then the mirror explodes into a hundred pieces, and the sorcerer's player suffers a penalty of -2 to all Mental and Willpower rolls for the next 24 hours, due to the sorcerous backlash. If the sorcerer and the target score an equal number of successes, then the mirror shatters, but there is no other reaction. If the sorcerer scores more successes than the target, then the target is trapped inside the mirror.

The victim's mirror reflection has the same physical abilities, Charms, items and so forth as the victim but is a complete moral opposite. She is as intelligent as the victim and will act as her morals dictate — and to prevent herself from being returned to the mirror. She is also the sorcerer's willing slave and will do exactly as the magician commands. The victim herself is trapped in the mirror world, which is a shadowy reflection of the real world and only peopled by others trapped like her. Whenever her escaped reflection is mirrored by some surface (whether natural, such as a pool of water, or unnatural, such as a mirror), she is able to look out into the real world through the same mirror. The victim is not obliged to follow her reflection's movements — she can wave her hands, mouth appeals for help and so on. For this reason, most escaped reflections tend to avoid mirrors at all costs. The only known way to break this spell is to force the escaped reflection to touch the real victim, by touching a reflective surface. If this is done, then the two will resume their proper places.

ENCHANTED ITEMS

HEARTHSTONES

HEARTHSTONES OF AIR:

MIND-CLEANSING GEM (MANSE ••)

This blue topaz is the pale shade of dawn before the sun has fully risen and a precise sphere. Its clarifying influence assists the wearer in casting off attempts by others to dominate or influence his mind. Any wearer gains an extra two dice to all contests involving Willpower. In addition, if the Hearthstone is touched to someone who is under sorcerous or Charm-induced mental influence, it allows the target's player to attempt to free his character by rolling a reflexive opposed Willpower test. If the target's player rolls fewer successes, nothing changes, but if he rolls an equal or greater number of successes, the target is freed from all mental influences.

PURIFYING MERCY STONE (MANSE ••)

This Hearthstone makes the air pure and sweet for its wearer, so that he will never suffer from the effects of smoke, airborne gases, poisonous vapors or even the stench



FORGOTTEN

of a dunghill. Its effects extend for five feet around him in a sphere, so those close to him may also be protected. Smoke and visible vapors can be seen to ebb and curdle around the boundaries of the sphere, leaving the Exalt standing in clear, fresh air. The stone itself is heavy rock quartz, thick and limpid as the purest spring water.

HEARTHSTONES OF EARTH:

GEM OF DEEP MEDITATION (MANSE •)

This Hearthstone is a translucent, milky moonstone, surprisingly heavy for its small size. Its owner will find it comforting and cleansing to his mind to meditate on it and will gain focus and concentration merely by possessing it. Any character owning one reduces the difficulty of all Willpower rolls by 2, to a minimum of difficulty 1.

STONE OF FINAL REST (MANSE ••••)

This Hearthstone is a polished onyx stone the size of a child's fist, with odd glints of light at the heart. It has the power of sanctifying the tombs of the dead and bring rest to the souls of the departed. No grave within half a mile of the Manse that produced this Hearthstone may be polluted by necromancy: Skeletons and zombies may not be raised, and ghosts may not be called forth. In addition, the touch of a bearer of this Hearthstone causes zombies and other physical creations of necromancy to lose their semblance of life and return to their proper state of death. While ghosts can force themselves to approach the wearer, they take one health level of aggravated damage for each turn that they are within five yards of him. Ghosts see the Hearthstone as a blazing cold diamond, and though they are unaffected, Deathlords and deathknights perceive its light as sharp and hurtful. Ghosts will be aware of its presence from 100 yards away, Abyssals from as many leagues away as they have dots of permanent Essence, and Deathlords from 10 leagues away. Deathlords will also know if such a Hearthstone crosses the border of a shadowland they control and can roughly sense its location. This Hearthstone does not function in the Underworld. If in the shadowlands, it does not affect ghosts and only does one level of aggravated damage per turn when touched against physical undead. It will also be blindingly perceptible to all natives of the shadowlands, irritating and disturbing the magical currents for up to a league's distance.

HEARTHSTONES OF FIRE:

BLOODY-EYED BURNING JEWEL (MANSE ••••)

This Hearthstone appears to be a particularly brilliant jacinth, with an inner core of deep red. Anybody attuned to it can, at will, summon fire and smite down enemies merely with her gaze. Her eyes burn deep red, and fire spears from them to strike targets like a hammer. Each turn

that she looks at someone within 20 yards, she can inflict a number of dice of lethal damage equal to her permanent Essence. This ability requires full concentration and may not be used while making other attacks or taking other actions. The target may dodge the fiery assault as if it were a normal attack but may not parry it; armor will only soak it if it is composed of one of the Five Magical Materials. It is clear to the victim of the attack who is damaging him, assuming the attacker is visible.

FIREBIRD GEM (MANSE •••••)

The bearer of this Hearthstone may cast off human form entirely and physically transform herself into a bird of living fire, capable of flying hundreds of leagues at incredible speed. All objects that she is wearing, including weapons, are included in the transformation, but steeds or friends must be left behind. The bird of fire can travel a hundred leagues in an hour, but the character must return to her natural form at midday or midnight, whichever comes first, and rest for at least an hour before continuing. She will feel hunger and exhaustion from the flight as though she had spent the last span of hours running hard. The Exalt can set fire to flammable objects in the flaming bird form, and all attacks on others inflict an additional +2 damage beyond normal for hand-to-hand and do lethal rather than bashing damage. Any weapons, armor or shield that she may have had in her human form become part of the flames of her wings and may not be used in combat. The touch of any liquid returns the character to her normal form. This Hearthstone is a ruby as wide across as a woman's palm, with a flickering golden light at the center.

HEARTHSTONES OF WATER:

BLOOD-PURIFYING GEM (MANSE ••)

This Hearthstone looks to be a large amethyst, dark purple and as richly colored as wine. The wearer will never be affected by intoxication: He can swill down wine like water and can also take other recreational drugs without being affected by them. This gem also protects from active non-magical poisons, causing them to have no effect. Also, the Exalt gains no particular benefit from the wine or drugs, other than enjoying its taste: He will not become euphoric or find that they relieve any tension. Magical poisons or Charms that involve poison will cause damage as normal.

FOUNTAIN-SUMMONING STONE (MANSE ••)

The possessor of this Hearthstone can call water from the earth, wherever he may be, summoning a fresh spring to the surface of the land — even in the heart of the desert. He need merely stamp his foot against the soil or rock, or against paving if it lies atop the earth without intervening cellars or tunnels, and water will gush out freely. The water

produced will be fresh, sweet and drinkable. In the heart of the desert, such a spring will last for a few hours. In more temperate climes, it may endure for a month. This Hearthstone will not function on a magical surface or an enchanted floor. The stone itself is a dark oval emerald, with a cold and faintly moist texture.

HEARTHSTONES OF WOOD:

JEWEL OF YOUTHFUL SUPPLENESS (MANSE ••)

This stone is a sparkling peridot, its edges scalloped and razor-sharp. The bearer of this Hearthstone becomes as flexible and supple as a young sapling in spring. She gains a bonus of two dice to all Athletics rolls. In addition, the character is capable of dislocating and relocating her joints at will, without taking any damage for doing so, which may lower the difficulty of Larceny rolls to escape bondage, depending on how the character is restrained.

MAGICAL ARTIFACTS

BRACER OF THE HAWK (ARTIFACT ••)

This bracer — they are rarely found in pairs, though it has occasionally been known to happen — has a creature of pure Essence (like a cherub) in the shape of a hawk woven into its metal, which can be summoned and commanded to serve the owner. The bracer of the hawk appears to be a normal steel bracer of the highest quality, with the design of a screaming bird of prey worked into it in one of the Five Magical Materials. The owner must commit 2 motes of Essence to the bracer to attune it to himself. Once that is done, he need merely concentrate on the bracer and command the hawk to emerge.

The hawk spirit takes its body from the metals of the bracer: It is made of steel, with great wings edged with orichalcum, moonsilver, jade, starmetal or soulsteel. Use the attributes of a strix, page 317 of the main rulebook, with a one-meter wingspan and with a soak of 8L/12B. The magical bird has a high intelligence, though not quite at the human level, and is capable of obeying detailed orders. If it returns safely to the owner, then it can reenter the bracer: however, if it is slain outside the bracer, then the bracer becomes no more than a useful piece of armor, and the hawk spirit is lost forever.

The bracer of the hawk has a setting for a single Hearthstone.

WHISTLE OF GHOST SUMMONING (ARTIFACT ••)

This whistle of silver and chased ivory (or some rarer bone) can be blown to summon local ghosts and require their presence. It can only be blown between the hours of sunset and dawn: If someone attempts to sound it during the day, it is totally silent. If it is blown once during the hours of darkness, it gives a delicate thin tone, signaling to all ghosts within a league's radius that the holder of the whistle

requests their presence. While the ghosts are not obliged to attend, many will come out of curiosity or respect for the holder of the whistle. If it is blown a second time the same night, then the tone is a peremptory note like a military fife, signaling that the presence of all ghosts within a league is urgently required. This sound is uncomfortable to ghosts, and while it may draw their attention, it may also cause them to arrive in a less than friendly mood.

If it is blown a third time that night, it will shudder and quake in the hand of the bearer, then give a high pealing note like the sound of a trumpet of ice and steel that causes active pain to all ghosts within a league. This will usually bring any ghosts that have not already arrived, though they will be less than pleased. If used thrice in a night, then the whistle may not be sounded again for another 10 days. The whistle cannot break a binding that holds a ghost in a particular location. As the whistle confers no protection against the attacks of ghosts, the holder may wish to have some form of warding ready. Abyssal Exalted greatly prize such whistles and will do much to obtain them.

SEED OF THE IMMACULATE BLOOD (ARTIFACT ••, ••• FOR RED SEEDS)


When Sextes Jylis, the Immaculate of Wood, was walking the Realm and replanting the stricken forests, he is said to have stepped upon the discarded daiklave of an Anathema. Twisted by the malice of its departed owner, it cut his foot to the bone, and he shed three drops of blood, which gave birth to a new variety of fern. Even today, the seeds of this fern are sought after by sorcerers and savants who know its rare properties.

If a seed of the immaculate blood is sown and carefully tended, it will grow into a pale fern that seeds twice a year, in spring and in autumn. These seeds are dull green and sterile but may be compounded to create an ointment that restores five health levels when applied, even if the damage is aggravated. Once a century, on the last day of Calibration, the fern will give an out-of-season scarlet seed, which may be replanted to grow another fern with the same properties. This scarlet seed may also be dried and ground up with the seeds of 25 other types of plants. This process produces a small ball of dark thick sap, which smells of fresh woodlands. If this ball of sap is planted in fresh earth, a forest composed of all the plants that had their seeds mingled together will spring up instantly for a half-mile around the spot. Buildings will be toppled or shattered, humans and animals will be thrown aside, and elementals of Wood will flock to the spot, drawn by the natural power of their element.

CUP OF FLOWING BLOOD (ARTIFACT •••)

The Cup of Flowing Blood is a powerful tool of healing — but it is also a treasure much desired by the Abyssal Exalted, as it is a way for one being to give her very life's blood to another. The Cup of Flowing Blood is a chalice of





delicately carved ebony, patterned with scenes of Solars from the First Age fighting the foes of the Old Realm. When it is held by a person who truly wishes to give of herself for another's sake, it slowly begins to fill with dark blood, and as it does, the holder loses one health level per turn (which cannot be soaked). The holder may, at any time, stop the process. If the blood in the cup is then given to a wounded person to drink, he will recover one health level per turn as he drinks, until all of the blood in the cup is consumed. It is possible for a person to drain herself to unconsciousness and the verge of death while trying to heal others with the cup. Its location is currently unknown, though rumors put it in the private collection of the Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears, who permits her Abyssal Exalted to sanctify marriages with it.

