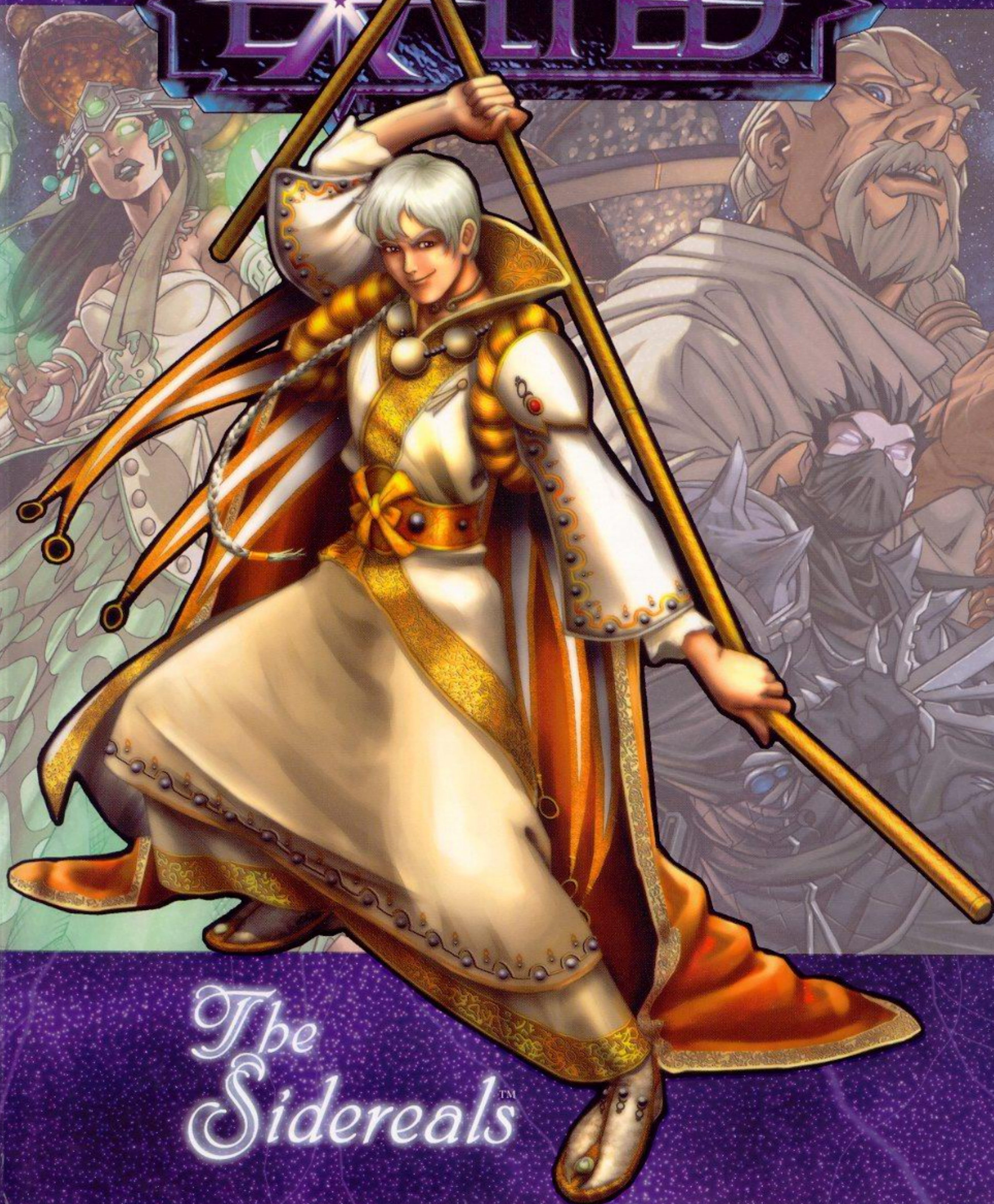
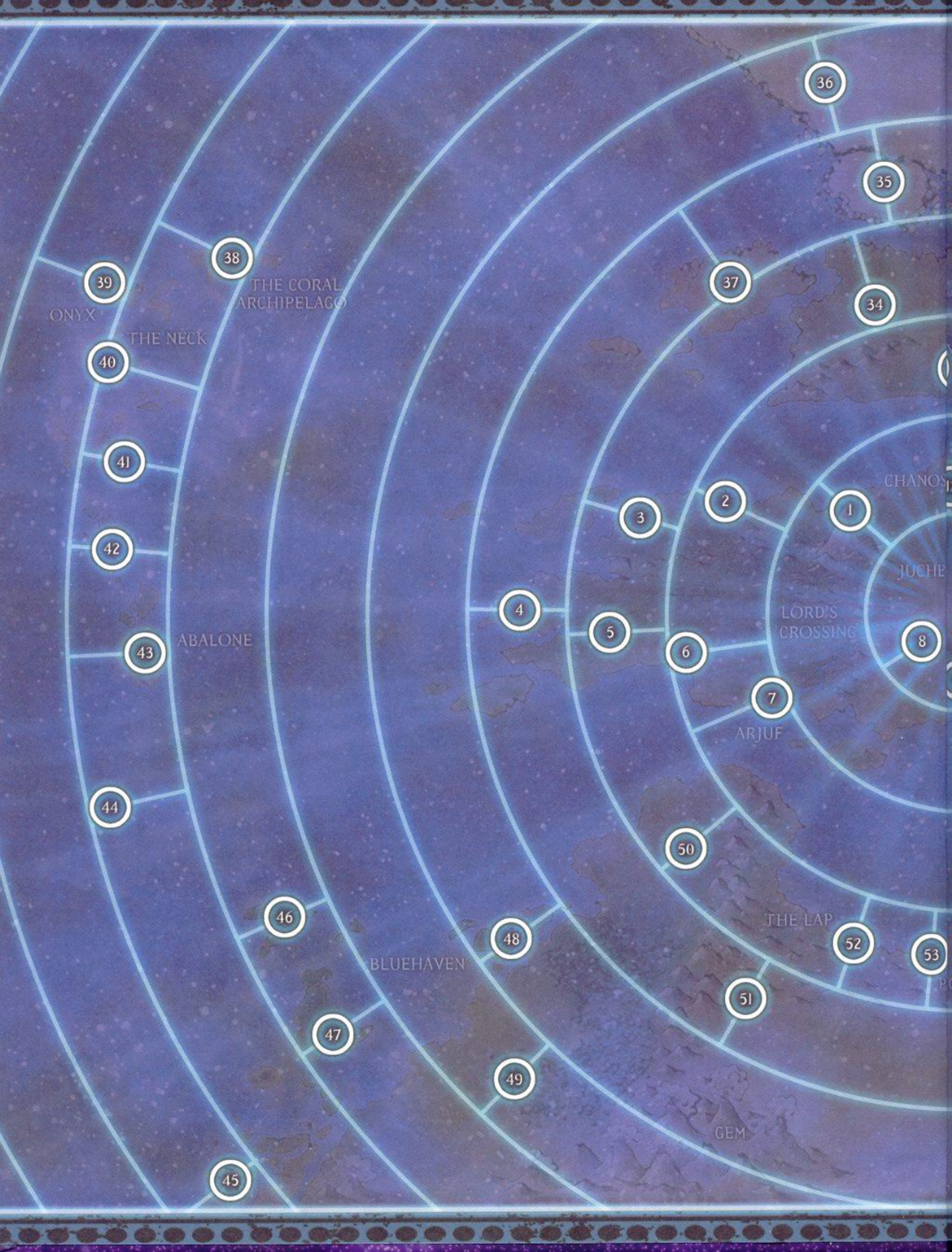


EXALTED



The
Sidereals™



36

35

38

THE CORAL ARCHIPELAGO

39

ONYX

37

34

THE NECK

40

41

42

43

ABALONE

44

46

BLUEHAVEN

48

47

49

45

3

2

1

CHANOS

JUCHE

4

LORD'S CROSSING

5

6

8

7

ARJUF

50

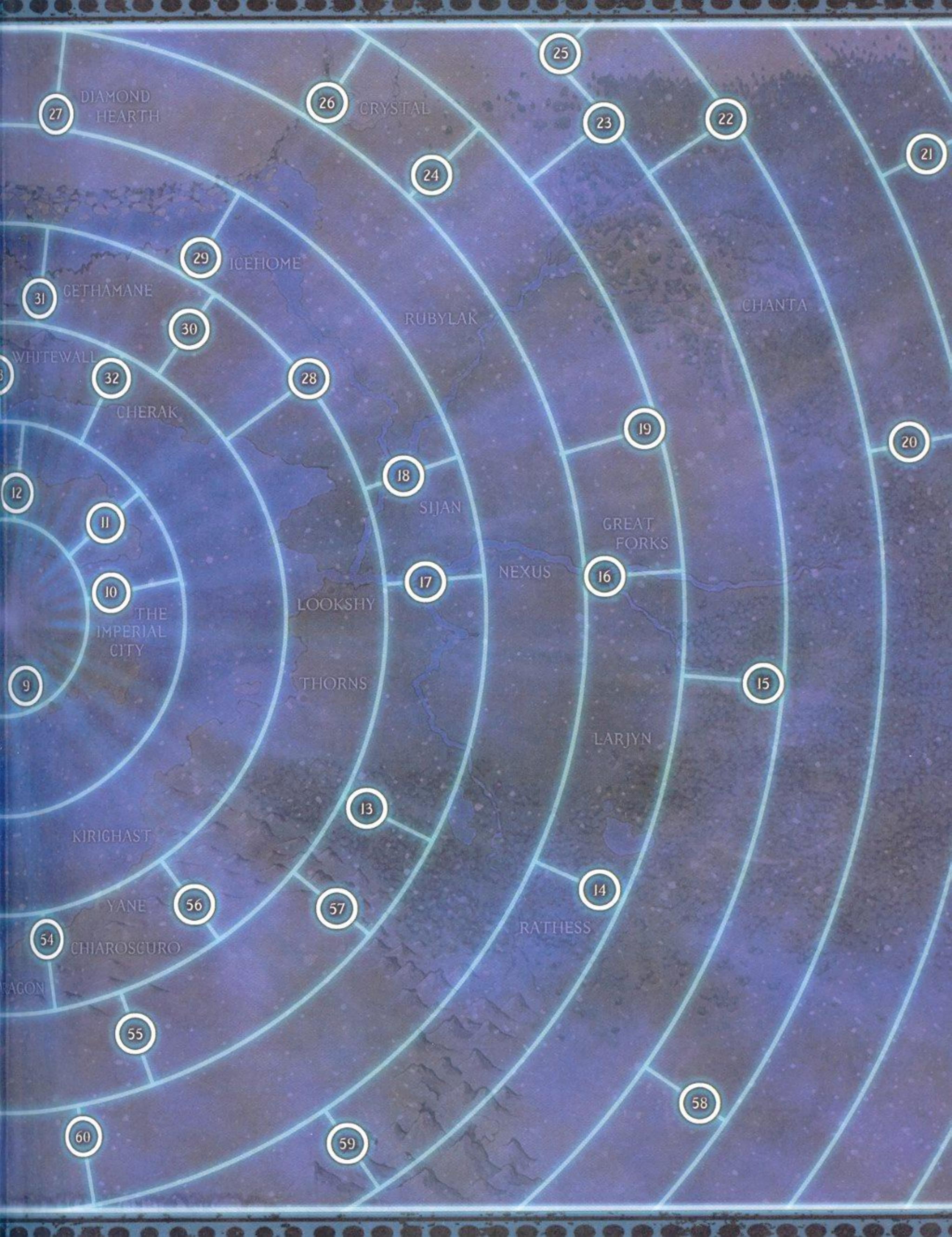
THE LAP

52

53

GEM

51



27 DIAMOND HEARTH

26 CRYSTAL

25

23

22

21

24

29 ICEHOME

31 GETHAMANE

CHANTA

30

RUBYLAK

WHITEWALL

32

28

19

20

CHERAK

18

SIJAN

GREAT FORKS

12

11

NEXUS

16

10

THE IMPERIAL CITY

LOOKSHY

17

THORNS

15

9

LARJYN

13

KIRIGHAST

14

YANE

56

57

RATHESS

54 CHIAROSCURO

DRAGON

55

58

60

59

天
地
人
三
才

天
地
人
三
才

The secret looked back on itself, sought to unravel itself, turned and twisted its vision of the Tapestry of Fate. It dreamt of the world within those strands and of its place in them as well. It had done this for century upon century, dreaming always of the tomorrow that lay ahead and strengthening itself against possible vicissitudes with predestined competence.

Wrapped in mendicant airs, the mad old man followed his whimsy as he walked the road, and his whimsy led him to knock on many doors and to look into many windows, not the least of which was Sucuchi Puno's. The old man had been a Sidereal Exalt once, before he tied himself to the destiny of a knave. Then, he had wrapped a prayer strip around his heart and become another being, elsewhere in Creation. Now, he was an old man, wandering the roads of the North, sleeping in no place for more than three days, tossed by the winds of fortune over the land.

And it was a good time to be a wandering man, but it was a sort of false prosperity, an Indian summer of plenty on the doorstep of a winter of want. There was a bountiful harvest to be taken in, but little was wasted, and after they gave him his wages, they made sure he knew the way out of town. It wouldn't do to have wanderers setting up their squatter huts. The roads were full of them, and one would draw another, and then, there'd be trouble. So, they'd help the old man off their farm and send him on down the road.

The nights had just begun to lose their warmth since Air became Resplendent, but they'd pull their buff jackets up around them, thinking about the man wandering the roads, weak and old, a widower carrying a tale of poverty and getting soft-headed as well. They'd shiver, those that had any sense, fearing how they might be like that one day. Many a prince had dined on adamant plates only to have his sons beg with wooden bowls. They'd worry, and they'd get so concerned with worrying that they'd lose track of the man the worrying had stemmed from, and pretty soon, they'd forget they ever met him.

It was in this forgettable guise that the being who had once been a Sidereal came to the hall of a minor Dragon-Blooded prince. This prince was from the Sucuchi line, a family of no note in the Realm, but of some note in the North.

The former Sidereal came among them wrapped in the airs of a thief. Masquerading as a mendicant and beggar, he was let in the door with the rest of the throng of paupers there to build up Sucuchi Puno's reputation with their hungry bellies. The nameless thief quickly slipped away from the bone gnawers and slid, meek and invisible, through the feast-time crowd at the hall. He assessed the full table and discreetly coughed forth an emerald-green spider of Essence, which he sent scuttling into the Tapestry. In a heartbeat, it returned with the fact the thief sought. Puno had the hundred warriors he boasted of and then some. The thief could see they were arming insiders rather than recruiting strangers — even the pig-keepers were washing up and eating at the big table. Not much against an Exalt, but they were still fighting men with blades and armor.

Most of the talk in the hall was of practical matters, of the management of the steading and the little town that had grown up around it. Much of the rest of the talk in the hall was of the war all were certain would come soon. The mammoth tribes had raided nearby settlements, and there was talk of the legendary Northern Lunars walking the land. The younger men tried to boast themselves into courage, the older men were largely silent, and the thing that had once been a Sidereal knew then that war would probably come to that place soon.

The thief approached Puno's rude throne, where the outcaste sat with his daiklave and his steel armor. The thief saw he was armed for battle at all times. And then, the thief departed, as invisibly as he had come. He had seen what he wished to see, heard what he needed to hear. He did not wish to listen to Sucuchi Puno's

privy council or to hear what he whispered as he bedded his concubines. The thief knew all those things already, from observation.

The secret watched itself unfold, watched the pattern it left in the abandoned web of history as the weavers spun out history. First, in the mad quilt of the First Age, and then, in the ever-narrower patterned bands that followed, the secret was a constant. Reaching the ever-advancing current, the secret dwelt on itself and then looked on. Its future was entangled. It would be a time of delicate negotiations.

Chejop Kejak, secretary to the Mouth of Peace, showed Cathak Cainan into the presence of the Mouth herself. Kejak failed to depart, and Cathak Cainan failed to notice. That was no surprise. There were lots of things people didn't notice about Chejop Kejak, like the fact that he'd been the secretary to seven successive Mouths of Peace. The unseen Kejak sidestepped and stood in the blurred world outside of fate. He listened to the distorted voice of Cainan, cajoling the Mouth to support his house in some risky political proposition.

Leave her be. How often she must suffer through this.

These few words, spoken into the mind of Cainan, checked his arguments, for the Terrestrial often felt himself to suffer under the burden of leadership, as Chejop Kejak well knew. The Aspect of Fire's tone became more wheedling and less confrontational, and Kejak nodded and smiled as Cainan gently browbeat the Mouth of Peace into support. He applied words to the mind of Cainan only twice more, to be certain the deal protected the Religious Subsidy. Cainan left, and Kejak left with him, trailing like a dust mote in his wake. Sometimes, he pitied the poor creature who had gotten herself named the Mouth of Peace. How different her job must be from what she'd imagined, and how addled she must be from all the sorceries at work upon her mind.

Kejak stepped, still unseen, into the discreet staircase just off the landing to the Mouth of Peace's office. He walked his ancient body up the narrow marble steps and emerged in his own study. He saw the acolytes had been in to update the Chief Astrologer's ceiling and nodded at the location of the planets and stars.

Kejak sat in the comfortable chair he had earned with 1,500 years of sacrifice, opened his incoming-mail safe and contemplated the bundle of silk reports before him. Starting with the luckiest (it wasn't very lucky), he opened them and read the day's bad news. There were mundane reports from his spies within the Order and throughout the Realm. Were they discovered, he would be unmasked as the secret master behind much of the Realm.

Kejak did this every evening he could see to it, and it took no few hours. He read his dispatches behind his vast teak desk, in a high, dark tower room with a ceiling of hanging ornaments. With a delicate brush, he penned his responses in emerald-green ink. He finished them as the long evening of Resplendent Air drew to a close. Then, he rose from his desk after the responses had been locked away in the outgoing-mail safe.

As he had so often done, the Exalt brushed aside the heavy velvet curtains and opened the tower window to the evening. The faint purple light of the dying day still colored the horizon. The chill night air filled the aerie, touched here and there with the smoke of the Palace's many fireplaces and stoves. Kejak looked out at the night, at the sky that sparkled with so many stars and at the black masses of the rolling uplands around the Palace Sublime. He breathed the air, and he stretched, and he tried to remember himself as he once had been. He could see it laid out before him when he slept, but now, he lacked the clarity of dreams.

Then, Kejak closed the window, and he closed the drapes, and he shut and barred the door. As much as the acolytes who tended this office knew anything about him,



they knew Kejak did this thing very often, that he made his projections and took his readings behind locked doors. In this, they were correct. Most assumed he worked from the orrery that was his ceiling. In this, they were wrong.

Kejak saw that his room was safe and secure, and then, through occult means, he confirmed that his study was, in fact, free of gods, Exalts and other prying eyes. When this was done, he turned toward a ceiling-high scroll rack that sat against one wall. Reaching out, he touched the spindle rod of a particular scroll, and the rack swung easily out from the frame. Behind it lay a door to Heaven, which Chejop Kejak proceeded to unlock and use.

With discernment unmatched, the secret selected dozens of threads from the face of the Loom. It chose threads of victory, alliance and communication, and it tangled them thoroughly with its own pattern. Then, the secret ceased to pry against itself and entered a waking state of perpetually heightened awareness that was not much different than its dreams of fate. How long had it been, the secret wondered, since it had known the precise moment when sleep became waking?

Doorways to Heaven are rare things. With one of them, you could just walk right in and out of Yu-Shan. There were other ways to get there, of course — one could summon the Calibration Gate, for instance — but they required the expenditure of Essence, and the Bureau of Heaven monitored that. The gates were just gates, and anyone could walk in and out. As a result, they were locked up tight and closely guarded by the Bureau of Heaven's celestial lion and lion dog troopers, who kept close track of who came and went.

Luckily for the Bureau of Heaven's budget, there were only so many such gates. Officially, there were 61 gates, but there were also said to be 11 informal or secret entrances. Some of them were more secret than others, but Chejop Kejak happened to have a list of them that he knew was correct.

Correct, that is, with one exception, the gate in Chejop Kejak's office. No paperwork showed the one at the top of the Palace Sublime listed, though it had been there for centuries. Nobody ever asked about it, auditors never inquired, and even though everyone in the division and probably the bureau itself knew the gate was there, nobody ever seemed to suggest that it should be put into the public record.

Whatever it was, it was watched by two celestial lions from the division's own troops, and they made certain that none save Kejak and his traveling companions used it. This only fueled the gossip, and the popular opinion among the younger members of the Bronze Faction was that the gate in Kejak's office didn't actually exist at all and was some other sort of mechanism for travel to Yu-Shan that he passed off as a gateway. They discounted it as the old-age slight of a legend whose star had, they said, faded.

Kejak stepped onto the polished marble floor in a room of scrimshaw ivory and emerald to see two celestial lions and a lesser elemental dragon waiting for him. The lions were stolid in the Exalt's presence, but the dragon fawned instinctively. As Kejak motioned the beast to cease its cringing, it didn't seem as if the elder Sidereal's star had particularly "faded."

Kejak nodded to the dragon, turned and strode from the room. After a moment of hesitation, the dragon hastened to follow. "Tell me the weather report, Gorodo," the Sidereal said to the red-maned beast who tarried solicitously behind him. Carrying his shining white-armored scales and iridescent peacock-feather plumes with deft grace, Gorodo trailed behind the ancient astrologer, chattering as he wandered the hallways of the Forbidding Manse of Ivy.

"Well, lord, the situation hasn't really changed over the last few days. There are 21 persistent errors in the Tapestry building toward their respective climaxes, divided three, five, five, four, four."

"Three in the Capital Convention, that's unusual."



"I know. I think we're just going to have to live with that. Essence expenditures among the Terrestrials have picked up considerably. More fighting practice, more use of Charms in social situations. And, of course, the Thousand Forged Dragons." The dragon walked meekly, nose pointed down, as Kejak worked his way upward through the Manse.

"The what?"

"The Thousand-Forged Dragons. Teams of savant-engineers from the Heptagram activated several of them this week to test their functionality. I'm sure you knew — I believe they're under your control?"

Kejak was bemused for a moment. "Oh, yes, yes we did. Other than that, is there anything especially bad?"

"There's a Second Circle error due soon in the Convention of Fire, the one with the beer wagon that does and doesn't kill the artist? We have a Circle on it, though."

"Whose?"

"The Gold's." They were in front of the planning room door now. Gorodo didn't have sufficient rank to view planning data, so the conversation lingered uncomfortably outside.

"Take them off it, and put someone senior on the job, or at least make sure there's someone senior there to watch. I think they're busy with their camps. Sending the Circle will mean one or two Exalts at the very most."

Gorodo whuffed his assent. The dragon found the degree to which faction politics pervaded the Sidereals to be quite disturbing. It had been an amusing schism when it was a conflict buried for 1,500 years, when it kept the Sidereals at one another's throats. Now, it was dangerous and real, and even Kejak himself admitted that it hindered their ability to mend flawed destinies. The Exalt's voice shook the dragon from his reverie.

"Tell me about the other team. What new things do we know about the Deathlords? What are the Yozis up to?"

"Nothing new from the Deathlords. Still little from the Ebon Dragon. We're continuing to shadow his people, but his operations remain somnolent. He hasn't so much as appeared in a dream for three seasons now. We think we've learned all we can from watching some of the last batch. If you don't mind, sir, I have a couple of strike requests I want you to look at."

"If we have the resources, yes. The thing with Iron Siaka, how is she doing?"

"You'd know better than me, sir. We've gotten no news."

"Well, I don't know better, so I guess we'll just be held in a state of suspense."

"I suppose so, sir."

The Exalt nodded. "I'll be out in an hour. Be waiting for me with any news about Iron Siaka and actual information about the Deathlords — and bring those death warrants too."

The dragon shook his head at the Exalt's improper terminology as the door to the planning suite closed behind the Sidereal.

There are only so many layers to the onion. There is only so much of a secret one can learn before it can no longer be a secret. The pattern can be used for only so long before it becomes monotonous and is retired. History was a story, and though it had no point, it had a beginning and an end. It was finite, and all things in it were finite as well, even the gods and even the most cunning of secrets. But the arrow does not know flight from rest, hitting from missing, and Kejak lived as the arrow did. If it was criminal to end a pattern late, then was it not also criminal to end it early?

CREDITS

Authors: Bryan Armor, Rebecca Borgstrom, Geoffrey C. Grabowski, Steve Kenson, Krister M. Michl, John Snead
Sidereal Constellation Design: Ellen P. Kiley
Storyteller Game System Design: Mark Rein•Hagen
Developer: Geoffrey C. Grabowski
Editor: John Chambers
Playtesters: Christopher M. Carter, A. Bleys Ingram, Ron King, Amul Kumar, Marichristine Storch, Eric Toth, William Van Meter
Art Direction: Brian Glass
Artists: Ed Bourelle, Ross Campbell, Eric Canete, Chynna Clugston-Major, Shane Coppage, Sherard Jackson, Chris Stevens, Andie Tong, UDON with Eric Vedder and Joe Vriens, Melissa Uran
Cover Art: UDON with Mark Brooks, Danimation and Charles Park, William O'Connor
Cover Design: Brian Glass
Layout and Typesetting: Brian Glass
Intern: Shannon Drake

SPECIAL THANKS

Bryan "Ninja Rhino" Armor, who also worked on *Abyssals* but didn't get put in the credits. D'oh!
Terry "Spyder" Gearhart and **Angela Tracey**, thanks once again for the help with the Charm trees and index.



1554 LITTON DR
 STONE MOUNTAIN, GA
 30083
 USA

© 2003 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, Mage the Ascension, World of Darkness, Aberrant and Exalted are registered trademarks of White Wolf Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Werewolf the Apocalypse, Dark Ages Vampire, Wraith the Oblivion, Changeling the Dreaming, Hunter the Reckoning,

Werewolf the Wild West, Mage the Sorcerers Crusade, Wraith the Great War, Trinity, Age of Sorrows, Second Age of Man, Exalted the Abyssals, Exalted the Dragon-Blooded, Exalted the Lunars, Exalted the Sidereals, Games of Divinity, Exalted Storyteller's Companion, the Book of Three Circles, Scavenger Sons, Savage Seas and Time of Tumult 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.

This book uses the supernatural for settings, characters and themes. All mystical and supernatural elements are fiction and intended for entertainment purposes only. This book contains mature content. Reader discretion is advised.

For a free White Wolf catalog call 1-800-454-WOLF.

Check out White Wolf online at

<http://www.white-wolf.com>; alt.games.whitewolf and rec.games.frp.storyteller

PRINTED IN CANADA



*The
Sidereals™*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	8
CHAPTER ONE: YU-SHAN	14
CHAPTER TWO: THE BUREAU OF DESTINY AND THE SIDEREAL EXALTED	50
CHAPTER THREE: CHARACTER CREATION	94
CHAPTER FOUR: TRAITS	102
CHAPTER FIVE: CHARMS AND MARTIAL ARTS	126
CHAPTER SIX: SIDEREAL ASTROLOGY	202
CHAPTER SEVEN: STORYTELLING	236



There are many savants who contend that, no matter how ill-favored an individual is, somewhere in Creation, there is at least one being who will find that individual the sole personification of beauty. They point to the Arczeckhi and the Djala panda people of the South, to show that even the grotesque or the improbable can find its mate and prosper. But the truth is that, no matter where they go, some individuals will just be plain. Iron Siaka was one such individual: with her strong shoulders and square face, muscled chest and narrow hips, she would never have been called beautiful, not even among the panda people. But she nevertheless had an abundance of character and no small amount of mannish charm, and that made her popular with a certain class of independent-minded young woman, which pleased Iron Siaka in turn.

It was with such a lovely young lady that Iron Siaka went out walking in the City of the Steel Lotus in the kingdom of An-Teng to take the evening air and find some grub.

It wasn't that she was neglecting her duties, Iron Siaka reminded herself. Her taking this kind of time off improved her job performance. It wasn't as if Chejop and the rest of the Inner Circle would be passing out furloughs anytime soon. One's free time was where one made it.

Take the demon Calymdos, a Second Circle offspring of Kimberry. He wasn't much, just a dog-man three yards tall with javelins of rusting green bronze. I mean, what was he going to do? He was a giant demon-thing who slipped through a gap in the strands of fate where the sand met the sea. It happened all the time, and there couldn't always be a Sidereal there to sprinkle salt and iron on the water. The demon Calymdos was either going to eat someone, or he was going to start a cult. Either way, Iron Siaka would know soon enough. What was she supposed to do, kick down the door of every Manse and basement temple? She was walking up a street of temples now! That was an undeniable fact.

This was subtlety. It just wasn't traditional subtlety — it didn't involve making it look like you were working. Iron Siaka was working just by walking up this jasmine-scented lantern-lit avenue of opulence with this fabulous young girl. She was keeping her eyes open! It was better than some too-strong spectacle of Essence-driven carnage that would bring the Wyld Hunt down on her head!

To her credit, Iron Siaka was paying some attention to events as they unfolded, and she began to get that queasy "you may die soon" feeling not after she left the bar. She couldn't really tell what it was that might cause the dying, which was a pretty good sign that it was, in fact, a demon — and probably the demon Calymdos. Apparently, he had been watching for pursuit, which was a shame but probably not unexpected. The Sidereal shrugged, reminding herself this was as good a way to hunt demons as any. Just more proof that taking a little time off could improve job performance.

So, Iron Siaka feigned surprise when the demon sometimes called "Lung-eater" heaved its 10-foot-tall, tentacle-covered wolf-beast body out of the shadows between two stone temples, dragging its verdigrised javelins along the ground behind it in its characteristic pose. She waved nervously to the towering, writhing terror and activated the Water Dragon Form.

"Why, demon Calymdos! I was just thinking about you. I hadn't expected to see *you* here in An-Teng!"

She whispered an aside to her companion, "This is where you run, honey."

The girl beside her screamed and ran in the pointless and uncoordinated fashion of the truly petrified, but the demon turned its attention wholly on the Sidereal. It peered at her with its beady little yellow eyes. Behind those eyes was a burning wall of hate for all that lived and was free.

Iron Siaka shook her head. "That was a nice piece of ass you chased off, Calymdos. I'm pissed."

The demon bellowed, pounding the Exalt with its mighty roar, tearing her expensive holiday robes and flattening her hair back. Head turned, face averted, the Exalt grimaced at the nauseating stench of its breath.

With her head turned, Iron Siaka could see the erymanthoi leaping from the temple fanes above her. Perfect, an ambush. Now, she could get them all at once.

So much for cutting out the spectacle of Essence-driven carnage.



INTRODUCTION

He had many names, but one nature, and this unique nature made him subject to certain laws not binding upon ordinary persons. In a compensatory fashion, he was also free from certain other laws more commonly in force. . . . And one rule by which he had very strictly to abide was that at set seasons he should overlook that portion of the All which had been allotted to him as his individual responsibility.

—John Brunner, “Imprint of Chaos”

The Sidereals have always been creatures of mystery. Even in the First Age, they kept to themselves. Alone among the Exalted, they truly are the Chosen servants of their gods, and theirs in a terrible, terrible burden. They alone know the true workings of destiny — that reality is an illusion as fragile as a soap bubble. They know that it is a forever-pouring cascade of patterned Essence that must never falter or cease.

The Sidereals originally provided advice and auspices to the Solar Deliberative, ensuring that the rule of the Exalted was anticipated and sustained in Heaven. In time, they came to feel that the growing power of the Solar Exalted and their increasingly erratic nature threatened to rend the Tapestry asunder. The Sidereals advocated the murder of the Solars to the Dragon-Blooded and, through various means, induced the majority

of the Lunars to abandon their mates at this most critical of moments.

Since then, the Sidereal Exalted alone have ruled the course of history. At first, it was stewardship, but over time, their sense of responsibility became a sense of proprietorship, and they now shape history to flow as best suits their plans.

But history has not been kind to Sidereal rule. The Shogunate was a time of war and social instability that squandered the legacy of the First Age. The Great Contagion was an unexpected disaster that almost destroyed the Tapestry itself, and the Age that followed was one of decline and forgetfulness, and thereafter, man lived by the sword and the ox-drawn plow.

Yet, the Sidereals persevered. This history was better than one rent asunder by the madness of Twilight Caste doomsday weapons activated in a fit of pique.

THIS IS NOT A COMPLETE GAME

Despite its size, **Exalted: The Sidereals** is not a complete game. It is a supplement for White Wolf's **Exalted**, a game in which characters take the roles of Solar Exalted, the heroes who were slain by the Dragon-Blooded at the behest of the Sidereal Exalted. This book doesn't include descriptions of the game's various Traits, rules on combat or a complete setting. It just has an in-depth treatment of the Sidereals, the Celestial City of Yu-Shan and the Bureau of Destiny. You'll need to at least have access to a copy of **Exalted** to use this book. Because the Sidereal Exalted are immediately involved in the fate of Creation and the politics of Heaven and the Realm, it's suggested that you also have a copy of **Games of Divinity** and **Exalted: The Dragon-Blooded**, but you should be able to get by without them.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Groups using this book will be able to play games with Sidereal Exalted characters. This book should also prove useful to Storytellers who want to present fully detailed Sidereals as Storyteller characters or who want to use the Celestial City as a setting for non-Sidereal games.

In structure, **Exalted: The Sidereals** is similar to the main **Exalted** rulebook, except that there are no Systems, Drama or Antagonists chapters. The contents are as follows:

Introduction:

The section you're reading now. It contains a statement of the book's overall character and a lexicon of important terms.

Chapter One: Yu-Shan

This chapter details the Celestial City of **Exalted** and details existence as a god or Exalt dwelling in Heaven.

Chapter Two: The Bureau of Destiny and the Sidereal Exalted

This chapter details the Sidereal Exalted, their training and their many political organizations, from the caste-based divisions of the Bureau of Destiny to the direction conventions to the purely political factions.

Chapter Three: Character Creation

This chapter contains the rules for creating Sidereal characters for use in an **Exalted** game. Though they are mechanically compatible with the Solar Exalted, Sidereals have their own unique milieu and may not combine well thematically with Solar Exalted.

Chapter Four: Traits

This chapter describes the specialized Traits used in Sidereal character creation. Traits detailed in the **Exalted** book are not discussed here. The chapter also contains a few mechanical systems unique to this book.

Chapter Five: Charms and Martial Arts

This chapter details the manipulations and slights of fate that make up the Charms used by the Sidereal Exalted.

Chapter Six: Sidereal Astrology

This chapter discusses the powerful astrological magic the Sidereal Exalted practice as part of their connection with fate.

Chapter Seven: Storytelling

The final chapter of the book discusses the special needs of storytelling a Sidereals game.

LEXICON

Most of the terminology in this book was introduced in the main **Exalted** book, and we have not reproduced that book's glossary in full. The following entries are either altered to reflect the Yu-Shan point of view or specialized vocabulary relevant to describing the Celestial City and the lives of the Sidereal Exalted.

Ambrosia: The fruit of prayers directed at a single god, Ambrosia can be used to create items of high quality in Heaven. Ambrosia is the true coin of the Celestial gods — *Quintessence* is used only by gods of the lower classes.

Arcane Fate: Prolonged manipulation of the *Tapestry* in the precincts of the *constellation* known as the Mask has left the *destinies* of the Sidereal Exalted permanently obscured behind a haze of forgetfulness, lost paperwork and misdirection. This effect is called the "Arcane Fate." Sidereals must use Essence effects or serious and prolonged contact to create any lasting bond with non-Sidereals.

astrological house: The five general groups into which the 25 *constellations* are divided. Each *division of the Bureau of Destiny* has control over one house, from which the division takes its name. The constellations are divided into houses as follows:

The Golden Barque of the Heavens (The Division of Journeys): The constellations of the Division of Journeys are the Captain, the Gull, the Mast, the Messenger and the Ship's Wheel.

The Cerulean Lute of Harmony (The Division of Serenity): The constellations of the Division of Serenity are the Ewer, the Lovers, the Musician, the Peacock and the Pillar.

The Crimson Panoply of Victory (The Division of Battles): The constellations of the Division of Battles are the Banner, the Gauntlet, the Quiver, the Shield and the Spear.

The Forbidding Manse of Ivy (The Division of Secrets): The constellations of the Division of Secrets are the Guardians, the Key, the Mask, the Sorcerer and the Treasure Trove.

The Violet Bier of Sorrows (The Division of Endings): The constellations of the Division of Endings are the Corpse, the Crow, the Haywain, the Rising Smoke and the Sword.

Celestial Bureaus, the: The Celestial Bureaucracy is divided into five bureaus, under which all the functions of Creation and Heaven fall. They are the:

Celestial Monitors of the Seasons and Weather (The Bureau of Seasons): The highly conservative Bureau of

Seasons is made up primarily of *elementals* and is given little respect. Instead, the Court of Seasons is honored. This latter group is a ceremonial body of trivial gods in charge of certain celestial festivals, but Heaven's preference for divinities knows little propriety. The Bureau of Seasons also contains Heaven's primary army and is responsible for turning the power of so-called "martial weather" on the enemies of Creation.

Commission on Abstract Matters and Celestial Concerns (The Bureau of Heaven): This bureau controls the nature of abstract reality and the administrative machinery of Heaven itself. It employs the *censors* and the celestial lions, the lion dogs and the scarab guardians and all the other direct servants of Heaven.

Divine Witnesses of Human Works and Deeds (The Bureau of Humanity): With the shrinking of Creation and the gradual decline of human civilization, the Bureau of Humanity has lost a great deal of its importance. Today, many senior members of the bureau encourage city fathers and other gods to rule humans directly in order to prop up the bureau's failing fortunes.

Most Excellent Designers of Destiny and Sidereal Conjunctions (The Bureau of Destiny): This is the bureau to which the Sidereal Exalted belong. The Bureau of Destiny maintains the *Loom of Fate*, plans history and ensures that *the Tapestry* unfolds smoothly — free of snarls and snags. In this capacity, it is Creation's first line of defense against those who would unravel the Tapestry completely, including the Fair Folk, the *Yozis* and the Deathlords.

For planning and administrative purposes, the Bureau of Destiny is divided into five divisions, one for each *astrological house*. For operations in Creation, the bureau operates in a number of *conventions*. There are five permanent conventions, one for each direction, and a number of special conventions for matters such as demon-hunting, disasters and forward planning for powerful Essence-wielders.

Superintendency of Nature Grand and Humble (The Bureau of Nature): This bureau represents the gods of the physical world and the creatures within it. The destruction of so much of Creation during the Contagion resulted in the layoff of many gods. These unemployed divinities form the majority of Heaven's unemployed squatter class.

Celestial Incarna: The seven great divinities of the heavens — the Five Maidens, Luna and the Unconquered Sun. The primordial Gaia is often counted as among these beings as well, increasing their numbers to eight, but this grouping is more a matter of convenience than an effective taxonomy. Savants of theological matters count Gaia as a being of an entirely different sort.

censor: An official, typically a lesser elemental dragon, charged with meting out justice among the gods. Censors are part of *the Bureau of Heaven*. There are 125 censors in Heaven and 7 in Creation. Censors are normally served by celestial lions and other heavenly agents.

college: One of the 25 specialist organizations of *pattern spiders* who provide support for certain kinds of stereotypical

destinies. There is one college for each *constellation*, and beings whose destinies are under the influence of a given college are said to be in its precincts. Sidereal Exalted are able to become certified initiates of these colleges and then gain the ability to invoke their effects on themselves and others. This is the foundation of *Sidereal astrology*.

constellations: Recognizable arrangements of stars that form a sort of reference shorthand for certain kinds of templated *destiny*. Each constellation has a *college of pattern spiders* associated with it. Constellations are the foundation of the Sidereals Charms and *Sidereal astrology*.

conventions: The operations divisions of *the Bureau of Destiny*. There is a convention responsible for maintaining and repairing *fate* in each elemental direction and a number of special conventions.

demon: The most numerous of the inhabitants of Malfeas, the prison-kingdom of the *Yozis*. Demons of the greater sorts are the divided souls of the *Demon Princes*, while those of the lesser sort are the creations or offspring of the greater demons.

Demon Prince: A term more commonly used to describe the *Yozis*.

destiny: Technically speaking, an object's *fate* in the large sense — the deeds it is to take part in, as opposed to its fates. As a general rule, Sidereals plan destinies, *pattern spiders* weave fates. Destiny and fate are often used interchangeably, even by Sidereals, to describe *the Tapestry* as a whole.

elemental: The semi-spontaneous offspring of natural forces, elementals are responsible for the maintenance of the natural world and for carrying out its ongoing processes. Most elementals work for *the Bureau of Seasons* or *the Bureau of Nature*.

fate: Speaking technically, the actions an item is to take, as opposed to its *destinies*, which are more general. Everything that happens to an item is, in some sense, a fate, but most fates are planned and handled transparently by the *pattern spiders*.

Five Elemental Dragons, the: The five children of Gaia, who protect their mother and who brought all the gods and *elementals* to heel in the chaotic days after the Primordial War. They are, in theory, the rulers of the Terrestrial Sphere, but for all their might, they issue few edicts and are so vast that they show little interest in Creation. It may be that the Terrestrial Exalted followers of the Immaculate Philosophy really do join them when they become spiritually advanced, for the Terrestrials partake of the same nature, but if this is the case, the Five Elemental Dragons say little of it.

Games of Divinity, the: A game invented or created by the Primordials. The Games of Divinity are explicitly *not* the use of humans as pawns (though there are many gods who do play such games), but are, in fact, something greater and more mysterious.

Jade Pleasure Dome, the: The great palace in Heaven where the *Celestial Incarna* and their guests play *the Games*

of Divinity. Access to this palace is forbidden save to invited guests, and the Exalted are never invited.

little god: A god not of the *Celestial Incarna*. Even the least gods are prideful beings and resent being referred to in the diminutive or reminded of their low station. All but savants, the Exalted and the followers of the Immaculate Order simply call these beings “gods.”

Loom of Fate, the: The structure upon which the *pattern spiders* weave the fabric of *destiny* according to the plans of the Maidens and the elder Sidereals.

pattern spiders: Spiders made by the Primordial machine-god Autochthon in order to assist the Maidens in operating the *Loom of Fate*.

Quintessence: Quintessence is the fruit of prayers offered to Heaven in general. Quintessence collects in basins in the jade prayer plazas of *Yu-Shan* and is distributed among the gods for their subsistence. It is considered a sign of low status to draw one’s own Quintessence.

Sidereal astrology: Unlike normal astrology, which only predicts the future by the location of the stars, Sidereal astrology changes the future by conveying specific orders to a given *college of pattern spiders* to change the location of stars.

spirit: A term used by some savants for those gods not of the Celestial Order. In common usage, it is just a synonym for god.

Tapestry, the: The fabric of interlocking *fates* and *destinies* that makes up Creation. This endless cascade of Essence is drawn from the Wyld, spun and woven to fill each moment and then discarded when the instant has passed. The Tapestry is woven on the *Loom of Fate*.

Yozi: One of the Primordials defeated by the Exalted in the Primordial War but not slain. These beings were made to swear oaths of surrender on their own names and imprisoned in the prison-kingdom of Malfeas. The Yozi known as the Ebon Dragon is in charge of the *Demon Princes’* attempts to escape from their prison and, thus, the one most commonly encountered by the Sidereals.

Yu-Shan: The greatest city ever built, the Heavenly City of Yu-Shan is the abode of the *Celestial Incarna*, the home of the *Games of Divinity* and, also, the dwelling place of all those *little gods* who represent universal principals. Yu-Shan was once the abode of the Primordials in the days before the Primordial War and, today, has fallen into a state of decay, as the gods ignore its maintenance to instead play the *Games of Divinity*.

LITERARY RESOURCES

Exalted: The Sidereals is largely inspired by the setting of **Exalted** itself. While many things informed the book’s general feel, the way to best prepare to run a game about characters who are celestial officials is to read all you

can about the setting, specifically the setting’s cosmology. Interpret this as a sales ploy if you insist, but the best resources for Sidereals are probably other **Exalted** supplements, specifically (in order of relevance):

Exalted: The Dragon Blooded. WWGS. WWGS. Atlanta, GA ISBN 1-58846-656-6

Games of Divinity. WWGS. WWGS. Atlanta, GA. ISBN 1-58846-659-0

Exalted Storyteller’s Companion. WWGS. WWGS. Atlanta, GA. ISBN 1-58846-650-7

Scavenger Sons. WWGS. WWGS. Atlanta, GA. ISBN 1-58846-652-3

“Spirit Exiles of the Western Ocean” **Time of Tumult.** Cogman, Genevieve. WWGS. Atlanta, GA. ISBN 1-58846-655-8

The Book of Three Circles. WWGS. WWGS. Atlanta, GA. ISBN 1-58846-651-1

Creatures of the Wyld. WWGS. WWGS. Atlanta, GA. ISBN 1-58846-663-9

The following books also inspired **Exalted: The Sidereals** to varying degrees. They are also listed in order of relevance, but all are relatively important to the feel of the final game.

Brunner, John. *The Compleat Traveller In Black.* Bluejay Books Inc. New York, NY. ISBN 0-312-94060-2

The Traveller in Black is probably the classiest powerful destiny-manipulating sorcerer out there. While they decline somewhat in quality as the amount of chaos in the Traveller’s world decreases, the earlier stories, especially “Imprint of Chaos,” were the major inspiration for the Sidereals. You should check them out.

John Crowley. *The Great Work of Time.* Bantam Spectra. New York, NY. ISBN ??

A beautiful and baroque story of a man’s involvement in a conspiracy to shape history to see that the Victorian British Empire never ends. This can be a difficult text, but it’s the other major inspiration for the Sidereal Exalted.

Anthony C. Yu, trans. *The Journey to the West.* University of Chicago Press. Chicago, IL. ISBN ??

How the impudent monkey Tripitika was ordered by Heaven to accompany Hsuan-tsang. You just need to get the first volume — the celestial politics in that volume alone will give you ideas for a dozen plots in the Celestial City. A must for any Sidereals game and a major inspiration for Yu-Shan.

William S. Buck, trans. *Ramayana.* University of California Press. Berkley, CA. ISBN 0-520-04394-4

Very anthropomorphic gods and godlike heroes combine in a setting where holy men eat devils and wicked spirits can engage in ascetic meditation in order to force the gods to grant them immortality. Another excellent resource for running games where gods and men walk together.



VENDEL
81.23

Beneath the temperamental dome of Heaven's sky, Shepherd of the North Star waited impatiently beside the marble stairs leading down to the glittering quicksilver canal, with its broad golden stripe down middle for priority traffic. Standing around him at a precisely polite distance of 17 feet, pretending he didn't exist, was a small throng of better-than-thou upscale divinities. They were mostly office managers and scribe-pit overseers from the opulent (but by no means royal) townhouses that lined the street.

The Shepherd sighed at their furtive glances and imperious bearings, and they monitored him nervously in turn, afraid the Sidereal would demand the full obeisance his station deserved and ruin both their schedules and the seams on their freshly laundered apparel. The Shepherd politely made no acknowledgement whatsoever of their existence, obviating their need to cast themselves down and grovel.

This wouldn't have happened back in the good old days. Back when things ran properly in Heaven, these stuffy gods would merely have had to check their stride or stop to admire the road of tasteful little walled villas in order to escape any interaction with one another. By the time they got to the bottom of the glitteringly paved road, their fellow second-shift assistant master of accounts would have boarded his, hers or its own gondola and been out of sight up the canal. They'd have made a funny little procession on their way down the hill each morning, each one proud and straight-backed in its Essence, each one malingering just a little further behind to maintain a proprietous distance.

Now, in these fallen days, the procession had a tendency to form an uncomfortable puddle at the bottom of the hill, leaving a small crowd of upwardly mobile gods to mill listlessly and wait until the Celestial Transit System could shift boats their way. And so, they were all just waiting for their gondolas, admiring the heavenly shrubbery and staring in awe-struck horror at the Shepherd of the North Star's back because this was not the sort of neighborhood that saw a lot of Celestial Exalted traffic.

The Shepherd sighed again and set his little audience of Yu-Shan's middle managers to terrified quivering with his regret for the location of his mistress' apartment. It was a great location for the little pagoda he shared with the Queen of Nightingales, but every time he decided he didn't want to take a cloud to work, this happened.

But now, the crane-headed master of the dock beckoned. Shepherd of the North Star took his staff from the hands of his black-clad raven familiar, and the two of them walked down to the dock together. Buku paid the master of the dock, and a boat slid up from the quicksilver depths. It was one of the better sort of dragon boats, and his familiar tipped the dockmaster with more Ambrosia.

Buku took the rudder, while the Shepherd gently pushed the boat away from the dock with the butt of his staff. By the time he had taken his seat and the god-raven had gotten the dragon boat underway, the Shepherd had entirely forgotten about the milling little convention of gods back at the dock, waiting for their gondolas. What was there to remember, really? It was just another gold-cobbled lane in a second-rate bedroom neighborhood, seen from the wrong side of a long night of loving in the feathery embrace of Sweet Lament. It was just another footnote to the morning. Another footnote and another delay.

Shepherd of the North Star shook his hand impatiently, gesturing toward the center of the quicksilver canal.

"Take the gold road, Buku."

The god-raven nodded and cawed softly. Then he shifted the rudder, sending the dragon boat on a smooth arc into the golden fluid at the center of the canal. There was an instant of hesitation as the canal scrutinized the boat's passengers and concluded they had sufficient authorization to use the channel. Then, the scenery blurred further, and a great golden pleasure barge going in the opposite direction passed in impossibly slow motion, the goddesses on the front singing and casting cherry blossoms over the channel before them.

Then, the god-raven was once again shifting the rudder to swing the boat out into the silver edges of the canal, but now, they were at the dock outside the Lotus, where lion dogs meticulously sniffed visitors, checking for bad intentions and hostile sorcery. Another sign of bad times.

Shepherd of the North Star stepped briskly out of the boat and passed the checkpoint unchallenged but still delayed an impatient moment to allow the dogs to give his familiar a once-over. The instant they were away from the security cordon, he handed his staff back to the raven.

In was just another morning in Yu-Shan, and Shepherd of the North Star was already late for his first meeting.



CHAPTER ONE YU-SHAN

Yu-Shan is a pocket in the fabric of Creation similar to but far larger than any of the individual sanctums maintained by various gods. It is as old as Creation and was originally built by the Primordials during the construction of Creation. The underlying geography of Yu-Shan is surprisingly familiar to mortal visitors — Yu-Shan originally possessed exactly the same size, shape and topography of the Blessed Isle. Every hill, valley and river in the Blessed Isle is mirrored in this vast metropolis of the gods. However, their respective inhabitants have greatly changed both Yu-Shan and the Blessed Isle. Instead of the ancient and somewhat decrepit cities, the vast farms, the multitude of towns, villages and hunting preserves that are all found on the Blessed Isle, Yu-Shan is a single great city. Although it contains within its boundaries parks and orchards the size of small city-states, the streets, canals, villas, markets, plazas and similar constructions stretch from one end of Yu-Shan to the other. However, the most obvious differences between Yu-Shan and the Blessed Isle are at the edges and the center.

THE WALL AND THE SKY DOME

Instead of a coastline surrounded by a great ocean, a huge wall of purest shining adamant surrounds Yu-Shan. This wall is more than a dozen yards thick and 30 yards high, and there is quite literally nothing beyond it. Like the sanctums of various gods, Yu-Shan is a bounded space.

The only way to go beyond this wall is to exit one of the 61 gates into Creation. Forty-eight of these gates are spaced evenly around this wall, while the remaining 13 are located near the center of the city (see p. 17). Above the wall rises the dome of the sky. The sky dome joins seamlessly to the wall and covers the entirety of Yu-Shan. Like the wall, the sky dome is impossible to breach or mark. Even the most massive attacks leave both the wall and the sky dome completely unscarred.

The sky dome is a smooth hemisphere that glows with a radiance that shifts depending upon which of the highest gods is currently leading the Games of Divinity. When the Unconquered Sun is in the lead, his brilliant golden image shines down from the exact center of the dome and illuminates Yu-Shan as if at noon on a cloudless midsummer day. When Luna is winning, the sky is as bright as a full moon on a starless early evening, and her silver and eternally changing image moves in seemingly random patterns across the sky. Most of the time one of these two deities is in the lead. When they briefly tie, both of their images shine down, and the sky is as bright as early twilight.

However, although these two are its best players, they are not alone in playing the Games of Divinity. During the occasions when one of the Five Maidens is in the lead, the sky is as black as midnight during the dark of the moon and is full of stars, the brightest of which is the Maiden who is currently in the lead. Because the Unconquered Sun and

Luna trade off first place with some regularity, day and night in Yu-Shan are not as capricious as some of the stories about this city maintain. However, new visitors are still often surprised to find that the brief darkness of an exceedingly short and moonless night sometimes follows an equally short but unusually bright day. Even more confusingly, the cool pleasant light of the full moon in the evening can follow either a dark moonless night or a sunny day. As a few overly proud and foolish rebels have discovered, the images that light the sky are all merely huge two-dimensional phantoms. Striking them with great force or potent magics has no effect on the images, the gods they represent or the sky dome.

DEMATERIALIZING IN YU-SHAN

Like the Underworld, Yu-Shan is a spiritual realm. One of its most important differences from Creation is that it is impossible to dematerialize in Yu-Shan. There is simply no place to go when one attempts to dematerialize there. If a character tries, the attempt simply fails — no Essence is spent, and nothing happens. It is also impossible to sneak into Yu-Shan while dematerialized. Everyone and everything in Yu-Shan is dematerialized. It is also impossible to use the Materialize Charm in Yu-Shan. The only way to leave is through one of the 61 gateways into Creation. Exiting one of these gateways instantly returns the characters to Creation in their natural state — Exalts and elementals are materialized, while the various small gods are dematerialized.

THE JADE PLEASURE DOME

While the center of the Blessed Isle is dominated by the towering Imperial Mountain, the heart of Yu-Shan is instead covered by the great Jade Pleasure Dome wherein the most powerful gods play the Games of Divinity (see *Games of Divinity*, p. 13). This dome is two miles across and almost one mile tall. It shines brilliantly in the light of both the Unconquered Sun and Luna and lights Yu-Shan at night. It is also completely off limits to anyone not invited by one of the Celestial Incarna.

It has 25 great gates around its circumference — a half-dozen celestial lions guard each gateway. Anyone who fights or sneaks his way past the celestial lion must still face the potent wards on these gateways. All uninvited visitors take 10 levels of aggravated damage that ignores all armor and similar protections. These wards utterly destroy anyone they kill — not even dust remains. Anyone who made it past both of these deadly trials and actually interrupted the Games of Divinity would then face the terrifying wrath of the Unconquered Sun and his fellow players.

Only a tiny handful of rebels and thieves have ever made their way past the celestial lions, and the wards on these gateways slew all of these foolish trespassers. No one has ever set so much as one foot inside these gateways without an invitation. Only the highest gods ever receive such invitations. The Celestial Incarna never invite members of the Exalted, no matter how powerful, to witness the Games of Divinity, nor are Exalts ever given a personal audience with the Unconquered Sun, Luna or any of the Five Maidens. Although no Exalt has ever see the inside of the Pleasure Dome, there is a brisk trade among both minor deities and certain of the Sidereal Exalted in dreamstones imprinted by gods who were permitted to observe or even play one move of the games.

Dreams of the Games of Divinity are exceptionally intense and vivid. Dreams of actually making a move in the games can actually be addictive. Since Exalts and other mortals are somewhat less resistant to these dreams than gods, many deities with access to such dreamstones will tempt Sidereals with a chance to experience a dream of actually playing the Games of Divinity, hoping that the Exalts will become hopelessly addicted to this dream. More than one Sidereal has spent weeks or even months under the thrall of a god who holds such a dreamstone. Eventually, the Celestial censors will discover the Exalt's dereliction of duty and resolve the problem (occasionally by executing the Sidereal), but during that time, the addict may perform a host of extremely regrettable actions in return for continued access to the dreamstone.

ENTERING AND LEAVING YU-SHAN

There are 61 gates into Yu-Shan from Creation. Each gate is located in the heart of a First Age city or near some important First Age temple or shrine. There are 12 gates in each elemental quarter of the world and another 12 on the Blessed Isle. Each gate is associated with a specific week in the year, and glyphs in Old Realm representing a specific week adorn the lintels of all these gateways. All 12 gates associated with a specific season are located in the elemental direction associated with that season. For example, the 12 gates aligned to the weeks in the season of water are located in the West. All gates are on dry land, but some may be on tiny islands or in the middle of trackless wastes. Three are currently located in the Wyld, and two are now in shadowlands. The 61st gate is the mysterious Calibration Gate, which moves to a different location every dawn (see below).

In Yu-Shan, 48 of these 61 gates are spaced evenly around the circumference of the adamant wall surrounding the Celestial Metropolis. In Creation, each gateway is slightly different, but all contain an indestructible archway (which can be real or purely symbolic) made from a combination of orichalcum, moonsilver, starmetal and jade. Each archway is four yards tall and three yards wide. When activated by a spirit with the Materialize or Dematerialize

DREAMSTONES OF THE GAMES OF DIVINITY

Being in the presence of the Games of Divinity is an awesomely powerful experience, and everyone who views the Games being played will dream vividly about it for many days to come. No one who experiences a dreamstone imprinted by someone who recently saw or played the Games will ever forget the experience. Having a dream of watching the games produces a feeling of overwhelming joy in all who see it.

On rare occasions, one of the players will reward an important deity by allowing this god to make a single move of the Games. Almost all of these gods then make several dreamstones of this experience. These dreamstones produce boundless joy and the feeling of near-limitless power in all who experience them. The experience is so overwhelming wonderful that even before someone becomes addicted, her player must still make a Temperance roll with a difficulty of 2 to have the character avoid using the stone again within the next day. Reduce the difficulty of this roll to 1 if the character can go more than a full day without using it. After three full days, players of unaddicted characters do not need to make further Temperance rolls. Unfortunately, unlike dreams of merely watching the Games, these dreams are also highly addictive.

Every time a character uses one of these dreamstones, her player must make a Stamina + Resistance roll for the character with a difficulty equal to 1+ the number of times she has experienced this dream in the last month. Failing this roll means that the character will do almost anything to gain access to the stone again. A character whose player failed this roll won't risk certain death, and her player can make Temperance and Conviction rolls for the character to resist offers that involve the character violating her innermost convictions. However, addicts of these dreams can easily be persuaded to agree to unreasonable bargains or to perform acts they otherwise never would. Every week after this roll is failed, the character's player can make another roll — the difficulty of each of these rolls is one less than the last roll. Success on any of these rolls allows the character to overcome her addiction. However, if the character experiences this dream again, the cycle of addiction can begin again.

Any mortal or Exalt whose player botches any of these Resistance rolls will do literally anything to gain access to one of these stones. No act is too evil or horrific, and a promise of even a single night with one of these stones could get the character to mortgage her soul and murder all of her loved ones. If deprived of the stone for more than two days, the character will lose all interest in both food and sleep. If the character survives for a month without access to the stone, her player can make another Stamina + Resistance roll for the character. If the roll succeeds, she has kicked the addiction, but she will also permanently lose a point of Willpower. Gods are more resilient to the games — reduce the difficulty of all Resistance rolls by 1, and treat all botches as simple failures.

Charm, by the spell Open the Spirit Door (see p. 122) or by any other ability or artifact that allows characters to enter sanctums, everyone passing through the gateway enters a large hallway located inside the adamant wall. At one end of this corridor is the gateway back to Creation, while the other ends in a gateway in the inner side of the wall leading into Yu-Shan. All of these hallways are 50 feet long and 30 feet wide. Inside each corridor, there are three celestial lions charged with guarding the entrance to Yu-Shan. The entrance into the Celestial City is barred with an adamant gate. If someone managed to defeat the three celestial lions, he is still faced with a door with a soak of 30B/25L that is immune to all damage not boosted by Charms, sorcery or weapons made from one of the Five Magical Materials. Characters must do a minimum of 60 damage levels to the door to create a hole large enough to crawl through.

Opening this door from either side requires two celestial lions to ask the door to open. Except for Celestial gods with an Essence of 7 or higher, no other force in Creation can open these doors. Even if someone manages to force the celestial lions to open the door, another six celestial lions are waiting outside. Attempting to fight one's way

into Yu-Shan is as fruitless a task as attempting to gain entrance to the Jade Pleasure Dome without an invitation.

Twelve of the gateways to Yu-Shan are on the Blessed Isle itself. The Blessed Isle was once the home of the gods, in the time when the Primordials controlled Yu-Shan. As a result, going from the Blessed Isle to Yu-Shan is somewhat different from entering from the rest of Creation. On the Blessed Isle, all gateways to Yu-Shan lead to one of 12 entry corridors arranged in a circular pavilion a mile in diameter that is located approximately 20 miles from the Jade Pleasure Dome. Each gateway is a large room made of the finest carved jade and attended by a trio of celestial lions. The defenses on these gateways are identical to those on the 48 gateways from the Threshold. The Calibration Gate is also located in this cluster of 13 gateways.

GAINING ENTRANCE TO YU-SHAN

Regardless of their location, the reception visitors receive at each gate is identical. The celestial lions allow any deity with an Essence of 5 or higher or any Celestial Exalt with an Essence of 6 or higher into Yu-Shan without question. These guardians extend the same courtesy to



any god or Celestial Exalt who has a residence in Yu-Shan (one or more dots of the Celestial Manse Background), to God-Blooded who have a parent or sibling living in Yu-Shan and to all Solar Exalted who are members of the Eclipse Caste. In addition, Sidereal Exalted who are on a mission need only present their credentials — the celestial lions instantly admit anyone traveling on business for any of the five bureaus.

Each of these sorts of permitted visitors may bring along as many as a dozen companions. Visitors are allowed to wander freely in Yu-Shan, so long as they and their companions obey all laws. All other Celestial Exalted, including Sidereal Exalts who are not currently on a mission and who do not have a residence in Yu-Shan must state their business before the celestial lions will allow them in. They do not permit visitors to enter Yu-Shan without good reason. Those visitors who are permitted to enter Yu-Shan are also generally assigned guides or escorts to help them complete their business.

Although most celestial lions remain somewhat faithful to the Celestial Order, few other gods do. Given the current corrupt state of Heaven, many guides and escorts will demand bribes and favors before they provide even the most minimal aid to visitors. These bribes generally take the form of requests for the visitors to perform some sort of action back in Creation. Such actions can range from performing an assassination to making an offering of

flowers at a specific shrine. Bribes of artifacts or various exceptionally rare commodities such as dreamstones are also acceptable payments. Many gods will attempt to persuade one of the Celestial Exalted to promise to perform an unspecified favor at some later time — only the foolish or the desperate accept these offers. Unspecified favors are often both difficult and costly to perform when they come due.

Dragon-Blooded and mortals who do not have relatives living in Yu-Shan are beneath the notice of the celestial lions and are never allowed into the Celestial City unless they accompany a god or one of the Celestial Exalted. Even if the celestial lions permit a mortal or Dragon-Blood into Yu-Shan, these beings have a status no higher than the lowest servant. The deity or Exalt who accompanies them is personally responsible for any problems caused by any such Dragon-Bloods or mortals. Also, the celestial lions may freely execute such lesser beings for any serious offenses that they are either caught committing or that they admit performing. Gods often use memory-probing Charms to prove the guilt of a suspicious servant or other lesser being. Although it is at least a Severity 2 offense (see p. 36) to use such Charms on a resident of or a visitor to Yu-Shan without a Celestial writ, mortals and Dragon-Bloods have no such protections. While they are in Yu-Shan, Dragon-Bloods and mortals are living property, like a pet or a familiar.

CELESTIAL LIONS

Description: Celestial lions are incorruptible guardians who protect most of the important places in Heaven — the honorable ones cannot be bribed to shirk or ignore their duty. However, like most Celestial gods, when they abandon tradition and the Celestial Path, they become either glorious or terrible beyond all words. Celestial lions all appear to be identical. They are heavy-bodied lions that stand three yards high at the shoulder and appear to be made of mirror-polished orichalcum. Celestial lions are all extremely proud and will devour anyone who does not offer them proper respect.

Sanctum: Celestial lions have no sanctums. Those that are off duty for a time use their charms to travel to Yu-Shan, where they all have small mansions.

Attributes: Strength 12, Dexterity 6, Stamina 10, Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 5, Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 4, Valor 4

Abilities: Athletics 5, Awareness 5, Dodge 5, Endurance 5, Linguistics 5, Lore 5, Martial Arts 5, Occult 5, Presence 5, Resistance 5, Socialize 3, Stealth 3, Survival 5

Backgrounds: Influence 2

Suggested Charms: Camouflage, Essence Bite, Hoodwink, Host of Spirits, Instill Obedience, Materialize, Measure the Wind, Paralyze, Principle of Motion, Sense Domain, Spirit-Cutting, Stillness, Tracking, Uncanny Prowess, Words of Power

Cost To Materialize: 55

Base Initiative: 11

Attack:

Claw: Speed 17 Accuracy 20 Damage 18L Defense 18

Bite: Speed 14 Accuracy 14 Damage 24L Defense 11

Dodge Pool: 10 **Soak:** 30L/30B (Orichalcum hide, 25L/20B)

Willpower: 8 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 5 **Essence Pool:** 102

Other Notes: None

Most gods consider Fair Folk, Abyssal Exalted and demons to be the enemies of both Heaven and all of Creation. The celestial lions never allow demons to enter Yu-Shan, even escorted by one of the Exalted. This prohibition includes bound demon servants. Fair Folk and Abyssal Exalted may only enter if a Celestial Exalt or a god with an Essence of 6 or more accompanies them. Even if the guardians let them in, these visitors are viewed as visiting enemies — at least one celestial lion will never leave the visitor's side, so long as she is in Yu-Shan.

UNUSUAL GATEWAYS

The majority of the Celestial gateways in Creation are located in ancient ruins such as Rathess (see **Scavenger Sons**, pp. 29-30, and **Ruins of Rathess**) or in cities such as Nexus that have been continually inhabited since the First Age. However, a few are quite unusual and are worthy of special mention. All these gateways are listed by number, the numbers refers to the designation of the Gateways listed on the inside cover of this book.

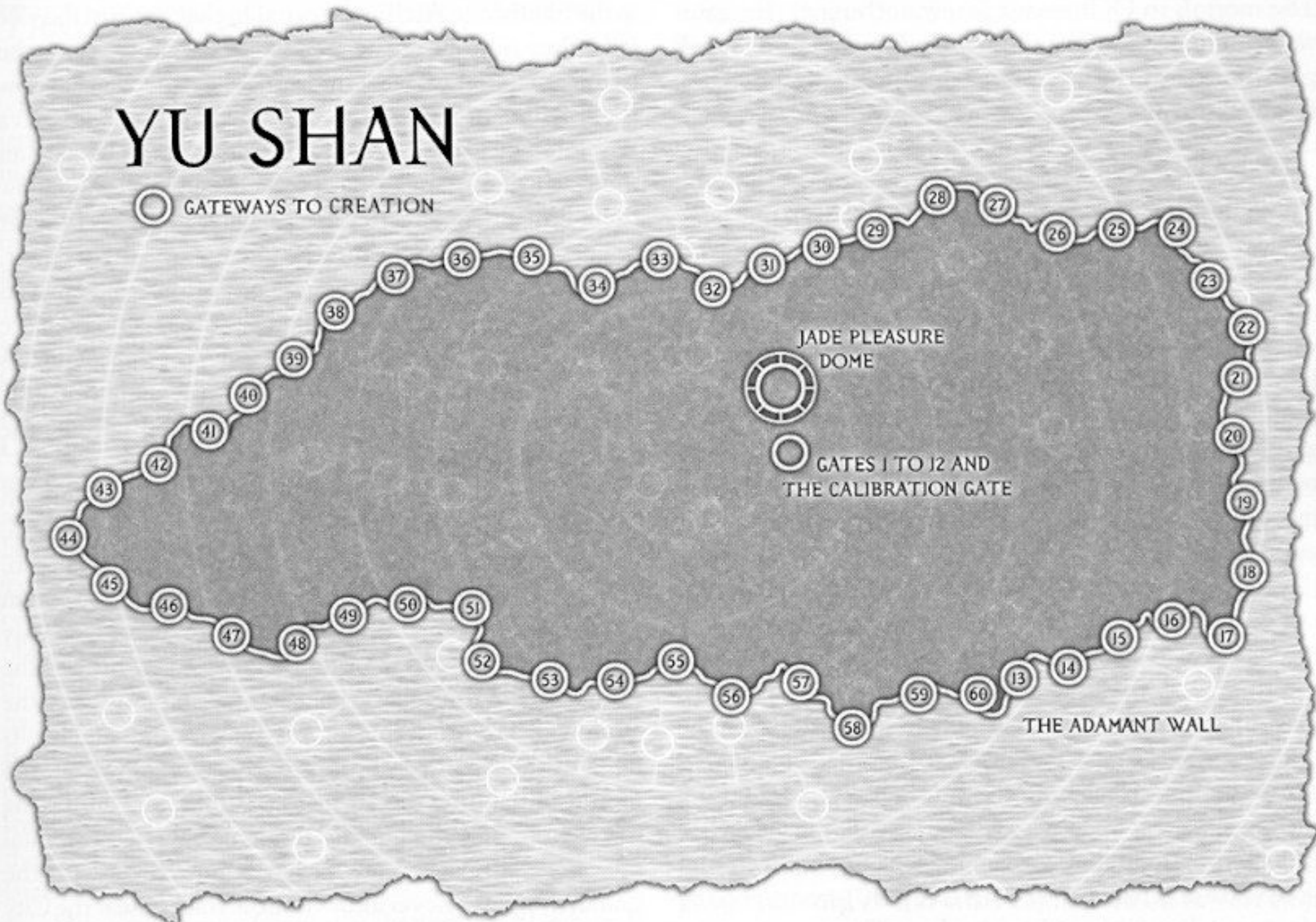
THE BLESSED ISLE

Gateway 1: This gateway is located close to the top of the Imperial Mountain. This region is off-limits to everyone but the Sidereal Exalted. During the First Age, the capital city of Meru was built on the slopes of the Imperial Mountain, and a portion of the upper part of the mountain was the location of a vast and ancient academy whose existence predated the fall of the Primordials. In a series of vast and elaborate catacombs built into the depths of the

Imperial Mountain, mortal, Exalted and divine seekers after knowledge used to study arcane arts, experiment with new magics and learn long-forgotten paths to physical, mental and spiritual perfection. Today, most of the academy is sealed with powerful wards, and much of the rest is tainted with dangerous magics that can twist, slay or drive mad even the most powerful Sidereals. Daring gods and foolhardy Exalts have found great treasures of knowledge in the academy's catacombs, but many who seek more such wonders die raving or never return. Most Sidereals stay in the safe but long ago looted portions of the fallen academy near the gateway and the doorway to the outside.

THE NORTH

Gateway 31: This gateway is not actually located in the mountain-city of Gethamane. It is, instead, in the upper portions of the underways that extend deep underneath Gethamane and connect with similar chthonic passages found throughout Creation. Long ago, this was where Exalts and gods came to meet with the eldritch beings known as the lightless walkers that have lived deep under the ground since the earliest days of the Primordials. The gateway is a few hours walk above the lightless city of these semi-humanoid, purple-eyed creatures who inhabit the much of the Northern portions of the underways. These creatures are utterly inhuman, and while some are willing to trade information, exotic goods and ancient artifacts with brave Exalts, they often ask for strange or horrific prices to be paid in exchange, such as the heart of an Exalt's child or a fragment of glass buried in an ancient Solar tomb.



RIGHTS IN HEAVEN

All deities and Celestial Exalts visiting or living in Yu-Shan have specific rights guaranteed to them by the Bureau of Heaven and the Unconquered Sun. Violating these rights is at least a Severity 2 offense, and so, the celestial lions and other diving beings who enforce the Celestial law avoid violating them.

These beings cannot be fined or imprisoned without a trial. Murder or assault are serious crimes but can be excused if the accused acted in self-defense. Also, residents and divine or Celestial Exalted visitors to Heaven are immune from having either their persons or their residences searched without their permission, unless the searchers have evidence that the subjects committed an offense and the search is being used to prove this supposition. Anyone who believes that their rights were violated may register a complaint. If the judge finds the complaint valid, then the god who violated the subject's rights is guilty of an offense (see p. 36 to determine the severity). If the subject was charged with any offense based upon these violations of rights, then the severity of the breach of rights is subtracted from the severity of the subject's crime.

For Example: If a random search (a Severity 2 [see p. 36] crime if done on any divine being with an Essence less than 6) turns up someone smuggling out one of the peaches of immortality (a Severity 5 crime), then the smuggler is only guilty of a Severity 3 offense.

Mortals, Dragon-Blooded and other lesser beings have no such rights in Yu-Shan and must rely upon their allies or patrons for protection. The only exception is during the Carnival of Meeting (see *Games of Divinity*, pp. 19-20). All visitors to Yu-Shan who remain within the boundaries of the carnival are accorded full rights. Abyssal Exalted and Fair Folk nobles who visit Yu-Shan are also accorded full rights because the Bureau of Heaven does not want to precipitate a serious diplomatic incident.

The mortals in Gethamane know nothing of this gateway, and those using it to visit Gethamane must sneak past the guards the city places on the openings leading down to the underways.

THE EAST

Gateway 21: This gateway is located deep in a large Wyld zone that extends outside of the boundaries of Creation. The gateway is 90 miles outside of Creation in the Bordermarches of the Wyld, at the edge of the region where the Bordermarches become the Middlemarches. However, the gateway's powerful enchantments have stabilized a region that extends for a quarter of a mile around it. As a result, this area is a stable zone of normal reality inside the Wyld. It is also one of the primary meeting points between the gods and the Sidereal Exalts and the Fair Folk.

The gateway itself is located in the ruins of the lost city of Xu-Lak. Although these ruins were long ago looted of anything of value, the celestial palace, which is located less than a dozen yards from the gateway, still contains most of the lights and other built-in amenities that the residents of the First Age took for granted. Normally, emissaries from Heaven to the Fair Folk live here during their visits — few deities or Exalts trust the Fair Folk enough to sleep in their gossamer mansions. Five celestial lions and a dozen minor servants (see p. 30) are assigned by Heaven to live in the celestial palace. These spirits make certain that visiting emissaries from Heaven are comfortable and prevent the Fair Folk from casting their glamours on this palace.

The local Fair Folk nobles have transformed most of the remaining portions of Xu-Lak into a vast palace. In addition to being the largest Fair Folk estate in the Northeast, the nobles who control this palace have also made it a place where Fair Folk from all over the world can come to negotiate with both their fellows and the gods. Using the gateway to Yu-Shan and their own exotic magic, the Fair Folk can request an audience with various gods or Exalted. Since the Fair Folk cannot enter Yu-Shan, the gods must come to Xu-Lak.

The chaotic and deadly grandeur of Fair Folk politics is even less stable and organized than mortal politics. However, most of the powerful Fair Folk nobles understand the necessity of having a somewhat neutral place where they can discuss alliances and attempt to prevent feuds from becoming so serious that they disrupt their other pleasures. Because Fair Folk nobles who wish to make alliances with rogue gods and foolish Exalts already come here, Xu-Lak has become a meeting place for the highest nobles to spin their poisonous schemes.

THE WEST

Gateway 39: Not only is this gateway located on the island of Darkmist, in the heart of the shadowland known

as the Skullstone Archipelago, it is in the center of the vast jade plaza in front of the great edifice that was once the island's celestial palace. Unfortunately, this palace is now the dwelling of the Deathlord known as the Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Water. The Deathlord rarely takes an interest in emissaries from Heaven and will only allow them an audience if they are carrying messages of great import or offers of opportunities for great wealth or power. Due to a pact forged centuries ago, visitors from Heaven can enter and leave freely, so long as they spend no more than two full nights here. The Silver Prince and his deathknights hunt all visitors from Yu-Shan who stay longer as if they were wild game. Few who become the Deathlord's quarry survive.

Gateway 44: Although no mortal charts mark an island here, this gateway is built on a circular jade platform, 20 yards across, located in the middle of the open ocean. A five yard wide unbreakable glass tube leading down from the center of this platform connects it to the sunken City of the Shining Reefs. During the First Age, this was the capital city of the aquatic pelagials (see *Creatures of the Wyld*, pp. 93-94). In this long ago era, mortals and Exalts lived in the air-filled portions of this city. However, the mortals inhabiting the air-filled portions died during the Contagion, and the aquatic residents reverted to brutal savagery. Although a few pelagials now trade with the Guild, they have never allowed those traders near the City of the Shining Reefs. However, this city is filled with ancient artifacts. Brave gods and Sidereals occasionally venture down to the abandoned outskirts of the city, attempting to recover some of these wonders before they are discovered and set upon by angry pelagials and the trained siaka and giant squid that guard their treasures.

THE CALIBRATION GATE

As was stated earlier, the gate marked with the glyph for the five days of Calibration moves constantly. Every dawn, it vanishes from its current location and, in an instant, reappears somewhere new. However, during Calibration, on the day of the Carnival of Meeting, it moves immediately after it has been used. There is no obvious pattern to the gate's movements. One day, it might appear in the center of Lookshy. The next, it might be located in the blazing deserts of the South near the edge of the Wyld. The only limits are that the gate must appear on some solid surface (which has on a few rare occasions been the deck of a ship or even the back of a behemoth) and that this gate only appears within the current boundaries of Creation — it never appears in the Wyld. Sidereal Exalted can use Sidereal astrology to predict where the gate will appear next or to determine where it currently is (see p. 229). Using the Lunar Exalted Charm Divining the Hidden Truth (see *Lunars*, pp. 184-185) to locate the Calibration Gate is a difficulty 2 roll. Also, many Sidereals know a spell that allows them to summon the Calibration Gate (see p. 123).

TRAVEL IN YU-SHAN

Yu-Shan is vast, more than 4,000 miles across at its widest — travel from one part of it to another can be a lengthy process. The need for speedy travel is made even more urgent because many of the Celestial gods use the gateways into Yu-Shan as a shortcut to rapidly travel from one portion of Creation to another. Since traveling all of the way across Creation requires of journey of more than 12,000 miles, any way to reduce this distance is invaluable. Unfortunately, the journey from a Water gate north of Coral to a Fire gate near Yane could still require that the Exalt to travel several thousand miles through Yu-Shan. Doing so is faster yet more difficult than travel in the mortal world, in large part because, even in these decayed and corrupt times, travel within Yu-Shan is highly regulated. Casting spells such as Stormwind Rider is illegal in Yu-Shan and can result in the caster being fined, banished or even entombed alive for many hundreds of years — few of the gods are willing to put up with a speeding whirlwind disrupting their tea rituals or their gambling parties. Any Exalt lucky enough to have a warbird (see **Ruins of Rathess**, pp. 88-89) or wings of the raptor (see **The Book of Three Circles**, p. 95) may freely use them so long as they stay high enough not to disturb any of the gods. However, the gateways into Yu-Shan are too small to bring in most large flying vehicles.

Using movement Charms is similarly problematic. If the Charm causes a significant disturbance or even large amounts of noise, the Exalt could be cited for using it. As a result, wise Exalts use the transportation facilities Yu-Shan offers to all its residents. The most impressive and widespread of these is the network of quicksilver canals that traverse the entirety of Yu-Shan. All of these canals are 30 yards wide, and they are divided into two separate sorts of lane. The two outer portions of the canal are each nine yards wide and shine a brilliant silver, while the inner, brilliant gold portion of the canal is reserved for individuals traveling on official business for one of the five Celestial Bureaus. All official travelers are given Celestial writs that grant them access to facilities such as the gold portion of these canals.

Other travelers must use the silver portions of the canals. Characters need only find one of the many small docks and rent a dragon boat (Resources ••). Any character with Sail • or more can pilot her own dragon boat. Otherwise, one must also pay for a pilot (Resources •••). The boats speed up quite rapidly and normally move at 100 mph. Traveling from the adamant wall to the Jade Pleasure Dome rarely takes more than two days of intensive travel (or 20 hours of continuously piloting a small cramped boat). Going from one gateway to another generally takes between one and five days.

However, characters traveling on official business can use the gold portion of these canals. This lane

magically moves travelers at almost the speed of thought. Traveling a distance of less than 100 miles requires only a minute or two and longer journeys never last more than half an hour. However, if anyone not bearing a Celestial writ with an official seal attempts to use this portion of the quicksilver canals, one of the gods of the canals will rise up from its depths, immobilize the boat and ask the travelers to state their business.

The player of any Sidereal or Eclipse Caste Solar Exalted who has spent more than a week in Yu-Shan may make a Manipulation + Bureaucracy roll at difficulty 5 for his character to convince the deity that his use of the gold portion of the canal is allowable under the sacred laws of Heaven. Alternately, a bribe of a handful of Ambrosia (see p. 26), orichalcum, moonsilver, starmetal (Resources ••••) or any powerful talisman or one-dot artifact will also generally accomplish the same result if the character's player can succeed at a Manipulation + Bureaucracy roll at difficulty 2.

The canals form a radial network, heading from each of the 61 gates in the adamant wall to the center of this continent-sized city. There are also ring-shaped canals that connect all of the radial canals. These rings are spaced every hundred miles. Going from one gateway to another is exceptionally easy, and no place in Yu-Shan itself is further than 50 miles from at least one of the canals. All important palaces and villas are located on or very near one of the canals. The regions furthest from the canals are most generally devoted to orchards, parks, vast sculpture gardens, habitats for large and unusual pets, the villas of middle management spirits and the more modest dwellings of the numerous ranks of servants and assistants that the elaborate protocols of Yu-Shan demand. Within the areas bounded by the canals, travel is normally done either on foot, via relatively discreet Charms such as Landscape Travel or in one of the various small flying rickshaws piloted by minor gods associated with air or flight.

CLOUD RIDING

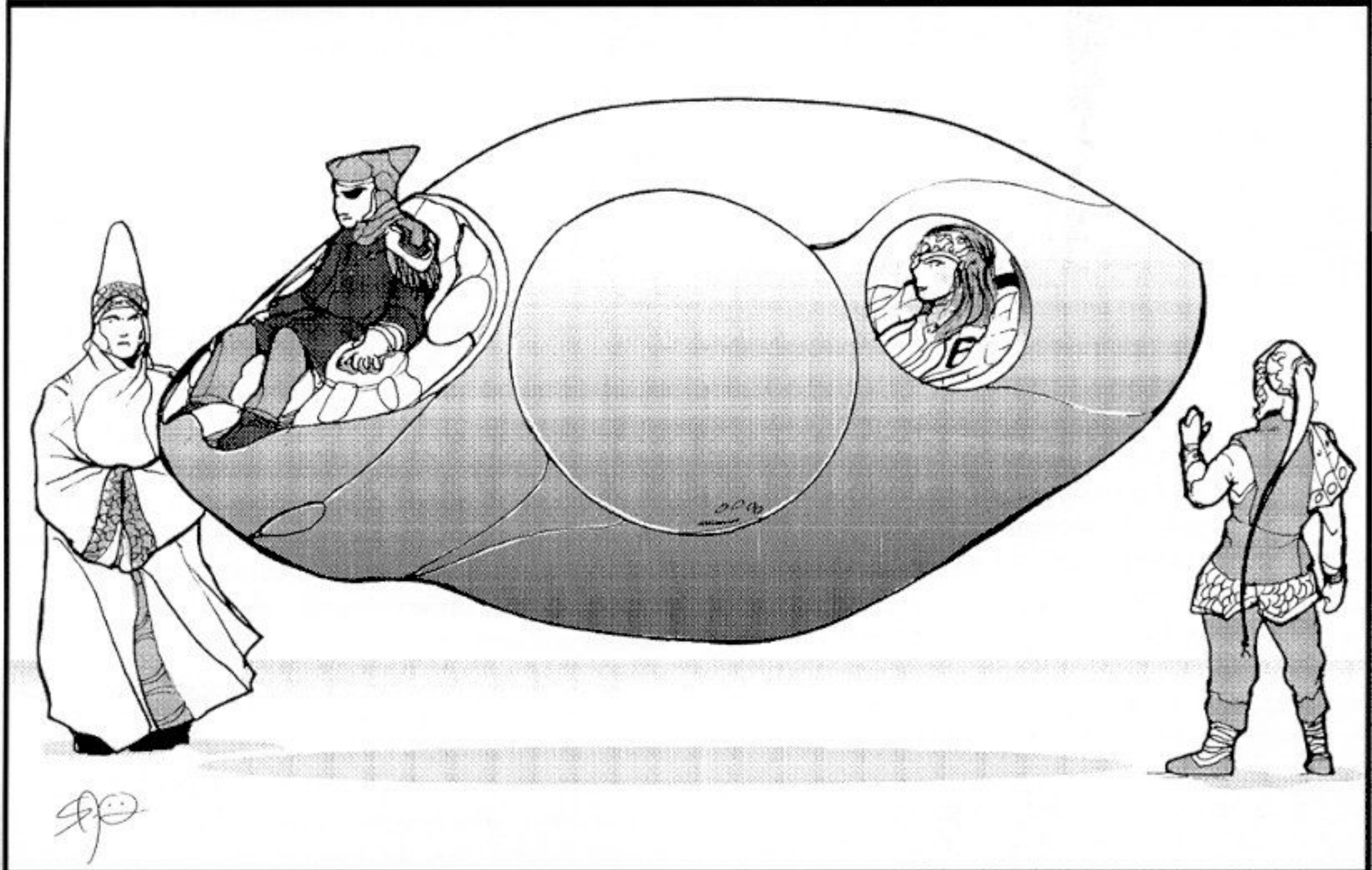
Naturally, the high gods (any Celestial deity with an Essence of 6 or more) and other beings of great power do not have to rely upon either the quicksilver canals or on various artifact vehicles. Experienced Sidereals and powerful deities can call clouds to carry them where they will. Any spirit or Celestial Exalt with an Essence of 5 or more who knows the Affinity Element Control (Air) Charm, the Element Control Charm or the Weather Control Charm (see the **Exalted Storyteller's Companion**, pp. 58-59) can summon a cloud to carry them at great speed to anyplace in the Celestial City. Sidereals whose players roll a successful Charisma + Performance roll for prayer or who know the Song of Spirit Persuasion Charm can also summon clouds. However, only Sidereals who are people of import in Yu-Shan or who are on an important mission should do so. Newly Exalted Sidereals who use clouds to

AERIAL RICKSHAW (ARTIFACT ●●●●)

These small vehicles are one of the most common means of short- and medium-distance transport in Yu-Shan. Since they are also small enough to fit through the gateways to Creation, some gods and Sidereal Exalted also use them there. Some are fantastically decorated, but most are relatively plain. However, all aerial rickshaws are 14-foot-long, 6-foot-wide jade ovals with a depression in the front where the driver sits and windows on the sides (but not the front) of the passenger compartment.