EYE OF THE LIVING EARTH (ARTIFACT ●●●)

These large stones are occasionally quarried by the Mountain Folk from the roots of the Imperial Mountain. They are as large as a man's head, and while they are as clear and pure as a diamond, they constantly glow and sparkle with a hundred colors, emitting rays of light that bathe entire rooms in shifting hues. If such a stone is in any way chipped or carved or altered from its original rough state — other than by having extraneous matter cleaned away — then its power is lost. Earth elementals find the radiance of these stones to be euphoric and relaxing, and they will often throng to them, in order to bathe in the light.

However, the true power of this stone is as a scrying device. If an Exalted touches a diamond to it and anoints both the eye of the living earth and the diamond with a drop of his blood, he can later use the eye to scry upon wherever the diamond currently is. He will perceive the entire scene as though he were looking down from on high and can move around the eye to alter his perspective on events. This will only work with up to five diamonds at a time: If a sixth diamond is attuned, then the link to one of the others (the owner's choice which) is broken. It is said that the great jewel-crafter Madam Ismerel, one of the most prominent and feared Twilight Exalted of the First Age, was fond of presenting diamond necklaces and rings to those who dared not offend her by refusing them. While samples of her work have been found, from time to time, nobody has yet located her eye of the living earth — though many would be interested in doing so.

GHOST-SEEING BLINDFOLD (ARTIFACT ●●●)

This simple-seeming piece of cloth is a work of puissant magic, embroidered with sigils of power in centuries long past. It seems to casual observation to be merely a long scarf of white silk, with barely visible designs in the same color worked along its length. When it is bound over the eyes, its true power becomes manifest: It allows its wearer

to not only see normally, but also, to perceive dematerialized ghosts, spirits, dragon tracks and other flows of power, as with the Twilight Charm All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight. The blindfold is uncannily resistant to damage and will reweave itself if cut or burned: The only sure way to destroy it is to soak it in the blood of a blind person.

HONEY OF THE BEES OF ZARLATH (ARTIFACT ●●●)

This honey is taken from the bees that swarm in the gardens of Zarlath, long since lost to the ravages of the Wyld. Those who have read the ancient histories of the First Age know that those bees took the nectar from roses that only bloomed by sunlight and oleanders that only bloomed by moonlight. The honey that they stored in their hives gives speech to the dumb or surpassing eloquence to those born with speech (+3 to all Social Abilities for one hour). It can temper the finest of blades, giving them an edge of great quality. And it can also be used in the forging of strings for lyres and multichords.

Zarlath is hidden deep in the Wyld, protected by the automated defenses of long-dead Exalted, and the marble crumbles while the onyx tiles are grown over with moss. Once a year, the bees journey beyond its walls and through the Wyld to civilized lands, to gather nectar from sane flowers, before returning. If they are followed, they can lead the way to their hives, from which an Exalt might attempt to steal their honey. Many have attempted it, but few have returned.

MIRRORS OF ILLUSION-SHATTERING (ARTIFACT ●●●)

These two mirrors were crafted long ago by one of the greatest Twilight smiths, hammered out of moonsilver and faced with orichalcum, with the smith's own mon interlaced on the back with that of his Lunar lover. They are small things, the size of a woman's hand-mirror, and they would serve as such perfectly well. However, their true use is to penetrate illusions. Someone who looks into one of these mirrors will see the true images of all things reflected therein. Although Charms, glamours and other magical illusions will remain in force, the true identity of the person will be clearly visible in the reflection.

This mirror also has a more aggressive use. If the illusion-shielded person is forcibly presented with the mirror, so that she sees her own true reflection, the Charm or sorcery that she is using immediately shatters, leaving her obvious in her true nature. The mirrors were separated long ago when the smith and his lover were slain, but they have a tendency to turn up together or to find their way together. These artifacts do not affect shapeshifting, Lunar or otherwise, that physically changes the being, rather than changing what she seems or appears to be.

SCABBARD OF THE LIVING WEAPON (ARTIFACT ●●●)

This is an elegantly worked sheath of red dragonskin and orichalcum, sized to fit a daiklave or reaver daiklave. A

character must attune himself to it, requiring 5 motes of committed Essence. Once this is done, it will magically be precisely the right size for his daiklave, fitting it like a glove. Although it is an excellent scabbard — and will never need cleaning or mending — its true virtue lies in its protection of its owner. While the wearer's daiklave is sheathed, he is invulnerable to all non-magical damage: Weapons will turn against his skin, clubs and rocks will bounce off him, and fires will prove harmless to him. He can, however, be affected by magical weapons, Charms, attacks augmented by Charms, spells, glamour and similar directed uses of Essence. Once he draws his weapon, this protection is gone, and he may once again be harmed by non-magical means as well as by magical ones.

SORCERY-CAPTURING CORD (ARTIFACT ●●● FOR EMERALD, ●●●● FOR SAPPHIRE, ●●●●● FOR ADAMANT)

This short piece of rope, only a couple of yards long, is interwoven with threads of orichalcum and moonsilver, giving it an unusual weight and strength, though it is thin and flexible. There are three different variants of this cord: emerald, sapphire and adamant. The types can be told apart by an experienced eye or by a savant who knows the different weaves of the cords. One of the Exalted can use this cord to trap spells that have been cast at him and then release them later against his enemies. The user must stand in the path of the spell and loop the cord into a knot, focusing on his wish to capture the power of the sorcery. Assuming that the cord is of an equal or greater level of power to the spell (emerald for Terrestrial Circle, sapphire for Celestial Circle or adamant for Solar Circle), the spell will be safely captured, and the user will not be harmed by it. He may then release the spell at a time of his choosing by unknotting the cord while facing in the appropriate direction. Each cord can hold only three spells at most: There will simply not be enough rope left for a further knot. It is impossible to tell what spell is locked in a knot from inspection. If a cord is destroyed while still containing one or more spells, then they will be released and take full effect.

THE JACKAL'S SKULL (ARTIFACT ●●●●)

This skull is larger than that of any ordinary jackal. Legend has it that it belonged to one of the foremost Lunars of the First Age, who was slain while guarding the back of his Solar mate during the Usurpation. Wires of moonsilver link the jaw to the skull proper, and threads of moonsilver are laced over the ivory dome of the skull and

through the bone in an intricate web. Two great star rubies are set in the eye sockets, and they seem at times to glint as though something behind them were watching.

The skull has the peculiar property of being able to summon a group of dog spirits when commanded by the name of the ancient Lunar, exhaling them in a cloud of pale silver from between its jagged teeth. Five dog spirits emerge, each with a shadowy moon brand upon its forehead, and will faithfully serve the summoner until they are defeated by an enemy or commanded to return to the skull. The dog spirits have the statistics of omen dogs (main rulebook, p. 317) but with human intelligence and with the Charms Materialize and Principle of Motion. If one of them is slain, he can be summoned again after the next full moon. The dog spirits will be loyal to the summoner and may even regard him with friendship if treated well and not scorned.

The Jackals have Essence 3, Willpower 9, Valor 4 and all other Virtues at 2. They have 89 temporary Essence, and it costs them 32 motes to materialize.

One taboo surrounds the use of the Jackal's Skull. If the dog spirits are ever commanded to hunt down a pair of true lovers or to kill them, then the skull will open its jaws and give a yammering howl. The dog spirits will attempt to seize the skull, wherever it may be, and dematerialize, taking it with them. If they should somehow be prevented in doing so, they will attempt to hunt down and slay their previous summoner, returning at every full moon if killed, until either they have fled with the Jackal's Skull or the summoner is dead.

VEIL THAT HOLDS BACK TIME (ARTIFACT ●●●●)

This fragile length of gossamer, spun and woven by craftsmen of the First Age, has the rare property of being able to suspend the flow of time. It is diaphanous and may easily be seen through. If it is placed over an unmoving person or item, then the subject will remain in a state of suspended animation or preservation, neither aging nor decaying. The veil will not work on a conscious person. An unconscious person will remain in that state and will be unable to wake or to remove the veil. If the veil is lifted away from the subject or disturbed or damaged in any way, then the flow of time will at once resume. The veil is extremely fragile and must be handled with care. Few in the current age would have any knowledge of how to reweave or mend it.





APPENDIX I

SIGNATURE CHARACTERS

The Copper Spiders are the clever hands of the Unconquered Sun. From their brilliant and incisive minds spring countless stratagems and sorceries, prodigies of artifice and miracles of learning. Such is the trade and the genius of the Twilight Castes, that they should never lack for cleverness. As allies, they are peerless thinkers, masterful schemers and possessed with a universal aptitude for magic of the most powerful sort. As enemies, they are impossible, anticipating their foes' every reaction and then striking well-prepared blows with the incredible

force that earned them their nicknames of "Solar Lightning" and "Arrows of Heaven."

This book presents the stories of five young Descending Suns, Exalted only recently. They have walked the earth only in the days since the disappearance of the Empress and are thus detailed as starting-character Exalts. They can be played as characters, they can serve as inspiration for player-created characters, or they can serve as ready-made Storyteller characters, either at the offered power level or, with added experience points, as more experienced Solars.

SAYN

Quote: *Our task is to sweep away the lies of the past, and to craft a new future, where the humans who we protect can walk in truth and learning. All things must be in measure.*

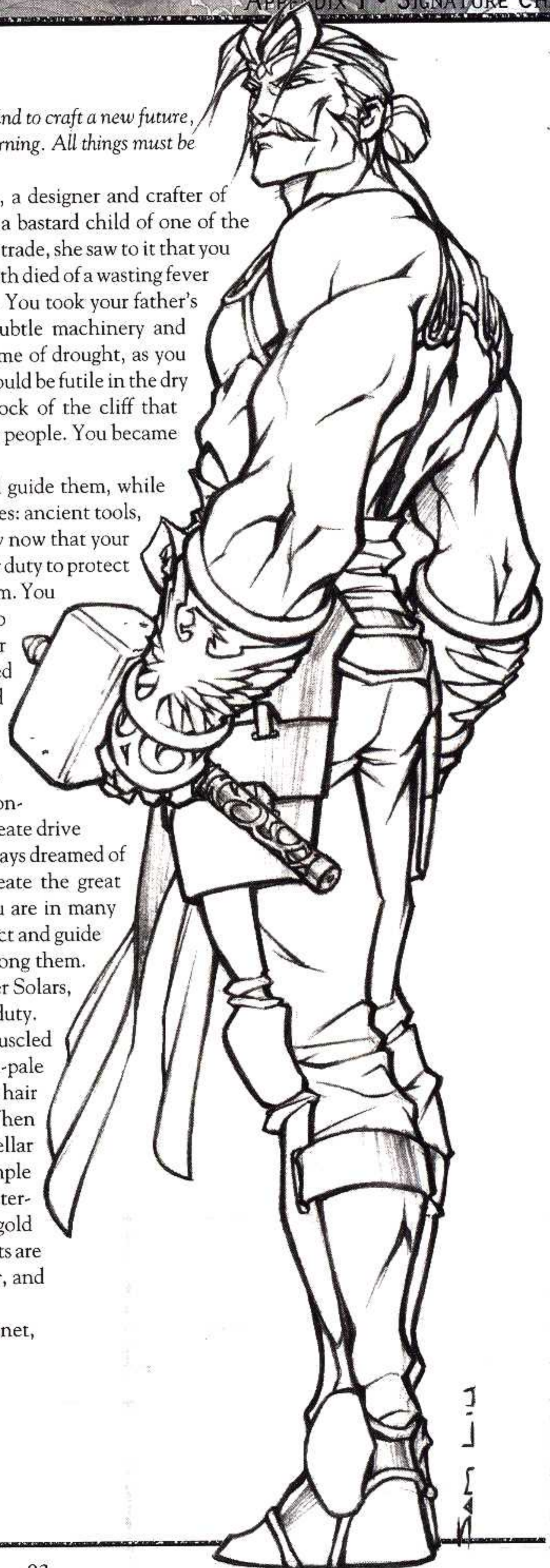
Prelude: Once you were a smith and a merchant, a designer and crafter of weapons. Your mother had been an educated woman, a bastard child of one of the Dragon-Blooded, and though you followed your father's trade, she saw to it that you learned to read and write and to think and plan. They both died of a wasting fever when you were barely old enough to manage the forge. You took your father's place for the village but dreamed of crafting more subtle machinery and complex tools. Your Exaltation came upon you in a time of drought, as you stood at your anvil, hammering out ploughshares that would be futile in the dry land. With a stroke of your hammer, you split the rock of the cliff that overlooked the village and brought forth water for your people. You became their protector, and they are your charge.