Aerial rickshaws can hold two passengers in comfort (or five who are exceedingly friendly) in a wide bench seat. In addition, one driver must sit in the front and power the vehicle. The driver sits in the open, while the passengers all sit in a roomy closed compartment that maintains a comfortable temperature. To operate the aerial rickshaw, the driver must commit 5 motes of Essence to the vehicle. Gods of air, fire or flight and Air- or Fire-aspected Dragon-Blooded can then operate the vehicle by simply spending 3 additional motes of Essence per hour to keep it running. Other gods, God-Blooded and Exalts must insert a Celestial, Air or Fire Hearthstone of at least level 2. The pilot must also have Sail ●● or more.

Aerial rickshaws are immune to bashing damage and have a soak of 10L and 10L/20B health levels. The passengers are completely protected by this soak, and the driver is mostly protected (75 percent cover), so all attacks that specifically target the driver are made at a +3 increase in difficulty. Unfortunately, these vehicles are not designed for combat. Passengers cannot open the doors into the cabin unless the vehicle has landed and the windows do not open, so the passengers cannot fire out. The driver is busy operating the vehicle, and so, he also cannot attack. In addition, aerial rickshaws are relatively slow, with a maximum speed of only 50 mph. Unless they are damaged, these vehicles are simple to maintain, requiring only an hour of minor repairs after every 100 hours of continuous use. The character performing the repairs must know both Occult ●● and Lore ●●, and the repairs cost Resources ●●. Alternately, a single minor servant (see p. 30) can easily maintain this craft.



waft themselves from one part of Yu-Shan to another on a whim will gain a reputation for being insufficiently humble and obedient. Some gods see such Sidereals as rebels and troublemakers and will not hesitate to have them audited (see pp. 34-40).

These clouds move at a maximum speed of 300 miles an hour and can go anywhere in Yu-Shan. Each cloud is a few feet thick and a few yards across. A summoned cloud can carry the deity or Exalt calling it as well as a number of other passengers equal to the summoner's permanent

Essence. Unlike most other forms of transport, these clouds are both silent and produce no stray breezes or other effects that might disturb those nearby. Also, despite their speed, anyone riding on one of these clouds will not feel the slightest breeze and cannot accidentally fall off the cloud. When called, the cloud will fly straight down from the sky to the god or Exalt and, when the summoner commands, will rise at least 500 yards into the air and then speed to her destination. Most summoners call these clouds while outside, but rushed, desperate or overly dramatic beings can summon clouds to appear at open windows or underneath Exalts who have jumped off of high balconies. Although not as fast as riding in the golden lane of the quicksilver canals, users need no authorization to summon clouds and are carried from their starting point to their destination, without the necessity of relying upon any other modes of travel.

LIFE IN YU-SHAN

In addition to being unimaginably larger than any mortal metropolis, Yu-Shan is also profoundly different in a multitude of ways. Perhaps the greatest difference is that the inhabitants are not human. The residents of Yu-Shan are effectively immortal — they are not born, and they never age and die. New gods occasionally come into being, and existing gods are sometimes altered in form or even destroyed, but all of these events are rare and exceptional. Also, most obviously of all, the residents do not look human. The majority are at least roughly human shaped, but many have elemental characteristics far more visible than the most powerful Dragon-Blooded. In addition, some gods are completely inhuman. Dragons, floating squid, strange crosses of humans and spiders and tangible shadows all walk these enchanted streets.

In addition, much of this metropolis is effectively alive. The gods of each of the quicksilver canals can appear as a shining figure rising up from the substance of the canal and talk to someone. Large formal doors on palaces and large public buildings can address anyone who wishes to enter and decide which visitors are worthy, and some of the city's vehicles require no drivers. Perhaps even more significantly for anyone used to living in mortal cities, Yu-Shan lacks the continuous flood of foodstuffs and similar goods that stream into every mortal city.

The gods are self-sufficient beings who do not need to eat or drink, although almost all greatly enjoy doing so. Also, all but the rarest and most special food and drink in Yu-Shan is produced from the physical substance of prayers (see pp. 26-27). Minor servants then waft the substance of these prayers through air or water or carry them across the ground to the homes of the more important gods or distribute it to waiting crowds of lesser gods. Because of the purified nature of the Celestial City, food never goes bad, and various magical servants are responsible for keeping

food at the appropriate temperature. These same servants also keep Yu-Shan clean and repair anything that breaks or becomes worn. Any of the high gods and their guests automatically receive such services, but less important visitors must bargain with the servants to have their sandals repaired or their rooms cleaned.

The very act of commerce itself is also different. In Yu-Shan, the Realm's jade currency is acceptable for trivial services such as renting a dragon boat or having a servant repair one's tunic. However, major expenses such as purchasing or even renting a villa must be paid for with the substance of prayer known as Ambrosia (see below) or with favors, services, promises of allegiance, artifacts or the ownership of either heavenly residences or Demesnes and Manses located in Creation.

Because the gods have real no need for food, clothing or similar commonplace items, the most important commodities in Yu-Shan are land, favors, entertainments and the products of supernaturally empowered labor. Although even the most meager dwellings have running water, as well as light and heat that adjust themselves to the owners whim, every deity would rather own a vast and luxuriously furnished palace rather than the small servants quarters that are home to many of the least powerful spirits.

Similarly, although every spirit has at least a few useful Charms, access to the most powerful Charms or the ability to simply ask someone else to perform an undesirable or dangerous task is also highly prized. Gods trade favors like currency. An Exalt who owes a favor to a god of hunting may find that the god has traded this favor to a deity of roads, and so, the Exalt must instead perform a favor for that spirit. In Yu-Shan, the gods classify favors into three categories: minor favors that require no more effort than using one or two minor Charms, moderate favors that require a few days or weeks of work and major favors that involve either a lengthy service or the performance of a single impressive service such as killing or saving the life of a major god or other powerful being. Every god and all sensible Exalts ask what grade of favor they will be required to pay for a specific service. Unspecified favors to be named later are considered major favors unless otherwise specified at the time of the agreement.

Like all immortals, the gods easily become bored. Any new or wonderful form of entertainment, from a newly created and exceptionally rare intoxicant to a new play crafted by a master playwright and performed by inhumanly skilled Solar Exalted actors will greatly impress the divinities of Heaven and can be used to pay for many services. Unfortunately, being immortal, the gods have seen almost everything, and promising something unique and delivering a result a deity has seen literally thousands of times before can earn the entertainer the lasting wrath of a powerful god.

HANDLING EMERGENCIES IN YU-SHAN

While the celestial lions and their deputies (including both lion dogs and scarab guardians) patrol Yu-Shan, it is a huge city, and riots and other serious troubles could spread quite rapidly without an effective way of handling such problems. On every city block in the urban portions of the Celestial City, and every quarter mile in the parkland and open areas, there are pillars of blue jade approximately three yards tall and as big around as an adolescent's torso. Anyone who notices an emergency need merely place her hand on the pillar and activate it by spending a mote of Essence or a point of Willpower. That instant, the nearest few celestial lions will become aware that there is a problem at that location and will hurry there.

Using either cloud riding or the gold lane of one of the quicksilver canals, the first celestial lion will arrive within one to ten minutes (roll 1d10), depending how close it was when the pillar was activated. Upon arriving at this location, if the situation looks easily resolved, the celestial lion will touch the pillar to deactivate it — only celestial lions who are on duty may deactivate these pillars. If the pillar is not deactivated, more celestial lions will continue to arrive every few minutes until the situation is resolved. During any sort of large emergency, such as a powerful deity going berserk, panicked gods will activate multiple nearby pillars or activate a single pillar multiple times. In either case, the celestial lions know that there is a large-scale problem, and a dozen or more will arrive within five to twenty minutes, and if the problem is very severe, large numbers of huraka and thunderbirds may be summoned and arrive through a portal opened by a powerful military god. Also, the jade pillars automatically activate if they are destroyed, and all nearby jade pillars automatically activate if buildings are destroyed or set on fire. Falsely activating a jade pillar is a Severity 2 offense (see pp. 36-40).

THE ECONOMY OF PRAYER

Like the Underworld, Yu-Shan is a completely magical realm — it is not a part of the physical reality of Creation. Its natural laws and geography are those of magic and metaphysics, not of physical matter, and its inhabitants are made of will and Essence, not mortal flesh and blood. Eating, like gambling is a recreational activity and not a necessity. Mortals and Exalts staying in Yu-Shan will feel mildly hungry and thirsty if they don't eat but will suffer no other ill effects.

The entire basis for the economy of Yu-Shan is prayer. Every day, hundreds of millions of mortals offer prayers to all manner of gods. In Heaven, these prayers take on a physical reality. There are two sorts of prayers, general prayers offered to Heaven or to all of the gods and personal prayers directed toward a single specific deity. General prayers form the subsistence base of Yu-Shan. Every dawn, the prayers offered during the previous day appear in Yu-

Shan as a glowing liquid known as Quintessence. Quintessence materializes in large jade tubs placed in the multitude of jade prayer plazas located throughout Yu-Shan. Because most mortals subconsciously thank the gods and Heaven at least once a day, there is an abundance of Quintessence.

In accordance with the laws of Heaven, tens of thousands of minor spirits in the Bureau of Heaven distribute the Quintessence equally to all employed and law-abiding residents and legitimate visitors. Visitors to Yu-Shan quickly become used to the sight of crowds of lesser gods picking up their daily ration of Quintessence. All spirits powerful enough to possess at least a few minor elemental servants (see p. 30) send these servants to pick up their Quintessence — important gods never pick up their own Quintessence, and few will admit that they need it. Rebels, criminals and the unemployed are not given Quintessence, and if the minor gods responsible for distributing the Quintessence see any criminals attempting to falsely obtain Quintessence, they report the thieves' presence to the celestial lions.

Regardless of where it ends up, any being who has both the Craft Ability and the Creation of Perfection Charm can transform Quintessence into one of a multitude of forms. However, Quintessence can only be used to make high-quality ephemeral goods. A deity can transform Quintessence into an excellent meal, a wonderful ale or wine, well-made clothes, high-quality makeup or perfume or any similar good that is either designed to be used up or that will wear out within a few months of use. The Celestial Incarna provide Quintessence to all productive residents, in part to insure their loyalty, but also because the rulers of Yu-Shan wish to insure that all of the lower gods have sufficient amounts so that they do not cause a scene by wandering the streets naked and unperfumed. The high gods rarely use Quintessence for any purpose except to feed their beasts and to fertilize plants such as the sacred trees that grow the peaches of immortality (see pp. 28-30).

One of the paradoxes of life in Yu-Shan is that even the lowliest food and poorest clothing made from Quintessence is better than all but the finest foods in Creation. However, any deity who can afford better will shun goods made from Quintessence. Even the most minor gods who exist solely to serve their betters lead lives of luxury unimagined by all but the wealthiest queens and princes of Creation. Of course, this is the reason that only gods with powerful enemies, dreams of political power or a love of mortal slaves ever willingly leave Yu-Shan. Eventually, most unemployed spirits also leave, but only after they have attempted to find new employment for decades or centuries.

In the mostly abandoned portions of Yu-Shan, inhabited only by criminals and the unemployed, Quintessence still appears in the jade prayer plazas. However, no functionaries of the Bureau of Heaven are there to insure that the Quintessence is fairly distributed. Instead, the strong

can take it from the weak, and most sprits in these regions lead deeply impoverished and servile lives.

Prayers directed toward a particular god produce a far more rarified and wondrous substance, which materializes as an amorphous block of shining colors. This block appears on a solid surface within a few feet of the deity. This supernal material is known as Ambrosia and can be transformed into all manner of goods, from a beverage finer than any wine in Creation to a suit of clothes that might cause a mortal who simply touched the cloth to cry tears of joy. It can, in fact, become any material except soulsteel, moonsilver, orichalcum or starmetal. Craft gods make some Ambrosia into jade, but most becomes the fine gowns, wondrous meals and similar fine goods so treasured by the gods.

The highest gods receive vast quantities of this amazing material. In addition to keeping this Ambrosia for their own use, they trade both it and the materials made from it to others. Ambrosia is the basis for the entire economy of Yu-Shan. All gods who receive Ambrosia must pay 10 percent of it to the Unconquered Sun. The celestial lions collect this tithe and then distribute it to the five Celestial Bureaus, where spirits working in the various bureaus make it into numerous useful items and use it to pay these bureaus' employees.

Because Ambrosia can be transformed into jade, this material is quite common in Yu-Shan. However, orichalcum, moonsilver and starmetal are far rarer. Only prayers directed toward the Unconquered Sun can be forged into orichalcum, just as only prayers directed toward Luna or the Maidens can be transformed into moonsilver or starmetal, respectively. Making even moderate amounts of orichalcum or any of the other materials associated with the Celestial Incarna requires large quantities Ambrosia, so craft gods only make small amounts of these materials, especially now that the worship of the Celestial Incarna is relatively rare in Creation.

WEALTH IN YU-SHAN

Every god in Yu-Shan has the equivalent of Salary • simply by virtue of the prayers and sacrifices given to all of the Celestial gods and the Quintessence these prayers produce. Gods who possess the Cult Background have a level of Salary equal to their rating in the Cult Background + 1 while they are in Yu-Shan. Gods who live apart from Yu-Shan in their own sanctums do not benefit from this general worship and only have a Salary Background equal to their Cult Background. This discrepancy in wealth is yet another reason that most gods would love to live in Yu-Shan and why even the most minor of the Celestial gods feel so superior to the regional gods.

Almost everything in Yu-Shan was at some point made from Ambrosia, and it is vital for gods wishing to hold elaborate banquets, both to be made into food and to provide the raw materials for the elaborate costumes and the jeweled pavilions and silk cushions the gods will use. As a result, the primary coinage of Yu-Shan consists of concentrated Ambrosia wrapped in a thin shell of gold foil embossed with the image of the Unconquered Sun. The Ambrosia in a single coin is sufficient to create an exquisite feast for two, a large jug of the finest wine or a jade daiklave.

MOVING AND FORGING QUINTESSENCE AND AMBROSIA

Any goods formed from Quintessence or Ambrosia continue to exist normally once they have been brought into Creation, the Underworld or anywhere else. However, if either raw Quintessence or raw Ambrosia is ever carried into Creation, it immediately dissipates into a glowing cloud of Essence.

Quintessence and Ambrosia can only be worked in Yu-Shan or in some god's private immaterial sanctum. Working Quintessence is identical to working ordinary materials, except that an extra die is gained on all Craft rolls because Quintessence is superior to almost any non-magical material. Ambrosia is similar, except that the difficulties of all die rolls to craft something from Ambrosia are reduced by 2 (to a minimum of 1). These bonuses are in addition to any others provided by the Creation of Perfection Charm, which is necessary for a deity to forge either material. Solar Exalted who know the Charm Flawless Handiwork Method, Lunar Exalted who know the Charms Tool-Hand Technique and Moonsilver-Shaping Rite and Sidereals who know the Excellent Implementation of Objectives Charm can also work both Quintessence and Ambrosia.

HEAVENLY SUSTENANCE

Ordinary food and drink in Heaven are better than anything most mortals ever taste, and the most powerful gods have access to even grander fare. Because these consumables are so rarified and pure, any mortal who partakes of celestial food resists and recovers from all diseases and heals from all injuries as fast as one of the Exalted. Exalted who partake of celestial food are immune to all diseases and infections except the Great Contagion and heal all wounds four times as rapidly as they normally would. Also, all mortals and Exalts only age half as fast while eating and drinking the food of Yu-Shan. All of these effects last for three days after consuming this food or drink. Naturally, some visitors bring a few

bottles of beer or other celestial food and drink out with them. Although it still maintains its healing properties outside of Yu-Shan, the Celestial Guardians are not about to allow any visitors to carry out entire cartloads of celestial beer or heavenly bread. Any visitor who wishes to do so may carry out sufficient food or drink to supply someone in Creation for two weeks, but carrying more requires a Celestial writ. Two week's worth of this fare can be sold in Creation for •••• in Resources, both for its taste and for its other obvious benefits.

PEACHES OF IMMORTALITY AND CELESTIAL WINE

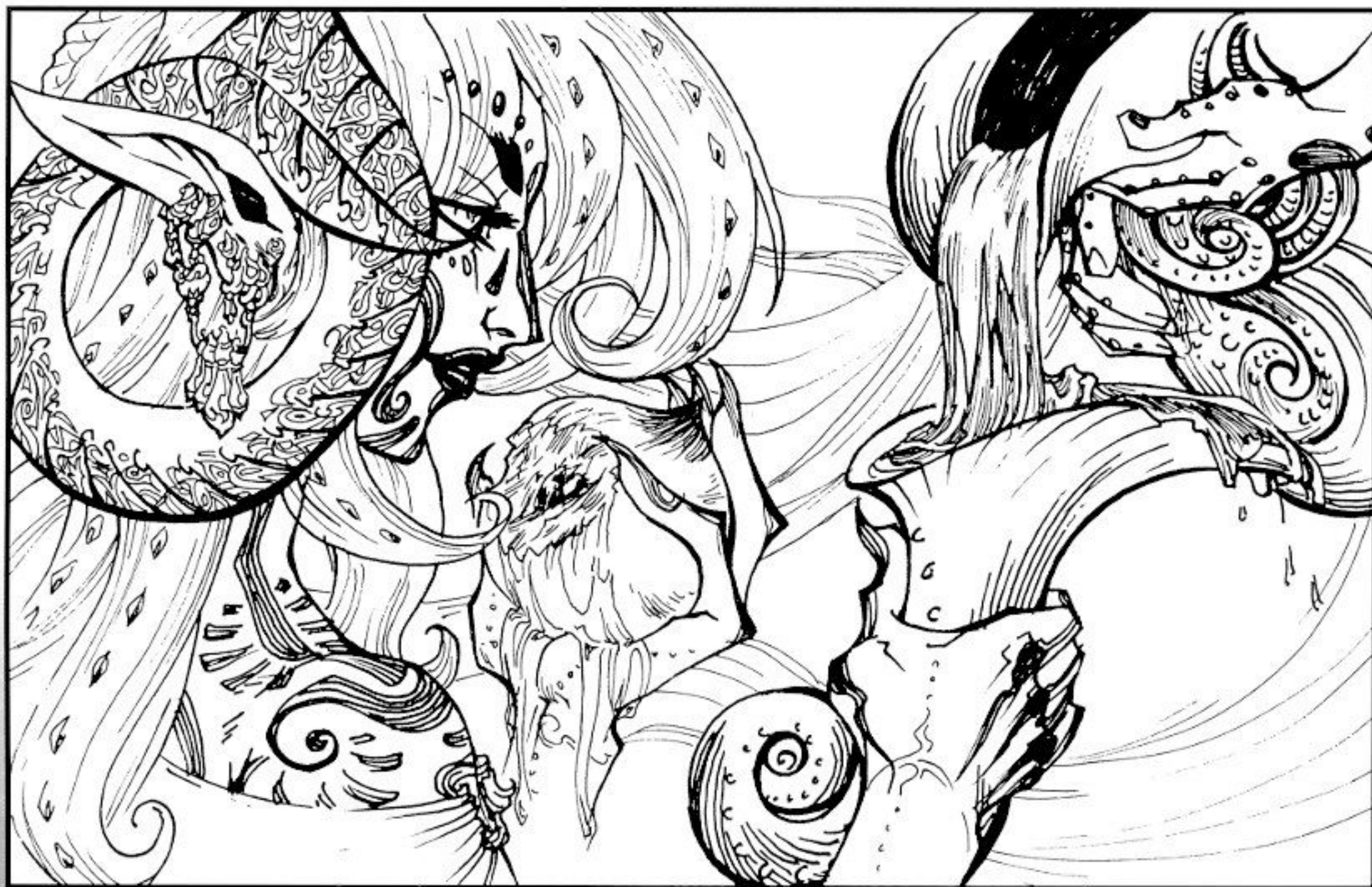
Although the ordinary food and drink of Heaven have potent virtues, the gods consider them low fare indeed when compared to the wondrous joys of the food and drink of the highest gods. The Unconquered Sun, Luna, the Five Maidens and all of the other high gods (gods with Essence 6 or higher) have the right to request a share of the peaches of immortality and the celestial wine. This incomparable food and drink is constantly available in the Jade Pleasure Dome and perfectly complements the joys of watching or playing the Games of Divinity.

Outside of the Pleasure Dome, these viands are only served at great parties attended by those high gods not currently watching the games. Divinities with an Essence of 5 are often invited to these parties, where they may freely partake of both peaches and wine. Celestial Exalted

may be invited to these parties, but only if they are allied with or friends of the god or gods who are putting them on. Mortals and Dragon-Blooded are too lowly to be invited to these lofty parties but can attend if they are willing to act as retainers for a deity or Exalt who has an invitation. Any guest who is invited to one of these parties and impresses her hosts favorably (player succeeds in a Charisma + Presence roll with a difficulty of 4) may remove a single peach or one bottle of wine (not both) when he departs. Less entertaining guests and any retainers may attempt to steal a bottle or a peach (requires a Dexterity + Larceny roll, difficulty 5). Success allows the character to smuggle out one of these items. Failure results in the immediate torture and execution of any retainers involved and the trial or audit of any guests involved.

STEALING THE PEACHES OF IMMORTALITY OR CELESTIAL WINE

Naturally, since they are both extremely desirable in their own right and can be sold for truly grand amounts in Creation, every even potentially larcenous deity or Exalt has considered attempting to steal some of these culinary treasures. However, accomplishing such a theft is far from easy. Paradoxically, although it is slightly less priceless, celestial wine is the harder of the two to steal. The wine gods who make this supernally precious vintage work in closed buildings that are well guarded by celestial lions. No one has ever succeeded in robbing either these facilities or



CELESTIAL TREATS

The peaches of immortality and celestial wine both have profound effects on any who consume them. In addition to being immeasurably better than any food or drink the character has ever tasted or will ever taste again, both also supernaturally boost health and longevity. Even outside of Yu-Shan, neither the peaches nor the wine ever spoil or go bad. However, these celestial treats rarely remain uneaten for long.

The Peaches of Immortality (Cost: N/A): Each peach takes three bites to eat. One bite from a peach will remove one decade from the age of a mortal or Dragon-Blood and one century from the age of one of the Celestial Exalted. Eating an entire peach in one sitting restores a mortal or Dragon-Blood to her first years of adulthood and removes up to 1,000 years from the age of one of the Celestial Exalted. Eating further peaches continues to taste as good but will have no more effect on the character until an entire year has passed. Peaches of immortality can never reduce the eater's age below early adulthood. A few of these peaches make their way down to Creation every century, and wars have been fought over them. In Creation, these peaches are literally priceless, and any individual who owns one can sell it for whatever he wishes, assuming he can avoid the legions of thieves and murderers eager to steal this wonder. Sidereals live about 3,000 to 5,000 years. Even with access to the peaches of immortality, they cannot cheat their final day.

Celestial Wine (Cost: Resources ●●●●●): Each bottle of wine holds three glasses. A single glass of celestial wine will heal a character's Essence Trait in health levels. Alternatively, a glass will cure any poison or disease the character is suffering from, including the Great Contagion. Drinking three glasses in one day will return a character to full health levels, and for a year and a day thereafter, the drinker will be immune to all poisons and to all diseases weaker than the Great Contagion.

the great wine cellars located beneath the mansions of the highest gods. Instead, both the celestial wine and the peaches of immortality are most easily acquired either during one of the parties where they are served or when various servants are setting up the party.

The servants who set up these parties are immune to bribes because they know the dire fate that awaits minor gods who steal these wonders. They are also well aware that they will be charged with a Severity 2 offense if any of this food or drink is stolen even without their assistance. As a result, these deities are unwilling to allow unautho-

rized individuals into a banquet hall they are setting up and have encountered all of the common tricks. The only way to gain access to these foods is to forge a Celestial writ granting the user access to the banquet hall. At that point, ordering the servants to attend to a portion of the hall far from the food and drink the thief is intent on stealing is a simple matter and a Wits + Larceny roll with a difficulty of 3 is sufficient to steal one of either item with no risk of immediate discovery.

Unfortunately, during the party, some god is almost certain to notice that there are only 99 instead of 100 peaches or 49 instead of 50 bottle of celestial wine, and then, the servants will be interrogated about the fictitious Celestial writ. Unless the thief can come up with a convincing reason as to why she had to forge a Celestial writ in order to steal this food (at least six successes), she will likely be entombed in solid rock for a few decades or subjected to various horrible tortures such as being flayed alive to convince her of the error of her ways.

Perhaps the safest (if such a dire risk can be called that) way to illegally acquire one of the peaches of immortality is to steal the peach from the orchards where it grows. In more than a dozen walled and guarded orchards throughout Yu-Shan, several hundred square miles have been devoted to growing these wondrous fruits. These orchards are warded against all sorcery and are covered with domes of crystal-clear adamant to prevent thieves from simply flying in. The peaches grow with astounding slowness — there is an average of more than 500 years between crops. Not even Solar Circle Sorcery can speed their ripening. During these many centuries, the unimaginably ancient and gnarled trees where they grow must be tended frequently.

The walls of these orchards are also made of indestructible adamant, and five celestial lions guard each gate, but the interior of the orchards are devoid of guards. None of the high gods wishes to risk any of the trees in battles between guards and thieves, and many gods believe that the mere presence of the martial and suspicious energies of any guard might adversely affect the fruit. As a result, the only beings inside of the orchards are the clever and dexterous wood elementals known as gardeners.

These spirits are identical to the Artisans (see the **Exalted Storyteller's Companion**, pp. 71-72), except that they are experts in horticulture instead of woodworking. The cycle of work in the orchards is very simple and served as the model for the way the beasts of resplendent liquids are treated in Creation (see **Manacle and Coin**, pp. 49-52). Minor servants bring carts of mulch and manure in to the orchards every week — these spirits carry the carts directly to the orchard's gates. The celestial lions inspect these carts, open the heavy gates and allow the gardeners to take these supplies in and apply them. The gardeners also use these same carts to haul out dead leaves and other debris. The gods treat the actual peaches far

more carefully. Ripe peaches can remain on a tree for up to a century, but none are ever allowed to remain there that long. When a powerful god hosts a party or similar event, she obtains a writ from the Bureau of Heaven for a dozen or more of these peaches. Servants deliver this writ to the gardeners, who then walk into the orchards, place the peaches in a jade basket and deliver the basket to the servants who are always kept waiting at the gate.

Clever thieves can smuggle themselves into one of the carts of mulch, hide from the gardeners, pick a few of the ripe peaches and then escape in the same cart. Alternately, the thief could forge a writ and request a few ripe peaches. Both options are fraught with risk, but both have also succeeded several times in the past several centuries. Once stolen, the thieves must still transport these wonders from Yu-Shan to Creation. Thankfully, the celestial lions guarding the gates do not search visitors unless they suspect a crime has been committed. While the celestial lions will not allow anyone to carry out a cart filled with the peaches of immortality, a character may be able to smuggle out a few under her robes. However, these guardian spirits have keen senses and can smell both peaches

and wine (requires a Perception + Awareness roll at difficulty 2). Carefully wrapping up all stolen food and drink increases the difficulty of this roll to 4, but attempting to smuggle out more than a total of two of these goods lowers the difficulty of this roll by 1. Dragon-Blooded and mortals are not protected by the rules against random searches, and those celestial lions who dislike such obviously inferior beings regularly search and harass Dragon-Blooded and mortals who enter or leave Yu-Shan.

HOUSING

The vast majority of Yu-Shan consists of a single huge city with the same sorts of roads, city blocks and other common places travelers find in any mortal city. With sufficient amounts of Ambrosia, every minor spirit can easily and rapidly create all manner of elaborate buildings. As a result, the only truly valuable things about a dwelling are how much space it and its surrounding grounds take up and what enchantments and magics it possesses. Because the majority of spirits can only afford to lease a small amount of land from the Bureau of Heaven, most gods live in the densely urbanized portions of Yu-Shan. Fortunately,

MINOR SERVANTS

Description: The lowest level of servants in Yu-Shan are one of five varieties of minor elementals who exist solely to serve their betters. There are many millions of these beings in Yu-Shan, and all members of each type are nearly identical. The air and water spirits are almost-intangible messengers and couriers and are most easily noticed when they are carrying some item. The fire spirits are small animate flames that exist only to keep items and places warm. The earth spirits look like stocky, yard-tall people made from stone, and the wood spirits look like smaller and less menacing versions of the wood spider. Both of these last sorts of beings carry loads and perform other menial tasks such as cleaning and repairing items.

All of these spirits will take orders from any god or Celestial Exalt with an Essence of 4 or higher — every Celestial Exalt with an Essence of 4 or more will attract at least a few minor servants who are looking for work. Also, every dwelling comes with its own staff of minor servants who will perform all needed domestic duties — each dot in the Celestial Manse Background also gives the character the services of two minor servants who will only perform on domestic duties.

Less powerful gods and Exalts who are not the guests of one of the more powerful gods must bargain for the other services of these spirits. Fortunately, little is required to gain their services. A high quality meal, a single coin of Ambrosia or a beautiful piece of jade

will obtain the services of a minor servant for a month. Setting up a small shrine in Creation to the servant will result in one of these spirits serving the builder as long as the shrine exists.

Sanctum: Minor servants live only in Yu-Shan and in the sanctums of gods with an Essence of 4 or higher.

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

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

Abilities: Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Craft 5 (Repair +2), Dodge 2, Endurance 1, Lore 1, Occult 1, Presence 5, Resistance 1, Socialize 1 (Proper Manners +3), Stealth 1 (Going Unnoticed +2)

Backgrounds: Contacts 2, Resources 1

Suggested Charms: Affinity Element Control, Creation of Perfection, Dematerialize, Landscape Travel, Measure the Wind, Sense Domain, Stillness

Elemental Powers: Aegis

Cost To Materialize: 24

Base Initiative: 5

Attack:

Retractable Claws: Speed 7 Accuracy 7 Damage 2L Defense 7

Dodge Pool: 7

Soak: 4L/5B (Aegis, 3L/3B)

Willpower: 4

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

Essence: 2

Essence Pool: 47

Other Notes: None

enchancements on the various structures combined with the effort of ever-diligent minor spirits means that the streets and buildings of Yu-Shan are cleaner and remain in far better repair than those of any mortal city built since the end of the First Age.

However, within this seemingly endless metropolis, there are huge parks and gardens. Some hold orchards or pastures for various heavenly plants and animals, while others contain the dwellings of the most powerful gods. These gods live in huge mansions, the largest of which are single buildings that cover almost a dozen square miles of land and are situated in huge preserves up to 50 miles on a side. The largest mansions are so vast and complex that if the owner does not assign new guests a skilled guide, visitors can become lost and wander aimlessly for many days before they are found.

Only a few hundred gods have dwellings that cover more than a dozen acres. The vast majority of the tens of thousands of powerful and important gods live in large villas that cover anywhere from a city block to a dozen acres. Villas larger than two city blocks are always located outside of the densely urban portions of Yu-Shan. Regardless of their size, all of the mansions and elaborate villas in Yu-Shan are built along similar lines. Long hallways are rare. Even the largest mansions rarely have more than two or three hallways that stretch from one end of the mansion to the other. Instead, rooms generally adjoin each other or, more commonly, come off of short hallways that extend between a dozen and a hundred yards (depending upon the size of the mansion).

The smallest villas normally contain several courtyards and gardens, and the largest may contain many dozens of courtyards and walled gardens that can each cover several dozens of acres. Except in abandoned and terribly run-down villas, almost all of these gardens and courtyards have minor servants who care for them and keep them pristine. However, some gods have lost status and power such that they can no longer maintain a staff sufficient to look after their mansions even though they can pay the lease on the grounds. As a result, barren and long-abandoned gardens and courtyards can sometimes be found in even the greatest mansions.

Most gardens and courtyards are elemental in character and are cared for by minor servants of this same element. A fire garden might contain a selection of different colors of ever-burning flame fountains that shoot carefully arranged ribbons of fire high into the air. Earth courtyards contain many unusual rocks and a few are actually caves located underneath the mansion. Water courtyards naturally contain pools and fountains, while wood courtyards range from formal gardens with elegantly pruned trees to dense miniature rainforests. Air courts are the strangest of all. Some are built on cliffsides where perpetual winds blow. Others can only be entered from the

upper stories of the villa and contain an array of light and airy furnishings all built on a single large cloud that permanently fills the courtyard.

Regardless of their size, these mansions and villas are generally between 2 and 30 stories high. The largest mansions, which sprawl across many square miles, are rarely more than five stories tall, but all of these buildings contain towers and pavilions that rise as many as 300 stories into the sky. No building can rise higher than the summit of the Jade Pleasure Dome, which rises 4,400 feet into the sky. Although stairs and ramps are both common, all buildings higher than 10 stories contain polished-jade lift tubes that carry residents from one floor to another. Some are elevators like those found in Rathess and various First Age cities, where travelers step into a small room that carries them from one level to another. However, other lift tubes are seemingly empty. Travelers simply walk into them and are carried up or down on invisible platforms of Essence that respond to simple verbal commands. Mortals and Exalts visiting Yu-Shan often have trouble walking out into empty space a dozen floors above the bottom of the tube.

Lesser gods live in far smaller quarters. The luckiest are the important servants of the high gods—most of these minor gods live in comparatively small but exceptionally comfortable quarters within a high deity's mansion or urban villa. However, most of the less important deities and elementals live in dwellings that range from large apartments to a single room in a mostly mundane building. More upscale apartments can be as large as an entire upper floor of a 50-story apartment building. Status is indicated by the size of the apartment and the proximity to one of the quicksilver canals. Large buildings near the canals are for important functionaries, while smaller dwellings are mostly inhabited by minor spirits who help with the general upkeep of the city.

Sidereals and other mortals who visit or move to Yu-Shan are often awed by even fairly modest dwellings. Outside of those limited portions of the city that are now ruined or mostly deserted, Yu-Shan is much like a fully functional First Age city, except that it contains even more magic and wonder. Light and heat come from the walls and ceilings, and residents can command both simply by speaking or by drawing simple sigils in the air (roll Intelligence + Lore with a difficulty of 1 in order for a character to determine a particular command or sigil). In addition, minor servants perform most menial tasks, the floors eat dust and dirt, and well-made household objects (Resources cost •• or more) keep themselves clean, put themselves away and come when called. The end result is a life of luxury unequalled by any but the wealthiest mortals in Creation.

Characters with 3 or more dots in the Celestial Manse Background may also have fire fountains, living trees that make images with the patterns of their mobile branches



and leaves or other wondrous elemental art forms. Although such comforts are commonplace to all respectable gods, few mortals or Exalts have ever seen such wonders before. For the first full week that any Exalt spends in Yu-Shan, his player should make a Wits + Presence roll with a difficulty of 2 to avoid having his character appear visibly startled or amazed by the most ordinary wonders in Yu-Shan. Naturally, any such displays of emotion mark the Exalt as naïve and foolish and often attract unscrupulous con artists and other similarly dubious divinities who will seek to take advantage of the Exalt's lack of familiarity with the Celestial City.

Although Yu-Shan is mostly a lively and vibrant city, there are now a large number of gods and elementals who lack jobs. Despite the fact that this situation goes against all of the Celestial edicts that mandate that every inhabitant of Yu-Shan must contribute to the maintenance of the Celestial Order, many spirits simply live in Yu-Shan while contributing nothing to its upkeep. Some exist aimlessly and without purpose, while others carefully craft their own schemes and plots.

When the First Age ended, the Wyld consumed much of Creation, and the gods of the destroyed regions, animals and plants were left with nothing to do. In addition, some of the high gods have deserted Yu-Shan, leaving additional minor gods with no one to work for. In response, a good number of these unemployed gods have also deserted Yu-Shan and now reside in Creation. As a result, almost 10 percent of Yu-Shan is now deserted. Most of the unemployed spirits living in Yu-Shan reside in and on the outskirts of the largely deserted areas. Naturally, all such areas are far from the canals and the villas of the more important gods. In the emptiest areas, some of the minor elementals have even ceased their constant cleaning and repairs, and the buildings and streets look worn and dusty. However, in these empty regions, thousands of tall apartment buildings stand waiting for someone to move into them. Although the celestial lion guards can easily track down the most serious fugitives, they rarely concern themselves with petty offenders who flee to the deserted portions of Yu-Shan. Rebels, criminals, the lazy and the insane all find living in these portions of Yu-Shan to be exceptionally easy. Since Quintessence still appears in the jade plazas, even beings who wish to eat and drink can exist here, even if they lack the comforts available in the rest of the city.

Although the rest of Yu-Shan is a wonder beyond compare, signs of the disruptions that began at the end of the First Age mark much of the rest of the city. A few of the more impressive palaces and mansions lie in ruins — legacies of subtle but deadly warfare between gods. When Grala (see *Games of Divinity* pp. 31-32) became the Mistress of the Endless Hunt and had Tleny, the previous Master of the Endless Hunt soulforged into a powerful jade hunting whistle, she also had his palace torn down. She transformed the entirety of a nearby abandoned district

into her new palace. She left the ruins of Tleny's palace to stand as a reminder of her triumph. In addition, new tenants inhabit many of Yu-Shan's palaces. The results of these changes are painfully obvious — many of these mansions show signs of crude refitting and remodeling. Dragons have had their servants rip out the walls of dwellings designed for gods who preferred to spend time in human form, and aquatic gods have filled their new palaces with water.

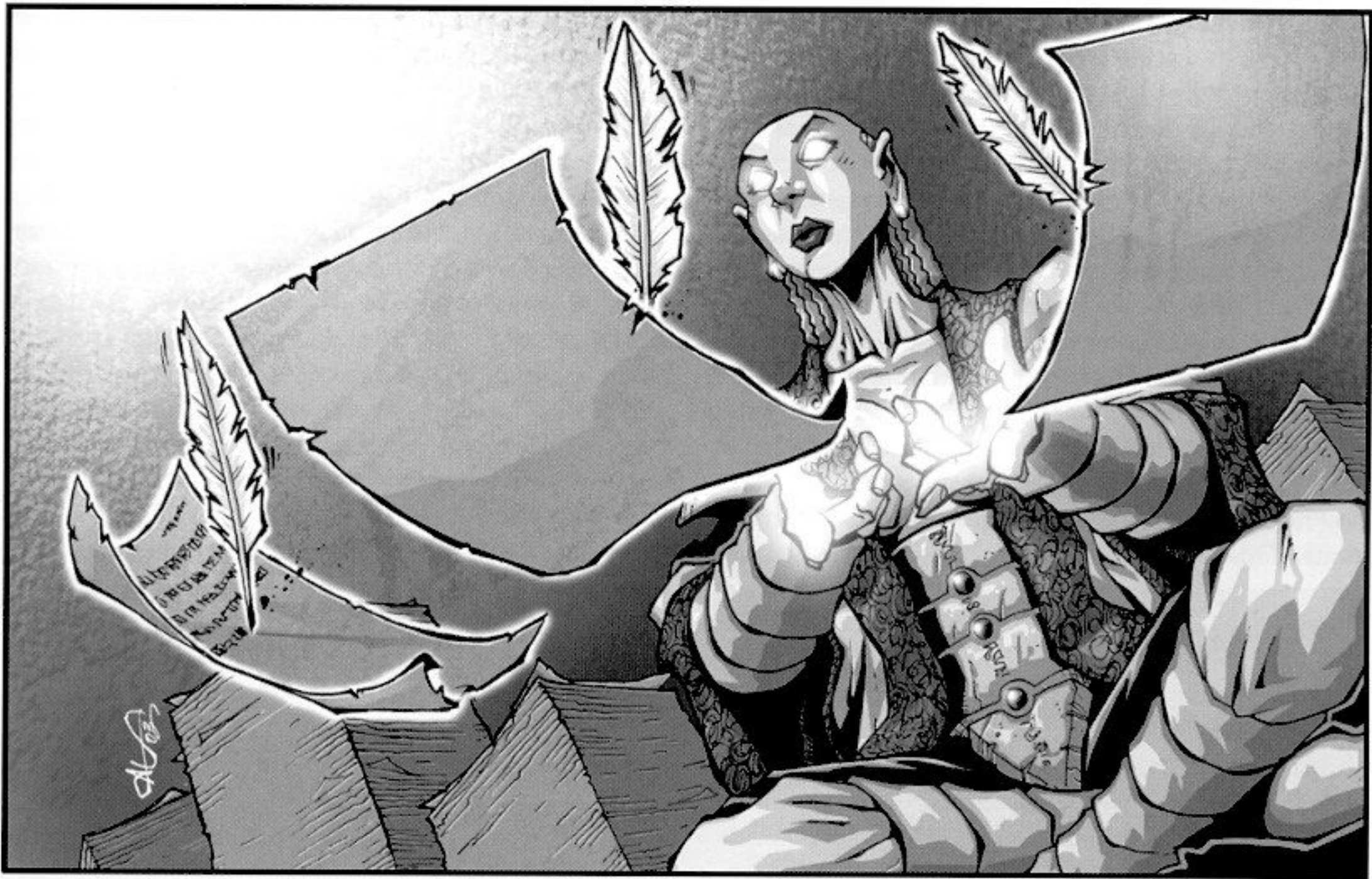
WORK AND PLAY IN THE CELESTIAL CITY

As in the cities of Creation, most of the inhabitants of Yu-Shan work for a living. Jobs in Yu-Shan are exceptionally varied — while the least powerful spirits use their meager Charms to keep places clean and in good repair, most of the rest are either servants to the greater gods or bureaucrats in the nearly endless and inhumanly complex Celestial Bureaucracy.

As in any bureaucracy, most jobs involve filling out and organizing a nearly endless supply of paperwork. The minor functionaries must record every rainstorm and bird migration in Creation, in addition to all official complaints and all offenses committed in Yu-Shan. The less powerful gods living in Yu-Shan regard this city as superior to everywhere else. However, complaints about work are extremely common. Such gods envy Sidereal Exalted, celestial lions and others whose work takes them beyond the confines of the great halls filled with busy scribes and bureaucrats.

These complaints mask the fact that most of the gods who have jobs fear losing them. When attacks by the Fair Folk weaken the boundaries of Creation or when important Celestial gods abandon their positions and leave Yu-Shan, the result is usually that at least a few more gods lose their jobs and join the ranks of the unemployed. If they are unable to find new work, they must either leave Yu-Shan or move into the desolate and lawless regions inhabited by the rest of the unemployed deities. Many recently unemployed gods live on the fringes of the inhabited regions of Yu-Shan, but their lives are miserable, and most leave after a few decades — or centuries. The sight of desperate-eyed gods, wearing threadbare silk robes and begging for Quintessence or employment has become far too common since the end of the First Age.

For gods and Exalts fortunate enough to be employed or for those staying in Yu-Shan as the guests of some deity, the city offers a mind-bogglingly diverse range of entertainments. Plays and songs forgotten millennia ago in Creation are performed here nightly, intoxicants more potent and exotic than any ever known in Creation can be found in every tavern, and there is a thriving illegal trade in the leavings from the parties of the highest gods. Tiny scrapings of the flesh of the peaches of immortality and the dregs of celestial wine are collected and thimble-fulls are sold to any who can pay their exorbitant prices. Although these minute amounts are insufficient to give youth or



羽化

health to mortals or Exalts, any who taste them will forever consider all other food and drink to be inferior.

There are also dreamstone parlors and brothels offering services far more exotic than any found in Creation. However, gambling of any kind is surprisingly rare. The largest gaming houses are closed, and it is considered slightly uncouth to gamble in Yu-Shan except when Plentimon, the God of Gambling (see *Games of Divinity*, pp. 24-25), visits the Celestial City. On those rare occasions, all of the gambling houses are opened with great fanfare, and divine beings wager servants, Manses and other commodities with great abandon.

CELESTIAL ECOLOGY

In addition to the special plantations where the rare celestial fruits are grown, there are also many elaborate gardens and aviaries where rare and exotic animals and plants can be found. There are two sorts of these gardens. Most contain celestial plants and animals. Both are minor spirits similar to less intelligent versions of the wood spiders, fire butterflies or wind makers. Like every other sort of deity, they are immortal and require no sustenance. Although they become considerably more vibrant and content if they receive regular supplies of Quintessence, it is not necessary for their survival. In well-maintained parks and gardens, minor servants provide Quintessence to these creatures, and even creatures that appear to be fierce predators will be relatively docile unless threatened.

However, in run-down, impoverished or abandoned regions, these animals and plants must fend for themselves. Most plants simply look less fresh and vital. However, many animals and all carnivorous plants will start seeking prey. Since large packs of these creatures can be profoundly dangerous if provoked or hungry, all who wander into these now-wild gardens are taking their lives in their hands. These creatures hunt other gods and especially seek out visiting mortals or Exalts — most find living flesh to be far more appetizing than a god's divine form because they savor the Essence of mortality.

The beasts that stalk the gardens of the more reclusive and paranoid gods provide more than simple entertainment. Fearful of losing their positions and even their lives to spies and assassins, some of these deities surround themselves with deadly creatures that they keep hungry and train to attack all intruders who are not specifically invited inside. While many gods are content to employ lion dogs or scarab guardians to protect them from intruders, others believe that dumb but well-trained beasts cannot be bribed or coerced nearly as easily as guards.

There is also another sort of garden in Yu-Shan. A few gods, especially those who belong to the Bureau of Nature (see p. 48) wish to keep mortal plants and beasts around them. Only prosperous and powerful gods can afford this luxury, since keeping these creatures requires much work by the god's minor servants. Every day, Quintessence must be crafted into fertilizer and food for these plants and creatures, and some deity must be assigned to tend to any

injuries they might sustain. Several gods, including Burnished Talon (see p. 49) have more exotic tastes and keep creatures from the Bordermarches of the Wyld. Because of the deep hatred most of the inhabitants of Yu-Shan have for the Wyld, almost all gods consider keeping beings from the Wyld to be in remarkably poor taste, and gods that do so rarely have visitors. Since many Wyld-twisted beasts are profoundly dangerous, they also serve to keep out all but the most determined intruders.

Some gods have even stranger tastes. Four centuries ago, Hran-tzu, God of Decay, captured one of the greatest beasts of all, a behemoth. After spending a century creating an enchantment that allowed her to move this living mountain through one of the gateways into Yu-Shan, she now has a single vast behemoth on the grounds of her huge estate. This creature, known as the Ur-Snake, is a huge serpent a quarter of a mile long, with a 30 heads and two dozen tails. The capture of this creature was an epic task that involved aid from many gods and Sidereal Exalted and required the creation of a special jade collar designed to temporarily shrink this creature so that it could fit through the gateway. While other gods are naturally quite impressed with the capture of such a monster, many disapprove of the behemoth's presence in Yu-Shan. Most gods consider behemoths to be abominations, and there are plots afoot to either kill the creature or somehow return it to Creation.

These same gods are currently angry because Burnished Talon, Daimyo of Mammalian Predators, is planning to capture his own behemoth and is currently recruiting allies to help him with this project. Since he has openly announced this plan, other gods are also amassing allies to help them prevent Burnished Talon from capturing one of these ancient monsters.

THE CELESTIAL BUREAUCRACY

This magical realm of powerful and immortal beings has a bureaucracy that utterly dwarfs the largest and most complex governments in Creation. The laws of Heaven are elaborate and complex, and Exalts who run afoul of this immense bureaucracy can be in dire trouble if they do not understand how the system works.

RANK AND PROMOTIONS

Underneath all of the politeness and ritual, there are really only two criteria that determine a deity's position in the Celestial Hierarchy, power and history. A powerful deity who has held an office for centuries will almost certainly continue to hold this office unless her superiors destroy, imprison or demote her. However, the position and status of newly promoted gods can be quite uncertain, and a god whose power decreases can easily lose a long-held position. Of course, these rules apply equally well to Sidereal Exalted, who also belong to the Celestial Hierarchy. Their first century or two in their new position is

always the most difficult. After that, most have been accepted by the other bureaucrats and need to worry far less about rivals.

Unlike Exalts, gods gain and lose power and status according to the relative size of their domain. If the domain of a god suddenly increases greatly, then the deity grows in power — if the road between Lookshy and Great Forks is expanded from being a narrow, roughly paved road to being a wide, straight road with the finest paving, the god of this road would almost certainly gain a point of Essence. Similarly, if the city of Maresh was utterly ravaged and the land sowed with salt, the God of Maresh would become substantially weaker, and her regalia would become old and tattered.

However, gods are exceedingly durable beings. No deity who has ever possessed a permanent Essence of 2 or more will ever drop below a permanent Essence of 2, even if her domain is utterly destroyed. Also, gods almost never lose or gain more than two points of permanent Essence, regardless of what happens to their domains. Vanileth, the Shogun of Artificial Flight (see *Games of Divinity*, pp. 27-28), was one of the greatest deities of the First Age and had a mighty Essence of 7. In the Age of Sorrows, artificial flight is almost unknown, but he still retains an Essence of 5. Powerful gods always retain at some of their prior greatness, and weak gods can never fully overcome their innate inferiority.

Since each deity's power is tied at least partly to its domain, many gods have lengthy and elaborate schemes to increase their own domains or to diminish the domains of their enemies. Such plans often require more than a century to execute. However, some divine beings ask Sidereal Exalted for discrete assistance, since their fate-bending Charms and powerful astrology can cause such changes to occur far more rapidly.

Another way for any being to gain or lose Essence is through the blessings and curses performed by those gods who both possess and are willing to use the Endowment or the Scourge Charms. Most deities are only willing to use these costly Charms on other Celestial deities or Celestial Exalted at the request of the Celestial Court. A powerful deity whom the censors convict of a serious crime can be stripped of power, just as a weak god who performs a worthy enough service can be given additional power. Both actions are exceedingly rare, and neither one is likely to happen more than a few times a century. Regardless of how a deity gains or loses power, the results affect both this god's political standing and its job — weak gods are eventually demoted, and powerful gods are eventually promoted.

CELESTIAL AUDITS

Periodically, all Celestial employees must account for their actions. Although each of Heaven's five bureaus is in charge of reviewing the performance of its employees, the

censors of the Bureau of Heaven have the ultimate responsibility for addressing serious problems or complaints made against any Celestial employee. In the First Age, each god received a general audit once every five years — today, audits are far more sporadic, and some gods need only face them once every three or four centuries. However, Sidereal Exalted are rarely that fortunate. Exalts, like all mortals, are regarded as somewhat suspect in Yu-Shan. Until a Sidereal has had at least a century to entrench herself in the Celestial Bureaucracy and create the appropriate network of favors and contacts, she will likely face an audit at least once a decade — more often if she seriously annoys gods of even minor import.

Today, censors who still bother performing their jobs order the vast majority of Celestial audits because some deity or Exalt has questioned or complained about an

individual's performance. Actions performed in Creation generally escape the notice of the censors unless some powerful local deity or elemental is upset enough to complain. However, the Bureau of Heaven monitors Yu-Shan far more carefully, and even minor slights or errors in diplomacy can cause a Celestial god to report such problems to the censors. The censors sometimes audit Exalts who have not technically violated any rules simply because some important god has taken a dislike to the Exalts. While the Maidens protect Sidereals from most unnecessary audits, a sufficiently motivated and convincing deity can often arrange to have an audit called.

Although the censors ostensibly handle the entire procedure identically for complaints from both important and minor gods, in practice, they ignore complaints by gods with a permanent Essence of 3 or less, unless there are

LESSER ELEMENTAL DRAGONS

Description: These beings are some of the most important and powerful functionaries in Yu-Shan. All Celestial censors are lesser elemental dragons. They also serve as the leaders of many of the smaller Celestial Bureaus and as the assistants to many of the most powerful gods such as the Five Maidens and the regional war gods. All of these divine beings can assume a human-like form, which can range from a human-shaped pillar of flame to an elementally touched human who looks much like one of the Dragon-Blooded. However, when they are threatened or wish to make an impressive entrance, they transform themselves into their true form — a large wingless, serpent-like dragon with jewel-colored scales and four fearsome claws on each of its four limbs.

The following are the average Traits for one of these deities. Some are more powerful and may have an Essence as high as 8. Others have lower Traits, either due to punishment or lack of martial predisposition.

Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 6, Stamina 10, Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 4, Temperance 3, Valor 4

Abilities: Athletics 5, Awareness 5, Brawl 4, Bureaucracy 6, Dodge 5, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Flametongue, Forest-tongue, High Realm, Riverspeak, Seatongue, Skytongue) 6, Lore 5, Melee 5, Occult 5, Presence 5, Performance 5, Socialize 2, Stealth 4

Backgrounds: Artifact 5, Allies 5, Celestial Manse 5, Contacts 5, Followers 5, Manse 5, Resources 5

Charms: All available spirit Charms

Elemental Powers: All elemental powers

Cost To Materialize: 50

Base Initiative: 11

Attack:

Bite: Speed 14 Accuracy 12 Damage 15L Defense 10

Claw: Speed 17 Accuracy 14 Damage 12L Defense 14

Elemental Breath: Speed 18 Accuracy 13 Damage 21L (Rate 1/10, Range 30)**

* All lesser elemental dragons may make two claw attacks and a bite attack every turn without splitting their dice pools.

** The dragon breathes a blast of fire, icy wind, venom, acid or some similarly deadly substance. Lesser elemental dragons may only use their elemental breath once every 10 turns.

Dodge Pool: 8 **Soak:** 15L/30B (Dragon hide, 10L/20B)

Willpower: 8 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 7 **Essence Pool:** 132

Other Notes: None



an impressively large number of such complaints. However, even a single complaint by a deity with an Essence of 6 or more is sufficient to call an audit on any Exalt who has not spent several centuries building a strong power base. The few Celestial censors who still attend to their duties carry out all audits.

Needless to say, Celestial audits are just as corrupt as any other portion of Heaven's bureaucracy. However, just as elsewhere in Heaven, there are limits to this corruption. The censors usually deal with complaints by minor gods by assessing a fine — typically a Manse, an artifact or the promise of performing a present or future favor for the censor conducting the audit. Sometimes, the more dutiful censors combine this payment with use of the Geas Charm (see the *Exalted Storyteller's Guide*, p. 54) to cause the subject to avoid performing the action that caused the audit for at least the next month. If the subject of the audit refuses to produce the desired payment, punishments can include imprisonment, enslavement using the Collar of Dutiful Submission (see p. 39) or even being stripped of Essence by the Scourge Charm.

Audits that are called because of complaints by powerful gods are a very different matter. Rather than simply being an opportunity for personal advancement, the censor must actually resolve the problem lest he also draw that divinity's wrath. Usually, the god who called the audit will be present during the audit. At this point, the censor questions both the subject and the deity who called the audit.

If the subject of the audit has an Essence 4 or more points lower than the god who called the audit, the entire procedure is exceedingly rapid and usually consists of the god who called the audit making a recommendation to the auditor as to what the appropriate punishment should be. If the two beings are closer in power, the procedure more closely resembles a conventional trial where the censor attempts to uncover the truth of the issue. If the actual events are unclear, she will call witnesses and send celestial lions out to gather evidence. These proceedings can take a week or more, and the censor is solely in charge of the audit's resolution. Although, in most cases, the censor punishes the subject in accordance with the wishes of the deity who called the audit, censors occasionally punish both or neither party or even punish the deity who called the audit and reward the subject of the audit.

RULES FOR CELESTIAL AUDITS

If a character is subject to a Celestial audit, she always has a chance to state her case. If the character commits a minor offense or the complaint against the character comes from a deity with little political power and an Essence of 3 or less, then all she needs to do is to negotiate with the censor to determine what her fine should be. Unless she is lucky enough to be audited by a censor who is in an unusually generous mood, there will always be at least a minor fine. Censors must give three quarters of all

goods they receive (or an equivalent value) to the vast coffers of Heaven. However, the remainder of the fines forms the majority of the remuneration for their job — in Yu-Shan, vigilance is well-rewarded.

To determine the fine, make opposed Manipulation + Bureaucracy rolls for the censor and the character. If the censor wins, the character will be assessed a heavy fine, generally an artifact or Hearthstone of 1 to 3 dots or a moderate or even an extensive favor such as spying on or stealing something from one of the censor's more powerful and dangerous rivals. The more the censor wins by, the heavier the fine. In contrast, if the character wins, the fine is quite light and typically consists of either a minor favor such as apprehending a rogue god with an Essence of 3 or less, acquiring a valuable but non-magical object from Creation or acquiring some minor magical object. At most, the character will be required to give an item worth Resources ••••, and if she gains more than one success, she will only need to surrender a talisman or some other minor magic. If either side botches the roll, then the case is rapidly settled in favor of the party who did not botch. If the roll for the censor botches, the character receives no fine, and all offenses are ignored. However, if the roll for the character botches, then the punishment for a minor offense will be equal to those normally reserved for serious offenses (see below, the severity of the offense is equal to the number of 1s rolled).

For a more serious offense, such as breaking one of Heaven's more important edicts, or if the audit is called by an important god with an Essence of 4 or more, the proceedings are far more like a conventional trial, and the punishments can be far more severe. To resolve this audit, the exact nature of the accusation must be determined.

Sample Offenses	Severity
Causing serious trouble to an important god with an Essence of 4 or more, or breaking an important but minor law such as using the gold portion of a quicksilver canal for personal business:	1
Violating the heavenly rights of a deity with an Essence of 5 or less, or seriously disrupting the course of a celestial lion's investigations. Killing a Terrestrial Exalt without justification:	2
Causing a serious disturbance that harmed or upset more than a dozen important gods. Interfering with the Exalted mandate to rule Creation:	3
Violating the heavenly rights of or causing serious trouble to a high god with an Essence of 6 or more. Killing a Celestial Exalt of Essence 5 or less:	4
Committing an offense against all of Yu-Shan such as stealing some of the peaches of immortality or attempting to betray the Celestial City to the Fair Folk. Killing a Celestial Exalt of Essence 6 or greater:	5

At this point, make opposed Manipulation + Bureaucracy rolls for the accuser (or the censor if the character is accused of a crime against Heaven) and the character. To win the case, one side must score a number of successes equal to twice the other party's Essence (which represents her status in Heaven) in an extended contest of rolls. Note that only gods can be charged with "Interfering with the Exalted mandate to rule Creation." This is the blanket term for meddling in the progress of fate or otherwise transgressing against the stewardship of the Princes of the Earth.

Only Celestial Exalted can bring this charge, and it is rarely filed for outside of the Blessed Isle, as the suit must be pressed in Creation, and there is only one censor for each Threshold direction. Since all of them have a backlog of cases sufficient to guarantee the Exalt's case languishes forever, most petty cases are simply never reported. Especially severe meddling is a Severity 4 offense, while "Divine Hooliganism," a catch-all charge used against gods who step out of line in Immaculate strongholds of the Blessed Isle, is Severity 1. This is likewise true for offenses involving the murder of Exalted — the charge must be pressed with a directional censor by a Celestial Exalt, and off of the Blessed Isle, only the ingratiating or intimidating are likely to see any action.

A number of dice equal to the severity of the offense (see above) is added to the accuser's roll. Before the player makes a roll, the character can ask to bring in witnesses and provide evidence of her innocence. Bringing in positive witnesses, revealing important evidence or delivering rousing courtroom speeches is treated as a stunt and adds between one and three additional dice to the roll. A hefty bribe of an artifact or Hearthstone of 2 or more dots can also add an additional one to three dice (depending upon the amount of the bribe) to this roll.

In addition to delivering statements about the character's innocence or guilt, both the character and the accuser/censor can also deliver a rebuttal to each of the other side's arguments. Each rebuttal can either be a careful analysis of why the other's argument is incorrect (roll Intelligence + Bureaucracy) or an impassioned speech about the victim's character and the obvious nature of her innocence or guilt (roll Charisma + Bureaucracy). Each success on either of these rolls subtracts one success from the other side's roll when making its statement. Statements and rebuttals continue until one side achieves the necessary number of successes.

In addition to the above type of audit, occasionally, a particularly active or outspoken Celestial employee receives a general audit that covers all of her actions since the previous audit. Investigators from the Bureau of Heaven (as well as any characters who also wish to take part in gathering evidence) make a record of all of the character's deeds and misdeeds during this time. In addition to the above table of offenses, the Storyteller should also make note of the positive actions the character has performed.

Sample Meritorious Deeds	Merit
Saving or providing valuable aid to an important god with an Essence of 4 or more:	1
Capturing a criminal who has committed crimes of Severity 4 or 5:	2
Saving a dozen or more gods with an Essence of 4 or more from harm:	3
Saving or providing valuable aid to a high ranking god with an Essence of 6 or more:	4
Saving Yu-Shan or one of the Celestial Incarna from serious harm:	5

During these periodic audits, the censor will review the entirety of the character's actions. The censor will then judge any offenses of Severity 3 or higher individually, in an ordinary audit. In addition, the Storyteller should make a total of all of the character's important deeds and subtract the total Severity of her offenses from the total Merit of her meritorious deeds. If the resulting number is positive, it is added to the number of dice the player rolls on the Manipulation + Bureaucracy roll for her character, and if it is negative, it is added to the number of dice rolled on the Manipulation + Bureaucracy roll for the censor.

The remainder of the audit proceeds as above, except that the character's allies and companions can both provide proof of her merits and attempt to cover up or reduce the apparent severity of her offenses. The results of this audit are the same as the result of an audit to investigate a specific accusation, except that the likelihood of the censor rewarding the subject for meritorious service is higher. Unfortunately, because censors judge especially severe offenses separately, Sidereals or deities who perform both especially meritorious and especially problematic actions can end up being both highly rewarded and severely punished during the same audit.

ASSISTING DURING AN AUDIT

All Celestial audits are performed on single individuals. If three gods or Sidereals all participated in committing an offense, they would all be tried separately. However, the members of a Circle will often seek to aid a comrade who is undergoing an audit. Such individuals can be exceedingly helpful in uncovering or hiding evidence, especially since the subject of the audit may be confined until the audit is complete. Successful rolls by the player of a character aiding the subject of the audit translate into stunt dice when the player of the audited character rolls to make her case or rebut her accuser.

However, Heaven's laws clearly dictate that anyone who voluntarily gets involved with an audit suffers the same penalties as the individual he is aiding. An elemental who aids a god in providing evidence against a Sidereal who is being audited will suffer any punishment this deity receives if the audit finds that the Exalt acted righteously and that the Exalt's enemies falsely called this audit.

Similarly, other members of the Exalt's Circle who openly aid the Exalt in the audit will suffer the same punishments as the Exalt. Unfortunately, the censors only reward the individual who actually performed the meritorious actions. Individuals who aid a character being audited are liable to suffer the same punishments but are exempt from any rewards.

THE STAGES OF AN AUDIT

1) **Charges:** The character or characters are charged with committing various offenses or are investigated for a general audit.

2) **Evidence Gathering:** The censor sends out his celestial lions to gather evidence. The characters are also free to gather whatever evidence or make whatever bribes they can before the audit. There is usually one month between when charges are made and when the audit is held. During this time, both sides gather evidence. If a character is charged with a Severity 4 or 5 offense, she will be imprisoned, and her companions and allies must gather evidence or make bribes for her.

Alternately, if the accused can find a willing stand-in who is also a high god or one of the Celestial Exalted and who has an Essence equal to or greater than the accused, then the accused may be set free to help gather evidence while the hostage remains in custody. However, if the accused flees, then the stand-in is liable for any punishments, and the accused is still charged with the original offense plus the added charge of avoiding the audit (a Severity 2 offense).

3) **The Audit:** The censor and everyone else who is involved with this audit or who is acting as a witness must appear in one of the Chambers of Celestial Justice. Both the accused and any accusers must be present for the audit. If either side fails to appear, then the other side need only roll a number of successes equal to the absent side's Essence (not their Essence x 2).

The censor reads the charges, and then, the actual audit begins (both sides make opposed statement and rebuttal rolls until one side achieves a sufficient number of successes to win — see above for the type of rolls and the number of successes required).

4) **Punishment:** When one side has won, the censor recites the verdict and then states any fine or other punishments. Fines must be paid within another month, and the accused (or a suitable stand-in, see above) is held until any fines are paid. Punishments begin the next time the lead changes in the Games of Divinity.

CELESTIAL PUNISHMENT AND REWARDS

Once a Celestial audit ends, the censor and her assistants carry out the sentence. The results of a general audit need have nothing to do with punishment. Meritorious actions are rewarded, and in many cases, instead of convicting of deity of various offenses, a general audit reveals that a deity is incompetent or lacks the power to deal with her responsibilities. Censors and examiners of the Bureau of Heaven (see p. 40) demote or promote gods whose work is better suited for a different office or whose power is no longer in keeping with their current rank. These and other reassignments by the Bureau of Heaven only occur during Celestial audits. Naturally, the possibility that a deity could lose her rank and her job as well as suffering all manner of horrid punishments makes general audits a subject of considerable dread among Heaven's residents.

The results of an audit called because a character is accused of committing some offense are far more clear-cut. If the character is declared blameless in an audit, she is freed and needs only make a token payment (such as a powerful talisman, a minor favor or, at most, a level 1 artifact) to the censor for taking up its valuable time. This payment is in addition to any bribes already made. If the character triumphs with 5 or more successes or if she succeeds and the other side botches, then the censor finds the character to have acted in the best interests of Heaven and will grant her a reward, such as a one-dot artifact, a one-dot Celestial Manse or a cash payment.

In extreme cases, where the character actually did perform some deed that saved Yu-Shan or one of the Celestial Incarna from harm, then the character might even receive an additional dot of Essence from the Endowment Charm. However, if the character's player rolls a botch or the character loses by 5 or more successes, she will forfeit 4 or more dots in Artifact, Celestial Manse or Manse as punishment. In addition, she might be imprisoned for several years or enslaved to a powerful god and forced to perform one or more dangerous and difficult tasks. If she is convicted of particularly heinous deeds (a Severity 4 or 5 offense), she might lose a dot in Essence from the Scourge Charm or even be devoured by the censor. Less severe failures result in the character losing between 1 to 3 dots in Backgrounds or owing a significant favor to her accuser, to the censor or to the Bureau of Heaven.

For crimes with a Severity of 4 or more, censors also often request that minor servants create specially enchanted cages so that the prisoner remains alive despite any injuries or lack of air, water or food. They then place the prisoner in the coffin and torture her for years — or even decades. The worst offenders are usually either buried deep under a mountain or imprisoned in cages that are continually heated red hot.

Fortunately, one of the primary Celestial edicts is that all of the gods and Exalts who serve Heaven must work to

CAGE OF ETERNAL TORMENT**(ARTIFACT ●●●●)**

This item is most often built as a jade and adamant cage that is four feet on a side. It is made to be almost indestructible. A cage of eternal torment cannot be harmed by anything except Charms, enchanted weapons made of one of the Five Magical Materials or sorcery. Also, neither bashing damage nor Charms and other effects that multiply damage against objects have any effect on these cages. They have an armor of 30L and require 50 health levels of damage to open one enough to allow the occupant to escape.

Thanks to an effect similar to the one provided by a gem of incomparable wellness (see *Exalted*, p. 340), anyone placed inside this cage cannot die or suffer permanent harm. The prisoner recovers one level of bashing damage every five minutes, one level of lethal damage every hour and one level of aggravated damage every day. So long as the cage is closed and the prisoner is inside, this regeneration continues even if the prisoner is killed and her body burned to fine ash. However, this regeneration is as painful as receiving the damage was in the first place.

benefit Heaven. Most of the powerful gods see imprisoning a powerful deity or Exalt or assigning one to perform highly menial tasks as a serious waste of both talent and ability. This is especially true if these punishments continue for any length of time. After a year or two buried under a mountain or hanging in a red-hot cage, if any difficult and onerous task arises, one of the censors or some other god will likely offer the prisoner or prisoners a chance at freedom in return for performing this task.

Most such tasks involve journeying to Creation, and all of the gods are aware just how easy it is to disappear into this vast realm. Therefore, for tasks that take less than a month, ex-prisoners will be subjected to the Geas Charm, and for longer tasks, they are fitted with an enchanted item such as the Collar of Dutiful Submission to insure that they actually complete the desired task. The most lengthy and difficult tasks are reserved for the most serious offenders. Typical tasks can include recovering valuable artifacts that are now being held in the Imperial Treasury, obtaining an important piece of information from Grandmother Bright or capturing a powerful and important non-Celestial deity and bringing her to trial in Yu-Shan. The scenario "Spirit Exiles of the Western Ocean" in *Time of Tumult* is an excellent example of a possible quest that a censor might give to a Circle of Exalted convicts. At the end of this task, the prisoners are free, having worked off the spiritual burden of their offenses. However, the censors sometimes order offenders found guilty of especially severe

offenses to perform tasks that require years or even decades to complete.

Unfortunately, none of these considerations apply to mortals or similarly short-lived beings such as the Dragon-Blooded. Any mortal or Dragon-Blood found guilty of committing a serious crime or of aiding a god or Celestial Exalt who committed a serious crime will almost certainly be either instantly killed or subjected to imaginative and ultimately lethal tortures. However, some censors use the threat of such an individual's death as an opportunity to

THE COLLAR OF DUTIFUL SUBMISSION**(ARTIFACT ●●●●)**

This item insures that its wearer obeys the wishes of whoever put the collar on him. To use the collar, the owner of this artifact spends a mote of Essence to activate it (she recovers this Essence normally). Then, she places the collar on the person she wishes to wear it and orders him to commit 2 motes of Essence to the collar. Since the collar will not lock until the wearer has committed this Essence, the owner will know if the wearer refuses to commit the Essence. Once committed, this Essence cannot be uncommitted until the collar is removed.

Until the collar is removed, anytime the wearer attempts to directly attack the owner or whenever the owner wishes to punish the wearer for disobedience, the collar will slowly tighten, doing one die of unsoakable bashing damage to the wearer every turn until the wearer is rendered unconscious or until the owner orders the collar to stop tightening. This damage cannot be healed by any means until the collar stops inflicting additional damage. If used for a sufficiently long period of time, the collar will render the wearer unconscious, but it will stop before it causes any lethal damage to the wearer. If desired, the owner can also order the collar to keep the wearer unconscious indefinitely. The owner can cause the collar to constrict at any time merely by spending a single mote of Essence. Regardless of the distance between the owner and the wearer, the collar will immediately begin to constrict, even if the owner is in Yu-Shan and the wearer is in Creation or the Underworld.

The owner can easily remove this collar by simply touching it and spending another mote of Essence. The only other ways to remove one of these collars are by the direct action of one of the Celestial Incarna or by the use of an exceedingly rare spell of Solar Circle Sorcery. No other magic or Charm will affect these collars, and they are completely immune to all forms of attack.

gain additional bribes or favors from one of the gods or the Celestial Exalted, offering to spare the mortal or Dragon-Blood's life in return for additional payment.

SUMMONING CENSORS AND OTHER CELESTIAL OFFICIALS

Like Fakharu, the other Celestial censors are all lesser elemental dragons. Although technically elementals, they cannot be summoned with the Summon Elemental spell because all censors and other senior members of the Celestial Bureaucracy are immune to Charms that directly affect their target's will. Because the Summon Elemental spell forces an elemental to obey the summoner, the censors are immune to this spell. However, while no Exalt can command them, Sidereal Exalted can use their astrology to request that a censor appear. Also, Charms that merely allow an Exalt to be more charismatic or persuasive work normally on censors, although using these Charms to impede or change the course of a censor's decision is a Severity 4 offense.

THE CELESTIAL BUREAUS

Except for the Bureau of Destiny (see pp. 52-75), the entire heavenly bureaucracy is ill run, massively corrupt and largely useless and symbolic. The majority of the employees of these bureaus spend their time recording tedious minutia in reports and records that no one will ever look at, plotting against their rivals and attempting to avoid being audited. Unlike the Bureau of Destiny, the other four bureaus are largely powerless and irrelevant outside of Yu-Shan. Although any of these four bureaus could easily call upon an army of powerful and dangerous spirits to fight their battles and slay their enemies, they are paralyzed by a combination of tradition and a lack of firm direction. However, almost all of the Celestial gods consider these bureaus to be vitally important and place great import on their positions in them.

THE COMMISSION ON ABSTRACT MATTERS AND CELESTIAL CONCERNS (THE BUREAU OF HEAVEN)

This is the most powerful, the most diverse and in many ways, the most corrupt of the Celestial Bureaus. It is divided into of two largely separate departments — the Department of Abstract Matters consists of gods of abstractions such as memory and loss. Since all such concepts are universal, their gods all belong to the Celestial Hierarchy. Some of the senior Sidereals believe that these gods are kept close to Heaven so that the Celestial Incarna can, through personnel transfers and bureaucratic restructuring, seriously reorder the nature of the world if they ever find a compelling reason to do so. The other half of this bureau is the Department of Celestial Concerns. This

department is responsible for the governance of Heaven. The Unconquered Sun is technically the head of the entire bureau, but he only intervenes if a situation gets totally out of control. Otherwise, the various functionaries of this department keep Heaven running, audit members of the five bureaus who are suspected of malfeasance and maintain (albeit often rather badly) the rule of law in Heaven.

The bottom level of the Department of Celestial Concerns consists of tens of thousands of sub-ministers who are in charge of filling out all the bureau's paperwork correctly and delivering prayers to the correct destinations. Above them are the lion dog investigators and the celestial lions, who act as the senior field agents of this bureau. While on duty, each celestial lion is a law unto itself. Celestial lions have the right to impose punishments on any of the less powerful beings in Yu-Shan without question. With no trial or other formalities, a celestial lion can impose fines on any creature in Yu-Shan with an Essence of 4 or less and devour or order the imprisonment of any being with an Essence of 2 or less. Although censors occasionally review these decisions, the celestial lions are in charge of conducting the audits of their fellow agents. However, celestial lions are intensely loyal to each other and rarely audit their fellows. Unfortunately, many celestial lions are convinced that Heaven is irredeemably corrupt and now dispense "justice" based on either greed or eccentric personal codes of ethics.

However, the celestial lions cannot summarily dispense justice to the more important gods. Instead, they can charge one of these gods with an offence and pass this charge on to the censors, who can judge any offense in Yu-Shan. Naturally, this department ignores offenses committed by the Celestial Incarna — even the most powerful censors lack the means to enforce such judgments. When one of the Celestial Incarna commits an offense, the situation is only resolved when another Celestial Incarna intervenes.

Many celestial lions guard various critical locations, but the censors assign most to a district that they are ordered to patrol. Less powerful spirits such as lion dogs, hounds of the Endless Hunt, scarab guardians and similar beings are assigned to aid each of these deities. Celestial lions can also deputize any resident of Yu-Shan with an Essence of 4 or less and order this being to assist in an investigation. Various gods and Exalts, including most of the older Sidereals, have been ordered to assist with at least one such investigation. So long as the celestial lion approves, its deputies can legally perform any action that does not disrupt the lives of the high gods.

The celestial lions spend most of their time dealing with minor offenses ranging from petty theft to disturbing the peace. These offenses are usually resolved by the guilty party correcting the problem or by paying a fine. The celestial lions collect all of these fees — these fines form the majority of their remuneration.

This department is also the home of the censors. These being are plenipotentiary officials who act as judges and investigators of offenses by important deities. Generally, they wait for charges to be brought against an individual, but they can pursue their own lines of inquiry as well and have a staff of assistants sufficient to do so. There are 125 censors in the Bureau of Heaven and an additional seven assigned to Creation, one for each Threshold direction and three for the Blessed Isle. Those in the Threshold barely merit the title, and those of the center direction are the virtual appointees of the Bronze Faction and help to enforce its rule on the gods of the Blessed Isle.

The Department of Abstract Matters has a simpler and far more haphazard structure. Shortly after the end of the First Age, the heads of this bureau recruited more than two thirds of the major gods who now belong to this department from the Bureau of Humanity — and this department's original form proved unable to handle this large influx of new employees. While some abstractions such as warfare, lost things or dreams are broken down into smaller units determined by the particular nature of the abstraction and the desires of the gods in charge of it, a single deity who controls a host of effectively equal underlings governs most individual abstractions. Abstractions that have long been part of this department, such as the Division of Warfare can be quite complex. The Division of Warfare consists of a war queen (who is answerable to both the head of this Department and the Maiden of Battles), the five regional war gods and various minor battle deities. However, newer divisions, such as the Division of Lost Things, usually consist of only two levels of hierarchy, such as Madame Marthesine and her Hoarders.

LEADERS OF THE BUREAU

The Shogun of the Department of Celestial Concerns: Ryzala, Lady of Bureaucracy and Paperwork. She is one of the most powerful gods in Yu-Shan, in part because she receives prayers from both gods and mortals. She is a large mantis-like creature with four legs and 10 arms. She is always in constant motion, shuffling and filling out paperwork with several arms at once. In addition to overseeing the gods of paper, ink, scribnerly and organization, she is also the unofficial director of the Bureau of Heaven. Technically, she and Taru-Han (the Shogun of the Department of Abstract Matters) are of equal rank, and both of them are subordinate to the Unconquered Sun.

However, the Unconquered Sun almost never takes a role in the affairs of this bureau, and Ryzala appointed Taru-Han, who is not interested in advancing her position. Except for the Celestial Incarna, Ryzala is the most powerful god in Yu-Shan. She enjoys power and uses her authority to aid her allies and discomfit her enemies. However, she is well aware that she cannot displace the Celestial Incarna and is quite satisfied with her present position. Ryzala worries that she will lose her position if the Celestial



Bureaucracy is ever significantly upset or threatened. As a result, she distrusts innovation and will only consider major changes in policy when faced with serious threats. She is currently undecided on the matter of the newly reborn Solar Exalted and is likely to remain undecided until some major event forces her to make a decision.

The Shogun of the Department of Abstract Matters: Taru-Han, Lady of Souls. Taru-Han is the god of souls and of the act of dying and the current head of the Department of Abstract Matters. Taru-Han does not select who is going to die. She is the god of the act of dying, not the god of death — deciding who dies and actually ending lives is under the control of the Maiden of Endings in the Bureau of Destiny. Instead, Taru-Han sends her servants, the soul collectors, to remove the souls of the dying. Soul collectors are strange creatures that appear as a pair of raven wings joined at a small featureless feathered sphere from which juts a single slender dexterous arm. The soul collectors herd the souls to her heavenly tower much like sheep dogs herd their flocks.

Taru-Han both directs the operations of the soul collectors and oversees the departure of the souls to their appropriate destination. Although she does not decide who goes to the Underworld and who reincarnates without spending time there, she keeps a few souls for her collection. Her collection is highly illegal, and by keeping it, she is guilty of a Severity 4 offense. She imprisons these souls in small jars made of yasal crystal (see *Scavenger Sons*, p. 47). She currently has a collection of more than 150 souls. She keeps only the most beautiful souls, and when she acquires a new one, she usually gives the least precious soul in her collection to a loyal soul collector, who delivers this soul to its appropriate destination.

Because so many people died during the Great Contagion, Taru-Han grew greatly in power, and Ryzala



appointed the Lady of Souls to take control of this department because she was the most powerful of the qualified gods. At first, Taru-Han found that her new responsibilities detracted from working with her precious souls. However, she soon realized that her high position rendered her almost completely immune from audits and other forms of supervision. This realization was responsible for her starting to collect souls, rather than merely keeping the most precious ones around for a day or two. She has kept a few of her favorite souls imprisoned for more than 500 years and is convinced that her collection will be uncovered if she ever loses this office. As a result, she provides the other gods in this department with little oversight but is constantly on guard for any deities who look like they may attempt to challenge her position. Taru-Han has her soul collectors spy on all potential rivals and has bribed censors and celestial lions to trump up charges against particularly dangerous rivals. She is currently watching Lytek (see below) very closely and plans to call an audit on him if he attempts to displace her. Unlike most gods, Taru-Han looks completely unlike any sort of natural living creature — she is a swirling man-sized vortex of gray-and-black smoke who extrudes charcoal-gray tendrils to manipulate objects.

Daimyo of the Division of Exaltation: Lytek, the Right Hand of Power. Lytek is the god of Exaltation. He is the deity responsible for selecting candidates for Celestial Exaltation. Although Terrestrial Exaltation is an inborn quality not under his jurisdiction, he is also responsible for choosing the moment to trigger Exaltation in young Dragon-Blooded. When a Celestial Exalt dies, her Exalted Essence flies back to the beautifully carved cabinet in Lytek's office. Lytek is also responsible for pruning these

Essences — he cleans away dross of their previous existences and sculpts and trims their few memories associated with previous lives.

Lytek considers this pruning to be a high form of art and is quite proud of some of his better works. He will display the Essences in his cabinet to anyone who wishes to see them and will talk for hours about the artistic merits of various shards. However, unlike many gods, Lytek takes his duties quite seriously and will never discuss the details of any particular shard with anyone except members of his own department and authorized employees of the Bureau of Destiny. He loves all of the Exalts he has helped to make.

Although he considers Dragon-Blooded to be little more than interesting pets, he sees all Celestial Exalted as somewhere between his children and his art projects. However, he is also exceedingly patronizing and feels that he is far wiser than any of his creations. He touches Celestial Exalts without their permission and comments on facets of their personalities and powers as if he were discussing a work of art. In addition to the Maiden of Secrets, Lytek is also the only other deity who is aware of the Great Curse, and although he is unwilling to discuss it, he has been working (without success) on a cure for it since the end of the First Age.

Lytek is also Taru-Han's chief rival for the head of the Department of Abstract Matters. He was the head of this division during the First Age. However, the murder of the Solars and the end of the Solar Deliberative cost him much of his power. In his weakened state, Ryzala forced him to step down as head of the department. He remains bitter about this loss and has never lost hope that he will eventually regain his old office. However, he has always lacked both the raw power and the political backing necessary to retake control of this department. Recently, the return of the Solars has boosted his power,



and he has begun to consider ways by which he can regain his previous high status.

Currently, Lytek is crafting an alliance with the Sidereals of the Gold Faction, since he shares their interest in the Solar Exalted. He also hates the Deathlords with a fierce passion and considers the way they have twisted Solar Exalted into deathknights to be a horrible perversion of the Celestial Order. He is working with several members of the Gold Faction to attempt to uncover a way to transform Abyssal Exalted back into Solar Exalted. Lytek has the form of a man sculpted from solid light.

THE CELESTIAL MONITORS OF THE SEASONS AND WEATHER (THE BUREAU OF SEASONS)

The gods in this bureau look after the turning of the seasons and the weather. This bureau's gods also have a close alliance with the Court of Seasons (see the **Exalted Storyteller's Companion**, pp. 64-66). However, this alliance is now largely symbolic. During the First Age, the Court of Seasons' sole responsibility was organizing the Creation-wide festivals that accompanied the beginning and ending of every month and the far more elaborate celebrations that went on whenever a season ended or began. Unfortunately, these festivals ended with the First Age, and now, the Court of Seasons' only duty is to organize similar but far smaller festivals in Yu-Shan.

In contrast, the Bureau of Seasons is responsible for the actual mechanics of the weather and the seasons. During the First Age, this was regarded as a far less important and glamorous job than that belonging to the Court of Seasons because the gods in the Bureau of Seasons were under the direct control of the Solar Deliberative. The Celestial Exalted of the Solar Deliberative maintained complete control over the weather and extended or shortened seasons to keep the economy of the Old Realm running smoothly. The Celestial Exalted also employed this bureau as a secondary defense force. They used it to help drive back Fair Folk incursions and to counter any threats posed by the hordes of Malfegas. As a result, the bureau consisted largely of elementals who never needed to exercise any initiative and who had no voice in deciding the bureau's policies. When the Solar Exalted were murdered, these gods were ill-prepared to suddenly take control of the bureau.

For the first few centuries after they took control, the weather and the seasons were highly erratic. These problems occurred because the bureau's new leaders were not used to making their own decisions and were easily swayed by both prayers and the suggestions of the Dragon-Blooded. Eventually, the directors of this bureau learned to ignore problematic suggestions. However, they still had little experience controlling the weather. Their worst disaster

occurred 700 years after the Usurpation, during the Great Contagion — several of the most militant directors attempted to use the weather as a weapon against the hordes of invading Fair Folk. Because these gods had no knowledge of either long-term planning or any form of strategy, the result was that the weather went briefly out of control. Many in this bureau remember the widespread fire rains, the lightning blizzards and thorn tornadoes with great shame — this martial weather was responsible for much death and destruction in Creation.

In the aftermath of that catastrophe, the new heads of this bureau became exceedingly timid and conservative. Today, the bureau's shogun-regent rigorously keeps to the normative patterns of seasons and weather established millennia ago by the Solar Exalted who first designed the modern seasons. For the first few decades after the Contagion, the seasonal daimyos kept strictly to this pattern, and the weather was perfectly consistent from one year to the next. However, the censors notified the daimyos that this rigorous consistency in weather had both caused a 10 percent decrease in mortal prayers and reduced mortal initiative. After that time, Shogun-Regent Ghataru and the other heads of the Bureau of Seasons kept to the general pattern of weather and seasons created during the Solar Deliberative, but included a degree of variability in phenomena such as temperatures and rainfall based upon the Celestial Incarna's changing patterns of advantage in the Games of Divinity.