Since then, you have done your best to guard and guide them, while working on projects based on vaguely glimpsed memories: ancient tools, old weapons, items of orichalcum and magic. You know now that your mother's tales of the Anathema were mistaken. It is your duty to protect the humans around you, just as it is your right to rule them. You have made contact with other Solars and are willing to journey with them, particularly in quest of new metals or tools, as long as you do not leave your people unprotected for too long. While you yearn for one of the fabled Manses, leaving your old home for good would mean leaving the villagers unprotected in an increasingly dangerous world. You seek an answer to this dilemma.

Roleplaying Hints: You believe in hard work, responsibility and the truth. Your curiosity and your urge to create drive you on to fashion the works of art and craft that you always dreamed of making. With hammer and anvil, you strive to recreate the great weapons and magical devices of old. You feel that you are in many ways separate from humanity now: It's your job to protect and guide them, but not to befriend them or take lovers from among them. That was the corruption that led to the fall of the earlier Solars, centuries ago. You have sworn to keep to the path of duty.

Image: Sayn is a tall man in his early 40s, well-muscled from the forge, with the coffee-colored skin and peach-pale hair of a man from the Scavenger Lands. He wears his hair tied back and held off his face by a black iron coronet. When preparing for battle, he wears well-made black lamellar armor with gold trimmings, but otherwise, he dons a simple linen shirt and breeches for work at the forge or administering his village. He always wears a pair of steel-and-gold bracers embossed with screaming hawks. His movements are firm and confident, backed by the knowledge of power, and his voice is a level, firm bass.

Equipment: Large hammer, lamellar armor, coronet, bracers of the hawk, smithy tools, raw metal supplies



Sayn



NAME: SAYN
 PLAYER: _____
 CASTE: TWILIGHT

CONCEPT: SMITH
 NATURE: PARAGON
 ANIMA: _____

ATTRIBUTES

STRENGTH _____ ●●●●○ CHARISMA _____ ●●○○○ PERCEPTION _____ ●●●○○
 DEXTERITY _____ ●●●●○ MANIPULATION _____ ●●●○○ INTELLIGENCE _____ ●●●○○
 STAMINA _____ ●●●○○ APPEARANCE _____ ●●○○○ WITS _____ ●●●○○

ABILITIES

DAWN		ZENITH		TWILIGHT	
<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHERY _____	○○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENDURANCE _____	●●●○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CRAFTS _____	●●●○○
<input type="checkbox"/> BRAWL _____	●●●○○	<input type="checkbox"/> PERFORMANCE _____	○○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INVESTIGATION _____	●○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> MARTIAL ARTS _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> PRESENCE _____	●●○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LORE _____	●●○○○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MELEE _____	●●●○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RESISTANCE _____	●●●○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDICINE _____	●○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> THROWN _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> SURVIVAL _____	○○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCULT _____	●●●○○
NIGHT		ECLIPSE		SPECIALTIES	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ATHLETICS _____	●○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> BUREAUCRACY _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	○○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> AWARENESS _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> LINGUISTICS _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	○○○○○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DODGE _____	●●○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> RIDE _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	○○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> LARCENY _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> SAIL _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	○○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> STEALTH _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIALIZE _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS

ALLIES (SOLAR FRIEND) ●○○○○
 CONTACTS (LOCAL VILLAGES) ●●○○○
 FOLLOWERS ●●●○○
 RESOURCES ●○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○

CHARMS

Name	Cost	Name	Cost
SPIRIT DETECTING GLANCE	3M	TERRESTRIAL-CIRCLE	1W+
SPIRIT CUTTING ATTACK	2M	SORCERY	
EXCELLENT STRIKE	1 PER 1	EMERALD COUNTERMAGIC	10/20
FLAWLESS HANDIWORK	3M PER	DEATH OF OBSIDIAN	15
METHOD		BUTTERFLIES	
OBJECT-STRENGTHENING	6M	INVULNERABLE SKIN	20
TOUCH		OF BRONZE	
10 MAGISTRATE EYES	3M		
INTEGRITY-PROTECTNG	5M, 1W		

WEAPONS

EXCEPTIONAL HAMMER
 SPD 5 ACC 10 DMG 9L PRY 9

WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

VIRTUES

COMPASSION	TEMPERANCE
●○○○○	●●○○○
□□□□□	□□□□□
CONVICTION	VALOR
●●●○○	●●●○○
□□□□□	□□□□□

ANIMA

HEALTH

SOAK
 B 11 L 7 A 6
 -2 MOBILITY PENALTY

ESSENCE

● ● ● ○ ○ ○
 PERSONAL 15 | _____
 PERIPHERAL 36 | _____
 COMMITTED _____

LIMIT BREAK

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

-0	□ ■ ■ ■ ■
-1	□ □ ■ ■ ■
-2	□ □ ■ ■ ■
	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
-4	□
INCAPACITATED	□

VIRTUE FLAW

BERSERK
 ANGER

EXPERIENCE

FEHIM OF THE THREE DEVILS GANG

Quote: *As the sun brings light into the darkness, so shall I come unto Creation as avatar of the Unconquered Sun.*

Prelude: You were born into the nobility of Yane and cast aside with your common-born mother when your father grew bored of her. Life in the squalid streets stole your mother's life, but you were a survivor. A hard childhood taught you when to fight and when to run away and that bloody battles lead to a short life. Conmen and temple prostitutes taught you how to winnow truth from lies.

The Three Devils gang rules the underworld of back alleys and the shadows beneath the high towers of the nobility. Using the false courtesies of your noble father, your quick blade and quicker mind, you made a place for yourself in their organization. Still young, you rose to become the Top Man's left hand — the one that ferreted out disloyalty or treachery in the gang that had become your surrogate family.

You tracked down turncoats and spies, informants and witnesses; the Top Man trusted you enough to introduce you to the Three Devils' secret weapon. Imialek Anshar — an outcaste Dragon-Blood — taught you the secrets of simple magic, even as she mocked your mortal blood. You learned how curses could be sharper than knives and more subtle than poison. You mastered the arts of talismans, along with the patient work of poisons. But everything you learned, everything you tried, Imialek could surpass with a shrug and a wave of her hand. She teased you with glimpses of the world of the Exalted, and you ached with envy.

In your 20th summer, the Three Devils gang was betrayed by the Top Man's favorite lieutenant and destroyed by the Yane city guard. Your small magics were no match for the Dragon-Blooded warrior leading the attack. Near death, you fled the battle and took refuge in the temple of the Eternal Eye. By ancient tradition, the guards of Yane will not violate temple sanctuary — even such a poor temple as the Eternal Eye.

Fever took you and nearly claimed your life. While the temple servants tended you and sang to the old and forgotten god of the Eternal Eye, your meaningless fever dreams changed. Their god was a corrupted memory of the Unconquered Sun, and you woke with his mark on your forehead.

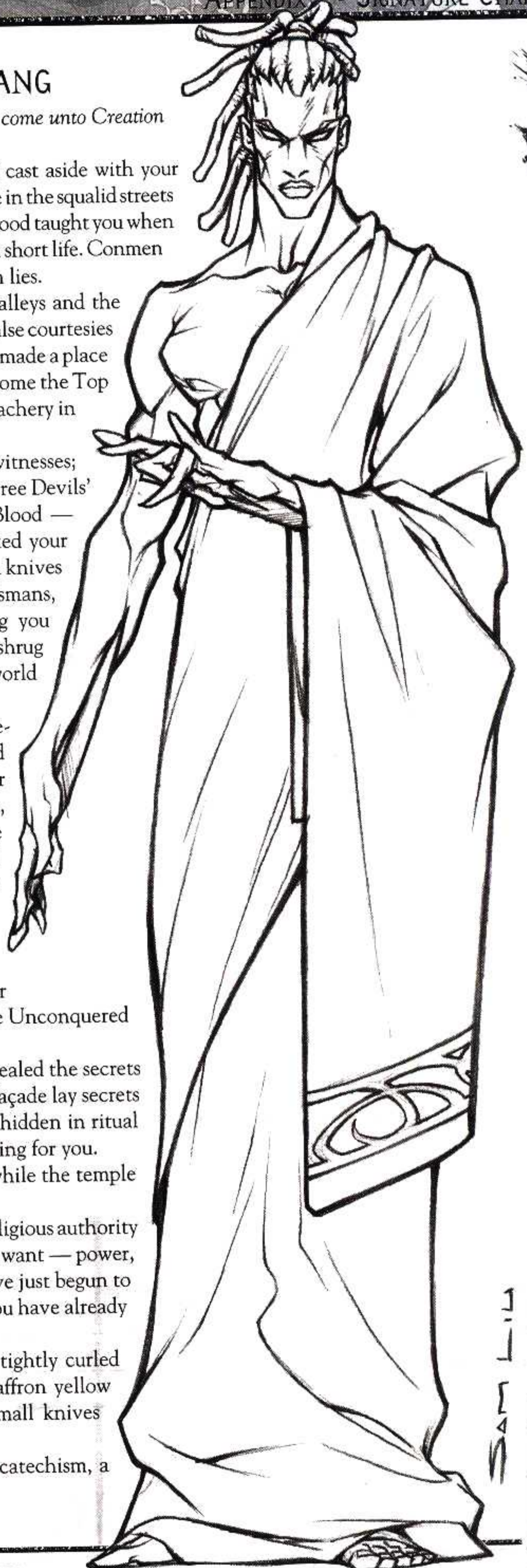
The temple took you as an avatar of their god and revealed the secrets they had held for so long. Behind the temple's crumbling façade lay secrets hidden since the fall of the Old Realm. Old powers were hidden in ritual garment; Twilight knowledge had been preserved — waiting for you.

Long weeks of healing gave way to months of study while the temple revered you as the incarnation of their god.

Roleplaying Hints: You are thrust into a position of religious authority by your worshipers, but you yourself don't know what you want — power, revenge, veneration or simply time to be yourself. You have just begun to master the secrets hidden away here in your temple, but you have already surpassed any dreams of Dragon-Blooded glory.

Image: Fehim is thin and dark-skinned, with wild, tightly curled hair. He has one eye and wears a sari like garment of saffron yellow embroidered with symbols, sandals and carries many small knives secreted about his person.

Equipment: Six throwing knives, books of ancient catechism, a crumbling cult and a head full of temptation



FEHIM



NAME: FEHIM
 PLAYER: _____
 CASTE: TWILIGHT

CONCEPT: AVATAR
 NATURE: CONNIVER
 ANIMA: _____

ATTRIBUTES

STRENGTH _____ ●●●○○○ CHARISMA _____ ●●○○○○ PERCEPTION _____ ●●●○○○
 DEXTERITY _____ ●●●○○○ MANIPULATION _____ ●●●○○○ INTELLIGENCE _____ ●●●○○○
 STAMINA _____ ●●○○○○ APPEARANCE _____ ●●○○○○ WITS _____ ●●●○○○

ABILITIES

DAWN		ZENITH		TWILIGHT	
<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHERY _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> ENDURANCE _____	●○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CRAFTS _____	●●○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> BRAWL _____	●○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> PERFORMANCE _____	●●○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INVESTIGATION _____	●●●○○
<input type="checkbox"/> MARTIAL ARTS _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> PRESENCE _____	●●○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LORE _____	●●○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> MELEE _____	●○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> RESISTANCE _____	○○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDICINE _____	●○○○○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> THROWN _____	●●○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> SURVIVAL _____	●○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCULT _____	●●○○○
NIGHT		ECLIPSE		SPECIALTIES	
<input type="checkbox"/> ATHLETICS _____	○○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUREAUCRACY _____	●●○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	○○○○○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AWARENESS _____	●○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> LINGUISTICS _____	●○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	○○○○○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DODGE _____	●●○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> RIDE _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	○○○○○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LARCENY _____	●○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> SAIL _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	○○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> STEALTH _____	●○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIALIZE _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS		CHARMS	
ARTIFACT _____	●●○○○	Name	Cost
CONTACTS _____	●●○○○	OX-BODY TECHNIQUE _____	SPEC
FOLLOWERS _____	●●○○○	PERCISION OF THE _____	1 PER
INFLUENCE _____	●○○○○	STRIKING RAPTOR _____	
_____	○○○○○	JOINT-WOUNDING _____	3M
_____	○○○○○	ATTACK _____	
_____	○○○○○	REED IN THE WIND _____	1PER2
_____	○○○○○	RESPECT-COMMANDING _____	5M
_____	○○○○○	ATTITUDE _____	
_____	○○○○○	10 MAGISTRATES' EYES _____	3M
		Name	Cost
		BODY-MENDING _____	10M
		MEDITATION _____	
		TERRESTRIAL CIRCLE _____	1W+
		COMMANDING PRESENCE _____	10
		OF FLAME _____	
		DEMON OF THE _____	20M
		FIRST CIRCLE _____	

WEAPONS

EXCEPTIONAL POISON SWORD
 SPD 4 ACC 7 DMG 6L+ PRY 6
 THROWN KNIFE
 SPD 8 ACC 6 DMG 5L

ANIMA

LIMIT BREAK

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

VIRTUE FLAW

DELIBERATE _____
 CRUELTY _____

WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

HEALTH

SOAK
 B 6 L 4 A 3

-0	□ ■ ■ ■ ■
-1	□ □ □ ■ ■
-2	□ □ ■ ■ ■
	□ □ ■ ■ ■
-4	□
INCAPACITATED	□

VIRTUES

COMPASSION	TEMPERANCE
● ○ ○ ○ ○	● ● ● ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □
CONVICTION	VALOR
● ● ● ○ ○	● ● ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □

ESSENCE

● ● ● ○ ○ ○
 PERSONAL 14 | _____
 PERIPHERAL 35 | _____
 COMMITTED _____

EXPERIENCE

JAY SELAK-AMU, WITCH OF THE WINDWARD ISLE

Quote: *The storm is coming, but it is my duty. I will come with you and see what can be done for your people.*

Prelude: Orphans are not welcome on the harsh Windward Isle, and when your parents died in the white plague, you were nearly given to the Sea. You were saved by the witch of the isle, who sensed some strange potential in your infant self. She took you in and raised you as something between a slave and her heir to power. As you cooked and cleaned, fished and mended, you also learned seal-calling songs and how to calm the waves.

You knew no other world but that of the small islands, your ill-tempered guardian and the fiercely independent fisherfolk and raiders of the Western islands. You learned how to deliver babies, how to make fish poisons, how to hunt whales and how to predict the weather. When you were old enough, you married a blue-skinned girl from your old village. The old witch died, and you inherited her far-seeing boat and her duties; now you were the one the villagers turned to for healing, hope and protection.

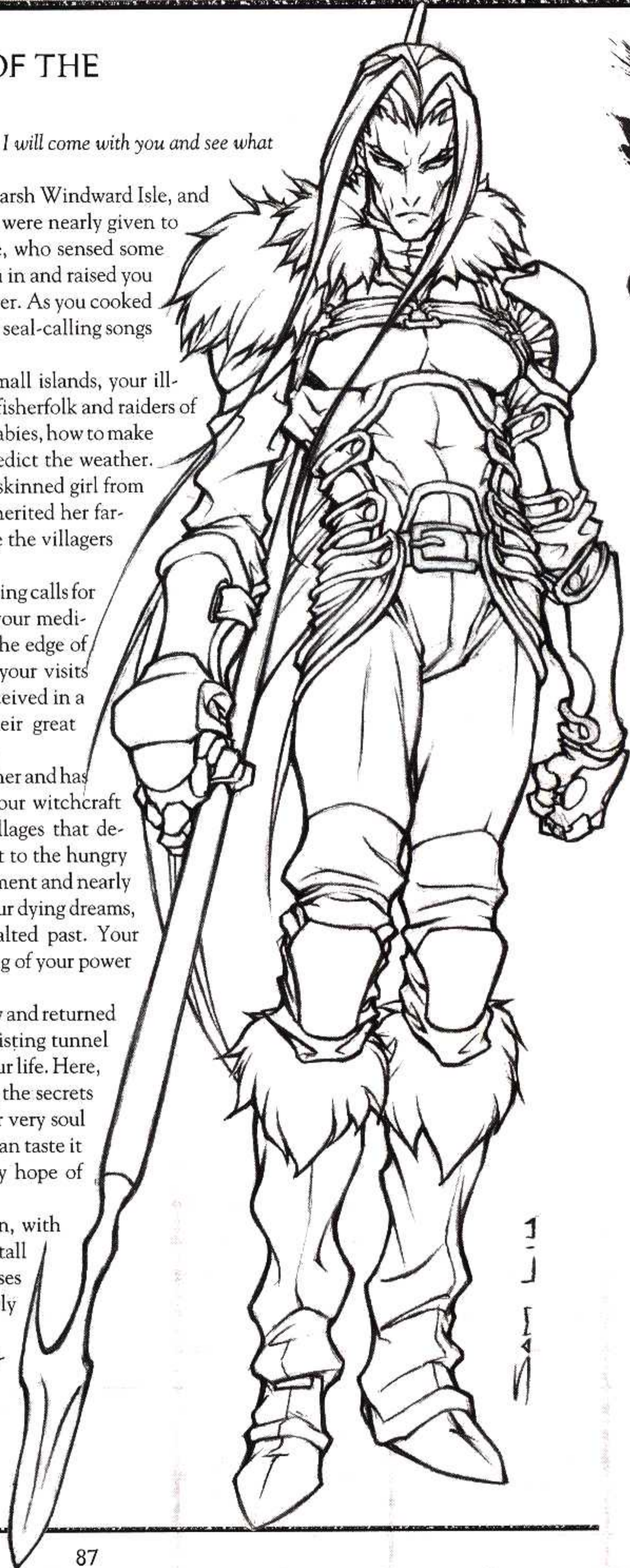
Most of your time was spent traveling, answering calls for help, harvesting the herbs and animals used in your medicines and tracking the rise of the Wyld beyond the edge of the world. You carried messages as well; often, your visits were the only contact some small settlements received in a year. Even the pirates, sailing far north of their great sargasso sea, allowed your tiny boat free passage.

In recent years, the Wyld Sea has swelled higher and has begun swallowing islands. The talismans that your witchcraft created to master the Wyld are failing, and villages that depended on you for their very lives were being lost to the hungry Sea. You yourself were caught in a doomed settlement and nearly undone by the Wyld. You drifted for weeks. In your dying dreams, a spirit came to you — the spirit of your Exalted past. Your memories are hazy still, but the sudden awakening of your power is not.

Roleplaying Hints: You have left your family and returned to the witch's hut of your childhood, where a twisting tunnel leads to a sanctuary that had been a mystery all your life. Here, in the solitude and isolation, you are unraveling the secrets painted on the walls and learning the spells your very soul was shaped to cast. The Wyld is on the rise, you can taste it in the salty air, and only your powers have any hope of stopping it.

Image: Jay is a tall, thin, good-looking man, with long, straight black hair. He wears oilskins and tall whalehide boots; his clothes are utilitarian. He uses a harpoon for fishing and defense, and it rarely leaves his hand in these troubled days.

Equipment: Small magician's coracle, harpoon, clothing, herbs and a small witch's hut.



浪
島
の
巫
女



NAME: IAY
 PLAYER: _____
 CASTE: TWILIGHT

CONCEPT: WITCH
 NATURE: CAREGIVER
 ANIMA: _____

ATTRIBUTES

STRENGTH _____ ●●○○○ CHARISMA _____ ●●●○○ PERCEPTION _____ ●●●○○
 DEXTERITY _____ ●●○○○ MANIPULATION _____ ●●○○○ INTELLIGENCE _____ ●●●○○
 STAMINA _____ ●●●○○ APPEARANCE _____ ●●●○○ WITS _____ ●●●○○

ABILITIES

DAWN		ZENITH		TWILIGHT	
<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHERY _____	○○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENDURANCE _____	●○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CRAFTS _____	●●○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> BRAWL _____	●●○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> PERFORMANCE _____	○○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INVESTIGATION _____	●○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> MARTIAL ARTS _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> PRESENCE _____	●○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LORE _____	●●●○○
<input type="checkbox"/> MELEE _____	●○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> RESISTANCE _____	●○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDICINE _____	●○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> THROWN _____	●○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SURVIVAL _____	●●●○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCULT _____	●●●○○
NIGHT		ECLIPSE		SPECIALTIES	
<input type="checkbox"/> ATHLETICS _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> BUREAUCRACY _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	○○○○○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AWARENESS _____	●●○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> LINGUISTICS _____	●○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	○○○○○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DODGE _____	●●○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> RIDE _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	○○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> LARCENY _____	○○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SAIL _____	●●○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	○○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> STEALTH _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIALIZE _____	●○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS		CHARMS	
<u>ALLIES (CORACLE)</u> _____	●○○○○	Name	Cost
<u>ARTIFACT (CORACLE)</u> _____	●●○○○	<u>FLAWLESS DIAGNOSIS</u> _____	1M
<u>INFLUENCE</u> _____	●○○○○	<u>REED IN THE WIND</u> _____	2 PER 1
<u>MANSE</u> _____	●●●○○	<u>HARDSHIP SURVIVING</u> _____	5M
_____	○○○○○	<u>MENDIVANT SPIRIT</u> _____	
_____	○○○○○	<u>FLAWLESS HANDIWORK</u> _____	3/SUCC
_____	○○○○○	<u>TECHNIQUE</u> _____	
_____	○○○○○	<u>INTEGRITY-PROTECTNG</u> _____	5M, 1W
_____	○○○○○	<u>PRANA</u> _____	
_____	○○○○○	<u>TERRESTRIAL CIRCLE</u> _____	1M
		Name	Cost
		<u>CHAOS-REPELLING</u> _____	10M, 1W
		<u>PATTERN</u> _____	
		<u>TOUCH OF BLISSFUL</u> _____	5M
		<u>RELEASE</u> _____	
		<u>BODY-MENDING</u> _____	10M
		<u>MEDITATION</u> _____	
		<u>EYE AND THE MOUTH</u> _____	15
		<u>DEATH OF OBSIDIAN</u> _____	15
		<u>BUTTERFLIES</u> _____	

WEAPONS

GAFF SPEAR _____
 SPD 7 ACC 4 DMG 5L PRY 3

WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

VIRTUES

COMPASSION	TEMPERANCE
● ● ● ● ○	● ● ● ● ○
□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □
CONVICTION	VALOR
● ● ● ● ○	● ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □

ANIMA

HEALTH

SOAK
 B 7 L 4 A 3
 -1 MOBILITY PENALTY

ESSENCE

● ● ● ○ ○ ○
 PERSONAL 15 | _____
 PERIPHERAL 36 | _____
 COMMITTED _____

LIMIT BREAK

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

VIRTUE FLAW

ASCETIC _____
DRIVE _____

-0	□ ■ ■ ■ ■
-1	□ □ ■ ■ ■
-2	□ □ ■ ■ ■
	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
-4	□
INCAPACITATED	□

EXPERIENCE

HORAKINIS

Quote: *Only through knowledge can we be saved, and only through the wisdom of the Solars who died long ago can we hope to find an answer for our present problems.*