Although the vast majority of the elementals in the bureau are still unskilled at long-term planning, their military might remains quite formidable. The many thunderbirds, huraka and storm serpents make up the bulk of the deadly warriors that belong to this bureau. Because the Unconquered Sun is a sky deity, these elementals form the central legion of his army. In peacetime, they work at controlling the seasons and the weather. However, should Yu-Shan or Creation be threatened, the Unconquered Sun can mobilize this vast army in a matter of days.

A few mortal scholars and outcaste Dragon-Blooded sorcerers have learned the ancient stories of First Age war weather. As a result, these individuals frequently attempt to use both mortal magic and Terrestrial Circle Sorcery to ask or compel the gods and elementals in this bureau to use the weather as a weapon. Although the gods in the bureau often answer prayers and requests to alleviate drought or to temporarily alter the paths of storms, the leaders of the Bureau of Seasons remember the folly of their last attempt to use martial weather too well to consider granting any large or drastic requests for alternative weather.

Recently, there has been much debate among the members of this bureau as to how they will react when one of the Solar Exalted asks or demands the right to control the weather or to use it for warfare. The Bureau of Seasons is currently divided on the issue. Some senior officials

would like nothing more than to put down their mantle of leadership and once again serve the Solar Exalted — the rest see the newly reborn Solar Exalted as having no more sense or experience than the leaders of the bureau did when they first took over the job. These directors worry that allowing even a single Solar to control the weather is a sure path to climatic disaster. The use of the Aerial Legion is even more controversial. Although the Solar Exalted were once permitted to use this legion for battles against the Yozis and other enemies of Creation, no Exalt has commanded this legion since the fall of the Solar Deliberative. In addition to concerns that Solar Exalted may ask for command of the legion, several Sidereal Exalted from the Bronze Faction have recently requested the aid of this legion to combat the Solar Exalted, while members of the Gold Faction have asked for the Aerial Legion's aid in helping to restore the Solar Deliberative.

Currently, the Shogun-Regent of the Bureau of Seasons is unwilling to agree to any requests for the use of the Aerial Legion without the authorization of the Unconquered Sun himself. For good or ill, the Unconquered Sun has remained completely silent on this issue, and as pressure from all sides continues to intensify, Shogun-Regent Ghataru struggles to remain neutral.

In Yu-Shan, few gods outside the Bureau of Seasons take this bureau seriously. Most gods see it as the least useful and necessary of the five bureaus. Ambitious mem-

bers of the other bureaus often spend time attempting to find ways to subsume this bureau into their own. The more obvious of these attempts usually end quite dramatically — the directors of the Bureau of Seasons have no qualms about using the Aerial Legion to defend their position. In contrast, most of the Celestial divinities treat the members of the Court of Seasons as impoverished but regal nobility. Most gods are convinced that the Court of Seasons should be in charge of the Bureau of Seasons, despite the fact that the members of the Court of Seasons have shown no ability to manage any sort of large organization.

The reasons for these attitudes are clear. Because the gods and elementals in the Bureau of Seasons are both organized and deeply conservative, most gods outside the bureau now believe that controlling the seasons and the weather is a simple task that could be easily improved upon by more imaginative and noble leaders.

In contrast, the members of the Court of Seasons are all widely popular despite their lack of both Essence and political power. Five times a year, the Court of Seasons holds an elaborate festival located in the vast plaza surrounding the Jade Pleasure Dome in the center of Yu-Shan. Here, there are fanciful mock battles between representatives of the seasons that are changing, masked balls and large amounts of fine food. These festivals are often the only time that the lowest gods obtain a small taste of Ambrosia.





Most important of all, the Court of Seasons also organizes the Carnival of Meeting held during Calibration (see *Games of Divinity*, pp. 19-20). For one night a year, thousands of mortals and Exalts are admitted to a small portion of Yu-Shan where they entertain the gods. These festivals allow all of the residents of Yu-Shan to bask in remembrance of lost days when they took a more active and important role in Creation and received far more prayers. In addition, the Carnival of Meeting is an ideal time for all manner of intrigues and assignations — as well as a chance for unscrupulous gods to enslave mortals and Terrestrial Exalts.

These festivals are some of the most popular and best loved events in Yu-Shan, and the Court of Seasons receives much acclaim for them. All of the other gods assume that the gods of the Court of Seasons are solely responsible for these festivals. However, the truth is far more complex. In part, these festivals continue because the vast majority of the gods love them and expect them — many gods help with minor preparations and offer to plan or perform the various entertainments. Participation in these festivals is enough of a boost to the participants' status that the festivals might well continue even if the Court of Seasons took no further role in them. In addition, the minor gods of the Bureau of Seasons actually perform most of the behinds-the-scenes work for these festivals. The deeply conservative nature of the Bureau of Seasons extends to wishing all aspects of the seasonal cycle to remain eternal and unchanging. As a result, the lower-ranking gods in this bureau are the ones who are largely responsible for transforming the Court of Season's nebulous plans into grand and wonderful realities.

Because the Celestial Exalted once ran so much of this bureau, the current bureaucratic structure is a haphazard patchwork of overlapping offices that the directors hurriedly created in the aftermath of the murder of the Solars. All of the five senior officials are in charge of both a single season and a single important type of weather: blizzards, sandstorms, rainstorms, clouds and sunlight. All employees of this bureau above the lowest menials hold two offices, as both a sub-intendent of a particular month, week or day and as a duke of light showers or a baroness of dust devils. This form of organization is both confusing and highly inefficient, especially when two senior gods order a single lower-ranking deity to perform two opposing tasks. However, the leaders of this bureau are unwilling to change a system that works for one that might possibly lead to a return to chaos and the unplanned use of martial weather.

LEADERS OF THE BUREAU

The Shogun-Regent of the Seasons and Weather: Ghataru. Ghataru still considers himself to be a loyal servant of Heaven who is keeping the bureau running until the Solar Exalted can again take control of it. However,

while he has little personal ambition, he now has a very narrow and rigid view of both this bureau and what sort of individual should run it. As a result, he is not about to yield his office to the first Solar Exalt who asks for it. Many in the Bronze Faction of the Sidereal Exalted assume, perhaps correctly, that, at this point, only a Solar Exalt who spent at least a century working under Ghataru as his apprentice has any chance of obtaining control of this bureau. Ghataru is stodgy, highly conservative and inclined to order the senior warriors of the Aerial Legion to slay anyone who threatens the stability of this bureau or who in any way impedes its smooth functioning.

The General of the Aerial Legion: Nasri, Daimyo of Rainstorms and Daimyo of the Season of Air. Nasri is a huge and unusually powerful storm serpent who is in charge of the Aerial Legion. In peacetime, her only duties are to make certain that the Aerial Legion correctly generates and controls hurricanes and other huge storms. However, when Ghataru or any of the Celestial Incarna order it, Nasri rallies the Aerial Legion and leads an attack on the enemies of the gods. Since she cannot simultaneously manage storms, the first sign that the Aerial Legion is assembling is that all large storms cease. Until the battle ends, the only large storms in Creation are the martial weather created by the Aerial Legion. Nasri commands the five regional storm deities, including Naresh, Arbiter of Northern Storms, in both peace and war, and during wartime, she is temporarily in charge of the five Wind Masters. However, in peacetime, she must work with them to ensure the proper winds blow during her storms.

THE DIVINE WITNESSES OF HUMAN WORKS AND DEEDS (THE BUREAU OF HUMANITY)

This bureau looks after the gods of human places and things. Unfortunately, it is often less than clear when something belongs to this bureau or to the Department of Abstract Matters in the Bureau of Heaven. Since the end of the First Age, the Bureau of Heaven has been expanding and has stripped away many concepts previously governed by the Bureau of Humanity (such as hunting and intoxicants). When many hundreds of millions of humans died during the Contagion, this bureau and the gods in it grew significantly weaker and became far more vulnerable to the machinations of the Bureau of Heaven. The gods in this bureau worked exceedingly closely with the previous Solar Deliberative, and today, the members of the Bureau of Humanity generally support the idea of aiding the newly returned Solar Exalted. These deities regard an alliance with the Solars as the best way for them to regain much of their lost power.

The Bureau of Humanity has the dubious distinction of being the most openly heretical of the five bureaus.

Included in this bureau are the gods of all of the various mortal cities and towns. Today, many dozens of these gods have abandoned their rightful duties and now actively control their domains and rule over the mortals who live there. Although the head of the Bureau of Humanity claims to disapprove of this practice, it is an open secret that the bureau never actually punishes these rogue deities.

Most of the heads of this bureau believe that gods can rule mortals far better than either mortals or Dragon-Blooded, and several of the heads of the bureau consider themselves to be the rightful replacements for the Solar Exalted. Currently, there is much discussion as to whether the gods of this bureau should ally themselves with the Solars and the Sidereals of the Gold Faction as equals or whether it might be better to return to their old subservient role. Unsurprisingly, all but a few reactionaries favor the various city gods continuing to rule their homes and the Bureau of Humanity working with the Solar Exalted as equals.

One of the Bureau of Humanity's primary duties used to be policing the behavior of gods who interacted with mortals. Today, this policing is often little more than an excuse to obtain bribes. In addition to allowing various city fathers and mothers (see the *Exalted Storytellers Companion*, pp. 61-62) to become the immortal overlords of human cities and towns, the Bureau of Humanity also frequently permits rebel gods such as ronin lion dogs and rogue celestial lions to take control of mortal habitations. Not only does this behavior violate the heavenly edicts that states that the gods should not openly interfere with the affairs of mortals, but these god-kings also displace the current deities of these cities and towns.

Instead of alerting the censors to punish these offending deities, the investigators of the Bureau of Humanity generally approach the new ruler of a city and offer to turn a blind eye to its various crimes in return for the construction and maintenance of shrines dedicated to the Bureau of Humanity. To prevent further problems, the leaders of the bureau then either forcibly reshape the previous city god and assign it to a lesser duty or use bribes and threats to coerce it into finding a new line of work. Amoth City-Smiter — the God of Tumbled Ruins — eats overly recalcitrant gods.

The Bureau of Humanity has an exceedingly simple organizational structure. Each elemental region is ruled by a satrap. Under these satraps are the gods of the various nations or city-states, and under them are the gods of all of the individual fields, cities, roads, towns and villages.

In the First Age, there was a parallel half of the Bureau devoted to large-scale human concerns such as agriculture, hunting and intoxicants. Unfortunately, most of these gods were convinced to join the larger and more powerful Bureau of Heaven. Today, this division, called the Department of Universal Human Affairs contains only minor

gods and a very few powerful gods such as Plentimon of the Dice who are happy with the near-total lack of supervision in this Bureau. In general, the few gods that remain in this bureau have no interest in joining the Bureau of Heaven, preferring freedom to greater political power. The Bureau of Humanity has essentially become the bureau in charge of various locations used by humanity.

LEADERS OF THE BUREAU

The Director of Humanity: Wun Ja, God of the Shining Metropolis. Wun Ja was one of the greatest of the gods in the First Age but lost much of her power when the greatest cities collapsed during the Contagion. Her loss of power is the primary reason the Bureau of Heaven was able to steal so many gods from under this bureau's jurisdiction. Wun Ja is terrified that her bureau will continue to shrink and is willing to break any of the laws of Heaven to prevent this from happening. Wun Ja is the primary proponent of the bureau's plan to work with the Sidereal Gold Faction and any Solar Exalted who can be convinced to work equally with the Bureau of Humanity.

Although Wun Ja lost much of her previous power, she still obtains more worship than any other deity in this bureau since she receives a tithe from each of the city gods worshiped in the Threshold. Since city fathers and mothers who actually rule their homes obtain considerably more worship than those content to allow other to rule their cities, Wun Ja is an active proponent of having mortal cities ruled by gods. As relations between the Realm and the Threshold continue to deteriorate since the disappearance of the Scarlet Empress, Wun Ja is working to convince more gods to take control of cities. She is currently attempting to convince Grandmother Bright of Chiaroscuro to take control of the city and rebuild it to its ancient glory. Grandmother Bright has so far proven resistant to these attempts but might be convinced if Wun Ja could provide a sufficient number of Celestial Exalts and other powerful allies to help with this conquest.

Ever since the Solar Exalted escaped from the Jade Prison, Wun Ja has also become interested in the goals of the Sidereal Gold Faction. She is actively looking for Solar Exalt willing to take control of large cities — but only if they agree to avoid destroying any other large cities and are willing to insure her worship in all cities they control. Since the largest cities in the world are in the Realm and are currently providing her with no prayers, she is also exceedingly eager to help with any plans to conquer the Scarlet Empire.

Wun Ja most often appears as a tall, slender woman made entirely of glass and metal, but she can also adopt a more human shape for those rare occasions when she wishes to walk through her cities in Creation. She deeply loves both cities and the people who inhabit them. However, she is firmly convinced that she and the employees of

her bureau know far more about how to manage a city than any mortal or Exalt. She essentially sees people living in cities as pets in need of her care.

The Sub-Director of Bribery and Finance: Amoth City-Smiter, God of Tumbled Ruins. Amoth was a minor deity in this department until the end of the First Age, when the vast increase in ruins greatly boosted his power. He wants Wun Ja's job as bureau head but also shares her desire to prevent the Bureau of Heaven from stealing even more of their power. His long-term strategy involves making exceptionally discrete alliances with members of the Lunar Exalted. He gives them all manner of useful information in return for their promise that they will turn the towns and small cities they invade from prosperous communities into smoking ruins. Civilized humans normally build new cities just as fast as the old ones are destroyed, but his Lunar allies insure that the number of ruins continues to increase. In time, he hopes to force a peaceful transition of power between himself and Wun Ja, once he is obviously the most powerful deity in this bureau.

Amoth has ties with several of the senior No Moon Caste Lunars in the Silver Pact. Although there is no great friendship between Amoth and the Lunars, they both find their alliance to be beneficial. Amoth sends out minor spirits to spy on various settlements and then has messengers carry this information to the Lunars. Using this information, the Lunars are able to send their barbarian armies in through hidden entrances and can find ways to evade civilized patrols that might otherwise warn the city or town of impending attack.

The only condition Amoth puts on providing this information is that the cities in question must be utterly destroyed and all their residents must either be adopted into the barbarian tribe, enslaved or killed. His efforts have also resulted in a growing cult among some of the Wyld-barbarian tribes. Although this cult is providing him with much-needed worship, it has also attracted the interest of Fleeting Maelstrom, one of the celestial lions attached to the Bureau of Heaven. This investigator is currently looking into the possibility that Amoth may have violated various Celestial edicts concerning noninterference with Creation. Although only exceptionally conservative gods care about most violations of this rule, most gods take infractions that might destabilize the borders of Creation far more seriously. Cur-

rently, Amoth is seeking allies in Yu-Shan to help prevent Fleeting Maelstrom from discovering the truth.

Amoth normally takes the form of a being with the head and torso of a man and the lower body of a great serpent. Unlike most of the gods in the Celestial Bureaus, he spends almost half his time in Creation. Amoth loves to slither through the ruins of various First Age cities and has, on several occasions, attacked large organized groups of mortals attempting to rebuild one of these ruins. He has no objection to scholars studying or even removing valuable or useful objects from various ruins. However, he will not accept anyone attempting to either completely destroy or rebuild any of the tumbled walls and broken towers. Even when he is not present, he will sometimes send messages to Lunars or to dogs of the unbroken earth (see *Games of Divinity*, pp. 42-43) to prevent ruins he particularly treasures from being disturbed.



Amoth also occasionally make temporary alliances with Fair Folk nobles, who he find useful in his efforts to destroy various cities. If evidence of any of these dark alliances were made public, Amoth would most likely end up buried under a mountain for the next 500 years. So far, no hint of these alliances is known to anyone except Amoth and a handful of Fair Folk nobles. He will attempt to kill anyone who seems like they might get close to uncovering this information.

The Satrap of the Realm: Jagalza. She is both Wun Ja's staunchest ally and her lover. Jagalza has close ties to the Bronze Faction, not because she hates the Solar Exalted, but because she is terrified of the threat any new power might pose to the stability of the Realm. Jagalza dislikes the Realm's current policies that forbid the worship of various gods and regularly attempts to manipulate or blackmail various Bronze Faction functionaries into changing this policy. Since the disappearance of the Scarlet Empress, she has also begun talking to members of the Gold Faction because her goal is to preserve the Realm from ruin, and if possible, to increase the power of the gods there. She is essentially amoral, and except for her love of Wun Ja, Jagalza cares for nothing except protecting the Realm and eventually remaking it into a state ruled by the gods. She will stop at nothing to accomplish this goal, and as the Solar Exalted continue to destabilize the world, her machinations become more overt, more desperate and deadlier.

The God of the Imperial City: Gri-Fel. Gri-Fel is deeply loyal to both the Realm and Wun Ja. He also hates Jagalza and is jealous of the attention Wun Ja pays to her. Gri-Fel is a devout follower of the Immaculate faith and is convinced that the Bronze Faction and the Dragon-Bloods are the proper rulers for the Realm. Although they share many of the same basic goals, Gri-Fel and Jagalza are bitter rivals and regularly attempt to disgrace each other. Amoth keeps careful watch of this rivalry and is always eager to offer one of them aid — or to have one of his secret allies offer them aid. Amoth hopes that the current troubles will allow him to foment open feuding between Gri-Fel and Jagalza and, so, topple the Realm.

The God of Nexus: Gen. To the mortals in Nexus, Gen is the slightly odd Minister of the Ways of the Council of Entities. No one outside of this council knows that he is also the deity of the ancient city of Hollow, now known as Nexus. During the Contagion and the trouble surrounding the end of the First Age, he was gravely wounded, and this wound has never healed because of the severe damage done to his city. Currently, Gen is not capable of running the city on his own, nor is he entirely sane. He did not even found the Council of Entities. Instead, another member who found him wandering the city lost in madness founded the Council. The physical embodiment of Gen's wound is the Wyld zone in the Firewander District. If anyone ever

stabilized this Wyld zone, Gen would become both fully sane and far more powerful.

Powerful magics performed by various members of the Council helped Gen mostly recover. He still has occasional bouts of madness, but he is rarely violent during them. Gen is vaguely loyal to Wun Ja but cares little for affairs beyond Nexus. Several gods, including Wun Ja, wish to replace Gen with a more effective and sane city god. The primary reason that Gen has not been destroyed and replaced is that no faction wishes its rivals to place a powerful and loyal deity in charge of Nexus.

The God of Meru: Ameru. Ameru was once the most powerful god in the Realm and one of the most powerful gods in Creation. He was the deity of the First Age capital of Meru. However, during the Usurpation, the city was destroyed, and powerful and uncontrolled magics were unleashed in the portions of it carved into Mount Meru. The destruction of the city stripped away most of Ameru's power, and the magical corruption of its mountain catacombs blasted his mind. Ameru has the mind of an infant and sits in a well-appointed office where he babbles nonsense to a single scribe who learned to ignore his babbling centuries ago.

THE SUPERINTENDENCY OF NATURE GRAND AND HUMBLE (THE BUREAU OF NATURE)

This bureau is responsible for the wilderness, for the plants and animals and for all objects not created by humanity. Like the Bureau of Humanity, this bureau used to work closely with the Celestial Exalted. It suffered a serious blow at the coming of the Contagion — during this time, Creation shrank, as almost 40 percent of the previous world vanished into the Wyld. The gods in charge of all of the species, biomes and regions that the Wyld destroyed remained behind but were suddenly both less powerful and unemployed. Since most of the destroyed regions were wilderness areas, the now-impooverished gods formerly of the Bureau of Nature make up the majority of Yu-Shan's unemployed. Most have departed from Yu-Shan, but many hundreds of thousands remain, living squalid and pathetic lives in the abandoned portions of the Celestial City.

The remaining members of the Bureau of Nature are determined that Creation not shrink further and, so, threaten their own jobs. As a result, several of the directors of this Bureau have cultivated moderately close contacts with the Lunar Exalted. Ever since the Lunars firmly established themselves as the guardians of the borders of the Wyld, several departments in the Bureau of Nature, including most of the regional committees overseeing land, plants and animals located near the borders of the Wyld, have provided discrete aid to the Silver Pact. When the Lunars battle Fair Folk invaders, they sometimes do so

with spirits such as dogs of the unbroken earth and small armies of beasts under the direction of various gods of nature. This alliance is particularly close in the East.

The alliance is technically against the laws of both Heaven and of the Bureau of Nature. However, only the most reactionary and fanatical gods openly oppose any actions that help keep back the Wyld. Still, whenever anyone in this bureau provides significant aid to the Silver Pact, he must pay the appropriate bribes to the censors and celestial lions of the Bureau of Heaven. Helping the Lunars in their battles against civilized opponents is a far less popular cause, and gods who offer this aid attempt to keep their role in these attacks secret.

Most of the time, the rather slack celestial lions fail to notice the aid provided by the Bureau of Nature. However, when a field guardian or similar deity or elemental living in a civilized land complains that barbarians aided by nature spirits have overrun its shrine, the Bureau of Heaven sometimes intervenes. In such cases, the lions assess high fines, or the gods responsible select a scapegoat from among their number, and they demote or imprison this god for a century or two. The daimyos of this bureau who have allied themselves with the Lunars also have a loose but secret alliance with Amoth City-Smiter. Since the gods in the Bureau of Humanity and the Bureau of Nature are traditionally bitter rivals, most members of both bureaus would be horrified were anyone ever to reveal the details of this alliance. Also, if any hint of Amoth's alliance with the Fair Folk became known, all of the gods in this bureau would become his bitter enemies.

The structure of the Bureau of Nature is both simple and highly inefficient. There are two parallel hierarchies, the Hierarchy of Type and the Hierarchy of Function. The Hierarchy of Type divides animals, plants and places by appearance: There are gods of birds, mountains, hoofed animals, valleys, red rocks, cats, dogs, trees, snakes, lakes, fungi, flowering plants and grasses. The Hierarchy of Function groups animals, plants and places according to more abstract points of similarity and difference: There are gods of carnivores, high places, burrowers, flying creatures, sedimentary rocks, leaf-eaters, autotrophs and aquatic life.

In the First Age, the two hierarchies were approximately equal. However, much knowledge was lost at the end of the First Age, and in the present day, most mortals group animals solely by type because the elaborate First Age taxonomies only exists in a few books buried deep in ancient ruins. The gods of the Hierarchy of Function resent their loss of power and have tried many schemes to restore the balance in this bureau. Unfortunately, the only sure way to restore the prior state of affairs is to change the way that most mortals understand and classify

the world. So far, such changes have proven impossible to implement. One recent effort involved lesser gods in this hierarchy traveling to Creation and working as scholars and teachers in an effort to teach natural history in a fashion that would aid their cause.

LEADERS OF THE BUREAU

The Shogun of the Hierarchy of Type: Flashing Peak, God of the Imperial Mountain. As the deity of the single largest and most visible natural feature in Creation, Flashing Peak is also the most powerful deity in this bureau — and one of the most powerful deities in Yu-Shan. However, she uses her power to keep this bureau locked in a rigidly fixed form. Unlike many of the bureau shoguns, she is not afraid of change — instead, she is unwilling to admit its existence. She knows that both Yu-Shan and Creation have changed since the days of the First Realm. However, she is unwilling to admit that these changes make a significant difference to her bureau or to Yu-Shan. She is quite intelligent but completely blind to the new realities around her. She is the most strictly legalistic of the bureau shoguns and applies the laws of Heaven just as they were back in the days of the First Realm. She strenuously avoids noticing the fact that obviously corrupt censors and deeply cynical celestial lions perform many of the audits she calls. Because she is so powerful, many in this bureau and in others emulate her philosophy, in the vain hope that if enough gods ignore the changes that have occurred, both Yu-Shan and Creation will return to their previous uncorrupted state. Flashing Peak always appears as a beautiful, eight-foot-tall woman made of polished basalt.

The Shogun of the Hierarchy of Function: Burnished Talon, Daimyo of Mammalian Predators. Although most of the gods in the Bureau of Nature are as deeply conservative as the gods in the Bureau of Seasons, there is a small contingent of rebels and would-be innovators led by Burnished Talon. These gods are not content to have the species of animals remain eternal and unchanged and constantly attempt to get the phylum gods such as Nan-Chal, Eminence of Mammals, to accept new species. Nan-Chal and the other phylum gods are all unwilling to let Burnished Talon and his allies indiscriminately use Charms and controlled exposure to the Wyld to create new species. However, they have allowed Burnished Talon and his allies to locate those Wyld-twisted creatures that are able to breed true and encourage their survival and expansion inside Creation. Burnished Talon hopes that increasing the number of species and creating Wyld-twisted mixtures of two or more species will help mortals re-embrace divisions of function as well as form.



It was a hill far from any Manse, not located on any dragon track, far from the territory of aggressive gods and Lunars and far outside the Seventh Legion's surveillance perimeter. Such safe locations were rare treasures, and the Convention of Wood had a rotating list of them that it kept up to date for meetings such as this.

Three of the figures were well-acquainted. Ayesha Ura, Chosen of the Maiden of Journeys and the leader of the Gold Faction, and with her were Fleet Brilliance, a fellow Chosen of the Maiden of Journeys, and May Blossom, Chosen of the Maiden of Secrets. Together, they formed a significant portion of their faction.

The fourth figure was the many-faced Solar known to them as the Mirror Flag. It alone of the assembled Exalts used Essence, maintaining Charms to conceal its identity. The Sidereals looked disapprovingly at the "paunchy older man" who'd come to meet with them, but they had anticipated this and had arranged astrological circumstance to conceal the Solar's presence in the remote chance someone was attempting to observe the meeting.

The Sidereals had great plans for Mirror Flag, and they were sure the young actress they believed lived inside the Solar's façade of multiple selves had plans for them as well. The purpose of this meeting was to attempt to see that those plans did not conflict.

Fleet Brilliance was the Solar's recruiter, but Ayesha Ura spoke for the Sidereals. It was a sign of the fragility of the movement that its leader needed to expose herself in a delicate situation such as a recruitment. May Blossom had come only to provide security and bear witness to the proceedings.

"You have shown admirable judgment, Mirror Flag. As Fleet Brilliance has suggested, we think your pursuit of your goal is unstinting, and yet, you do not overestimate your powers and seek to challenge the Realm directly like the Bull of the North."

The weathered, wrinkled mask of the Solar looked at her dispassionately. "Even I have heard the name of Yurgen Kaneko, but few have heard of the Mirror Flag. That is the reason for my circumspection. Further, though you see me as using the people as a weapon, I see myself as the weapon of the people. I merely give them the key to fulfill their dreams of righteousness or lend slight impetus to their already extant desires. It would be far less useful to train them to be tiger warriors. There would be more effort for less reward. Cease flattering me."

Ayesha Ura nodded. "Then we'll dispense with the formalities."

"Your purpose?"

"As Fleet Brilliance has informed you, some of our kind support and defend the Realm. We support the return of the Solar Exalted. We can provide you with training, financial support, whatever you need for your revolutionary struggle."

"And in return?"

"You accept our advice? There is little else we can ask — we support the return of the Solar Exalted. You are the rightful rulers of Creation. The disordered state of life today is the direct fault of the Solar Purge."

"And so, unlike every god and Exalt I have yet met, you generously offer me tutelage and power merely in exchange for me being myself?"

"What else do you want, Solar? A confession of our bad intentions? Think of it this way, if you will: We approached you for recruitment. That means that, somehow, we penetrated your veil of false identities. Even if it was only to deliver our message to you, we can locate you, and if we can, our fellows who support the Realm can as well. We moved first because the Scavenger Lands are our center of power, but an imperial response will not be far behind, even to actions of your subtlety. We can help you, Exalt. We can hide you, introduce you to your fellow Solars, even teach you martial-arts techniques to defend yourself."

The Solar nodded imperceptibly, "And in return, all I need to do is pursue my struggle with your helpful advice?"

The Sidereals nodded, almost as one, and the Solar shook its head.

"Your falsehoods are patent, but not total. I will learn from you."

Ayesha Ura nodded, amused at the Solar, so intent on reading them for truth and falsehood that it had not discerned that two of its interlocutors had never met one of the Solar Exalted before. She smiled, "We will learn from you as well, Mirror Flag. Let us hope our alliance is fruitful for both parties."

CHAPTER TWO

THE BUREAU AND THE SIDEREAL

Whereas the other bureaus of the Celestial Bureaucracy are concerned with what is and what was, the Most Excellent Designers of Destiny and Sidereal Conjunctions, or the Bureau of Destiny as it is less formally known, is responsible for what will be. On a grander scale, the Bureau of Destiny is responsible for the fulfillment of fate, the continuation of Creation itself.

Thus, where other Celestial Bureaus have become embroiled in conflicts over the proper division of Creation as it now stands, the Bureau of Destiny has little time for such things. Official minutiae must often be put on hold, since there is always work to be done. The process of destiny is ongoing and never-ending. So, too, must the bureau and its functionaries be always in motion, or else, they risk being caught and ground up in the gears of progress. This lends a somewhat frenetic air to the business of the Bureau of Destiny, compared to the often dust-gathering pace of other parts of the Celestial Bureaucracy.

Like the other bureaus of the Celestial Bureaucracy, the Bureau of Destiny is located in Yu-Shan, in its own cluster of structures known because of its arrangement as the Most Perfect Lotus of Heavenly Designs. The five divisions of the Bureau are spaced around the domed structure that lies at the center, the Loom of Fate, where the true work of destiny is done. The structures and the fine plaza that surrounds them are always bustling with activity, particularly the comings and goings of the various gods,

functionaries and workers of the bureau, including the Sidereal Exalted.

THE FIVE MAIDENS

The most mysterious of the Celestial Incarna are the Five Maidens, given dominion over different aspects of fate and the progress of Creation and given the duty and responsibility of overseeing the motions of the stars and the future of the world. It is a responsibility they have passed on to their Chosen, who take their duties seriously, perhaps even more seriously than their inscrutable patrons.

The Maidens are so-called because they most often appear to mortals as young and beautiful women, but like all gods, their forms are only appearance, and the Maidens are neither young nor truly women. They are nearly as old as Creation itself and are wise in its secrets, particularly the twists and turns of fate. Each Maiden was set to oversee a particular aspect of progress or change in the world.

Where once the Five Maidens worked closely with their Chosen, they are now more distant patrons of the Sidereal Exalted, engrossed in the affairs of the gods and the Games of Divinity. The Sidereal Exalted are left largely to their own devices, charged with overseeing the Bureau of Destiny and the Loom of Fate in the absence of their patrons. This suits the Sidereal Exalted well enough. They are used to the idea of self-reliance and understand full well that responsibility for the fate of Creation rests squarely on their shoulders.

MERCURY, THE MAIDEN OF JOURNEYS

The swift Maiden of Journeys, Mercury is associated with going and doing, travel and what results from it. She is the god of merchants, messengers, wanderers and explorers, those who long to know what lies just beyond the next hill. She is associated with wanderlust and a need for activity. Those unable to sit idle for long (as well as folk given to fits) are said to be touched by Mercury. She has the most diverse interests of any of the Maidens, and is the most likely to be engaged in activities other than the Games of Divinity. However, Mercury's interests are so diverse that she rarely focuses on one thing for any length of time. She is known to be fickle, offering her complete attention and support one moment, then withdrawing them when she is distracted by some other matter.

Mercury's astrological house is the Golden Barque of the Heavens, made up of the Captain, the Gull, the Mast, the Messenger and the Ship's Wheel. Her color is yellow-gold, often associated with the wealth sought by merchants, and the Maiden is often pictured dressed in saffron-colored robes.

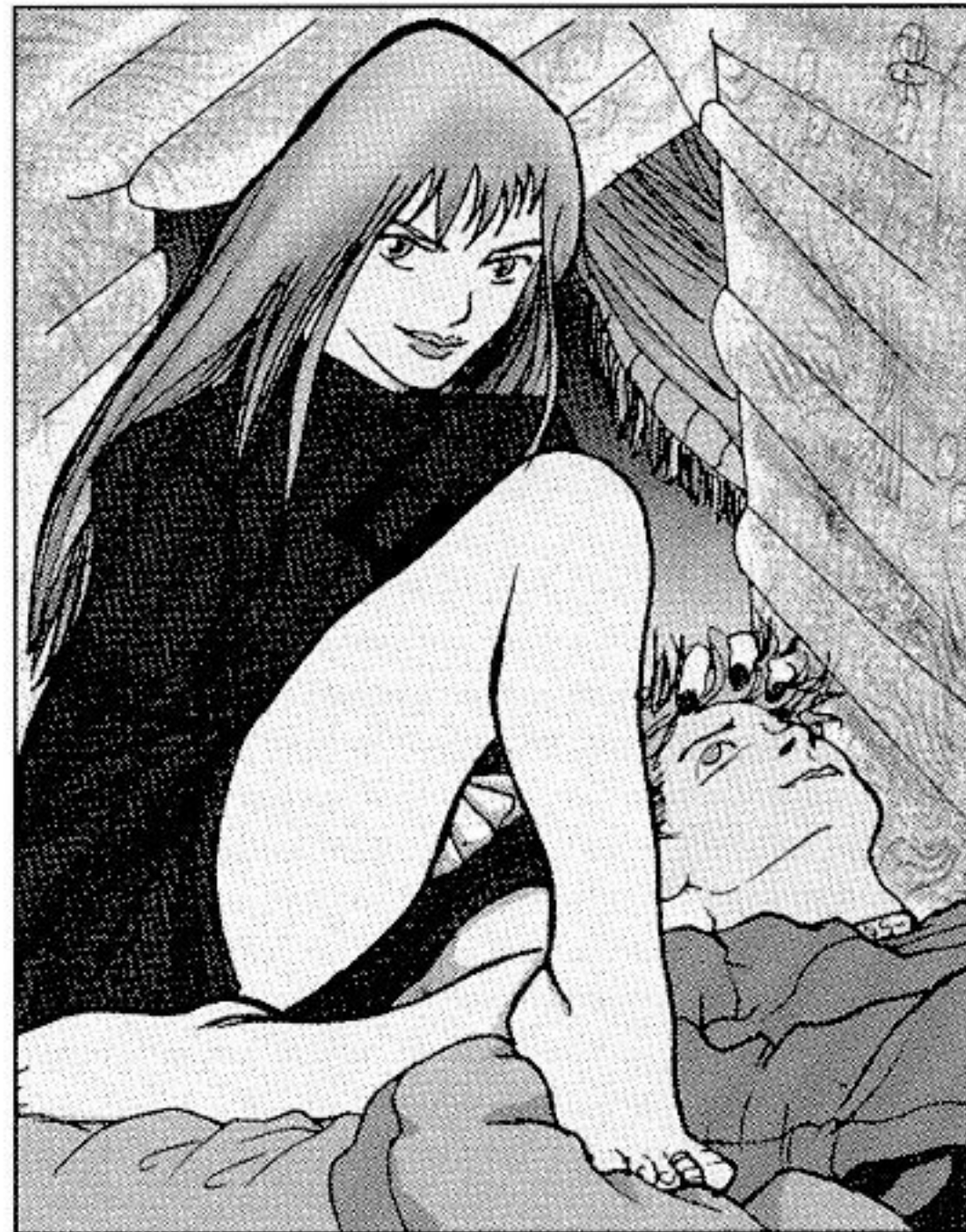


VENUS, THE MAIDEN OF SERENITY

The Maiden of Serenity is the god of leisure, joy, pleasure and all things that make life worth living. She has the happy duty of overseeing those impulses that help to urge life onward, the desire that motivates mortals and immortals alike. This means Venus is also the god of love, desire, passion and, to a degree, marriage, family and children. In the Old Realm, goldbricks and layabouts were known as "churls of Venus." Venus is said to be the Maiden who cares the most about mortals and her Chosen because she is concerned with joy and serenity, but some believe

that she is more concerned with her own pleasure. Certainly, Venus' dalliances with other gods and even mortals are the stuff of legends.

Venus' astrological house is the Cerulean Lute of Harmony, consisting of the Ewer, the Lovers, the Musician, the Peacock and the Pillar. Her color is sapphire blue, commonly seen in both marriage gowns and the veils of courtesans. Venus herself is a woman of unearthly beauty and serenity, robed in brilliant blue like the summer sky.



MARS, THE MAIDEN OF BATTLES

Red-handed and red-haired, Mars is the fierce Maiden of Battles, the god of war and strife. Hers is the power to wreak change in the world through conflict and upheaval, but she is also the mistress of cunning strategy and brilliant tactics. Although the Unconquered Sun is the greater warrior among the gods, Mars is perhaps the greater general, and her guidance (and that of her Chosen) helped to win the war against the Primordials. Mars is still associated with warriors, although few call upon her directly. Her symbol (a stylized sword and shield) is the universal sign of an armory or weapon smithy. Mars is the most direct of the Maidens, often tempered by the guidance of her sisters.

Mars' astrological house is the Crimson Panoply of Victory, made up of the Banner, the Gauntlet, the Quiver, the Shield and the Spear. Her color is crimson, the color of rage and of shed blood. Mars is often seen as a fiercely determined woman with short red hair, armed with sword or spear and wearing red-lacquered armor.



JUPITER, THE MAIDEN OF SECRETS

The Maiden of Secrets is perhaps the most mysterious of the Five Maidens — unsurprising, given her domain. She is responsible for studying the Tapestry of Creation, of measuring out its threads and of knowing their color, shape and form. Jupiter is said to know the allotted span of every mortal thing, of even the gods and Creation itself, although, if so, she has not shared this knowledge with anyone else. Jupiter has long been associated with wisdom and learning, but also with spying, stealth and secrecy. Although the Maiden of Secrets has much knowledge, she guards it carefully. She is the eldest of the five sisters and often helps them to cooperate without conflict.



Jupiter's astrological house is the Forbidding Manse of Ivy, which includes the Guardians, the Key, the Mask, the Sorcerer and the Treasure Trove. Her color is green, and green robes or a green sash are often the mark of savants and other learned folk. The Maiden of Secrets is seen as a homely-handsome woman with a lopsided smile that suggests some hidden knowledge. She is depicted with a measuring rod in her hands, used for measuring out the lengths of threads in the Loom of Fate.

SATURN, THE MAIDEN OF ENDINGS

The last and most feared of the Five Maidens is Saturn, the Maiden of Endings. Hers is the duty of cutting the threads on the Loom of Fate at the direction of her sister Jupiter, bringing the measured span of each and every thing in Creation to its appointed end. She is the god of death and undoing, but her work also makes way for new things to be born and keeps Creation from stagnation. Unlike the Deathlords, hers is a merciful and final ending, not a twilight existence caught between life and death. Still, the distinction is lost on many, who consider Saturn a fearsome and terrible figure.

Saturn's astrological house in the night sky is called the Violet Bier of Sorrows and it includes: the Corpse, the Crow, the Haywain (a cart laden with the fruits of the harvest), the Rising Smoke (from a funeral pyre) and the Sword. Saturn's color is a deep violet, used in funerary shrouds and to drape the bodies of the dead. She is shown as a beautiful maiden with white hair and a sad expression, robed in violet. Her sword carries the touch of death for any that it cuts, even slightly.



DIVISIONS OF THE BUREAU OF DESTINY

The Five Maidens sit atop the hierarchy overseeing the Bureau of Destiny, although their involvement in the day-to-day affairs of the bureau is limited. The Maidens spin out the threads of fate from the raw stuff of Essence, measuring and cutting them to their proper length. The Maidens may also color them and give them their texture, or that may be part and parcel of the nature of the threads themselves. None can say for certain.

The threads pass on into the Loom of Fate, where the pattern spiders, tireless workers of the Loom, take them up and weave them into the fabric of Creation. This work is largely automated. The spiders labor endlessly, producing the fabric of Creation upon the Loom. The work of the Bureau of Destiny doesn't involve the actual weaving of fate (since the pattern spiders perform that tiresome and tedious work). Instead, it is the bureau's job to ensure that the work is done properly and well.

THE GOLDEN BARQUE OF THE HEAVENS (THE DIVISION OF JOURNEYS)

The Golden Barque and its functionaries are concerned with matters of movement, action and travel within Creation. Among other things, this division is the most concerned with the movements of the stars and other heavenly bodies (the actual execution of which is in the hands of the great Celestial Incarna and their

servants). The division oversees matters concerning travel, distance and communication. This means that its functionaries are the most involved in mercantile matters on Earth, in the building and maintenance of roads and in maritime affairs of all sorts (save for naval battles, which fall under the purview of the Crimson Panoply of Victory).

The Golden Barque is also charged with matters of exploration and discovery: the journey to see what lies beyond the next hill or to sail to a distant land. It is the Division of Journeys' duty to see to it that certain things are discovered when and where they should be, that the right trails are blazed across the face of Creation and that newly discovered things generally remain fixed and true. The Division of Journeys cooperates with the Division of Secrets to hide those things that should not yet be discovered.

As suits its nature, the Golden Barque of the Heavens is just that, a vast ship of gold. It sets sail each day from the Quay of Dawn on the edges of the Perfect Lotus, traversing the Sea of Stars during the day and reaching the Quay of Twilight on the far side of Heaven by evening. There it takes on new crew and sets out back to its starting point, a never-ending journey across the heavens. A passage from the halls of the Loom of Fate leads into the Golden Barque's hold, permitting those with business on board to arrive and depart easily.

THE
GOLDEN
BARQUE



THE CERULEAN LUTE OF HARMONY (THE DIVISION OF SERENITY)

The Division of Serenity is concerned with matters of pleasure, health and well-being for the inhabitants of Creation. It is the most sublime of Heaven's pleasure-palaces, but underneath its finery and air of relaxed hedonism is a concern for all creatures. More than any of the other divisions of the Bureau of Destiny, the Cerulean Lute is concerned with humanity's happiness as an expression of the designs of fate. At least, that is the ideal to which the functionaries of the division aspire, even if they do not always achieve it.

The truth is that the spirits and Exalted of the Cerulean Lute are often more concerned with their own pleasure than that of others. A complex web of favors, barter and exchange drives the affairs of the division (both romantic and bureaucratic) and are intended to provide the most pleasure and satisfaction for those involved. The Cerulean Lute is sometimes known as "the Pleasure-House of Yu-Shan" or, less complimentarily, as "Heaven's Whorehouse" for the habits of its functionaries.

The Cerulean Lute would prefer to see more opportunities for happiness and simple pleasures in Creation but lacks the will and the support to bring its desires into being. Its agents do what they can to promote serenity, happiness and health among the people of the world, but often, their solutions are half-hearted "quick fixes" rather than long-term answers. Over time, they can cause more problems than they solve. The human propensity to trade in slaves, sex, drugs and other such things to satiate the carnal appetites of humanity can be traced to the Division of Serenity.

THE CRIMSON PANOPLY OF VICTORY (THE DIVISION OF BATTLES)

The vast tents and spires of the Crimson Panoply of Victory are focused on one thing, conflict. It is the duty of the Division of Battles to oversee all conflicts, struggles, battles, wars and skirmishes, carefully plotting their outcomes and their effects upon Creation. The Panoply is abuzz with spirits and functionaries pouring over maps, charts, and tables covered with markers to show the distributions of troops and any ongoing conflicts within Creation. They have cunningly crafted figures that move and fight in an almost lifelike way, either displaying what is currently happening in Creation or to demonstrate how a battle *might* go, allowing the division to assess its possible outcomes.

The Crimson Panoply holds the soldiers and guardians of the Bureau of Destiny, both gods of battle and the Chosen of Mars trained in the arts of weapons and war. They make up a small force compared to the Legions of Heaven, but they are the most skilled warriors in Yu-Shan.

When not engaged in other duties, they can often be found sparring and practicing in the courtyards between the great tents and towers.

THE FORBIDDING MANSE OF IVY (THE DIVISION OF SECRETS)

The Forbidding Manse is well named, since few of the inhabitants of Yu-Shan approach its ivy-covered walls without a feeling of being watched and studied. The inhabitants of the Forbidding Manse serve the Division of Secrets, the most respected division of the Bureau of Destiny. It is from here that the servants of Heaven gather and catalog the whole of Creation. The greatest stores of knowledge in Yu-Shan lie within its walls, a virtual infinitude of tomes, scrolls and records. Countless secrets are known to the keepers of the archives, the Chosen of the Maiden of Secrets. It is also from the Forbidding Manse that directives are issued to the conventions outlining what must be done in Creation. The Division of Secrets doles out its knowledge to the Bureau of Destiny — but in its own way and time.

The Division of Secrets is well aware of the power it holds, so those who wish to peruse its archives or to consult with its divine savants and researchers must submit to an arcane and complex approval process. The higher the petitioner's rank, the less trouble the requirements of the division pose. Still, the librarians and scribes of the Forbidding Manse can stymie even the eldest Sidereals and most powerful gods from time to time.

THE VIOLET BIER OF SORROWS (THE DIVISION OF ENDINGS)

The most feared portion of the Perfect Lotus is the Violet Bier of Sorrows, its dark draped halls and chambers the domain of the Division of Endings. It is a silent and somber place, filled with shadowed beings going about their tasks. Meetings are always conducted behind closed doors, and even the agents of the Division of Secrets are not precisely aware of what is discussed there.

The Division of Endings oversees the proper endings of things in Creation — not just mortal lives, but the endings of institutions, ideas, nations and all other things under Heaven. Much of the division's work is concerned with properly marking, recording and honoring the passing of things when their time has come, but sometimes the Division of Endings must directly intervene. When an ending is not clean or does not come at its appointed hour, it can leave a festering sore in the Tapestry of Creation. Agents of Endings are dispatched to cut it out so the fabric of destiny can heal properly.

All things pass in time, and the Division of Endings is feared because of this. Even the gods know that, one day, it will be their time, and the servants of Endings will come for them. Only the Division of Secrets knows when, and only the Division of Endings knows how.

The halls of the Violet Bier of Sorrows are dimly lit by hanging lanterns, often hooded or shuttered with heavy, violet-colored glass. Many of the gods that serve in this Division work in complete darkness, either blind to all light or able to work without it. They handle by touch the scrolls that detail the proper endings of things, since it is said that no creature should look upon them in their entirety. Visitors must often pass through chambers of utter darkness where voices whisper back and forth to each other or must wear blindfolds in order to enter certain chambers or to deal with certain entities.

This attitude of secrecy suits the Division of Endings well in its role as the bureau's internal-affairs department. This function has recently been under attack by the Bronze Faction, which has suffered bothersome investigations at the hands of young members of the Gold Faction serving in this division.

GODS OF THE BUREAU OF DESTINY

The gods of the Bureau of Destiny are manifold, each with its appointed task. Aided by the Chosen of the Maidens, these gods are responsible for the future of Creation. Most of the functionaries of the Bureau treat their task with the seriousness it deserves, although, even here, the corruption and idleness of Yu-Shan has begun to manifest itself. All is not right within the halls of the Bureau of Destiny, and if the Maidens do not act, it will fall to the Sidereal Exalted to right matters and to ensure that fate unfolds as it should.

RUVIA, CAPTAIN OF THE GOLDEN BARQUE

They say that the God of Roads does not travel much any more, but that is not entirely true. Although he rarely leaves the bounds of the Golden Barque of Heaven these days, Ruvia's eyes and ears are everywhere in Creation, and



he is among the most attentive to his duties of all the functionaries of the Bureau of Destiny. His concern is the network of roads that connect the cities and towns and villages of the world, the veins through which the lifeblood of trade, commerce and news flows. Ruvia is the greatest organizer and administrator among the gods of the bureau, and his division is run with great efficiency, although it may seem hurried and chaotic to outsiders. Ruvia is opposed to the heresies of the Bureau of Humanity, particularly the rogue city gods, and would like to see the city gods brought to heel.

Ruvia has the aspect of an old man, with a long white beard and hair, dressed in simple robes of saffron color, crossed with a grid of lines in red thread. On those occasions when he leaves his offices aboard the Golden Barque, he rides on the back of a donkey, with a bulging sack slung over one shoulder and a great wooden mallet close at hand. From the sack, he can pull any material thing, and a blow of his mallet can alternately bless or curse its target, as Lord Ruvia wills. He is a cheerful and pleasant spirit but is often caught up in the duties of his position.

YAOGIN, BEARER OF THE LAPIS EWER

Legend says that Yaogin the Fair, Bearer of the Lapis Ewer and God of Beautiful Dreams, was a simple shepherd boy from the dawn of Creation. The Maiden of Serenity spied him from Heaven as he lay asleep in his field beneath her star. Enchanted by his beauty, she ensnared him and brought him to Yu-Shan to be her companion. Yaogin has been in Yu-Shan for millennia and has become a god in his



own right, even though the Maiden of Serenity long since grew tired of his company.

Yaogin is Bearer of the Lapis Ewer, which contains the heavenly draughts of illumination and pleasure. A mere taste can bring inspiration to the lips of poets and singers, stir warmth and love in the heart and grant freshness and vitality. Yaogin is a youth of incredible beauty, with dark hair, dreamy eyes and a bright, easy smile. He is concerned particularly with pleasant dreams — perhaps too concerned, according to some. His dreamy state sometimes means that he finds it difficult to understand the urgency of matters happening in Creation, so he permits his underlings a great deal of latitude. Personal initiative is vital for the agents of Serenity to do their work.

HU DAI LIANG,

SHOGUN OF THE CRIMSON BANNER

The Shogun of the Crimson Banner is Lord General of the Division of Battles and one of the greatest warriors in Heaven. She is never seen without her red-lacquered armor or her spear with its pennant. Her weapon can



change its length at her whim, from a scepter of office to a battle-pike. Liang is best known for her remarkable wings, which are like those of a butterfly, all in shades of crimson and rose and edged in black.

Liang is a staunch supporter of the Bronze Faction of the Sideral Exalted and, therefore, of the armies of the Realm. She supported the Bronze Faction's plan to eliminate the Solar Exalted in order to save Creation and even assisted them with her advice and guidance. She advocates change through war and violence, although she claims not to take any pleasure in them.

The Shogun is most concerned about the disappearance of the Scarlet Empress and the conflict brewing among the Dragon-Blooded houses. She has helped the Sidereals to stave off open war for the time being, but she is afraid that, if the Realm does not fall into civil war soon, she may lose face. The situation must be handled carefully, and Liang is prepared to do whatever is necessary to safeguard her own position, even if it means going against the wishes of the Bronze Faction.

NARA-O OF THE HUNDRED VEILS,

KEEPER OF SECRETS

The head of the Division of Secrets is among the most mysterious personages in Heaven. Nara-O of the Hundred Veils is so named for always appearing draped in voluminous cloth of blues and grays, with no part of it uncovered, such that its true appearance (and even sex) are unknown. There are those who say that Nara-O is impossibly beautiful, that it is unspeakably ugly or that it doesn't look like anything at all, and if all the coverings were stripped away, there would be nothing left. Secrets are at the heart of the Keeper's nature, and it guards them well.



Like many of its subordinates, Nara-O gathers knowledge but gives little in return. It is not in the habit of explaining its orders but having them carried out. Oftentimes, it seems that the division's right hand does not know what its left is doing, although Nara-O's designs may become apparent to those who observe them over long periods of time. The Keeper of Secrets speaks in a voice barely above a whisper and is known for appearing and disappearing quite suddenly.

WAYANG (BLACK PUPPET MASK), GOD OF SILENCE

Nearly as mysterious as the Keeper of Secrets is Wayang, the God of Silence and Minister of Endings. He is also known as Black Puppet Mask, for his appearance is that of a man composed and robed entirely in shadow, with his glowing yellow eyes his only visible feature. Wayang never speaks, but his gestures and motions are filled with such meaning that he rarely needs to. He can also create shadow plays that carry his intent to viewers, demonstrating his wishes so they may be carried out. He is only ever found in the precincts of the Violent Bier of Sorrows, where he blends into the shadows that follow him wherever he goes.

Order is Wayang's watchword, and the Minister runs his division with a light but firm touch. It is said that the God of Silence would be most satisfied if all things came to an end so that there could be perfect and timeless order to Creation. Others realize that Wayang does not want an ending to everything, merely those things that must end to keep the fabric of Creation tidy. Black Puppet Mask expects his subordinates to carry out their work efficiently and without remorse — or mercy. Of late, Wayang's insights into the thoughts of the Malfeans have proven useful, but some fear that the God of Silence has too much insight into the Malfean way of thinking for anyone's good.



THE LOOM OF FATE

Within the Celestial City of Yu-Shan lies the place that may rightly be called the cradle of Creation or, at least, its beating heart, pumping its very lifeblood: the Loom of Fate. Although Gaia is the embodiment of the living world and the great Celestial Incarna steer the courses of the heavenly bodies, the work of the Loom sustains them all. Without it, Creation would cease to be, the sun, moon and stars would grind to a halt, and chaos would reign supreme.

For all its importance in the grand scheme of things, the Loom of Fate appears humble, at least outwardly. It is housed within a plain domed building at the center of the Most Perfect Lotus of Heavenly Designs. A first-time visitor to the Loom is generally taken aback by its interior layout — or apparent lack of one. The halls, walkways and passages of the Loom exist without any regard for the qualities mortals call “up” or “down.” Instead, the balconies, walkways and such exist at odd angles to each other, such that one can look up and see others moving along the ceiling or walls (or what seem to be the ceiling or walls from the viewer's perspective). In fact, in some cases, visitors can look out across the Loom and see themselves from another angle or perspective — sometimes as they are at that moment, other times as they have been in the past or even as they may be at some point in the future.

Stretched in the space between the stairs, ramps, walkways and balconies of the Loom is the Tapestry of Creation itself. It is woven not from any earthly thread or fiber, but from flows of raw Essence, spun, measured and cut from the primal stuff of the Wyld by the Five Maidens. These threads are woven into the vast pattern of the Tapestry, each one representing a flow or concentration of Essence that will manifest in Creation. They are the building blocks of all that is and all that will be.

Once the threads are in place within the pattern, the Tapestry is spun out, descending from Heaven in great, shimmering folds, emerging yard by yard, moment by moment. Its patterns become the things of Creation. The process of its unfolding becomes the quality mortals know as “time” and “change,” the forces that sustain the slow, steady and proper progress of the world.

The Loom of Fate is one of the most awe-inspiring sights in Heaven. Sidereal Exalted can stand upon the balconies overlooking the never-ending work and watch the complex patterns of destiny unfold before them. From certain angles, almost the entire pattern is clear, and the sheer beauty and harmony of the divine work is breathtaking.

WEAVERS OF THE LOOM OF FATE

All around and throughout the Loom are its most tireless workers. Metallic spiders the size of large dogs click and whirl as they scuttle along the threads of fate, trailing them along behind, weaving in and out, in and out of the pattern, taking new threads and working them



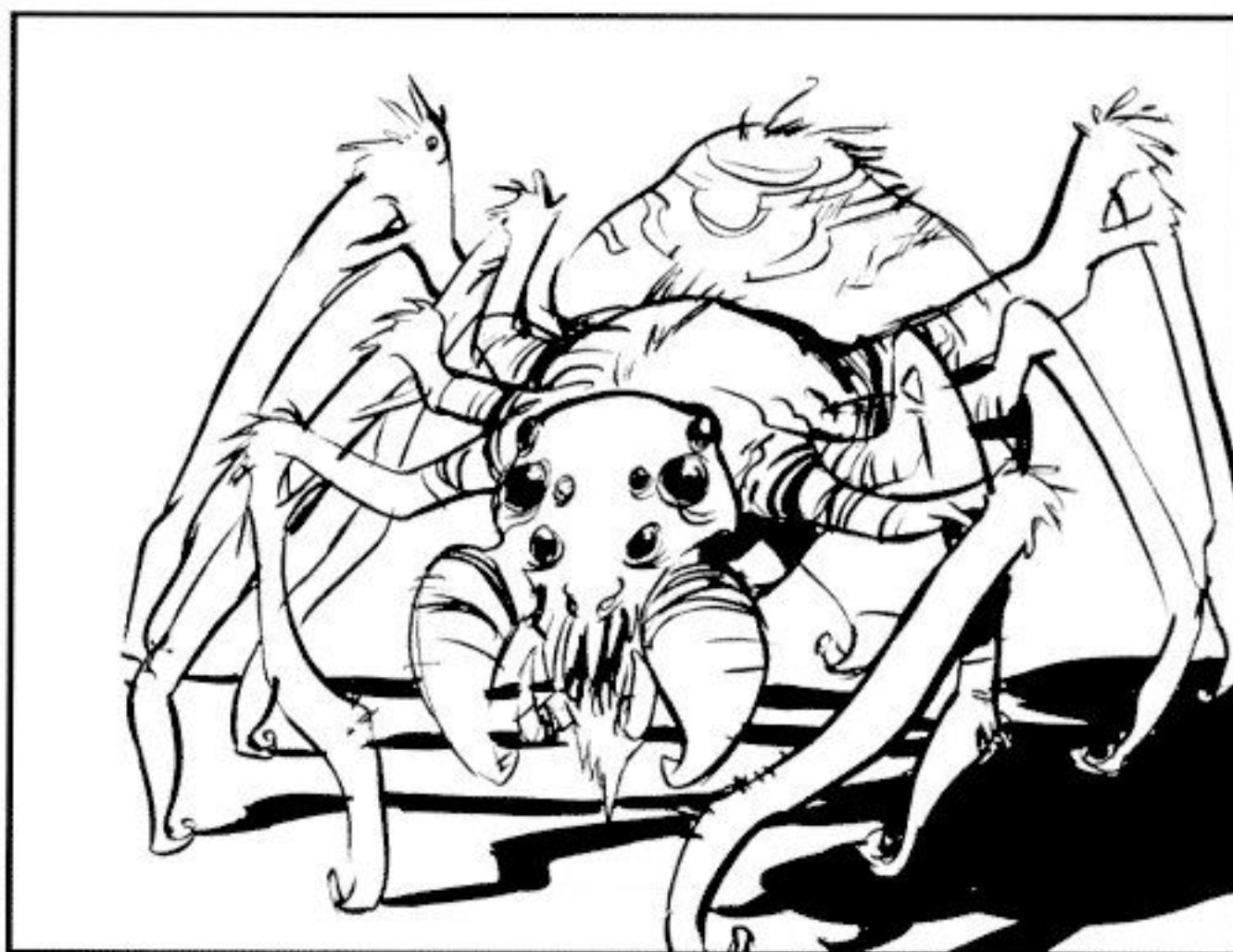
into the fabric. They crawl along the walls and ceiling of the Loom, back and forth along the Tapestry itself, largely heedless of those around them, focused entirely on their work. The pattern spiders are constructs that were built by the Primordial Autochthon at the behest of the Five Maidens. Although mechanical in nature, they are, nevertheless, powerful gods.

The pattern spiders maintain the overall structure of the fabric, but they do not dictate its pattern. That comes from the flows of Essence, the Five Maidens and the raw chaos of the Wyld. Eddies and changes in the flow of Essence result in threads of slightly different character from moment to moment, and the pattern spiders are very methodical in their work. There is no room for innovation or improvisation in them. So, although their weaving remains constant, the color and texture of each thread differs, creating intricate patterns as the fabric of Creation is spun out from the Loom, moment by moment. Some Sidereal Exalted liken the pattern spiders to the blind weavers employed by cloth-makers in the South of Creation: extremely sensitive and skilled artisans but incapable of understanding dyes or colors, since they cannot see the overall pattern of their work.

The work of the pattern spiders keeps certain qualities of Creation stable. Mortals can rely on the fact that the cardinal directions will remain fixed from day to day, that mountains will remain mountains and the sea will remain water, that time will progress in an orderly fashion and that things will fall down instead of up. Of course, the myriad details and cycles of the natural world are maintained by a host of spirits in the Celestial Hierarchy, but without the fabric of the Loom of Fate, their work would have no meaning, as all progress and order in Creation would quickly begin to break down.

Larger and more sophisticated pattern spiders, known as august weavers, oversee the work of their lesser kin. The functionaries of the Bureau of Destiny, in turn, oversee the work of the pattern spiders and try to ensure that it is free of defects and that the Tapestry follows the design and pattern laid out by the Five Maidens and the dictates of fate.

It is good that the Great Builder's work was made to last, since the Bureau of Destiny (and Creation in general) has become so dependent upon the tireless work of the pattern spiders. Fortunately, the pattern spiders were designed with the capability to maintain themselves, effecting repairs as needed and even reconstructing their damaged or defective brethren. The Bureau of Destiny also oversees this process, although there is generally no intervention required.



PATTERN SPIDER

Description: A typical pattern spider has a body approximately three feet in length, made up of cunningly formed and joined plates of the Five Magical Materials. The spider's head has a set of eight jade eyes, and eight thin, spindly mechanical legs are attached to the middle of its body. Like an ordinary spider, it is capable of walking on any surface, up walls or upside down, and it has precise and perfect balance, able to skitter along a single thread.

Pattern spiders are capable of speaking, although they rarely ever do. Their speech has a buzzing, mechanical quality to it and tends to be curt and precise. They show proper deference to their superiors (including the Sidereal Exalted) and generally ignore anyone else unless that creature directly interferes with the pattern spiders' duties.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 6, Stamina 8, Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 5

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 5, Temperance 5, Valor 2

Abilities: Athletics 4, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Craft (Weaving) 5 (Loom of Fate +3), Dodge 2, Resistance 4, Stealth 3

Charms: Binding, Foretell the Future, Hurry Home, Landscape Travel, Materialize, Measure the Wind, Natural Prognostication, Sense Domain, Stillness

Cost To Materialize: 40

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Bite: Speed 7 Accuracy 7 Damage 3L Defense 7

Dodge Pool: 7 **Soak:** 10L/14B (Spider armor, 6L/6B)

Willpower: 8 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 3 **Essence Pool:** 80

BINDING

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Conviction: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

The spirit can physically or psychically bind a target. The binding may take the form of silken webs, vines, chains or whatever other form is appropriate to the spirit. Roll the spirit's Dexterity + Conviction. The successes are the difficulty for the target to escape from the spirit's binding using either Strength + Athletics (for a physical binding) or Willpower (for a psychic binding).

Other Notes: The above template represents the typical pattern spider working on the Loom of Fate. August weavers are larger and more powerful: Add 2 to all Attributes and 1 to all Abilities and Essence. The Landscape Travel of a pattern spider allows it to move effortlessly throughout the Loom of Fate and to move along walls and ceilings as a real spider does.

SEEING THE PATTERN OF FATE

The Loom of Fate is a dangerous place for those unprepared for it, a place where the laws that govern Creation can break down. Travelers can see, and perhaps even meet, themselves or round a corner to see their whole lives spread out before them like a map. The Loom can grant insight — but also madness.

Upon first encountering the Loom of Fate, and at any time thereafter that a visitor contemplates the twists and turns of the Tapestry, make a Perception + Lore roll. A botch on the roll results in the visitor gaining a derangement (see *Exalted*, p. 281), while a failure on the roll causes the visitor to feel ill at ease and distracted (-1 penalty on all dice pools) for a day. Another roll is required the next day (or the next visit, if the first lasts less than a day). Success on the roll allows the visitor to acclimate to the oddities of the Loom; no further rolls are required unless the visitor seeks deliberate insight.

Greater levels of success grant a measure of insight into the weaves of fate, as follows:

Successes	Results
2	A vague impression of where particular information lies or what the outcome of a particular event will be.
3	A fairly clear impression of particular information or results.
4	A very clear insight into particular information or the result of a particular

PATTERN SPIDERS, AUTOCHTHON AND THE ALCHEMICAL EXALTED

Storytellers making use of the "Crusaders of the Machine God" storyline from *Time of Tumult* may wonder, if Autochthon created the pattern spiders, does their ultimate loyalty lie with the Machine God and his followers, the Alchemical Exalted? Is the machinery of fate ultimately theirs to control?

Most likely not, but the question is left for the Storyteller to decide. Despite their origin, pattern spiders are not mere machines, but gods in their own right. Their primary devotion is to their task — and nothing else. The Alchemical Exalted might possess the necessary lore to interfere with a pattern spider's proper operation, but they would first have to gain access to one, difficult since pattern spiders rarely leave the Loom of Fate. Still, some Storytellers may wish to have Alchemical Exalted spies attempt to infiltrate the halls of Heaven — and the Loom of Fate in particular — pitting them in a shadow war against the Sidereal Exalted for control of destiny.

sequence of events, provided that conditions do not change.

- 5 As 4 successes, plus the observer feels the rightness of the pattern of fate and regains a point of Willpower immediately. If at full Willpower, the observer regains a point of Essence.
- 6+ As 4 successes, plus the observer regains all temporary Willpower. If at full Willpower, the observer regains all Essence directly from the Essence flows of the Loom.

THE CHOSEN OF THE MAIDENS

The burden of the Sidereal Exalted has always been a heavy one, unknown to the Chosen of the other gods, unknown to any except the Sidereals themselves and those who dwell in Heaven. While the other Exalted fought and died and ruled, the Chosen of the Five Maidens advised, studied and carried out their duties as agents of fate. They protected Creation from the Yozis and guarded the strands of fate. The Sidereals were proud to serve, using their knowledge and wisdom to help guide the Solar Exalted and ensure that all was right with the world.

But all was not right under Heaven. The Sidereal Exalted saw Creation's doom written in the stars, heard it whispered on the wind. They saw the future that would come to pass — Creation would fall at the hands of the Solars that ruled it. The burden of destiny fell upon the Chosen of the Maidens, and they made a choice, a terrible



choice, that changed the world forever. They took destiny into their hands, and the world that has come into being since that day is the result of their fateful decision.

Now, the Sidereal Exalted feel the burden of their duty more than ever. The fate of Creation is balanced on the edge of a knife, the threads of fate's Tapestry frayed and tangled. It falls to the Sidereals to impose order on chaos, to keep Creation on the straight track as it careens out of control, plunging toward an uncertain future. In a world of selfish, uncaring gods and men with the power of gods at their command, the Sidereal Exalted are the last hope, the guardians of destiny, the secret protectors of Creation against those forces that would destroy it.

It is a heavy burden to bear, but bear it they must because no one else can.

THE TAPESTRY OF FATE

The history of the world is a lie, a fable crafted by the men and women who truly rule Creation. It is woven from threads of truth shot through with colorful falsehood and strengthened with long-held belief, but it is a fabrication, intended to keep the awful truth from those unable to bear it and to safeguard the true masters of the world so that they can continue their vital work. History is the creation and the tool of the Sidereal Exalted, although it remains to be seen if they wield it or it wields them.

THE WEAVING OF CREATION

In the beginning, the Primordials wove Creation out of the raw stuff of Essence, bringing the world and everything in it into being. They created the earth, the sun, the moon, the fixed and wandering stars and all the myriad things in Creation. But the fabric of the world was stretched and pulled by the chaos of the Wyld, which unraveled it in places, forever tugging at the corners and edges of the new Creation. So, the Primordials made the gods, the great

Celestial Incarna, and charged them with watching over Creation and maintaining it, while the Primordials took their leisure and played the Games of Divinity.

The gods saw to the many facets of Creation: keeping the sun, moon and stars moving in the sky, overseeing the seasons and the weather, matters of birth, death and renewal. The Five Maidens were charged with the motion of the stars and with continuing to spin out the threads of Creation and weave them into its fabric. For Creation was not a static thing. It needed to be constantly renewed from the flows of Essence.

As the weaving of Creation continued, its patterns subtly changed, like the pattern of a hand-woven cloth. Mortals called this change and progression of the fabric of Creation "time" and the spinning of new threads into its weave "fate." This constant work helped to keep Creation in balance, renewing old threads frayed or pulled loose by the Wyld and strengthening the world's fabric. But the work was tedious and never-ending. The gods grew tired of their labors. So, they conspired together. The gods would overthrow the Primordials, so that they could take their leisure and play the Games of Divinity.

WORKING AT THE LOOM OF FATE

The war against the enemies of the gods is well known in legend. The gods could not overthrow the Primordial themselves because it was made into their nature not to raise their hands against their creators. So, the gods Exalted certain mortals and gave them the power and weapons they needed to wage war on the Primordials. Those Primordials that were not killed in battle were exiled to the Demon Realm to become the Yozis. Those that were slain sank beneath Creation to form the Underworld, becoming the Malfeans. The gods ascended to supremacy in Creation and were able to retire to play the Games of Divinity. They tasked the maintenance of Creation to the vast hierarchy of spirits in the Celestial Bureaucracy and granted dominion over the world to their mortal champions, the Exalted.

The Sidereal Exalted — Chosen of the Five Maidens — were appointed the task of overseeing the Loom of Fate and the ever-changing fabric of Creation. Since the Five Maidens were well aware of the monotony of the task of weaving the threads of fate, and because their Chosen were so few, they petitioned the Primordial Autochthon to craft workers to handle much of the labor at the Loom. In response, he forged the pattern spiders, based on the finest weavers of Creation, and the Maidens charged their Chosen with overseeing the work of the spiders and ensuring that the fabric of Creation remained smooth, whole and untangled as it was spun from the Loom of Fate.

Thus, the Sidereal Exalted worked closely with the Hierarchy of Heaven, serving as go-betweens for the gods and the other Exalted, who were more concerned with terrestrial matters. Even the Eclipse Caste Solar Exalted, who frequented the halls of Yu-Shan, focused their atten-

THE ARCANE FATE

In the time after the Usurpation, the Sidereals used a great deal of powerful Sidereal Astrology to hide themselves from history. This was a wildly improbable event, as they had been an open part of the apparatus of the Solar Deliberative until then. They succeeded, but only at the cost of permanently damaging that part of the Tapestry — now, it is virtually impossible to remember the Sidereals exist at all. People who meet Sidereals have a very difficult time remembering them, and evidence of their existence is quickly lost or forgotten. This mixed blessing and curse is called the "Arcane Fate" by the Sidereal Exalted and is viewed as a unique burden of their status, much like the Lunars see their tattoos.

MAKING DESTINY

Characters may be called upon to plan destiny at some point. Characters crafting fate never need to choose the material. The Maidens spin all the key threads for the Loom of Fate, and the rest are spun from Essence by the Loom at the Sidereal's behest and are of uniform quality.

Planning the project requires an Intelligence + Craft (Fate) roll. This uses the normal rules for using Craft to plan projects, as per *Exalted*, pp. 245-246. The Sidereal Charm *Elegant Patterns of Fate* aids in this (see p. 143 of this book). The planning period is one day, and this period doubles each time the character retains successes, so the second roll takes two days, the third roll four days, and so on. The difficulty of weaving the destiny depends on the scale and precision of the design, plus the highest Essence of any being involved. Additional successes can be applied to ease the burden of planning. Each success beyond the difficulty can be sacrificed for one hour of freedom from toil.

Basic planning for high-Essence creatures requires a roll with a difficulty equal to the highest Essence of any being in that direction that day. Heaven's minimum standards require that this planning be done at difficulty 8. In general, the Maidens themselves plan this portion of destiny, and the heads of the Convention on Essence Wielders checks their work. Occasionally, when the Maidens are indisposed or especially distracted by the Games of Divinity, high-Essence planning for certain directions may be composed by the senior divinities and elder Sidereals of the divisions.

Most of the basic planning of destiny is done by the gods of the divisions or the pattern spiders themselves. Characters who are just planning out mundane destinies can choose to devote only a single success to quality and to devote the rest of the successes to the amount of destiny spun. In general, the weaving for a given direction for a day consumes about 10 successes of area at its most minimalistic and about 30 at its lushest and best-executed. The Loom of Fate runs best when each direction receives about 20 successes worth of area per direction in a day, plus whatever additional fates are necessary to handle high-Essence beings.

Actually spinning fates is a difficulty 3 Dexterity + Craft (Fate) roll. A character must be at the Loom of Fate to do this and must have been initiated into the College of the Sorcerer. The number of successes provides a rough measure of the quality and robustness of the fate involved. Each success represents one horrible fluke, one heroic effort to escape the web of fate or one clash with the efforts of the Yozis or Fair Folk that the character's plan endures. As usual, the quality of the woven fabric cannot exceed the quality of the plans — that is, the number of successes over difficulty on the Craft (Fate) roll. The plans for the majority of destiny, should the character be assigned to spin some arbitrary stretch of history, are composed with one success.

Characters with additional successes can use them to increase the amount of fate spun. It takes 10 successes of weaving to fabricate enough fates to implement one success of area planning, so a direction generally takes about 280 successes of weaving per day to maintain (10 weaving successes for each of the 20 area successes of planning, plus another 80 waving successes for the high-Essence planning). There may be yet more weaving if powerful Essence-wielders with important destinies are active in the area. This can amount to as many as 1,000 successes per direction worth of additional weaving — the pattern spiders do not rest often from their work when great powers move across the face of Creation.

Spinning fates takes 24 hours per roll, but the character can sacrifice one success to win one hour of freedom from toil.

Inspecting the material for flaws requires a Perception + Craft (Fate) roll at difficulty 2 and takes one day per roll. It takes 100 successes per direction per day of inspection to survey the Tapestry adequately and report all errors. Characters inspecting the Tapestry may sacrifice a successes to earn themselves 15 minutes of freedom from their duties. To see how far in the future flaws will manifest, roll on Chart 5: Time on page 258 of the Storytelling chapter of this book. This is how far in the future of the Tapestry the error will reach its critical point, not an indicator that Heaven has days and days of history saved up. Most of destiny is woven the day after it is planned.

tion more on the great Realm the Exalted were building than the affairs of the gods. Their concern was with the present, not the distant and unknown future. So long as all things in Creation proceeded smoothly, it was of no concern to them, and the Sidereals saw to it that everything was kept in good order.

VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

While all was running smoothly in Heaven, problems developed in the Realm. The Solar Exalted, who ruled the Realm wisely and well for so long, became corrupt and complacent in their power. They turned



from the worship of the gods and encouraged mortals to worship them instead. They abused their power, and perhaps worst of all, they ignored the advice and wisdom of their Sidereal counselors, preferring to keep their own counsel as to how the Realm should be administered. The Sidereals were told, in no uncertain terms, to mind their own affairs and to leave the job of ruling the world to their betters.

Deeply concerned by what they saw happening within the Realm and what they saw reflected in the weavings of fate, the Sidereal Exalted gathered together in secret for a grand conclave. They cast horoscopes and read the signs of fate in the stars. They debated, discussed and communed with spirits and servants of Heaven. At the end of their labors, three visions of the future emerged, three paths that Creation might follow.

In the first, the Sidereals encouraged the disgruntled Dragon-Blooded to rebel and overthrow the Solar Exalted. The Realm and Creation would be diminished as a result but would continue on under Terrestrial rule, guided by Sidereal wisdom. In the second, the Sidereals attempted to reform and correct the behavior of the Solars. If they succeeded, the Realm would be restored, but if they failed, the Realm would be torn asunder by civil war and terrible battles would lay waste to Creation, leaving nothing but ruins, overrun by the Fair Folk and creatures of the Wyld. In the third and final vision, the Sidereals did nothing, and the corruption of the Solar Exalted spread to poison all Creation, covering the world in darkness. The Sidereals would fight to preserve order and protect the masses against the rising tide, but even they would be corrupted, becoming mad agents of the Wyld or authoritarian tyrants of order, with only a handful of traditionalists struggling against them. Ultimately, the world would drown in corruption, smothered in darkness.

The third vision was the most terrible of all, and the Sidereals agreed that it must not come to pass. What they did not agree on, however, was which of the remaining two paths they should choose. One faction of Sidereals favored trying to reform the Solar Exalted, despite the slim chance of success. They became known as the Gold Faction, for their allegiance with the Solars. Another faction favored the odds, supplanting the ruling Solar and Lunar Exalted with the more biddable Dragon-Blooded. While the Realm would be diminished, the chances of success were far greater, and the world would be preserved. They became known as the Bronze Faction, for they favored a world without the Gold of the Solars or the Silver of the Lunars.

In the end, the Bronze Faction won out. The Sidereal Exalted agreed to a secret compact to overthrow their Celestial cousins and to save Creation from them, no matter the cost.

THE BLIND PROPHETS

Although they believe that they are the only ones in Creation to know the whole truth, even the Sidereal Exalted have their blind spots. Sidereal prophecy is ultimately flawed when dealing with those places and things outside of Creation, hidden from the sight of Heaven. This blindness extends to the fallen Primordials and the Great Curse they placed upon the Chosen of the Gods. The Sidereals did not understand that it was the influence of the Yozis and the Malfeans that corrupted the Solar Exalted. The Chosen of the Maidens were unaware of the Solars that sold themselves to the Princes of Malfeas and of the source of the passion that the Chosen of the Unconquered Sun could not control. The Sidereal Exalts saw only the results of the Solars' corruption, not its source.

Likewise, the Sidereals have always failed to see the subtle strings that the Yozis and the Malfeans use to manipulate events in Creation to suit their plans. Manipulators of the first order, the Sidereals have not seen the other puppetmasters working behind the scenes, influencing events from their prisons outside of Creation. So it was that the Chosen of Fate did not foresee the Great Contagion or the rise of the Deathlords. So it was that they did not foresee the breaking of the Jade Prison, the return of the Solars or the creation of the Abyssal Exalted.

How is it that the Sidereals have remained blind to their own lack of vision? It is the tragic flaw at the heart of the Chosen of the Maidens and their own manifestation of the Great Curse. Their arrogance and hubris have blinded them to even the possibility that their prognostications may be in error or that there are things of which they are not aware. The Sidereal Exalted have bent all their efforts to eliminating what they see as threats to the continuation of Creation and the proper course of destiny without looking inward to consider their own role in things. It simply doesn't occur to them that they could be wrong. For all their outward humility as servants of fate, the Sidereals are too caught up in their rightness of their cause.

The Chosen of the Maidens believe it is their duty and their responsibility to follow their insights no matter what the cost. This is just as the enemies of the gods intended it to be, and the fallen Primordials plot and scheme in their prisons, knowing that the eyes of Heaven are blind to their actions.

THE DRAGON-BLOODED REBELLION

The Chosen of the Maidens did not need to sow the seeds of dissent among the Dragon-Blooded. They only nurtured those that were already planted by the corrupt Solars, encouraging them to take root and grow. The Terrestrial Exalted were jealous of the Celestial Exalted and coveted their power and rule over Creation. Their jealousy did not extend to the Sidereals, who appeared to be humble servants and advisors to the other Celestials, whose work the Dragon-Blooded never fully understood. So, it was a simple matter for the Sidereals to offer common cause with the Terrestrial Exalted, to exhort them to action against the rulers of the Realm.

The Dragon-Blooded were weak in comparison to the power of the Solar and Lunar Exalted, but the Terrestrials were many, where the Celestials were few, and the Dragon-Bloods were trained to fight together to augment their strength. The ironic similarities to the war against the Primordials were not lost on the Sidereal Exalted. The Primordials were mighty compared to the Exalted, but the Exalted were many where they were few and used surprise, cunning and tactics to their advantage. The techniques of that war were turned against the Solars as the Dragon-Blooded rose up to slaughter them. Guided by the foresight and advice of the Sidereals, the former soldiers and servants of the Solar Exalted overwhelmed them. Some of the Solars

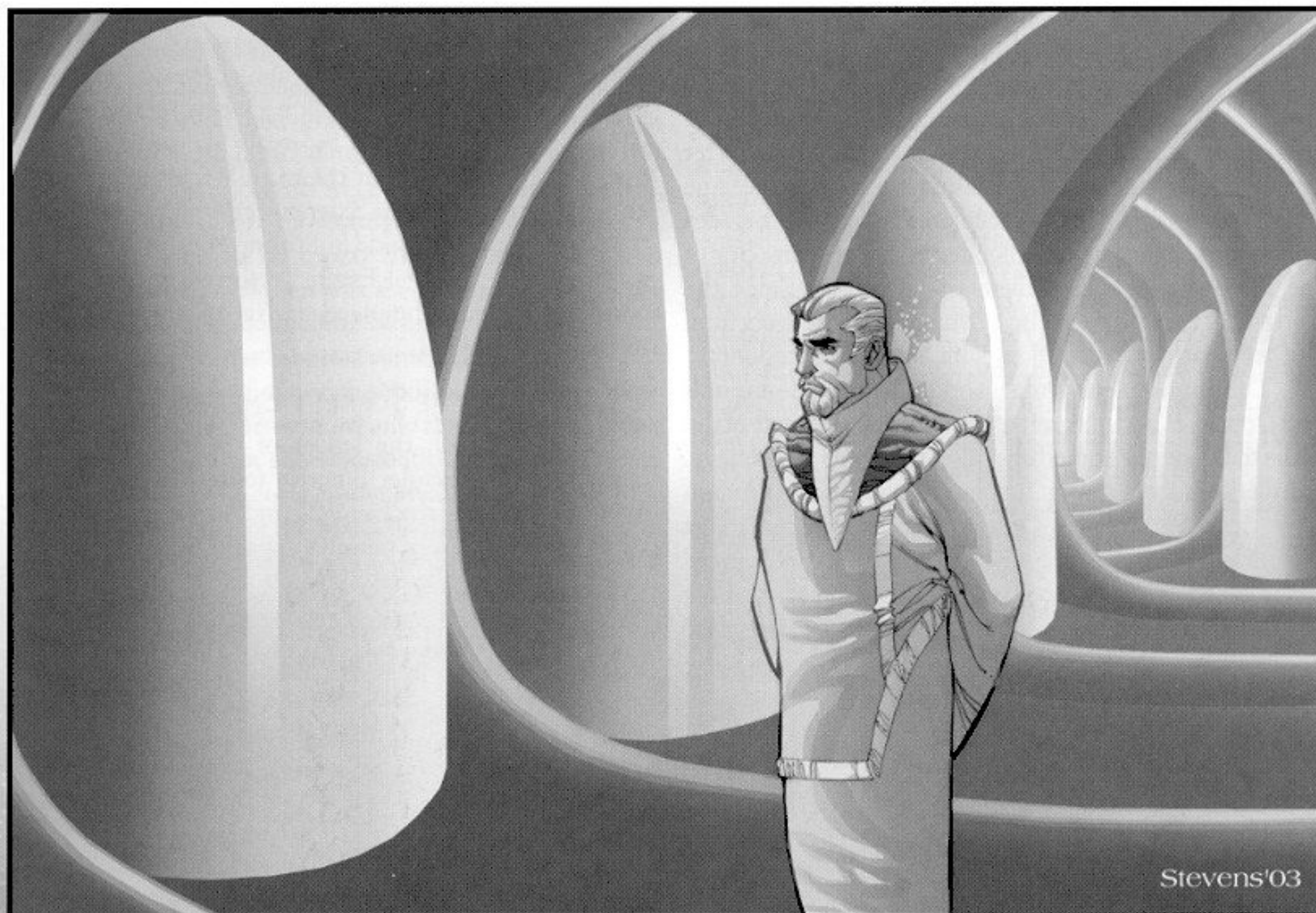
fought, but the outcome was never in doubt. The Sidereals planned for every eventuality — or so they thought.

THE PRISON OF JADE

The rebellion engineered by the Sidereal Exalted was a success, if “success” is the proper term for a war that slaughtered most of the rulers of Creation, hunted the others down like animals and drove the surviving Lunar Exalted into the Wyld places at the edges of the world. It took decades for the Dragon-Blooded to purge the last remaining Solars, and there were some attempts at a counteroffensive, but Solar rule of the Realm was broken.

More importantly, unbeknownst to the Terrestrial Exalted, the Sidereals took steps to ensure that the Solars would no longer be a concern for Creation. Using their sorcery and occult lore, they constructed a complex Prison of Jade in which the disembodied Essences of their slain Solar brethren could be held, preventing them from incarnating again. After the deaths of the Solars, the Sidereals permanently closed and sealed the Jade Prison with powerful enchantments. Thus contained, the tainted Exalts were removed as a threat.

This left only the handful of Solars who survived the initial purge. To deal with them, the Sidereals created the Wyld Hunt, elite Dragon-Blooded warriors trained to hunt down the remaining Anathema and destroy them, over and over, throughout their incarnations. With their



foresight, the Sidereals could predict when and where one of the remaining Solars would return, and it became a simple matter for the Wyld Hunt to run down and dispatch the newly Exalted, unsure in their powers and not yet fully aware of their true nature.

The surviving Lunar Exalted withdrew to the Wyld places at the edges of Creation, leaving the Realm and their former lives behind. So long as they remained there, the Sidereal Exalted saw no reason to provoke a war with Luna's Chosen. The Dragon-Blooded defended the Realm against any incursion, but most of the Lunars chose exile over any attempt to reclaim a world in which many of them felt they never truly belonged.

THE IMMACULATE ORDER

The Dragon-Blooded established military rule over the Realm, and just as the Sidereals predicted, their rule was not the grandeur of the Realm's heyday, but neither was it plagued by the excesses of the Solar Exalted. Unfortunately, neither did it have the stability of the Solar Deliberative and its bureaucracy, however corrupt they may have become. Dragon-Blooded efforts to replace the Deliberative led to almost constant struggles for power between different factions and alliances. The Sidereals worked behind the scenes, shoring up one tottering Shogunate after another, trying to build a stable new foundation on the shifting sands of the Terrestrials' loyalties.

To help increase the stability of Dragon-Blooded rule, the Bronze Faction created the Immaculate Order. The people of the Realm previously honored and worshiped the gods of the Celestial Hierarchy, surmounted by the Incarna, but the worship of the gods waned in the latter days of Solar rule, as the Exalted themselves became objects of worship. The Immaculate Order took this idea and portrayed the Dragon-Blooded as divine, partaking of the Essence of the Five Elemental Dragons. Since the Terrestrial Exalted were also the saviors of humanity from the depredations of the Old Realm, it was an excellent fit.

The Immaculate Order worked to provide mortals and Dragon-Blooded bereft of the spiritual guidance of the Celestial Exalted something else in which to believe. Conversions were slow at first but became more common over time. Part of the Order's success was due to its devotion to learning and scholarship, which encouraged many would-be monks seeking education and a better life to join its ranks. The Order also helped to safeguard civilization against the whims of the little gods, using the influence of the Sidereals behind the scenes to help ensure the spirits' cooperation and training Dragon-Blooded monks in the Elemental Dragon styles to allow them to deal with the more truculent of these little gods. In only a few mortal generations, the Immaculate Order became a force to be reckoned with in the world.

THE GREAT CONTAGION

The Sidereals believed they had averted the terrible future they had foreseen, but there was something else, something that they did not foresee. The Great Contagion came out of nowhere and spread across Creation like wildfire. Nine out of every ten people touched by the Contagion died in agony, and there were not enough living folk left to care for the dying, much less bury the dead. The threads on the Loom of Fate frayed and broke, the fabric of Creation weakened and tattered, and the Fair Folk battered down the gates to invade the world in a flood of chaos and madness.

The Contagion and the invasion of the Fair Folk left the Sidereal Exalted at a loss because these events were not accounted for in their prophecies. They had not foreseen them and, so, were unprepared. Some members of the Gold Faction proclaimed that the deaths of the Solar Exalted had damaged the Tapestry of Fate irrevocably, that the tampering of the Sidereals was unraveling the world. Others believed that the Great Contagion, like the Fair Folk, came from the Wyld or that it came from Malfestas or the Underworld, places hidden from the sight of Heaven and beyond the reach of Sidereal prophecy.

Whatever the case, for the first time, the Sidereal Exalted were all but helpless in the path of onrushing destiny. They bent all their efforts toward untangling the skein of fate and strengthening the torn fabric of Creation. Their desperate work may be what led a particular Dragon-Blooded officer to brave the defenses of the Imperial Manse, to gain control of the Realm's defense grids and to use them to drive the Fair Folk back beyond the edges of Creation. Certainly, some Sidereals like to believe that they had a hand in it, but the truth is that no one really knows whether it was the Sidereals' efforts or blind chance that saved the whole world from unraveling into chaos and madness. The Sidereal Exalted resolved never to be so complacent again. They needed to take a more direct hand in guiding the world.

THE RISE OF THE SCARLET EMPRESS

Chejop Kejak, the leader of the Bronze Faction, approached the Scarlet Empress following her triumph over the legions of the Fair Folk and her Dragon-Blooded rivals. She had proven herself a capable and ruthless ruler, exactly the sort that the Sidereals needed. Kejak offered the Empress an alliance, the support of the Sidereal Exalted and their Immaculate Order in exchange for the political and social stability the Sidereals felt was needed to safeguard Creation.

Predictably, the Scarlet Empress was both arrogant and suspicious. She required Kejak to come to her and to wait for a full day outside the palace, head bowed in humility, before negotiations began. He willingly made the sacrifice to further the cause of the Bronze Faction.



The negotiations were fruitful, and both sides had much to gain from an alliance. Kejak proposed that the new Realm be linked to the doctrines of the Immaculate Order, which already elevated the Dragon-Blooded in the eyes of the common folk and would give the squabbling Terrestrial Exalted the unity they needed to maintain an empire. In return, the Immaculate Order would become the official religion of the Realm, giving the Sidereal Exalted more direct influence over the people, and the Chosen of the Maidens would serve as the teachers and mentors of the Dragon-Blooded, helping to guide them along the right path.

The deal was struck, and the Sidereals set to repairing and maintaining the fabric of Creation. It had diminished following the Great Contagion and the invasion of the Fair Folk, its edges unraveled and consumed by the Wyld, reduced in stature and grandeur. This was as the Sidereals had foreseen, even if they had not known the cause. Creation was less than it had been under the rule of the Solar Exalted, but it still existed, and the Chosen of the Maidens would see to it that it continued to exist.

THE SOLARS RETURN

For centuries, the Sidereal Exalted went about their work. The Realm cemented its hold over the Blessed Isle and the kingdoms of the Threshold, while the Immaculate Philosophy extended its influence throughout Creation. The Sidereals worked tirelessly to support the new Realm they helped create and to maintain order in Creation. They indoctrinated the Dragon-Blooded in their service (whether the Terrestrials knew it or not), and they fought, struggled and even died protecting Creation from threats of which no mortal, including the Dragon-Blooded, was even aware. The Sidereals were as they had always been: devoted agents of fate protecting and sustaining order in the world. It began to appear that the hard work and dedication of the Chosen was succeeding. Then, something else happened that the Sidereal Exalted had not foreseen. The Scarlet Empress vanished.

Not even the wisest of the Sidereals could say what had become of her. They knew only that the thread of her life had not been cut short by death and that the forces involved must have come from outside of Creation, hidden from the notice of the Maidens and the weave of fate. The Sidereals also knew that the Empress' disappearance meant civil war in the Realm was almost inevitable. The Empress was the Realm, its sole and eternal ruler. When she vanished, control over the Realm went with her. Although the Great Houses of the Scarlet Dynasty closed ranks to protect and maintain the empire, behind the scenes, they began maneuvering for position against each other. By sending the Tepet legions to the Linowan frontier to die fighting the Bull of the North and then murdering several Tepets in the Deliberative, the secret

alliances, plots and schemes that were preludes to war were hatched among the Great Houses.

As if that was not bad enough, as the Sidereals moved to take steps to head off war and prevent the Realm they had worked so hard to build from being torn apart, Chejop Kejak received even more disturbing news. The Jade Prison that held the Essence of the captured Solar Exalted had been sundered, and the imprisoned Solars were free. For the first time since the Sidereals had set down their chosen path, there was a split among their ranks. Members of the Gold Faction sought to aid the reborn Solars, believing that they could use them to restore balance to Creation, while members of the Bronze Faction worked to maintain the status quo and suppress the resurgent Solars. Both factions remained dedicated to their duty, but once again, the future of Creation was in doubt.

Now, the Sidereals of both factions struggle to protect Creation in the face of the momentous events that are unfolding all around them. They fight to keep the weave of fate untangled and to prevent the terrible ends they have foreseen from ever coming to pass, and not even the wisest among them can say for certain whether or not they will succeed.

THE DUTIES OF THE CHOSEN

The other Celestial Incarna have gifted their Chosen with considerable freedom. Although the Unconquered Sun has turned his attention back to the Solar Exalted, they are still left largely to their own devices, guided by the occasional vision and exhorted to restore righteousness and justice to Creation. The Chosen of Luna are blessed with a vision of their patron upon Exaltation but are otherwise left to survive as best they can in a harsh and uncaring world.

The Chosen of the Five Maidens, however, perform many of the same duties they did in the First Age. They are responsible for the destiny of Creation, a duty that they do not take lightly. So, while they may pursue their own goals in Creation, in Heaven, the Sidereal Exalted are all yoked to the same plow and sworn to the same cause. After all, what does the future of the Solar Exalted, or the Realm even, matter if Creation itself ceases to be?

Therefore, the Sidereal Exalted, unlike their cousins, must split their time between their heavenly duties, their earthly duties and their own personal agendas, whatever they may be. Sometimes, they coincide, particularly a Sidereal's earthly work and the agenda of his faction. In cases where they do not, the heavenly duties of the Chosen must take precedence, followed by their responsibility to their faction.

The proportion of a Sidereal's responsibilities tends to be related to the Chosen's age and experience. The eldest Sidereals spend much of their time in Yu-Shan, meeting with the gods of the Bureau of Destiny and assigning work

to their juniors. Younger Sidereals spend more time outside the halls of Heaven.

Typically, at least a third of a Sidereal's time is consumed by his duties, either in Heaven or in the material world. Another third is take up by mundane matters, including regular training and study, while the remainder of the time is available for the Sidereal to pursue other activities, often taken up by matters of concern to the Sidereal's faction. This distribution of time isn't always uniform. Sidereals may work steadily for days on end, then receive some time to rest, recuperate and attend to their other affairs. They may also spend considerable time in the world before returning to Heaven, and vice versa.

The major duties of the Sidereals, in relative order of importance, are meeting with their superiors in Heaven, serving as agents to redress concerns of destiny in the world, training the newly Chosen and advancing the goals of the their faction.

TAKING COUNSEL WITH THE STARS

Although the pattern spiders do much of the work of the Loom of Fate, the functionaries of the Bureau of Destiny must oversee that work and the proper unfolding of the fabric of Creation. Like all tasks in Heaven and Earth, this requires planning meetings, the creation of committees and the apportioning of responsibility (and sometimes blame). The gods of the bureau work in conjunction with the Chosen of the Five Maidens to ensure that the machinery of destiny runs as smoothly as possible.

Of course, as with all things in Heaven, each god and each Sidereal has his, her or its own objectives and agenda where the Tapestry of Fate is concerned. Meetings between the spirits and Sidereals of the Bureau of Destiny are often rife with efforts to further those agendas, usually at the cost of rivals within the bureau itself, in other bureaus of Yu-Shan or in Creation. There is often more than one solution to a tangle in the skein of fate, and for every possible solution, there is an advocate within the Bureau of Destiny.

When there is a tangle in the threads of fate that must be undone, the Maidens expect their servants to solve the problem with as little intervention from them as possible. So the Crimson Panoply of Victory may advocate creating conflict as a solution, while the advisors of the Cerulean Lute of Harmony advocate a more peaceful solution and the experts of the Violet Bier of Sorrows suggest cutting out the problem with the precision of a surgeon. Each division usually believes its way is the best one, although its suggestions may conceal or incorporate other goals. If the conflict advised by the Crimson Panoply of Victory also allows the Realm to quash rebellion in part of the Threshold, so much the better for the Bronze Faction, for example.

The work of deciding how to fulfill their duties as the Chosen of Fate is usually handled by elder Sidereals,

experienced in dealing with the denizens of Heaven and the intricacies of its bureaucracy, while younger Sidereals carry out the decisions of the committees and censors of the bureau. Up-and-coming Exalted are expected to attend to affairs in Yu-Shan as well as Creation. Those who wish to advance in the service of the Maidens do well to seek out opportunities to involve themselves in the decision-making process, no matter how onerous a task it may be at times.

UNTANGLING THE SKEINS OF FATE

Even the most learned savants are blissfully ignorant of just how fragile the work of the Primordials and the gods truly is. Creation is a delicate fabric, woven from the stuff of dreams — raw chaos given form by the will of the mighty Primordials. The work of the Loom of Fate sustains the world and keeps it moving ever-forward. If that work were to stop, time would come to an end. The fabric of Creation would fray and tatter, and all that is would fall back into the endless sea of madness that is the Wyld.

Fortunately, the pattern spiders are tireless workers, and their labors ensure that the Loom of Fate is always in motion. Even if the Sidereals shirked their duty, Creation would go on, for a while at least, before the forces of entropy and chaos wore it down. The bulk of the work of sustaining the world has been automated and is carried out with no need for godly or Exalted intervention.

The work of the pattern spiders is a bit too perfect, however. They are methodical weavers, but the pattern of Creation is not static. It cannot be in order for life and the drama of destiny to exist. In addition, the Tapestry is always changing, as powerful Essence users reorder the world with their power. So, from time to time, the weavers of the Loom of Fate hit a snag. A particular thread becomes knotted or snarled, or two or more threads cross where they should not. Gaps develop in the weave, or tangles disrupt its pattern. The pattern spiders are not equipped to solve these problems. It is up to the senior gods of the bureau and the conventions of the Chosen of Fate to do so.

Some of the tangles in the Tapestry of Fate can be dealt with at their source, within the Loom of Fate itself. Functionaries of the Bureau of Destiny — typically various gods — oversee the work of the pattern spiders, looking for imperfections or flaws in the Tapestry. When one is found, the appropriate division of the bureau is alerted, and a functionary is dispatched to rectify the problem. Typically, it is a simple matter of tugging at the weave to right matters, common maintenance work.

While the Bureau of Destiny checks the Tapestry constantly and moves quickly to correct any problems that arise within the Loom of Fate, "quickly" is a relative term when dealing with any bureaucracy, even a heavenly one. There are reports to be filed, proper channels and procedures that must be observed and ministers and functionaries

who must be consulted on the matter at various meetings. This process ensures that the problem is dealt with properly, but it can be difficult to balance the need to follow procedure with the urgency of correcting the fault.

By the time the machinery of the Bureau of Destiny is prepared to act, a tangle in the Tapestry of Fate may be too far along in the process of creation to be corrected within the precincts of the Loom. After all, the work of destiny cannot be halted for every problem that arises. Time does not pause even for heavenly committee meetings. It must go on at the same steady pace. This means that the flaw in the Tapestry may start to become part of the fabric of Creation. It may also be that a particular problem is too knotty to deal with directly within the Loom. Such problems — those that cannot be immediately corrected in Heaven — must have their effects on Creation addressed instead. This is the duty of the conventions of the Sidereal Exalted.

The threads of fate impel all things in Creation, much like the strings of a puppeteer. If the Sidereals cannot untangle the threads directly, they can do so indirectly by manipulating the things attached to the threads and, in so doing, manipulating the threads themselves. The Chosen are experts in this process of engineering the future through precise and careful control of the present.

In practical terms, Sidereals manipulate various people and events in the world to ensure that things happen in a particular way. A traveler must take the left fork and not the right. A noble young bachelor must attend a particular social event, as must the daughter of a poor family in the same city. A particular side must win a battle and must win at a particular time and place. Sometimes, the events are momentous in and of themselves, but more often, they seem small and meaningless, at least to those unable to see the threads of destiny entangled in them, but their cumulative outcome is considerable. The Sidereals know that the smallest choice can sometimes affect the future of all Creation.

A terrestrial intervention usually involves a small number of Sidereal agents being dispatched with orders from the Bureau of Destiny to ensure a particular outcome. The Sidereal's superiors are not always inclined to reveal the reasons for their orders, so the agents doesn't necessarily know *why* this particular change is necessary, only that it needs to happen.

In fact, in some cases, not even the eldest Sidereals or the heads of the divisions of the Bureau of Destiny know the exact reasons for a terrestrial intervention. The Maidens themselves order some adjustments in events happening in Creation from time to time — to serve their own purposes or the greater demands of destiny, none can say. Some interventions therefore seem nonsensical from the agent's point of view: as simple as leaving a flower on a particular doorstep or as complex as ensuring that a par-

ticular village is attacked by barbarians and its people sold into slavery. Even for all their ability to see the threads of fate, Sidereal agents sometimes operate in the dark as to the greater purpose of their work (assuming that there actually is any beyond untangling destiny's skein).

The intervention team ideally consists of a member of each Sidereal caste, to ensure the proper balance, but may have a different mix of castes, depending on the availability of Sidereals to respond and the demands of the particular task. Each of the conventions tries to field two teams if possible, but the West is chronically short of manpower, while the Capital Convention has three reinforced Circles.

The best terrestrial intervention involves as little effort on the part of the Sidereals as possible because the less they have to directly intervene, the smoother the final result in the fabric of Creation. Adjusting a single thread or two is far better than having to stitch a patch of an entirely different color onto the fabric of history to cover over a hole. So, Sidereals are subtle in their work, as in all things. A word of advice here, a suggestion planted there, can often be enough to nudge events in the desired direction. There are times when more overt action is called for, however, and in those moments, the Chosen must act without hesitation.

The most difficult element of terrestrial intervention for the Sidereals is that it may call for them to perform distasteful or even terrible deeds. The life of an individual — or that of a village or an entire city — is insignificant when measured against the existence of all Creation. Early in their training, the Sidereal Exalted are told that sacrifices must be made to ensure that destiny follows its proper course, and the hardest sacrifices are often the things the Chosen are called upon to do in the name of duty. Throughout history, the Sidereal Exalted have lied, murdered, betrayed those who considered them friends, rewarded the unworthy, punished the innocent and done whatever had to be done to ensure the continuation of all existence. It is their burden and their responsibility, the destiny that they must bear as the Chosen of Fate.

STEERING THE SHIP OF HISTORY

The Sidereal Exalted are entrusted with the future of Creation, although they are by no means united as to what that future should be. The Bronze and Gold Factions of the Chosen of the Maidens pursue their own vision of the future, each doing what they believe is best. Although the conflict between them is often bitter, it is ultimately minor when compared to the responsibilities the Maidens have entrusted to their Chosen. When the time comes to fulfill their duties, members of both factions put aside their differences and work together. When their duties permit, however, the Sidereals spend their time furthering the cause of their particular faction, usually at the behest of their elders, the leaders of the factions.



Those who knew of the Sidereals' role in history would be surprised to discover that secretly shaping the future is the least of their concerns, but then, mortals and Exalted alike often believe that their future, their destiny, is the only one that matters. The Sidereal Exalted, on the other hand, must be concerned with the fate of all Creation, not just individual parts of it.

The first duty of the Chosen of Fate is to ensure that the river of history continues to flow. The direction that it flows in is ultimately of far less concern to their heavenly patrons. The truth is that the fates of men and their empires are in their own hands — and in the hands of the Sidereal Exalted. The gods and their functionaries care little for the drama of mortal life, no more than the blink of an eye to them.

Sidereals of the Bronze Faction, which has directed the course of Creation since the ending of the First Age, typically work within the Immaculate Order to uphold the rule of the Dragon-Blooded in the Realm and to further the Realm's cause in the Threshold. Of late, it has more often involved preventing the conflict between the Great Houses from erupting into civil war until a peaceful succession can be negotiated. Once, the Bronze Faction also devoted time to working with the Wyld Hunt to find and eliminate the

remaining Solar Exalted. Now, with the prison sundered and the Realm beginning to come apart at the seams, there is little time for the Bronze Sidereals to devote to hunting the Solars.

For the Gold Faction, there are many new Solars to be sought out and recruited for its cause and trained in the use of their abilities. Then, the Gold Faction Sidereals can direct the Solars against particular targets that the Sidereals have identified as important in shifting the flow of history in the direction they would see it go. The Gold Faction Sidereals also personally intervene from time to time to help secure the Threshold against dangers such as the Fair Folk or the beastman tribes of the Lunar Exalted. These Sidereal Exalts tamper with various petty kingdoms and empires, building and breaking alliances and shaping the Threshold to suit their purposes.

DEFENDING DESTINY

Destiny — and Creation itself — has many enemies. Though the Ebon Dragon leads them, all the Demon Princes are, at some level, always searching for cracks in their prison. Though the Yozi itself may not focus its attention on the matter, some of every demon prince's



component souls are always pressed against the wards surrounding their prison, scratching at the door of Creation.

And those scratchings aren't always in vain. When the Tapestry is damaged by twisted fates, there is an opportunity for demons to escape from Malfeas and enter Creation. Not only are they destructive and unpleasant, demons also often seek to undermine destiny, so that they can further breach the Tapestry and widen the cracks in their prison. Since this translates directly to ruined fates and disjointed destinies, the Bureau of Destiny makes the destruction of demons a priority.

Demon-hunting is a sideline occupation for most Sidereals, and a few of the Chosen of War and Endings make it their full-time job. The fall of Thorns and the return of the Solars have reduced the resources available for hunting demons, but they haven't reduced the number of demons needing to be hunted, and the few full-time demon-hunters that remain are a fanatic crew. These brave handful pit their skill against the enemies of destiny time and time again, hoping to save the Age of Sorrows from adding widespread demonic activity to its menu of woes. Unfortunately, this may not be possible for much longer. Lately, the demon-hunters have detected an increase in scouting activity and believe that the forces of Malfeas may be mustering for a major attack on Creation.

Like the Yozis, the Fair Folk also lurk always outside of Creation. But unlike that of the Yozis, the threat posed by the Fair Folk is hardly insidious. These beautiful princes of the Wyld come from beyond the edges of Creation, either as exiles to shelter in it against their enemies or as crusaders, riding to war against the blasphemy of fixed shape.

The Sidereals have a long policy of encouraging exiled Fair Folk of every sort to settle on the edges of Creation, there to serve as a buffer against their unshaped kin. The price of this practice is tolerating the Guild's trade in human souls with the princes of faerie and otherwise accepting that many of these "allies" are merely more predictable and easily defeated foes. Those faeries that push the borders of good behavior too far, the Sidereals smite, as warning to the rest. The lesson fades quickly, but there is no other real alternative without strong enough armies to secure Creation's borders. Those faeries who ride against Creation as crusaders the Sidereals strike down without hesitation, and between the heroes of the Silver Pact and the Sidereals, the borders of Creation are better policed than one might think.

MINDING HISTORY

The Sidereal Exalted are directly responsible for the continuance of history. Second by second, history clicks forward on its inexorable course. The Sidereal Exalted must be there to guarantee that matters continue to progress in that fashion. Below is described the process by

DESTINY AND ESSENCE

Essence-wielders manipulate the Tapestry around them, effectively rewriting their fate and altering their destiny. Destiny accommodates most of this activity — the ability of elements of the Tapestry to write their own destiny is built into Creation at a fundamental level. But the implementation isn't perfect, and the extreme flexibility of high-Essence beings requires a great deal of forward planning. As noted in the "Making Fate" boxed text, this planning absorbs about 80 percent of the effort of planning destiny.

More importantly, about 90 percent of the minor errors in the Tapestry the Sidereals mend can be traced back to an Essence-user. When errors are detected that cannot be traced to the fabrication of the Tapestry, the Sidereals generally investigate them closely, as they are often subtle signs of a threat, such as a powerful demon or faerie noble, that they cannot see directly. More recently, servants of the Deathlords have been behind these disruptions, and various Sidereals in the Convention on Deathlords have begun to work backward through previously unexplained interference in an attempt to trace the history of this necromantic intervention.

which the Sidereal Exalted and the divinities of the Bureau of Destiny plot and execute history.

LONG-TERM PLANNING

History comes into being in Yu-Shan in a very top-down fashion. The Maidens are the most active of the Celestial Incarna, meeting regularly with the senior divinities and Sidereals of the divisions and conveying to them plans for destiny. These are very general plans, usually containing a thumbnail sketch of whichever sections of future history are next in line for the Loom.

The senior Sidereals and divinities then confer among themselves, deciphering as best they can the often-cryptic utterances and illustrations of the Maidens. Then, the divinities of the divisions plan the illusion of natural law, while the older Sidereals lay out the course of human history. When the senior managers of the divisions approve of the general outline, problematic areas are highlighted and passed to inter-divisional working groups for solutions. These working groups, called conventions, generally have a regional focus. There is a convention for each of the four elemental poles and one for the Blessed Isle. There are also a number of special conventions that handle phenomena of Creation-wide impact.

Most elder Sidereals are on several conventions, usually a directional convention and a convention with



Creation-wide concerns. Creation-wide conventions are generally part-time positions, meeting only when important destinies are decided. Recently, this has begun to change, and many of the Elder Sidereals are spending more and more of their time working directly on the fate of the Age of Sorrows.

THE TANGLED FATES

When the divinities and Sidereals of the divisions are done with the planning of the material and the pattern spiders have set to weaving it out on the Loom, it is then inspected for the inevitable flaws. When these flaws are discovered, they are assigned to Sideréal Exalted to correct. As a jurisdictional matter, gods (even gods of destiny) are not permitted to alter Creation except at the orders of a Sideréal, one of the Maidens or the head of the division the god belongs to.

This is the primary duty of young Sidereals, at least insofar as the Celestial Bureaucracy is concerned. Problems in the Tapestry must be corrected, or they will cause paradoxes and breaches in the fabric of Creation. Secondly, these young Sidereals are deployed against the forces of the enemies of Creation. Typically, this means the Fair Folk and the servants of the Yozis. Although the Deathlords have been thrust into extreme prominence since the fall of Thorns, the Sidereals still hunt faeries and demons at liberty in Creation, to protect the Tapestry of Fate from their shredding talons.

However, Sidereals also have other tasks to fulfill that fall within the purview of their job. Even younger Sidereals are asked to advise on the construction of fate and take part in planning groups, and there are countless reports that need to be filed. Most Sidereals of any age have a staff of bound spirits, elementals and familiars who help them handle these matters. In addition, there are the niceties of Heaven and politics to attend to, and characters will be expected to attend teas, receptions and formal dinners with a variety of Celestial functionaries, either those lobbying for political favor or simply prominent gods with whom the Sidereals have interacted. These affairs are considered part of the job, and Sidereals who dodge their social obligations too often can face professional censure.

It's worth noting that most flaws in the Tapestry aren't immediately discernable. The godly Loom of Fate will not allow any immediately flawed designs to be inserted into the Tapestry. However, it is possible, and quite common, for problems to enter the design that will finally mature into flaws hours or days later when slightly imperfect patterns converge.

CONVENTIONS

Conventions are the basic working group by which the Sidereals manage fate in Creation. There are five directional conventions and a number of other conven-

tions that tend to special tasks and Creation-wide events. Directional conventions are normally composed of several elder Sidereals acting in a decision-making capacity and doing primary implementation work and two or occasionally three Circles of younger Sidereals working to implement minor matters, look after tangled fates and hunt demons. Special-purpose conventions are mostly comprised of elders who are, in theory, personally responsible for any direct intervention. The truth is, however, that elder Sidereals will frequently dragoon younger Sidereals into performing some or all of the footwork, and this, too, must be counted against the responsibilities of younger Sidereals.

Each convention has its own character. The Capital Convention is packed with members of the Bronze Faction, while the other conventions of the elemental poles tend to have both a Gold and a Bronze Circle, with divided administrative control. More influence is now being exerted in these areas by dragons and other gods in the service of destiny, as the elder Sidereals have begun to neglect their duties and feud bitterly.

DIVISION AND CONVENTION

In Yu-Shan, the Bureau of Destiny operates primarily in different divisions. This is to establish dual accountability. In Creation, the Sidereals operate in conventions, but it is to the divisions that the Sidereals are ultimately accountable. Sidereals have their performance reviewed regularly (normally, every decade or so, but an excuse can always be arranged) by the elders of their divisions. This helps to discourage individuals from setting up fate-manipulation rings or otherwise abusing their positions. Evaluating other Sidereals is a task taken quite seriously, and Sideréal Exalts never know if they are being observed and judged or not — and are frequently asked to travel across Creation to observe one of their peers at work.

DIRECTIONAL CONVENTIONS

These are the regular working groups of the Sideréal bureaucracy. Almost every Sideréal is assigned to a directional convention, either as part of a Circle or as a manager or supervisor. However, Sidereals aren't the only members of these conventions. There are usually a number of gods, elementals and bound demons serving the conventions as well. While they are not permitted to interfere directly in Creation, they can take a hand in various technical adjustments of destiny, as well as helping with a convention's bureaucratic overhead.

Directional conventions normally control a number of supernaturally concealed Manse strongholds and a

larger number of less impressive safe houses. The conventions have a fairly large budget of mortal wealth, and Sidereals operating on the organizational budget can generally expect to meet any reasonable expenses. Where a Sidereal's faction holds sway, the official budget can generally be stretched to cover faction activities. The Capital Convention and the Convention of Wood provide most of their controlling faction's operating budgets, while the Convention of Air and the Convention of Water are both relatively poor, and the Convention of Fire features hotly contested accounting, with both sides seeking to turn the audit machinery on the their rival's misappropriation of funds.

The Capital Convention: The stronghold of the Bronze Faction, the Capital Convention is heavily overstaffed. There are three Circles of Sidereals in this convention, in addition to the senior administrators, who are Chejop Kejak and his Inner Circle. Until very recently, what happened on the Blessed Isle was entirely their decision. Recently, with so many Essence-wielders in contention for control of the Realm, this convention has found it far harder to keep control of history. The Capital Convention is currently spending a lot of time attempting to manipulate the destiny of the Realm back into a stable configuration without a tremendously damaging succession war, while still acting as the strong arm of the Bronze Faction.

The Convention of Air: The Convention of Air is also well-stocked with members of the Bronze Faction. Unfortunately, the convention's previous leader died recently, and the convention completely failed to react appropriately to the Bull of the North and lost several younger Sidereals to him as a result. Their replacements are not yet trained, and the members of this convention are currently reduced to mending fates and hunting demons until help arrives. The Gold Faction is trying very hard to make sure the replacements are ideologically favorable to that faction.

The Convention of Fire: An evenly divided convention, the Convention of Fire is the seat of the most serious struggles between the factions. Both sides have a full Circle in the area, as well as independent agents and operatives in the convention's management.

The Bronze Faction is strengthened by the heavy imperial presence in the region's many city-states, and it has two standing Wyld Hunts at its immediate disposal. In contrast, the Gold Faction prospers by its association with the Court of the Orderly Flame. This semi-legal fraternal organization of fire elementals is devoted to righteous behavior in the memory of the deceased Celestial censor Swan Dragon and shares some ideals with the Cult of the Illuminated and the Gold Faction (see *Games of Divinity*, p. 65).

The Convention of Water: The Convention of Water is understaffed, with two short Circles of Sidereals who frequently operate together as a single mixed Circle. The unpopulated and hostile nature of the West means that there are fewer eyes and fates to reflect problems, and the vast mazes of Essence-laden ocean currents guarantee there will be many minor errors in the Tapestry.

The result is a very frontier character to Sidereal operations. Sidereals focus on beating back the constantly encroaching tendrils of the Sea, as the Wyld is called in that region. Sidereal operations are triage — there are Fair Folk strongholds all throughout the West, and the Southwest is a hive of demon cults. More islands are lost to the Sea every year, and even before the beginning of the Time of Tumult, neglect and lack of resources had bred a slow decline in this convention. This situation merely reflects Heaven's general neglect for the West. In addition to an understaffed convention, the regional censor is corrupt and most of the local Storm Mothers run their courts like independent kingdoms and collect sacrifices with impunity. There are even areas when Heaven allows fugitives gods and Celestial exiles to gather.

As the Age of Sorrows begins, the Sidereals of the West are more concerned with keeping their segment of Creation in existence than with pursuing political points. Faction politics are at a minimum, and the West is a dumping ground for Sidereals of moderate commitment to their factions.

The Convention of Wood: The stronghold of the Gold Faction, the Convention of Wood governs the East, including the fractious and sorcerously active Scavenger Lands. The Convention of Wood benefits from having so many Essence-using beings in the region. As a result, Sidereals of this convention can operate somewhat openly. In addition, the fate-weaving bureaucracy for this direction is nearly up to First Age standards, simply due to the number of active godlings, Exalts, magical constructs and sorcerous life forms in the area. The coming of the Time of Tumult hasn't really increased the use of Essence in the convention's area of responsibility. It has just made it more focused. Members of the Gold Faction working here still have time to lend serious support to the Cult of the Illuminated, and the Bronze Faction has no real say in the implementation of the direction's destiny.

It is a measure of the Bronze Faction's influence that it can keep agents active even here, in the midst of the Gold Faction's greatest strength. Two Bronze Faction assassins are active in this region to liquidate Solars and to observe Gold Faction activities.

In a rare show of unity, the Bronze Faction didn't attempt to burden the Gold Faction with the responsibility for studying and acting against the Mask of Winters in the wake of the fall of Thorns. Members of this convention have been ordered to avoid Thorns and to report information on



the Mask of Winters's operations to the Division of Secrets. Those Sidereals who deal with the Mask of Winters are those selected by the Inner Circle for their loyalty and competence. The Gold Faction has stepped up surveillance activities against the other Deathlords of the region but hasn't taken any action against them pending the outcome of the Sidereal studies of the Mask of Winters.

SPECIAL CONVENTIONS

The special conventions are the organizations used by the Sidereal Exalted to address matters of Creation-wide impact or universal importance. They are composed of managers from the various conventions and meet on an irregular basis, when called together by their executives. Membership in key special conventions is reviewed by the censors and the Maidens themselves, so there are few purely political appointments.

Special conventions don't normally have any permanent assets or staff, but they can commandeer whatever they require, and most Sidereals old enough to serve in these councils do not lack for personal assets.

The Convention on Deathlords: Only recently founded, this convention is comprised mostly of managers from the Capital Convention and their selected protégés. The convention is carefully studying Thorns. Also attached are most of the full-time demon-hunters in the Bureau of Fate, now turned on the threat of the Deathlords. They hold the line while the Convention on War musters troops and prepares them for commando actions.

The core of the Convention on Deathlords is composed of the most loyal servants of the Bronze Faction's Inner Circle, and the implicit assumption that members of the Gold Faction would make alliance with the Malfeans has not set well with many younger Sidereals.

The Convention on Essence Wielders: Composed of the eldest Sidereals, the Convention on Essence Wielders helps to design the broad and flexible destinies required by powerful gods and Exalts. Ethics violations and breaches of secrecy involving destiny make this convention the source of much information for the Bronze Faction on the location and power of various Exalted. The fact that the Convention of Wood handles so much of the overall plotting for the Scavenger Lands' destiny is an old political maneuver that has come back to haunt the Bronze Faction. Once, it was an administrative burden on the Gold Faction. Now, the lack of direct accountability restricts the Bronze Faction's access to information on Solars emerging in the region, and the Gold Faction has made an excellent case to the elder deities of the bureau that it delivers better service.

The Convention on Natural Disaster: Another broad convention of elder Sidereals, this assemblage focuses on the triggering of terrible disasters. While it has a pro forma role in approving cyclones, earthquakes and vulcanism (and its related tsunamis) all over Creation, the real focus is on unleashing the greater elemental dragons. The Convention on Natural Disaster has a moderately sized full-time staff that reviews requests for



disastrous weather and liaises with the Bureau of Seasons and the Bureau of Nature. The Convention on Natural Disaster also pays for and nominally controls the greater elemental dragons, but it does not possess sole authority to deploy them.

The Convention on Plague: This Convention is of rather greater importance than one might at first reckon, as it covers disease of all types, including those that occur among animals and plants. This convention used to be a very minor one, but it grew in importance considerably after the Great Contagion. Though this convention did not approve the Contagion, it is the umbrella for the Sidereal efforts to detect and prevent any reoccurrence of that dread disease.

The Convention on War: The Convention on War is funded as a forecasting group for the Crimson Panoply of Victory, and indeed, part of what the convention does is to project which wars might not turn out properly. However, it is also the military wing of the bureau and controls the military command structure of the martially inclined Sidereals. The bureau's assortment of huraka, scarab guardian, celestial lion and lesser elemental dragon troops all operate as part of this convention as well. These warlike gods are trained for covert deployments in defense of Creation and also provide security for the Bureau of Destiny's facilities in Yu-Shan.

THE FIVE-SCORE FELLOWSHIP

The Sidereals are the rarest of all the Exalted. There are perhaps 100 or so of them in all Creation, 20 for each of the Five Maidens. This is a mere fraction of the number of Solar, Lunar and Abyssal Exalted and is miniscule indeed compared to the thousands of Terrestrial Exalted. The Sidereals recognize that they are among an elite few, tasked with a great responsibility.

Of the 100 or so Sidereal Exalted, a few (rarely ever more than a dozen or so) are not in the active service of the Maidens, either having recently incarnated or having fairly recently Exalted and still training. There are also a handful of rogue Sidereals who have fled the Fellowship of the Chosen, so the total number of Sidereal Exalted in the service of Heaven hovers around 80 or so.

Their numbers are few enough that Sidereals know most of their fellow Chosen, and elder Sidereals know (and have likely met) every other Sidereal. Anonymity is something that the Chosen of the Maidens find in the outside world, not within their own ranks. Sidereal Exalted study, train and work together on a regular basis, and even members of different factions, with their own agendas in the world, must work together to further the cause of destiny.

As a part of their duty to their fellow Sidereals, the Chosen understand that every one of their kind is precious, regardless of differences in faction, goals, beliefs or

SIDEREAL AGES

Most Sidereals alive at the beginning of the Time of Tumult can be divided into three cadres based on age. The very old Sidereals predate the Solar Purge and are the ancient and revered masters of their kind. One of these elder Exalts passes into death every few years. They do not have an even distribution of ages because they were incarnated in the wake of a large Sidereal die-off during the First Age, and there is a large cadre of Sidereal Exalts similar in age to Chejop Kejak who are dying or will die soon.

The "middle management" of the Sidereals is composed of Sidereals who were incarnated to replace those killed in the Solar Purge, either directly or through unforeseen calamity. Many of these Sidereals are being promoted now, to replace the old masters. This is taking the Sidereal organizational memory of the days before the Contagion with it, and there are many prominent figures in the divisions who were not at the Great Convention when the Prophecy was drawn.

"Young" Sidereals are those born into the Second Age, that is, incarnated after the Contagion. Few Sidereals have died in the Second Age, and so, most of those who are incarnated today are replacements for very elderly Exalts.

other personal conflicts. While the Bronze and Gold Sidereals may argue bitterly over the future of Creation, while they may set armies against each other to decide that future, direct physical conflict between the Sidereals themselves is almost unthinkable. Even on the rare occasions when the Chosen of the Maidens fight each other, it is never to the death. For one Sidereal to kill another is a terrible crime, certain to result in the demotion of the perpetrator, who may be assigned the duty of shepherding the life of her reborn sibling toward Exaltation once more.

HEROES FROM MANY HOUSES

Like other Exalts, the Sidereals are divided into castes according to their particular duties and areas of expertise. In addition, the Sidereals are divided into castes according to which of the Five Maidens favors them. A Sidereal's caste dictates many things. Although Sidereals are capable of working on their own, the Chosen are intended to work together in groups, much like the other Exalted.

Sidereals define themselves by their caste in many ways. Unlike the Solars and Lunars, who share the same Celestial Incarna patron, Sidereals of different castes each serve a different Maiden, although they are united in their service to fate. Thus, the different castes of Sidereal



Exalted see themselves much like the Maidens that they serve: separate, but working together toward a common cause. This is true of individual Sidereals as well. They are each independent, with their own habits and goals, but are all part of a greater whole.

THE CHOSEN OF THE MAIDEN OF JOURNEYS

Sometimes known as Harbingers, the Sidereals Chosen by the Maiden of Journeys are filled with her wanderlust and a desire to travel and see distant places and lands. In the First Age, the Chosen of Mercury were the swift messengers and heralds of the Realm, traveling far and wide across Creation bearing news and important information. The Eclipse Caste of Solar Exalted were the Realm's ambassadors and emissaries, but the Harbingers helped to maintain the lines of communication between the Realm and its many tributaries and client states. They also served as messengers of destiny, carrying the word of Heaven to Earth and acting as go-betweens for the Exalted and the gods.

In the present Age, the Harbingers are still travelers, but their travels are for a different purpose. They are now the swiftest agents of destiny, sent to the far-flung places of the world when there is an immediate need to right the tangled threads of the Tapestry. They are also the most adept of the Chosen at coordinating and maintaining lines of communication: trade routes, messengers, logistics and so forth. Among the Bronze Faction, the Harbingers are the threads that bind the temples and monasteries of the Immaculate Order together. They convey news and information swiftly from place to place, keeping the other members of their faction updated and prepared for whatever is happening elsewhere in Creation.

Of all the Chosen, Harbingers often find it the easiest to leave their mortal lives behind when they feel the call of destiny. Young Harbingers are often touched by wanderlust, and once they have Exalted, they find their desire to travel and see other places virtually unquenchable. They gladly leave behind their old lives in order to take the first steps of the journey that will occupy them for the rest of their days. Even the eldest of the Chosen of Mercury, who have traveled the length and breadth of Creation and seen places that most can only dream about, still find no satisfaction in the settled life. The call of the road is always there for them, and they are eager to be off and headed toward a new destination.

The training of the newly Chosen of the Maiden of Journeys is often conducted on the road. A Sidereal mentor takes the new Exalt as an apprentice, and the two depart at the earliest opportunity. By the time Harbingers complete their training, they have already seen more of Creation than most will ever see, and these early experiences only feed their desire to travel and see even more.

Harbingers are trained in both riding and sailing and in how to survive in the wilderness. They are the guides of their fellow Chosen, able to get them to where they need to be and to ensure their survival along the way. Chosen of Mercury approach problems from the perspective of a hunter, able to stalk their quarry through any terrain for days on end, if need be. When they must fight, they prefer a swift strike from a distance.

THE CHOSEN OF THE MAIDEN OF SERENITY

Health, pleasure, satisfaction, happiness, these are the things that the Joybringers, the Chosen of the Maiden of Serenity, place above all others. While it is easy to dismiss them as hedonists, the Joybringers are concerned with more than simple pleasure. Venus is the god of life and all of its many passages: birth, maturity, marriage, love, joy, union, conception and birth, which begins the cycle anew. The Chosen of Venus consider these things great blessings and work tirelessly to promote them throughout Creation.

In the First Age, the Joybringers were the guardians of the health and well-being of the people. The agents of Serenity promoted health and the simple joys of life, encouraging exercise, meditation, relaxation and proper rest. They also oversaw many rituals of passage marking important points along the journey of life: betrothals, marriages and births. It was the Chosen of Venus who officiated at the weddings of the Solar and Lunar Exalted and blessed their unions.

Now, the Chosen of Venus turn their efforts toward arranging rests and celebrations that further the cause of destiny and their faction. For centuries, the Joybringers of the Bronze Faction have arranged couplings among the Terrestrial Exalted, helping to create and sustain the Great Houses of the Dynasty. These Sidereals oversee the rites of marriage from within the Immaculate Order and help to ensure the strength of the Realm by knowing which marriages will forge stronger ties and help to ensure peace between the houses, to help keep the Realm's rulers strong and able. Likewise, the Chosen of Venus of the Gold Faction arrange cultural exchange and treaties between rulers in the Threshold to strengthen those kingdoms and keep a watchful eye for potential allies to aid their Solar protégés in the future.

The Chosen of Venus are trained in all manner of social graces, allowing them to easily navigate through any social situation. They are the voices of the Sidereal Exalted, smoothing the way for the other castes, making contacts and handling social situations. They prefer to solve problems through negotiation and polite deflection rather than violence, which they leave to the other castes.

THE CHOSEN OF THE MAIDEN OF BATTLES

The martial arts are named for Mars, the scarlet Maiden of Battles, and the Shieldbearers, the Chosen of

Mars, are the warriors of the Sidereal Exalted, making them a match for the Solar and Lunar Exalted in battle. The gifts of the Sidereals are more subtle and far-reaching than the forthright power of their Celestial cousins, but as tacticians and military planners, the Chosen of Mars are peers of the Solar Exalted. They helped to plan the strategies that brought low the enemies of the gods. They helped to train the grand army of the Realm and taught the Dragon-Blooded to fight together as one. They designed the strategies that overthrew the Solar Exalted and placed the Dragon-Blooded in control of the Realm.

Mars rules conflict of all kinds, so her Chosen have thrived in the atmosphere of conflict that has ruled the world since the time of the Prophecy and the Dragon-Blooded Revolt. Shieldbearers rarely lead troops into battle these days. Instead, they spend much of their time studying and analyzing the military strength of the Realm and the various kingdoms of the Threshold.

These heavenly generals move troops and armies about like playing pieces on a great game board. Shieldbearers have a strong interest in and aptitude for martial pursuits even before they are Exalted, and their training makes them masterful fighters and tacticians. What they lack in sheer power they make up for in keen insight. Shieldbearers are able to see an opponent's attacks coming and counter them and are able to exploit any weakness in an enemy's defense or strategy. The Shieldbearers' blows strike true to the heart and can end a battle almost before it has begun.

The Chosen of Mars are the warriors of the Sidereal Exalted. It is their duty to protect their fellow Chosen and to deal directly with their foes. They learn how to fight with many different weapons (including their bare hands) and how to lead troops into battle. Shieldbearers tend to see problems in military terms and solve them through direct confrontation and conflict. They are the combat specialists and front-line fighters of Sidereal intervention teams.

The Shieldbearers of the Bronze Faction are the military advisors to the Realm, the true genius behind the legions of the Scarlet Dynasty. Of late, these Sidereals have found themselves involved in studying and predicting the tactics of the various houses as they maneuver for position in the struggle for succession to the throne. The Chosen of Mars have been able to arrange matters to suit their plans when necessary and make do with the resources that they have. Still, they are eager for the matter of the succession to be settled so that the Realm's military can be turned outward once more. Unfortunately, they, like the rest of the Bronze Faction, are not entirely united as to *how* the succession should be settled.

Chosen of Mars belonging to the Gold Faction serve as generals, aides and military advisors to kingdoms in the Threshold. They help to secure kingdoms against threats

from the Fair Folk, the shadowlands and invading barbarians or greedy neighbors. Gold Faction Shieldbearers have also taken to training the newly returned Solars in the ways of war, preparing them to become the shining leaders they once were, standing at the heads of armies created by their Sidereal mentors (who also intend to hold the armies' ultimate loyalty, just in case).

THE CHOSEN OF THE MAIDEN OF SECRETS

The Sidereal Exalted are privy to many of the secrets of Creation and the mysteries forever unfolding upon the Loom of Fate, none more so than the Oracles, the Chosen of Jupiter, the Maiden of Secrets. Like their patron, the Oracles have taken all knowledge as their province, particularly the most occult and arcane secrets of Creation.

In the First Age, the Chosen of Jupiter were the greatest savants and philosophers, plumbing the hidden depths of Creation, conversing with gods in the halls of Heaven and maintaining the great libraries and archives where the Exalted kept the annals of their history and their collected knowledge. The Oracles were the first of the Sidereals to see the danger posed by the corruption of the Solar Exalted and the astrologers whose divinations led to the Prophecy and all that followed. Their knowledge and insight may have saved Creation — but at a heavy price.

The Oracles made certain to preserve what knowledge they could from the First Age, but even they could not whisk away entire libraries of books, scrolls and other tomes. Their greatest sacrifice was to watch so much of the lore that they'd collected burn on the pyre of the Old Realm. Since those fateful days, the Chosen of Jupiter have devoted themselves to rebuilding their store of knowledge and recovering all that was lost in the establishment of the new order.

The Chosen of Jupiter are the most learned sorcerers in Creation. While the Solar Exalted command more raw power, the Oracles have the greatest body of occult lore, including spells and enchantments preserved since the First Age. In addition to the occult, Oracles seek to master all forms of knowledge. History, natural science, letters and the great works of philosophy and thought are all subjects of their studies. Astrology and divination are particular specialties of the Chosen of the Maiden of Secrets. While all Sidereals can read the future written in the stars and in the patterns of the Loom of Fate, the Oracles are the true masters of the art.

In the First Age, the Chosen of the Maiden of Secrets were more focused on scholarly and intellectual pursuits, but knowledge does not always come from studying in a library, pouring over stacks of books and scrolls. Even then, the Oracles found it needful to pursue knowledge. Since the fall of the Old Realm, they have found it even more necessary to steal into secret, forbidden places. The Oracles are natural masters of the arts of sneaking and



spying, making them the eyes and ears (and sometimes the grasping hands) of the Sidereal Exalted.

This role is a vital one, since there are places and things hidden from the sight of Heaven. The Wyld and the other places that exist outside of Creation, such as Malfeas and the Underworld, are not threads in the Tapestry, so they cannot be seen in the patterns unfolding on the Loom of Fate. The Sidereals have learned the hard way that the doings of the Yozis, the Malfeans, the Fair Folk and the like cannot be easily foreseen and that they have the potential to undo all that the Chosen have accomplished. The Oracles are spies who infiltrate the shadowlands and the Wyld places, gathering intelligence for their brethren. Theirs is a dangerous assignment, but they accept it for the opportunity to learn what secrets their enemies may conceal.

The Oracles act as advisors to their fellow Chosen, gathering information to provide a clear understanding of the challenges they face and how they can deal with them. They may also be entrusted with secret directives from the Bureau of Destiny and act as the bridge between the intervention teams and the halls of Heaven. The Chosen of Jupiter are the intelligence officers, spies and savants of the Sidereal Exalted. They prefer to deal with problems quietly, from behind the scenes. The Oracles carefully map out a plan of attack, then strike silently from the shadows.

THE CHOSEN OF THE MAIDEN OF ENDINGS

To all things, there must come an end. None know this better than the Reckoners, the Chosen of Saturn, the Maiden of Endings. All of Creation is fleeting, but sometimes, the Chosen must help the process along to ensure that the cycle of destruction and creation remains stable.

In the First Age, the work of the Reckoners was to recognize and mark the passing of things: the end of the year, the end of a life, the end of an institution or alliance. They reminded others that all things passed away in their time and, in so doing, encouraged a love of life and an appreciation of the time granted by fate. Occasionally, the Chosen of Saturn were called upon to take a direct hand in ending things whose time had come, and they did so with ease and gentleness, like gardeners pruning their plants to make way for new growth.

It was the Reckoners who first seized upon the idea that the Prophecy meant the time of the Solar and Lunar Exalted was over, that there had to be an ending of their rule over Creation. The Chosen of Saturn counseled the elimination of their Celestial cousins to make way for a new order that could preserve the world. Some thought the rule of the Chosen of the Unconquered Sun was forever, but the Reckoners reminded their brethren that all things — *all* things — must pass away in time. In the end, they were proven right, as they always are.

These Chosen oversaw the transition between the Old Realm and the new, and more than a few of them practiced their skills against the Solars in the dead of the night. Not all of the Princes of the Earth were brought low by the Dragon-Blooded. Some fell under the knives and the magic of Sidereal assassins who struck from the shadows, cutting the threads of their lives to make way for a new pattern upon the Loom of Fate. The Chosen of Saturn were the only Sidereals to take a direct hand in the elimination of the Solars, and now, there are some who wonder how much the reborn Solars recall of their final hours — and what they will do with that knowledge.

The Reckoners are effective censors. They are doubly feared because they come to audit as well as to kill. They cut through bureaucratic red tape, root out corruption within the ranks and cure the body politic of disease. In the same way, they promote health and well-being, using their knowledge of anatomy and medicine to heal as well as kill.

They are sometimes known as the Gardeners of Heaven for their duties in pruning the garden of Creation. Though they are often sent on terrestrial interventions to cut a particular thread, Reckoners also serve as the conscience of their fellow Chosen. They are the agents of justice entrusted with policing the Sidereals' ranks. They are the sentinels, ever watchful for threats, both within and without. They see to the well-being and fitness of the Chosen. The large number of Chosen of Endings in the Gold Faction has recently caused the elders of the Bronze Faction to undercut the authority of the Division of Endings to operate its internal-affairs department in order to evade politically motivated investigations by Gold Faction gadflies.

THE BRONZE FACTION

Betrayers of the Solar Exalted and secret guides and mentors of the Dragon-Blooded, the Sidereals of the Bronze Faction are the ultimate architects of the current Age of the world. They have shouldered the responsibility for the future of Creation, and now, they must see their decision through — to the bitter end, if need be.

The Bronze Faction includes most elder Sidereals, including some of those who saw to the overthrow of the Solars and the banishment of the Lunar Exalted. These elders are wise and powerful beyond any mortal measure, but many of them are also nearing the end of their allotted spans. Even the life of one of the Exalted is not forever, and the elders of the Bronze Faction want to ensure that their vision continues on after they are gone.

Before the disappearance of the Scarlet Empress and the return of the Solar Exalted, the Bronze Faction had grown somewhat complacent. Its agents thought themselves the absolute masters of destiny, firmly in control of the Realm, the Dragon-Blooded and the ship of history. The Gold Faction was nothing more than a minor annoy-

ance — outdated political dissidents clinging to hard feelings over an issue settled over 1,000 years ago — and other threats such as the Yozis and the Fair Folk would be dealt with in time.

That all changed with the dual blows of the Scarlet Empress' disappearance and the sundering of the Jade Prison, releasing the Essences of the Solar Exalted. Now, the carefully laid plans of the Bronze Faction are crumbling, and the Sidereals work to shore them up and prevent the terrible end of the world that the Conclave foresaw all those centuries ago.

CHEJOP KEJAK,

CHOSEN OF THE MAIDEN OF SECRETS

Chejop Kejak is the founder and head of the Bronze Faction — and the oldest and most powerful mortal being in Creation. He personally attended the Grand Conclave where the Prophecy regarding the future of the world unfolded. Even then, he was an experienced servant of the Maiden of Secrets. He was among those who believed that the only choice lay in bringing down the Solar Exalted to keep the world safe from their corruption. To do so, he helped to forge the Bronze Faction and to galvanize his fellow Sidereals into action against their Celestial cousins. It was the hardest decision that Kejak ever made, but while he has regretted the necessity of it, he has never doubted that it was the right choice.

Over the centuries, Kejak has guided the Bronze Faction — and, therefore, Creation — with a deft hand. At first, he interfered as little as possible with the course of events, and that is still his preference, but bitter experience has taught him to keep the reins of the Realm in hand, albeit held loosely. Giving the Dragon-Blooded their head after the rebellion resulted in their military Shogunate over the Realm, which squandered the wealth, wonders and knowledge of the First Age, then crumbled beneath the onslaught of the Great Contagion and nearly spelled the end of everything. So, Kejak arranged an alliance with the Scarlet Empress and turned his Immaculate Order into the state religion of the Realm, to stay closer to the halls of power and exercise finer control over things. That seemed to work for a time, until the Empress vanished and the Solar Exalted escaped from the prison that the Sidereals forged for them.

Now, Kejak works to regain control of the situation. He has no doubt that he will, eventually. After all, he has weathered the greatest crises the world has ever known. The latest events are just a few more minor setbacks in the Sidereal's master plan. They, too, will be dealt with, and the work will progress. Of this, he has no doubt. It's only a matter of time, patience and careful planning, as in all things.

Kejak's greatest concern is that he may not have the time that he needs. He is already over 3,000 years old, the



Exalted

oldest of his kind, and even he, with his ability to read fate like an open book, cannot say for sure how much more time he has. He knows only that he can feel the thread of his life growing short and that there is so much more yet to do.

Chejop Kejak long since gave himself over to the call of his destiny. He is a faithful servant of fate, entirely devoted to the cause of the faction he created. He carries out his duties without sentiment or remorse, and he expects the same from those who serve under him. Sympathy, pity and regret are luxuries permitted to others, not to those entrusted with the welfare and future of all Creation. The passing millennia have hardened Kejak's heart to the point where he has no tears left to shed for the countless lives he has snuffed out in the name of his cause.

The head of the Bronze Faction is the wisest and most powerful Sidereal in Creation, perhaps the most powerful living Exalt. He knows more lore than is contained in all the finest libraries of the world, having personally witnessed (and dictated) much of history. He is a sorcerer without peer, capable of shaking the foundations of Creation and the pillars of Heaven. Gods prostrate themselves before him, and he has long since mastered all of the martial arts of his order. His greatest skill is his mastery of astrology, allowing him to read the future in the flows of Essence from the Loom of Fate. He uses this knowledge to choose his course of action, never wavering once it is set.

Kejak cuts an imposing figure. Although not overly tall, he has an incredibly commanding presence. What hair he has is snowy white around a bald pate. He typically wears his hair long in an elaborate braid down his back. He has bushy, expressive white eyebrows and a neatly trimmed beard. His eyes are a deep emerald green with flecks of gold that look like an endless vista of stars in their depths. He typically dresses in fine robes of silk but wears little in the way of ornamentation or any badge of his rank. They are not necessary. Those who know Kejak respect him, and those who do not know him are clearly not meant to do so.

THE INNER CIRCLE

The Inner Circle of the Bronze Faction is made up of the masters of the faction, Kejak's closest advisors and allies, among the most ancient and experienced of the Sidereal Exalted. Some of the Inner Circle are Kejak's First Age contemporaries (although his juniors by a century or more), while others were raised to the Inner Circle in the years following the Dragon-Blooded coup. The members of the Inner Circle are all Kejak's students in one way or another and are utterly loyal to him and his cause. Now that the world is set on the course that the Bronze Faction chose for it, there can be no faltering, no turning back. Whatever must be done to ensure that Creation goes on, the Inner Circle will do it, without hesitation or remorse.

Members of the Inner Circle are responsible for the Immaculate Order's larger temples and monasteries

throughout the Blessed Isle, although they often visit the Palace Sublime in the Imperial City to consult with Chejop Kejak and plan for the future of the Order and their faction. Most are publicly known as particularly wise and capable masters of the Immaculate Order, although their true power and influence is known only to the most senior Dragon-Blooded Immaculates who answer directly to them.

Like Kejak, the Sidereals of the Inner Circle are old, among the oldest of their kind, and it remains to be seen how many more years of life any of them can expect. Already, some younger Sidereals (which is to say, less than 2,000 years old) are part of the Inner Circle. Kejak and his contemporaries are concerned that those who did not live through the ending of the First Age do not truly understand the importance of the Bronze Faction's mission, do not fully grasp its vision and its destiny.

THE OUTER CIRCLE

The Outer Circle of the Bronze Faction includes those younger Sidereal Exalted who support the faction's cause and swear loyalty to Chejop Kejak but who have not yet gained the experience and wisdom (or enough of Kejak's trust) to enter the Inner Circle. Most Sidereals in the "Outer Circle" of the Bronze Faction are assigned to the three Bronze Faction Circles of the Capital Convention, but some are posted as managers in the other directional conventions.

Outer Circle Sidereals are the primary agents of the Bronze Faction in Creation, carrying out the will of their elders to help ensure that things proceed according to the faction's design. Unfortunately, recent events have taxed the resources of the Bronze Faction. Even with members of the Inner Circle once more active in the field, they simply do not have enough agents to keep up with the "interesting times" that have plagued Creation since the disappearance of the Scarlet Empress.

Outer Circle Sidereals are all relatively young, some less than a century old. All of them were born well after the Dragon-Blooded rebellion and have no direct experience of the First Age. Thus, they were raised on stories about the Anathema and the revolt to overthrow them. They have also been raised with the knowledge that they are the secret masters of Creation, the privileged elite, rather than having wrested their power and position from the bloody hands of their Solar brethren. To them, the Sidereal Exalted have always been in charge, and rightly so, which has bred a measure of arrogance and complacency into the younger generations.

Some think that the Bronze Faction has been too conservative and that the Chosen of Fate should take a more direct hand in guiding events in Creation. They wait for the day when their elders will finally pass on and they will have the opportunity to steer the rudder of history more to their liking. Though the elders of the Bronze

Faction try to instill their vision into their successors, they fear that the Outer Circle can see only the power and prestige that comes with their calling and not the heavy burden of duty and responsibility to a higher purpose.

THE ORDER OF IMMACULATE DRAGONS

The Bronze Faction's primary instrument in the Realm is the Order of Immaculate Dragons, or, simply, the Immaculate Order. Created by Chejop Kejak and turned into a state religion, it has ruled the hearts and souls of the people for hundreds of years. The Immaculate Order was founded to fill the need people have to believe in something greater than themselves, a need that the Sidereals have harnessed to serve their own purposes.

That is the key to the Immaculate Order for the Sidereal Exalted. Believers in the Immaculate faith (and there are many) know and believe what the Bronze Faction wishes them to believe. Through the doctrines and texts of the Order, the Bronze Faction has promulgated a particular way of thinking in the Realm and throughout much of Creation that supports its ideals and goals, even if the believers are entirely unaware of it. Those raised to believe in the Immaculate Philosophy do not see how it has been crafted to define what is and is not right and possible in their world. Even enemies of the Immaculate faith and the Sidereal Exalted are often unaware of how the Order has shaped their beliefs, setting the boundaries of what is possible. In many ways, the Immaculate Order is one of the greatest spells the Sidereal Exalted have ever worked, transforming the very way people see Creation. So long as the people believe, the Realm and the Order (and their Sidereal masters) remain strong.

The Immaculate faith also provides a strong foundation for the Dragon-Blooded, both as Princes of the Earth and as unknowing servants of the Chosen of Fate. From childhood, the Terrestrial Exalted are taught their proper place in the scheme of things. They learn to respect their elders and to obey their superiors. This preserves order within their society and allows the Sidereals to control that order to their own ends. Of course, this assumes complete devotion to the faith, which is by no means universal, but even the most cynical scion of the Realm has difficulty completely ignoring those childhood lessons.

While the Sidereals know full well that the Immaculate Order is a constructed religion, thought up by Chejop Kejak and crafted toward specific ends, this knowledge does not trouble them — or even invalidate it in their eyes. Much of the core of Immaculate belief is true in the Sidereals' view: There is an order to Creation, and all creatures should be beholden to it. The prime difference is that the perfect beings of that order are not the Dragon-Blooded, but their secret masters, the Sidereals.

For more details on the Immaculate Order, see pages 48-53 of *Exalted* and pages 70-81 of the *Exalted: The Dragon-Blooded* sourcebook.

THE GOLD FACTION

Loyal to the cause and the memory of the Solar Exalted, the Gold Faction seemed defeated for a long time. The will of the Bronze Faction prevailed, and the light of the Solar Exalted was extinguished, seemingly forever. The members of the Gold Faction did not lose faith, however, and their dedication has been rewarded. The Chosen of the Unconquered Sun have returned, and it is the duty and privilege of the Gold Faction to help guide them and to ensure that the mistakes of the past Age are not repeated in the present.

AYESHA URA,

CHOSEN OF THE MAIDEN OF JOURNEYS

The current leader of the Gold Faction has a long history with it. At the Great Conclave, a Sidereal named Tammiz Ushun represented those Chosen who favored reforming the wayward Solar Exalted, bringing them back to the path of righteousness, despite the apparent risks. Although he spoke passionately and eloquently on the



matter, the majority chose to follow Chejop Kejak's Bronze Faction in exhorting the Dragon-Blooded into rebellion.

Tammiz Ushun perished during the uprising against the Solar Exalted when he attempted to warn some of the Solars but was slain by the Dragon-Blooded before he could betray them. A great Sidereal scholar and leader was lost. Agents of the Bureau of Destiny determined that his Essence would be reborn in the lands of the Southeast. The child bearing Ushun's Essence, Ayesha Ura, was born into a world torn apart by war, and when she Exalted, Kejak took her under his personal tutelage. She became one of his most promising students and, if the stories are to be believed, his lover for a time. Chosen of Mercury, she was a most effective agent of the Bronze Faction and the Golden Barque of Heaven.

Over time, however, memories of her past Exaltation awakened within Ayesha, leading to a rift between her and her mentor. She became increasingly critical of the Bronze Faction's goals and, eventually, disassociated herself with the faction altogether, drawing to her the scattered elements of the Gold Faction. Her timing was fortuitous — or perhaps ordained by destiny — since, only a few short years later, the Scarlet Empress vanished, and then, the Solar Exalted began reappearing.

Ayesha and her faction are dedicated to the ideal that the Solar Exalted are the rightly ordained rulers of Creation but that they need the aid and insight of the Sidereals to guide them along the right path. Like her brothers and sisters, Ayesha travels a great deal in the Threshold, seeking out newly Exalted Solars and helping to train them, while sheltering them from the Wyld Hunt and the Bronze Faction. She is convinced that the betrayal of the other Celestial Exalted was a dire mistake that must be corrected at any cost.

Although centuries old, Ayesha Ura still looks like a fairly young woman. She has dark skin and wears her black, curly hair tight against her scalp. Her eyes are a deep amber color, and she favors jewelry of that stone, along with a gold circlet she often wears, set with an amber Hearthstone over her Caste Mark. She has a bright and easy smile and a charming manner that conceal a brilliant mind, iron determination and a fierce devotion to her cause.

THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

Ayesha Ura's closest allies and advisors within the Gold Faction are collectively known as the Golden Circle. They were among the first to answer her call and to take up the faction's cause with renewed vigor. Now, they help to coordinate the work of the junior members of the faction and control various cults and fronts for the Gold Faction, particularly branches of the Cult of the Illuminated. Members of the Golden Circle also work throughout the Threshold, either to strengthen it against attacks from barbarians, Fair Folk and other threats or to specifically

undermine certain kingdoms and lands, leaving them ripe for Solar conquest and leadership.

The members of the Golden Circle are generally younger than their Bronze Faction counterparts, although many of them apprenticed with First Age Sidereals who fled rather than join in the overthrow of the Solar Exalted. Thus, they have learned to consider the Bronze Faction misguided at best, traitors at the worst. They are the most devoted to the cause of the Gold Faction but seek to sway other Chosen to their side.

Because of their relative youth (at least compared to the elders of the Bronze Faction), the members of Golden Circle have no directly experience with the Solars of the First Age. They did not see for themselves the corruption and decadence of the Old Realm, and most believe that the stories of Anathema are merely that, exaggerations crafted by the Bronze Faction to frighten the ignorant.

WHAT IS THE GOLD FACTION FIGHTING FOR?

The simple truth of the matter is that the Gold Faction of the Sidereal Exalted isn't "fighting for" anything, at least not anything that's been clearly defined. They're all fighting *against* the plans and influence of the Bronze Faction, but if the Gold Faction were to suddenly find in its hands the means to topple all of the Bronze Faction's plans tomorrow, without hopelessly tangling the skeins of fate, what then?

Like many rebellious or reformist groups, the Gold Faction is entirely focused on overcoming the opposition and, therefore, hasn't given a great deal of thought to what happens after the rebellion is over. There are vague ideas of teaching the Solar Exalted to become the right and proper rulers of the Realm and of restoring the glory of the First Age but little in the way of practical plans as yet for bringing about those goals.

The truth is that a victorious Gold Faction wouldn't be all that different from the present-day Bronze Faction. Its members certainly don't have enough faith or trust in the Solar Exalted to allow them to rule unsupervised (that's what caused all the problems in the first place, after all). So, instead of the Bronze Faction and its Dragon-Blooded puppets, the Realm would have the Gold Faction and its more powerful Solar Exalted puppets. If reforming the Realm or keeping the Solar Exalted on a short leash proves more difficult than the Gold Faction anticipated, the Chosen of Fate may gain a great deal of sympathy for the difficulties of their Bronze counterparts.

Thus, they tend to romanticize the Chosen of the Unconquered Sun as falsely maligned heroes betrayed by the advisors who could have helped to redeem them. Their interactions with the reborn Solars have begun to demonstrate that the Chosen of the Unconquered Sun may not be everything the Gold Faction believed and that there is some truth to the Bronze Faction's warnings.

THE CULT OF THE ILLUMINATED

Ayesha Ura learned her lessons well, so when the Solar Exalted began reappearing, the Gold Faction chose to follow the example of its Bronze associates. The Gold Faction Sidereals co-opted a religious cult and have used it as their instrument for influencing events in Creation.

In the case of the Gold Faction, the "religion" was a fringe cult in the Threshold, one of many such, known as the Cult of the Illuminated. Its leader was a charismatic but somewhat mad prophet from the South, named Shen Aru, who had visions of powerful "champions of light" who would appear to make the world a place of peace, harmony and plenty. They would cleanse the world of wickedness and even overthrow the Dynasty of the Dragon-Blooded. Naturally, the faith was declared heresy by the Immaculate Order. Nonetheless, it appealed to desperate folk far from the Realm.

The Golden Circle easily assumed control of the Cult, making Shen Aru its puppet figurehead, to divert any attention away from the Gold Faction. Then, the Golden Circle began recruiting not only mortal believers in the cult, but also newly Exalted Solars, proclaiming them the "champions of light" that the prophet foretold. The Sidereals trained the Solars in the use of their powers and protected them from the Wyld Hunt and others that would destroy or co-opt them.

Since taking control of the Cult, the Sidereals have slowly modified its doctrines, although they remain rather simple. They say that the world was corrupted when the First Age ended and that the gods will send new champions of righteousness to overcome this evil and restore Creation to the way it should be. The doctrines never mention that the Solar Exalted are the reborn heroes of the First Age, treating them instead as something entirely new so far as the Cult's followers are concerned.

The Solars are told a bit more of the truth. The Sidereals typically reveal themselves to the Solars and explain that the Chosen of the Maidens wish to guide and teach the Solar Exalted, just as they did in the First Age. However, the Gold Faction has not yet revealed the existence of the Bronze Faction to their Solar protégés, nor have they told them of the Prophecy or the truth behind the end of the First Age. There's no need for the Solars to know, they figure, since it would only confuse matters. They also keep the Solars in the dark regarding the Sidereals' duties in Heaven and with the Bureau of Des-

tiny. Certainly, their Solar allies would be surprised to know that their mentors regularly worked with members of a faction that controlled the Realm behind the scenes.

Although the Cult of the Illuminated has been a successful tool of the Gold Faction, the Bronze Sidereals are now aware of its existence and try to stamp it out wherever it arises. However, the Cult is quite adept at hiding and at snatching Solars out from under the noses of the Bronze Faction and the Wyld Hunt. Its number of Solar allies is growing, and with more proof that the divine saviors are real, the ranks of the Cult's followers have swelled. In time, the Cult of the Illuminated may become a serious threat to the rule of the Immaculate Order.

THE SILVER FACTION

The so-called "Silver Faction" is more of an idea than it is a true faction among the Sidereal Exalted. There are Chosen of the Maidens who have speculated that the future of Creation lies with the Lunar Exalted, whether the Sidereals like it or not. They point to the fact that the Lunars have survived despite the overthrow of the Old Realm and their millennia of exile in the Wyld — not only survived, but in many ways, thrived. These Exalts take note of the fact that Lunars are breeding beastmen and gathering armies of savages on the edges of the world and despair at the corruption of the Dragon-Blooded and their Realm. These Sidereals would not be entirely unhappy to see the Lunars tear down the Dragon-Blooded and find the directness of the Chosen of Luna refreshing after so much intrigue and manipulation.

However, few Sidereals believe that the Lunar Exalted would be as effective in ruling the world as they would be in conquering it. The Lunars have made it clear that they have no use for civilization, and preserving civilization is the ultimate goal of the Sidereals. None of them truly want to see all civilization swept away under a tide of barbarism. That is frighteningly close to the doom foretold in their ancient Prophecy. So, the consensus among the Chosen of Fate is that the Children of Luna must be kept to their savage kingdoms on the borders of Creation and not allowed to undo the centuries of work that the Sidereals have done, no matter what the cost.

Proponents of the Silver Faction still believe that the Lunars may be cultivated in some way to help give civilization a measure of the savage strength that they possess. They say that ignoring the Chosen of Luna completely is dangerous and that the Sidereals should try to guide the Lunars in a direction that suits their own plans. Most of these Chosen are young and haven't encountered many Lunar Exalted face to face. Their elders say that it is best to let sleeping beasts lie where the Lunars are concerned.



ROGUE SIDEREALS

Finally, there are those Sidereals who ally themselves with no faction and who even divorce themselves from the Five-Score Fellowship altogether. Some still serve the Maidens and the demands of fate in accordance with their division's orders but live without belonging to a faction. The bulk of the Gold Faction existed like this until Ayesha Ura resurrected the faction banner. While not in rebellion, they were disorganized and without goal. They were held back from the best positions by the old boy network of the Bronze Faction, and most avoided informal contact with their Bronze Faction peers, for fear of recruitment through reincarnation. Some Sidereals allied with the Gold Faction, especially senior officials, still remain uncommitted to the faction's modern revival, while others pretend at independence.

Other Sidereal rogues are simply criminals who have turned their backs on their duty and upon Creation for their own selfish ends. This tiny handful are regarded as criminals and are hunted by their fellow Sidereals. However, unless these beings are especially disruptive, they can run for quite some time. Sidereals do not shed Sidereal blood lightly, and any attempt to assassinate a criminal could just as easily result in the assassin's death, so those criminals not a direct menace to the Celestial Order are generally left to themselves. After a few centuries, boredom and proffered amnesties bring most minor criminals back.

Rarer even than criminals are ronin, Sidereals who have never been trained as part of the Five-Score Fellowship. Sometimes, these Exalted come into being due to the direct intervention of the Maidens. Others are young Exalted who are not contacted by the Celestial Bureaucracy for years on end due to bureaucratic error or lack of resources. Though most of these ronin are eventually brought into the fold, it has, at times, taken decades for their education to reach a prominent place on the busy schedule of their fellow Sidereals.

SIDEREAL EXALTATION

The Exaltation of the Sidereals is the most controlled and planned of all the Celestial Exalted. When other Celestial Exalted die, their Essences immediately seek out new and worthy mortal hosts, Exalting them in the service of the Unconquered Sun or Luna. Not so with the Sidereal Exalted. Their Essences cannot enter into mortal lives that are already being lived, since this represents an unnecessary disturbance in the threads of fate. Instead, a Sidereal Essence seeks out a destined moment of conception and begins a new life from the very beginning, born anew both literally and figuratively. Thus, with each incarnation, the Sidereals enter the world in innocence, although this is destined not to last.

WRITTEN IN THE STARS

The moment of a Chosen's rebirth, like all the other key moments in a Sidereal's life, is written in the stars and in the pattern of the Loom of Fate. The Sidereals work to safeguard the birth of their spiritual sibling and to ensure that the conditions are right, according to the pattern of destiny. Thereafter, they keep a close watch on the newly incarnated Sidereal soul, typically from afar, gently guiding and safeguarding it until the time is right for that spirit to Exalt once more.

Sidereal children are Chosen from the moment of birth, and they are often different from their peers or even other members of their families. They have strange dreams and flashes of memory from previous incarnations, growing stronger and more vivid as they get older. They often have a sense of how things are meant to be and of what has happened and will happen as the pattern of fate unfolds around them. They may feel that they are chosen or meant for a special destiny. Some Sidereal children even look different from other members of their blood family, having traits associated with their previous incarnations. In particular, they often have eyes that reflect the ancient and ageless Essences within them.

These qualities may make others uncomfortable around Sidereal children. A child with uncanny insight into the doings and secrets of adults and an unguarded tongue quickly becomes unwelcome. At worst, such children are considered monsters to be abandoned or even killed by their communities. In these cases, the Sidereals must intervene to save their siblings and will take them away to be raised elsewhere. Usually, they are placed in the care of another mortal family chosen by consulting the child's horoscope, since the Chosen of the Maidens rarely have time to raise children on their own. A childless family may be visited by a cloaked stranger in the dark of the night or simply find an infant left on its doorstep, and the family is usually wise enough not to question its good fortune.

Many Chosen children remain with their blood families and weather the occasional incident or odd habit. Their Sidereal brethren help to ensure that they are kept safe, and the children are sometimes aware of the "special friends" or guardians who watch over them or appear from time to time and help guide them to make the right decisions. Only later in life do they realize that their childhood guides and guardians were their brother and sister Exalts.

EXALTATION

The time and place of a Sidereal's Exaltation is set at the moment of her mortal birth and known to the Chosen of the Maidens through their horoscopes. The Sidereal child's entire life up to that point is merely preparation for the moment when her Celestial nature comes fully to the

fore. This always occurs when the star of the Maiden that has chosen the Sidereal is high in the sky and always at a moment where the threads of destiny cross, a conjunction of Heaven and Earth, a moment of decision.

The destined moment of Exaltation is often a time when the young Sidereal must make a fateful decision. It may be due to danger or a terrible threat, a momentous choice about the youngster's future or a child on the verge of adulthood first asserting true independence or self-will. The Sidereal awakens to the power within her and to an awareness of the flows of Essence in the world and from the Loom of Fate. Taking hold of these threads, the Sidereal shapes them by instinct and ancient memory.

Although the time of Exaltation is destined, there is no assurance that the newly awakened Sidereal will be successful, and the moment of crisis may prove disastrous, even fatal. More importantly, a Sidereal's fellow Exalted cannot directly interfere with the moment of Exaltation. It is something each Sidereal must face alone. A failure can mean that the Sidereal's Essence must incarnate again in a more worthy form, which means years more waiting, so the Sidereals work carefully to ensure that the Chosen are prepared for the critical moment when it arrives.

TUGGING THE STRANDS OF FATE

Although the Sidereals cannot interfere with the moment of Exaltation, they can and sometimes do manipulate precisely *when* it occurs. Once the Chosen of the

Maidens could afford to wait decades for their siblings to come into their power in their own time. Like other Celestials, the Sidereals may Exalt anywhere from adolescence to their middle years, typically in the early years of adulthood. But now, with the Solar Exalted returned to the world and the work of destiny demanding so much attention, the Sidereals cannot always afford to wait. Therefore, they sometimes take fate into their own hands and subtly pull on its threads to bring about the time of a Chosen's Exaltation that much sooner, perhaps as young as the age of nine years.

This practice is a risky one, not only for the young Chosen but for the manipulators as well. A Sidereal brought to Exaltation too soon, unprepared for the moment, may fail, setting the work of destiny back by years. Worse yet, the manipulation of the strands of fate may backfire against the weavers. It has been known for a Sidereal to accelerate the Exaltation of another, only to lose his own life in the process. To lose an experienced and trained Sidereal for a newly Exalted novice is a poor trade, so the Chosen of the Maidens must be careful in their work. Still, the need is great, so the Sidereals must sometimes risk the whims of fate for the good of all Creation.

A newly Exalted Sidereal becomes aware of the flows of Essence and destiny, often all in a rush, in a moment of awakening, although, sometimes, more slowly. Unlike the Exaltation of other Celestials, Sidereal Exaltation is a subtle process. Where Solars flare with the brilliance of



the Unconquered Sun and Lunars see a vision of their god, some even assuming totem form for the first time, there are few outward signs of a Sidereal's Exaltation. It comes almost invisibly, quietly. Observers might dismiss a young Sidereal's survival of a near-fatal accident or her achievement of an otherwise impossible deed as an extraordinary stroke of luck, but the fledgling Chosen knows the truth: There is no such thing as luck, and her fate is now truly in her hands.

In the days following the moment of Exaltation, the Caste Mark of the Sidereal's patron Maiden appears, and her eyes begin to change color to match that of her anima. These subtle signs are fairly easy to conceal at first. Most often, the Sidereals contact the new Chosen even before this happens. They reveal the truth of her Exaltation and take her with them to begin the process of her training. The new Exalt is welcomed back into the ranks of the Chosen, and her life as an agent of fate truly begins.

LEAVING THE WORLD BEHIND

The Chosen of the Maidens are the agents of destiny. It is their duty to be of the world but apart from it, so that they can rightly perform their responsibilities. They must have a measure of objectivity and cannot afford to become entangled in the threads of others' destinies. Therefore, Sidereals must leave their mortal lives behind them when they are Exalted.

Sometimes, fate lends a hand with this, and the circumstances of the Sidereal's Exaltation make the process an easy one: The Chosen is lost at sea or presumed dead in a accident or conflict. Would-be assassins leave the Sidereal for dead, or the new Exalt's mortal family or community are slain by barbarians, Fair Folk or plague, leaving her the sole survivor. Such Sidereals have their ties to the mortal world cut already and are usually ready for the new life that lies before them.

For others, their mortal lives are not so easy to abandon. They may have families, friends and loved ones. They may have full lives, perhaps even careers, spouses or children, if they Exalt later in life. Yet, they are expected to leave these things behind them in order to undertake the years of training ahead, then to assume their duties as Chosen of the Maidens. This can be a difficult choice for a new Exalt to make, even with the aid of other Sidereals.

For younger Exalts, it tends to be easier (another reason why the Sidereals sometimes try to speed up the time of Exaltation). A child or youth may leave home to attend school or take up an apprenticeship, perhaps "returning" years later to start up a trade or business (while actually pursuing the business of destiny). If there are no signs of the Exaltation and no compromising ties, then the Sidereal's mortal identity can be maintained, and her place in the community can be useful.

Oftentimes, it is necessary to make a complete break with the past. The demands of a Sidereal's duty are harsh and require sacrifice. In these cases, it is common for the Sidereals to arrange a convincing "death" for the new Chosen, then whisk her away to a new life. It may even be necessary for the Sidereals to take a hand in cutting ties to the Exalt's old life when fate does not do so. The attack that destroys a new Sidereal's village or the accident that claims loved ones may not be entirely the work of destiny, although, ultimately, the Chosen are merely the instruments of destiny, something the new Sidereal will come to understand one day.

ESCAPING FATE

Given the need to leave their old lives behind and take up the duties of the Chosen of the Maidens, it is no great surprise that some newly Exalted Sidereals try to escape their fate in one way or another. Despite the best efforts of the agents of the Bureau of Destiny, despite the most carefully woven plans and preparations, some young Sidereals refuse to accept what fate has in store for them. They are unwilling to break ties to their old life, and they want nothing to do with their fellow Exalted. In fact, such denial of the truth is common, especially for Sidereals with many ties to the mortal world, but it is the rare Chosen who defies fate and succeeds.

Ultimately, a fledgling Sidereal's attempt to cling to mortal ties always fails. First, such a rogue Sidereal is the target of every rightful agent of the Bureau of Destiny, working to ensure that the rogue is shown the proper path. This places mortal friends and family in grave danger, since the Sidereals are themselves quite willing to forcibly sever a novice's ties to the world, if need be. Additionally, the very nature of the Chosen of the Maidens sets them apart from the weave of destiny. They tend to fade from the memory and the perceptions of mortals over time, slipping into the background.

Of course, there are those Sidereals who lose their mortal ties (willingly or unwillingly) but still refuse to join the ranks of the Celestial Bureaucracy and take up their rightful duties. These apostates are pursued in hopes of reforming them. If that is not possible, then it is the duty of other Chosen to release those Sidereals' Essences so that they can be incarnated in more suitable (and, hopefully, more loyal) forms. Rogues are grave threats to the work of the Sidereals and are treated as such.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

The education and training of other Celestial Exalted is a haphazard thing at best in the modern Age. Fledgling Lunars are apprenticed to elders in sink-or-swim tests of survival in the Wyld. Solars receive even less training, following their instincts and fragmentary memories of the First Age, with a little guidance from the Unconquered

Sun (and perhaps some from the Sidereal Gold Faction). The Sidereals, on the other hand, maintain the traditions of training and education used since the First Age to prepare them for their duties and ensure that they are capable of doing whatever fate requires of them. In fact, the training methods of the Sidereals are the basis for the education of the Dragon-Blooded and what little training Solars receive under the tutelage of Sidereal mentors. The Sidereals were the teachers and guides of the Exalted in the First Age for good reasons.

TEACHING TECHNIQUES

There have never been many Sidereals, so the Chosen of the Maidens have always taken a highly individualistic approach to teaching. One or two new Chosen a century was not unusual, so there was plenty of time to teach and to tailor the teaching to the needs of the student and the circumstances. New Sidereals would study under masters in various disciplines, following a rigorous regime of training for many years before they were declared ready to take their places in the Bureau of Destiny and begin the work for which they were Exalted.

Now, although the Sidereals remain the rarest of the Exalted, there are more of them in need of training than ever. Many elder Sidereals have reached the end of their spans (or soon will) and must incarnate again. The Sidereals keep watch over various mortals who carry Sidereal Essences within them, guiding them toward the moment when they will Exalt and increase the ranks of the Chosen again. It is a time of great happenings, when the Sidereals need all of their forces at full strength. The leisure of taking decades to train a novice, to fully prepare, is a luxury they cannot afford. New Sidereals are needed — and needed *now* — leading the Chosen to accelerate both the Exaltation and training of their fellows.

At present, new Sidereals are still trained by various teachers from the ranks of the Exalted, but their training tends to be more intense. The standard training regimen was developed during the First Age and takes a year and a day. There are other training styles, but none take less than that. Training at a relaxed pace takes about three years. Meditation and rituals to reawaken memories of earlier incarnations are common, to help students acclimate to their new lives and recall old skills and knowledge.

The Sidereals also make more use of sorcery in teaching their students than ever before. Certain Celestial Circle spells allow Sidereal masters to directly impart knowledge to their students far more efficiently than the spoken language does. They also take advantage of ancient training manuals, created by both Sidereals and First Age Solars, that can quickly pass on the skills and knowledge that their students need. In addition to the extensive training that all Sidereals receive, each also undergoes training according to his or her caste and

patron Maiden. This training emphasizes the particular tasks that the Chosen of that Maiden are called upon to undertake and reflects the specialties of the different castes of Sidereal Exalted.

The system of training that renders young Sidereals fit for service is a prodigy of the First Age. It can bring a talented young man to a level of education sufficient to pass the examinations for employment in the Bureau of Destiny in but a year and a day of intensive instruction by a rotating battery of tutors.

TESTS AND TRIALS

The work of the Sidereal Exalted is of vital importance to all Creation. Sidereal mentors and teachers drill this truth into their students from the very beginning. There is no room for failure, no margin for error in what the Chosen of Fate do. They are the first and last line of defense against chaos and the destruction of all that is, so they cannot afford to make mistakes, nor can they afford for their abilities to be anything less than the very best possible.

Therefore, the training of the Sidereal Exalted includes regular tests and trials intended to measure the student's progress and to ensure that important lessons are learned and important skills are mastered. Tests for Sidereal students include measures of academic performance, questions to determine the student's knowledge and understanding of various subjects and the application of koans or riddles intended to free the student's mind and open up new ways of thinking and understanding. There are tests of martial prowess, pitting students against each other in bouts and even testing students against masters to see how far they have progressed. Other tests measure health, fortitude, concentration and spiritual awareness.

SCHOLARSHIP

Knowledge is and always has been the greatest weapon in the Sidereal arsenal, and Sidereal training emphasizes scholarship. With thousands of years of accumulated lore and wisdom at their disposal, the Sidereal Exalted are some of the most knowledgeable folk in all of Creation. They pass that knowledge on to each generation of the Maidens' Chosen to ensure that it will not be lost like so much else has been since the end of the First Age. One of the great tragedies of the passing of an elder Sidereal is the loss of millennia of experience and wisdom that can never truly be reclaimed.

The Chosen of the Maidens are all expected to be able to read and write in both High and Old Realm and in at least one other language as well. For the Bronze Faction this language is typically Low Realm, for the Gold Faction, Riverspeak. The students' studies emphasize the disciplines of astrology, history, geography, politics and magical lore as well as knowledge of Heaven and the ranks and structure of the Celestial Bureaucracy. Ideally, some of this



TESTING THE CHOSEN

Sidereal teachers subject their students to a wide variety of tests. Storytellers can use the following as examples of the sorts of tests that Sidereals undergo in their training.