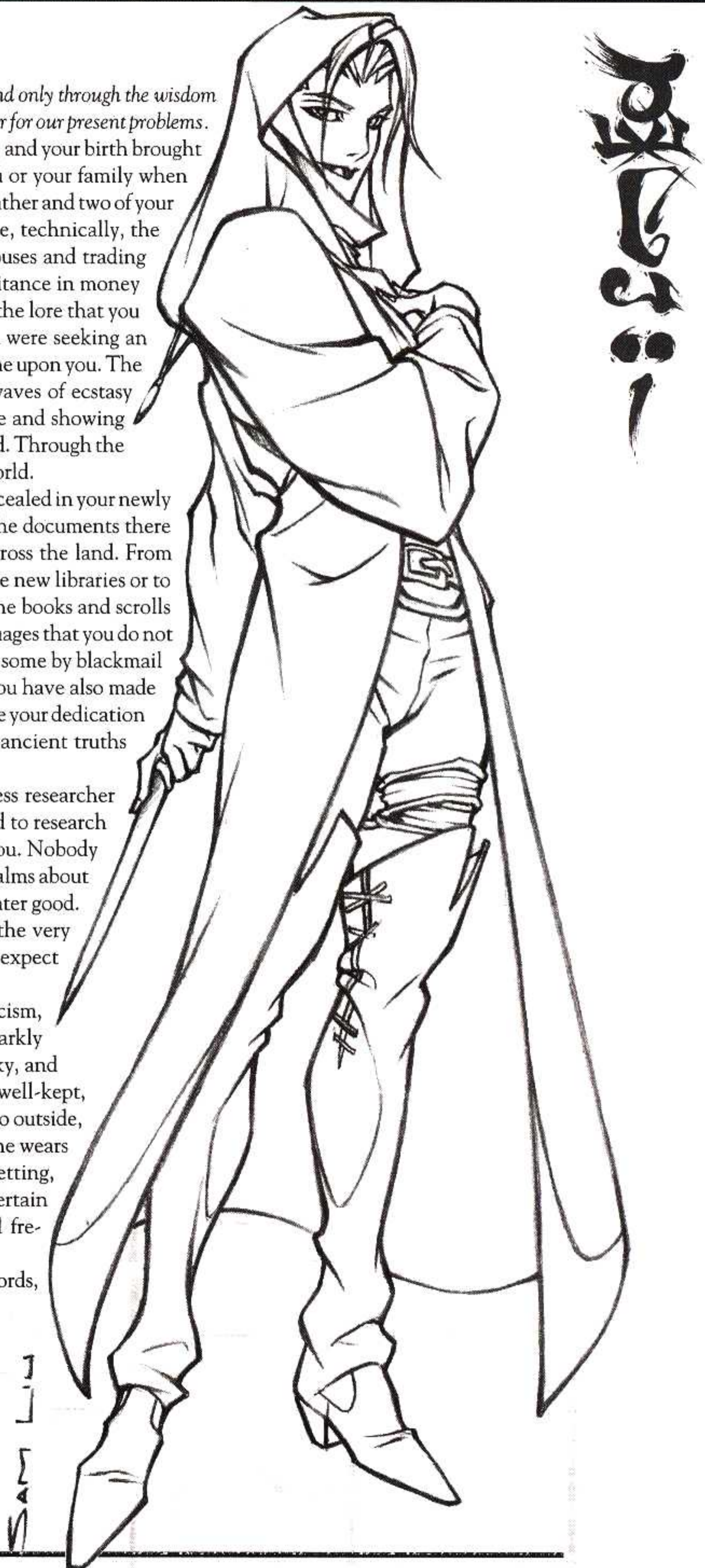
Prelude: You were a rich man's daughter in Arjuf, and your birth brought you wealth and privilege. But none of this spared you or your family when disease struck the port: You barely survived, and your father and two of your brothers died. As the eldest remaining child, you were, technically, the family heir. You signed over your interests in warehouses and trading fleets to your only living brother and took your inheritance in money and resources that would let you travel and search for the lore that you are still sure would have saved their lives. While you were seeking an ancient library deep underground, your Exaltation came upon you. The Unconquered Sun descended upon you in burning waves of ecstasy and power, bringing memories of your life long before and showing you what you needed to do to bring back that age of gold. Through the knowledge of the ancient Solars, you will save the world.

Since then, you have spent much of your time concealed in your newly discovered library — a minor Manse — researching the documents there and sharing your information with other sorcerers across the land. From time to time, you leave the place in order to investigate new libraries or to assist other Solars in return for knowledge. Many of the books and scrolls are merely histories or accounts, and others are in languages that you do not know: You have had to bring in translators and clerks, some by blackmail or force, to get the information you need. However, you have also made many useful contacts, fellow researchers who appreciate your dedication and objectives. Together, you and they will find the ancient truths that will help rebuild the world.

Roleplaying Hints: You are an impatient, tactless researcher and find it hard to believe that anybody is better fitted to research or hold the great wisdom of the ancient Solars than you. Nobody ever works fast enough to suit you, and you have no qualms about pushing human colleagues to their limits: It's for a greater good. You don't mind sharing new discoveries (apart from the very powerful ones) with allies or other Solars, but you do expect some gesture of thanks in return.

Image: Horakinis has an air of ostentatious asceticism, with crimson hair trimmed to elegant shortness and starkly cut robes of expensive dark silk. She is short and stocky, and her pale skin is unmarked by weather. Her hands are well-kept, and she paints her nails in gold and silver. If she must go outside, she muffles herself in cloaks and veils. At her throat, she wears a Salt-Gem of the Spirit's Eye in an orichalcum setting, though she conceals this gem with a scarf if she is uncertain of her company. She moves briskly and sharply and frequently smiles thinly.

Equipment: Hearthstone, robes, paired short swords, library





NAME: HORAKINIS

CONCEPT: SCHOLAR

PLAYER: _____

NATURE: SAVANT

CASTE: TWILIGHT

ANIMA: _____

ATTRIBUTES

STRENGTH ●●○○○ CHARISMA ●●●○○ PERCEPTION ●●●○○
 DEXTERITY ●●○○○ MANIPULATION ●●●○○ INTELLIGENCE ●●●○○
 STAMINA ●●●○○ APPEARANCE ●●●○○ WITS ●●●○○

ABILITIES

DAWN		ZENITH		TWILIGHT	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHERY	●●○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> ENDURANCE	○○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CRAFTS	●○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> BRAWL	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> PERFORMANCE	○○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INVESTIGATION	●●●○○
<input type="checkbox"/> MARTIAL ARTS	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> PRESENCE	○○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LORE	●●●○○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MELEE	●●○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> RESISTANCE	○○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDICINE	●●○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> THROWN	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> SURVIVAL	○○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCULT	●●●○○
NIGHT		ECLIPSE		SPECIALTIES	
<input type="checkbox"/> ATHLETICS	○○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUREAUCRACY	●●○○○	<input type="checkbox"/>	○○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> AWARENESS	●●○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LINGUISTICS	●●●○○	<input type="checkbox"/>	○○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> DODGE	●○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RIDE	●●○○○	<input type="checkbox"/>	○○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> LARCENY	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> SAIL	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/>	○○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> STEALTH	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIALIZE	●○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/>	○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS		CHARMS	
CONTACTS (SCHOLARS)	●●●○○	Name	Cost
FOLLOWERS	●●○○○	FIERY ARROW ATTACK	2M
MANSE	●●○○○	GOLDEN ESSENCE BLOCK	1 PER 2
_____	○○○○○	BODY-MENDIALS	10M
_____	○○○○○	MEDITATION	_____
_____	○○○○○	SPIRIT DETECTING GLANCE	3M
_____	○○○○○	FRUGAL MERCHANT	1M
_____	○○○○○	WHIRLING-BRUSH METHOD	4M
_____	○○○○○	_____	_____
_____	○○○○○	_____	_____
_____	○○○○○	_____	_____

WEAPONS

SHORT SWORD (ON-HAND)
 SPD 9 ACC 5 DMG 4L PRY 5
SHORT SWORD (OFF-HAND)
 SPD 7 ACC 4 DMG 4L PRY 4

WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

VIRTUES

COMPASSION	●●●○○	TEMPERANCE	●●●○○
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CONVICTION	●●○○○	VALOR	●○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ANIMA

HEALTH

SOAK
 B 3 L 1 A 0

ESSENCE

● ● ● ○ ○ ○
 PERSONAL 15 | _____
 PERIPHERAL 36 | _____
 COMMITTED _____

LIMIT BREAK

VIRTUE FLAW

ASCETIC
DRIVE

-0	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
-4					<input type="checkbox"/>
INCAPACITATED					<input type="checkbox"/>

EXPERIENCE

ARIANNA

Quote: *This power is a tool that the Unconquered Sun has given to us — and that I intend to use.*

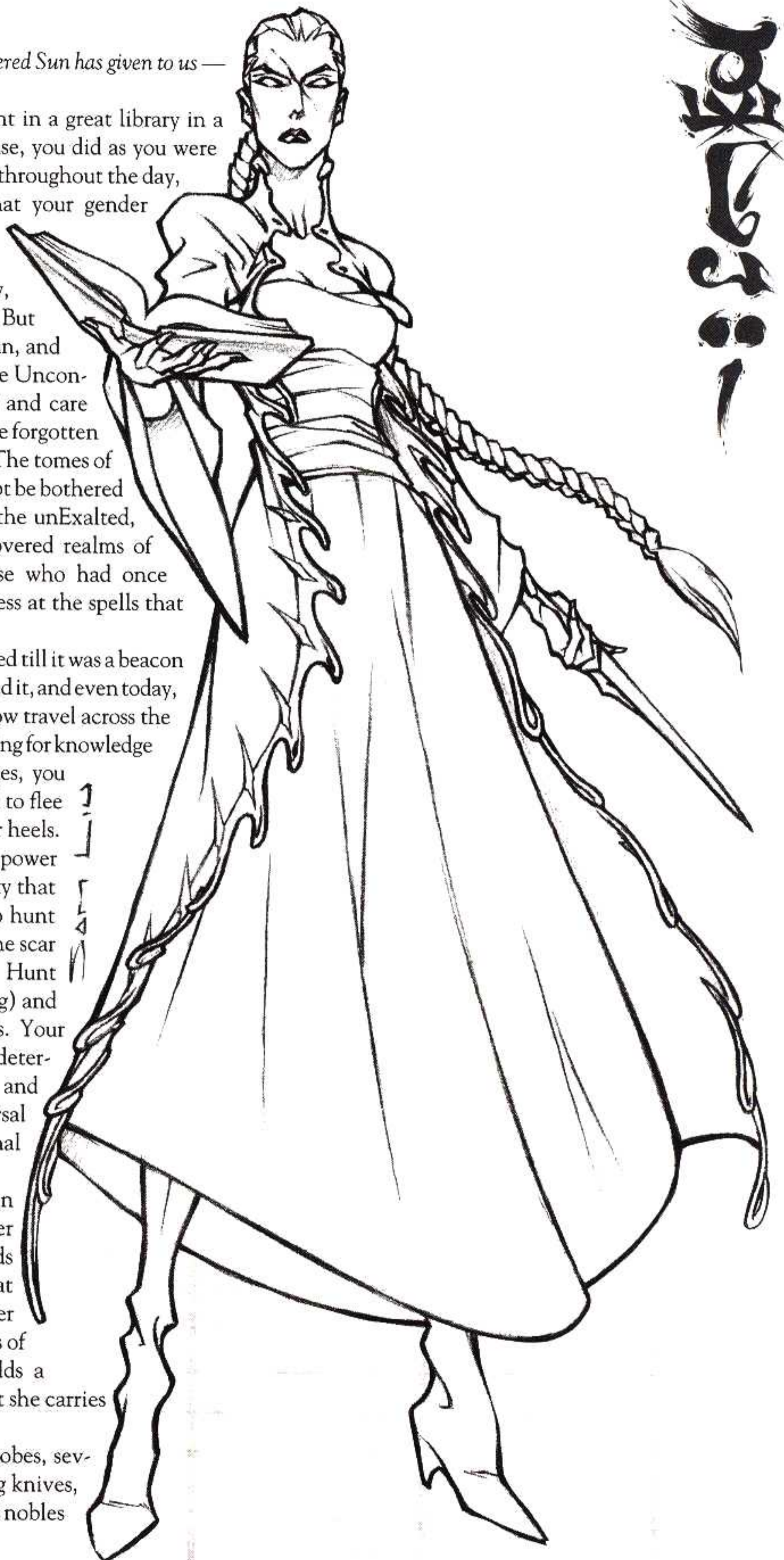
Prelude: Once you were the meek assistant in a great library in a Northern Threshold kingdom. Timid as a mouse, you did as you were told — cleaning and reshelving books, working throughout the day, always hoping to surpass the glass ceiling that your gender imposed on you. At night, you read and read and read. You were proud and open in your knowledge, though you concealed your fragile beauty, wanting to be accepted for your skill and ability. But however much you knew, you were still a woman, and it was never enough. Until your Exaltation. The Unconquered Sun and the souls of his Exalted know and care nothing of gender. You were transfigured, and the forgotten texts in the library became your treasure-trove. The tomes of sorcery, books that the Dragon-Blooded could not be bothered to carry away and whose magic was useless to the unExalted, became your tutors and guides, and you discovered realms of knowledge that surpassed any scholar's. Those who had once mocked you as a mere assistant would never guess at the spells that were now yours to command.