- **Crane Balance Test:** The student must cross a balance beam or rope without falling, requiring a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 3). For more advanced tests, the rope is higher, thinner and oiled (up to difficulty 5).
- **Feathery Step Test:** The student must walk the length of a sheet of fine tissue paper, between 20 and 30 feet long, barefoot without wrinkling or tearing the paper. This requires a Dexterity + Stealth roll (difficulty 4). A similar test is the Silent Bell Run, in which the student must run across a floor covered in tiny bells without making a sound (difficulty 5).
- **Enduring Stance Test:** The student must assume a series of difficult postures and maintain them for as long as an hour. This requires a Stamina + Athletics or Martial Arts roll (difficulty 4).
- **Riddle Test:** The student is given a koan or riddle to solve, requiring an Intelligence + Lore roll (difficulty 3-5, depending on the test).
- **Shattering Strike Test:** The student must break a stack of wooden planks with a single empty-handed blow, requiring a Strength + Brawl or Martial Arts roll (difficulty 3). More advanced tests require the student to break solid stone or to break only the bottommost plank in a stack, leaving the others unharmed (both difficulty 5).
- **Shot Without Sight Test:** The student must hit a target with a bow or thrown weapon while blindfolded: Dexterity + Archery or Thrown (difficulty 4).
- **Wilderness Test:** The student is left alone in the wilderness without tools or supplies to survive for three to five days, requiring a Stamina + Survival roll (difficulty 3).

For additional inspiration for tests, see the Challenging and Legendary feats for the various Abilities given in *Exalted*. Any of these can be made into suitable tests for Sidereal students.

education takes place even before the Chosen are Exalted, with Sidereal teachers or guides subtly nudging young Chosen toward scholarly pursuits and helping to arrange for their education. The comprehensive Sidereal education forms the basis of the Savant Background (see p. 109).

FITNESS

Although they recognize the mind as their greatest asset, the Sidereal Exalted do not ignore the body in their training. Students are put through a rigorous exercise regi-

men intended to hone their physical abilities and to improve their strength, health, coordination and balance. The body is a Sidereal's vehicle, shelter, tool and weapon and so must be properly cared for. Sidereal students are expected to hold complex and demanding postures while meditating or studying and to learn to control their breathing as a means of understanding and controlling their body in general.

Diet is also an important component of overall fitness, and Sidereals learn to control what they eat and to regulate their bodies through proper diet. Fasting is a common way to promote endurance and to purify the body of toxins, and Sidereals tend to eat simple, whole foods, although they have an understanding and appreciation for fine cooking. Unlike the Immaculate Order, there are no dietary restrictions for the Chosen of the Maidens save what they wisely choose to follow for their own health and well-being. (Such restrictions are imposed on mortals and Dragon-Blooded by the Bronze Faction in the belief that they cannot always be trusted to heed their own bodies' wisdom.) Sidereal mentors often give their students particular diets to compensate for any malnutrition or physical ailments they had as children.

Obviously, Sidereals who are also monks in the Immaculate Order are expected to uphold the monkish vows of their coil. Just because the Sidereals are the true pinnacle of the Perfected Hierarchy does not give them leave to ignore their monastic vows. Reaching the pinnacle is not the point of the hierarchy. The hierarchy itself is the point. At least, that's the point of view of the Inner Circle, and its members frown on Sidereals who abuse the vestments. Though there's only so much they can do formally, an informal visit from some stern superiors often does a great deal to mend a Sidereal's behavior.

MARTIAL ARTS

Nowhere is the unity of body, mind and spirit expressed so well as in the Sidereal training in the martial arts. For the Chosen of the Maidens, the martial arts are more than just simple combat techniques. They embrace an entire philosophy and way of existence in harmony with their calling as agents of destiny. Martial training provides focus, discipline, coordination, confidence and strength of will in addition to its health and practical applications. It ensures that the Sidereals are never truly "unarmed" because they become living weapons, but the benefits are deep and wide-ranging. Many Sidereal Charms are based on their martial-arts mastery.

Sidereal martial-arts training is intense and is one of the things that cannot easily be rushed. The true masters among the Chosen have had many mortal lifetimes to hone their skills and are typically masters of multiple styles and forms. Students start out learning the basic forms that make up the foundation of the more advanced styles. The mastery of these fundamentals is only the first step in their training, which is ongoing throughout a Sidereal's life.

MANIPULATION

The Sidereal Exalted are agents of destiny, and they are often called upon to right tangles in the skein of fate and to subtly guide Creation back onto its proper course. This is as much an art as their scholarship or martial training, and young Sidereals are taught how to manipulate events to suit the demands of destiny. They study the relationship between the Loom of Fate and the fabric of Creation to better understand how events in the world can shift the threads in fate's Tapestry. This includes everything from diplomacy and social intrigue to how to engineer sequences of events to help ensure a desired outcome. The Chosen combine a keen understanding of human nature with their innate ability to sense the flows of Essence and the weave of fate and to guide them in the proper direction.

MAGIC AND SORCERY

The Chosen of the Maidens are the masters of subtle magic among the Exalted. Although the Solar Exalted command greater raw power through Solar Circle Sorcery, the Sidereals have the ability to perceive and manipulate the threads of destiny directly, influencing the fabric of Creation itself. Sidereal magic is also more cooperative than that of other Celestials, at its most powerful when the Sidereal Exalted work together to divine or alter the course of fate (although such gatherings of Sidereals are rare).

Sidereals instinctively know how to perceive the flows of Essence from the Loom of Fate and how to manipulate them to some degree. Many of their Charms are based on this ability. Training in Sidereal astrology refines their understanding of what they perceive and their ability to reweave the threads in just the right way to achieve a desired effect. Each caste of Sidereal Exalted has a type of magic it specializes in, but each has the potential to learn the full range of powers that come from the shaping of destiny.

ONGOING TRAINING

Although the Sidereal Exalted undergo the most intensive training immediately after their Exaltation, the training of the Chosen of the Maidens never truly ends. Sidereals maintain a regime of training and study to keep their abilities honed to a fine edge. A Sidereal's daily routine typically includes time to practice fighting forms and postures, time to exercise and time to study. The Chosen also use proper diet to stay in good health. Sidereals engaged in a mission for the Bureau of Destiny might put aside these commitments, if necessary, but otherwise, they continue their own training on a regular basis. Even the eldest Sidereals practice their skills from time to time, particularly those that they may not use as often, since there is no knowing when those skills might be needed.

OTHER THREADS IN THE FABRIC OF CREATION

Once, the Sidereal Exalted were considered the least of the Celestial Exalted, in rightful service to the Chosen of the Unconquered Sun and the Chosen of Luna. Then, the Sidereals overthrew their Celestial cousins, and for centuries, they were the mightiest Exalted in Creation. The Dragon-Blooded were in their thrall, and the mysterious Abyssal Exalted had not yet appeared. The Solars were gone, and the Lunars scattered and broken.

Now, the Sidereals are faced with the return of the Celestial cousins they betrayed (or failed to save, in the case of the Gold Faction). They're faced with the potential rebellion of the Dragon-Blooded as they war amongst themselves. They're faced with the mystery of the Abyssal Exalted and their Deathlord masters. The other Exalted are, in turn, confronted with the mysterious Sidereals, who vanished in the waning of the First Age, following the fall of the Old Realm. Most do not know the Sidereals' true role in history or their true importance in the maintenance of Creation, and that is just how the Chosen of Fate prefer to keep it, for as long as they can.

THE SOLAR EXALTED

The eldest of the Sidereal Exalted knew the Chosen of the Unconquered Sun well. In the First Age, they advised them and helped to guide the development of the Old Realm. The Sidereals were the counselors, savants, aides and, sometimes, emissaries of the Realm. Although the Solars and Lunars ruled the world, the Chosen of the Maidens served a higher purpose. They bore witness to the Solar Exalted's legendary feats — and to their tragic fall from grace. When their prophecies told them that the Solars would be the death of Creation if they weren't stopped, the Sidereals had two choices: Try to save their Celestial cousins, or destroy them in order to save Creation. The Bronze Faction won out, and the Sidereals betrayed the Solars to their deaths at the hands of the Dragon-Blooded.

For good or ill, the Sidereals believed that the Solar Exalted were no longer a threat to the Tapestry of Creation. Sooner or later, one of them would activate some vast weapon in a fit of pique and tear the fabric of destiny asunder. The Sidereals struck the Solars down, that they might never have to deal with them again. The Wyld Hunt chased down the handful of Solars who escaped the initial purge, but such hunts became almost routine as the centuries passed. Now, the Sidereals' own sins have come back to haunt them. The Solar Exalted have returned, and some of them recall how their lives in the First Age ended. They know that they were betrayed, though few if any of them know of the Sidereals' involvement.

For the younger Sidereal Exalted, incarnated after the Usurpation, the Solars are figures out of legend. While the



Sidereals know the truth about the Solars' fall, the younger generations were raised in a world ruled by the Dragon-Blooded and were taught to believe in tales of the Anathema and of their terrible deeds. Such lessons make a strong impression, and some young Sidereals still consider the Solars corrupt monsters. If they aren't now, they reason, then it's only a matter of time. The Chosen of the Unconquered Sun appeared benevolent in the First Age for quite some time before they showed their true colors, after all. More hopeful young Sidereals may reject what they were taught as children — and even what their elders have told them. They want to learn about the Solars for themselves, first hand, and see in them the potential to reshape Creation.

For the Bronze Faction, the Solar Exalted are one of the greatest threats to their plans, a threat to all of Creation. The Prophecy that led the Sidereals to overthrow the Solars still stands, meaning that the Solars will doom the world if they are not stopped. But the Bronze Faction also knows that open warfare between them and the Chosen of the Unconquered Sun will destroy Creation, as foretold, so they must act through intermediaries such as the Dragon-Blooded and their Wyld Hunt.

Unfortunately, the Realm is in disarray, the Terrestrial Exalted wrapped up in their schemes to seize the Scarlet Throne, and all the while, the Solars go virtually unchallenged in the Threshold. This state of affairs cannot endure. The Bronze Faction plans to stabilize matters in the Realm, then turn the full force of its power against the reborn Solars. In the meanwhile, the Bronze use subtle manipulations and schemes, trying to turn the Solars against each other, stirring up fear and anger toward the Anathema in the Threshold and undermining the Solars' own efforts to build power bases for themselves.

The Gold Faction, on the other hand, sees the return of the Solar Exalted as an opportunity. For the first time since the Usurpation, they can attempt to save the Solars from themselves and make them the wise and noble rulers that they once were, proving that their path was the right one all along. With the aid of the Chosen of the Unconquered Sun, they can bring down the Bronze Faction's new order and restore the peace and glory of the First Age. They know that it's no easy task that they face, but now, at least, it is possible.

To achieve their goal, the Gold Faction needs to find and influence as many Solars as possible. This is why Sidereal Exalted working with groups such as the Cult of the Illuminated recruit newly Exalted Solars and train them in the use of their Charms. The Gold Sidereals have taken up the mantle of counselor and advisor once more, but this time, they will control the Solars and guide them toward righteous behavior with their insight into the weavings of fate.

Some Gold Sidereals truly regret the necessity of deceiving their Solar charges but see no other choice. The

fall of the Old Realm showed that the Solars are not completely in control of their darker impulses, and it is unlikely they would understand the scope and reasons for the Sidereals' plans. A few Gold Sidereals also envy the control that the Bronze Faction has exercised over the world for centuries. Now, they feel that their time has come, and they will rule the Realm with the Solar Exalted as champions and figureheads.

THE LUNAR EXALTED

Even in the First Age, the Sidereal Exalted had little to do with the Chosen of Luna. The Sidereals primarily advised and dealt with the Lunars' Solar consorts. The Lunar Exalted likewise tended to ignore the Chosen of the Maidens, whose flame burned far less brightly than the Solars'. More is the pity, since the Lunars might have otherwise noticed the danger that the Sidereals posed before it was too late.

The Solar Exalted were the primary targets of the Dragon-Blooded uprising, allowing many of the Lunars the opportunity to turn their backs on the Realm and survive. Some Lunars chose to die at the side of their husbands or wives. The rest fled to the edges of the world, with the Dragon-Blooded occupied dealing with the remaining Solars. The gifts of Luna allowed her Chosen to both survive in the Wyld and to escape the treachery of the Sidereal Exalted and their Dragon-Blooded pawns.

With the Lunars removed from the affairs of the Realm, the Sidereal Exalted left them to their fate, assuming the hazards of the Wyld would deal with them in time. When they discovered that such was not the case, the Sidereals instead focused their efforts on protecting the Threshold from raiding tribes of beastmen and the occasional predatory moon-beast. For their part, the exiled Lunars didn't venture far into Creation and certainly posed no threat to the stability of the Realm. This established a status quo the Bronze Faction found acceptable.

Since then, the Sidereal Exalted have had few dealings with the Chosen of Luna, which suited both parties. The clannish and savage Lunars don't trust the Sidereals, since some of them painfully recall the events of the Usurpation and the rest cherish the tale. For their part, the Sidereals have little reason to provoke the anger of Luna's Chosen, so long as they remain on the fringes of Creation and do not threaten the Sidereals' plans. Both the Bronze and Gold Factions work to protect the Threshold from Lunar raids, beastmen and barbarians. The concern is that such attacks have become increasingly common, at a time when the Chosen of Fate can ill afford the effort or resources necessary to deal with them. The Sidereals tend to doubt that there is any coordinated effort between the Lunar and Solar Exalted (or even among the Lunars themselves), but the possibility of such is certainly a grave concern.

Most of the agents of the Bureau of Destiny believe that they will have to deal with the Lunar Exalted sooner or later — hopefully later, after the Realm is secure and more immediate threats such as the Solar Exalted are dealt with. It may be necessary to sacrifice some of the Threshold to the Lunars and their spawn in order to buy some much-needed time. It can always be reclaimed from them later.

THE DRAGON-BLOODED

In the First Age, the Sidereal Exalted served as advisors, teachers and guides to the Dragon-Blooded as they did to the other Chosen of the gods. Ever the loyal and obedient soldiers, the Terrestrial Exalted were the ideal weapon for the Sidereals to turn against the other Celestial Exalted.

The Dragon-Blooded had already grown discontent with the rule of the Solars by the time the Sidereals began whispering words of rebellion in their ears. Envious of their leaders and inflamed by the rhetoric of the Sidereals, the Terrestrials rose up in revolt. Even before the Usurpation was complete, the Sidereals had vanished into the background, all but forgotten by the victorious Dragon-Blooded, who now had an empire to rule.

After subtly guiding the Terrestrial Exalted for centuries, the Chosen of Fate consider the Dragon-Blooded little more than pawns for them to move about on the game-board of Creation. As the gods gave the Celestial Exalted dominion over Creation following their victory against the Primordials, so the Sidereal Exalted granted the Dragon-Blooded their empire as the reward for saving the world from the threat of the Anathema. So long as the Realm remains stable, the Dragon-Blooded can do as they please, so far as the Bronze Faction is concerned.

This is not to say that the Sidereals underestimate the Dragon-Blooded. After all, they are aware firsthand of what the Terrestrial Exalted can accomplish if they are united in a cause. It is one of the reasons why the Sidereal Exalted tread carefully where the succession to the Scarlet Throne is concerned. If the Scarlet Empress is not found, then they must ensure that the proper leadership is installed to maintain order in the Realm, but they must do so without tipping their hand to the Dragon-Blooded.

The Terrestrial Exalted are, for the most part, completely unaware of the role the Sidereals played in establishing them as Princes of the Earth. After all, the Usurpation is ancient history even to the longest-lived Dragon-Blooded. Most of them were raised on the doctrines of the Immaculate Order and truly believe that their ancestors vanquished the terrible Anathema and that they are the closest to Heaven by virtue of their blood ties to the Five Immaculate Dragons.

The Bronze Faction interacts with the Dragon-Blooded the most, of course. It primarily does so through the Immaculate Order. There are also Bronze Faction Sidereals among the teachers and instructors at the Heptagram, the

finest academy of sorcery in the Realm, and the private tutors and instructors to the Great Houses, along with Sidereals who hold positions with the Thousand Scales. Terrestrial Exalted that may discover the truth about their teachers and mentors are bound by an oath (enforced by Celestial Circle Sorcery) that prevents them from revealing what they have discovered to anyone else. So, the Sidereals' secret remains protected.

The Gold Faction deals far less with the Dragon-Blooded, most often with outcastes and scattered members of cadet lines or the few legions still abroad in the Threshold. Of late, the Gold Faction has been encountering the scions of the Realm more often, now that they are in the business of finding, sheltering and training the Anathema, the reborn Solar Exalted. This situation has led to some fights with the Wyld Hunt, and Gold Sidereals see no problem with teaching their Solar protégés how to fight and kill the Terrestrials. This provokes the ire of the Bronze Faction, but ultimately, the loss of a few Dragon-Blooded warriors is a small concern compared to the future of the Realm.

THE ABYSSAL EXALTED

As grave a concern for the Chosen of Fate as the return of the Solar Exalted, perhaps even more so, is the appearance of the Abyssal Exalted and what they herald for the future of Creation. The champions of the Deathlords represent a danger to the Sidereals because they draw their power from the shadowlands and the Underworld, which is hidden from the sight of Heaven. The Sidereal Exalted were unable to foresee the Abyssals' appearance, and they often cannot tell what the Deathlords and their Chosen will do next. It is not a feeling that the agents of destiny care for at all.

Since the Abyssal Exalted first appeared, the Sidereals have tried to learn all that they can about them, which hasn't yielded up very much information. They know that the Essences of the deathknights have been corrupted by the Deathlords. They strongly suspect that the Essences came from the Jade Prison, that they once belonged to the Chosen of the Unconquered Sun and that the sundering of the Solars' prison was due, in part, to the work of the Deathlords. Unfortunately, the Sidereals cannot be sure as of yet.

What the Sidereal Exalted are certain of is that the Deathlords mean to carve up Creation among them, expanding the influence of the shadowlands until no place is left untouched, and that the Abyssal Exalted are their instruments in this scheme. The Chosen of the Maidens cannot allow this to come to pass. Therefore, the Sidereal Exalted and the Abyssals are dire enemies, struggling for the future of the world.

Of course, the Abyssal Exalted move with the same deliberate care and stealth as the Sidereals, so the conflict



between them is rarely out in the open where anyone else would be aware of it. The war between the Sidereals and the Abyssals is a shadow war, conducted behind the scenes, often through intermediaries and pawns controlled by both sides. In this, the Sidereals have an advantage, since the other Exalted are likewise opposed to the work of the Chosen of the Deathlords. Solars and Lunars can often be subtly directed against the Abyssals to shatter their schemes with little risk on the part of the Sidereals. Still, there are, in addition to the Abyssal Exalted, those Solars who willingly serve the Deathlords.

For the time being, the slow and subtle dance between the servants of the Deathlords and their enemies continues, and not even the Chosen of Fate can foresee the outcome.

THE HIERARCHY OF HEAVEN

More than any other type of Exalted, the Sidereals deal directly with the gods, from the humble spirits of hearth, stream and field to the mighty Celestial Incarna themselves, including their heavenly patrons, the Five Maidens. Of all the Exalted, the Sidereals are the only ones who still hold the keys to the doorways of Heaven and traffic regularly with the inhabitants of Yu-Shan. They both work closely with many gods and also, in their earthly affairs, work to keep spirits from interfering in their carefully laid plans.

The relationship between the Sidereals and the gods is complex. On the one hand, the Sidereals are servants of the gods, particularly the Five Maidens. They are charged with particular duties in Heaven and on Earth and are expected to fulfill them. The ministers of the Bureau of Destiny can speak in the Maidens' name and issue orders to their Chosen. On the other hand, the Sidereals are invested with authority over certain smaller gods by their Celestial Incarna patrons and by virtue of their service in the Celestial Bureaucracy. As agents of the Bureau of Destiny, the Sidereal Exalted can order certain spirits and expect to be obeyed, so long as those spirits mind the authority of Heaven.

There's also the matter of the Bronze Faction and the Immaculate Order, which carefully manages the worship of the gods, great and small, throughout the Realm, ensuring that the gods can't subvert the rightful order and extort mortals for prayer and worship by not performing their ordained duties. Some little gods do not look kindly upon the Sidereals' efforts to contain their ambitions. This had led to dissent in the ranks of the Celestial Hierarchy, with some gods ignoring their duties. It often falls to the agents of the Bureau of Destiny (namely the Sidereals) to correct such problems.

So, the Sidereal Exalted walk a delicate balance between appeasing ill-tempered gods and keeping various spirits in line and under Sidereal influence. They use a combination of magic, force, threats, diplomacy and

pure manipulation to maintain this balance. The least spirits are easily swayed by the Sidereals' authority and bound by their magic. The greatest gods are managed using flattery, diplomacy, logic and, occasionally, a touch of coercion. The ranks of little gods in between are dealt with as the situation warrants and the Sidereals deem necessary.

The key in the relationship between the Sidereal Exalted and the gods is that the Sidereals believe that they — and not the gods — know what is best for humanity and Creation. The Celestial Incarna recognized this when they placed the care of Creation into the hands of the Exalted as their reward for their service in the war against the Primordials. The Sidereals see themselves as the direct inheritors of the Exalted mandate to rule Creation. They carry out the wishes of the Five Maidens in order to preserve the Tapestry, but the history of the world is theirs to determine. The future is for the Chosen of Fate to decide, and they do whatever is necessary to ensure that the gods do not interfere with their decisions.

THE YOZIS

Ancient beyond years, cunning beyond measure and possessed of a desire to rend fate asunder in order to escape their prison, the Yozis are the natural enemies of the Sidereals. The Sidereals were long ago charged with monitoring the prison of the Yozis for signs of weakness and with policing Creation for escapees. The Chosen of the Maidens continue in this role today, hunting fugitive demons who escape from the control of sorcerers or who slip through the cracks in reality and seek to establish secret networks of worshipers.

The Sidereals are daring in their assaults, and Sidereal demon-hunters are frequently known to enter the kingdom of Malfeas to stalk their prey. However, the Sidereals do not hunt so thoroughly as they did in the First Age. It has been many years since retributive assassins dared Malfeas, and lack of resources means that the Division of Fate turns a blind eye to a level of demon worship that, while no direct threat to Creation, would have been unimaginable even during the Shogunate.

The Sidereals have severely slashed the resources they allocate to demon-hunting over the last few years and devoted those resources, instead, to watching and checking the expansion of the Deathlords. The Yozis are well aware of this and have increased their efforts to escape their bonds, seeking to put down footholds in Creation. Most of this activity comes from Third and Second Circle demons and their personal entourages. The agent network of the Ebon Dragon has been acting less and gathering information more over the last five years, and the Sidereals suspect he may soon make a serious attempt at the bars of the prison.

THE FAIR FOLK

While even more inimical to Creation than the Yozis, the Fair Folk are much less insidious. They hate Creation for the blasphemy of fixed shape, and where their servants go, souls are beguiled and dreams are consumed. The Sidereals normally content themselves with using Lunar heroes and shaped Fair Folk to blunt the ambitions of these inhuman beings. However, when the faeries' ambitions threaten to push forward the Bordermarches of the Wyld, the Sidereals are not above direct confrontation. Sidereal operations against the Fair Folk are generally mounted on an ad hoc basis, and that practice continues to this day. Luckily, the increasing restiveness on the part of the Lunar Exalted has been hard on the Fair Folk, as young Lunar heroes have been warring with the faeries of the Middlemarches. As a result, Sidereal actions against the Fair Folk are mostly limited to smothering the effects of breaches in fate.

MORTALS

With all their dealings with the great powers of Creation, from the gods on down to the Princes of the Earth, it can be easy to overlook the relationship between the Sidereal Exalted and the countless mortals living in the world. Outsiders would say that the Sidereal Exalted don't care about an individual mortal's life, and they would be right, but that does not mean that the Sidereals don't care about mortal life in general. Quite the opposite, in fact.

All that the Chosen of the Maidens have done, from their duties in Heaven to exhorting the Dragon-Blooded to rebellion, has been for the benefit of humanity. True, the Sidereals have been willing to sacrifice lives for the greater good, but they have always kept that greater good in mind, which includes maintaining Creation as a place where life can thrive. The life of the average peasant may be harder than it was in the First Age, but then, if the Sidereal Exalted had *not* acted, the whole world would lie broken under the heel of the Anathema and their empire. At least, with the rule of the Dragon-Blooded, there is a measure of order, and with the Immaculate Order, the capricious gods can be tamed somewhat. The peasant's life may be harder, but at least he has a life.

Like the other Chosen, the Sidereals come from mortal roots. They are born and raised without knowledge of their destiny and spend the formative years of their lives among mortals, often in humble surroundings. Although their Exaltation and their duties take them to far-flung and fantastic places, Sidereals hold on to those earliest memories and never entirely leave their mortality behind. Whether this is the greatest virtue or greatest flaw of the Chosen is known only to the Maidens.



Yozis



The room was all darkness, and the beings within it were darknesses themselves. One was a great and ancient god, one a young and troubled Exalt.

Wayang, the Black Puppet Mask, was the God of Silence. He did not speak. He did not hurry. He was the head of the Department of Endings, and it was a rare thing that he should even presume to notice a young Sidereal, much less take such an Exalt under his wing. In this case, however, the sense of kinship was understandable.

Black Ice Shadow was an experiment of sorts. The plan of the Maidens indicated a great deal of death in the future, and so, the Sidereals chose to shape one of their number to meet that future. A conception in a shadowland was arranged for the moment when an ancient Chosen of Endings was due to exit the Tapestry, and powerful geomantic and sorcerous rituals lured the Exaltation to the intended host.

Born to a people touched by death, the child was raised from an early age under the tutelage of powerful gods. The Sidereals had none like him among them, so they had recruited spirits of disease and decay to raise the child for them. And so, Black Ice Shadow grew to maturity, surrounded always by negative geomancy, wicked gods and the short, tormented lives of his fellows.

When he Exalted, his Sidereal tutors took him away to black Manses built solely for his education. In these places, built in small shadowlands and staffed with ghosts, they tutored him. They civilized him in a year and a day and educated him in martial-arts techniques learned from study of a Deathlord's battle manners. Senior members of his division brought Black Ice Shadow books on necromancy from the most tightly controlled libraries of the Violet Bier of Sorrows, and he initiated himself into the dark arts. Black Ice Shadow was given scrolls and reports about death and the Underworld, and he was told this was his lot in life, to be the one among his people wise in the ways of Death.

And so, the Chosen of Endings had set himself to learning what they told him to learn, and to be what they told him to be. Perhaps his heart was not in it to start, but they had reared him in the sepulcher and swaddled him in the cerements of the grave. By the time he was ready to perform his role, he was a creature of the darkness, as his elders and betters had asked of him.

Then, Thorns fell, and everything changed. The Mask of Winters had ridden Juggernaut, Treader of Cities, out of the Underworld and up to the walls of Thorns, just as Black Ice Shadow warned he might. The Mask of Winters' deathknights had issued forth and felled the Terrestrial rear guard, and the dead had made the city of Thorns their own.

And within the department, eyes that had seen the Abyssal Exalted had turned to Black Ice Shadow, and worried lips talked to anxious ears. What have we done, they asked. Can we trust him?

Apparently, the answer had been, "maybe," and so, Black Ice Shadow had been put out to cool. Now, he sat in the darkness with Wayang, a being of thrice his Essence, but now just as distrusted as Black Ice Shadow himself.

"They suspect me of complicity with the Malfeans."

Yes. The darkness spoke without words. In the dim lamplight, the Sidereal watched the graceful contortions of Wayang's body and read his every nuance. *They worry we are slaves of the darkness.*

"I don't think I'm a servant of the Malfeans."

The darkness affirmed. *Nor do I, but you are not yet conscious of the seriousness of the situation. In this, the largely mortal perspective you retain is hindering you. Imagine what a sorcerer of the Deathlords' standing could do with their black magic. What traps could have been laid in the books you read? What influences could have been applied to your soul?*

"I see. So, do you think yourself to have been compromised?"

With a graceful bending, the Black Puppet Mask replied. *I would prefer to think not, but I do not know. After all, my disloyalty might be a fundamental law of reality.*

And so, the two sat silently in the darkness for a time, and the stillness between them was like the stillness of the grave.

CHAPTER THREE

CHARACTER CREATION

In the glorious halls of Yu-Shan sit the members of the Celestial Hierarchy. Here, the gods oversee the functioning of Creation and carry out the mandates of destiny. Among these servants of Heaven are the Sidereal Exalted, the Chosen of Fate and the elite magistrates of the Celestial Maidens. Although they are bureaucrats, the Sidereals are not faceless. Each of Heaven's Chosen is a unique individual, with her own schemes and desires. Now, you are one of these secret masters of Creation. Destiny has marked you with the power to influence and change the fate of the world.

This chapter provides the rules needed to create Sidereal characters. The process for creating one of the Sidereal Exalted follows the same guidelines presented for Solars in *Exalted*. However, there are areas in which the Chosen of Fate differ from their Solar cousins. The following material details these differences and is meant to supplement and modify the rules in *Exalted*.

STEP ONE: CHARACTER CONCEPT

This is the single most important step in creating your character. Without it, your traits are nothing but random dots on a sheet of paper. The stronger your concept is, the stronger your final character will be and the easier it will be to flesh him out. For the Sidereal Exalted, there are a number of factors that must be taken into account when deciding upon a character concept.

THE STORYTELLER

During character creation, it is important for the Storyteller to work with her players, and vice versa. Ultimately, gaming is a team effort, and the closer everyone works together, the more fun everyone will have. Storytellers should discuss with their players the type of series they want to run, and players should work to create character concepts that fit that type of series. Players should also work at making their characters fully developed personalities with histories and goals. The more raw material a Storyteller has to work with, the more story hooks she can provide for that character.

CASTE

Like their Celestial cousins, the Chosen of Fate are divided into castes. A Sidereal's caste is a reflection of which Maiden the character serves and of the duties assigned to that Maiden and her servants in the Celestial Hierarchy. What is unique among the Sidereal is that they are, literally, born into their castes. When a Sidereal dies, her Exalted Essence seeks out a child being born under auspicious signs and attaches itself to the newborn. For her entire life, the future Chosen of Fate is aware on some level of the destiny that awaits her. Because of this, most Sidereal

children are naturally drawn to a lifestyle that will help prepare them for their future roles as servants of Yu-Shan.

ALLEGIANCE

While each Sidereal owes her ultimate allegiance to the Maiden who chose her, the Chosen of Fate are not immune to the political struggles that infect the Celestial Hierarchy. Since the fall of the Solars during the First Age, the Sidereal have been divided over their actions taken against the Solars. The recent return of the Unconquered Sun's champions, combined with other events the First Age Chosen of Fate failed to foresee, has once again brought these divisions into play. While these rival factions compete furiously for the advancement of their own agendas, this rivalry has never interfered in the Sidereal Exalted's ability to carry out their duties as members of the Celestial Hierarchy. At least, not yet.

- **The Bronze Faction:** Those who supported the removal of the Solars and continue to stand by that decision. For centuries, the followers of the Bronze Faction have been the dominant political faction in Creation, but recent events have led to that position being threatened. The Bronze Faction is most active in the Realm and in those lesser kingdoms aligned with it. In addition, its members are the secret masters of the Immaculate Order, the Heptagram, the All-Seeing Eye and other institutions of imperial power.

- **The Gold Faction:** Those who opposed the murder of the Solars and those who have come to view that action as a mistake, as well as those who now believe that the Solars are the only force capable of driving back the forces of the Deathlords, the Yozis and the Wyld. The Gold Faction is most active in the Threshold, especially in those kingdoms and regions that are antagonistic toward the Realm and the Immaculate Order. The group's most influential tool is the Cult of the Illuminated.

- **Independent Sidereals:** Those who avoid both existing factions. Many members of the Gold Faction became effectively independent after the Solar Purge, and many who have returned to the Gold Faction fold use claims of independence to enhance the deniability of their involvement. Others are attempting to work beyond the divide of the factions to protect and maintain Creation.

- **Ronin:** Those very rare Chosen of Fate who have somehow managed to escape their destiny and evade the other Sidereal Exalted. Such Sidereals have not undergone the special training given to agents of the Celestial Hierarchy, nor do they have access to many of the resources of their sisters. For more on ronin characters, see the sidebar on page 100.

NATURE

Nature functions identically for Sidereal Exalted as it does for Solars. While some Natures are common among certain castes (the result of one's Celestial Essence being there since birth), they are by no means the only ones present. Your character may have any Nature you wish.

PARAGONS OF THE CELESTIAL

BUREAUCRACY

Although the idea of an idealistic bureaucrat may seem a contradiction, the Chosen of Fate have their share of Paragons. However, the ideals such Celestial Paragons uphold are those of Heaven and not of mortal men. Such a Paragon is wholly dedicated to the Celestial Hierarchy and her place within it. She is obedient to her superiors and respectful to her underlings (although she expects to be obeyed in all things). She will carry out all assignments to the best of her ability, seeking recognition only from her superiors and desiring respect only from her peers. The Celestial Paragon recognizes that all things — even her own life — pale in comparison to the dictates of fate and the smooth function of Creation.

STEP TWO: CHOOSING ATTRIBUTES

As with all characters, Sidereal characters begin with each Attribute at one dot. As the Chosen of the Celestial Maidens, Sidereal Exalted are much more powerful than mundane mortals.

A Sidereal character has eight (8) dots to divide among her primary Attributes, six (6) dots to divide among her secondary Attributes and four (4) dots to divide among her tertiary Attributes. Characters are not limited in how many dots they may assign to each Attribute, save that Attributes may not be raised above five dots.

STEP THREE: CHOOSING ABILITIES

Abilities begin with a rating of zero. Each Ability is attuned to one of the celestial constellations, and they are divided in accordance to which Maiden's house that constellation's spirit serves within.

- **Journey Abilities** are those related to travel and movement and are governed by the Golden Barque of the Heavens. They include Endurance, Ride, Sail, Survival and Thrown.

- **Serenity Abilities** are those that involve life and civilization and are overseen by the Cerulean Lute of Harmony. They include Craft, Dodge, Linguistics, Performance and Socialize.

- **Battle Abilities** are those devoted to combat and clash of arms and are ruled by the Crimson Panoply of Victory. They include Archery, Brawl, Melee, Presence and Resistance.

- **Secret Abilities** are those involving hidden actions and unspoken truths and are influenced by the Forbidding



Manse of Ivy. They include Investigation, Larceny, Lore, Occult and Stealth.

- **Ending Abilities** are those that relate to change and death and are managed by the Violet Bier of Sorrows. They include Athletics, Awareness, Bureaucracy, Martial Arts and Medicine.

Each Sidereal has a natural affinity with those Abilities governed by her Maiden's house. This affinity is represented by the easier time a character has in raising these *Auspicious Abilities* through both bonus and experience points. See the table on page 102 for the point costs.

In addition, each Sidereal Exalted has an affinity for certain Abilities beyond those naturally attuned to her celestial auspice. A character selects four (4) Abilities to be her *Favored Abilities*. These Abilities receive the same bonus and experience point discounts as her *Auspicious Abilities*. You may not "double up" and increase your discount by choosing *Auspicious Abilities* as *Favored Abilities*. It is strongly suggested that, if you're making up your first character, you choose Martial Arts and Craft as favored.

Young Sidereals must undergo a rigid and demanding period of training before entering service with the Celestial Hierarchy and being accepted as members of their Maidens' households. Using divine techniques and artifacts of the First Age, this training regimen is able to condense a lifetime's worth of instruction into only a year and a day. As a result, even novice Sidereal Exalted possess a phenomenal level of skill and ability. You have 15 points to spend on your Sidereal character's *Auspicious* and *Favored Abilities* and an additional 20 points to spend on any Abilities you wish. A character must possess at least one dot in each of her *Favored Abilities*. One of the reasons it is a "Favored" Ability is that your character has devoted some time toward learning it.

You may not assign more than three dots to any Ability, but you can increase Abilities to four or five dots with bonus points. Bonus points may also be used to purchase Ability specialties in the same manner detailed in *Exalted*.

- All members of the Celestial Hierarchy *must* have an *absolute minimum* of Awareness ••, Bureaucracy ••, Linguistics (Old Realm) •, Lore •••, Martial Arts ••, Occult ••, Socialize •, Stealth • and Archery, Melee or Thrown •. In addition, all members of a Maiden's household must meet additional Ability requirements.

- Members of the Golden Barque of the Heavens are expected to travel anywhere in Creation they may be needed. They must have an absolute minimum of Athletics ••, Endurance ••, Linguistics (Old Realm and one other tongue) ••, Stealth •, Survival •• and Ride or Sail •••.

- Members of the Cerulean Lute of Harmony are expected to oversee gatherings of both gods and men. They must have an absolute minimum of Craft or Performance ••, Linguistics ••• (the choice of tongues is secondary to

the character's ability to speak and write with great eloquence), Medicine ••, Presence •• and Socialize •••.

- Members of the Crimson Panoply of Victory are expected to be ever on guard and ready to enforce the will of Heaven. They must have an absolute minimum of Archery or Melee •••, Athletics ••, Dodge ••, Presence •• and Resistance ••.

- Members of the Forbidding Manse of Ivy are expected to uncover all things that Heaven must know and to act in complete secrecy. They must have an absolute minimum of Awareness •••, Investigation •••, Larceny •••, Socialize •• and Stealth •••.

- Members of the Violet Bier of Sorrows are expected to oversee and to instigate the Celestially mandated ending of all things. They must have an absolute minimum of Athletics ••, Awareness ••, Dodge •••, Martial Arts ••• and Stealth •••.

STEP FOUR: ADVANTAGES

Because of their unique position within the Celestial Hierarchy and because of its connections throughout Creation, Sidereal characters have fifteen (15) dots to spend on Backgrounds. Because of their heavenly patronage, certain Backgrounds work differently for Sidereals. In addition, Sidereal Exalted also have access to several new Backgrounds. See Chapter Four for details on these new Traits.

Sidereals, like all Exalted, have access to the mystic powers and abilities known as Charms. Select twelve (12) Charms for your character. No more than three (3) of these Charms may be selected from the Sidereal's special Martial Arts powers.

Sidereals are also educated in the elaborate system of memos used in ordering changes to the Loom of Heaven. The character starts with seven (7) dots in Colleges and must spend at least four (4) of them in the Colleges of his Maiden. Colleges cannot be raised above 3 without the expenditure of bonus points.

As with all sentient beings in Creation, Sidereals are driven by desire and emotion. Your character has five (5) dots to divide among the four Virtues — Compassion, Conviction, Temperance and Valor.

While Sidereals, like all Exalted, are tainted by the Great Curse, the Chosen of Fate are unique in that their Curse effects them as a whole and not individually. All Sidereal suffer from the effects of hubris, or wicked pride. Unable to admit to their mistakes and unwilling to concede that there may be something they have overlooked, the Sidereals heed only their own wisdom when it is wrong and ignore the wisdom of others when it is right. The Chosen of Fate's pride grows only greater when they gather in groups. The Sidereal Curse has no mechanical aspect and is, instead, a matter entirely for roleplaying. See page 253 of the Storytelling chapter for more information.

STEP FIVE: FINISHING TOUCHES

Calculate a Sidereal character's Willpower by adding together her two highest Virtues. Sidereal Exalted, like all Exalted, begin with an Essence of two (2). Each of these Traits may be raised using bonus points (although Willpower may not exceed a rating of 8 unless the character has ratings of 4 or higher in her two highest Virtues).

As with all Exalted, Sidereals channel their Essence into both Personal and Peripheral Essence. Effects created using Personal Essence are subtle, while effects generated using Peripheral Essence are awesome demonstrations of the will of fate made manifest, causing the Chosen's anima banner to flare.

Personal Essence pool is calculated by multiplying your character's Essence Trait by two and then adding her Willpower ($[\text{Essence} \times 2] + \text{Willpower}$).

Peripheral Essence pool is calculated by multiplying your character's Essence Trait by six and then adding the sum of her Willpower and her Virtues ($[\text{Essence} \times 6] + \text{Willpower} + [\text{the sum of Virtues}]$).

Sidereal characters possess the normal mortal seven (7) health levels — a -0 health level, two -1 health levels, two -2 health levels, a -4 health level and an Incapacitated health level — plus any additional -0 health levels gained from the Sidereal Ox-Body Technique Charm.

Sidereal characters have 18 bonus points that may be spent at any time during character creation. See the chart on page 102 for the point cost of raising each Trait.

SPARK OF LIFE

Now come the final touches. Answer the same questions for your Sidereal character that you would for a Solar: What does she look like? What are her habits and quirks? Who is she close to? Who are her enemies and rivals? What was her childhood like? When did she first Exalt? What motivates her to do the things she does?

In addition, there are other questions to answer.

- **The Celestial Hierarchy:** How do you fit in among the Celestial Bureaucracy? Do you have any powerful rivals or patrons? How do your underlings feel about you? Have you attracted the attention of your superiors (for good or ill)? Do you have a favored scapegoat for when your assignments go wrong? How well are you tuned in to the gossip and rumors that swirl around you?

- **The Celestial Gods:** What are your opinions of your Maiden? Of her sisters? Of the other Celestial gods? Of the Games of Divinity?

- **The Destiny of the World:** What are your thoughts on the growing threats to Creation? How do you feel about the Deathlords? The Yozis? The Fair Folk? The returned Solars? The Lunar barbarians? The disappearance of the Scarlet Empress? The coming civil war in the Realm? And most importantly, how does each of these things fit in with or threaten your own goals and plans for the way Creation should be?



RONIN SIDEREAL

On very rare occasions — perhaps once in a lifetime — a newly Exalted Sidereal manages to avoid all contact with her sister Chosen of Fate. Because of this, such an individual is a wild card of destiny. She is an agent of fate ungoverned by the dictates of Heaven and lacking an understanding of the patterns of a properly functioning Creation. The Sidereals consider the presence of such a person a highly inauspicious sign, as she may potentially pose a danger to everything the Celestial Hierarchy strives to oversee. Even two Sidereals who loathe each other will work together to bring in a ronin.

Because they lack the training and resources of a member of the Celestial Hierarchy, ronin Sidereals have only 25 Ability dots. At least ten (10) of these must be spent on Auspicious and Favored Abilities, with at least one dot in each Favored Ability. Ronin Sidereal have only seven (7) dots to spend on Backgrounds and are limited to the Backgrounds of Acquaintances, Allies, Artifact, Backing, Connections, Familiar, Manse and Resources. Ronin may not have Backing from or Connections with any of the Sidereal factions or with any of the Celestial Bureaus. A ronin Sidereal has only eight (8) Charms, and none of them may be from the special Sidereal Martial Arts powers (the Violet Bier of Sorrows Style is still available). Ronin Sidereals have no access to the colleges of astrology.

Finally, any player wishing to run a Ronin character must come up with one hell of an explanation for the Storyteller. As stated above, the members of the Celestial Hierarchy go to great lengths to track down any and all newly Exalted Sidereals. They are master investigators, powerful astrologers and natural political manipulators with the ability to call upon vast webs of favors and agents. Simply evading the Chosen of Fate is in itself an incredibly feat. Continuing that evasion is nothing short of miraculous. The Storyteller is perfectly within her rights to refuse any request to play a ronin character.

CHARACTER CREATION SUMMARY

CHARACTER CREATION PROCESS

• STEP ONE: CHARACTER CONCEPT

Choose concept, Caste, allegiance and Nature.
Note caste's anima powers.

• STEP TWO: SELECT ATTRIBUTES

Note that all Attributes start with one dot before you add any.

Prioritize the three categories: Physical, Social, Mental (8/6/4)

Choose Physical Traits: Strength, Dexterity, Stamina

Choose Social Traits: Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance

Choose Mental Traits: Perception, Intelligence, Wits

• STEP THREE: SELECT ABILITIES

Note Auspicious Abilities.

Select Favored Abilities (4); may not be the same as Auspicious Abilities. Martial Arts and Craft are suggested as useful Favored Abilities.

Choose Abilities (35 — at least 15 must be from Auspicious or Favored Abilities; at least one must be in each Favored Ability; none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points; members of the Celestial Hierarchy must have a minimum of Awareness ••, Bureaucracy ••, Linguistics (Old Realm) •, Lore •••, Martial Arts ••, Occult ••, Socialize •, Stealth • and Archery, Melee or Thrown •. Members of each household must meet additional Ability requirements. Ronin receive only 25 points of Abilities, 10 of which must be from Auspicious or Favored Abilities. They have no minimum required Ability scores.)

• STEP FOUR: SELECT ADVANTAGES

Choose Backgrounds (15 — none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points; ronin have only 7, limited to Acquaintances, Allies, Artifact, Backing, Connections, Familiar, Manse and Resources), Charms (12 — at least 5 must be from Auspicious or Favored Abilities; no more than 3 may be from a Sidereal Martial Arts form; ronin 8, none from Sidereal Martial Arts), Virtues (5 — none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points), Colleges (7 — 4 must be from his Maiden's colleges; ronin 0).

• STEP FIVE: FINISHING TOUCHES

Record Essence (2), Willpower (add the total of two highest Virtues — may not start higher than 8 unless at least two Virtues are 4 or higher), Personal Essence Pool ([Essence x 2] + Willpower), Peripheral Essence Pool ([Essence x 6] + Willpower + [the sum of Virtues]) and health levels (7, plus any gained from Charms).

• BONUS POINTS

Bonus points (18) may be spent at any time during character creation.

CHARACTER CREATION SUMMARY

CASTES

- **Chosen of Journeys:** Heaven's Messengers, who travel anywhere in Creation they may be needed.

Auspicious Abilities: Endurance, Ride, Sail, Survival and Thrown.

Caste Anima Power: May spend 10 motes to triple her and her allies' running speeds.

- **Chosen of Serenity:** Heaven's Courtesans, who oversee gatherings of both gods and men.

Auspicious Abilities: Craft, Dodge, Linguistics, Performance and Socialize.

Caste Anima Power: May spend 10 motes to add her Essence rating in extra successes to Performance rolls made for her and her allies.

- **Chosen of Battles:** Heaven's Soldiers, ever on guard and ready to enforce the will of the Celestial Hierarchy.

Auspicious Abilities: Archery, Brawl, Melee, Presence and Resistance.

Caste Anima Power: May spend 10 motes to reduce by one health level the damage of all attacks made against her and her allies.

- **Chosen of Secrets:** Heaven's Eyes, who uncover all things that Heaven must know.

Auspicious Abilities: Investigation, Larceny, Lore, Occult and Stealth.

Caste Anima Power: May spend 10 motes to protect her and her allies against all forms of mind control and thought reading.

- **Chosen of Endings:** Heaven's Gardeners, who oversee and instigate the Celestially mandated ending of things.

Auspicious Abilities: Athletics, Awareness, Bureaucracy, Martial Arts and Medicine.

Caste Anima Power: May spend 10 motes to add one health level of damage to all attacks made by her and her allies.

NATURE

- **Architect** — You want to leave a lasting legacy.
- **Bravo** — Might makes right.
- **Bureaucrat** — Rules keep the world from collapsing into chaos.
- **Caregiver** — You are a wellspring of compassion.
- **Conniver** — Brains over brawn.
- **Critic** — Pointing out flaws makes it possible to correct them.
- **Explorer** — Life is a never-ending adventure.
- **Follower** — You look for someone else to take charge.
- **Gallant** — You seek to be the center of attention.
- **Hedonist** — Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you may die.
- **Jester** — Laughter can heal and teach.
- **Judge** — Balance, truth and justice are your quest.
- **Leader** — You are the one others turn to in times of crisis.
- **Martyr** — You are ready to give everything for what you believe.

- **Paragon** — You strive to be the noble ideal of a member of the Celestial Hierarchy.

- **Rebel** — You constantly seek to challenge authority.

- **Savant** — Any problem can be solved with logic and deduction.

- **Survivor** — You withstand anything that fate throws at you.

- **Thrillseeker** — Life is not worth living unless it's on the edge.

- **Visionary** — You see the world for what it could be, rather than what it is.

VIRTUES

- **Compassion** — Empathy and forgiveness.

- **Conviction** — Emotional endurance.

- **Temperance** — Self-control and clear-headedness.

- **Valor** — Courage and bravery.

BACKGROUNDS

- **Acquaintances** — Useful mortal associates who are accustomed to your presence.

- **Allies** — Aides and friends, typically gods, who help in tasks.

- **Artifact** — Weapons and tools, usually crafted from starmetal.

- **Backing** — Rank in an organization of power and influence, typically the Gold or Bronze Faction.

- **Celestial Manse** — You have a dwelling in the Celestial City.

- **Connections** — Information sources in useful places that give you pull in the world around you.

- **Familiar** — An animal companion.

- **Manse** — A place of power and Essence.

- **Salary** — The size of your Celestial pay packet.

- **Savant** — Memories of the First Age and its lost secrets.

- **Sifu** — A mentor wise in the secret martial arts of the Sidereals.

BONUS POINTS

Trait	Cost
Attribute	4
Ability	2 (1 if a Favored or Auspicious Ability)
Background	1 (2 is the Background is being raised above 3)
Specialty	1 (2 per 1 if in a Favored or Auspicious Ability)
Virtue	3
Willpower	2
Essence	10
Charms	7 (5 if in a Favored or Auspicious Ability)
Sidereal Martial Arts Charms	8 (6 if in a Favored or Auspicious Ability)
Colleges	8 (6 in your Maiden's colleges)



Elias Tremalion, Solar Exalted and agent of the Haslanti League, was in a bit of a bind. It wasn't that he hadn't succeeded in his mission. No, he'd seduced the Terrestrial's mistress, seized the documents detailing imperial aid to the North and even left his calling card, all without being detected.

No, the Wyld Hunt that sought to ride him down was drawn to him by nothing but bad luck and his own previous infamous accomplishments.

He'd given the monkish killers the slip back in Cherak, but they'd set the satrap's personal cavalry to pursuing him across the wind-blown grasslands of the North. The horsemen followed hot on his heels, until nothing but his trusty backpack glider would keep him ahead of the uh-lans. Thankfully, it was the North, and the wind hadn't yet betrayed the agent. Unfortunately, the North was also a land of rugged horses, and the cavalry hadn't slackened its pursuit for the last four hours. More unfortunately, two of the Dragon-Blooded chose that moment to catch up with the chase. After a brief conference with the officer leading the cavalry, one of the Exalts took the wing cleanly off Tremalion's glider with a broadhead arrow at just over 300 yards.

The glider lurched down roughly out of the sky, but Tremalion did his best to hit the ground in a landing-like fashion, and he was an expert with the glider. Soon, he found himself among the stones of a glacial moraine. Here, among boulders vast and tiny, he took shelter from the powerbow-armed Terrestrials.

He kept moving, sling in hand, giving ground. Tremalion knew how it would unfold. He would outfox them, take a shot at one, perhaps kill him with a well-aimed Combo. Then, a second later, the other Terrestrial would kill him with her own Combo. That was the way of such battles, but the cards were dealt, and Tremalion had no choice but to take his shot and then attempt to deal with the consequences.

Using his sling to launch the "Gold Bullet Special" Combo, Tremalion virtually disintegrated the first Dragon-Blood as the Terrestrial spun around the boulder with well-timed smoothness. Then, the Solar spun, seeking the place behind him from whence the unerring arrows would appear.

He saw her, saw the archer, and realized that he was right, that he would die here. The Terrestrial, her face contorted with hate, pulled the string of her bow as a field of waving grass erupted in the air around her. She pulled the arrow back across the bow, Tremalion felt his heart lurch, and then, the hidden Exalt killed her. The killer was wholly obscured by some Essence effect that left him nothing more than red blur. With one hand, he made a gesture of power, and with the other, he struck the Terrestrial archer three times with his slim daiklave, delivering two mortal wounds.

As he wove casually through the blood spray of the female monk's death, the assassin let the Essence effect that shielded him fade away. Beneath the visual distortion, the killer was dressed in a loose-fitting red suit, of a sort Tremalion had heard of but never actually seen before. Originally used by First Age ranger units, the suits were part assassin's garb, part military combat armor. The clothing trapped the wearer's scent, and his joints and vitals were well-protected with imperishable materials. Despite the armor, the garb remained light and flexible. The wearer's eyes were hidden by the lenses of his passive Essence imaging and optical amplification gear, and his mouth was covered by a breathing unit. The rest of his face was obscured, wrapped in the tasseled tails of his hood.

The glittering, emotionless optics swung to face Elias Tremalion, and the killer raised his sword in a silent salute. Then, with a nobly theatrical gesture of the blade, the red-garbed Exalt was gone.

A voice lingered behind inside Tremalion's mind. It was a voice that sounded like his own, and it said, "I am Crimson Banner Executioner, Elias Tremalion. I represent parties who wish to utilize your unique skills for the greater good of Creation. We have been watching you, and we will soon make contact."

Tremalion nodded gravely, understanding. He had just been recruited.

CHAPTER FOUR TRAITS

Most of the Traits used in *Exalted: the Sidereals* are identical to the ones used in *Exalted*. Virtues, Abilities, Attributes, Willpower, Essence and the like are all handled identically or nearly so. For the rules governing these Traits, see the Traits chapter, beginning on page 112 of *Exalted*.

USEFUL CRAFTS

Craft (Fate): This is the Ability used to shape and plan fate and to activate Sidereal astrology. While *Exalted* of any type can learn Craft (Fate), it is useless without mastery of certain astrological Colleges and Sidereal Charms. While of little use to others, this Ability is still a closely guarded secret, as the Sidereals protect this information quite closely. Indeed, few in the Second Age know at all the degree to which the Sidereals are agents of the Celestial Bureaucracy and of fate.

EXPANDED BACKGROUNDS

The Chosen of Fate are unique among the beings of Creation. They walk equally among two worlds, Heaven and Creation, and act as the elite agents of destiny in the world of men. As a result of the Sidereal Exalted's unique place within Creation, several Backgrounds work differently for Sidereal characters than they do for Solars and other Exalted. In addition, there are several new Backgrounds exclusively available to Sidereal characters.

ALTERED BACKGROUNDS

As stated, the nature of the Sidereals' role in the Celestial Hierarchy and the unique place they've carved out for themselves within Creation require the redefinition of certain Background Traits. While some require only notes on how they apply specifically to the culture of the Chosen of Fate, others work differently. Unless mentioned below, existing Backgrounds work just as they do in *Exalted*.

ALLIES

The Sidereals have spent countless centuries cloaking their very existence from non-Celestial beings. As a result of this, the Chosen of Fate have few allies among mortals. A Sidereal character's allies will typically be drawn from the ranks of the gods, including spirits, elementals, the God-Blooded and fellow Exalted.

ARTIFACT

The vast majority of Sidereal-owned artifacts are forged from starmetal. As it is the rarest of the Five Magical Materials, the Chosen of Fate go to a great deal of trouble to ensure that they possess a continuing supply of the metal. With the aid of astrological magics, the Sidereals are able to ensure they are present for the falling of meteorites and to instantly mine the precious starmetal. However, even this well-organized harvesting method

produces only limited amounts of the material. Sidereal characters use the same Artifact Background scale as Solar characters (see *Exalted*, p. 142).

BACKING

While Sidereals can possess Backing, it is uncommon. The nature of their work combined with their difficulty in maintaining face-to-face relationships with mortals makes cultivating a position of responsibility within mundane organizations more trouble than many Sidereals believe is prudent. Most Chosen of Fate prefer to work behind the scenes, establishing covert relationships with such groups (via the Connections Background below). The primary exceptions to this are the two Sidereal political cliques: the Gold and Bronze Factions.

CONTACTS AND INFLUENCE

Sidereal characters do not use these Backgrounds. Instead, they use Connections (see below).

FAMILIAR

Although Sidereals start with only a single familiar, they may eventually gather a total number of familiars equal to their Essence, through the use of the Ride Charm Ordained Bridle of Mercury.

FOLLOWERS

Sidereals are unable to gather followers. The inherently arcane nature of their existence makes this impossible. Instead, see Acquaintances (below).

MANSE

Sidereal-held Manses are uncommon. Many of the Chosen of Fate find that their ongoing duties to the Celestial Hierarchy prevent them from being able to devote the necessary effort to upkeep and defense that a Manse requires. Instead, most Sidereals prefer to use Celestial Manses (see below). Those handful of Manses held by the Sidereals in Creation are almost exclusively Celestial in character and are frequently equipped with elaborate observatories and even truly awe-inspiring First Age orreries.

MENTOR

With their small numbers, long lives and complex support structure, the Chosen of Fate are able to maintain a strong and regulated mentoring system. Every member of the Celestial Hierarchy possesses a mentor whom she sees on a regularly scheduled basis. For this reason, Sidereal characters do not use the Mentor Background. However, a mentor's knowledge of the Sidereal's special martial arts forms is an important factor and is covered by the Sifu Background (see below).

RESOURCES

Non-ronin Sidereals do not generally start with Resources, instead using the Salary Background. Ronin

Sidereals cannot generally start with Resources greater than 3 due to their Arcane Fates.

NEW BACKGROUNDS

In addition to the standard Backgrounds presented in *Exalted*, the Chosen of Fate have several additional Backgrounds from which to choose.

ACQUAINTANCES

Because of their inherently arcane nature, Sidereals must go to great lengths to build and maintain interpersonal relationships with mortals. The Acquaintances Background represents the time and effort a character has devoted to establishing such bonds. Without this Background, no mortal will ever recognize nor remember a character's name or face. Mortals will simply accept the character by whatever role she had assumed and recall her as little more than another face in the crowd. However, those mortals with whom the character has worked to build a relationship with will begin to remember her more clearly. At first, they will simply find her face familiar. With enough time and patience, the mortals may even remember her name when she is not there, allowing the Sidereal to establish front identities. Front identities are business operations or professional identities that are similar to acquaintances, but rather than one individual knowing the Exalt well, many know her superficially. Any serious inquiry into a front identity will reveal that it does not exist, and so, the front cannot be particularly prominent or important.

Sidereals can add to their Acquaintances Background through the use of the Ride Charm Breaking the Wild Mortal.

- x None. You have made no effort to cultivate any sort of personal relationship with mortals. Why?
- A single person, such as an innkeeper or city guard, recognizes yours as a friendly face when he sees it.
- A small handful of people who recognize your face and remember your name when they see you. Alternately, you may have a greater number of less familiar acquaintances. With this level of Acquaintances, you may have a front identity, such as the owner of a curious bookstore or a gravely humorous undertaker. However, you will have no repeat clientele, as your patrons will only come upon your front identity by accidents of fate.
- The regulars at a tavern, gambling den or other small, close-knit group (such as a criminal gang or small farming village)

accept you as one of their own. At this level, you can maintain a thorough professional appearance in a front identity, but away from your persona, you are still an enigma.

- You have a close personal relationship with a single mortal as well a small number of genuine friends. Alternately, you may have a larger number of less familiar acquaintances — up to three front identities with full sets of casual acquaintances. You might have the same identity in multiple places or may maintain entirely different fronts.
- You have an established social position in a sizable but close-knit community, such as a town or city neighborhood, a mercenary company or a large temple. The quality of this position is dependent upon your Connections and Resources Backgrounds, and this familiarity does not extend outside the immediate community. Alternately, you may have up to five front identities with full sets of casual acquaintances.

CELESTIAL MANSE

The Celestial City of Yu-Shan is so large and crowded as to make the greatest of mortal cities look like a farming village. Space is limited, and the gods endlessly compete for control of it. For many of the Chosen of Fate, a dwelling within Yu-Shan is an invaluable treasure. A Sidereal's Celestial Manse provides both a temporary reprieve from the pressure and demands of her duties to the Celestial Hierarchy and a sanctuary from the chaos of the material world. In addition, Sidereals with Celestial Manses are permitted to travel to and from Yu-Shan whenever they wish, allowing them to enter Heaven without official business.

The competition for Yu-Shan's available space is fierce. When a Sidereal dies (or a god is exiled), others begin a subtle and cutthroat dance of intrigue in an attempt to claim the space for themselves. On rare occasions, a Sidereal undertakes such intrigues out of friendship, hoping to safeguard the holdings of her fallen sister until the return of her next incarnation. However, the majority of such plots are carried out solely for the sake of personal advancement and for the comfort that comes with a larger sanctum.

In addition to shelter and status, a Sidereal's Celestial Manse is also capable of producing Hearthstones just like a regular Manse. Such Hearthstones are always Celestial in nature. Hearthstones from Celestial Manses work normally in Creation. Characters cannot buy above Celestial Manse ••• without special Storyteller permis-

sion — more impressive digs are reserved for higher-ranking individuals.

- x None. You have no celestial dwelling of your own, unless you live without a residency permit in a squatter camp. Why?
- A small faux-shrine or comfy townhouse. Produces a level 1 Hearthstone.
- A beautiful pagoda or a spacious townhouse. Produces a level 2 Hearthstone.
- A small palace with grounds or a spacious mansion. Produces a level 3 Hearthstone.
- A towering pagoda, an impressive palace or a hunting lodge with a hundred acres of land well-stocked with godly deer. Produces a level 4 Hearthstone.
- A singular property, either famed for some previous inhabitant or for some element of its vast and overwrought grandeur. Produces a level 5 Hearthstone.

CONNECTIONS

Combining the vast backing of the Celestial Hierarchy with an innate talent for spotting opportunity, the Sidereal Exalted are in a unique position to influence the individuals and institutions around them while drawing little or no notice to themselves. They excel at crafting webs within webs, and the ability to use those webs for their own personal and professional benefit is a powerful one. Characters with connections can guide society in the direction they wish it to move and grow, protecting their assets and gaining special favors. However, such an ability also requires a serious dedication of time and resources. Because of this, Sidereals must focus their attentions on certain areas of influence in order to fully manipulate any of Creation's widespread and diverse social and political structures.

When purchasing the Connections Background, you must select one of the areas of influence detailed in the sidebar on page 108. Each area effectively counts as a separate Background. A member of the Bronze Faction may have Connections (Immaculate Order) 4, Connections (The Cloister of Wisdom) 3 and Connections (The Realm) 2, while an independent Sidereal crimelord may have Connections (The Guild) 5 and Connections (Outlaws) 5.

You cannot manage more points of Connections than the sum of your character's Physical, Social and Mental Attributes combined. For starting characters, this means the total number of dots in Connections may not exceed 27 (unless you've spent bonus points toward Attributes). There is only so much one can do in a day, and exceeding that number of things taxes the character's mind and body beyond its limits.

Note that this Background serves the same function as both the Contacts and Influence Backgrounds from *Exalted*.

- x None. You lack any ties to the group in question.
- You possess at least one major contact (and a handful of minor ones) among the group and are moderately influential on the local level.
- Two major contacts and several minor ones, giving you a great deal of pull in your area.
- Three major contacts and a large number of minor ones within your area of influence, making you a person of importance within your region.
- Five major contacts and a horde of lesser ones. You are one of the most influential persons in your bailiwick.
- You know all of the major power players in your area of influence, and more importantly, you know how to make them do what you want.

SALARY

Their powers and the availability of Ambrosia make mortal wealth of little concern for most of the Sidereal *Exalted*. What matters most is the amount of Quintessence and Ambrosia the character has access to. Because Sidereals are neither permitted nor able to develop cults,

they are instead given access to monies through their division. These come out of the funds the Bureau of Heaven releases to the Bureau of Destiny, but the character has discretion to spend them as she wishes. There is a noticeable pay differential between the Bronze and Gold Factions. The Bronze Faction does not control the payments apparatus (that is in divine hands), but it does exert a great deal of influence through its operation of the evaluation system.

Bureau regulations prohibit Sidereals from living above the Resources ••• standard of living in Creation lest they draw attention to themselves. Likewise, heavenly regulations prohibit Celestial salaries being used to purchase or maintain armies, fleets, thrones or other trappings of political power. Living at Resources •••• is a Severity 2 offense, living at Resources ••••• is a Severity 4 offense. Purchasing mortal armies or principalities is a Severity 5 offense. Characters cannot bribe their regional censors to get around this — the Bronze Faction pursues these cases through the Bureau of Heaven's internal affairs division, and Kejak will prosecute his own over this matter.

Note that, in Heaven, as in the Imperial City, no amount of money can secure a character a Manse. They are acquired through connections and bribes. A Sidereal must have the Celestial Manse Background to start with his own Manse, and characters with high Salaries cannot just immediately rent one at the start of play. Characters without Celestial Manse are restricted to palaces and mansions that do not generate Hearthstones.



AREAS OF INFLUENCE

• **The Dragon-Blooded:** The members of the 11 Great Houses of the Dynasty are the Princes of the Earth. They rule the Realm and, through it, all Creation (or so they tell themselves). Wielding influence over one or more houses gives a character tremendous input into the shape of imperial politics, economics and military activity. In addition, influence within the four academies — the Cloister of Wisdom, the House of Bells, the Spiral Academy and the Heptagram — helps shape the next generation of Dragon-Blooded.

• **The Realm:** The webs of power and influence within the Realm are the most Byzantine in Creation, yet even they pale in comparison to the workings of the Celestial Hierarchy. Because of this, the Sidereals are well skilled at subtly manipulating the Realm toward their own ends. With the proper message put in the proper hands at the proper time, one can have enemies jailed, turn rich men into paupers and destroy armies. With this area of influence comes access to the Thousand Scales, the legions, the All-Seeing Eye, the imperial navy, the Merchant Fleet and the patrician families of the Realm.

• **The Immaculate Order:** The Immaculate Order is one of the most powerful institutions in Creation, and its policies exert considerable influence over the direction of politics and society in both the Realm and the Threshold. Knowing the appropriate Immaculate allows insight into doings of the Order, and the use of Immaculate connections can alter religious policy, affect the assignment of Immaculate lectors, lead to the denouncement of rivals as heretics and allow access to secret societies within the Order.

• **The Guild:** If there is a single power in Creation that comes anywhere close to matching the Realm in influence, it is the Guild. With economic ties to both the Realm and to countless Threshold kingdoms and with the wealth to buy its own armies, the Guild is a powerful — and dangerous — tool. Guild connections give a character influence over regional and even international trade, access to illegal goods and services and the ability to decide who gains lucrative economic contracts.

• **The Threshold:** The lands of the Threshold sit at a crossroads, and whether their destiny lies under the control of the Realm or as independent states has yet to be decided. Threshold connections allow characters to encourage political alliances, to push over local poten-

tates, to direct mercenary armies, to flush out heretics and Anathema, to reestablish or disrupt the Realm's sphere of influence and to shape the future of Creation.

• **The Cult of the Illuminated:** Once little more than a tiny heretical cult devoted to the Unconquered Sun, the Cult of the Illuminated has now become a powerful tool of the Gold Faction. With influence over the Cult, a Sidereal may erode Immaculate influence over areas, foment rebellions against Realm authority and influence the destiny of its Solar members.

• **Outlaws:** With the Scarlet Empress' disappearance, all of Creation has become a more chaotic place. Gangs of bandits and pirates prey upon the Realm and the Threshold alike, while disenfranchised criminals stalk the city streets and barbarian hordes go on the rampage. Such misanthropes live beyond the rule and the protection of the law — and can be powerful tools in the right hands. The ability to influence which trade ships, caravans and other holdings will or will not be attacked by raiders can alter the fates of individuals, families and empires. Characters with outlaw contacts will know how to pull the strings of powerful bandits and criminal organizations such as the Lintha Family.

• **The Bureau of Destiny:** The most powerful and influential of the Celestial Bureaus, the Most Excellent Designers of Destiny and Sidereal Conjunctions is also the most alien and Byzantine. Connections within the Bureau of Destiny enables one to influence fate more directly. However, the bureau dwarfs even the most convoluted of human institutions in its complexity and incestuousness. It is only the fact that the Sidereal Exalted are official members of the bureau that allows them any influence over it at all. Because of this, each of the Maidens' divisions within the bureau (see Chapter Two) counts as a separate area of influence.

• **The Celestial Hierarchy:** While much of the Celestial Hierarchy's actual work is carried out by the Bureau of Destiny, the four remaining bureaus remain in place. Although the Bureaus of Seasons, Nature and Humanity now act primarily as observers, connections to each can serve as a powerful source of information. The Bureau of Heaven exists entirely to serve the egos of its members, but the ability to influence such things can be a most powerful tool when playing the political games of Yu-Shan. Because each bureau jealously guards its own influence and power, each counts as a separate area of influence.



Sidereals don't generally qualify to exceed Salary ••• until they have served Heaven for at least 100 years. Exalted other than Sidereals might occasionally be awarded Celestial preferments for meritorious deeds, but such honorariums are never above Salary •••. There is no way that any other kind of Exalt should start play with a Salary unless the Storyteller really wants them to. Players who wish to start their Sidereal characters with a separately bought mortal Resources as well as a Salary should come up with a compelling explanation for why and how the character maintains such a prominent position in the mortal world.

- x No salary. Did you piss someone off, or are they impounding it to pay some heinous court fee? You live in someone's back room or in your office. You have to beg or crash a feast to eat.
- The starting salary for most gods. As a Sidereal, this means you're either new or on probation. You have a small (five-room) apartment and can afford one meager feast each day. You can pay your two servants, but you get no Ambrosia. You have Resources •• in Heaven, Resources ••• in Creation — dragon boat rental is problematic, and you often ride in passenger dhows.
- Solid salary — you have a small townhouse or a spacious apartment in a mediocre neighborhood. Your feasting-board is constantly full. There is some Ambrosia in your pay, but most of it is in Quintessence allowances useful only for paying servants or meeting basic needs. You have Resources ••• in Heaven and can live as if you have Resources •••• in Creation, although Sidereals generally won't be able to exert this fully. This is the standard Salary for members of the Gold Faction, who are typically paid at the bottom of their grade.
- You own a towering townhouse, a working faux-ranch or a rooftop temple-fortress. You have your own dragon boat, aerial rickshaw and a dozen servitor gods. Most of your pay is in Ambrosia, allowing you to eat many godly victuals. You have Resources •••• in Yu-Shan and could have Resources ••••• in Creation if you could stand the legal heat. This is the standard pay packet for a member of the Bronze Faction.

HEAVEN ON A MORTAL BUDGET

Heaven is a very expensive place. Resources in Yu-Shan are not the same as Resources for characters in Creation. If a character derives his Resources from Creation and not a Salary, add •• to the Resources cost of all fees and standards of living.

- At least two of the above residences and, possibly, a few Essence 2 or 3 gods living with you as yojimbos, advisors or concubines (must be bought with the Allies Background). You eat nothing but godly victuals and pay even your menial servants in Ambrosia to keep them loyal. Ambrosia and Quintessence subsidies give you Resources ••••• in both Heaven and Creation.
- You have a half-dozen grand palaces, penthouse aeries and weekend hunting lodges or party houses in faux-country settings. You possess several dragon boats and a party barge, several aerial rickshaws and a legion of servants, possibly including up to a dozen militant lesser gods (useful gods must be bought as Allies). You dine on the peaches of immortality. You could make unlimited Resources ••••• purchases in Creation, totally ruining the local economy.

Only senior Sidereals and the better sort of high god receive these sorts of pay packets. Decide what divine criminal or celestial powerbroker you are in bed with and how many Severity 3-5 offenses you will be charged with when the censors catch you.

SAVANT

Alone among the Exalted, the Sidereals have preserved the lost secrets of the First Age in their entirety. While the Dragon-Blooded remember only what the Sidereals have carefully doled out and the Lunars have lost all interest in the arts of civilization, the Chosen of Fate have carefully recorded and handed down secrets of Essence and craftsmanship long forgotten in the material world. Even when the Great Contagion threatened to consume Creation, the Sidereal libraries in Yu-Shan remained undisturbed. The Sidereal Exalted use special teaching techniques to fill young Exalts up with concentrated understanding.

A character with the Savant Background may add her Background rating in dice to any Lore check involving the history, science and/or magic of the First Age. In addition, she may add her Savant rating in dots to her Lore, Occult and/or Craft Abilities in order to meet the skill qualifications to operate, maintain or overhaul any First Age artifact.

- x None. You lack any intuitive understanding of First Age lore. Why?
- You vaguely recall the secrets learned in past existences and intuitively grasp some of the basics of First Age wonder working.
- The teaching techniques worked well with you, and you have a reasonable understanding of First Age magical principles.
- You can remember large amounts of your enhanced training and have excellent insight into the secrets of the First Age.
- Most segments of the knowledge imprinting remained intact. You easily grasp the workings of most First Age artifacts.
- The elders applied supplemental training to your already-perfect mastery and made you a walking library of First Age secrets. You have an instinctive understanding of even the most complex First Age mechanisms. It must be painful to comprehend the distance that the Second Age has fallen from the First.

SIFU

Each Sidereal is assigned a tutor, known as a sifu, who is expected to pass the secrets of martial-arts mastery along to the young Exalt. When a young Sidereal has proven herself ready to begin learning these secret and powerful forms (by meeting all of the prerequisites for learning the Charms), her sifu will begin instructing her in the secret techniques as well. But while all Sidereals have a sifu, not all sifus are created equal. Elder Sidereals know only a limited number of supernatural martial-arts secrets. The greater the sifu's skill, the more the student will be able to learn.

The Sifu Background allows a player to stake out those martial-arts forms she wishes for her character to learn later in the game. If a character possesses the Sifu Background, the player and the Storyteller should agree on which forms the sifu knows. Sifus may be busy, but they are expected to make time to train their charges — Sifu is effectively martial-arts training on demand, subject to plot consideration.

- x Your sifu knows only a single supernatural martial-arts form and probably has only partial mastery of that. What did you do to get such a teacher?
- Your sifu knows one supernatural martial-arts form and has partially mastered one Sidereal form.
- Your sifu knows two supernatural martial-arts forms and one Sidereal form.
- Your sifu knows three supernatural martial-arts forms and two Sidereal forms.
- Your sifu knows five supernatural martial-arts forms and three Sidereal forms.
- Your sifu knows seven supernatural martial-arts forms and four Sidereal forms.

CASTES

Just as the other Celestial Exalted are divided into castes based upon the predispositions of their spiritual Essences, so too are the Sidereal Exalted. Where their Solar cousins are naturally divided along aspects of leadership, the castes of the Sidereal Exalted are, at once, aspects of destiny and statecraft divided according to the Maidens they serve. While the Sidereals are powerful agents of fate and hold a place of honor among the halls of Yu-Shan, they are ultimately servants of something greater than themselves.

ANIMA EFFECT

All castes of Sidereal Exalted can channel Essence directly through their animas to generate magical effects. While this is inefficient compared to the refined magic of Charms, it is reflexive, and every Chosen of Fate can utilize her caste's anima power without special training.

In addition to those abilities unique to their castes, a Sidereal Exalt can spend a single mote of Essence to:

- Cause her Caste Mark to glow brightly for a scene (as if the character had spent 4-7 motes of Peripheral Essence). A Sidereal Caste Mark always glows a bright, pure color that corresponds with the color associated with the Exalt's caste.
- Cause her anima to glow brightly enough to read by for a scene (as if the character had spent 8-10 motes of Peripheral Essence).
- Attune her anima to the emanations of Heaven, enabling her to sense nearby gateways. At a distance of (the character's permanent Essence x 100) feet, a Sidereal will recognize the presence of a gateway to Heaven. This does not reveal the location of the gateway to the Sidereal, only its general presence.

Chosen of Journeys

Life is a journey. It has a beginning and an ending, but what truly matters is the journey from one point to the next. This journey is what shapes who we are and how we meet our fate. The Primordials created the Maiden of Journeys to oversee this aspect of Creation and destiny. All that deals with going and doing falls under her mandate. Now, it falls to the Chosen of Journeys to oversee this mandate and to ensure that Creation continues its journey toward its destiny.

In the First Age, the Chosen of Journeys were charged with maintaining and expanding the complex web of transportation and communication networks that spanned all of Creation. Under their management, every kind of commodity, including materials, people and information, moved quickly and efficiently from one corner of the world to another. When the Sidereals sought to eliminate the Solar Exalted, it was the Chosen of Journeys who saw to it that this vast web was turned against the world's fallen rulers. Warnings to fellow Solars were lost, escape routes were misdirected into ambushes, and the Dragon-Blooded outmaneuvered their former lords at every step.

In the wake of the Great Contagion, the Chosen of Journeys were tasked with reestablishing the ties between communities. They worked to reopen trade routes, to instigate the rebuilding of roads and to maintain the lines of communication among the far-flung temples of the Immaculate Order. Some of the Chosen of Journeys also oversaw the remapping of Creation and the recording of the changes wrought by the Wyld. Others scouted the boundaries between Creation and the Wyld, watching for further dangers from the Fair Folk or even the long-lost Lunar Exalted.

Among the Bronze and Gold Factions, the Chosen of Journeys are responsible for seeing that their respective conspiracies are able to coordinate their rival efforts. Bronze members carry messages between the secret masters of the Immaculate Order, while Gold-aligned Chosen of Journeys perform the same duties among the Cult of the Illuminated. Through their efforts, the Immaculate Order is always able to stay one step ahead of the political maneuverings of the Dynasty, while the Cult of the Illuminated is able

to avoid Immaculate inquisitors. In addition to their duties as messengers, Bronze-aligned Chosen of Journeys work to maintain the infrastructure of the Realm

and its client states, to monitor the growing number of threats to the Realm's power and to aid the Wyld Hunt when possible.



Gold-aligned Chosen of Journeys travel the Threshold working to ferment trouble for the Realm and the Immaculate Order and to scavenge ancient tombs in search of artifacts to be used by their Solar pawns. Independent Chosen of Journeys perform many of these same tasks in order to further their own goals.

The Chosen of Journeys are always born among those destined to travel, and most are struck with wanderlust at a young age. Many have grown up among Guild caravans, nomadic tribes, horse clans and communities of sailors and fishermen. Those rare Chosen of Journeys who strive to maintain a semipermanent residence or mortal identity often do so among communities similar to those they once called home.

Caste Markings: The eyes of every Chosen of Journeys have yellow irises, and their pupils appear to be filled with minute yellow flecks, causing them to resemble a star-filled night sky. During powerful expenditures of Peripheral Essence, the Sign of Journeys appears upon the Chosen's forehead, formed of bright yellow light.

Anima Effect: A Chosen of the Maiden of Journeys can make the Lesser Sign of Mercury at a cost of 10 motes. This sign causes the Chosen's anima to extend out as a brilliant yellow aura that laps around

all those under the anima's effect. For the rest of the scene, the Chosen of Journeys and all her allies within (the Sidereal's Essence x 10) yards triple their running speeds. The increased running speed applies not just to people, but to horses and other steeds whose feet touch the ground as they travel. The effect of the anima dissipates if a recipient moves out of range of the Exalt employing it.

Auspicious Abilities: The Chosen of Journeys are influenced by those celestial constellations that serve under the Golden Barque of the Heavens. They are the Captain, the Gull, the Mast, the Messenger and the Ship's Wheel, and they grant the Chosen of Journeys a natural affinity for the Abilities of Endurance, Ride, Sail, Survival and Thrown.

Common Natures: Architect, Bureaucrat, Con- niver, Explorer, Paragon, Rebel, Savant, Survivor, Thrillseeker, Visionary

Associations: The color yellow, the element and season of air, the astrological house of the Golden Barque of the Heavens

Sobriquets: Heaven's Messengers, Harbingers

Concepts: Bronze Faction messenger, obsessive explorer, ship's navigator, Lunar sympathizer, wandering troublemaker, the Sidereal with No Name, merchant prince, reformed bandit

*As the stars quiver, blown
across the heavens by the
winds of fate, so too does my
heart quail to see you, censor.*

Chosen of Serenity

Life is pleasure. It consists of an endless series of moments that bring joy and happiness. The birth of a child, the taking of a lover, the thriving of a community, the death of an enemy. These moments shape who we are and serve as landmarks on the path to our destiny. The Primordials created the Maiden of Serenity to oversee this aspect of life and fate. All that concerns joy, dreams and pleasure are hers to give.



Now, it falls to the Chosen of Serenity to oversee the continued health and happiness of Creation.

In the First Age, the Chosen of Serenity were charged with maintaining the health and well-being of Creation's mortal populace. With their guidance, every family was fed and clothed, given shelter and entertainment and kept healthy and fertile. When it came time to dispose of the corrupt Solars, it was the Chosen of Serenity who planned the banquet at which the fallen champions of the Unconquered Sun were betrayed and ambushed. Drunk and distracted by the Sidereal's entertainments, the Solars were easily struck down without warning by Dragon-Blooded assassins.

In the wake of the Great Contagion, the Chosen of Serenity were given the task of returning some measure of joy and prosperity to the world. They oversaw the reestablishment of farms and herds, the rebuilding of towns and cities and the recovery of the mortal population in the wake of disease and war. The Chosen of Serenity also oversaw the reestablishment of the slave and drug trades, the building of brothels and gladiatorial arenas and the growing prosperity of the wealthy and decadent.

Among the Bronze Faction, the Chosen of Serenity see to the health and prosperity of the Realm and its tributary states. They work to ensure the continuing fertility of fields and herds and use food and entertainment to undercut any potential peasant rebellions. In addition, the Chosen of Serenity act as matchmakers and marriage brokers among the Great Houses of the Scarlet Dynasty. Such efforts ensure that Dynastic marriages will continue to produce useful political alliances and well-bred Dragon-Blooded offspring. The Bronze Faction Joybringers' duties also include managing the endless number of public ceremonies and rituals performed by the Immaculate Order. Gold Faction Chosen of Serenity carry out similar functions — recruiting Solars, arranging unions between important Threshold families and serving as priests within the Cult of the Illuminated and local fertility cults. Independent Chosen of Serenity undertake such duties as well, but

a growing number have abandoned the caste's traditional undertakings in favor of the vice trade.

The Chosen of Serenity are always born among those who work to bring joy and pleasure to others. While many are born to toymakers, traveling performers and merchant caravans, others draw their first breaths in whorehouses, drug dens and the slave dwellings of the Dynasty. Many Chosen of Serenity continue to find themselves most comfortable in surroundings similar to those in which they were raised.

Caste Markings: The eyes of every Chosen of Serenity have blue irises, and their pupils appear to be filled with minute blue flecks, causing them to resemble a star-filled night sky. During powerful expenditures of Peripheral Essence, the Sign of Serenity appears upon the Chosen's forehead, formed of bright blue light.

Anima Effect: The Chosen of the Maiden of Serenity can make the Lesser Sign of Venus at a cost of 10 motes. This sign causes the Chosen's anima to extend out as a brilliant blue aura that laps around all those under the anima's effect. For the rest of the scene, add a number of successes equal to the Sidereal's Essence to any Performance rolls made for the Cho-

sen of Serenity and all of her allies within (the Sidereal's Essence x 10) yards. The effect of the anima dissipates if a recipient moves out of range of the Exalt employing it.

Auspicious Abilities: Chosen of Serenity are influenced by those celestial constellations that serve as part of the Cerulean Lute of Harmony. They are the Ewer, the Lovers, the Musician, the Peacock and the Pillar, and they grant the Chosen of Serenity a natural affinity for the Abilities of Craft, Dodge, Linguistics, Performance and Socialize.

Common Natures: Architect, Bureaucrat, Caregiver, Conniver, Hedonist, Jester, Leader, Paragon, Savant, Visionary

Associations: The color blue, the element and season of wood, the astrological house of the Cerulean Lute of Harmony

Sobriquets: Heaven's Courtesans, Joybringers

Concepts: The world's greatest actress, apprentice artificer, the queen of whores, instructor at a Dragon-Blooded academy, professional matchmaker, priestess of a fertility cult, slave trader, king's favored vizier

If you think we're not very influential, look around at all the objects around you just lying there. That's all us.

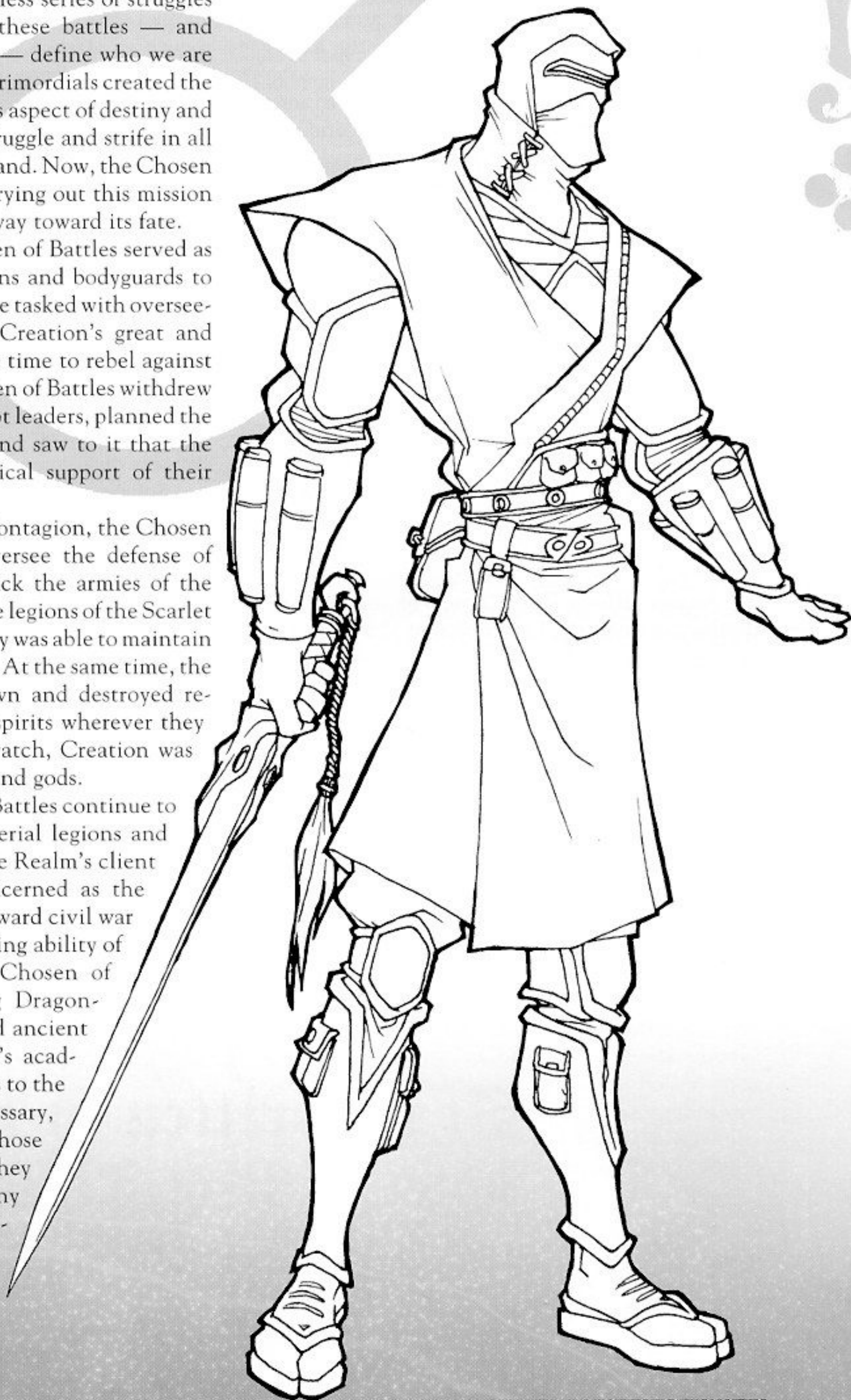
Chosen of Battles

Life is a battle. It is an endless series of struggles and conflicts. How we fight these battles — and whether we win or lose them — define who we are and what our fate is to be. The Primordials created the Maiden of Battles to govern this aspect of destiny and existence. All that concerns struggle and strife in all their forms fall under her command. Now, the Chosen of Battles are charged with carrying out this mission and to help Creation fight its way toward its fate.

In the First Age, the Chosen of Battles served as military advisors, shield maidens and bodyguards to the Solars. In addition, they were tasked with overseeing the logistics and care of Creation's great and powerful armies. When it came time to rebel against the Solars' command, the Chosen of Battles withdrew their protection from the corrupt leaders, planned the Dragon-Blooded's campaigns and saw to it that the Solars were denied the logistical support of their world-spanning empire.

In the wake of the Great Contagion, the Chosen of Battles were ordered to oversee the defense of Creation and to help drive back the armies of the Wyld. Under their guidance, the legions of the Scarlet Empire grew strong, and Lookshy was able to maintain its arsenal of First Age weapons. At the same time, the Chosen of Battles hunted down and destroyed remaining Fair Folk and plague spirits wherever they could be found. Under their watch, Creation was once again made safe for men and gods.

Bronze Faction Chosen of Battles continue to oversee and maintain the imperial legions and navy, as well as the forces of the Realm's client states. Many have grown concerned as the Dynastic rivalries that spiral toward civil war threaten the strength and fighting ability of the imperial legions. Other Chosen of Battles work to teach young Dragon-Blooded martial disciplines and ancient war arts as part of the Realm's academies, serve as military advisors to the Great Houses and, when necessary, act as secret bodyguards to those Dragon-Blooded and patricians they see as vital to the military destiny of the Realm. Gold Faction Chosen of Battles carry out similar missions outside the Realm. They manage the armies of the



Threshold and the Scavenger Lands, teach martial arts and other fighting skills to young Solars and advise kings and merchant princes in matters of conflict. Independent Chosen of Battles frequently focus their efforts toward defending Creation against the threats of the Yozis and the Deathlords. They work behind the scenes to create private armies and to engineer conflicts that hurt or hinder the forces of chaos and death.

The Chosen of Battles are always born among those destined to be familiar with conflict and battle. Many are reborn among career military families, warrior cultures or monasteries that teach the martial arts. Others grow up among famous weaponsmiths, military historians or even families accustomed to social and political conflict. The Chosen of Battles find themselves most comfortable among such settings, and those that establish semipermanent homes often seek out places that will keep their battle skills well honed.

Caste Markings: The eyes of every Chosen of Battles have scarlet irises, and their pupils appear to be filled with minute scarlet flecks, causing them to resemble a star-filled night sky. During powerful expenditures of Peripheral Essence, the Sign of Battles appears upon the Chosen's forehead, formed of bright scarlet light.

Anima Effect: The Chosen of the Maiden of Battles can make the Lesser Sign of Mars at a cost of

10 motes. This sign causes the Chosen's anima to extend out as a brilliant scarlet aura that laps around all those under the anima's effect. For the rest of the scene, the Chosen of Battles and all of her allies within (the Sidereal's Essence x 10) yards reduce the damage of all blows against them by one health level, applied after the damage is rolled. This effect cannot reduce an attack's damage below one. The effect of the anima dissipates if a recipient moves out of range of the Exalt employing it.

Auspicious Abilities: Chosen of Battles are influenced by those celestial constellations that serve under the Crimson Panoply of Victory. They are the Banner, the Gauntlet, the Quiver, the Shield and the Spear, and they grant the Chosen of Battles a natural affinity for the Abilities of Archery, Brawl, Melee, Presence and Resistance.

Common Natures: Architect, Bravo, Bureaucrat, Conniver, Leader, Martyr, Paragon, Savant, Survivor, Visionary

Associations: The color scarlet, the element and season of fire, the astrological house of the Crimson Panoply of Victory

Sobriquets: Heaven's Soldiers, Shieldbearers

Concepts: Master strategist, staff officer of mercenary company, Immaculate martial-arts sifu, behind-the-scenes revolutionary, demon-hunter, enforcer of Heaven's will, patrician financier of legions

**It is written in the
book of life: This is
a battle you shall
not survive.**

Chosen of Secrets

Life is a mystery. A person may spend his entire existence trying to unlock the secrets and mysteries of life. The answer to this mystery lies ultimately in ones

destiny and how one attains it. The Primordials created the Maiden of Secrets to watch over this most elusive facet of fate and Creation. All that which is hidden and guarded over are hers to know and to influence. Now, this stewardship falls to the Chosen of Secrets, who must uncover and keep safe the most dangerous and the most mundane of mysteries as they carry out the secret dictates of fate.

In the First Age, the Chosen of Secrets were given the twin tasks of overseeing the great libraries of the Solar Empire and of managing the Bureau of Magistrates who investigated crime and treason. Under the Chosen of Secrets, the lore of all Creation was carefully collected and cataloged, while all secret deeds were uncovered and punished. It was the Cho-

sen of Secrets who orchestrated the overthrow of the Solars, and it was they who cloaked their fellow conspirators from discovery. When the surviving Solars fled, it was the Chosen of Secrets who uncovered their secret lairs, and when the last of the Solars had fallen, it was the Chosen of Secrets who used their secret magics to chain the Solars' Exalted souls.

In the wake of the Great Contagion, the Chosen of Secrets worked to gather and preserve all that they could of the wisdom and lore of the First Age. Once collected, these secrets were carefully doled out to those whose power and success would best benefit the Chosen of Fate and their plans for the world. In addition, the Chosen of Secrets uncovered the last vestiges of the Fair Folk's once powerful armies and of the Great Contagion and saw to it that this information found its way into the hands of those Dragon-Blooded and Lunars best able to destroy them.

The Bronze Faction Chosen of Secrets act as the leaders of that sect. They oversee the development of the Realm and attempt to guide it toward the fate



they prophesied during the First Age. To further this goal, the Chosen of Secrets act as advisors to the Great Houses of the Scarlet Dynasty, oversee the instruction of future generations of Dragon-Blooded and act as the secret masters of the All-Seeing Eye. Gold Faction Chosen of Secrets are the least numerous caste within that faction. Those that follow the Gold Faction are the most involved in attempting to sway Bronze Faction and independent Sidereals to their side. They are also the most successful at locating and mentoring young Solars and guiding the champions of the Unconquered Sun toward a destiny the Gold Faction finds pleasing. Independent Chosen of Secrets are the most mysterious of their ilk. They undertake schemes that are complex even by Sidereal standards, and some are even believed to deal with the Deathlords and the Yozis in order to advance their arcane agendas.

The Chosen of Secrets are always born among those steeped in secrets and hidden lore. They are born to the families of librarians, historians and heretics, as well as those of crime lords, spy masters and witches. As secretive as they are, the Chosen of Secrets rarely seek to dwell among mortals. Instead, they are often more comfortable in private libraries and Manses, as well as among the halls of Yu-Shan.

Caste Markings: The eyes of every Chosen of Secrets have green irises, and their pupils appear to be filled with minute green flecks, causing them to resemble a star-filled night sky. During powerful expenditures of Peripheral Essence, the Sign of Se-

crets appears upon the Chosen's forehead, formed of bright green light.

Anima Effect: The Chosen of the Maiden of Secrets can make the Lesser Sign of Jupiter at a cost of 10 motes. This sign causes the Chosen's anima to extend out as a brilliant green aura that laps around all those under the anima's effect. For the rest of the scene, the Chosen of Secrets and all of her allies within (the Sidereal's Essence x 10) yards cannot be subjected to magical mind control or have their thoughts read. The effect of the anima dissipates if a recipient moves out of range of the Exalt employing it.

Auspicious Abilities: Chosen of Secrets are influenced by those celestial constellations that serve as part of the Forbidding Manse of Ivy. They are the Guardians, the Key, the Mask, the Sorcerer and the Treasure Trove, and they grant the Chosen of Secrets a natural affinity for the Abilities of Investigation, Larceny, Lore, Occult and Stealth.

Common Natures: Architect, Bureaucrat, Con- niver, Critic, Explorer, Judge, Paragon, Savant, Survivor, Visionary

Associations: The color green, the element and season of water, the astrological house of the Forbid- ding Manse of Ivy

Sobriquets: Heaven's Eyes, Oracles

Concepts: Deep-cover agent of the Gold Faction, director of a Wyld Hunt, demon-hunter, the most devious crime lord in all Creation, spy master of the All-Seeing Eye, power behind several thrones, Realm historian, mentor to newly Exalted Solar

*You can know all
the answers and
still ask why.*

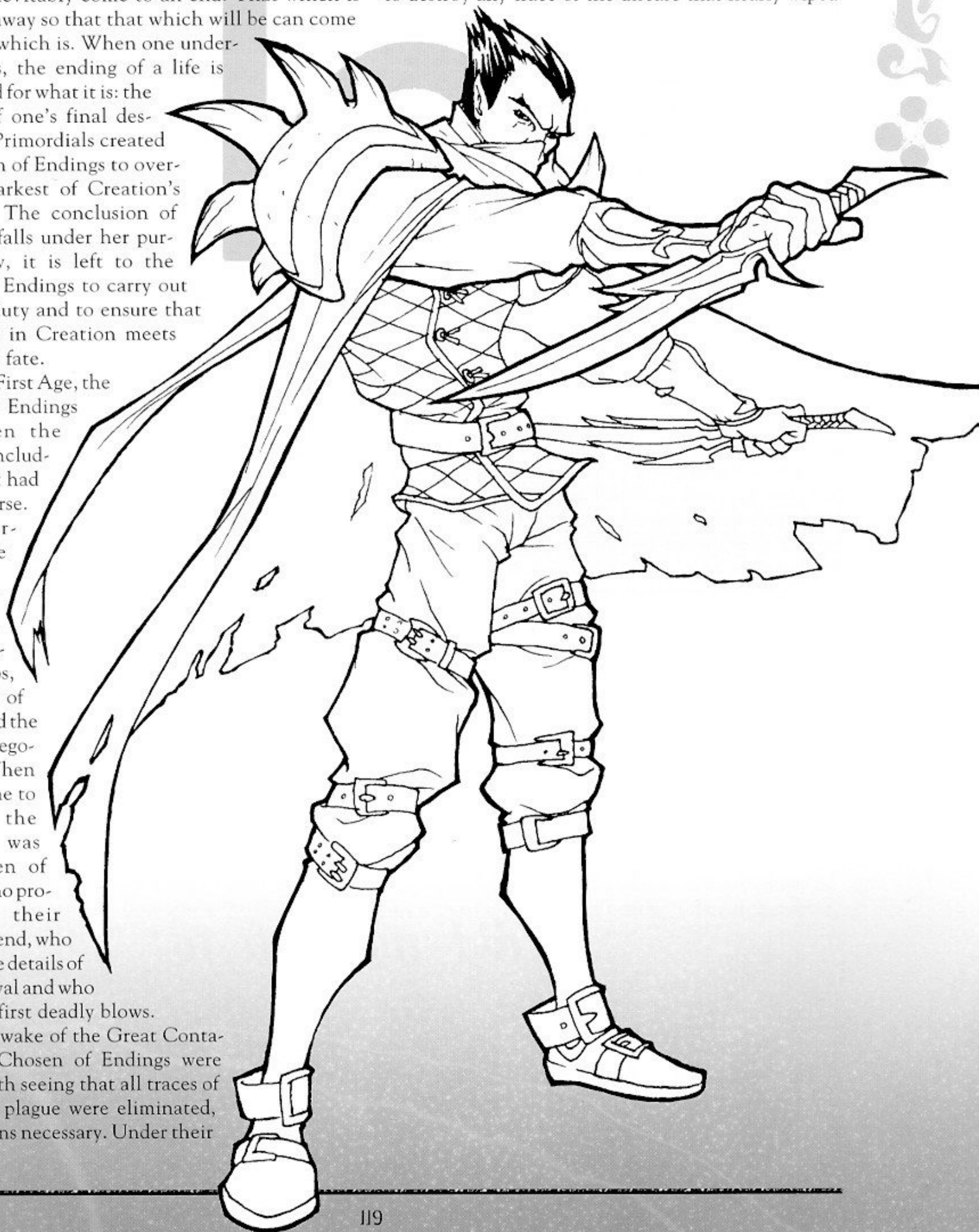
Chosen of Endings

Life is a series of endings. All things are fleeting and will inevitably come to an end. That which is must pass away so that that which will be can come to be that which is. When one understands this, the ending of a life is understood for what it is: the meeting of one's final destiny. The Primordials created the Maiden of Endings to oversee this darkest of Creation's functions. The conclusion of all things falls under her purview. Now, it is left to the Chosen of Endings to carry out this grim duty and to ensure that everything in Creation meets its allotted fate.

In the First Age, the Chosen of Endings were given the task of concluding all that had run its course. They oversaw the arrangements of funerals, the harvesting of crops, the ending of sickness and the closing of negotiations. When it came time to murder the Solars, it was the Chosen of Endings who pronounced their reign at an end, who planned the details of their betrayal and who struck the first deadly blows.

In the wake of the Great Contagion, the Chosen of Endings were charged with seeing that all traces of the deadly plague were eliminated, by any means necessary. Under their

direction, entire cities were put to the torch in order to destroy any trace of the disease that nearly wiped



out all life in Creation. In addition, the Chosen of Endings were tasked with ending any threat posed by the remaining Fair Folk. With lethal precision, every one of the foul creatures whose location could be divined was tracked down and destroyed or else driven back into the Wyld.

Few Chosen of Endings are members of the Bronze Faction. Most feel that the prophecy that drives the Bronze Faction has long since run its course and that the time has come for that sect to cease its activities. Those handful who remain among the Bronze Faction frequently oversee the funeral rites of the Immaculate Order and work with the Chosen of Secrets to ensure smooth transitions of power from one Dragon-Blooded potentate to the next. Gold Faction Chosen of Endings focus much of their attentions on bringing about the end of the Bronze Faction and even the end of the Scarlet Empire itself. Such Chosen of Endings prefer the tactics of debate and negotiation when dealing with fellow Sidereals but will go to any lengths when confronted with mortals and Dragon-Blooded. Political scandals, armed rebellion, assassinations and Solar catspaws are only the most visible of tactics employed to advance the agenda of the Gold Faction. Independent Chosen of Endings use similar methods in pursuit of their own goals. Many independents believe that the time for both factions has come to an end and that the sooner they can bring about that ending, the sooner the Chosen of Fate can begin working to confront the new perils that threaten Creation.

The Chosen of Endings are always born among those who are destined to develop an understanding of natural cycles and of the inevitable nature of change and death. Many are the offspring of healers, funerary priests and farmers. Others grow up among the worst of city slums or even within barbarian tribes, where one quickly learns how cheep life can be and how quickly death can come. Ironically, this understanding makes the Chosen of Endings the most likely Sidereals to dwell among mortals. Their innate under-

standing of the temporary nature of life makes them more able to accept and cope with the inevitable death of friends and loved ones.

Caste Markings: The eyes of every Chosen of Endings have violet irises, and their pupils appear to be filled with minute violet flecks, causing them to resemble a star-filled night sky. During powerful expenditures of Peripheral Essence, the Sign of Endings appears upon the Chosen's forehead, formed of bright violet light.

Anima Effect: The Chosen of the Maiden of Endings can make the Lesser Sign of Saturn at a cost of 10 motes. This sign causes the Chosen's anima to extend out as a brilliant violet aura that laps around all those under the anima's effect. For the rest of the scene, any blows that the Chosen of Endings and all of her allies within (the Sidereal's Essence x 10) yards strike are increased in damage by one health level, applied after damage is rolled. This effect cannot increase the damage of an attack that generates no damage successes. The effect of the anima dissipates if a recipient moves out of range of the Exalt employing it.

Auspicious Abilities: Chosen of Endings are influenced by those celestial constellations that serve under the Violet Bier of Sorrows. They are the Corpse, the Crow, the Haywain, the Rising Smoke and the Sword, and they grant the Chosen of Endings a natural affinity for the Abilities of Athletics, Awareness, Bureaucracy, Martial Arts and Medicine.

Common Natures: Architect, Bureaucrat, Caregiver, Conniver, Critic, Judge, Martyr, Paragon, Savant, Visionary

Associations: The color violet, the element of earth and season of autumn, the astrological house of the Violet Bier of Sorrows

Sobriquets: Heaven's Gardeners, Reckoners

Concepts: Ender of plagues, destroyer of financial empires, Sijanese funeral master, character assassin, peacemaker, professional poisoner, anti-imperial revolutionary, harbinger of doom

*I did not ask to
be what I am,
but no one
does, do they?*

SIDEREAL ANIMA BANNERS

Motes of

Peripheral Essence

Effect

1-3	The character's Caste Mark glitters and is visible from certain angles. Make a Perception + Awareness roll at difficulty 3 for anyone seeing the Exalt to notice the Caste Mark. The character can use the Stealth Ability normally and may still hide behind Stealth Charms and other concealing magic without fear of detection. This effect can persist for as long as an hour after the character has ceased to burn Essence.
4-7	The character's Caste Mark burns and may be seen by the alert. If the Caste Mark is not covered, make a reflexive Perception + Awareness roll at difficulty 1 for anyone seeing the Sidereal to spot it. If the Caste Mark is covered, it is invisible. A character may use the Stealth Ability and Stealth Charms normally. +1 difficulty to Sidereal astrology effect rolls, • Paradox if the character has donned a resplendent destiny.
8-10	The character's Caste Mark burns clearly. If it is uncovered, anyone seeing the Sidereal will recognize him. The Sidereal's aura discharges somewhat, and in dim light or darkness, the Exalt is at +2 difficulty to Stealth rolls, but Stealth Charms continue to work normally. +2 difficulty to Sidereal astrology effect rolls. If the character has donned a resplendent destiny, ••• Paradox, and the destiny recedes.
11-15	The character is illuminated by a soft but unmistakable halo in the color of his patron maiden. The character's Caste Mark automatically shines through any covering. Stealth is impossible, and Stealth-oriented Charms and Colleges automatically fail. +2 difficulty to Sidereal astrology effect rolls. If the character has donned a resplendent destiny, ••• Paradox, and the destiny recedes.
16+	The character is surrounded by a burning halo, bright enough to read by out to a stonecast away. It has no detail and is simply a brilliant glow in the color of the character's patron Maiden. This effect does not fade the next turn as other animas do, but remains this bright until the end of the scene. Stealth is impossible, and all Stealth Charms and Colleges automatically fail. +3 difficulty to Sidereal astrology effect rolls. If the character has donned a resplendent destiny, ••• Paradox, and the destiny recedes.



RULES AND SORCERY

ARCANE FATE

Since the Usurpation, the Sidereals have worked to hide themselves and their manipulations of the world's destiny from the eyes of others. So great, in fact, were their early efforts that the Chosen of Fate have forever twisted that aspect of their own destinies. They can no longer be recognized or remembered by mortals, and even some Exalted have difficulty remembering details of their encounters with the Sidereals. Those who meet one of the Sidereal Exalted typically accept her as whatever role she has taken on, and she will seldom be recalled once she has departed.

As a result of this arcane effect, all Sidereals gain an additional +3 dice to all Performance, Presence, Socialize or Larceny dice pools used to masquerade as something they are not, so long as they do not attempt to impersonate a specific person. A character would easily be accepted if she presented herself as a

Guild merchant, a minor nobleman or an Immaculate monk but could not pass herself off as the Roseblack. In addition, the character has a much easier time altering her appearance considerably through disguise, and the difficulty of the Intelligence + Larceny roll involved is always 1, even if the character is attempting to appear to be someone of a different gender, age or build. These bonuses don't apply to Sidereals attempting to disguise themselves as someone who actually exists.

In addition, mortals suffer a -3 dice penalty on any rolls to spot or remember the Sidereal character. However, there is a downside. The Sidereal suffers a -3 dice penalty on any rolls to build relationships, trust or love with those around her. Only long familiarity (represented by the Acquaintances Background below) allows her to make a lasting mark on the heart of others.

Finally, the character also gains +3 dice on attempts to disguise herself as a resplendent destiny she has donned. Resplendent destinies are a limited means

by which characters can bypass the Arcane Fate and don a memorable identity. For more information on resplendent destinies and their effects, see pages 215-218 of this book.

MECHANICS

Individuals, even high-Essence beings, who meet a Sidereal have a hard time remembering her. There are few exceptions. The character's Familiars and Acquaintances, fellow Sidereals, most other members of the Bureau of Destiny and beings outside of fate are immune. However, mortals, Exalts, Fair Folk, Terrestrial gods and even Celestial gods all forget. Individuals above Essence 3 will tend to remember the character a little, but only as "an agent of destiny" or "some Sidereal."

The way that this is represented in the game is by making the players of individuals who have met the Sidereal make a Wits + Occult roll, difficulty 1, at certain intervals after the Sidereal leaves their characters' presence, to see if they can keep a grasp on their memory of the Exalt. The roll to remember the Exalt is made at -3 dice. The intervals at which a roll must be made are one turn, one minute, one hour, one day, one week, one month, one season and one year. After one year, the player need only roll annually for his character to retain memory of the Sidereal. This applies to anyone told about the Exalt as well, and written accounts, diaries and so on will lose themselves just as quickly.

Leaving the character's presence does not mean leaving the character's sight. For example, alerted guards in a fortress will continue to patrol for the character, although it's unlikely any of them have a good description of her. However, within a few days of the intrusion, matters will have gone back to normal, the reports will be filed and, soon after, lost or destroyed, and the matter will have faded from the inhabitants' collective memory. Investigation and Bureaucracy rolls to learn about the character and Survival rolls to track the character all suffer -3 dice, and efforts to track the character will probably be hindered by collective amnesia.

The Arcane Fate and resplendent destinies interact well. The character will don some resplendent destiny and will be remembered as that destiny — only those immune to the Arcane Fate will see the Sidereal as herself. This allows a Sidereal to establish temporary identities that last until the resplendent destiny is cancelled or exhausted. Once the resplendent destiny is cancelled, expires or has its effect points exhausted, those who knew it must roll to remember it at the appropriate intervals, as if the

Sidereal had left their presence when the destiny passed out of existence.

SPELLS

The Sidereals have access to many spells, and any Sidereal on good terms with his faction should probably have access to any of the Terrestrial and Celestial spells from *Exalted* and *The Book of Three Circles* that the Storyteller is willing to allow in play. In addition, the Sidereals have a number of spells that are their especial preserve. One, Open the Spirit Door, is a generally useful spell for spirit congress that originally appeared in *Games of Divinity*. The other two, Gift of Knowledge and Summoning the Heavenly Portal, are secrets known only to the Sidereals in this current Age.

TERRESTRIAL CIRCLE SORCERY

OPEN THE SPIRIT DOOR

Cost: 15 motes + 5 motes per additional target

This spell allows the caster and anyone she cares to bring with her to physically enter the sanctum of any spirit with an Essence that is equal to or lower than the caster's. The caster can also use this spell to enter the sanctums of more powerful spirits, but only with the owner's permission. This spell does allow the caster to dematerialize, it can only be used to enter a small god's sanctum, and the caster rematerializes when he leaves the sanctum. To cast this spell the caster and everyone she is bringing along with her must be within three yards of one of the sanctum's entrance. To locate a sanctum, the caster can either ask a spirit, use the Spirit Detecting Glance Charm or perform a complex divination. This divination requires several hours and a Perception + Occult roll of difficulty 3. If the sorcerer's player succeeds in this roll, the Exalt has located all sanctum entrances within a 100-yard radius.

Once the entrance has been found, the caster and her companions need only stand before it and cast the spell. In the next instant, they all find themselves on the threshold of the sanctum. For the duration of this spell, everyone under its influence can interact physically with the sanctum and all of its inhabitants and furnishings. This spell lasts until the sun next crosses the horizon. If the caster wishes to leave the sanctum before the duration of the spell is up, she can simply cast the spell again, and she and everyone she brings with her will find themselves back in the mortal world. Regardless of how the caster and her companions leave the sanctum, they always find themselves back in the exact place where the spell was first cast. While a number of clever Exalted have used this spell

as a method of hiding from mundane pursuit, it cannot be used to intangibly move through space.

Anyone using this spell can carry items and furnishings out of the sanctum so long as she can pick them up and carry them. Spirits generally strongly object to having their sanctums invaded by greedy or aggressive Exalted. Anyone who is known to make a habit of attacking the sanctums of small gods will eventually have to deal with the wrath of more powerful spirits who object to their underlings being harmed or robbed. This spell can also be used to gain entrance to the Celestial City of Yu-Shan, but anyone attempting to enter Yu-Shan in this fashion must also talk their way past the celestial lions who guard it. See pages 18-19 for information on entering Yu-Shan.

CELESTIAL CIRCLE SORCERY

GIFT OF KNOWLEDGE

Cost: 25 motes

This spell allows the sorcerer to directly transfer knowledge of a particular subject or skill to another individual.

The spell requires an hour-long ritual. The sorcerer and the subject of the spell must be in physical contact. They both enter a deep meditative trance, and knowledge flows from the sorcerer to the subject. This spell can impart a particular memory or experience to the subject or understanding of a particular Trait, including Abilities, specialties, spells or Charms. It does not work on Essence. The spell obviates the need for training time for the Sidereal to learn the subject or improve the Trait, so long as the caster's rating in that Trait is greater than the subject's.

The subject must still have sufficient experience to improve the Trait's rating and can only improve a Trait by one dot per casting of this spell, as the subject must still integrate the acquired knowledge. However, multiple castings can allow a subject to increase a Trait in hours rather than weeks or months. Gift of Knowledge does not grant subjects the ability to learn Traits they cannot normally acquire, so it cannot teach a mortal to use Exalted Charms, for example, or teach a spell to a character who cannot cast it.

SUMMONING THE HEAVENLY PORTAL

Cost: 35 motes

As the personal servants and messengers of the Five Maidens, the Sidereal Exalted were given knowledge of how to actually summon the Calibration Gate. To cast Summoning the Heavenly Portal, the Exalt must meditate and pray for five minutes. At the end of this time, the caster's player rolls the character's Essence + Occult. On a failure, some other Celestial Exalted used this spell recently, and the gate was not

available. However, if the caster rolls even a single success, the gateway appears within arms reach. The gateway normally stays until the next dawn, and it may not be summoned by another Exalt for half an hour after the caster summoned it.

This spell is available to any Sidereal who wishes to learn it, and all of them know of its existence. So far, no member of the Gold Faction has taught this spell to any of the Solar Exalted they are mentoring. Almost no Solars even know that this spell exists. Even the members of the Gold Faction fear what might happen if the Solars could travel as easily as they do. However, all Sidereals know that it is only a matter of time before some Solar Exalt learns this spell. A handful of Lunar Exalted of the No Moon Caste know this spell, but they guard it jealously and will only give it to other Lunars who they consider truly worthy. Although they are normally capable of learning Celestial Circle Sorcery, Abyssal Exalted are incapable of casting this spell. Their nature is too antithetical to Heaven's for them to possess any ability to command it.

Also, this spell can only be cast in Creation and can only be used to call the gateway to the caster. A Sidereal can use this spell to gain access to Yu-Shan in less than 10 minutes. However, once in Yu-Shan, the caster cannot move this gateway. Instead, an Exalt desiring to move rapidly from one portion of Creation to another must summon this gateway, enter Yu-Shan and then leave it via another gateway near her destination.

SPECIALIZED PRAYERS

These prayer techniques were once more generally known and practiced, but they are largely limited to the Sidereal Exalted in the current Age, though certain elder Lunars and Immaculate monastic societies also practice them.

- **Prayer of the Chosen:** This type of prayer is used by a *single* Exalted and is directed to one god. The preparations for the actual prayer are simple but can be tedious and difficult to schedule. The Sidereal Exalted must fast for five days (one day for each Maiden) while *personally* creating one candle made from Quintessence, one from the fat of a deceased mortal and one from any type of material that can be infused with the Exalted's own Essence. Forging the candles requires normal Craft rolls or Charms, but the character must infuse the third candle with 10 motes of Essence, which then become committed until after the prayer is over.

On the sixth day, the Exalt enters an empty chamber without windows or furniture and places the candles in front of him. As he lights the

Quintessence candle, the Sidereal says in a loud voice: *Heavenly Essence Eternal, Burning Honorably in His (or Her) Favor.*

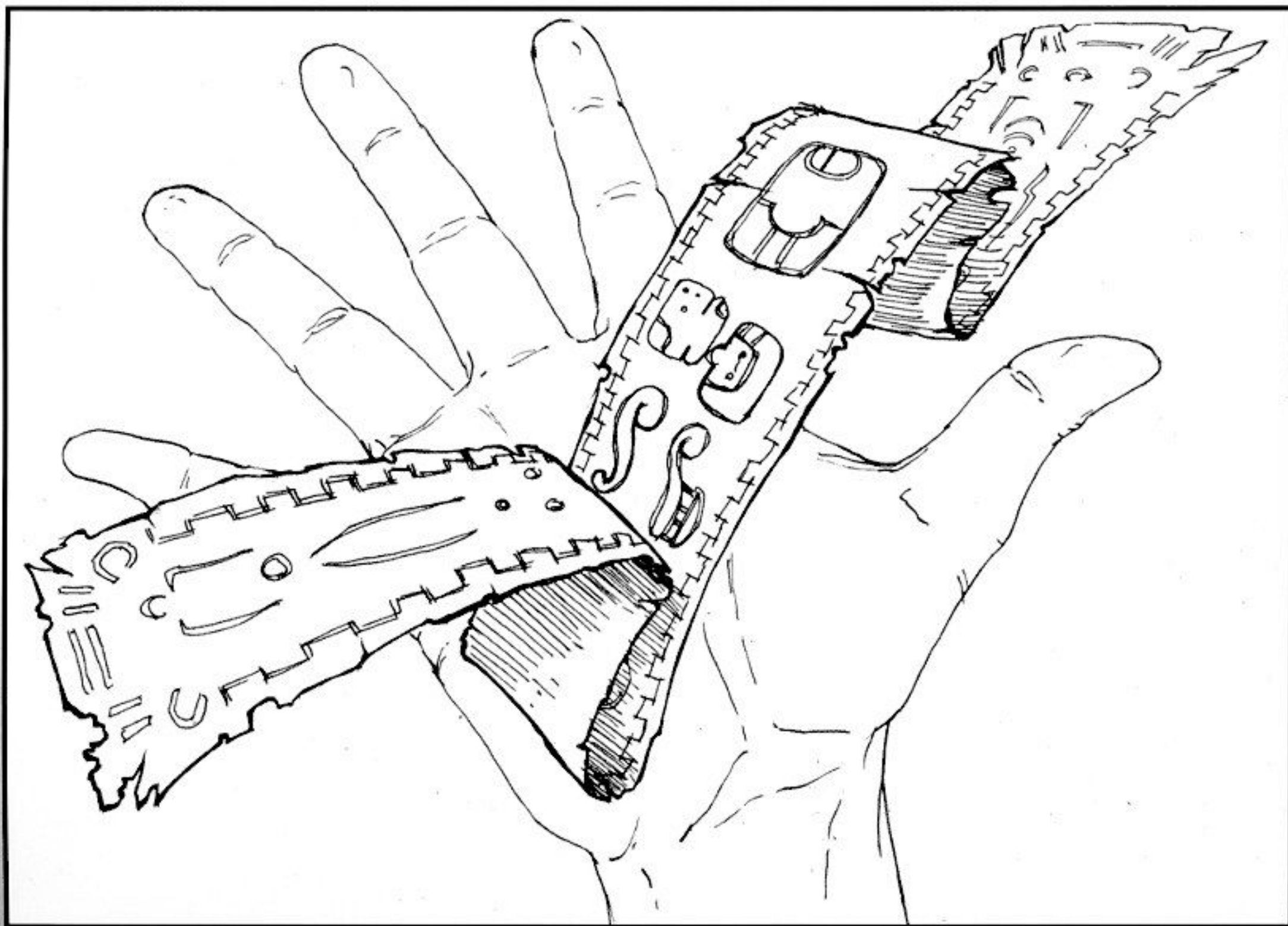
The second candle, made from the mortal's fat, symbolizes Creation and the god's domain, and the human's weak voice is portrayed through a whispering: *Creation Burns in His (or Her) Honor.*

The third candle, which is infused with the Sidereal's own Essence symbolizes that, although he is superior to the god in many ways, the Chosen too prays in the god's honor. As the flames burn, the Exalt must recite the god's name, his own name and the reason *why* he prays to the god. The ritual takes no longer than four hours to perform. Roll the character's Charisma + Performance (specializations on prayer add to dice pool as normal), difficulty 1. Each success on the roll beyond the first supplies the god with an amount of Quintessence proportional to the number of successes rolled. In general, an Exalt must roll twice as many successes as the god's Essence to impress a deity.

Characters cannot offer physical sacrifices to better their chances of successes with this prayer nor does the character's priestly status modify the difficulty of the roll (see *Exalted*, pp. 335-336). All Sidereals with a total of two or more dots in Occult and Savant know this prayer.

If the Sidereal Exalted praying has a permanent Essence rating of 5 or more, the player may chose to make a Charisma + Essence roll, difficulty 5. Success on the roll supplies the god with a block of Ambrosia (instead of Quintessence), but the character loses 15 motes of Personal Essence (which is regained normally). Normally, an Exalt only needs to exceed the deity's Essence in successes to impress her with an offering of Ambrosia.

Note that bribing gods is a crime and that, while normal mortal prayers (as outlined on pp. 335-336 of the *Exalted* book) may go unnoticed, especially efficacious prayers such as this one will most certainly be noticed and their arrival in Heaven recorded. While most such bribes go without comment, even during periodic audits, characters with powerful political enemies or who make a habit of offending censors may find themselves charged with a Severity 2 offense for each such prayer. Severity depends on the Essence of the god bribed and the degree to which the god deviated from the norms of her office to answer the prayer. The god in question will generally be charged with a Severity 1 crime if she did not answer the prayer (failing to report a bribe is also a crime) or a Severity 2 offense if she did answer the prayer. See



page 36 of Chapter One for more information on audits and Severity ratings.

- **Essence Prayer:** This type of prayer is extremely uncommon in the current Age as it requires a character with Lore 5 and Occult 5 and a specialization in prayers or Yu-Shan to know the intricacies of the ritual involved. Any group with four or more creatures or beings with an Essence rating of 4 or higher may perform a group prayer directed to a single deity. Performing this extended prayer ritual requires the expenditure of Essence. For every 10 motes of Essence invested by the group (and each character must invest at least that amount of motes), the final dice pool for the prayer increases by one die. The number of days that must be dedicated to the ritualistic prayer equals the total number of dice in the pool. The Essence is committed during the ritual, and because the effect is such a powerful ritual, it is also considered committed for 24 hours after the ritual ends.

The player of the participating character with the highest combined score of Charisma + Performance makes a roll at difficulty 8. The difficulty is decreased by the Resources value of any physical sacrifices offered and reduced by 1 if the offering character is a priest (as per prayers on pp. 335-336).

The prayer is something that you should either ask the players to write or simply narrate. They'll probably want to do this anyway to get stunt bonuses. If the roll is successful, it means that the dancing and recitation of the prayer was done in a proper manner. Roll a number of dice equal to (the amount of Essence spent by the participants ÷ 10), as noted above.

Roll the dice pool against an *unmodified* target number (7). Each success on the roll provides the god with a block of Ambrosia, and the god becomes immediately aware of who bestowed him with such wealth and honor through the ancient ritual. Each success on the roll also creates a pool of extra dice

that the characters' players can use in Social rolls affecting the god. While the dice remain until someone in the group has used them, the dice pool is *not* cumulative. Further rituals do not create any more dice until the first pool is exhausted. It is possible to maintain separate dice pools that affect different gods. Once the dice are used, the characters can attempt to create a new pool through another Essence Prayer.

No successes on the Essence dice pool roll means that although the ritual was done properly, it wasn't strong enough to generate Ambrosia. Botches on the roll makes the Essence the characters spent committed for as many days as there were dice in the pool. Also, if the ritual continues for more than four days, the players must also roll their characters' Stamina + Endurance, difficulty 3, to check if the characters manage the physical strain involved or if fatigue overcomes them. Charms that negate fatigue can be used to avoid (or ease) this roll, and performing it under difficult conditions will increase the difficulty. The roll must be made once per day each day after the fourth.

Legal wrangling by the Exalted in the First Age made this prayer legal. In theory, gods and Exalted cannot be audited for offering this prayer or taking action due to such a prayer. In reality, an offended censor will simply find something else to charge the characters with, as the Celestial Bureaucracy looks poorly on gods who are puppets of the Exalted. However, in general, even falsified charges will never exceed Severity 1 when directly relating to corruption engendered by this prayer technique. Note that only the prayer is protected. A god who slays another god at the behest of the Chosen would still be guilty of a high-Severity offense but could not be charged with accepting a bribe, nor could the Exalted be charged with bribing the god or with inciting the god to murder.





Samed the merchant was a seller of goods, dry and otherwise, in the Cinnabar District. He'd inherited his shop from his father. Samed had worked there for 27 years before he'd inherited it and for 17 years since then. Even though he spent most of his days here behind the counter or rocking on his upstairs porch while his daughter watched the till, Samed knew everybody in the neighborhood. He knew the faces of everyone, from the littlest children to the maids and servants of all the families — even some of the important men and madams, stopping by to pick up something for themselves or even to help the servants out, if they were truly gentle. He knew all the household gossip and the news and the whispers about *who* was doing *what* with *whom*.

But of all the customers, the one that Samed liked the best was *that woman*. There was just something about her, something real, that made Samed the merchant talk to her every time she came to his shop. He never did learn exactly where she lived. He got the impression that it was somewhat farther up the hill, in one of the very good neighborhoods, and that her ventures to his shop were adventures of a sort.

She hardly ever came in when there was anyone else at the shop, and when there were others, her visits were just in-and-out affairs — some quinoa, some candied ginger, and then, she would be off.

It was nice that she always paid in silver. A lot of the rich folks liked to pay in jade, and that was inconvenient. Samed let them, but he had to run a tab, and it was nice the woman saved him that trouble.

It wasn't as if his interest in her was sexual. It wasn't even really personal — if wasn't as if she had ever told him anything meaningful about herself.

But she had the most wonderful stories. Oh, they were so fabulous, full of such wonderful images and such profound beauty. Samed could not remember exactly what was in the stories, but they were so engaging. It seemed sometimes to the merchant that he would listen to her for hours, sometimes even listening long after the sun had gone down and he had closed up the shop.

• • •

It was a tender mercy of fate that mortals bound to the Sidereal Exalted through the use of Breaking the Wild Mortal did not remember the moment when the Chosen placed the bridle of Essence and stardust in their mouths. Samed would never recall when the woman came to him and slipped the Charm around his soul.

May Blossom enjoyed the human contact her conversations with the grocer brought. His simple prejudices and predictable lusts made him an entertaining companion, she thought. He was someone beyond the grind of faction politics, an innocent she could narrate her adventures to. He was also an accessible acquaintance in Nexus. Now, with Bronze Faction muscle trailing her, the last thing she needed was to face a lengthy detention and interrogation.

It didn't take much fast-talking to get Samed to close the door and sit down in his chair. Then, May Blossom blocked his Essence with a carefully select series of pressure point strikes and tied him down. She gagged him, although she knew it wouldn't do any good. The moment when the prayer strip took root caused screaming that would overwhelm all but the solidest gags.

May Blossom fished out her pearl and ivory case. "I'm sorry it had to be like this, Samed. I had hoped we'd never have to do this. It's quite destructive to your psyche, I'm afraid."

The Exalt placed the prayer strip against Samed's forehead, and it burned with a white light. The merchant thrashed and convulsed in his bonds, and May Blossom deftly pulled the chair out the shop's front door and onto the sidewalk. The merchant alternated gulping air and howling, desperately straining against his bonds in an attempt to reach the burning prayer strip, as it stretched to cover Samed's forehead, the top of his head and his back. Blood streamed from the corners of his mouth.

"Yes," she said, nodding gravely, "I'm afraid it may even damage the soul."

And then, the howling became roaring, and Samed the merchant was transformed into a glittering gold-and-scarlet-scaled dragon, his back burning with the fire of the prayer strip. May Blossom rode the dragon over the roofs of Nexus, over the walls and away into the countryside. Those who saw her fly away resolved to take fewer drugs or swore they had seen a karmeus. They quickly forgot about it.

She left Samed a mumbling fool by a mountain stream, reflecting that perhaps fate would bring him luck and perhaps not. In time, his daughter came to convince herself her father had run off with *that woman*, a figure she could neither name nor describe. It was close enough to the truth.

Destiny was bigger than any merchant.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHARMS AND MARTIAL ARTS

Sidereal Exalted have a more restrictive rule concerning dice pool maximums than do the Solar Exalted. Sidereal Charms can only increase their dice pools by their permanent Essence, not double their Attribute + Ability. No combination of Charms can increase their base pool by more than their Essence. For this purpose, automatic successes do not count as increases to a dice pool, and Charms that give automatic successes stack with all other Charms. The guidelines for committed Essence are handled exactly the same for Sidereal Exalted as for Solars. Many Sidereal Charms have a duration limited only by the committed Essence. If the Charm does not specify when it ends, it lasts until the Exalt stops committing her Essence to it.

The only characters in the setting capable of designing new Sidereal Charms are the Maidens, and they created most of the Charms below when the Exalted warred against the enemies of the gods. The Storyteller can define additional Charms and assert that they already exist, and lost and secret Charms may be out there. Otherwise, for 24 of 25 Abilities, this list of Charms is complete.

Martial Arts is the exception. Although the Maiden of Endings created the Violet Bier of Sorrows Style for her children, supernatural martial arts rely more on the discipline and Essence of the student than the specific gifts of the gods. Accordingly, with the exception of the

special Sidereal-only effect for the Conclusion-Pursuing Approach (see p. 181), treat Sidereal Martial Arts as Solar Charms. They can double the Exalt's Attribute + Ability pool; Sidereal Exalted can create new martial arts styles and Charms; and none of the special rules found below for Sidereal Charms apply.

MANIPULATING FATE

Sidereal Charms are personal abilities, and in one sense, they affect the world in the same fashion as any other natural or supernatural ability — as part of the workings of fate, not as a manipulation thereof. Yet, the Sidereals remain destiny's creatures, like the constellations that order their Charms and the Maidens that built those constellations. Using these Charms requires an active awareness of how Essence influences the weave of fate and of the machinations by which the Maidens bestow their power on their Chosen.

Sidereals, and those Eclipse or Moonshadow Castes arrogant enough to dabble in the magic of the stars, must apply these Charms with versatility, wisdom and skill. An elder Sidereal must often master at least 20 ways to play with fate, none of them easy. She catches glimpses of the future. She uses her connection to her Maiden to implement spot changes in destiny planning. She twists impending fate with her own two hands. She learns to appreciate and manipulate the

overall patterns of fate that make up each individual and thing in Creation — or, at least, what those things are *about* to be. The list continues.

Most of these Charms come with a built-in methodology. However, Sidereal Exalted who want to do things a little differently can generally work out ways to do so. As a matter of personal style, a Sidereal can learn to do most of these Charms in one of three or four fashions best suited to the character. The rest, they can adapt on the fly using stunts. For example, a Sidereal character who needs to dodge an attack without excessive motion can adapt the Absence Charm — that normally helps her get out of the way — to make the attacker miss, instead. The Storyteller must, of course, find her player's description of fate's manipulation interesting enough to qualify for a stunt. Depending on the game, this may favor heavily visual images or more abstract approaches. Knotting the weave of an enemy's weapon together with the fate-flow of a nearby river, dragging it off course, might work — or the Sidereal might impose her memory of how much being hit with a sword *hurts* and is *bad* on the incoming blade.

MATTERS OF PERSONALITY

Many of the Sidereal Charms derive their force from the Sidereal's personality — including her Nature and her Virtues. The Sidereal has a certain view of how she wants the world to work, and she bends Essence and fate alike to match.

Certain Charms flow naturally out of the individual Virtues and the strengths of spirit that they represent. Sidereal Exalted can channel a point of temporary Willpower through the Virtue (as described on pp. 129-130 of *Exalted*) for use with these Charms, even if the circumstances are not otherwise appropriate.

- **Compassion:** Charms that allow the use of Compassion flow out of a worldview where Creation inherently reflects the character's wishes. She is a servant of fate, bound to the world, and vice versa. She need take no overt action. (See *Innocuous Maneuver*, p. 171.)

- **Conviction:** When a Charm focuses on necessary action, in which the Exalt controls the world for its own good, it generally allows the use of Conviction. (See *Cash and Murder Games*, p. 152.)

- **Temperance:** If a Charm relies on calm, knowledge, insight, and direct domination of others, a character can use her Temperance. (See *Meditation on War*, p. 157.)

- **Valor:** When a character remakes the world personally into the shape it ought to hold, particularly by manipulating entities personally hostile to her, her Charms can use Valor. (See *Becoming the Wilderness*, p. 140.)

Using these rules, characters can gain extra dice for rolls mentioned in the Charm's text, rolls that a supple-

mental Charm supplements or any roll that an extra action Charm enables. Altering a Charm to take advantage of a different Virtue always requires a stunt.

CREATURES OUTSIDE OF FATE

Certain creatures supercede or stand outside of fate. These include Primordials and their immediate servants, such as Yozi, Malfeans, Deathlords and demons of the Second and Third Circles. Unless otherwise noted, these creatures are immune to the following effects from Sidereal Charms:

- Loss or gain of temporary Willpower, directly or indirectly, including effects that force them to spend Willpower to take normally allowable actions;
- Compulsions that affect their behavior rather than their dice pools;
- Transportation from one location to another.

Ignore that portion of a Sidereal Charm's effects when it's applied to a creature outside of fate. The Charm may still have other effects on such creatures. For example, *Conclusive Wisdom* (see p. 177) can reduce a Deathlord's temporary Essence and prevent her from regaining Essence, but it neither reduces nor prevents the regaining of her Willpower. *Impose Nature* (see p. 159) marks the palm of creatures outside of fate but does not affect their behavior or their Willpower.

RESTRICTED CHARMS

Certain Sidereal Charms draw directly on the authority of the Maidens. These Charms are noted as requiring a Maiden's personal approval. This does *not* handicap a Sidereal character in any fashion — approval is automatic. However, if an Eclipse Caste Solar (or, in theory, Moonshadow Caste Abyssal) wishes to learn them, a Sidereal must file a petition in Yu-Shan on his behalf. The petition follows a long, circular course through the Celestial Bureaucracy, and often, one must provide its current holder with a small or large bribe to continue its circulation. Providing these bribes pushes the Solar or Abyssal into a series of actions that pleases the Maiden, at which point she authorizes the Charm. The petition continues its eternal march through Heaven, its entire surface turning dead black with layered signatures, but it has no further purpose.

UNUSUAL CHARMS

Many Sidereal Charms can reduce the target number of a roll, biasing certain actions toward a certainty of success. However, no combination of Charms can reduce a target number below 4. Anything lower does not bend fate so much as dictate it. This is not to say that Sidereal Exalted cannot dictate fate — only that the rules differ! If a Sidereal applies or has applied a combination of Charms that would otherwise reduce the target



number of an action to 3 or less, she can reflexively spend 2 Willpower and one health level to convert one affected dice action into a *perfect success*. The player does not and cannot roll. Instead, the character receives one success on each die. This applies only to that action. For other actions, the target number remains its minimum of 4. Also note that perfect success is not necessarily optimal. Dice pools of one to nine dice give at least a 10 percent chance that rolling against a target number of 4 produces more successes than dice.

Sidereal Charms permit a positive synergy between skill and fortune. The greater an Exalt's dice pool, the more she benefits from target number reduction and perfect success. Conversely, for a Sidereal's enemies, bad luck is essentially independent of their skill—a constant influence that Abilities and Charms strive to overcome. Sidereal Charms never increase the target number on an enemy's roll. Instead, they can increase an action's difficulty or impose dice pool penalties. The most extreme Charms reduce a target's base dice pool to 0—the target must use supernatural dice adders to have any chance of success. When this happens, Lunar Exalted and others can still use Charms that normally convert dice to automatic successes. Each “automatic success” instead becomes a die returned to the pool.

PRAYER STRIPS

A long time ago, someone or something inscribed the scriptures of the Maidens on the Loom of Fate, written in a cramped and ragged hand. Each is a chaotic and unruly story that the Sidereal Exalted eventually deciphered and distilled down to its barest essence. Inscribed on lengths of paper to form prayer strips, these stories contain a rich power available to those who master the Charms of an associated constellation. Each reflects in its structure something of the fundamental patterns of the stars, fate, Creation and the broader existence.

Each constellation has an associated story. The Charms for that constellation reflect that story's essential nature. Not all of the stories and Charms match the constellation's personality in tenor. The Sidereals occasionally debate the motivations that drew each stellar god to the scripture of her choice. In general, each story has a Charm that can infuse its prayer strip with power.

Creating a prayer strip requires high-quality paper and ink (Resources ••), six hours and a Dexterity + Linguistics or Dexterity + Craft (Calligraphy) roll with a difficulty of 2. This difficulty rises to 4 if the character wishes to create a prayer strip in a single turn. In Yu-Shan, one can purchase



jade or ivory cases (Resources •••) roughly the size of a dagger's scabbard that hold and protect a sheaf of five prayer strips. For dramatic purposes, a Sidereal with his prayer strip case on his person is considered to have reflexive access to the strips — if the character can use a Charm, then he can have the prayer strips in hand to activate it as well. This only counts if the prayer strips are on the Exalt. It requires a Wits + Larceny roll to conceal prayer strips on one's person and a Perception + Awareness roll to spot them. Make only one roll for all the character's prayer strips.

Until a Charm infuses the prayer strip with power, smearing the ink or crumpling the paper ruins the strip. Once infused, the prayer strip has a soak of 10 and 25 health levels. It reflexively blocks or dodges all attacks, even normally unblockable attacks, with a dice pool equal to the character's Dexterity + Dodge + Essence. Blocked attacks are blunted by flares of power from a generally immobile prayer strip, while mobile prayer strips dodge. Destroying the prayer strip instantly terminates the Charm.

The use of Charms that require prayer strips generally produce major effects. Pattern spiders must amend destiny and the effects can derail many planned fates. Characters who use prayer-strip Charms without cause can be audited on a Severity 2 charge for each offense (see p. 136 of Chapter One for details of severity and audits). Characters who abuse these powers are more likely to be censured by their faction leaders or supervisors because Sidereals are reluctant to press charges that would allow censors within the Bureau of Heaven to pass judgment on members of the Bureau of Destiny.

Note that the possibility of legal proceedings does not and cannot restrict the Sidereal's ability to use these Charms. They are after-the-fact punishments meted out to serious abusers or those in serious political disfavor.

SPOTTING ACTIVE PRAYER STRIPS

Infused prayer strips are always visible to powers that detect magic at work, such as Tell-Tale Symphony (see p. 170). The following table gives the difficulty for a Perception + Awareness or Perception + Occult roll to notice an infused prayer strip at a certain range. Some of the prayer strips look unusual but do not otherwise betray their presence, so that one must look directly at the prayer strip or the Exalt to see it.

ON MEMORY

Fate does not deal directly with the past. Magic can influence memory, changing what its victims believe from that point forward — but most Sidereal Charms do not. Unless otherwise specified by the Charm, what people remember is exactly what takes place in play. Instead of changing memories, these Charms just make a new state of affairs seem natural. A Sidereal Exalt who uses Avoidance Kata (see p. 146) to avoid a conflict doesn't explain the exact transition; it just becomes obvious to herself and others that she wasn't actually there. Victims of the Wanting and Fearing Prayer (see p. 152) often realize the artificiality of their new social situation, but it feels "right" regardless. Sidereals and those in their company get used to odd discontinuities in

Charm	Difficulty 0 (Automatic)	1	3	5
Ceasing to Exist Approach (affixed)	—	—	—	—
Ceasing to Exist Approach (burning)	50 yards	100 yards	500 yards	5 miles
Conclusive Wisdom	Can see/smell strip	—	—	500 yards (Occult only)
Easily Accepted Proposition Stance	—	Can see user	—	—
Embracing Life Method	Can see tree	—	—	—
Five Ordeals Odyssey	1 mile	10 miles	50 miles	100 miles
Harmonic Completion	Can see user	—	—	—
Implicit Construction Methodology	Can see user	—	100 yards	500 yards
Invisible Motion	—	—	Can smell user	—
Lover's Oath	User visible	—	—	—
Neighborhood Relocation Scheme	Can see user	—	Can see effects	—
Perfection of the Visionary Warrior	Can see user	—	—	—
Spirit-Binding Battle Pattern	—	—	—	500 yards (Occult only)
Storm's Eye Stance	Can see user	50 yards	100 yards	500 yards
Transcendent Hatchet of Fate	—	—	—	Can see user
Wanting and Fearing Prayer (affixed)	—	—	—	Victim can roll
Wanting and Fearing Prayer (burning)	50 yards	100 yards	500 yards	5 miles
(all sutras)	User visible	50 yards	100 yards	500 yards
(all others)	50 yards	100 yards	500 yards	5 miles

their memories, representing one of the natural prices of regularly amending the world and its destiny.

Characters react in different ways to something that feels right when they know it shouldn't. It may be helpful for characterization to think about how a character would respond when powerfully attracted to someone she knows is wrong for her or when witnessing an enemy suffer prosecution for something she knows he didn't do.

PRESENTATION FORMAT

The Charms below use the same format as in the main Exalted book. Cost, Duration, Type, Minimum Ability, Minimum Essence and Prerequisite Charms are all presented and function just as with Solar Exalted Charms.

JOURNEYS: THE GOLDEN BARQUE OF THE HEAVENS

THE MAST: ENDURANCE

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE ETERNAL MAIDEN

*Once, there was a maiden...
...made from a lump of iron, shaped by wind, sea and fire.*

Fearing how wood might shape her, she ran, and did not look back.

One day, she forgot what she ran from.

So, she pulled out her heart to ask it.

"Why don't you look back and see?" it said.

So, she sighed and threw her heart away.

"I have no use for beginnings," said she.

OX-BODY TECHNIQUE

Cost: None

Duration: Permanent

Type: Special

Minimum Endurance: Varies

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: None

The bodies of the Exalted are more durable than those of mere mortals. To help simulate this, an Exalt may buy extra health levels as if they were a Charm. A player may purchase this Charm up to once per dot of the Endurance Ability her character possesses. Each provides one -0 health level.

UNSWERVING JUGGERNAUT PRINCIPLE

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: Indefinite

Type: Simple

Minimum Endurance: 2

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

The stars bathe the character in yellow stardust. It suffuses her, glittering beneath her skin, hair, clothing and eyes. She begins to run. She must keep her eyes focused straight forward, keep her course within 10 degrees of its original heading and can take no other actions save walk, sprint, run, jump, ride, use a mobility-enhancing Charm or invoke the Lesser Sign of Mercury. Violating these strictures ends the Charm's effects. In exchange, for the duration of the Charm, the character receives an additional 5L/5B soak, needs no sleep, suffers no fatigue and adds her Essence to all Endurance rolls. Fatigue rolls do not need to be made for her wearing

Endurance - The Mast



armor, regardless of environmental conditions. These benefits also apply to any horse she rides.

The character's journey is a thing of fate and not chance, interwoven with her reasons for traveling. If something renders her journey irrelevant or alters its appropriate destination, her player automatically makes a reflexive Perception + Awareness check for the Sideral. Even on failure, she senses a change in the situation. Success gives her a hint of what it might be. Exalted who invoke this Charm while fleeing pursuit often know when it is safe to stop their flight.

FORWARD-THINKING TECHNIQUE

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Indefinite

Type: Simple

Minimum Endurance: 3

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Unswerving Juggernaut Principle

The character's world narrows to his journey. The strands of fate that bind him to things behind him loosen. This Charm includes all of the benefits of the Unswerving Juggernaut Principle. In addition, it grants an increased (10L/10B) soak bonus against attacks the character cannot see coming. He can dodge any attack reflexively with a dice pool of 0 and his permanent Essence in automatic successes. He can evade pursuit and cover his tracks without slowing down, deviating from his course or ending the Charm. This requires the normal Wits + Survival roll. This Charm does not defeat supernatural tracking such as Inevitable Pursuit. It explicitly prevents trackers from noticing the straight-line travel the Forward-Thinking Technique enforces unless they succeed at the tracking contest.

OPTIMISTIC SECURITY PRACTICE

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Endurance: 2

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: None

Reflecting on the great sacrifices she might someday make for others, the character passes her hand over the weave of fate and imbues events with her own generosity of spirit. Weapons and other damage sources turn aside from her skin. She adds her permanent Essence to her lethal and bashing soak. This soak specifically applies even to aggravated damage sources. Creatures with Essence lower than her Compassion must spend one Willpower point each time they attempt to damage or disable her, or the attack automatically fails. This Charm is incompatible with the use of armor.

UNWAVERING WELL-BEING MEDITATION

Cost: 2 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Endurance: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character's calm certainty in his own destiny turns aside a single event that might otherwise do him harm. Players of attackers with an Essence lower than the Sideral's Temperance must succeed at a Willpower roll, or the attackers falter, and their attacks automatically fail. Even if they succeed, the character adds his permanent Essence to his lethal and bashing soak. This soak specifically applies even to aggravated damage sources.

HEARTLESS MAIDEN TRANCE

Cost: 8 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Indefinite

Type: Simple

Minimum Endurance: 4

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Optimistic Security Practice, Unwavering Well-Being Meditation

The character's chest convulses as she swallows her heart. This suspends the normal functioning of her body. The Exalt no longer suffers nor accumulates penalties from disease, poison, degenerative effects, hunger, thirst, fatigue, exhaustion, cold, heat, wounds or blood loss. She does not need to breathe. She emerges from this Charm in the exact physical state she entered it, save for any new wounds taken and any poisons or diseases she contracted while under the effect — which, effectively, enter her system at that point. While this Charm lasts, the Exalt ignores all accrued penalties from debilitating conditions and wounds and is unaware of their existence. Sufficient injury yields a nagging tactical distress that encourages her to withdraw from combat, but she otherwise *cannot* accept the notion that she is sick, poisoned, hungry, cold, wounded or otherwise impaired. She does not regain Essence except through the use of Charms. She functions normally when Incapacitated and cannot be knocked unconscious, but she can be killed by doing more than her Stamina health levels beyond Incapacitated.

ONE DIRECTION INVOCATION

Cost: 16 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: Indefinite

Type: Simple

Minimum Endurance: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Forward-Thinking Technique, Heartless Maiden Trance



This Charm uses a prayer strip marked with the scripture of the Eternal Maiden. The character releases it into the air, where it darts and dances randomly about, staying within 100 yards of him, trailing vivid afterimages of yellow light. The character names a goal, which can be as grandiose or minor as he chooses, and geases himself to fulfill it.

A character under the influence of this Charm forsakes his name and his identity. Rolls to remember the character suffer a -3 die penalty (in addition to the normal penalty for remembering a Sidereal). The Exalt cannot focus on any goal save the one he named in the Charm. Irrelevant actions are forbidden. He suffers a three die penalty on all rolls that — while helping him toward his goal — have another primary purpose. However, any non-aggravated injury or impairment the character receives while the Charm is active heals at the rate of one lethal health level or all bashing health levels per turn. Aggravated damage taken under the Charm's effects heals at one level per hour. The character heals preexisting conditions at the normal rate.

The character can end the Charm at any time but cannot reclaim his name and identity until he achieves his goal. If his goal becomes impossible to achieve, these things are forever lost. He cannot personally establish a new identity or name, and all attempts to do so fail, but high-ranking members of his division can issue replacements.

THE MESSENGER: RIDE

ORDAINED BRIDLE OF MERCURY

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 experience point
Duration: Until the character applies Mercury's bridle
Type: Simple
Minimum Ride: 2

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE DESIRABLE MAIDEN

*Once, there was a maiden...
 ...whom many men wanted for their own.
 She stepped as softly as starlight.
 She shone with glory.
 And one by one, they came to claim her.
 She fled by the quickest route she found.
 "Why do you run?" the stormclouds said.
 She said, "I cannot help who drives me."*

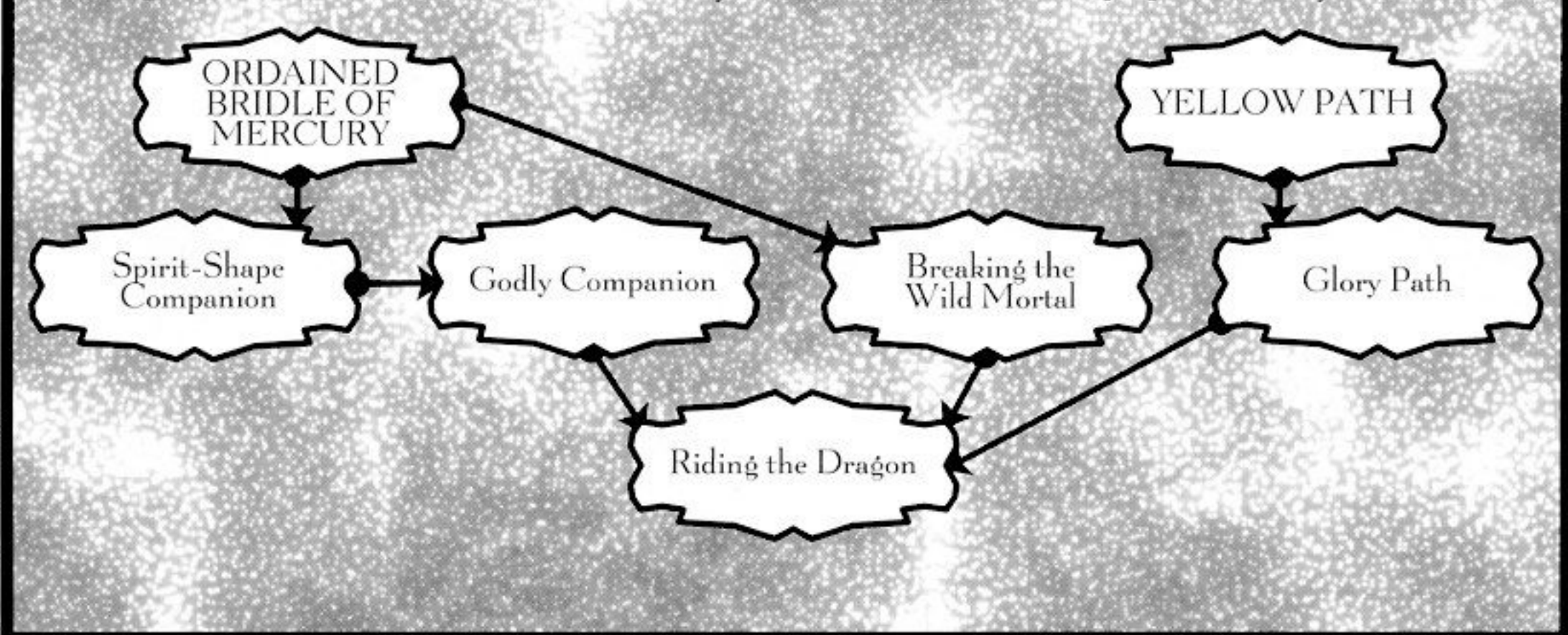
Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character petitions Mercury to weave a mount into her destiny. Each time she invokes this Charm, she gains a dot of the Familiar Background, normally with a creature she can ride. She can use this Charm to instantly increase her bond with an existing familiar. Alternately, she can invoke Mercury's guidance in finding a new, "suitable" familiar. Her player specifies the species. The character must travel to find the familiar but always knows the way. The destined familiar always allows the character to approach and set a bridle of stardust upon its head. The bridle fades, but the Background dot remains. If the character cannot afford to establish a complete bond, Mercury can lead her to that animal again with another invocation of the Charm.

It costs an extra experience point to summon forth the bridle of Mercury and apply it to an animal of the character's choosing rather than the Maiden's. Similarly, the first dot of the Familiar Background costs an extra experience point for animals unsuitable for riding — such

Ride - The Messenger



as a hawk. Note that controlling a familiar mount requires a Ride roll in only the most extreme circumstances.

Sidereal Exalted can purchase a total number of familiars and acquaintances no greater than their permanent Essence, unmodified by Charms such as the Soul Fire Shaper Form (see p. 193).

SPIRIT-SHAPE COMPANION

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 experience point

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Ride: 3

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Ordained Bridle of Mercury Drawing on her understanding of the spirit world, the character forces a metamorphosis upon one of her familiars. The creature adopts some of the characteristics of a spirit, as follows:

- Its Essence, Valor, and Intelligence increase to a minimum of 2.

- It acquires an Essence pool of $(\text{Essence} \times 10) + (\text{Willpower} \times 3) + (\text{Sum of Virtues} \times 2)$ — typically 51.

- The familiar's health levels become equal to its Willpower + Conviction — typically 8.

- The familiar's natural state is dematerialized. For a mote of Essence, it can manifest visually.

- It learns the Materialize Charm, which costs half its motes to use. It learns one additional spirit Charm of the Storyteller's choice if the Familiar Background is 3 or more and another if it is 5.

- The familiar develops an alternate shape, roughly human but still deeply reminiscent in appearance of the familiar's true nature.

- The familiar ceases to depend upon ordinary nourishment.

- Yu-Shan registers the familiar as a small god. Its primary duty is service to the character. However, it may be called or reassigned to other duty.

The numbers above assume that a typical beast familiar has Essence 2, Willpower 5, Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 1 and Valor 2 after the use of this Charm. Most non-familiar beasts have lower Essence, Willpower and Compassion.

GODLY COMPANION

Cost: 20 motes, 1 Willpower, 5 experience points

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Ride: 4

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Shape Companion

The character arranges a promotion for his familiar. Its Essence and Intelligence increase to a minimum of 3. It develops additional Virtues, if necessary, to bring the sum of its Virtues to 12



or more. It learns two additional spirit Charms of the Storyteller's choice and one additional shape. It also acquires certain specific responsibilities:

- The familiar is responsible for safely escorting the character to Yu-Shan and back when necessary and for the character's behavior while in Yu-Shan. As an Essence 3 spirit, it possesses the innate ability to carry itself and others between Yu-Shan and Creation.

- The familiar is responsible for delivering any messages Heaven has for the character and must be regularly available in Yu-Shan to collect them.

- The familiar must file regular reports on the character's activities. Although these reports pass through the Bureau of Destiny mailroom and are vulnerable to interception, they are rarely read — all are ultimately forwarded to the august weaver Caturasya, who eats them.

- The familiar may receive additional miscellaneous duties in Yu-Shan.

BREAKING THE WILD MORTAL

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 experience point

Duration: Until the character applies Mercury's bit

Type: Simple

Minimum Ride: 2

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Ordained Bridle of Mercury

The character petitions Mercury to weave a mortal companion into her destiny. Each time she invokes this Charm, she gains a dot of the Acquaintances Background, bonding first with a single mortal and then with those around him. She can use this Charm to instantly increase her connection with a specific acquaintance and his social context. Alternately, she can invoke Mercury's guidance in finding a new, "suitable" acquaintance. Her player specifies the general occupation and personality. The character must travel to find the acquaintance but always knows the way. The destined acquaintance always allows the character to approach and set a bit made of stardust in his mouth. Once it sinks in, the mortal loses the memory of that embarrassing moment, but the Background dot remains.

It costs an extra experience point to summon forth the bit of stardust and apply it to a person of the character's choosing rather than the Maiden's. Similarly, the first dot of the Acquaintances Background costs an extra experience point for people unsuitable for riding — such as humans. (Some Wyld barbarians might make acceptable mounts.)

Sidereal Exalted can purchase a total number of familiars and acquaintances no greater than their permanent Essence, unmodified by Charms such as the Soul Fire Shaper Form (see p. 193).

YELLOW PATH

Cost: 2 motes

Duration: One journey

Type: Simple

Minimum Ride: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character sees the glimmering yellow light of Mercury illumine the shortest path to his destination. This path is not necessarily safe, but the character can expect to overcome any obstacles thereupon. This Charm takes delays from such things as off-road travel, the need for food and rest and injuries from dangerous encounters into account. Roll the character's Essence. One success indicates a substantial improvement in his speed over ordinary travel. If the character has a deadline and any chance exists of making it on time, three successes indicate his timely arrival. Five or more successes allow him to make any appointment not already missed.

GLORY PATH

Cost: 8 motes

Duration: Five minutes

Type: Simple

Minimum Ride: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Yellow Path

A nimbus of Mercury's light wraps around the character's mount, and it develops the ability to overcome any obstacle to complete its journey. The player makes a Charisma + Ride roll. Each success adds five yards to the mount's base speed. In addition, the mount is undaunted by natural obstacles of any sort: for as many turns as necessary, it can gallop in the air across chasms, straight up a cliff face, across water or a swamp and weave through crowds of panicked yeddim. Only barriers built by people — such as walls of stone or sorcery — pose any obstacle. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Temperance with this Charm.

RIDING THE DRAGON

Cost: 20 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Ride: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Godly Companion, Breaking the Wild Mortal, Glory Path

This Charm uses a prayer strip inscribed with the scripture of the Desirable Maiden. The character affixes it to the forehead of a familiar or an acquaintance, either long-established or acquired through Charms. An indescribable sense of shock, horror and elation immediately fills the victim, who struggles for the next five turns to rip the strip free. Unless the victim is restrained, this requires no roll.

At the end of those five turns, the familiar or acquaintance undergoes a transformation, burning with a terrible golden celestial light. Its form twists and reshapes into a lesser elemental dragon. This Charm exerts a great toll on the victim's body and soul, and when the Charm runs its course, nothing but a burned-out husk remains — a person or animal able to accept food and mumble incoherently, but nothing more. That Familiar or Acquaintances Background is permanently lost, but at that moment, the character can choose either an air or a water dragon as her mount for a scene.

The transformed dragon, its back writhing with the symbols of the scripture, has no will of its own. The Sidereal must ride it and direct its actions with her own. The dragon flies at 500 mph, with effectively unlimited tactical movement. It has a Dodge pool of 10 and a soak of 20 against all attacks. It attacks with 15 Speed, Accuracy and Defense for 19 lethal damage. For each successful Charisma + Ride roll the Sidereal's player makes in a given turn, the mount takes one action at its full dice pool. Note that the Sidereal must split her pool to make multiple Ride rolls. The dragon has 10 health levels, all at -0. It can use any spirit Charm or elemental power, with the exception of extra action Charms or those that grant permanent bonuses or penalties. The Sidereal pays for these Charms or powers with her own motes, Willpower and health levels.

Sidereal Exalted may always use their Conviction with this Charm.

THE CAPTAIN: SAIL

SALT INTO ASH SLEIGHT

Cost: 2 motes + 2 motes per target number reduction
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Sail: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN AT SEA

*Once, there was a maiden...
 ...who set sail with a Captain she did not know.
 The sea came over the side as a creature with teeth. So,
 she set it on fire, until only the teeth were left. It wasn't
 expecting that to happen.*

*She noticed the ship was crushing the waves and told
 the Captain to steer the ship higher, so that it could be
 above them. "But not too high," she said. "I'd hate to
 crush the clouds."*

*A face in the depths glared at the Captain. The
 maiden got angry. She broke the face, and broke the
 depths, and broke the sea, leaving only the white caps of
 the waves. "Why did you do that?" asked the face.*

"Rarely is travel peaceful," the maiden said.

Clapping her hands, the character surrounds an elemental or spirit of water or the sea in a fiery yellow aura. Mercury calls that creature to journey. Its reasons to visit another place, where important unfinished business awaits it, press increasingly upon its mind. Simply by using the Charm, the Exalt proves and guarantees that such business already exists in some distant place. If necessary, the creature becomes aware of it. The creature must make a Willpower roll not to set forth immediately. For the duration of the scene, Mercury's call reduces the target number for any character's attempts to drive the creature away, physically or socially. This benefit applies to both attack and damage rolls.

STONE SKIPPING SPIRIT

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Sail: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None



The character exhales a puff of wind that travels beyond the world and disentangles the destiny of ship, sky and sea. No matter how fierce the weather or the waves, the ship sails smoothly, isolated from the world. For the duration of the scene, Sail checks made for the character ignore environmental penalties. He sails on a placid sea, with a good wind behind him and the favor of the local spirits, even if a typhoon rages around his location. He still suffers penalties for any damage the ship has taken, but it takes on no further water, and its condition does not degenerate naturally for the remainder of the scene.

MIRROR SHATTERING METHOD

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: Five days

Type: Simple

Minimum Sail: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Stone Skipping Spirit

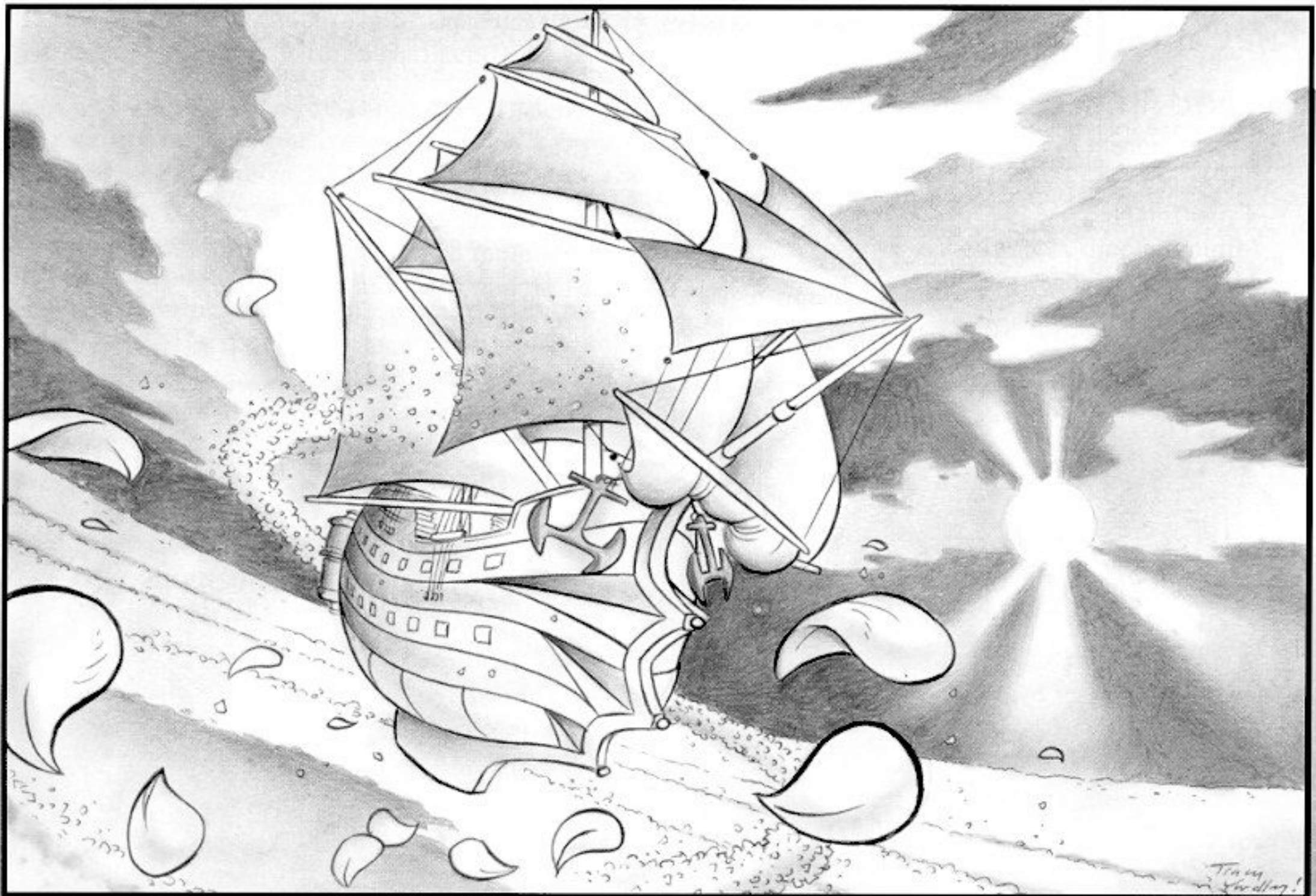
The character casts salt into a puddle or body of water beneath her. Its surface breaks and dissolves into foaming whitecaps, and the character vanishes. From her perspective, the whitecaps rush out in all directions, and then, she stands atop a field of white that is — at any given moment — water, wind-blown flower petals or

butterflies. The world around her fades away as she separates herself from the normal processes of fate.

While this Charm remains active, the character can travel at twice her normal pace, ignoring any obstacles. She remains in Creation, but her presence and location are obscured. Only the slightest shimmer in the wind marks her passing, which increases the difficulty of Awareness checks to notice her or Survival checks to track her by 2. She cannot sense the world around her at all. Nevertheless, when the Charm ends, she invariably finds herself in an auspicious location. If at all possible given the distance and general direction of her journey, she does not find herself in immediate danger, under observation or in a precarious location when she arrives.

The character can use this Charm when on board a ship (or any construct suspended entirely above a body of water) by casting salt into the water below. The entire ship and crew then travels with her. It sails at twice its normal speed across the field of white. An auspicious location for a ship's arrival includes the existence of water sufficient to keep it afloat.

As an alternative to mortal travel, a character using this Charm can travel to Yu-Shan. This requires five days on foot or a day on shipboard. Travel to other unusual locations, such as Malfeas, may be possible at the Storyteller's discretion. This always requires five days.



FIVE ORDEALS ODYSSEY

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: One hazard

Type: Simple

Minimum Sail: 4

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Salt into Ash Sleight, Mirror Shattering Method

This Charm uses a prayer strip marked with the scripture of the Maiden at Sea. The character casts it at an adversarial force, and it hangs in the air, wreathed in dandelion-hued lightning, until the resolution of the Charm destroys it.

The character may use this Charm when faced with any meaningful hazard at sea: storms, thirst while becalmed, pirates, monsters, reefs, mutiny and so forth. The character must then take action to remove the hazard as a practical threat to her life, health and progress. If she ensures that it cannot reasonably prevent a safe conclusion to her journey, the Charm marks her victory by wreaking massive damage upon the force that opposed her. It tears storms from the sky, breaks the calm in a fierce wind, splits the pirate ship in two, consumes the monster's corpse with fire and so forth. It kills extras and shatters inanimate things. Defeated characters suffer sufficient bashing damage to reduce them instantly to Incapacitated, although fate restores their consciousness (healing them to -4) if they face an immediate threat to life and limb before waking. In general, the prayer strip accomplishes this devastation in the moment of its own destruction, casting forth fire, thunder and lightning.

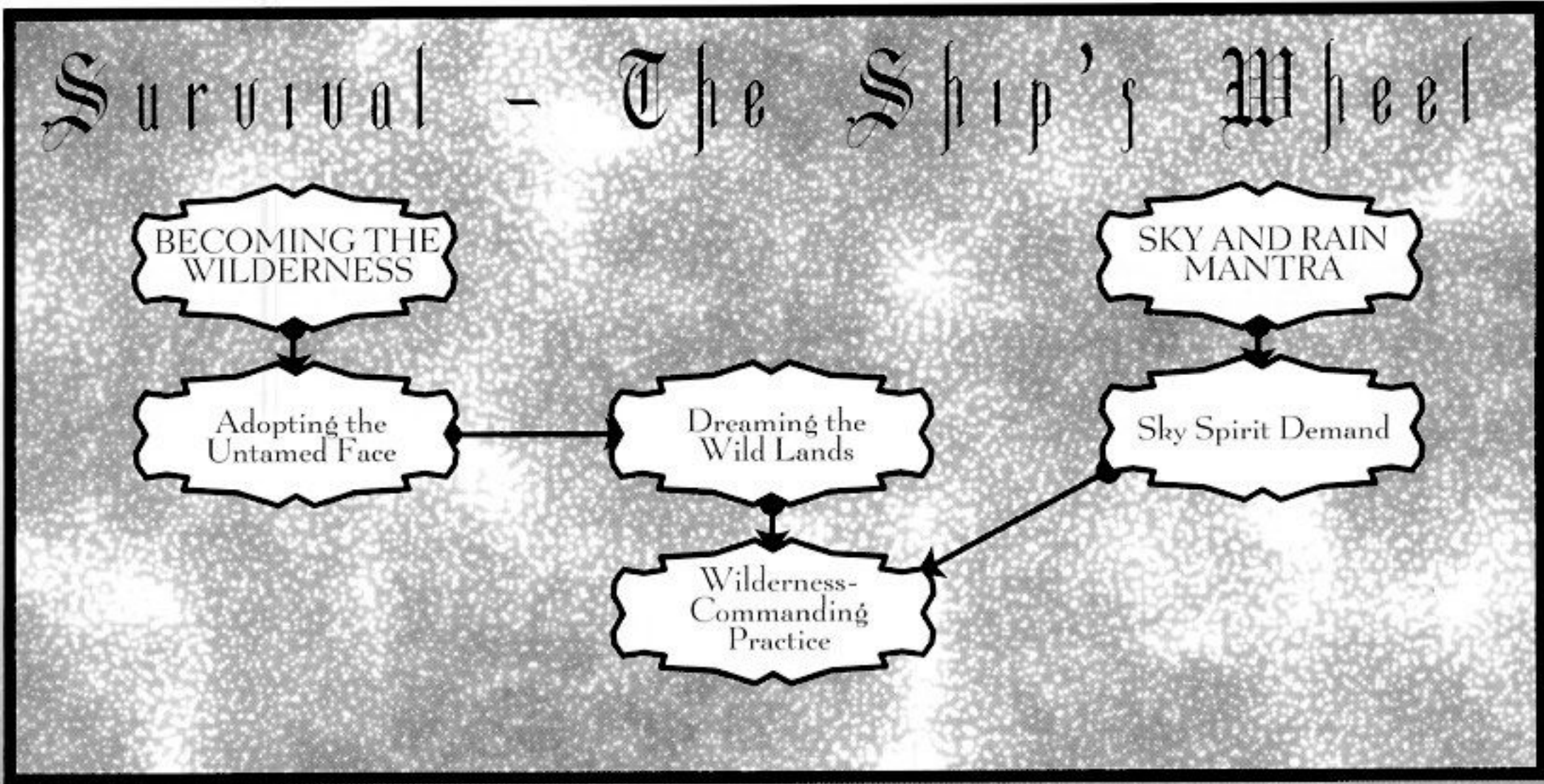
Each travail speeds the character toward her destiny, granting an ever-greater attunement to the Essence flows of fate and the world. Each time the character invokes this Charm and permits it to run its full duration, increase her effective permanent Essence by 1, to a maximum of 8. Also, increase the effective permanent Essence of characters working closely with her by 1, to a maximum of 6. These bonuses last until the end of the story, but cannot be used as a basis for training or for gaining Charms.

This Charm requires that the voyage have a purpose — the character cannot simply sail around in circles and must have some reason to travel across the sea. However, the character can freely favor sailing over other means of travel when it forms a reasonable alternative. Characters cannot learn otherwise unavailable Charms while under the effect of the Five Ordeals Odyssey.

THE SHIP'S WHEEL: SURVIVAL

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN ENTOMBED

*Once, there was a maiden...
...who lived in a tomb, and the tomb was made in her image.
Because she lived in a tomb, she became like the dead.
She slept, and dreamed.
And sometimes, woke, and walked within the confines of her tomb.
"Why do you move?" her own ghost asked. "Why walk at all?"
"I am not trapped while yet I run," said she.*



BECOMING THE WILDERNESS

Cost: 1 mote per target number reduction

Duration: One day

Type: Simple

Minimum Survival: 2

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character calls forth and spreads cat's cradle between her hands as a representation of the weave of fate for the entire local wilderness. She sets her will on it, remaking the land into a mirror of her soul. For the duration of this Charm, tree branches shelter her from the rain, food animals wander into her camp, the winds blow lightly near her, and she rarely encounters danger. This Charm reduces the target number of Survival or Awareness checks in the wilderness. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Valor with this Charm.

ADOPTING THE UNTAMED FACE

Cost: 4 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Survival: 2

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Becoming the Wilderness

In turn, the character can make his soul mirror the land, imposing the pattern of its fate upon the flows of his Essence. His player receives automatic successes equal to the Sidereal's Essence in any roll against a natural beast. While this Charm is active, add the Sidereal's Essence in extra dice when dealing socially with Lunar Exalted. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Compassion with this Charm.