Though you tried to hide it, your power swelled till it was a beacon that drew the Wyld Hunt to you. You barely escaped it, and even today, your face bears a scar from the encounter. You now travel across the land, never staying too long in any one place, seeking for knowledge and power. While you have many acquaintances, you have few close friends, and you have been forced to flee more than one court or city with enemies at your heels.

Roleplaying Hints: You finally have the power and recognition that you always wanted — a pity that it involves mobs of deluded fools attempting to hunt you down and kill you. You are sensitive about the scar on your face, a remembrance from the Wyld Hunt (though it is only minor and not at all disfiguring) and wear a scarf to cover it from casual onlookers. Your escape from death has left you cold and driven, determined that you will never again be so weak and defenseless. You have no great thirst for universal justice: When you take revenge, it's for personal reasons, and you enjoy every last drop of blood.

Image: Arianna is a tall, fine-boned woman who appears to be in her early 30s. She wears her pure white hair in a thick braid and often shrouds her face with a scarf to conceal the thin scar that runs across it. Her eyes are large and dark, and her lips red and tantalizing. She wears multiple layers of robes, with a wide sash at her waist that holds a surprisingly large number of throwing knives, but she carries no overt jewelry or Hearthstones.

Equipment: Good quality silk and cotton robes, several scrolls and books of her own notes, throwing knives, several maps and letters of introduction to various nobles





NAME: ARIANNA
 PLAYER: _____
 CASTE: TWILIGHT

CONCEPT: SORCERESS
 NATURE: SURVIVOR
 ANIMA: _____

ATTRIBUTES

STRENGTH _____ ●●○○○ CHARISMA _____ ●●●○○ PERCEPTION _____ ●●●○○
 DEXTERITY _____ ●●●○○ MANIPULATION _____ ●●●○○ INTELLIGENCE _____ ●●●○○
 STAMINA _____ ●●○○○ APPEARANCE _____ ●●○○○ WITS _____ ●●●○○

ABILITIES

DAWN		ZENITH		TWILIGHT	
<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHERY _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> ENDURANCE _____	○○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CRAFTS _____	○○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> BRAWL _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> PERFORMANCE _____	○○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INVESTIGATION _____	●●○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> MARTIAL ARTS _____	●○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> PRESENCE _____	○○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LORE _____	●●●○○
<input type="checkbox"/> MELEE _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> RESISTANCE _____	○○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDICINE _____	●○○○○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> THROWN _____	●●●○○	<input type="checkbox"/> SURVIVAL _____	●○○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCULT _____	●●●○○
NIGHT		ECLIPSE		SPECIALTIES	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ATHLETICS _____	●●○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUREAUCRACY _____	●●○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	○○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> AWARENESS _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> LINGUISTICS _____	●○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	○○○○○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DODGE _____	●●○○○	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RIDE _____	●●●●●	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	○○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> LARCENY _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> SAIL _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	○○○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> STEALTH _____	●○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIALIZE _____	○○○○○	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS		CHARMS	
ALLIES (CIRCLE) _____	●●●●○	Name	Cost
CONTACTS _____	●●○○○	INTEGRITY-PROTECTING	5, 1W
RESOURCES _____	●●○○○	PRANA	
_____	○○○○○	BODY-MENDING	10
_____	○○○○○	MEDITATION	
_____	○○○○○	TERRESTRIAL	1W+
_____	○○○○○	CIRCLE SORCERY	
_____	○○○○○	REEFED IN THE WIND	1 PER 2
_____	○○○○○	GRACEFUL CRANE STANCE	3
_____	○○○○○		
		Name	Cost
		MASTER HORSEMAN'S EYE	1
		HORSE-SUMMONING	3
		WHISTLE	
		PHANTOM STEED	10, 1W
		INVULNERABLE SKIN	20
		OF BRONZE	
		WOOD DRAGON'S CLAW	10
		1st CIRCLE DEMON	20+

WEAPONS

THROWN KNIFE
 SPD 7 ACC 6 DMG 4L
 HELD KNIFE
 SPD 9 ACC 6 DMG 4L PRY 4

WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○

VIRTUES

COMPASSION	TEMPERANCE
●○○○○	●●●○○
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
CONVICTION	VALOR
●●●○○	●●○○○
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

ANIMA

HEALTH

SOAK
 B 2 L 1 A 0

ESSENCE

● ● ● ○ ○ ○
 PERSONAL 15 | _____
 PERIPHERAL 36 | _____
 COMMITTED _____

LIMIT BREAK

VIRTUE FLAW

DELIBERATE
 CRUELTY

-0	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
-1	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
-2	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
-4	<input type="checkbox"/>
INCAPACITATED	<input type="checkbox"/>

EXPERIENCE



APPENDIX II

OTHER NOTABLE TWILIGHT CASTE

MISTRESS EMERALD

Mistress Emerald is well known on the roads and byways of the Realm as a traveling entertainer and juggler. Her sleight of hand amuses children, though adults know that it is no true sorcery, and she quietly provides love charms, abortifacients, horoscopes and other such items in her tent for private customers. More than one Dragon-Blooded patrol has watched her act and searched her belongings — and then thrown her out of town as a commoner and fraud.

Indeed, once, Mistress Emerald was no more than a mountebank — but that was before her Exaltation and before the Unconquered Sun chose her as one of his Twilight Solars. With wits honed by 25 years on the road, she realized that she had become one of the hated Anathema and that, if she were discovered, it would mean her death. She considered flight — but then, she wondered how many others like her might have been reborn into the Realm and how many of them would die without someone nearby who could help them. Realizing that, her choice was plain. She traveled between the towns and villages, apparently no more than a fortune-teller, juggler and herbalist, but she was always on the watch for new Solar Exalted.

Mistress Emerald has, over the last few years, begun to build up a network of contacts across the Realm. Some of them are newborn Solars, while others are merchants, peasants and even a couple of priests of the Immaculate Order who think that they're using her as part of their spy network. Only a couple of them — the ones she truly trusts — know that she



is a Solar and what that genuinely means. Although they cannot reach her directly, most members of the network can pass on messages that will reach her within a few weeks. She has instructed them to do so if they become aware of someone exhibiting the signs of Solar Exaltation. Some of them think that they're doing so in order to let her destroy "the Anathema" and that they're helping an Immaculate itinerant.



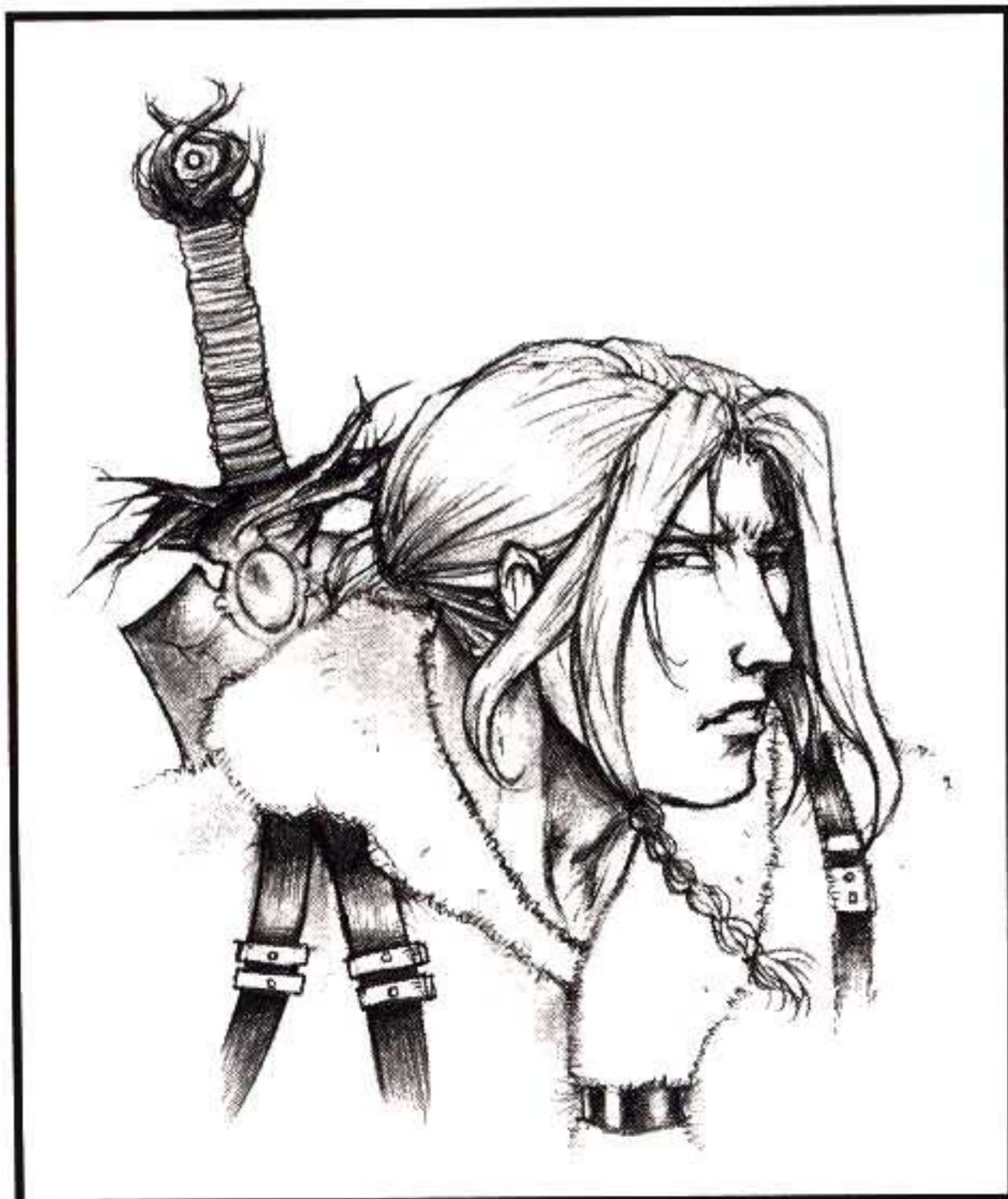
While she will work with other Solars and reveal her identity to them, she won't give the names of her network unless absolutely necessary.

Discretion is Mistress Emerald's primary watchword: She doesn't show her powers or let her anima flare in public, and if she has to cast spells or use Charms, she wears a mask and a hooded cloak. She realizes that she can't go on like this for long and that the risk of the Wyld Hunt catching up with her increases every day. She has few spells and desperately wants to learn more — but at the moment, she has little chance to learn them. However, she is already a skilled healer and is having difficulty disguising her expertise as merely that of a common herbalist these days. She frequently travels with carnivals or merchant caravans and can often smuggle other people along with her.