DREAMING THE WILD LANDS

Cost: 5 motes, 2 Willpower

Duration: Five days

Type: Simple

Minimum Survival: 4

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Adopting the Untamed Face

As she mirrors herself to the land, the character bends the wild directly to her will. Under the pressure of her intention, trees shift their places and river dragons cease to hunger. She can make cosmetic changes to the scenery in uncivilized regions and dictate the behavior of any wild beast she can see. She receives all the benefits of Adopting the Untamed Face. Unless they know better, Lunar Exalted perceive her as an eminent member of their own kind — that is, *ikth-ya*, as described on page 112 of *Exalted: the Lunars*. Sidereal characters with Essence 5 or more appear as *murr-ya*.

Lunars do not imagine a Tell or Caste Mark or other such indicators. The Sidereal Exalted simply carries herself like an *ikth-ya* and, therefore, *must* be a Lunar.

Even if a Lunar knows better, the impression is difficult to shake. Mistreating the character is mechanically easy but emotionally difficult. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Valor with this Charm.

SKY AND RAIN MANTRA

Cost: 10 motes

Duration: One day

Type: Simple

Minimum Survival: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character extends her influence into the sky, adjusting the region's weather. Her player rolls Stamina + Survival. The number of successes determines how harsh the Exalt makes the weather. Specifically, other characters' players need at least that many successes on a Survival roll for their characters to survive the new conditions without hardship. The Sidereal can voluntarily reduce this difficulty when creating the storm. If the Exalt wishes to calm the weather, she needs only one success.

Generally, this Charm takes effect within either minutes or hours, depending on the magnitude of the effects.

SKY SPIRIT DEMAND

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Survival: 4

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Sky and Rain Mantra

The character strives to mirror the fate of an air spirit or elemental to the flows of her own Essence, and vice versa. Her player rolls Manipulation + Survival against a difficulty equal to the spirit's Essence. If she succeeds, the Exalt imposes one of her goals upon the spirit. It appreciates the importance of that goal to the same degree and in the same fashion the Sidereal does. It can choose between that goal and its other beliefs when and if they clash dramatically. Using this Charm in a civilized region or against a civilized spirit adds +2 to the difficulty. It can be adapted for use against spirits and elementals of other elements, but this also adds +2 difficulty. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Compassion with this Charm.

WILDERNESS-COMMANDING PRACTICE

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Five days

Type: Simple

Minimum Survival: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Dreaming the Wild Lands, Sky Spirit Demand

This Charm uses a prayer strip marked with the scripture of the Maiden Entombed. The character casts it into the air, where it dances in the wind, casting off shapeless golden phantasms.

This Charm co-opts a wild region and turns it against the Exalt's enemies. So long as the character remains within sight of the prayer strip, he notices anyone of interest within his Essence in miles, even those who are not able to be tracked by non-supernatural trackers. He can give anyone three automatic successes on all Survival rolls made within the region or reduce anyone's Survival pool to 0 before they benefit from Charms. Each effect requires a further commitment of 2 motes per person so affected.

The Sidereal can also convey the location of someone or something to a local beast or spirit. The Charm's target sees the indicated person or thing as a hated enemy. This requires 5 motes and a successful Manipulation + Survival roll against the beast or spirit's Essence. The 5 motes are not committed. Intelligent victims can change their minds if given reason to rethink the situation. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Valor with this Charm.

THE GULL: THROWN

WILLFUL WEAPON METHOD

- Cost: 4 motes
- Duration: Instant
- Type: Supplemental
- Minimum Thrown: 2
- Minimum Essence: 1
- Prerequisite Charms: None

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN AND SHADOW

*Once, there was a maiden...
...whose shadow fled from her. She chased it over fire and stone.*

She chased her shadow to a monster's mouth. It went right in. It didn't know how to stop.

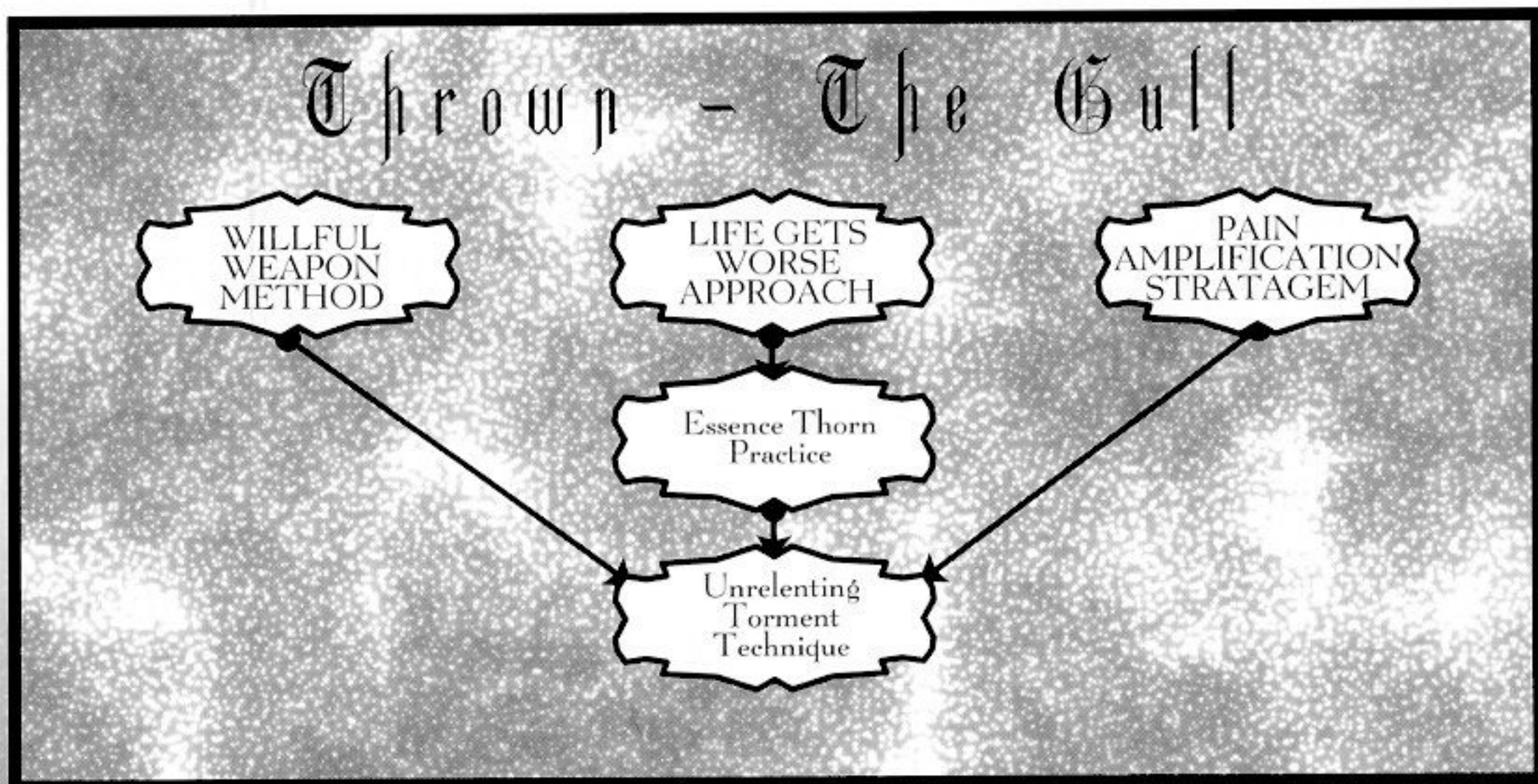
The maiden caught her shadow in a deep cave full of ghosts. It turned into a ball of thorns that wrapped around her. When the ghosts pricked their fingers on the thorns, they came to life. This didn't make anyone very happy.

The maiden made a ladder from the ghosts' bones, but it only pointed downward. "Why go on?" her shadow asked.

"I can't quit now," said she.

The Sidereal's eyes reflect a yellow light as she looks away from the present and toward the pattern of impending fate. She casts the shadow of her weapon from her hand, and it speeds toward her target. The player makes an attack roll normally, ignoring penalties for range and weather. The Sidereal must be able to see the target, and the attack must be within the weapon's maximum range (normally triple the listed range).

Even if the character misses, the shadow inexorably approaches the target's heart. The next turn, the Sidereal can attempt the attack again with a new Thrown roll. This is a normal action but uses the shadow weapon already in the air. It can be enhanced with appropriate Charms. This attack ignores range limitations on the weapon.



If the shadow hits, the target loses two points of temporary Willpower as a spirit-bird screams in the mansion of the Gull and the house of Endings quietly takes note. In addition, the character's weapon appears, quivering, in the target's chest, doing normal damage. If the character does not spend a Thrown action every turn on this Charm, the shadow fades away.

Sidereal Exalted may always use their Temperance with this Charm.

LIFE GETS WORSE APPROACH

Cost: 3 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Thrown: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character makes the Inferior Sign of the Gull over his weapon, whispers to it to seek the heart (or some other desired organ) and throws. This attack adds his Essence to the raw damage of the attack. In addition, if the weapon hits, it emits a soft yellow radiance that calls to things traveling through the air. Once per turn, when someone in range misses with a Thrown or Archery attack, the Exalt can reflexively spend 2 motes to summon the projectile to the wound. The player of the person responsible for the attack must immediately reflexively reroll the attack against the target of this Charm. All Charms used on the original attack still apply except for those inapplicable to the new target and those that allow the attack to target multiple characters. The Charms need not be paid for again. Removing the weapon requires a simple Strength + Athletics action and ends the effects of this Charm. If left alone long enough, the embedded weapon eventually attracts stray insects, birds and flying debris.

ESSENCE THORN PRACTICE

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Thrown: 4

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Life Gets Worse Approach

The blade of a knife is the gate between life and death. The target's fate is to suffer its touch. The character dispenses with the intermediate steps, hurling a blade of Essence up to (his Essence x 20) yards. It moves at such speed that it cannot be blocked, only dodged, the wind of its passage dragging the character up to 20 yards in the direction of its travel. It suffers no penalties from range, has an accuracy equal to the character's Essence and does (Strength + 6L) damage. The character chooses how far the blade pulls him toward the target.

Creatures of the shadowlands have passed beyond death's gate, and the Essence Thorn drags them closer to life. Hit by the blade, they suffer no damage. Instead, convert damage successes one for one into points of temporary Willpower lost. Such being can be reduced to a minimum of 0 temporary Willpower. If brought to 0 Willpower by this attack, the creature suffers hallucinations and disorientation, taking no actions save to engage in reverie, self-defense or extended self-defense (i.e., escape) for the remainder of the scene. Abyssal Exalted are alive and take damage. Deathlords are immune to the Essence Thorn unless already at 0 Willpower when it strikes them.

PAIN AMPLIFICATION STRATAGEM

Cost: 2 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Thrown: 2

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: None

Before making a Thrown attack, the character touches her weapon to the skin beneath her eye. She bleeds three drops of blood onto the weapon, symbolizing the sorrow she might theoretically feel for her impending victim. It is the way of fate that pain begets pain. Apply the victim's current wound penalty to the target number for both the attack and damage rolls. For example, against a character with a -2 wound penalty, the target number for both rolls would be 5. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Compassion with this Charm.

UNRELENTING TORMENT TECHNIQUE

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: Indefinite

Type: Simple

Minimum Thrown: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Willful Weapon Method, Essence Thorn Practice, Pain Amplification Stratagem

This Charm uses a prayer strip marked with the scripture of the Maiden and Shadow. The character casts it at an opponent or object as a Thrown weapon with a range of 100 yards and Accuracy +0. If it hits, it adheres, wreathing the target in an unpleasant, pulsing yellow glow. The Exalt can only have one such strip active at any given time, and it can only affix to someone with hostile intentions toward him.

While this Charm is in effect, whenever the character takes damage and has at least one mobile hand, a hatchet of Essence leaps from his hand to attack the target. It passes freely through obstacles and across any distance up to a quarter mile, screaming like a bird. There is no roll, and the strike can be averted only by perfect dodges and perfect parries that are specifically able to block any attack.

Ignoring non-perfect soaks, it inflicts the character's Essence in dice of unsoakable lethal damage. For each health level the target loses, the Sidereal heals one health level — the harsh fate inflicted upon him has been given to another. This is a reflexive action and does not count against the character's actions for that turn.

Sometimes, it is harder to stop a terrible journey than to embark upon it. The victim of this Charm suffers an overpowering, irrational desire to hurt the character. Despite the unpleasant consequences of each attack, she has difficulty remembering how to stop. Each turn, to avoid attacking the Sidereal with the greatest force available to her, her player must succeed at a Willpower roll. If the victim cannot see or hear the character, the effect subsides. She can spend a temporary Willpower to free herself from the compulsion until she sees or hears the character again.

Sidereal Exalted may always use their Conviction with this Charm.

SERENITY: THE CERULEAN LUTE OF HARMONY

THE PEACOCK: CRAFT

ELEGANT PATTERNS OF FATE

Cost: 2 motes per die

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Craft: 2

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

THE SCRIPTURE OF LOVER AND MAIDEN

Once, there was a maiden...

...who met a thing that lived outside the world, and there was a beauty to it.

It burned with an unholy wrath that could destroy Creation.

It hated her as much as it loved her.

Its kiss was blood and perfection, for its teeth were sharp.

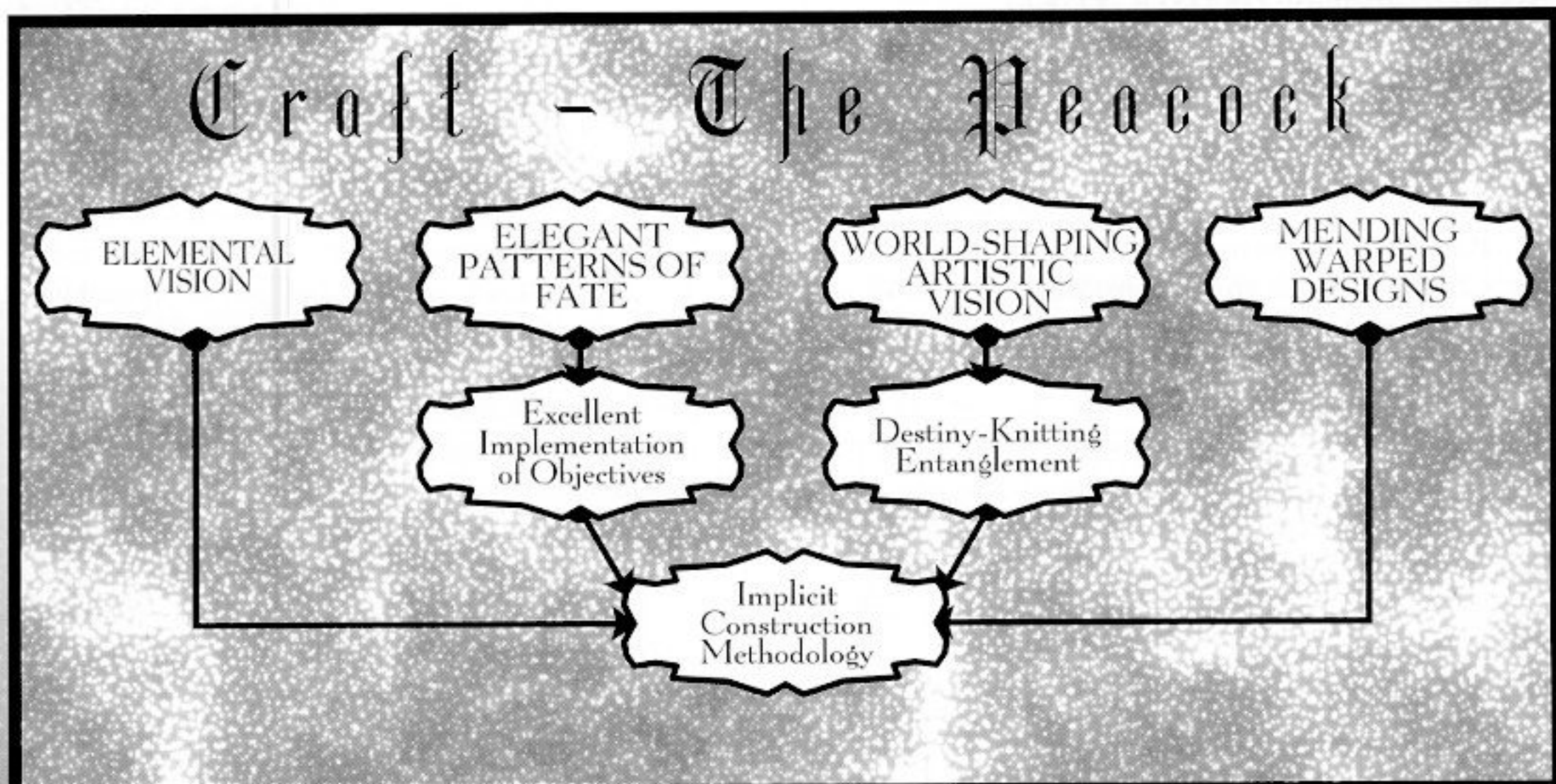
It offered her power, and with it, hooks to tear her soul.

With care not to burn her fingers, she took it into her life.

"Love is what you make of it," said she.

Sidereals can normally use an Intelligence + Craft (Fate) roll to design aesthetic weaves of events and circumstance that appeal to the various planning committees as means for untangling the snarls in the Loom of Fate. However, shaping these weaves so that they still further the character's personal goals, by the time everyone involved sets their stamp on the project, requires a supernatural insight into the bureaucracy of Heaven. This Charm provides that insight.

Elegant Patterns of Fate adds up to the character's Essence in dice to the Craft roll and allows the result to steer the course of events. This uses the normal rules for using Craft to plan projects. The character literally designs a blueprint for the future. The difficulty depends on the scale and precision of the design. The number of successes provides a rough measure of its quality and robustness. Each success represents one horrible fluke, one heroic effort to escape the web of fate or one clash



with the efforts of the Yozis or Malfeans that the character's plan endures.

Many such designs go into any given day's fate. A number of Sidereal Exalted have this Charm. Spirits with the Creation of Perfection Charm (see *Games of Divinity*, p. 127) can also compete at the destiny-designing game. Treat the relevant rolls as explicitly opposed but only to see what happens when two plans conflict. For example, if one plan focuses on the death of Cathak Cainan of House Cathak and the transfer of his power to his son, while another relies on Cainan's support for a joint venture with House V'neef, the opposed roll decides whether he lives or dies. However, even if he lives, his power likely drifts into his son's hands. Even if he dies, House Cathak probably supports the joint venture.

Members of the Eclipse and Moonshadow Castes can learn this Charm, but it does them no good unless someone submits their proposals to the Bureau of Destiny.

EXCELLENT IMPLEMENTATION OF OBJECTIVES

Cost: 8 motes + 1 mote per target number reduction

Duration: Varies

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Craft: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Elegant Patterns of Fate

Having planned some work of mundane or magical craftsmanship, the character weaves that plan into the more general design for the world. This ensures a swift and precise implementation. The Charm can reduce the target number of the final Dexterity + Craft or Intelligence + Craft roll. Also, the Sidereal divides the required construction time by her Essence.

WORLD-SHAPING ARTISTIC VISION

Cost: None

Duration: Permanent

Type: Special

Minimum Craft: 2

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

Characters with this Charm develop skill in manipulating fate in a specific, personal fashion. Each purchase of this Charm creates a circumstance — with the same breadth as a specialty — during which she automatically reduces the target number of all her actions by 1. The character can purchase this Charm up to three times, applying it to the same circumstance or to a new one each time. There is no cost to use this Charm's effects — learning this Charm simply enhances the Exalt's capabilities.

A Sidereal's appearance often shifts subtly as she develops this Charm. For example, a character with a

specialty at fate alteration "In Cities" becomes more urbane. A character who specializes in using fate "Against Demons" develops a martial appearance. A gleam in her Maiden's color may skate down the starmetal of her sword when a demon's presence is revealed.

DESTINY-KNITTING ENTANGLEMENT

Cost: 2 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Craft: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: World-Shaping Artistic Vision

The character can intertwine the fate of objects with her own, binding to her a total number of objects no greater than her Craft (Fate) score. To bind an object, she must handle it for an hour. This has no cost. Afterward, at any time, she can spend 2 motes of Essence to learn a general description of the object's circumstances — information on the order of "in a guarded vault in a rich man's house in the Scavenger Lands" or "traveling through the Wyld in the hands of a Lunar Exalt." Given basic knowledge of its situation, she can instead spend 2 Essence to call it back into her hands, describing a reasonable method by which fate could bring it closer to her. For example, "one of the guards decides he must have it for his own, steals it and flees the city to avoid retribution." This might not work, but *something* happens. If the guards are incorruptible, one experiences a strong temptation. An incompetent guard might steal it but get caught. If the character tries often enough, though, she eventually succeeds. She can freely release the binding on an object that no longer interests her.

In combat, the character can use this Charm and a stunt to recall a lost weapon or object into her hands. For example, a stumbling enemy might kick her daiklave back into her grasp, or a bracer fallen over a cliff might rise back up on a hybroc's head even as the character dives for it.

ELEMENTAL VISION

Cost: None

Duration: Permanent

Type: Special

Minimum Craft: 2

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

Each Maiden has an elemental association. The character learns to manipulate this element, automatically reducing the target number for all dealings with appropriate spirits and elementals by 2 and with appropriate Dragon-Blooded by 1. Chosen of Journeys reduce their target number for dealings with air. For Serenity, this applies to wood; for Battles, fire; for Secrets, water; and for Endings, earth. There is no cost to use this

Charm's effects — learning this Charm simply enhances the Exalt's capabilities. Learning this Charm requires the relevant Maiden's approval.

MENDING WARPED DESIGNS

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Craft: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character can patch damage to the local pattern of fate. The Sidereal's player rolls Dexterity + Craft (Fate). Each success heals one health level that the target lost to a creature or effect of Malfeas, the Underworld or the Wyld. Alternately, success can heal minor debilitating effects caused by such creatures, requiring one success for each mote of Essence spent on that harm. Thus, three successes can break a demon's Possession Charm, while 60 successes can heal a region wounded by a Deathlord's Rain of Doom.

This Charm has a limited ability to counter the direct effects of the Wyld. Five successes can cleanse a Wyld pox (see *Exalted*, p. 280). Twenty successes can remove a stronger Wyld mutation or Taint. Fifty successes can cleanse a small region within Creation of Wyld influence.

This Charm does not permit extended rolls, but multiple Sidereal Exalted can apply it in the same turn, adding their successes. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Valor with this Charm.

IMPLICIT CONSTRUCTION METHODOLOGY

Cost: 20 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: Varies

Type: Simple

Minimum Craft: 4

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Excellent Implementation of Objectives, Destiny-Knitting Entanglement, Elemental Vision, Mending Warped Designs

This Charm uses a long prayer strip marked with the scripture of Lover and Maiden. Having planned construction of some item and evaluated the available materials, the character twists the prayer strip and binds it around his wrists. It transforms into a band of cold blue light, slowly twisting and slithering around the bound extremities. The Sidereal suffers a +2 difficulty penalty to actions using his hands for the duration of this Charm.

This Charm extends the Excellent Implementation of Objectives Charm. Instead of encouraging the swift implementation of the Exalt's design through fate, destiny literally constructs the object for him as it ticks, second by second, into the world. Ignoring the normal mechanisms by which things happen, the components of

the design assemble and mold themselves, needing no direct intervention. The process takes a scene for mundane construction, a day for works involving the Magical Materials and a month for massive projects such as Manses and artifact ships. This Charm does not allow the Exalt to work with moonsilver.

The character automatically receives a perfect success on his Craft pool for building the item: All dice come up successes. In addition, all extra successes from the planning phase carry over as additional successes on the Craft roll. However, this form of Craft is not an extended action. The character cannot achieve any further successes through additional uses of this Charm or by making Craft rolls. Also, the Charm only shapes what is present. The character must procure the materials to be fabricated.

The character must have both the relevant Craft and Craft (Fate) at 4 or higher to use this Charm. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Compassion with this Charm.

THE EWER: DODGE

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE HUNTED MAIDEN

*Once, there was a maiden...
...who was driven from her land.
Great black stags chased her, and their eyes shone blue.
Monsters scrambled after her through the bush,
though they found her not.
Stumbling on a log, she fell; and thought to surrender,
and end the torment of the hunt; but then, she stood,
and stuck out her tongue at the dark woods behind her.
"Love is smiling at your troubles," she said.*

ABSENCE

Cost: 1 mote per target number reduction

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Dodge: 2

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: None

Predicting the path of a blade or blow well in advance, the Exalted arranges to be somewhere else when it lands. He can reduce the target number of a Dexterity + Dodge roll.

DUCK FATE

Cost: 10 motes

Duration: Instant

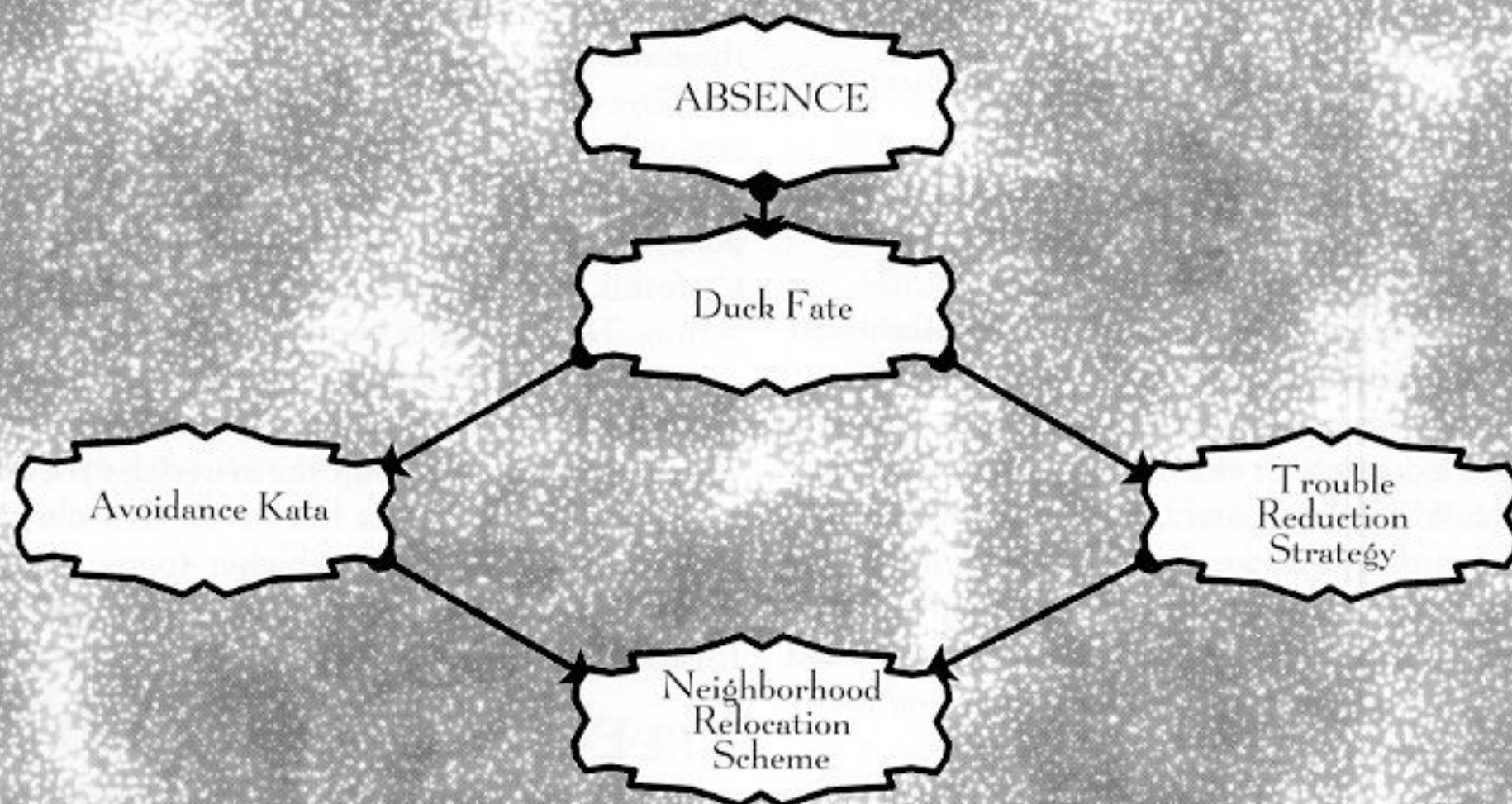
Type: Reflexive

Minimum Dodge: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Absence

Dodge - The Ewer



The character sees impending danger rippling toward her in the skein of fate and, as with Absence, chooses not to meet it. Her player rolls Dexterity + Dodge against a difficulty equal to her opponent's Essence. If the roll succeeds, the Exalt avoids any undesirable effect, including attacks she is not aware of, attacks with an area of effect, attacks with no physical component such as the Irresistible Questioning Technique and continuous deleterious effects such as You and Yours Stance. She must Duck Fate before her opponent's player makes the attack roll or as soon as her player knows about the effect, whichever is applicable. She need evade a continuous effect only once.

AVOIDANCE KATA

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Dodge: 3
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Duck Fate

Sometimes, the best answer to trouble is not being there at all. In the first two turns of combat or the first minute of a social encounter, the Sidereal's player can declare, "I'm not there." It turns out — at least as far as anyone can prove — that the Exalt anticipated the situation prophetically and was somewhere else, of the Storyteller's choosing, all along.

For this Charm's purposes, the first minute of a social encounter begins at the last chance the Exalt had to conveniently leave. If the character is chatting with a friend and Lilith shows up, a new social encounter has begun. The Sidereal can use this Charm, retroactively making her excuses and ducking out sometime beforehand. If the character is chatting with Lilith and a friend shows up, however, she's still in the encounter with Lilith.

TROUBLE REDUCTION STRATEGY

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Dodge: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Duck Fate

Generous Sidereals learn to spot impending danger to others as well. When activating this Charm, the character chooses a number of targets whose total Essence does not exceed her own. While the Trouble Reduction Strategy is in force, the character can use any other Dodge Charm she knows to benefit a consenting target instead of herself. Simple and extra action Charms use the character's action and Dodge pool. Reflexive Charms use the character's Dodge pool. Supplemental Charms enhance the target's dice action.

Using a Charm on someone else's behalf counts as using that Charm that turn. The Exalt must pay for the Charm. She can only use other Charms that turn if she

declares an appropriate Combo when using her first Charm. If the Combo includes non-reflexive Charms from other Abilities, the character cannot use it with the Trouble Reduction Strategy. If it includes reflexive Charms from other Abilities, she cannot use them on the target's behalf. She could, for example, Combo Absence and Shield of Mars (see p. 163). When she invoked the Combo, she could use Absence but not Shield of Mars to protect a friend. She *must* take a dodge action that turn, assisted by Absence, even if no one tries to hit her, because it is a supplemental Charm in a Combo. She *can* reflexively invoke the Shield of Mars.

Sidereal Exalted may always use their Compassion with this Charm.

NEIGHBORHOOD RELOCATION SCHEME

Cost: 15 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: Indefinite

Type: Simple

Minimum Dodge: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Avoidance Kata, Trouble Reduction Strategy

This Charm uses a long prayer strip marked with the scripture of the Hunted Maiden. The character twists it and wraps it around her waist, whereupon it transforms

into a band of crystalline Essence the color of the sky. Each hour the Exalted leaves this Charm in force, the band tightens, doing two levels of unsoakable bashing damage. This damage cannot be healed until the Charm ends.

The character begins to walk or run. These are the only acceptable forms of motion, but she can enhance them with Charms or the Lesser Sign of Mercury. As the character travels, the weave of Creation shifts, dragging part of the world after her. Specifically, both the general terrain and all habitations within her Essence in miles move with her. In the planning rooms of fate, this Charm slowly changes the records of each transported thing's position. Thus, their fated interactions in the moments to come take place in a new location.

This Charm alters divine records, which are then interpreted by those who feed fate into the world. Accordingly, it is an intelligent effect. The Sidereal cannot shear a mountain or city in two. If the Charm cannot logically divide such features, given the radius of effect, they do not travel at all. Further, Creation fills in the "vacant space" with something reasonable. Finally, the Sidereal cannot "erase" anything important by dragging land onto it. If she drags a desert onto a Manse in a forested region, the forest retreats but does not vanish. The Manse follows the forest or relocates to the desert. The new location seems correct and reason-



able to all witnesses, although they remember the previous state of affairs.

This Charm was first used to pull a key fortification out of the way of a Primordial assault, in the days when Exalted and Primordials warred. Using this Charm without authorization is a Severity 3 offense.

THE PILLAR: LINGUISTICS

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE BRIDE

*Once, there was a maiden...
...who fled a shadow, in the company of a friend.
They traveled through strange places, and among
strange people.
"How can you trust me," he asked, "with such
horror behind you?"
"Love endures," she said.*

FAVORABLE INFLECTION PROCEDURE

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Linguistics: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

Spoken properly, a person's name or nickname can pleasingly reflect the underlying pattern of his existence, forming a sense of completion in his heart. The character knows how to inflect a name in such a fashion. Her player rolls Charisma + Linguistics against the target's Essence. If the roll succeeds, the target experiences a momentary burst of warmth, happiness and connection to the Sidereal. If upset or violent, he loses his train of thought, forgetting what caused his unhappiness. He will not remember it naturally, but events may remind him. For

example, seeing the Exalt standing over the murdered body of his bride with a bloody knife in her hand would immediately reinvoke his rage. This Charm fails before the Great Curse, and the character must know the target's name. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Compassion with this Charm.

BLUE VERVAIN BINDING

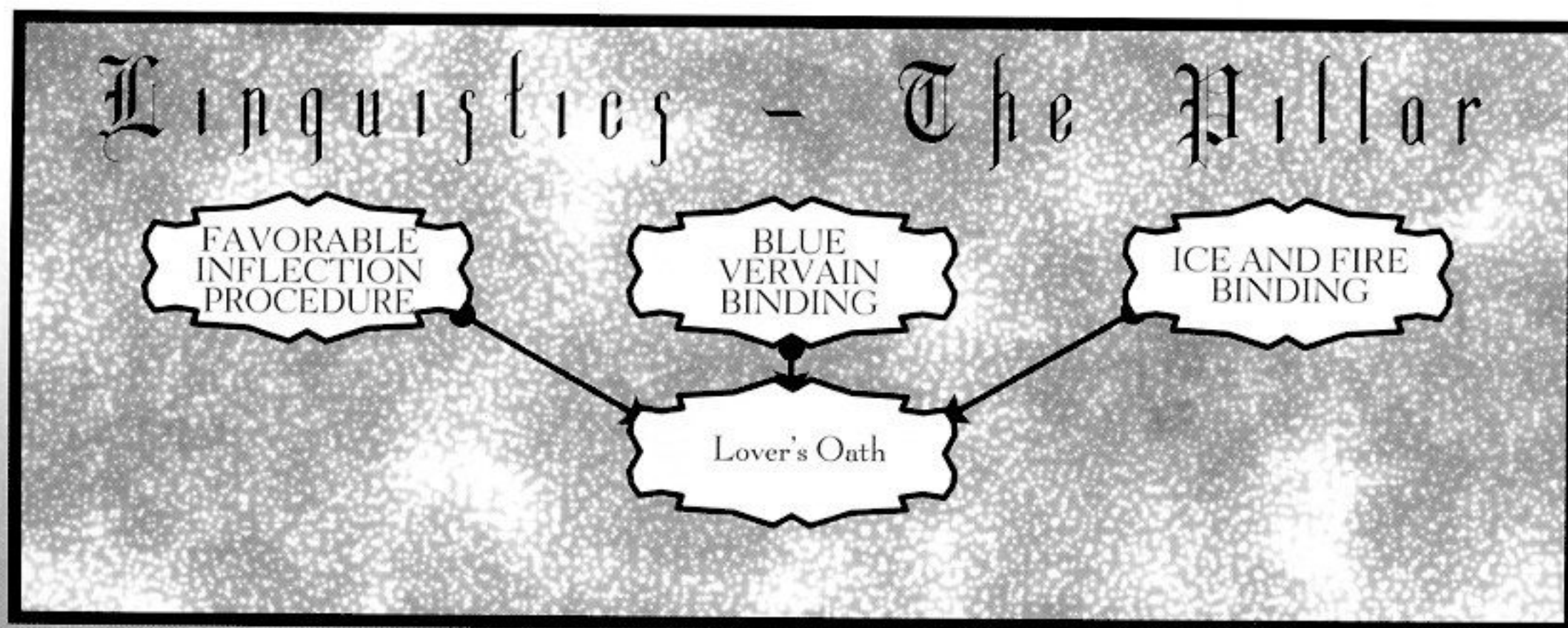
Cost: 5 motes, 1 experience point
Duration: One minute
Type: Simple
Minimum Linguistics: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Blue Vervain Binding is a minute-long formal blessing in the language of the Old Realm. It ties together two creatures' fates. (One creature can be the Sidereal himself.) Successfully reciting the binding requires perfect intonation, cadence and inflection throughout — and thus an Intelligence + Linguistics roll against difficulty 5. Forever after, to the limits of their intellects, each creature can understand the other perfectly and make herself understood.

ICE AND FIRE BINDING

Cost: 10 motes
Duration: One hour
Type: Simple
Minimum Linguistics: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

Reciting the Ice and Fire Binding is similarly complex and takes a full hour to complete. The player rolls Intelligence + Linguistics against a difficulty of 9. Each additional Sidereal who supports the Charm with her presence and words reduces the difficulty by 1, to a minimum of 5. Supporters need not know the Charm. This incantation summons a spirit or elemental of fire, with Essence less



than the character's own and touches it with the essence of Serenity. For one season, it binds that spirit to seek the joy, health and pleasure of those around it. Afterward, it smoothly removes any details of the characters who summoned and bound it from the spirit's memory.

LOVER'S OATH

Cost: 20 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Linguistics: 4

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Favorable Inflection Procedure, Blue Vervain Binding, Ice and Fire Binding

This Charm uses a long prayer strip marked with the scripture of the Bride. The Sidereal and a consenting partner invoke it together. His partner need not know this Charm but must fully understand its implications. Together, they twist the strip and wind it around one finger each, reciting an oath in the language of the Old Realm. Both players roll Intelligence + Linguistics against difficulty 5. On a success, every detail of cant and expression is correct. The prayer strip shrivels and reshapes into two starmetal rings, set with sapphires. Neither character can ever directly or indirectly attempt to remove the rings. Others can destroy them using the standard rules for breaking a prayer strip.

While the rings endure, each character can reflexively spend the others' health levels, Essence and Willpower as his own. Treat motes of Essence drawn from the character's partner as Peripheral for the purpose of affecting the drawing characters' anima banner. A character automatically and involuntarily draws on the other's health levels when his partner has a smaller (pre-Charm) wound penalty than he. When defending or helping one's partner, treat all Compassion dice as automatic successes.

This Charm is tantamount to a wedding ceremony, and the Maidens expect their Exalted to treat it with reverence. The feelings between the characters need not be romantic love. They do not even have to be love at all — one can make a Lover's Oath of expedience. However, the bond remains sacred, and ill fate follows should one character treat his partner poorly.

THE MUSICIAN: PERFORMANCE

COMPASSIONATE ESSENCE REPLENISHMENT

Cost: None

Duration: Permanent

Type: Special

Minimum Performance: 1

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE DANCER

Once, there was a maiden...

...who stood at the center of every dance.

Back then, she knew all the dances.

She never missed a step.

One day, she heard something in the music, as a singer dropped the beat.

It taught her of the joy of dancing poorly.

She started dancing more and more awry.

"Love has no rules," she said.

In many ways, Sidereals become the central figures in the lives of those around them — unrecognized, unknown, but nevertheless, the ones about whom events turn. When they call out for it, the world returns the love and service they have given it, offering its Essence to them freely. This Charm draws on the Exalt's ability to move through situations without taking overt action, encouraging spirits and the world to willingly take the actions she desires. It also draws on the sacrifices she makes, that the world should care for her so. Immediately after a successful roll using Compassion or immediately after a Performance roll that generated a significant surge of positive feeling toward the character, the Exalt regains twice her Compassion in motes of Essence, up to her normal maximum. There is no cost to use this Charm's effects — learning this Charm simply enhances the Exalt's capabilities.

PERFECTION IN LIFE

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

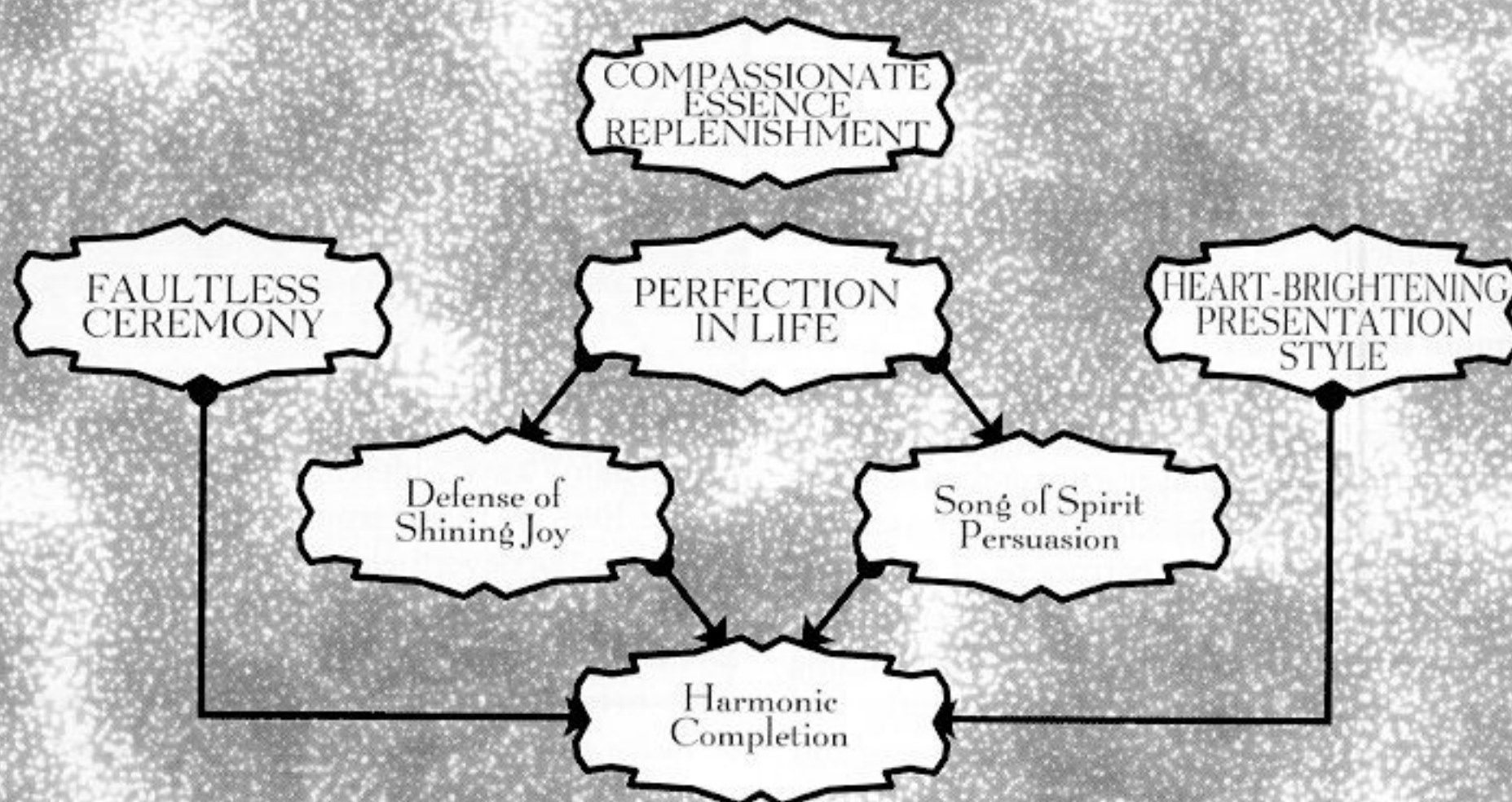
Minimum Performance: 2

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

Misery fills the world, but it is an incomplete fate. Characters with this Charm would sketch a life of sorrow as a broken pattern, full of pain, casting forth strands of effort, desire, hope and fear that reach for fulfillment. Those strands blunt themselves on weakness and circumstance but implicitly define the rest of the pattern — the perfection that that person's life could be. The Exalt can manipulate events to temporarily complete such patterns. This is the dance of Venus. His words and actions, though apparently mundane, purify and brighten the lives around him. The cadence of his movements and his speech brings joy to the world. Though not a dance by normal definitions, his actions radiate an artistic elegance and precision.

Performance - The Musician



The player rolls Charisma + Performance. For one scene, the character and everyone he interacts with gains 1 temporary Willpower point. This can increase Willpower past its normal maximum, but it cannot increase temporary Willpower past the number of successes rolled. Beneficiaries also feel fulfilled and happy. No character can gain Willpower from this Charm more than once per day. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Compassion with this Charm.

DEFENSE OF SHINING JOY

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Performance: 4

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Perfection in Life

Infusing herself with the Essence of the dance, the character sees the perfect completion to every enemy attack. Matching her efforts to their own, she avoids all harm. For the remainder of the scene, the character can reflexively dodge any physical attack with her full Dexterity + Dodge or Dexterity + Performance dice pool.

SONG OF SPIRIT PERSUASION

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Performance: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Perfection in Life

Singing in the language of the Old Realm — which she must, of course, know — the character answers the deepest fears and questions in a spirit or elemental's heart. As with the dance of Venus, she chooses her words and melody to complete that which is incomplete. In this fashion, she bends the spirit to her ends.

The Sidereal's player makes a Manipulation + Performance roll against the spirit's Essence. It must be able to hear the song, although it need not be awake or present. On a success, the spirit becomes one of the character's allies. Spending experience points equal to the spirit's Essence makes this permanent. Otherwise, the spirit forgets the Exalt at the end of the story.

Spirits of fire and wood, embodying life and passion, are particularly vulnerable to this technique. Add a +2 difficulty penalty when entrancing spirits of earth, water and air.

FAULTLESS CEREMONY

Cost: 1 mote + 1 mote per target number reduction

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Performance: 3

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character closes the loose ends of fate, making a ceremony she participates in perfect and complete in the eyes of fate and the gods. Betrothals, funerals, banquets and other ceremonies all qualify. Her player rolls Charisma + Performance (as with a prayer roll, see Exalted,

pp. 335-336) against a difficulty of (8 - the Resources cost of the ceremony). She adds her character's Essence in dice. She may lower the target number of this roll. Success provides a meaningful bias to fate, particularly in matters relevant to her caste. Thus, Chosen of Endings can easily arrange a smooth conclusion to a dead man's affairs, and the Chosen of Serenity can all but guarantee a couple's fertility. Active intervention from antagonists in Heaven or creatures outside of fate can muddle the result.

HEART-BRIGHTENING PRESENTATION STYLE

Cost: 2 motes per die

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Performance: 2

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

Every time an audience's trust in the character is about to falter, the Exalt adapts her approach to form a better answer to its members' needs and desires. The player can add dice up to her character's Essence to Presence, Performance, Bureaucracy and Socialize rolls. This Charm is explicitly permitted to be used in a Combo with Charms of other Abilities.

Sidereal Exalted may always use their Compassion with this Charm.

HARMONIC COMPLETION

Cost: 16 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: Five days

Type: Simple

Minimum Performance: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Defense of Shining Joy, Song of Spirit Persuasion, Faultless Ceremony, Heart-Brightening Presentation Style

This Charm uses a long prayer strip marked with the scripture of the Dancer. The character binds it around her eyes, whereupon it transforms into a band of starmetal and blue jade. (It still abides by the normal rules for prayer strip destruction.) For the duration of this effect, the Exalt is genuinely blind and takes a +2 difficulty penalty on appropriate rolls.

The words of a character employing Harmonic Completion sound to others like the affirmations and truths they have waited their entire lives to hear. Each comes across as a measured antidote to every trouble written in their history and fate. The Exalt receives a perfect success on all Performance rolls to influence mortals. Anyone, mortal or Exalted, who does not deliberately tune her out falls in love. Any non-extra character can reflexively tune her out when he senses this effect. This Charm imposes a difficulty penalty on all rolls to attack, dodge or otherwise influence the Sidereal equal to her Performance.

THE LOVERS: SOCIALIZE

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE WHORE

*Once, there was a maiden...
...and things didn't go so well for her.
It was just the way of the world, you know?
She had to give up power to get it, and she didn't
get much.
Some people hated her for getting any power at all.
She needed a protector,
so she gave herself to a man named Necessity.
"Love is hard," she said.*

STERN ESSENCE REPLENISHMENT

Cost: None

Duration: Permanent

Type: Special

Minimum Socialize: 1

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

In taking those actions she considers necessary, whatever the personal cost, a Sidereal sets her order on the world. As she does so, it helplessly yields its Essence to her. This Charm draws on the Exalt's ability to play spirits and the world, manipulating Creation in Creation's service. Immediately after a successful roll using Conviction or immediately after a Socialize roll that substantially changed the local social environment in her favor, the Exalt regains twice her Conviction in motes of Essence, up to her normal maximum. There is no cost to use this Charm's effects — learning this Charm simply enhances the Exalt's capabilities.

SHUN THE SMILING LADY

Cost: 7 motes

Duration: Indefinite

Type: Simple

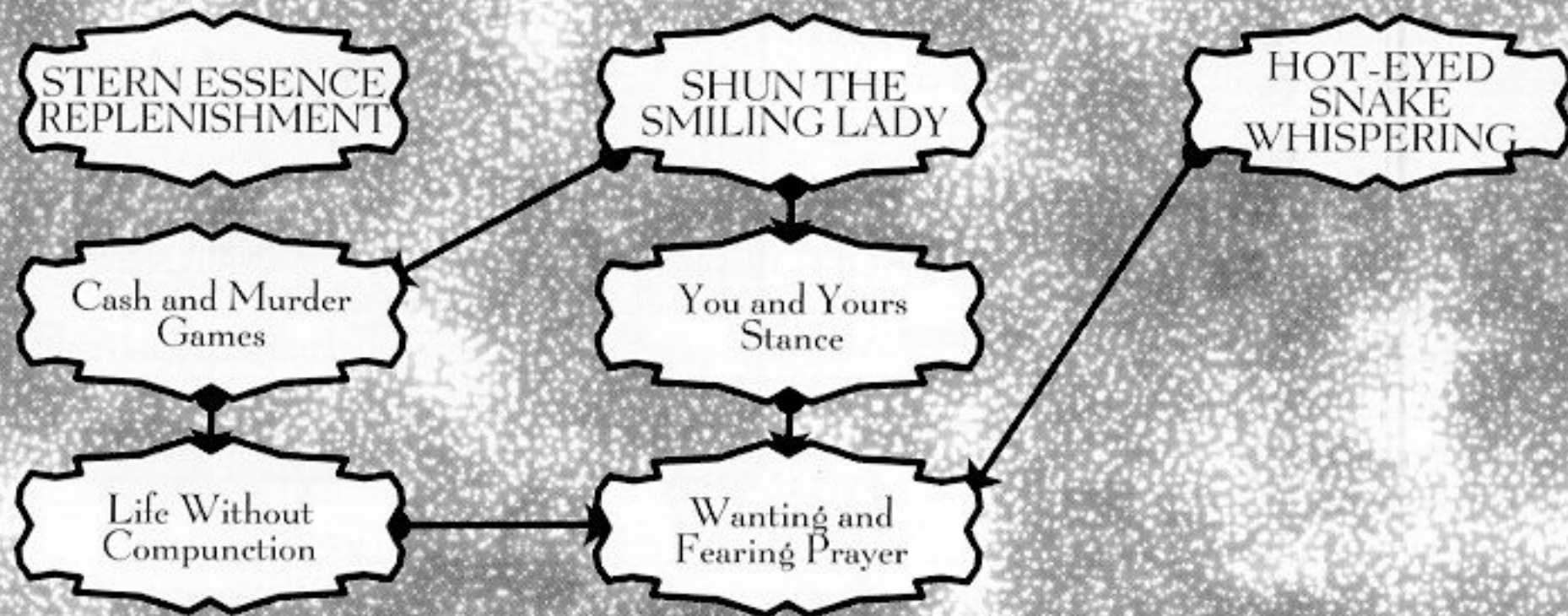
Minimum Socialize: 2

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character blots the target's name from the rolls of those destined to attract love. The target has an effective Appearance 1 for all non-magical effects. To invoke any form of supernatural appeal or to maintain it into a new scene, the target must spend a Willpower point, and his player must succeed at a Manipulation + Socialize roll against a difficulty of the Sidereal's Essence. He makes this roll after paying for the Charm or Ability used. If anyone with permanent Essence less than the Sidereal's own has romantic feelings for the target,

Socialize - The Lovers



those feelings are instantly severed. They do not return when the Charm ends.

CASH AND MURDER GAMES

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Socialize: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Shun the Smiling Lady

Quickly sketching a proposed relationship in the plans for future fate, the character increases the power one person has over another. The character names the fashion in which the beneficiary acquires dominion over the target — generally fear or desire, sexual or otherwise. The player rolls Manipulation + Socialize. To resist being intimidated, enthralled or impressed to the point of near-servitude, the target must spend one temporary Willpower per scene where he encounters the Charm's beneficiary. When he has spent Willpower equal to the number of successes rolled, the compulsion fades. Normally, the emotional impact does not entirely dissipate so much as mute itself to non-magical levels. The Sidereal can choose herself as the beneficiary. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Conviction with this Charm.

LIFE WITHOUT COMPUNCTION

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Socialize: 4

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Cash and Murder Games

As with legal crimes, the right tricks can make social crimes... disappear. The Sidereal can instantly erase the onus attached to herself or to someone else for some social blunder or taboo violation. Her player rolls Manipulation + Socialize. A single success makes people stop caring. With three successes, the character can choose instead either to make the relevant action generally acceptable or to make the person who committed it an admirable rebel (e.g., an ideologue who makes a bold, daring statement by digging up people's dead grandmothers, however disgusting that behavior would be in others). The Charm only affects communities where the relevant action significantly contributes to the target's notoriety. (To make theft socially acceptable throughout Creation, the Sidereal would have to arrange an act of theft infamous throughout Creation.) Socially acceptable acts often retain legal penalties. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Temperance with this Charm.

YOU AND YOURS STANCE

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Socialize: 3

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Shun the Smiling Lady

The character wraps himself in the tenor of fate that gives rise to lust. He becomes impossible to recognize. Looking upon him, others perceive only a blazing sense that he is their greatest possession and that to harm or disappoint him is to risk losing their own hearts. For those actively hostile to him, it requires a Conviction roll to attack. For others, it requires a Temperance roll

not to act as best they can, short of suicide, to please him. This Charm adds the character's Essence in automatic successes to any seduction roll.

HOT-EYED SNAKE WHISPERING

Cost: 1 mote per target number reduction

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Socialize: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

Every time an audience's trust in the character is about to falter, her hands on the web of fate twitch its members' minds back onto the proper path. The Charm can reduce the target number of Presence, Performance, Bureaucracy and Socialize rolls. This Charm is explicitly permitted to be in a Combo with Charms of other Abilities. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Conviction with this Charm.

WANTING AND FEARING PRAYER

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: Indefinite

Type: Simple

Minimum Socialize: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Life Without Compunction, You and Yours Stance, Hot-Eyed Snake Whispering

This Charm uses two prayer strips marked with the scripture of the Whore. The character holds them up, one at a time, and names a target for each. The targets must be within 10 miles. Each prayer strip burns lambent blue for a moment before disappearing, reappearing wrapped around one of its target's bones. Its light cannot shine through even the thinnest veil of flesh, but bursts forth brilliantly if that flesh is ever cut away. Extracting the strip requires 12 successes on an extended Dexterity + Medicine roll. Each attempt inflicts one level of unsoakable lethal damage.

The Sidereal's player rolls Manipulation + Socialize against the Essence of each target. If he succeeds both times, the character can dictate a new social and emotional relationship between the two targets. As fast and hard as plausible, for the duration of the Charm, events push the victims toward that social relationship. The imposed emotional relationship is partly a magical compulsion, which remains while the character commits Essence to the Charm. Under its influence, a target must spend a Willpower point to act significantly at odds with the imposed emotional context. The Charm also instantly creates genuine emotions, which do not depend on magic to sustain them. They fade or blossom as emotions normally do.

Sidereal Exalted may always use their Conviction with this Charm.

BATTLES: THE CRIMSON PANOPLY OF VICTORY

THE QUIVER: ARCHERY

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE CLAY MAIDEN

*Once, there was a maiden...
...who made herself from the substance of the world.*

She knew how to eat an owl's heart and gain its insight.

She knew how to bake herself in the sun and melt herself in the rain.

She knew how to mess up wisdom.

She knew how to love, and how to hate.

"Survival is flexibility," she said.

GENERALIZED AMMUNITION TECHNIQUE

Cost: 1 mote

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Archery: 2

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

The mirror of adjusting circumstances to meet one's needs is adapting one's needs to things found in one's circumstances. Both allow for the smooth progress of fate. This Charm lets an adaptable Exalt fire anything no heavier than her fist and no longer than her arm as if it were an arrow, including handfuls of dust or fire, shouts, dragonflies, small spirits or shadows. Living things can avoid the Sidereal seizing and launching them with a reflexive Dexterity + Dodge roll against a difficulty equal to the Sidereal's Archery score. Upon impact, an improvised arrow inflicts damage as a normal arrow of any type (Exalt's choice), in addition to any unusual effects appropriate to the attack. Sidereal Exalted can only shape arrows from concrete things, although the Maiden of Battles shapes her arrows from intention and desire.

ANY DIRECTION ARROW

Cost: 1 mote + 1 mote per die

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

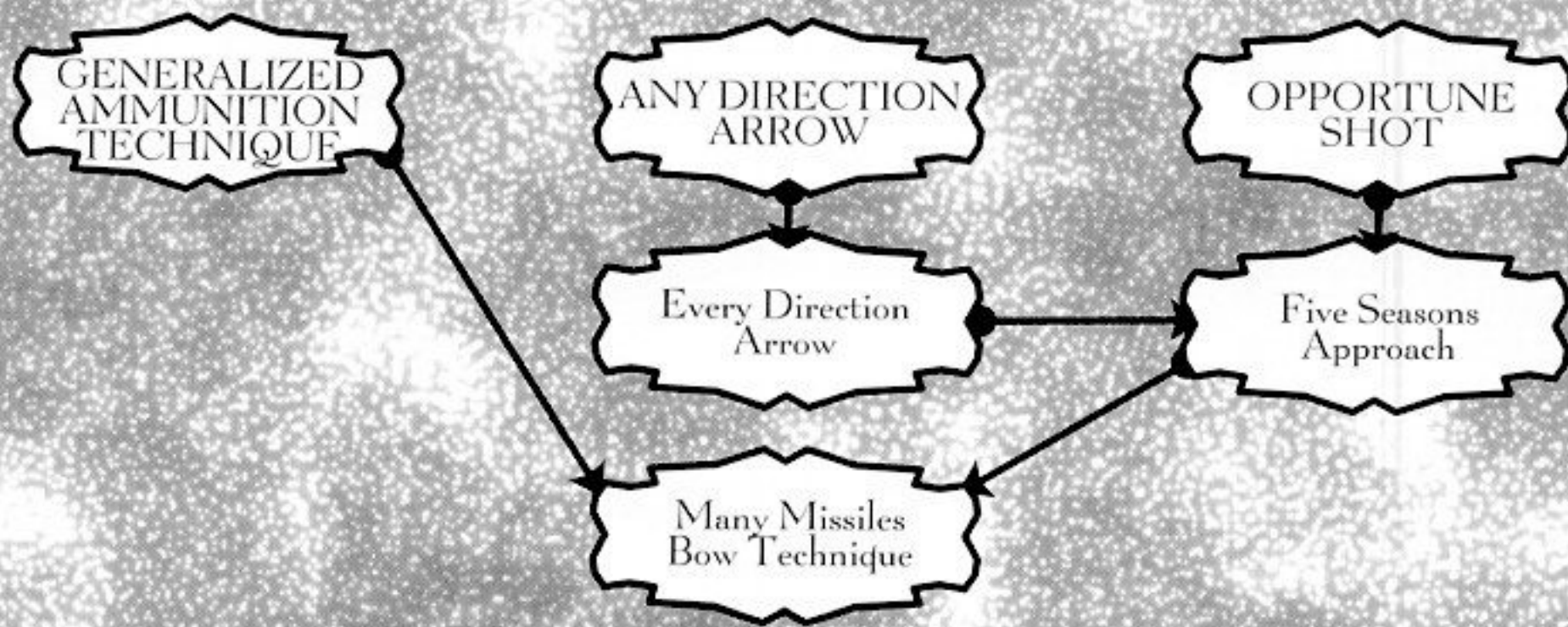
Minimum Archery: 1

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: None

Graced by the chance to serve those who weave fate, an arrow gleefully weaves in the air to strike its opponent from an unexpected direction. The Exalt adds up to her

Archery - The Quiver



Essence in dice to an Archery roll. In addition, the arrow takes no penalties from up to 50 percent cover.

EVERY DIRECTION ARROW

Cost: 3 motes per extra arrow

Duration: Instant

Type: Extra Actions

Minimum Archery: 4

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Any Direction Arrow

The character fires a number of arrows no greater than her Essence, which first scatter and then strike a single target from every side. Use one attack roll for all the arrows, but apply the damage for each of them separately.

OPPORTUNE SHOT

Cost: 3 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Archery: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

Spotting an opportunity thanks to the graces of fate, the character launches an arrow before her normal initiative. This Charm lets her automatically win initiative over a single target for purposes of making an Archery attack against him. She cannot split her dice pool on the turn she uses Opportune Shot. Characters using Opportune Shot, Thunderclap Rush Attack or similar abilities in competition roll for initiative with one another normally.

FIVE SEASONS APPROACH

Cost: 2 motes per target number reduction

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Archery: 4

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Every Direction Arrow, Opportune Shot

If skill does not suffice to make her shot, then a character may trust to the world's esteem for her. If not to that, then to the world's fear of what she hopes to save it from. If not to that, to the world's dreams of the glories she strives for. Even if these things fail, she may trust to luck. This is the Five Seasons Approach. The character can reduce the target number of an Archery roll. Sidereal Exalted can always use any Virtue with this Charm.

MANY MISSILES BOW TECHNIQUE

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Archery: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Generalized Ammunition Technique, Five Seasons Approach

This Charm uses a prayer strip marked with the scripture of the Clay Maiden. The Exalt casts it into the sky, where it radiates a gaudy pink light, hovering 10 yards above her bow.

For the duration of this Charm, the character's arrows have triple their normal range. In addition, for 1 experience point each, the Sidereal can learn transformations to apply to an arrow as it falls, reshaping it into

some other aspect of Creation. Commonly known transformations include:

- **Rain of fire:** The arrow turns into a rain of fire, attacking and applying its normal damage to all creatures within five yards of the target, setting flammable things alight, and ignoring armor on a successful hit.

- **Snow:** It begins to snow around the region where the arrow fell. The character must renew this effect with at least one arrow per minute to maintain it.

- **Life:** The target is healed for one level of lethal or bashing damage.

- **Grain:** A small patch of ripe wheat, enough to feed one person for a day, sprouts where the arrow lands.

- **Boulder:** The arrow turns into an unblockable boulder as it falls. It can be dodged. Double the raw damage of the attack, including extra successes, when used against inanimate objects.

- **Glass:** The arrow becomes transparent as it falls. Targets must make a reflexive Perception + Awareness roll at difficulty 2 to defend against it without the use of Charms.

Each such arrow costs 1 mote of Essence to fire. Living or heavily worked “arrows” based on the Generalized Ammunition Technique cannot suffer transformations, nor can arrows made from the Five Magical Materials.

Characters can learn transformations from other Exalted with this Charm. They can also design new transformations, with the Storyteller’s approval. Effects should be simple and should not directly duplicate the effects of other Charms.

THE GAUNTLET: BRAWL

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE DROWNING MAIDEN

*Once, there was a maiden...
...falling forever in the water. She reached for
purchase, but found nothing; her arms swung through
the sea.*

*The water did not slow her, nor the chill,
but she could not breathe.*

*Each time she gasped and found no breath, a human
child died; and thus, she lived.*

“Survival is acceptance,” she said.

UNOBSTRUCTED BLOW

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Brawl: 4

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character chooses the arc of his blow and writes it into forthcoming fate. One attack made using Brawl cannot be blocked. If it hits, the target’s armor provides no protection.

TOLERANT STRIFE

Cost: 3 motes + 1 mote per die

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Brawl: 3

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character adapts to the conditions of the battlefield, rewriting the course of events so that they aid rather than hinder her. She makes a Brawl attack, suffering no environmental or circumstantial penalties and adding up to her Essence in dice. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Compassion with this Charm.

HORRIFIC WREATH

Cost: 2 motes

Duration: Five turns

Type: Simple

Minimum Brawl: 2

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character mirrors her personal Essence to that of her enemies. When she strikes at a demon, this Charm wreathes her fists in a hideous red glare. When she attacks the servants of the Malfeas, her hands burn an undifferentiated white. Her unarmed attacks and attacks using starmetal brawling aids do lethal damage against ordinary foes and aggravated damage against inhabitants of Malfeas and the Underworld. This Charm can be invoked during a clinch, and its effects apply to a character’s clinching damage. Its effects also apply to barehanded Martial Arts attacks.

CRIMSON PALM COUNTERSTRIKE

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Brawl: 4

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Horrific Wreath

Coming to an accommodation with an enemy’s movements, the character learns to interrupt an enemy’s strike an instant before it happens. If the character is aware of an incoming hand-to-hand attack, she can reflexively counterattack. A well-executed Crimson Palm Counterstrike knocks the enemy out of position: He overreaches or stumbles and cannot complete his attack. The Sidereal’s player makes a single Dexterity + Brawl roll at her full dice pool. Count the

Brawl - The Gauntlet



number of successes. Apply these successes first as a parry, even against a lethal attack, to resolve the initial blow. Then, apply the remainder as successes received on an immediate Brawl counterattack.

The character can only use this Charm if she's able to attack and cannot use it in response to Crimson Palm Counterstrike or other any counterattack Charm. Otherwise, the parry and counterattack succeed or fail independently — she can knock her opponent aside without damaging him, or vice versa.

EASILY ACCEPTED PROPOSITION STANCE

Cost: 12 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: One battle

Type: Simple

Minimum Brawl: 5

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Unobstructed Blow, Tolerant Strife, Crimson Palm Counterstrike

This Charm uses a prayer strip marked with the scripture of the Drowning Maiden. The character knots it into her shadow, where it shimmers a soft scarlet.

Once per invocation of this Charm, the character can strike a fate-resolving blow, sending cascading vibrations through the weave of the world. She dictates a single event or circumstance. The dictum must be a feasible occurrence, although it can be highly improbable: Reinforcements might arrive, a wall might spontaneously crumble, or the character's fallen army might turn out to be bruised and unconscious rather than wounded and dead. Legions of tyrant lizards cannot fall from the sky and set upon the foe.

The Exalt's player rolls Intelligence + Brawl. The difficulty is the Essence of the highest-Essence entity directly and unpleasantly affected by the character's dictum. If she succeeds, that enemy has a choice. Either the character's dictum comes to pass, or the tremors in the weave ground through *that enemy* — inflicting dice

of aggravated damage equal to the Sidereal's Essence, plus one die per extra success on the Brawl roll. This damage ignores armor. The attempted use of a defensive Charm nullifies the damage entirely; instead, the dictum takes effect.

Sidereal Exalted can always use their Valor with this Charm. Using this Charm without authorization is a Severity 3 offense.

THE SPEAR: MELEE

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN ON THE SHELF

*Once, there was a doll...
...who sat on a child's shelf and watched the
entire world.
Her eyes were made of glass,
and their pupils were red.
Her mouth was sewn on.
For years and years, she did not move.
Then, when necessary, she was gone, and the head
of that child with her.
"Survival is control," she said.*

HARMONY OF BLOWS

Cost: 8 motes

Duration: Instant

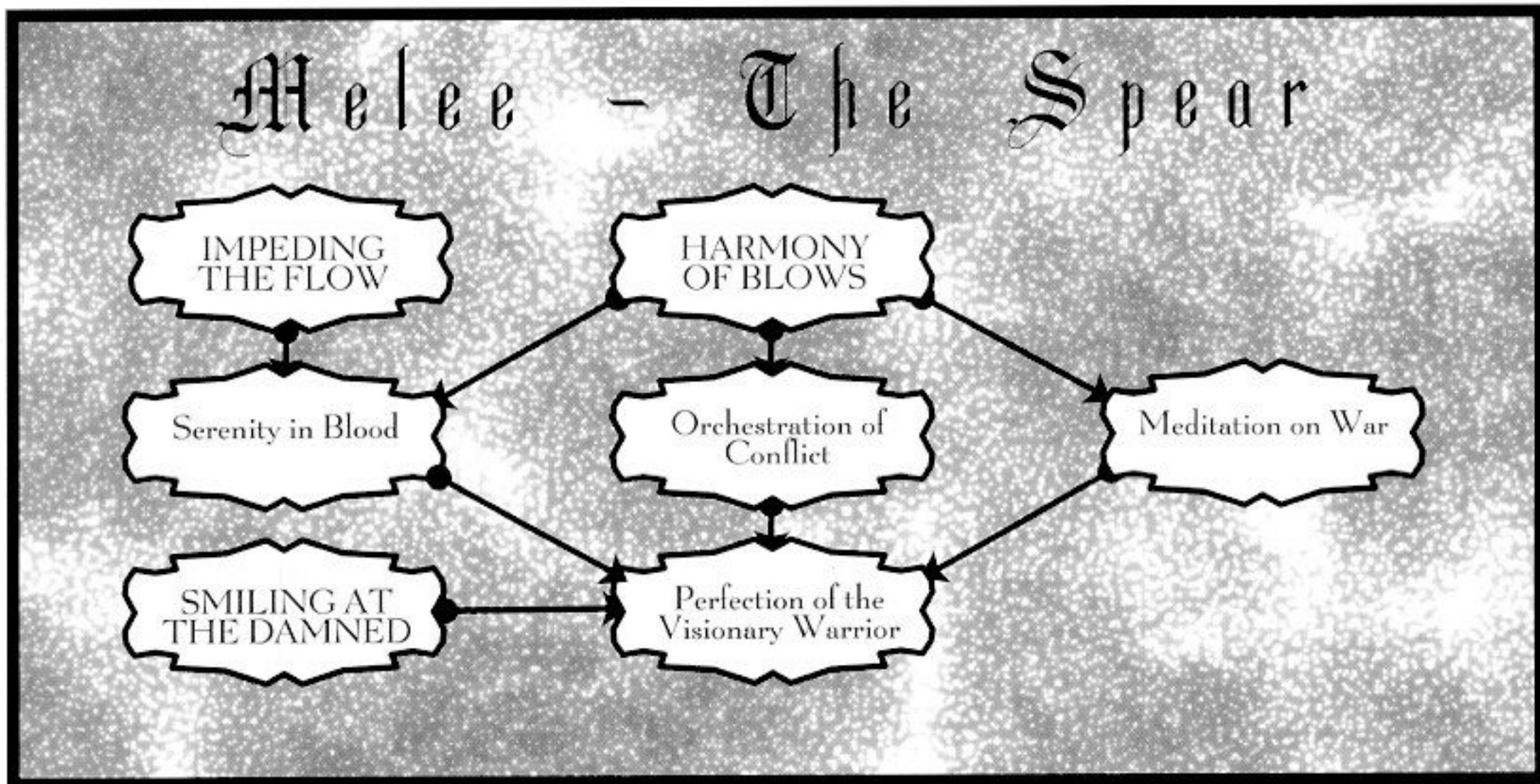
Type: Extra Action

Minimum Melee: 2

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

The patterns and flows of a battlefield hold no mysteries for the character. She does not need to improvise last-second defenses. She notices openings well before they appear. She can choose her blows precisely, selecting multiple actions that combine harmoniously.



In the turn in which she invokes this Charm, the character can take two extra attack actions, using Archery, Brawl, Melee or Thrown. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Temperance with this Charm.

This Charm is explicitly permitted to be in a Combo with Charms of other Abilities. Note that the rules on Combos may limit the kinds of actions a character can take.

MEDITATION ON WAR

Cost: 1 mote per die + 1 mote per dice pool penalty cancelled

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Melee: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Harmony of Blows

Calm and precision envelops the character as she strikes. She adds dice to one Melee attack, increasing it to a maximum of its normal pool plus the character's Essence. For example, an Essence 3 character who has a -1 wound penalty can spend up to 4 motes to enhance her attack. This can overcome penalties that reduce the character's dice pool to 0 before Charms. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Temperance with this Charm.

ORCHESTRATION OF CONFLICT

Cost: 2 motes per target number reduction

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Melee: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Harmony of Blows

Manipulating the local flow of a conflict through the ripple effects of her own actions, the character reduces the target number for a Melee attack or parry.

IMPEDING THE FLOW

Cost: 3 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Melee: 2

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: None

A wind full of red stardust and the character's will, visible to those who can see dematerialized spirits, spins around the character. It reroutes the flows of Essence and fate that normally allow others to attack her. A casual movement of the Exalt's weapon parries any one incoming attack she is aware of, so long as the attack has a physical component and is not specifically noted as impossible to block. This is *not* a perfect defense.

SERENITY IN BLOOD

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Melee: 4

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Harmony of Blows, Impeding the Flow

Stirring the currents of fate with the tip of her weapon, the character disrupts the path of any attack made against her, so long as it passes through any portion of the world bound by fate. If she is unaware of the attack, her player must make a reflexive Perception + Melee roll at difficulty

3 to divert the blow. Otherwise, this is a perfect block, capable of stopping even unblockable attacks.

SMILING AT THE DAMNED

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Melee: 4

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: None

In the moment the character's weapon strikes true, the colors around her take on a harsh red tinge. Essence dissolves at the weapon's touch. Halve the raw damage for one attack, rounding down, but the damage is aggravated. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Conviction with this Charm.

PERFECTION OF THE VISIONARY WARRIOR

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Melee: 5

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Meditation on War, Orchestration of Conflict, Serenity in Blood, Smiling at the Damned

This Charm uses a prayer strip marked with the scripture of the Maiden on the Shelf. The character places it across his eyes, whereupon it adheres and begins to drip with dark blood.

The character suffers no visibility penalties. All opponents and attacks become apparent to him, although effects such as the Mental Invisibility Technique can force him to ignore them. He sees enemies not as bodies and faces but as patterns of fate and potential or — for creatures outside of fate — disruptions in such patterns.

The character can reflexively parry any blockable attack with his full Dexterity + Melee dice pool. Once per turn, after his initiative, he can reflexively make an Archery, Brawl, Melee or Thrown attack at his full dice pool. He cannot use the latter ability in any turn where he splits his normal dice pool.

THE BANNER: PRESENCE

HEROIC ESSENCE REPLENISHMENT

Cost: None

Duration: Permanent

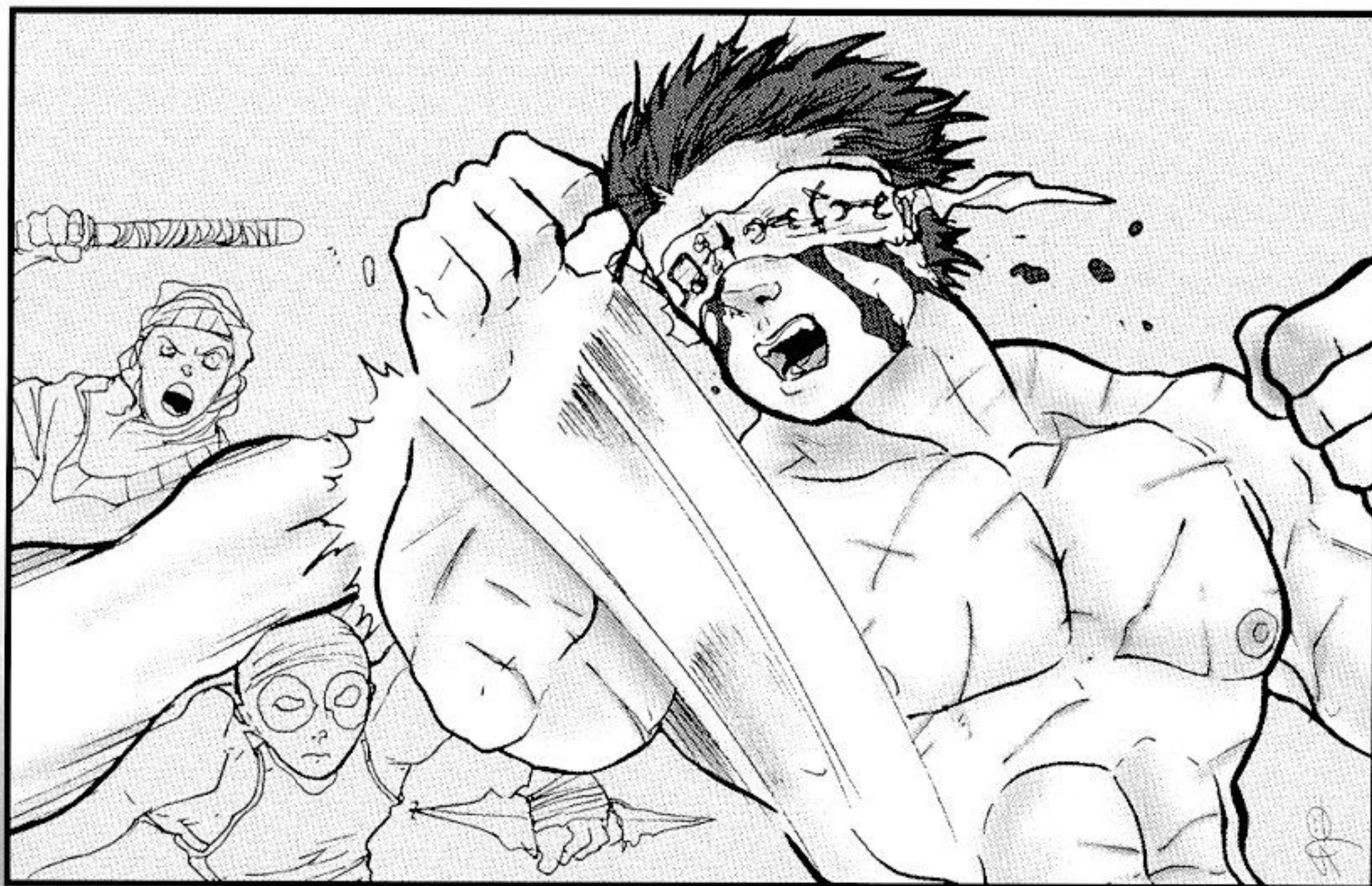
Type: Special

Minimum Presence: 1

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

In her moments of greatest accomplishment, the force of an exultant Sidereal's will allows her to siphon Essence from the world. This Charm draws on her ability to single-handedly remake the world in the shape she favors and dominate those hostile to herself and her cause. Immediately after a successful roll using Valor or immediately after a Presence roll that bent an enemy to



THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN AT WAR

Once, there was a maiden...
 ...whose battles called her far from home.
 She slew the thing she feared most, and conquered
 the land that feared her.
 As she fought, far away, she knew her children
 needed guidance.
 She knew they faced tyrants.
 She knew they faced fear.
 In her homeland, things were broken.
 So, she held up her hand before the sun, and cast a
 shadow on the world, and drowned the troubles of her
 home in darkness.
 "Survival's a long reach," she said.

her will, the Exalt regains twice her Valor in motes of Essence, up to her normal maximum. There is no cost to use this Charm's effects — learning this Charm simply enhances the Exalt's capabilities.

PRESENCE IN ABSENCE TECHNIQUE

- Cost: 5 motes
- Duration: Instant
- Type: Simple
- Minimum Presence: 2
- Minimum Essence: 1
- Prerequisite Charms: None

The character impresses the fervent force of his personality on another person's future. When next the target finds himself in a specified circumstance, the Sidereal can use Performance, Presence or Socialize as if the Exalt were there. His player makes a single Ability

roll, which Charms cannot augment. This uses the target's actions as a medium but does not change those actions — rather, it gives them an unexpected emotional resonance and unusual connotations. For example, the target could enter the court of a king of thieves and discover that her actions inadvertently comprise a Presence roll to convince that court that she must die. Using this Charm voids any previous Presence in Absence Technique effects on the target. The Sidereals cannot annotate a single person's destiny with dozens of future rolls.

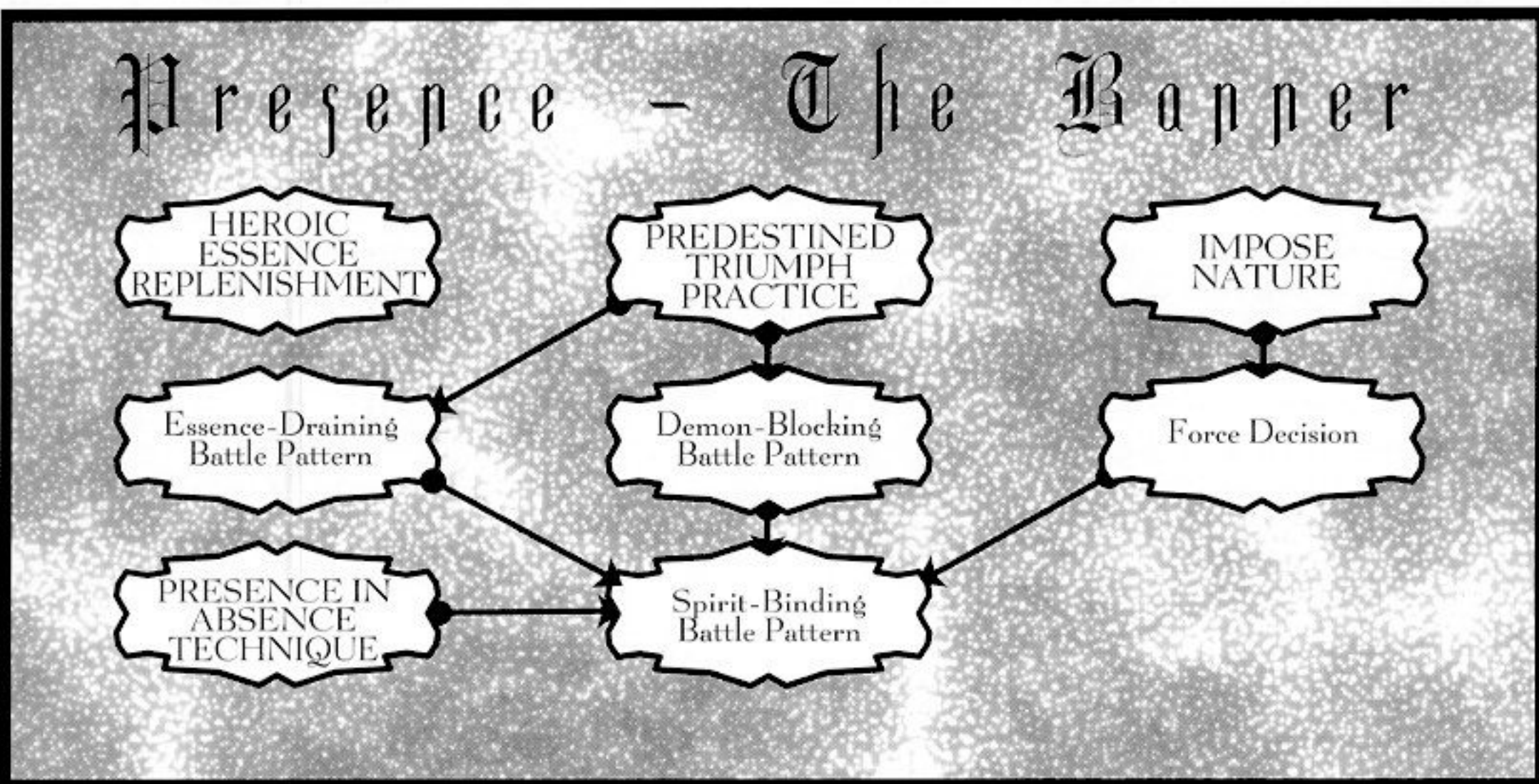
IMPOSE NATURE

- Cost: 3 motes
- Duration: Indefinite
- Type: Simple
- Minimum Presence: 4
- Minimum Essence: 2
- Prerequisite Charms: None

The character blesses a single creature with her personal sign, making a ghostly imprint of the character's Caste Mark on the target's left palm. The target gains the Sidereal's Nature in addition to his own. Both Natures are equally strong, and both help the target regain Willpower. The target proceeds normally, given that he has discovered an entirely new kind of joy/self-satisfaction, and while generally inclined to follow both Natures, does not need to give either precedence.

FORCE DECISION

- Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
- Duration: Instant
- Type: Simple
- Minimum Presence: 3
- Minimum Essence: 2
- Prerequisite Charms: Impose Nature



This Charm allows the Sidereal to channel Essence into another being briefly, forcing him to make the decision the Sidereal desires. The Sidereal's player makes a Manipulation + Presence roll with a difficulty equal to the target's Essence. Success indicates that the target will make the decision the Sidereal desires.

PREDESTINED TRIUMPH PRACTICE

Cost: 8 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One battle

Type: Simple

Minimum Presence: 4

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm gives the character supernatural acumen and insight when planning a battle. It functions automatically when the Sidereal commands the troops herself. Otherwise, it requires a Charisma + Presence roll to properly convey the Sidereal's ideas to the leader of the side she favors. This roll has difficulty 1 for a cooperative leader, difficulty 3 for a leader who does not trust the Sidereal and difficulty 5 if the leader is actively unwilling to accept the Sidereal's advice.

Fighting those blessed by a Sidereal's insight is difficult. If the Exalt succeeds, opponents suffer a one-die penalty to their dice pools for both attacking and defending against the troops. Sidereal Exalted can always use their Compassion with this Charm.