NIMIUM SNOWEYES

Nimium Snoweyes is known and feared in the North from Diamond Hearth to Gethamane. His sleigh is carved from ice and drawn by two great elks he braided from pineroots and ivory: Each night, they become two trees which guard his sleeping, and each morning, he weaves the wood back into the form of the elks again. He has made treaties with a court of Fair Folk that dwells in the depths of a lost glacier, and they lend their cataphractoï to his assaults on Dragon-Blooded strongholds. In return, he assists them in taking Terrestrial Exalted captive, so that the Fair Folk might feast on their pride and their dreams of freedom. Mortals are either killed or set free to make their way as best they can without leadership or shelter.

Nimium was born into a semi-settled relative of the beast tribes; it was a small group, oppressed by the local Dragon-Blooded garrison, who demanded tribute from the



tribesmen and called them heretics. As the child of two hunters, Nimium was trained in their skills and learned the joys of speed and silence. But one day, while performing the ritual veneration of the tribal totem, he saw the Unconquered Sun burning brighter than ever before and felt the glory of Exaltation. He seized the elk-spirit by the horns and wrestled it to its knees, swearing never to bow to it again. The elk-spirit only freed itself by promising him the two servants that now draw his sleigh.

Since then, Nimium has decided that the Unconquered Sun has called him to the task of driving the Dragon-Blooded from his people's homelands. He will take other Solars as allies in this task and would even accept help from the Deathlords — his alliance with the Fair Folk has already worried many of the local tribes, who fear that they will also soon be prey to the pitiless creatures. However, Nimium can be merciful to strangers who are lost in storms and will bring them to the nearest tribe for shelter. He has also discovered certain lost spells that can freeze a man in ice for a thousand years and then call him back to life again unharmed. Nimium now seeks the greatest spells of all, the Solar Circle and would be prepared to bargain with anybody to learn them — even Dragon-Blooded, if necessary.

Nimium is young, daring and reckless, and he has grown overconfident from his successes against the local Dragon-Blooded. However, the Terrestrial Exalted whom he has defeated were outcastes or novices, posted to a deserted place and no great challenge. It remains to be seen what will happen if certain Great Houses send more efficient Dragon-Blooded to protect their trade in amber, furs and ivory — or what will happen if the Fair Folk withdraw their support. Nimium is unaware that his current pact with the Fair Folk will be void if he ever breaks his given word to any other person — the Fair Folk know this and intend to trick him into doing so at some point, when he is no longer useful to them. Nimium is becoming something of an icon of resistance in the North, and it is said that the mighty warlord or demon-god called the Bull of the North is seeking Nimium out, possibly to seek him as an ally, possibly to call him out to a duel.

JAVRAN

Javran was a pearl diver in the Far West, a thin and eager young man who sold his pearls to the visiting merchants — and then sold information on their routes to the pirate ships that pursued them. He was born on an island near Bluehaven, of a family so poor and powerless that it could never hope to do more than scratch out a subsistence living. While he never sailed as a pirate himself, having no training in fighting, he admired the pirates as swashbuckling heroes and dreamed of being able to challenge fate as they did. He grew old, but still, he had to work day and night, piecing fragments of mother-of-pearl into mosaics to please the rich of the Realm and the wealthier Western states, still poor, still hungry and still dreaming.

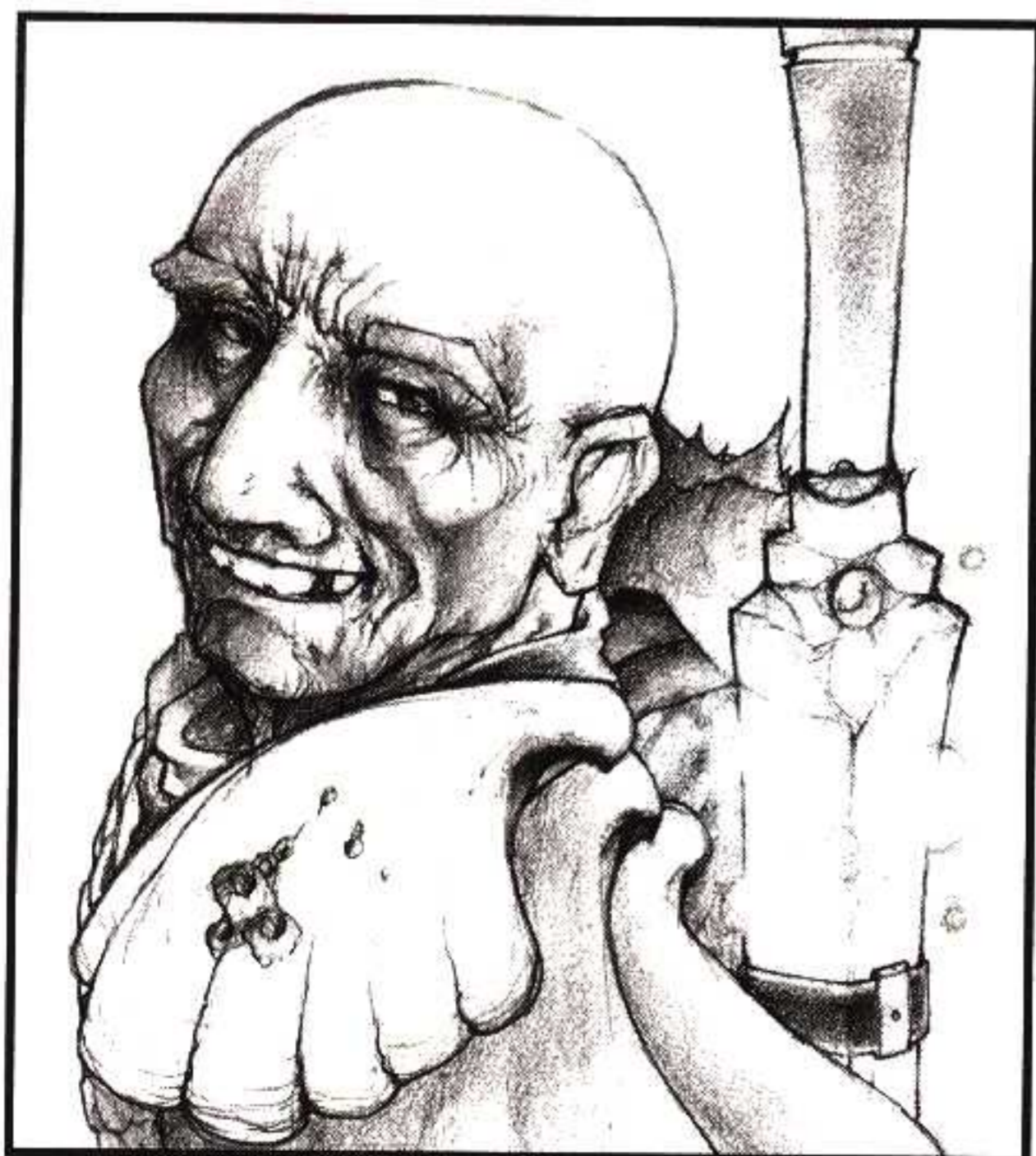
One day, while working upon a particularly complicated mosaic, Javran set the final piece into place — and was suddenly seized by a new understanding of the world, as the



Unconquered Sun brought Exaltation upon him. In a glory of sunlight and illumination, he looked out from the dock where he sat and heard the distant singing of sirens, luring sailors to their doom. His newfound memories gave him a purpose: He must restore the ancient order, wherein the spirits are obedient to the Solars, and the Solars protect the humans.

Javran believes that his mission is to persuade (or chastise) the local spirit courts into proper obedience to the will of Heaven — as personified by himself or by any other Solars in the area. He is also a glory-seeker: Now that he is able to fulfil his childhood fantasies of heroism and adventure, he runs from island to island atop the waves, using his new-found spells to impress the locals and to deal with local problems. So far, he has fought several Fair Folk and a number of water elementals and sunk a ship of Coral-affiliated pirates that had been looting locally. At the moment, he is extremely popular among the younger natives of his group of islands but somewhat feared by the older ones. The families of Bluehaven have heard about him and are concerned that Javran may cause them significant trouble by provoking too many enemies.

Javran himself is convinced of the glory of his mission and obsessed by the chance to finally be the hero he always wanted to be. His tiny island escaped the notice of the Immaculate Order in previous years, so he does not realize exactly how much the Anathema are hated and feared in the Realm. He is actively looking for more Solar Exalted, hoping to form a Circle and, perhaps, to find old friends from his previous incarnation. Javran has little experience of anything or anywhere outside the islands of the West and is contemptuous of the trappings of “civilization,” seeing it as the force that tempted and destroyed the Solars long ago. He has begun to feel vaguely ashamed about his associations with the pirates, as his memories of his previous incarnation showed that he used to fight the lawless to defend the Realm.



RAIN, MISTRESS OF THE HIDDEN LILY

Rain was plucked from the Guild caravans by an overseer from House Cynis; a pretty child, she was tended as carefully as a fragile flower and nurtured until she developed into rare and splendid perfection.

A courtesan of the highest rank, she was trained in music, calligraphy, poetry and seduction. But that was not all that the Cynis overseers taught her. Entertainers in training with Cynis learned the value of a carefully placed rumor, how to garner knowledge from a single careless word and how to tease a secret from a lover with the touch of a perfumed hand.

Growing up a slave in the most powerful empire in Creation, the most important lesson Rain learned was the loyalty of the collar. Lovers lie, a master may sell you on a whim. The only family she’s ever known are her fellow slaves: the courtesans and catamites, the body slaves and palace eunuchs. As Rain was sheltered and comforted by older slaves, so she has tried to protect the younger, more vulnerable slaves from the Dragon-Bloods’ worst abuses.

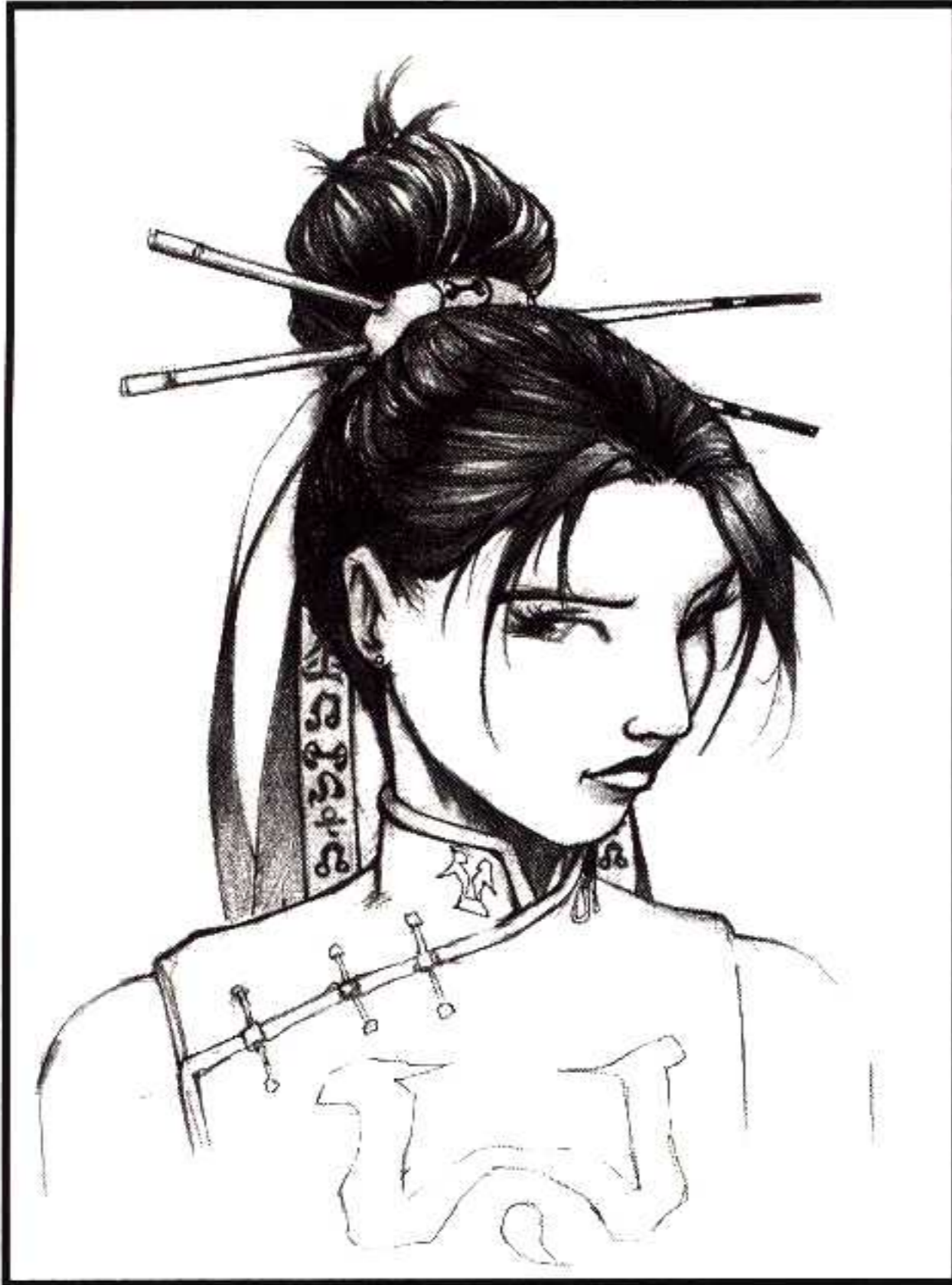
When House Cynis sent an envoy to Cherak, Rain was one of many in the slave train. She was dressed in white furs and blood-red silks for the frigid North. As the envoy’s favorite, she sang at parties, danced for guests and seduced secrets from the Ferem governor. Rain made friends among the locals and her master’s household alike.

Rain was not Exalted in terror or pain or grief. Her Exaltation came as a gift. Her many suitors gave Rain a cornucopia of gifts, but the chimes of rainbow crystal were given with the awkwardness of real affection. She hung them in her window to catch brilliant colors of the Northern sunset. These fragments of crystal, salvaged from mines of Diamond Hearth, cast more than rainbows. Hidden within the pretty display were words, runes and the seductive mandala of an Exalted past. Nights of dreams gave way to days of study as Rain struggled to master the fragments of knowledge hidden within the crystalline shards.

When Rain’s master was murdered over the distant politics of the Realm, she knew she could not leave the North without the rest of the crystals. In the confusion of the envoy’s death, Rain took control of his household. Using the arts of seduction, manipulation and the half-understood secrets of her power, she created the Hidden Lily — a house of pleasure that swiftly became famous throughout the North. The servants of House Cynis now serve Rain, and the house that had sheltered her master now echoes with the whispers of pleasure. She takes in the talented, not just the beautiful, teaching the courtesans of the Hidden Lily the skills of healing, as well as pleasure, and the soldiers of House Cynis the arts of protection, as well as violence.

As mistress of the Hidden Lily, Rain protects those under her care and seeks to expand her influence through the subtle arts of desire, secrets and passion. Her interest in the broken crystals from Diamond Hearth is well known, and she now has a large collection. Rain spends her days struggling to tease out the knowledge hidden within the brilliant reflections and master those spells she has already learned.





GANNETT, CHILD OF THE HIDDEN VALLEY

Within the deep jungles of the Southeast, the wild tribes raid the settled lands for weapons, slaves and the delight of slaughter. The farmers and villagers are helpless, kept unarmed by their own lords, who fear a peasant rebellion more than any barbarian horde. The villages endure the periodic raids as they do monsoons, floods, locusts and the natural tragedies that rule their short lives.

When young Gannett was taken in a barbarian raid, along with a dozen other children, he quickly adjusted to the hard and brutal life of a barbarian slave. It was little different from his life as a farmer's brat, after all. The rest of the captives were not so adaptable, and in a few years, Gannett found himself alone among the barbarians.

He learned the barbarians' language, fought with their children over scraps of food and grew clever as well as strong. In time, the barbarians came to treat him as one of their own; hardy, fierce and sometimes cruel.

In the heavy heat of high summer, the barbarian's god came to the tribe. The White Leopard Goddess seemed to take no interest in the boy, but Gannett was fascinated with her. He trailed the creature, watching her flow through a half dozen different shapes as she hunted or fished or tormented the villages that Gannett no longer recognized as home.

Hidden in the roots of a giant manioc or crouching shivering in a chill pool, Gannett learned the simple mortal sorcery the White Leopard used to hunt game, shape the woods to her words and tease the barbarians that were her children and her worshipers. While he could not take the shapes of the god, he could learn her magic. As he learned

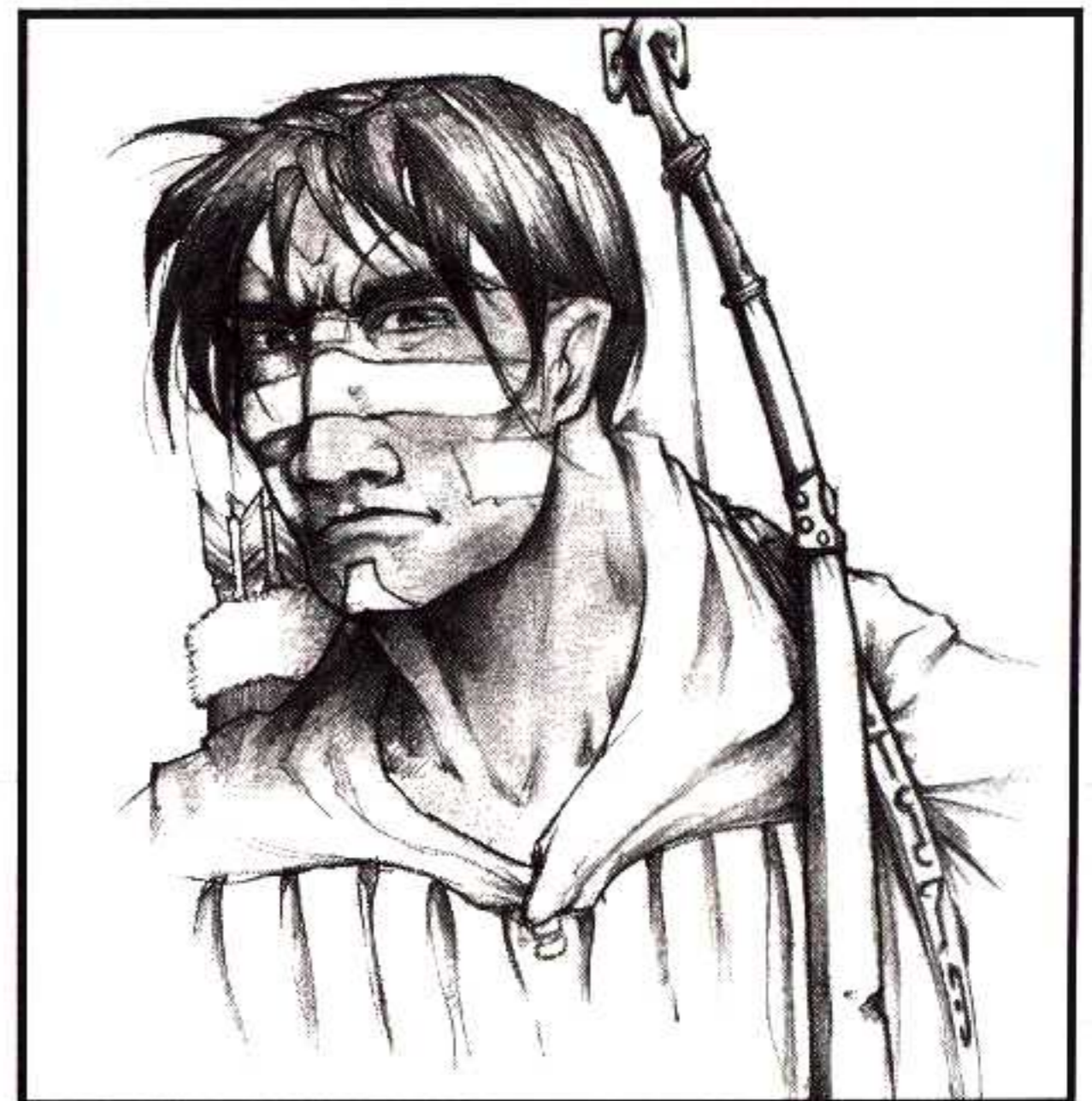
each sorcery, the god let him "discover" another. They danced this dance for two seasons, the boy learning as apprentice to the ancient Lunar.

Then, the Fair Folk came. The Wyld rose up in the wet winter night, rain took the shape of poisoned, razor edged leaves. The Fair Folk warriors grew out of tree branches and stepped from the luminous petals of the wild ginger. The White Leopard Goddess called her children to her side, and they fought back with their bone spears, their bronze daggers and the ferocity of their Lunar ancestry. Garrett fought beside the tribe, with barbarian weapons and the charms the Goddess had taught him.

In the rain and the Wyld wind, Garrett could not follow where the Goddess led. Of mortal blood, he was left behind and prey to the Fair Ones cruel humor. They hunted him with nightmares, digging deep into his mind, past his human childhood and into the attention of a power none could have expected, save perhaps the White Leopard Goddess, when she trained him as a magician.

Garrett's Exaltation came very close to killing him, for the Fair Folk recognized the Caste Mark that flared on Garrett's filthy forehead. No longer playing games, the Fair Folk warriors dove down to finish him off. In those moments, caught up in memories older than the Realm, Garrett burned with the glory of the setting sun, and the moon answered. The White Leopard Goddess saw the ruby blaze of his anima and knew it. Her ancient mate, whose coming has drawn her to this place. She held her oaths still in her heart, and she answered that cry for aid, falling on the Fair Folk in a frenzy of blood and madness.

The White Leopard's viciousness and desperation drove the Fair Ones away long enough for the White Leopard Goddess and Gannett to escape. The barbarian tribe, abandoned by its goddess, was decimated. Gannett was near death. Made bitter by the loss of her children, the White Leopard Goddess tends the young Exalted, remembering the cruelty of the ancient past and watching over her mate and lover in the hope of a better future.



C A S T E B O O K T W I L I G H T TM



The Savants of the Unconquered Sun

Savants, craftsmen and cunning men, the Twilight Castes of the Solar Exalted are the meddling sorcerer servants of the Unconquered Sun. Yet, these crafty tricksters are more than mere magicians and scholars. With its clever minds and invincible sorcery, the Twilight Caste is a mighty force for enlightenment in a benighted world. Those who would trick the masses and lock away wisdom should fear, for these savants of the Unconquered Sun have come to deliver knowledge to the ignorant.

The Greatest Sorcerers Creation Has Ever Seen

Caste Book: Twilight is third in the Caste Book line for Exalted — books detailing the different castes of the Solar Exalted. Within its pages are all the secrets of the Twilight Caste, from its members' unmatched mastery of sorcery to their fragmentary memories of the First Age. The book contains new Charms, rules, spells and artifacts to help them reclaim their heritage of power.

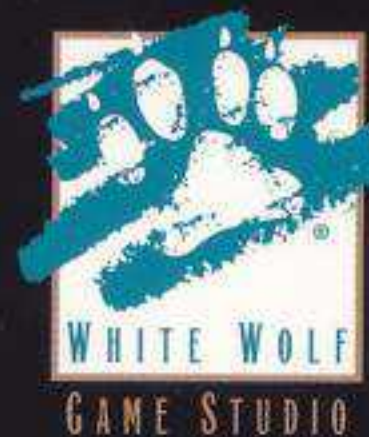


ISBN 1-58846-661-2 WW8832 US \$1495

5 1 4 9 5



9 781588 466617



www.white-wolf.com