ESSENCE-DRAINING BATTLE PATTERN

Cost: 8 motes

Duration: Until the relevant battle ends

Type: Simple

Minimum Presence: 5

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Predestined Triumph Practice

Having applied the Predestined Triumph Practice, the character may encourage his troops to fight in the Essence-Draining Battle Pattern. Their elegant maneuvering dams, blocks and diverts the flows of Essence that oppose them.

At any time while planning an impending battle, the character can elect to use this Charm. When the battle begins, the player rolls the Sidereal's Intelligence + Presence to measure the character's efficiency in designing the pattern and the troops' ability to follow it. The maximum number of successes achievable equals the Exalt's permanent Essence. Any further successes are lost. The pattern has a Perfection rating equal to this final number of successes.

One Exalt or 20 unExalted warriors can spend an action to enact part of the Sidereal's battle plan. The altered Essence flows of the battlefield pour 1 mote of temporary Essence into each character enacting the plan. In addition, they each add the pattern's Perfection

to the Essence cost of Charms and sorcery used by their opponents. Any number of characters can take this action in a given turn, each further increasing the difficulty of hostile magic. However, this cannot more than double the cost for a Charm or spell. The Essence-Draining Battle Pattern affects any hostile Charm or sorcery that either originates upon the battlefield or has direct effects there.

For example, if the character has Essence 5, and his player rolls five or more successes, and six Dragon-Blooded under his command fight in the Essence-Draining Battle Pattern, Charms and sorcery used against the character's forces cost up to 30 motes extra. Sledgehammer Fist Punch costs 8 motes instead of 3. Rain of Doom costs 90 motes instead of 60. Once upon a time, legions of well-advised Dragon-Blooded used this power to constrain even the horrible power of the Primordials.

An army may only enact one Battle Pattern-type Charm. Sidereal Exalted can always use their Compassion with this Charm.

DEMON-BLOCKING BATTLE PATTERN

Cost: 8 motes

Duration: Until the relevant battle ends

Type: Simple

Minimum Presence: 5

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Predestined Triumph Practice

Having applied the Predestined Triumph Practice, the character may encourage her troops to fight in the Demon-Blocking Battle Pattern. Their formations are attuned to the disruptions in fate that the creatures of Malfeas and the Underworld embody, and by mirroring and twisting that disruption, the warriors can keep the threads of fate running straight and true.

The character invokes this Charm exactly as with the Essence-Draining Battle Pattern. One Exalt or 20 unExalted warriors can spend an action to enact part of the pattern, imposing a general dice-pool penalty on an inhabitant of Malfeas or the Underworld equal to the pattern's Perfection. This cannot reduce the victim's pool below 0 before the use of Charms.

An army may only enact one Battle Pattern-type Charm. Sidereal Exalted can always use their Compassion with this Charm.

SPIRIT-BINDING BATTLE PATTERN

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: Until the relevant battle ends

Type: Simple

Minimum Presence: 5

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Presence in Absence Technique, Force Decision, Essence-Draining Battle Pattern, Demon-Blocking Battle Pattern

This Charm uses a prayer strip marked with the scripture of the Maiden at War. The character first applies the Predestined Triumph Practice and then burns the prayer strip. Only the symbols on it remain, drifting on the wind as letters of blood and smoke.

The Charm takes effect once the battle begins. The Sidereal names a spirit or elemental she hopes to call and bind. The Sidereal's location and invocation immediately becomes obvious to the spirit, wherever it may be. If the Sidereal uses this Charm unassisted, the spirit's maximum Essence is 5. However, up to one Sidereal of each other caste can support her, participating in the planning. They need not have the Charm themselves. Each adds 1 to the maximum summonable Essence.

The dice pool for summoning and binding the spirit starts at 0. The death of one Exalted or 20 unExalted warriors on the Sidereal's side adds one die to this pool. Whenever the Exalt finds this dice pool satisfactory, the player rolls against the spirit's Essence. Success binds the spirit to grant whatsoever favor the character demands and exact no retribution — or to serve her for a year and a day, later taking whatever revenge it chooses. (Elder spirits often consider killing the Sidereal Exalted too crude a revenge, instead seeking to impose an equally demeaning slavery upon them.) Suicide and favors tantamount to it are outside the limits of this agreement.

An army may only enact one Battle Pattern-type Charm. Sidereal Exalted can always use their Conviction with this Charm.

THE SHIELD: RESISTANCE

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE ONE-HANDED MAIDEN

*Once, there was a maiden...
...who struck an iron wall until it shattered her hand.
She did not stop, though cracks spread throughout
her bones.
She did not stop, though blood sprayed her eyes.
She did not stop until she shattered the wall.
"Survival is fury," she said.*

RED HAZE

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Five days

Type: Simple

Minimum Resistance: 2

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

Motes of crimson starlight fall in a mist over all things the character can see, warping the Essence of mortals, spirits, Exalted and even inanimate objects with furious opposition to the Primordial foe. Inhabitants of Malfeas and the Underworld lose one die from all rolls to affect creatures and places thus blessed. Rolls made defending against these enemies gain one die.



Resistance - The Shield



SOMEONE ELSE'S DESTINY

Cost: 4 motes + 1 mote per die

Duration: Instant

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Resistance: 2

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: None

Hissing, the character expels the effects of any poison or drug affecting her, including alcohol, onto a future enemy. Her player adds up to the character's Essence in dice to a Resistance roll made to avoid the poison's effects. If the roll succeeds, the substance ceases to exist, except as a memo attached to her fate. It reappears, coalescing around her weapon, a moment before the next physical attack she makes that lets her player roll at least one die of lethal or aggravated damage. The full quantity of that poison or drug enters the bloodstream of the person she hit, with its normal effects.

WATER AND FIRE LEGION

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: Until Calibration

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Resistance: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

With a reflexive sacrifice of pain, the character binds fire or water to the defense of fate. If she touches a flame, flame cannot burn or suffocate her for the duration of the Charm. If she touches a body of water, water cannot freeze, boil, sicken or drown her. Her allies and the things she cares for also fall under this protection.

In addition, while touching a spirit or elemental of fire or water — which may require a Brawl or Martial Arts action — the character can reflexively invoke this Charm. Her player rolls Charisma + Resistance against a difficulty equal to the spirit's Essence to coerce it into service. This service must take the form of protecting

something reasonably concrete. The Sidereal dictates what the spirit must protect. The spirit cannot retaliate for the Charm's duration. This Charm automatically expires at Calibration, and cannot be applied during that time. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Conviction with this Charm.

SHIELD OF MARS

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Resistance: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

Snarling fate with a twist of her hand, the character passes damage she might have suffered on to another. After damage is rolled but before it is applied, the Sidereal's player makes a reflexive Dexterity + Resistance roll. Each two successes allow the Exalt to transfer one level of undodgeable, unblockable and unsoakable damage to her attacker or one of her attacker's allies (who must be present) rather than taking it herself. She cannot transfer more damage than she originally took. She transfers bashing damage to others as bashing damage. She transfers lethal and aggravated damage to others as lethal damage. If her target uses a perfect dodge such as Seven Shadow Evasion, a perfect block such as the Heavenly Guardian Defense or a perfect soak Charm such as the Adamant Skin Technique, neither the target nor the Sidereal suffer the transferred damage.

STORM'S EYE STANCE

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Resistance: 4

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Red Haze, Someone Else's Destiny, Water and Fire Legion, Shield of Mars

This Charm uses a prayer strip marked with the scripture of the One-Handed Maiden. The character casts it into the air and night's darkness falls around her. The prayer strip burns like a hot coal, hovering near her and casting a flickering red light over the side of her face. When any effect does her harm, the Exalt can tangle the destiny of any number of visible targets with her own. This is a reflexive action costing 3 motes per target. She invokes this effect after all damage or deleterious effects are rolled but before they are applied. Her targets suffer the same effects from the attack as the Exalt. Only perfect dodges such as Seven Shadow Evasion, perfect blocks such as the Heavenly Guardian Defense and perfect soak Charms such as the Adamant Skin Technique protect against this Charm.

SECRETS: THE FORBIDDING MANSE OF IVY

THE KEY: INVESTIGATION

THE SCRIPTURE OF THAT OLD THING

*Once, there was that old thing...
...that wasn't like a shadow, because you could see
it too well.
...and that wasn't like a light, because it didn't
make flowers grow.
So, it had to be a maiden, but she didn't mind.
"To know the world is to love it," said she.*

AUSPICIOUS PROSPECTS FOR (CASTE)

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Investigation: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Maidens grant many of their Chosen this gift, that keeps them clear-eyed and ever-alert for the patterns in the stars that inform them of the needs of destiny. This is actually five Charms, one for each Maiden.

Auspicious Prospects for Journeys helps the character know when someone really ought to travel and, possibly, where. Auspicious Prospects for Serenity helps a character locate appropriate love matches or determine whom fate wishes to have joy. Auspicious Prospects for Battles hints at when and where and among whom a battle or war ought to take place. Auspicious Prospects for Fate — the Maiden of Secrets' Charm — gives insights into the proper overall direction of the world

and the character's own life. Auspicious Prospects for Endings suggests when something might best pass from Creation. These Charms provide appropriate knowledge when the Storyteller so chooses.

This knowledge almost never gives a direct benefit to the character. More often, it provides her with goals to strive for! So, she must satisfy herself with the joy of service — and the ability to investigate the claims of other Sidereal Exalted, with a mote of Essence and a successful Intelligence + Investigation roll, when they assert that some fate or other is favorable or necessary.

Any Sidereal can purchase any of these Charms. All five are favored for the Chosen of Secrets. The other Sidereal Exalted favor only their own caste's Charm.

MARVELOUS INCLUSION OF DETAILS

Cost: 1 mote per success
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Investigation: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

When a character learns this Charm, she weaves a thread of aquamarine mystery into her eyes. From that moment forward, she and the essence of fate that makes for secrets are kin. The things of mystery and enigma wear a faint, joyous glamour in her eyes. Conversely, secrets go out of their way to provide the kinds of evidence the character likes best. This Charm adds up to the character's Essence in automatic successes to an Investigation roll. If possible, the character chooses what kind of evidence she finds — a murder weapon, a book shelved right next to her, notes stuffed in such a book, footprints or something of that ilk. Whatever she finds, she finds instantly. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Compassion with this Charm.

EFFICIENT SECRETARY TECHNIQUE

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: One turn
Type: Simple
Minimum Investigation: 1
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

On learning this Charm, the character spits out a jubilant construct of Essence in the shape of an small unmanifested emerald pattern spider. When so instructed by the invocation of this Charm, it races off along the weave of fate to locate some fact for the character — any available information neither generally lost nor actively concealed. Examples are the name of the local god-king or carpenter, how many years ago widow Esther lost her husband, the status of a given war, the number of oxen an old friend now owns, the temperature in Nexus and so

Investigation - The Key



forth. One turn later, it returns, whispering the information into the character's ear. The spirit is indestructible while the Exalt lives.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT INVOCATION

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: Five days

Type: Simple

Minimum Investigation: 2

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Efficient Secretary Technique

Clapping his hands, the Sidereal causes a small plant to grow into the shape of a dedicated scholar and observer. This creature has the statistics and appearance of a typical mortal (see *Exalted*, pp. 276-277) except that it has an Intelligence 3, Awareness 3, Investigation 4, Lore 2 and Linguistics and languages equal to the character's own. It happily assists with research and investigation in any desired fashion, carrying books and research materials, noting details the character might miss, digging for truths in a large library and so forth. Under excessive stress, such as combat, it panics and reverts to the form of a plant; it can be coaxed back into human shape with a reapplication of this Charm.

EMBRACING LIFE METHOD

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: Five days

Type: Simple

Minimum Investigation: 4

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Marvelous Inclusion of Details, Research Assistant Invocation

This Charm uses a prayer strip marked with the scripture of That Old Thing. The Sidereal forms a question or curiosity in her mind and plants the strip as if it were a seed. Over the course of the next day, it first

develops roots and then sprouts into a tall mulberry tree. Local spirits of wood are drawn to visit it. They leave small gifts or secrets behind there. Five days later, the Sidereal can return. Her player rolls Charisma + Investigation. For each success, the Exalt finds both a piece of information useful in resolving her curiosity and a gift she will value beneath the tree. There are also various worthless offerings.

Returning earlier for faster answers is possible but may provoke the wrath of one or two wood spirits. The valuable gifts are generally trinkets that suit the character's tastes, but the Storyteller may include unique or important gifts for story reasons. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Compassion with this Charm.

THE GUARDIANS: LARCENY

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE SAVORY MAIDEN

Once, there was a maiden...

...who ate 236 leaves. She had to, because otherwise she'd forget where she came from, and that would make everyone very sad or, possibly, very happy.

She found herself in a woods full of monsters, impelled toward their cook pot. "Do you want to cook me?" she asked. "Or do you just think that's where maidens belong?"

There was a crack in the cook pot's bottom that let in the sky.

She started to squirm through the crack, but then, she saw that the clouds carried chains and the wind was their manacles.

As the monsters pulled her back, she called to the stones and she called the sky, but it was the night that came to her aid; and, in the night, fire and pain. "Why should you help me?" she asked.

"To know the world is to serve it," they said.

CREATION SMUGGLING PROCEDURES

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One day

Type: Simple

Minimum Larceny: 2

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character calls the weave of events to her. Thin tendrils of fate snake out from Creation to twine around each of her fingers, fading into phosphorescent green visibility for the final meter of their journey. If the character is in or ventures into the Wyld, she becomes a small island of stability and Creation, her destiny snuck into the abode of chance by craft, art and cunning. Neither the character nor anything within 10 yards of her suffers the touch of the Wyld.

SIDEREAL SHELL GAMES

Cost: 1 mote + 2 motes per die or level successfully stolen, 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Larceny: 3

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: Creation Smuggling Procedures

Again, the character summons the weave of events, but now, she crosses her wrists and deftly switches threads from one hand to the other as they materialize. If her player succeeds at a Wits + Larceny roll, the Exalt steals a portion of her target's destiny and can borrow up to her Essence in bashing and lethal soak, in damage dice or in dice from a specific pool (such as Dexterity +

Melee). The target loses the use of that soak or those dice for the remainder of the scene. The character gains it. The Sidereal cannot borrow more soak or more dice than the target possesses. This Charm is partially cumulative: The Sidereal can filch many different things in one scene but cannot add to the same pool or soak twice. When a Sidereal borrows dice for a pool, this is a dice bonus added by a Charm and should be considered as such when determining the maximum effect of other dice-bonus Charms.

NAME PILFERING PRACTICES

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: Indefinite

Type: Simple

Minimum Larceny: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

With a twist and a tug, the Sidereal steals another being's name. The Sidereal learns the victim's true name, and for the duration of the Charm, none save the Exalt can speak or think it. Make a reflexive Dexterity + Larceny roll with difficulty equal to the Sidereal's Essence for Fair Folk to notice and substitute another name for their own before the Sidereal completes the theft.

DREAM CONFISCATION APPROACH

Cost: 6 motes, 1 Willpower

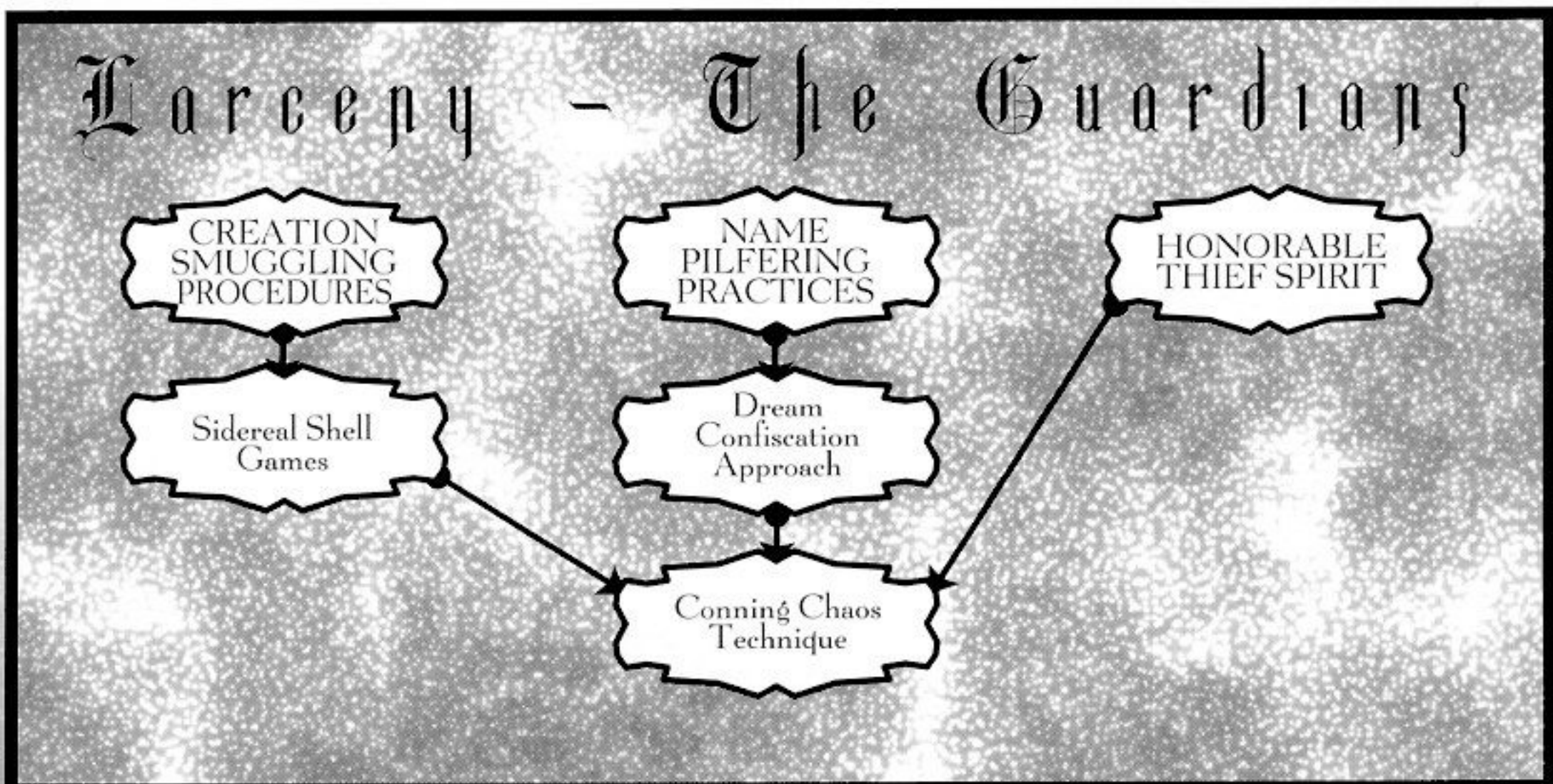
Duration: Indefinite

Type: Simple

Minimum Larceny: 4

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Name Pilfering Practices



Bumping casually into his target or otherwise making physical contact, and after a successful Wits + Larceny roll with difficulty equal to the target's Essence, the character pockets his victim's dreams. Fair Folk suffer the character's Essence in dice of aggravated damage, ignoring armor, as the character dexterously unweaves some of the dream Essence from their Wyld nature. They immediately become ravenous and slightly mad, though sane enough to Dodge further attempts by the character to touch them. Any other characters affected by this Charm become listless: Until the Sidereal stops committing Essence to this Charm and thereby releases their dreams, they cannot regain Willpower and do not regenerate Essence naturally. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Temperance with this Charm.

HONORABLE THIEF SPIRIT

Cost: 1 mote per target number reduction

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Larceny: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

Glittering green sparks weave about the character for a moment before settling into her hair and skin and becoming all but invisible. To the eyes of any criminal, the character seems to have the virtues and qualities that best qualify her for respect and admiration. The Sidereal can reduce the target number of all peaceful or defensive interactions with rogues, scum and knaves.

CONNING CHAOS TECHNIQUE

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Varies

Type: Simple

Minimum Larceny: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Sidereal Shell Games, Dream Confiscation Approach, Honorable Thief Spirit

This Charm uses a prayer strip marked with the scripture of the Savory Maiden. The Sidereal holds it up before him, whereupon it straightens and affixes itself to reality as if nailed to the air, occasionally emitting an effulgence of green light. The Sidereal then names his victim, who must be within 10 miles. For a moment, the victim sees the prayer strip through the Exalt's eyes, burning a brilliant green. Ancient forces set in motion by the Charm wheel and deal with the Wyld, trading the victim's destiny to chaos in exchange for a portion of chaos claimed into Creation.

The Sidereal's player rolls Manipulation + Larceny. Each success represents one month of this curse, and in each month, the Wyld's efforts intensify — they're not organized, conscious or directed, as a whole, but they're,

nevertheless, malevolent. The Charm draws Fair Folk and Wyld-spawned monsters to the target, their schemes and determination deadlier as time goes on. The victim suffers a derangement (see *Exalted*, p. 281) or a taint (see *Exalted: The Lunars*, pp. 219-221) as the order and laws that bind her deteriorate, though she may overcome this for a scene with a successful Temperance roll. However, when the curse expires, or when the Wyld has claimed its due, something in the chaos understands that the Maidens have cheated it — that it has given more territory to order and reason than chaos has consumed. The Sidereal's name is marked. The more often he uses this Charm, the more likely he is to find himself hunted by the very forces he invokes.

The player of a victim of this Charm can make an extended Intelligence + Lore roll every month for her character to understand the nature of the curse. With six successes, she understands that the prayer strip was within 10 miles of her location at the time the curse fell and that its destruction can free her. Twelve successes gives her its precise location.

THE TREASURE TROVE: LORE

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN IN TERROR

*Once, there was a maiden...
...who knew some things about a man. He didn't
like that, but he kissed her anyway.
She told him everything in her heart:
She whispered truths to him, but he didn't care.
She whispered hopes to him, but he didn't care.
She whispered her prayers, but only heard silence.
And she whispered her fear to him, but he didn't care.
He looked upon her inner self,
and the void met his eyes.
"To know the world is to fear it," said he.*

SYSTEMATIC UNDERSTANDING OF EVERYTHING

Cost: 1 mote

Duration: Until the character sleeps

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Lore: 1

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character sleeps, and the Maiden of Secrets grants her a vision of the projected plan for fate, from the moment of her waking until the end of Creation. A character trained to use this Charm can filter her perceptions and observe a small portion of the Loom of Fate, integrating it with her own extensive knowledge. Until the vision fades with her next dream, she adds a +1 specialty of her choice, which applies to all relevant Abilities.



Characters can only spend Essence for this Charm while asleep. This can increase the specialty total for an Ability above +3, but the character cannot add more than three specialty dice to any given roll. These specialties are dice bonuses added by a Charm and should be considered as such when determining the maximum effect of other dice-bonus Charms.

THE METHODOLOGY OF SECRETS

- Cost:** 5 motes
- Duration:** Until the character sleeps
- Type:** Reflexive
- Minimum Lore:** 2
- Minimum Essence:** 2
- Prerequisite Charms:** Systematic Understanding of Everything

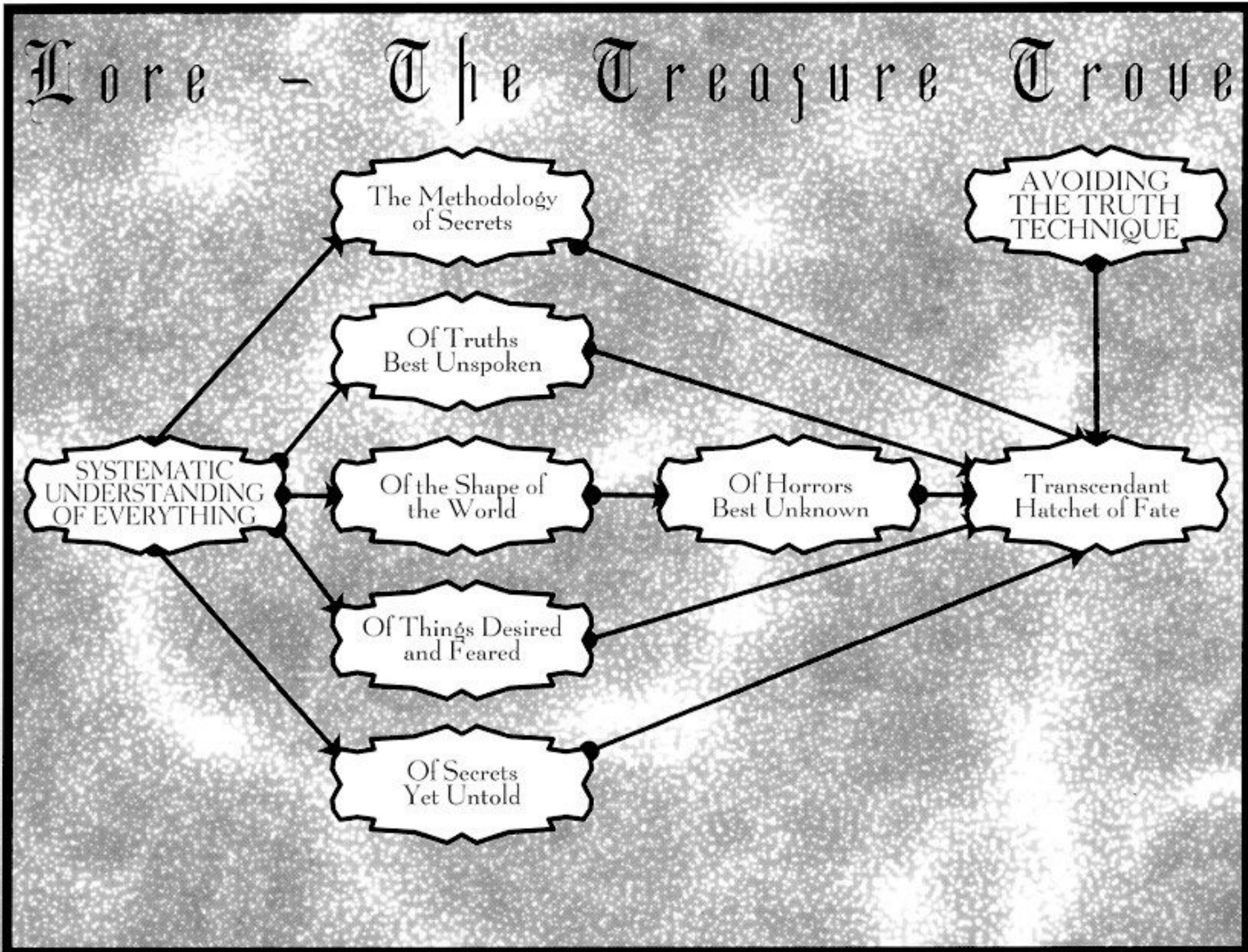
This Charm extends Systematic Understanding of Everything, providing a specialty that gives a +3 bonus to one Ability and a +1 bonus to all Abilities where it is relevant. Characters can only spend Essence for this Charm while asleep and cannot invoke it in the same slumber as Systematic Understanding of Everything. This Charm can increase the specialty total for an Ability above +3, but the character cannot add more

than three specialty dice to any given roll. These specialties are dice bonuses added by a Charm and should be considered as such when determining the maximum effect of other dice-bonus Charms.

OF TRUTHS BEST UNSPOKEN

- Cost:** 5 motes
- Duration:** Three hours
- Type:** Simple
- Minimum Lore:** 3
- Minimum Essence:** 2
- Prerequisite Charms:** Systematic Understanding of Everything

Scuttling on the paths of fate are the seven Heptarchs of Tragedy, gods of those truths and futures displeasing to mortal eyes. Catching sight of a horror to come, they snatch up the knowledge of it and bind it in a living sepulcher that they cast into the earth. Gathering together for three hours and simultaneously invoking this Charm, a trinity of Exalted serving Serenity, Battles and Secrets can dredge such a sepulcher forth and witness an atrocity not yet come to pass. At any time within the next year, the player of each can make a single Lore roll as if the Sideral were looking backward from the end of the



Age of Sorrows. For example, having lost an important artifact, the character can roll to remember notable events wherein it is destined to appear. Five successes may lead him to it immediately, while one success may indicate only that the Maidens intend it to fall into the hands of a young Lunar hero “eventually.” Extrapolating another aspect of the weave from a glimpse of one horrific section of the Loom is difficult, even for the Exalted.

Characters can use this Charm, at most, once per month. Multiple uses are not cumulative. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Conviction with this Charm.

OF THINGS DESIRED AND FEARED

Cost: 10 motes

Duration: Three hours

Type: Simple

Minimum Lore: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Systematic Understanding of Everything

Charting the paths of the future can help to resolve even the stickiest of situations. Gathering together for three hours and simultaneously invoking this Charm, a trinity of Exalted serving Journeys, Serenity and Endings map the paths of destiny and learn at least one method by which they may achieve a given goal. From a mechanical perspective, they learn the price of success at some endeavor — anything from “a few bumps and bruises” to “the destruction of your Circle and everything you believe in.” If the Sidereal characters choose to pay the price, they automatically achieve their goal; both the price and their victory occur in a narrative fashion in amongst other stories.

The paths lain out by these small prophecies are rarely optimal. Characters may reasonably decide to pursue the goals in their own fashion rather than following the prophecy (paying the price) or dropping the matter. The Storyteller should only slightly inflate the price for resolving a peripheral matter but set a prohibitive price for automatically resolving something central to the story. The characters still benefit, however, even when the price they pay is greater than what their own planning might provide. They are assured of success and can focus their attention and planning effort on other matters.

OF THE SHAPE OF THE WORLD

Cost: 3 motes per target number reduction, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Lore: 4

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Systematic Understanding of Everything

Averting her eyes from the truth that is, the character invokes a truth she wishes to create. She may lower the target number for a Sidereal astrology roll.

OF HORRORS BEST UNKNOWN

Cost: 10 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Lore: 5

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Of the Shape of the World

The Sidereal weaves one of the nets of Neferuaten, made from filaments of destiny thinner than the distance between a stone and its shadow or a dog and its howl. These nets can catch and cling even to those things normally immune to the workings of destiny: not strong enough to impede a Primordial’s course, but cunning enough to adhere to the nonexistent borders of Cecelyne, the Endless Desert, or hang like gossamer from a Deathlord’s flesh. The Exalt can cast the net around any creature she can see. Success requires a Dexterity + Lore roll with difficulty equal to the target’s Essence. Afterward, the net then exerts a slow, continual pull on the world around the target. In a circumstance the Sidereal names, *all* dice pools that oppose the target have their target number reduced by 1, to a minimum of 4. The net lasts a year and a day. Instead of rolling the attack, the Sidereal can spend a permanent Willpower to guarantee success. This also ensures that the net lasts long enough to fulfill her purpose in casting it, even if one must reckon that time in years. Multiple such nets may cover a single target. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Valor with this Charm.

OF SECRETS YET UNTOLD

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Lore: 4

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Systematic Understanding of Everything

Hissing a long susurrations, the character illumines an elemental or spirit of the earth in a verdant glow and bestows upon it a secret: a truth about the long course of the world that the spirit can never speak. The spirit must perform one favor for the Exalted in return, chosen by necessity and not by desire. Neither the character nor the spirit chooses what the favor might be. The spirit automatically knows the favor’s nature, but the Exalted does not. Until the favor is paid, success at a Wits + Temperance roll with difficulty 3 is required for the spirit to initiate hostile action against the Exalt. (It can still reply to violence with violence.)



AVOIDING THE TRUTH TECHNIQUE

Cost: 3 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Lore: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

Drawing on preternatural insight, the character imbues a true statement with implications that horrify the listener. Add her Essence in automatic successes to a Socialize, Presence or Bureaucracy roll to convince her victim she is lying. This Charm is explicitly permitted to be in a Combo with Charms of other Abilities.

TRANSCENDENT HATCHET OF FATE

Cost: 16 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: Until used

Type: Simple

Minimum Lore: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: The Methodology of Secrets, Of Truths Best Unspoken, Of Things Desired and Feared, Of Horrors Best Unknown, Of Secrets Yet Untold, Avoiding the Truth Technique

This Charm uses a prayer strip marked with the scripture of the Maiden in Terror, which glows a sickly green as it curls and twists and sinks into the Sidereal's palm. It leaves behind a faint tracery of symbols in the tongue of the Old Realm.

When the Sidereal so chooses, he shows his palm to a target and names that victim's fate: which of the target's worst fears the world will realize, and how. The Exalt's player then rolls Intelligence + Lore. The target instantly loses the Sidereal's Essence plus the number of successes in temporary Willpower, to a minimum of 0, and twice that amount in motes of Essence.

Under normal circumstances, although the character simply states what is preordained, the player chooses and names a fate and manner for its realization that he finds dramatically interesting. At the moment the character speaks, that event is destined. The Storyteller should suggest an alternative if that destiny simply cannot come to pass. Game events can alter this destiny and rescue the target, due to changes in departmental vision and the meddling of Primordials, but the target herself cannot avoid her doom.

THE SORCERER: OCCULT

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN IN CHAINS

Once, there was a maiden...
...and before her came all the peoples of Creation,
and knelt.

They set aside their petty squabbles in her name.

They acclaimed her with many shouts.

They prayed for her safety, and her weal.

Not one of them struck free her chains.

"To know the world..."

"...is to own it," she said.

MARK OF EXALTATION

Cost: 2 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Occult: 1

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character's Caste Mark shimmers, casting forth an appropriately colored light only visible to spirits and the Chosen of her caste. This light reveals unmanifested spirits to those who can see it. In addition, the Sidereal adds one automatic success to all Presence, Performance, Occult, Bureaucracy and Socialize rolls made when dealing with spirits or in Yu-Shan. This explicitly stacks with effects that add dice to her pool, even if it exceeds the dice limit. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Compassion with this Charm. Learning this Charm requires the appropriate Maiden's approval.

TELL-TALE SYMPHONY

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Occult: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Mark of Exaltation

To help the character better untangle the threads of fate, impelled by the earliest laws of Creation, the patterns of Essence around the character sing. Charms, sorcery and other effects give rise to strange but fitting melodies. Spirits — manifested or otherwise — emit a soft and inadvertent noise, like the ringing of bells. Only Sidereal Exalted can hear this music.

Both the character and other Sidereals within ear-shot can detect the presence of enchantments and unmanifested spirits automatically. An Intelligence + Occult roll against difficulty 3 allows Sidereal Exalted with this Charm to identify the details of an enchantment, the approximate rank and job description for a given spirit or the minutiae of the local geomantic environment.

INCITE DECORUM

Cost: 2 motes

Duration: Indefinite

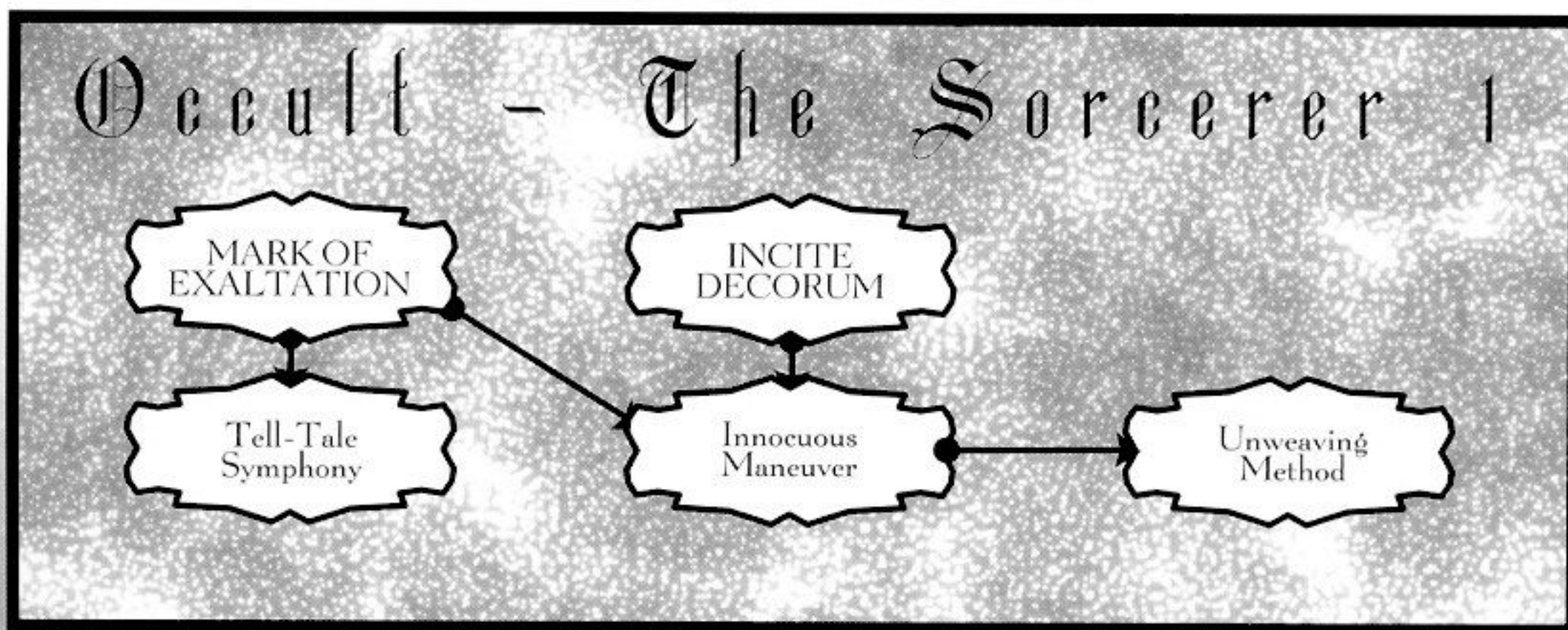
Type: Simple

Minimum Occult: 1

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: None

Invoking the blessing of his Maiden, the character facilitates polite dealings with the spirit world. Spirits and elementals with the Sidereal's Essence or lower must spend 2 temporary Willpower to initiate hostile action against the character. In addition, each Charm they use



Occult - The Sorcerer ?



in a conflict they initiate costs 1 additional Willpower. (This includes Charms that do not normally cost Willpower.) Learning this Charm requires the appropriate Maiden's approval.

INNOCUOUS MANEUVER

Cost: 2 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Occult: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Mark of Exaltation, Incite Decorum

Wrapped in the terrible grandeur of the Maiden that sponsors her, the Sidereal can present a compelling case for her intentions. If her player succeeds at a Charisma + Occult roll against a difficulty equal to the target's Essence, the Sidereal acquires a god's support in some political matter. The god must not be intractably opposed to the Sidereal, and the Sidereal can attempt this Charm at most once per year against a given target. When used by the losing side in a celestial audit, each use of this Charm counts as an independent Severity 3 offense. When used by the winning side, there is no penalty. (Helping others agree with the truth, as the censor's final opinion defines it, is no crime.) Sidereal Exalted may always use their Valor with this Charm. Learning this Charm requires the appropriate Maiden's approval.

UNWEAVING METHOD

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Occult: 4

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Innocuous Maneuver

Sidereals with a deep understanding of the ways of the Wyld and the dead can apply it to their manipulation

of fate. With a deft touch on the weave, the character corrupts the pattern of a person's existence with the essence of chaos and endings. She inflicts her Essence in dice of unsoakable aggravated damage on any creature or object she can see. This damage cannot be blocked or dodged. The Unweaving Method cannot harm the dead and has no effect on characters or items shielded from the influence of the Wyld.

TERRESTRIAL CIRCLE SORCERY

Cost: 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Occult: 3

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: None

For the Sidereal Exalted, steeped in the lore of the First Age, Terrestrial Circle Sorcery comes easily. Note that invoking this Charm only enables the character to cast a single Terrestrial Circle spell. The actual spell itself has an Essence cost, often very high, that the character must pay to actualize the spell. This cost is listed in the spell's description. Terrestrial Circle Sorcery can never be part of a Combo.

CELESTIAL CIRCLE SORCERY

Cost: 2 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Occult: 4

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Terrestrial Circle Sorcery, one prayer strip Charm

Those Sidereal Exalted who attain the pinnacle of one constellation's Charms, learning to understand and use one of the scriptures found upon the Maidens' Loom, unlock a path in their minds through which they may learn Celestial Circle Sorcery. The first time they cast a Celestial Circle spell, they must also sacrifice a prayer

strip inscribed with the scripture of the Maiden in Chains, which burns away in a gout of emerald fire. Celestial Circle Sorcery can never be part of a Combo.

THE MASK: STEALTH

THE SCRIPTURE OF ABSENCE

*Once, there were...
...shadows in the window.
...footsteps at the gates of life.
...whispering at the door:
"Should I live or die? Am I living or dead?"
"To know the world is to choose it," says the Void.*

SOFT PRESENCE PRACTICE

Cost: 1 mote per target number reduction
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Stealth: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The natural residents of Creation deform the flow of others' fates, marking it with the signs of their presence. Using this Charm, the character reduces this deformation, stepping lightly through the world the Maidens weave. For one scene, she reduces the target number of any roll to remain undetected.

WALKING OUTSIDE FATE

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Indefinite
Type: Simple
Minimum Stealth: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Soft Presence Practice

Quiet as the Void, the Sidereal steps entirely out of the weave of fate. Only those with Essence greater than her own can sense her directly. The touch of chance allows others a reflexive Perception + Awareness roll for others to feel a presence nearby. Even if they succeed, those who cannot sense her directly have a +2 difficulty penalty on attempts to attack her or affect her with Charms. Only supernatural trackers can engage in tracking contests with the character. The Exalt returns instantly to the weave if her anima banner makes Stealth Charms fail.

For the duration of this Charm, the Sidereal is treated as a creature outside of fate. Learning this Charm requires the Maiden of Secrets' approval.

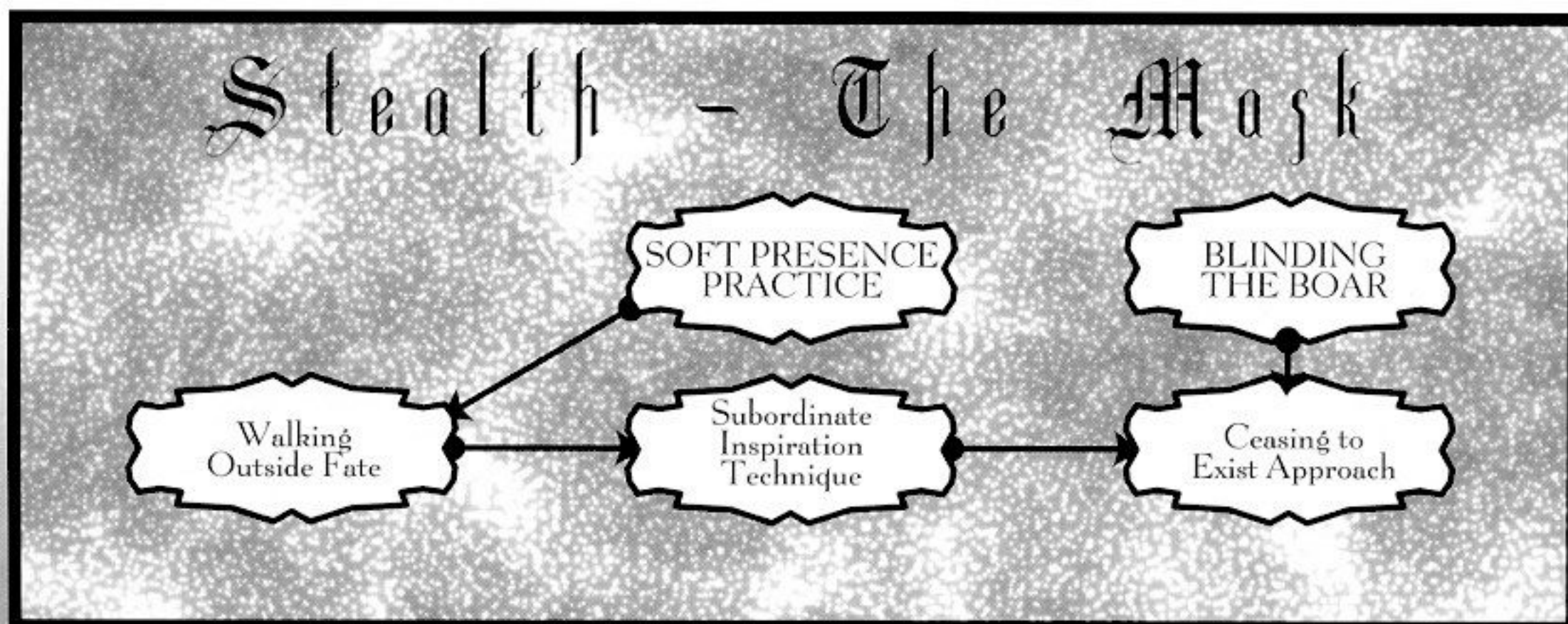
SUBORDINATE INSPIRATION TECHNIQUE

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: One minute
Type: Simple
Minimum Stealth: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Walking Outside Fate

The character can only use this Charm while Walking Outside Fate. Any spirit or Sidereal present hears the character's words as his own thoughts. A target can dismiss them as irrelevant internal monologue, but his player must make a Perception + Awareness roll at difficulty equal to the Sidereal's Essence to realize that the thoughts are not his own.

BLINDING THE BOAR

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Five turns
Type: Simple
Minimum Stealth: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None



Casting forth shadows of a thousand possible futures, the Sidereal conceals the truths of her existence from another. Although the character remains apparent to every sense, focusing on her to determine her exact location, her body language, what she is saying or any other detail becomes near-impossible. The player makes a Manipulation + Stealth roll. Add her successes to the difficulty of all attempts the target makes to attack, dodge or otherwise influence the Sidereal for the Charm's duration. If the player receives even one success, the target cannot understand the Sidereal's words. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Valor with this Charm.

CEASING TO EXIST APPROACH

Cost: 5 motes, 3 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: Indefinite

Type: Simple

Minimum Stealth: 5

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Subordinate Inspiration Technique, Blinding the Boar

This Charm uses a prayer strip marked with the scripture of Absence. The character places it upon her chest. Flashing with dark green light, it sinks inside and wraps around her heart. In that instant, the Sidereal vanishes from the weave of fate and reappears elsewhere, woven seamlessly into a new life. No effect that targets the Sidereal based on her identity rather than her physical location functions. For the time being, although others remember her, the Sidereal simply does not exist.

The character creates a new identity and appearance for herself as any sort of non-Primordial creature, including mortals, Exalted, spirits and the dead. She cannot, however, become someone who already exists.

The character chooses up to 15 dots of Backgrounds appropriate to her new life; Background dots above 3 cost double. She travels instantly to a location chosen by the Maiden of Secrets to fit her new identity. She instantly develops appropriate social relationships, seamlessly integrating into the life of any appropriate entities save creatures of the Wyld, beings outside the pattern of fate and spirits on or above the level of the Maidens. Thus, if the character chose to assume the identity of an Abyssal Exalted, the dead of her "native" shadowland would recognize and remember her as such, but the Deathlord that was her ostensible superior would not.

The character does not gain new Abilities. When possible, others perceive her Charms and anima as effects suitable to her new self. When magic or ignorance betrays the character, she



存在

automatically receives a perfect success on social rolls to explain the matter away. Others have no difficulty perceiving or remembering the Sidereal's temporary identity, unless the temporary identity is itself a Sidereal. However, the character's tendency to fade from view prevents her from spending more than one season a year as another person.

If the Sidereal dismisses this Charm or uses more than 10 motes of Peripheral Essence, the Charm ends. Its effects linger on for five days, after which the Sidereal snaps back to her old identity and its appropriate location.

ENDINGS: THE VIOLET BIER OF SORROWS

THE RISING SMOKE: ATHLETICS

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN AND THE DUST

*Once, there was a maiden...
...who learned that the faster she ran, the faster she
could run.*

*Thus, running consumed her,
until, one day, she flew beyond the ending of her life.*

"And here I thought it'd last forever," she said.

"But—"

"There's always an ending," said the run.

BURN LIFE

Cost: 3 motes per dot

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Athletics: 2

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character draws upon the long thread of his own future destiny for power, sacrificing a few days or weeks of lifespan to suffuse his physical form with Essence. His player rolls Essence + Athletics. Each success represents one point that the Exalt can add to his Strength, Dexterity or Stamina until the end of the scene; he cannot raise any of them by more than his Essence. These improvements add normally to his damage, running speed or soak. Each increase costs 3 motes of Essence and three days of lifespan. Successes not paid for are lost. Increases to his Attributes are dice bonuses added by a Charm and should be considered as such when determining the maximum effect of other dice-bonus Charms. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Conviction with this Charm.

HUNGRY TOUCH

Cost: 1 mote per target number reduction or damage point

Duration: Instant

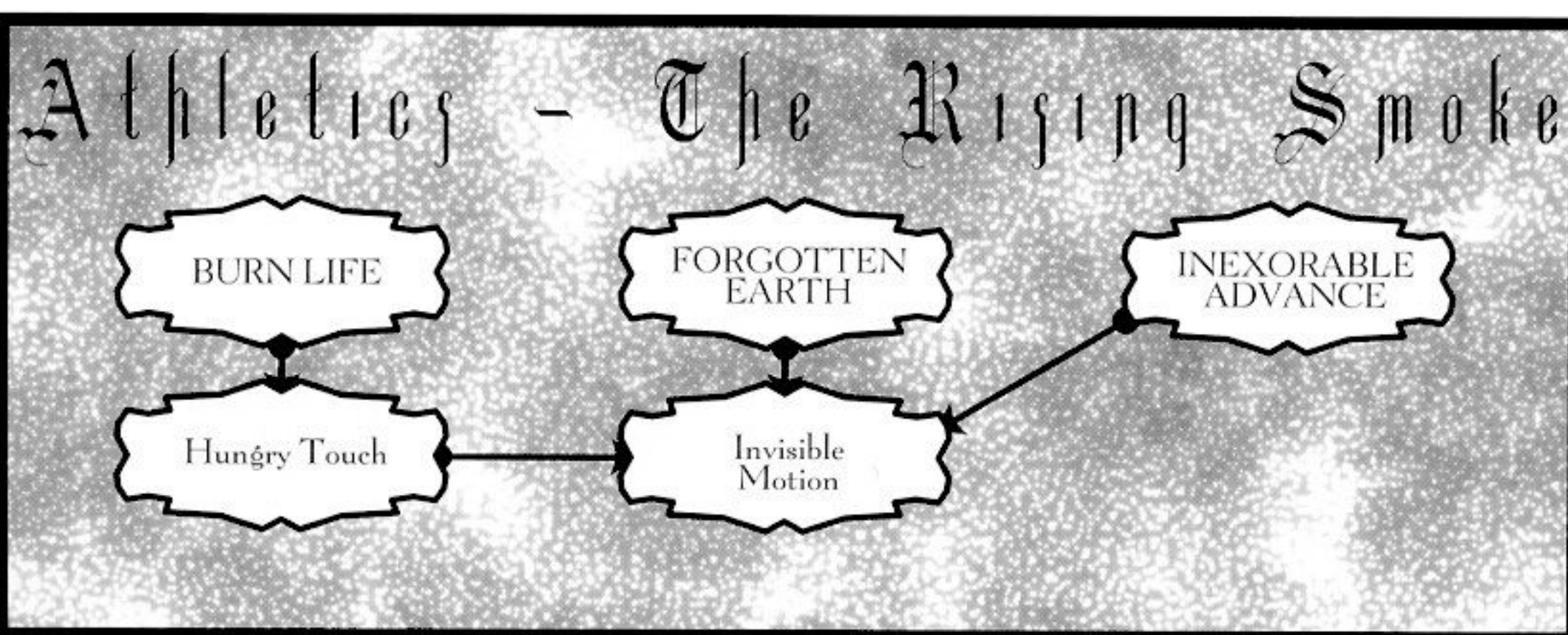
Type: Supplemental

Minimum Athletics: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Burn Life

With a single blow, the character consumes the destiny of an object, bringing that destiny partway toward or immediately to its final conclusion. When attempting to destroy an object with a feat of strength, the character can use this Charm to reduce the target number of the Willpower roll to boost her Strength + Athletics. If she succeeds at destroying the object, she recovers the Willpower point spent. Alternately, when attacking an object, the character can buy up to her Essence in additional points of damage at 1 mote each.



FORGOTTEN EARTH

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Athletics: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

For a moment, the character cuts the connection between herself and the ground, and her destiny lies in the air. She triples her leaping distance for a single jump.

INEXORABLE ADVANCE

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Five turns
Type: Simple
Minimum Athletics: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

Eliding the moments of her own life between footsteps, or between the beginning of a gesture and its end, the character acts without the need for motion. She suffers no wound or armor penalties of any sort, nor any penalties that reduce her running speed. When characters first learn this Charm, their movements involve flickering shifts in their position — as if others saw them through a strobe light. With a few days' practice, however, they can smooth out this effect, moving with a fluid grace that appears to ignore normal anatomical constraints.

INVISIBLE MOTION

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Athletics: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Hungry Touch, Forgotten Earth, Inexorable Advance

This Charm uses a prayer strip marked with the scripture of the Maiden and the Dust. The character wraps it around his forehead or neck, whereupon it exudes a soft scent of lilacs and decay. For the rest of the day, the character receives the benefits of the Inexorable Advance Charm every turn. This continuous simplification of his movements also reduces the fatigue value of his armor by two, to a minimum of zero. A fatigue value of zero means that the character need never roll to see if he becomes fatigued from wearing the armor. In addition, the character can compress more action and more complex action into the fractional seconds of his life he skips over and reduces to instantaneousness. He doubles his movement rate and receives a number of automatic successes equal to his Athletics score to divide in any fashion among his physical actions every turn. The

character can reserve some of these successes for reflexive actions later in the turn, but successes not used by the end of each turn are lost.

THE CROW: AWARENESS**THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN
AND THE SCYTHE**

*Once, there was a maiden...
 ...who was born, and told her Mom, "I know how
 I'm gonna die."
 "It's gonna hurt bad,
 and I ain't coming back."
 "...I could avoid it, but I won't."
 "'Cause one day, death'd come to me and say,
 'Baby, don't you know?'"
 "There's always an ending."*

PRIOR WARNING

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: Five hours
Type: Simple
Minimum Awareness: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

Once a Sidereal commits Essence to this Charm, her perceptions constantly probe into the immediate future for anything that could do her harm. When the character is in danger, her player makes a reflexive Wits + Awareness roll. If she succeeds, the character has a feeling of ill ease that informs her of impending danger. The character gets a warning period of two minutes per success rolled. This Charm only allows the Sidereal to spot obvious harm: Slow-acting poison concealed in her ale would not set off the alarm, as the effect is too far in the future. However, it might be triggered just before the effects kick in, giving the character time to deduce the cause and seek a cure.

EXPECTED PAIN

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Awareness: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Prior Warning

The character has a general idea of the bad things that will happen to him in the course of his life. When an unpleasant moment impends, this awareness crystallizes. This Charm activates automatically when something unexpectedly dangerous or awful is about to happen, and the character learns its general nature

Awareness - The Crow



("attack," "poison," "betrayal," "loss of loved one," "humiliation"). The character has one turn's warning in which to turn his fate aside. Ambushes against the character automatically fail, but the character does not automatically detect his attacker.

SUPERNAL AWARENESS

Cost: 4 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Awareness: 3
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Expected Pain

The character can see the web of fate around her as it cascades into the unavoidable reality of the present. With this Charm, she can focus enough attention upon the influx of destiny to watch continuously, out to a distance of (her Essence x 100) yards, for specific disturbances in that web. She can either keep track of people within that region, monitor spirits within that region or watch for some specific phenomenon such as combat, the use of Essence or the mention of her name. She senses only vague details — specifically, she can identify the location and power level of what she sees and recognize specific effects or people she is familiar with, but she cannot follow the course of events. For example, when monitoring Essence use, she might recognize the invocation of the Expected Pain Charm, which she knows well. Unless she has seen it often, however, the Ten Ox Meditation (see *Exalted*, p. 196) would register only as an Essence 3 Charm. In neither case would she know the specific effects of the Charm, such as what object a Solar used Ten Ox Meditation to destroy. The effects of this Charm are cumulative: If a Sidereal uses it five times in a scene, she can monitor five different things.

Supernal Awareness does not rely on any of the character's senses. Normal Stealth and Charms that

make the character physically invisible or silent have no effect.

WISE CHOICE

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Awareness: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

Life is full of choices. This Charm gives a Sidereal the edge on mere mortals by allowing him to make the best choice when confronted with many options. However, this Charm allows only a brief peek into the future, not an extended glimpse into all the consequences of the decision. The ideal short-term outcome is guaranteed, but long-term gains are not.

INEVITABLE PURSUIT

Cost: 8 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Awareness: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

No one can hide from their past. It unwinds inevitably, event cascading into event, rolling from the then into the now and finally into an inescapable collection of destinies. Characters with this Charm can track others not by the physical marks they leave on the world, but by the impressions their passage leaves on the destinies of everything around them. In a relatively uninhabited region, the character can follow a trail as old as one day per point of her permanent Essence. In a more populous region, where many people leave their marks on fate — and, more importantly, where those marks interact with one another in a progressively unruly and chaotic fashion — this Charm is less effective. In such places, the

character is limited to following trails no older than one hour per point of her permanent Essence.

This ability can be foiled by use of the Traceless Passage Charm (see *Exalted*, p. 182) and similar Charms. If the target uses such a Charm, resolve the matter with a standard opposed tracking contest.

CONCLUSIVE WISDOM

Cost: 20 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Awareness: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Supernal Awareness, Wise Choice, Inevitable Pursuit

This Charm uses a prayer strip marked with the scripture of the Maiden and the Scythe. The character holds it up before her target. It fixes itself in the air and begins to blossom with pungent violet flowers, whose petals dry, fall off and turn to dust in the course of seconds, each replaced as it dies with another flower's blooming.

The target of this Charm finds himself caught in a vision of his own ending: transported to a likely end for his life, a few hours, minutes or turns before its conclusion comes. Roll his permanent Willpower against a difficulty of 3. Success indicates that the Charm fazes him but has no other effect. Failure indicates that he returns from the vision deeply shaken. Reduce his temporary Willpower to 1. His Personal Essence pool is instantly lost; reduce his temporary Essence by the amount of his Personal Essence, to a minimum of 0. He cannot recover Willpower or personal Essence for the remainder of the scene.

If the victim is a Storyteller character, the rules above suffice. Otherwise, the Storyteller should play the vision out. This occurs at a convenient time: immediately, as the next scene, or at the end of the session, depending on the play group's style. The Storyteller devises an interesting and ideally appropriate scenario for the target's most likely ending. As events progress, the target can alter the scenario in one small way for each point of permanent Essence he possesses. Motes, Willpower, experience points and health levels spent or recovered in the vision do not affect the character's actual totals.

If, through interesting roleplay, luck or martial cleverness, the target manages to survive his impending doom, he suffers no permanent ill effects. Further, when he finishes processing the vision, a few scenes later, he generally recovers his full temporary Willpower.

If the target dies in the vision but his player made his permanent Willpower roll, above, the character suffers no permanent ill effects save disquiet.

If the target dies in the vision and failed his permanent Willpower roll, his player must roll the character's permanent Essence and permanent Willpower. (He cannot spend Willpower on these rolls.) Failure on either roll means losing one dot of the appropriate Trait, to a minimum of 1. No matter what he rolls, he cannot recover his Personal Essence for the remainder of the story. He only has access to Peripheral Essence.

This Charm has no effect on Abyssal Exalted or the dead. It specifically affects Second and Third Circle demons, despite their normal immunity to Willpower loss from Sidereal Charms.

THE HAYWAIN: BUREAUCRACY

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN'S PROMISE

*Once, there was a maiden...
...who was the living embodiment of everything
right in the world.*

*While she lived, no real harm could come to any-
one. Oh, wounds, disease, even death, sure. But she
stood between the world and anything worse.*

*"Except," she said, "I'm going to die." And no one
listened.*

*"I'm going to die tomorrow," she said. And no one
heard.*

*Into the silence, she said: "There's always an
ending, after all."*

SLICK ESSENCE REPLENISHMENT

Cost: None

Duration: Permanent

Type: Special

Minimum Bureaucracy: 1

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

In demonstrating her superiority to the frantic masses that mill about her, a calm and settled soul becomes a natural sinkhole for the Essence of the world. This Charm draws on a Sidereal's ability to keep perspective and maintain her tranquility in the most troubled circumstances, easily juggling a hundred projects and a thousand data points, controlling herself always and controlling others when necessary. Immediately after a successful roll using Temperance or immediately after a Bureaucracy roll that substantially helped her implement her agenda, the Exalt regains twice her Temperance in motes of Essence, up to her normal maximum. There is no cost to use this Charm's effects — learning this Charm simply enhances the Exalt's capabilities.

Bureaucracy - The Haywain



ICY HAND

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Five days
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Bureaucracy: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

The character's cold clean touch instantly drives away bureaucratic corruption. She can invoke this Charm immediately after touching a target bureaucrat, which, for unwilling targets, requires an unarmed attack (which need do no damage). The Sidereal's player rolls Charisma + Bureaucracy against the target's Essence. If successful, the target is compelled to perform his duties honestly for the duration of the Charm.

A spark in the character's pupil glitters violet during the use of this Charm.

TERMINAL SANCTION

Cost: 8 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Bureaucracy: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Icy Hand

Sometimes, all it takes to kill a god is a word in the right ear. To invoke this Charm, the Exalt's player rolls Charisma + Bureaucracy against a difficulty equal to the target's Essence. Normally, this files a petition in the Bureau of Endings, activating certain perquisites of the Chosen of Fate that facilitate quick, effective resolution of a conflict with a spirit or elemental. However, due to the terms of the Primordials' surrender, this Charm specifically affects demons of all Circles and adds the Sidereal's Essence in automatic successes against them.

The effects of the Charm are as follows. Whether the character succeeds or fails, the spirit must instantly

manifest and materialize to meet the Sidereal's calm gaze. It cannot dematerialize until the end of the scene. If the character succeeds, the spirit becomes additionally vulnerable. If its materialized body dies that scene, the Sidereal can either destroy it utterly, bind it into an object, coerce it into service for an indefinite task or command its obedience for a year and a day. This can offer a Sidereal a second opportunity to bind a demon that breaks free of her control.

Sidereal Exalted may always use their Temperance with this Charm. Learning this Charm requires the Maiden of Endings' approval.

UNDERLING INVISIBILITY PRACTICE

Cost: 4 motes
Duration: Indefinite
Type: Simple
Minimum Bureaucracy: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

By the will of the Maiden of Endings, who marks the end to every destiny, those who consider themselves above the process of fate shall find themselves most vulnerable to it.

With this Charm, the character conceals his presence effectively from those who foolishly consider themselves his superiors. Anyone who knows of the Sidereal Exalted and looks down upon them, or who considers himself superior to all others, simply cannot detect the Sidereal. This invisibility also applies to those who consider themselves more important than or hierarchically superior to the character himself.

The character registers on such entities' senses as a brief impression related to his caste. Chosen of Journeys "feel" like there is somewhere the subject needs to be. Chosen of Serenity exude a faint sense of peace and happiness. Chosen of Battles provide a sense of intangible tension to the air. Chosen of Secrets provoke a

strange sense of déjà vu. And the Chosen of Endings radiate a vague air of danger.

The arrogant cannot use the help of others to spot the Sidereal. Reports on the character's presence no more register than the character's direct visual impression. However, victims can derive other information from such reports, such as "something bad is happening and is preventing me from hearing exactly what my friends are saying." They can even target the Sidereal based on this kind of information and the faint impression mentioned above. However, their dice pool for attacking or defending against the Sidereal starts at 0, before the effects of Charms. A perfect counter to invisibility (such as Eye of the Unconquered Sun — see **Caste Book: Night**, p. 75) overcomes this effect. This Charm conceals the last few seconds of a Sidereal's tracks.

This Charm has no effect on other Sidereal Exalted. Otherwise, the Storyteller always decides whether a Storyteller character falls victim to this Charm, and players of non-Sidereals can explicitly decide their characters' opinions on the Sidereal Exalted and specific Exalts. Learning this Charm requires the Maiden of Endings' approval.

END DEBATE

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Bureaucracy: 5

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Terminal Sanction, Underling Invisibility Practice

This Charm uses a prayer strip marked with the scripture of the Maiden's Promise, which explodes in searing amethyst light as the character throws it to the ground. As the light fades, passion and the desire for speech drains from all those who witnessed the Charm. Everything has already been said.

If the character wishes, this Charm can instantly end a debate — leading into an immediate vote or to everyone dropping the matter, as circumstances dictate.

Alternately, as long as one or more key individuals are present, End Debate can stop any bureaucratic process cold. Only an Intelligence + Bureaucracy roll with a difficulty equal to twice the character's permanent Essence can restart it.

Finally, if the Sidereal's player successfully rolls Strength + Bureaucracy against the target's Essence, this Charm can impose the effects of Icy Hand on a single bureaucrat *permanently* — only by resigning his position (and, if desired, seeking another) can he reestablish a career of corruption.

Sidereal Exalted may always use their Temperance with this Charm.

THE SWORD: MARTIAL ARTS

STAFF AND BLADE

Charms in the cascade derived from Secrets of Future Strife treat attacks the Sidereal makes with knives, swords, staves and seven-section staves as unarmed attacks. This includes daiklaves and serpent-sting staves. These Charms do not function in armor.

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE EXPECTANT MAIDEN

*Once, there was a maiden...
...who was always looking forward to the way things
would be.*

She said, "Someday, I'm getting out of this place."

"Someday, I'm going to kill that boy that put me here."

*"And while I wait, I don't much mind,
'cause it's better to dream tomorrow than to be there."*

** * **

*"I'm holding at bay," she said, "what I know to
be true."*

"That I'll never get out. I won't let my dreams die!"

*"I'll hang on to hope," she said, "until Time itself
ends. But—"*

"There's always an ending," said Time.

SECRETS OF FUTURE STRIFE

Cost: None

Duration: Permanent

Type: Special

Minimum Martial Arts: 1

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character trains himself for instant acceptance of the twists and turns of circumstance. In any given combat, in the first turn he acts, he doubles his base initiative (Dexterity + Wits). Charms such as Opportune Shot and Thunderclap Rush Attack do not automatically win initiative over him. These advantages cease to apply once he takes his first non-reflexive action. There is no cost to use this Charm — learning this Charm permanently enhances the Exalt's capabilities.

FLIGHT OF MERCURY

Cost: 1 mote per initiative bonus

Duration: One scene

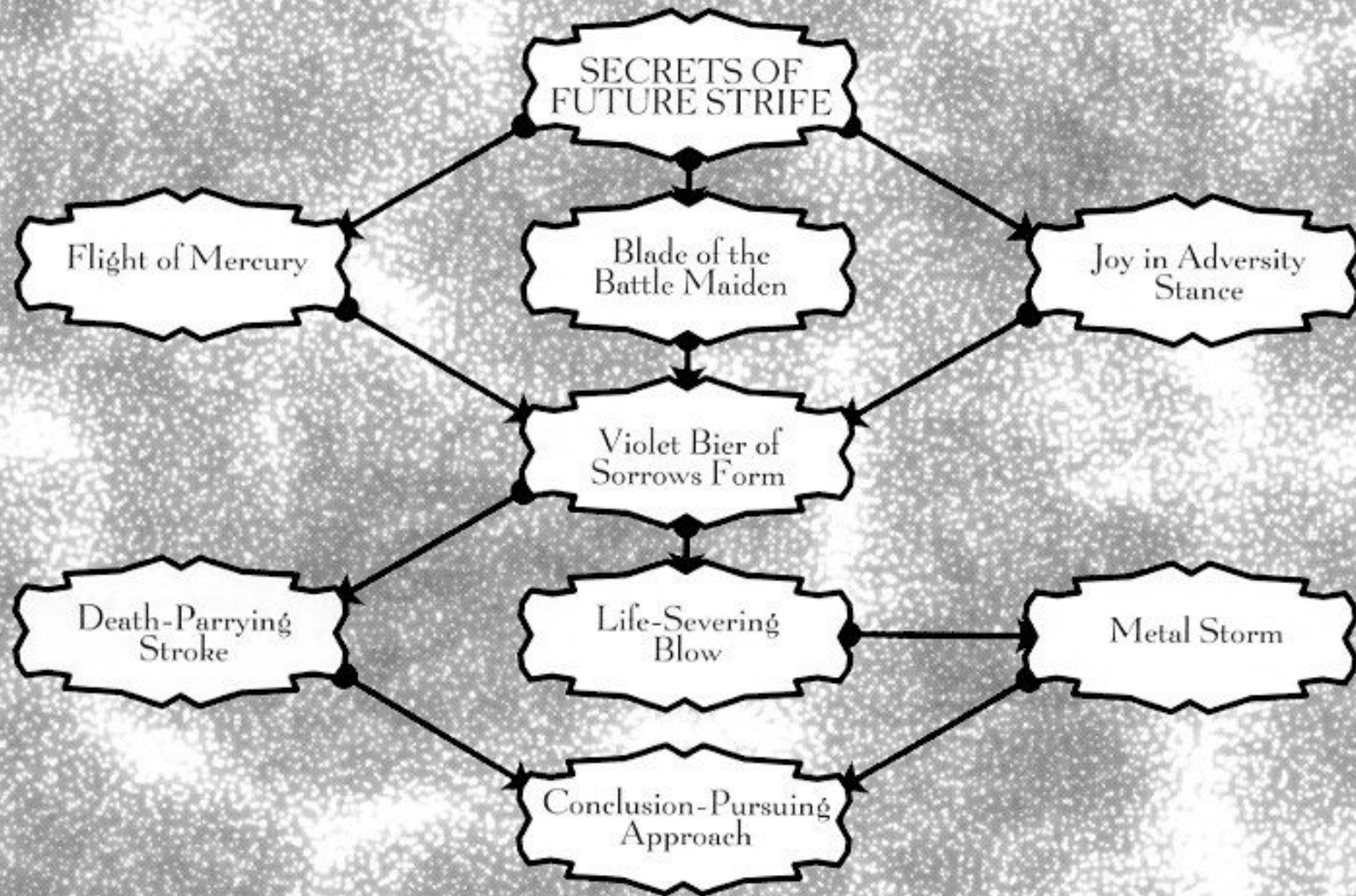
Type: Reflexive

Minimum Martial Arts: 2

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: Secrets of Future Strife

Martial Arts - The Sword



The character moves with the swift precision of one who knows her destiny. For each mote of Essence spent, she adds one point to her initiative for the remainder of the scene. Multiple applications of this Charm are cumulative, but she cannot add more than her Martial Arts to her initiative with any combination of effects that includes this Charm.

BLADE OF THE BATTLE MAIDEN

Cost: 2 motes per die, 2 Willpower

Duration: One scene

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Martial Arts: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Secrets of Future Strife

Essence shines around the character's hands (or weapons), tracing with their every movement crimson trails through the air. For each 2 motes spent, the character adds one die to each unarmed Martial Arts attack and parry she makes for the remainder of the scene. Multiple applications of this Charm are cumulative, but she cannot more than double her normal Dexterity + Martial Arts pool with any

combination of effects. While under this effect, her hands may safely parry even lethal damage blows, although blocking arrows or magical attacks requires a well-described stunt.

JOY IN ADVERSITY STANCE

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Martial Arts: 2

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: Secrets of Future Strife

Those who routinely face terrible odds can learn to take some measure of happiness in each moment's survival. Once having activated this Charm, the player rolls the Sidereal's Essence each time the character successfully blocks or dodges an attack. Each success indicates two motes of Essence, flavored by the tang of Serenity, that she recovers. This Charm does not activate against attacks not truly intended to harm the Sidereal, nor against attacks from enemies too weak to do her any real harm.

VIOLET BIER OF SORROWS FORM

Cost: 6 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 4

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Flight of Mercury, Blade of the Battle Maiden, Joy in Adversity Stance

The character adopts the cold detachment with which Saturn makes her Sign against those things whose time has passed. While the character uses the Violet Bier of Sorrows Form, each successful attack also drains some of the victim's passion. After damaging an opponent with an unarmed Martial Arts attack, the Exalt can remove one point of one of the target's Virtues, to a minimum of 1. This cannot reduce a target's Virtues below the minimums required for the Great Curse. For example, if a Solar's Virtue Flaw is Compassionate Martyrdom (see *Exalted*, p. 131), this Form cannot reduce his Compassion below 3. However, it can reduce a spirit, elemental or demon's Virtues below the minimum level necessary to use a given Charm, in which case the spirit loses access to that Charm until its Virtue recovers. Each Virtue heals at the rate of one point a day.

This Form changes the normal minimum for damage dice. While it is active, after a successful and potentially damaging unarmed Martial Arts attack, the character always rolls at least her Martial Arts score in damage dice.

This Charm is also called the "Endings Form."

DEATH-PARRYING STROKE

Cost: 2 motes per health level

Duration: Instant

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Violet Bier of Sorrows Form

In a blur of violet Essence, the character's blade catches an attack that might otherwise have killed him. If the character tries and fails to parry a blockable attack, he may decide — *after* damage is rolled — to invoke this Charm, reducing the damage by one level per 2 motes spent.

LIFE-SEVERING BLOW

Cost: 2 motes per health level

Duration: Instant

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Violet Bier of Sorrows Form

Drawing on the Essence of Endings, a character can add power to a blow that he realizes is about to pierce his enemy's defenses. As soon as a character hits an opponent with an unarmed attack, his player can declare the use of this Charm, purchasing automatic damage successes at a cost of 2 motes each. He cannot purchase more than his character's Essence in automatic successes. This Charm applies to unarmed Brawl attacks and is explicitly permitted to share a Combo with Brawl Charms; the disciplined approach of a martial artist is necessary only in the last instant of the blow.

METAL STORM

Cost: 3 motes per attack

Duration: Instant

Type: Extra Action

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Life-Severing Blow

Not even the most cunning of opponents can evade a sword that strikes everywhere at once. For each 3 motes spent, the character can make an extra unarmed Martial Arts attack at her full dice pool. All her attacks must be made against the same target. She cannot make more total attacks than her Martial Arts, nor can she split her dice pool in the same turn she uses Metal Storm.

CONCLUSION-PURSuing APPROACH

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Death-Parrying Stroke, Metal Storm

At the pinnacle of the Violet Bier of Sorrows Style, a character learns to draw strength from the pain of others. Her attacks gain resolve as her enemy falters. She is trained to take full advantage of the weakness of the wounded, stalking failing prey as death hunts those whose time has come. Whenever she successfully harms an opponent with an unarmed Martial Arts attack, she gains one point of Willpower. In addition, an opponent's wound penalties are tripled when it comes to attacking her or defending against her unarmed Martial Arts attacks.

Sidereal Exalted, and those who learn this Charm as a Sidereal Charm, can enhance it with a prayer strip marked with the scripture of the Expectant Maiden. The character fixes it to her sword (or other allowed weapon), wrapping the whole in a radiant burgundy light. While the prayer strip survives, her weapon cannot be destroyed, and each successful Martial Arts attack subtracts a Willpower point from the target. Creatures outside of



fate and targets with 0 Willpower instead lose 10 motes of Essence. If the target does not have 10 motes to lose, convert all damage dice to automatic successes instead.

THE CORPSE: MEDICINE

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN AND THE ROAD

*Once, there was a maiden...
...who found herself climbing up an earthen path.
Her footsteps made no sound.
There was a silence in the air.
She walked for years, and then, came to a cliff. The
road gave way to clouds, and she could go no further.
"There's always an ending," said she.*

SMOOTH TRANSITION

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Medicine: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm speeds and ensures a smooth transition from life to death. It instantly and painlessly kills any

Incapacitated or dying target. The target cannot rise again as an undead. If applied to a corpse, neither the body nor spirit can rise again as an undead. Zombies instantly collapse. This power cannot target ghosts directly, but if applied to the ghost's *original* body — not a body it happens to possess — it banishes the ghost instantly and permanently to the Underworld.

No Charm or ability protects the victim against Smooth Transition or activates in the moment of death. This is a perfect effect. However, extremely unusual corpses — such as spine chains — require a Charisma + Medicine roll to lay to rest, with difficulty equal to the Essence of the creature that raised them.

If the body of a target of this Charm is ever placed on naked earth or stone, it sinks quietly beneath the surface, arranging for its own burial.

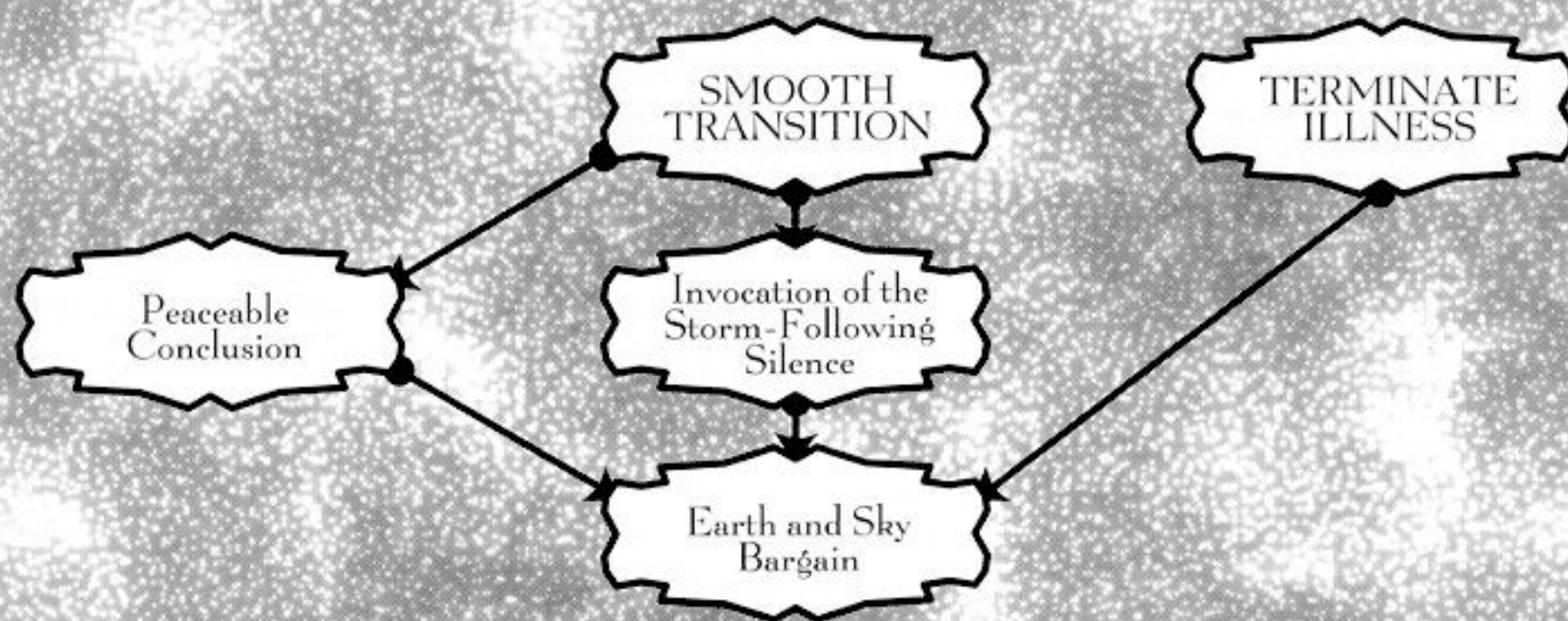
Sidereal Exalted may always use their Valor with this Charm.

PEACEABLE CONCLUSION

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Medicine: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Smooth Transition

As with Smooth Transition, this Charm instantly, painlessly and perfectly kills its target. The target need not

Medicine - The Corpse



be dying, Incapacitated or even wounded but must be willing to pass into death. His consent cannot be forced, nor can it be forcibly withheld: The target dies if and only if he would decide to consent, given adequate time and comfort in which to think, while under the influence of neither drug nor Charm. The Sidereal Exalted can freely make the prospect of life as unpleasant as she desires. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Valor with this Charm.

INVOCATION OF THE STORM-FOLLOWING SILENCE

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Medicine: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Smooth Transition

The character casts forth the violet radiance of Endings, stillness coming to the weave of fate. He brings a Smooth Transition to all those within (his Essence x 10) yards. If facing unusual corpses, his player makes only a single Charisma + Medicine roll; compare the number of successes received to the Essence of the Deathlord or deathknight who raised each given corpse to determine whether it falls. Sidereal Exalted may always use their Valor with this Charm.

TERMINATE ILLNESS

Cost: 10 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Medicine: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

The character makes the Inferior Sign of the Corpse against the spirit of an illness, and it comes to its natural end. The Exalt's player makes an Intelligence + Medicine roll against the normal difficulty to treat the disease, adding her Essence in dice. If successful, the disease's course ends, the least god of the infection dies peacefully, and the target can begin recovery. This does not affect spiritual diseases (see pp. 195-201). Sidereal Exalted may always use their Conviction with this Charm.

EARTH AND SKY BARGAIN

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level
Duration: Indefinite
Type: Simple
Minimum Medicine: 4
Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Peaceable Conclusion, Invocation of the Storm-Following Silence, Terminate Illness

This Charm uses a prayer strip marked with the scripture of the Maiden and the Road. The character buries it seven yards beneath the ground and covers its grave with stone. Ten spines of indigo light burst upward from the grave and explode into the sky — the Charm then takes effect. The Sidereal's intuition for fate leads her to the nearest spirit or elemental of the earth or the air who stands, for whatever reason, on the verge of death. If the Sidereal so chooses, she may offer it an opportunity to endure past its time. If it accepts, it binds itself to the Sidereal Exalted's soul and vanishes.

Until the Sidereal releases this Charm and the committed Essence, she recovers one lethal or bashing health level per turn. This action is a reflexive one that does not count against her actions for the turn. If she binds an earth entity rather than a creature of air, this

regeneration functions only in contact with the earth or stone. In addition, her natural soak increases by (3L/3B) if she binds an air creature and (6L/6B) if she ties herself to the earth. This soak is not compatible with armor. The character does not choose which sort of elemental or spirit she finds. The matter is in Saturn's hands.

The character can transfer the bound spirit or elemental to another. From that point forward, that person benefits from the effects, and she does not. She cannot reclaim it once so transferred, although the Charm still ends when she stops committing Essence to it.

When the character ends the Charm, the elemental or spirit is born again from its host's soul. It does not return as quite the same entity and is often closer to the Exalt's strength than to its original power. It may or may not consider itself indebted, depending on its nature, how long the character left the Charm in force and whether the Sidereal had anything to do with its being on the verge of death in the first place.

SIDEREAL MARTIAL ARTS

Martial arts do not have the same limitations as ordinary Sidereal Charms. For the Sidereal Exalted, they offer a route to large combat dice pools, mote-efficient Charms, new Charms and high-Essence Charms. In addition, **creatures outside of Fate have no special resistance to Sidereal Martial Arts.**

A very long time ago, the older Sidereal Exalted decided that this was *interesting*. They began to devote significant attention to the discipline and principles of the martial arts.

This section contains a few of the secret styles developed over millennia by the Sidereal masters. With sufficient discipline and effort, Sidereals can create any style they like, so many others exist. Many of them exceed these in raw power, with even the first Charms on the tree requiring Essence 6 or more.

Each of these secret styles requires a qualitative increase in focus and dedication over the other supernatural martial arts and rewards it with a qualitative increase in power. To acquire basic competence with these styles — that is to say, their Forms — a character must first master a lesser style entirely. Most Sidereal Exalted choose to learn the Violet Bier of Sorrows Style before proceeding to the secret martial arts, but learning any complete martial arts tree — such as Snake Style Martial Arts, described in *Exalted* — opens the way to the higher Forms.

Charcoal March of Spiders Style is a standard advanced martial art. It has a variety of applications for younger students, a potent Form and a fair number of applications requiring elder-level Essence.

Prismatic Arrangement of Creation Style is less typical and is often recommended for young, fresh Side-

real Exalted. The Charm tree develops into four lesser Forms and a greater Form, all available at Essence 5. Learning the Prismatic Arrangement of Creation Form helps a student take better advantage of lesser martial-arts styles while developing the breadth and depth of skill necessary to reach the high-Essence Charms.

Citrine Poxes of Contagion Style focuses on disrupting the natural Essence flows of its targets, inflicting or curing a variety of debilitating spiritual conditions. It is geared somewhat toward younger Exalted, with relatively few applications that require high Essence to master.

SUTRAS

The Sidereal Exalted have deliberately developed martial-arts styles that benefit from their innate connection to the Maidens. The sutras of these styles, like the scriptures for Sidereal Charms, bring together the power of the Charms and the patterns of the stars, allowing synergistic effects.

A Sidereal who learns the Form-type Charm for any secret style (or any Form-type Charm for the Prismatic Arrangement of Creation Style, below) also understands the secrets of its "student's sutra." If she has a prayer strip inscribed with this sutra, she can reflexively spend a Willpower point to activate it. For the rest of the scene, the prayer strip shines with the characteristic color of the style and floats in the air beside her. Each turn, it reduces the combined cost for using Charms from that style by 5 motes. It cannot reduce the cost below 1 mote per turn if the character uses any Charms.

Sidereals who learn every Charm in a secret style also understand its "elder sutra." Activating a prayer strip marked with the Elder Sutra uses the same rules, except that it reduces the combined cost each turn for using Charms from that style by 10 motes and 1 Willpower. It cannot reduce the Essence cost below 1 mote per turn, nor can it reduce the Willpower cost below 0. One cannot combine the benefits of a student's sutra and an elder sutra for the same style, but the character *can* simultaneously use sutras for two or more different styles.

CONSUMPTION: THE CHARCOAL MARCH OF SPIDERS

The Student's Sutra of Consumption: Once, there was a small maiden...

UNNATURAL MANY-STEP STRIDE

Cost: 6 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

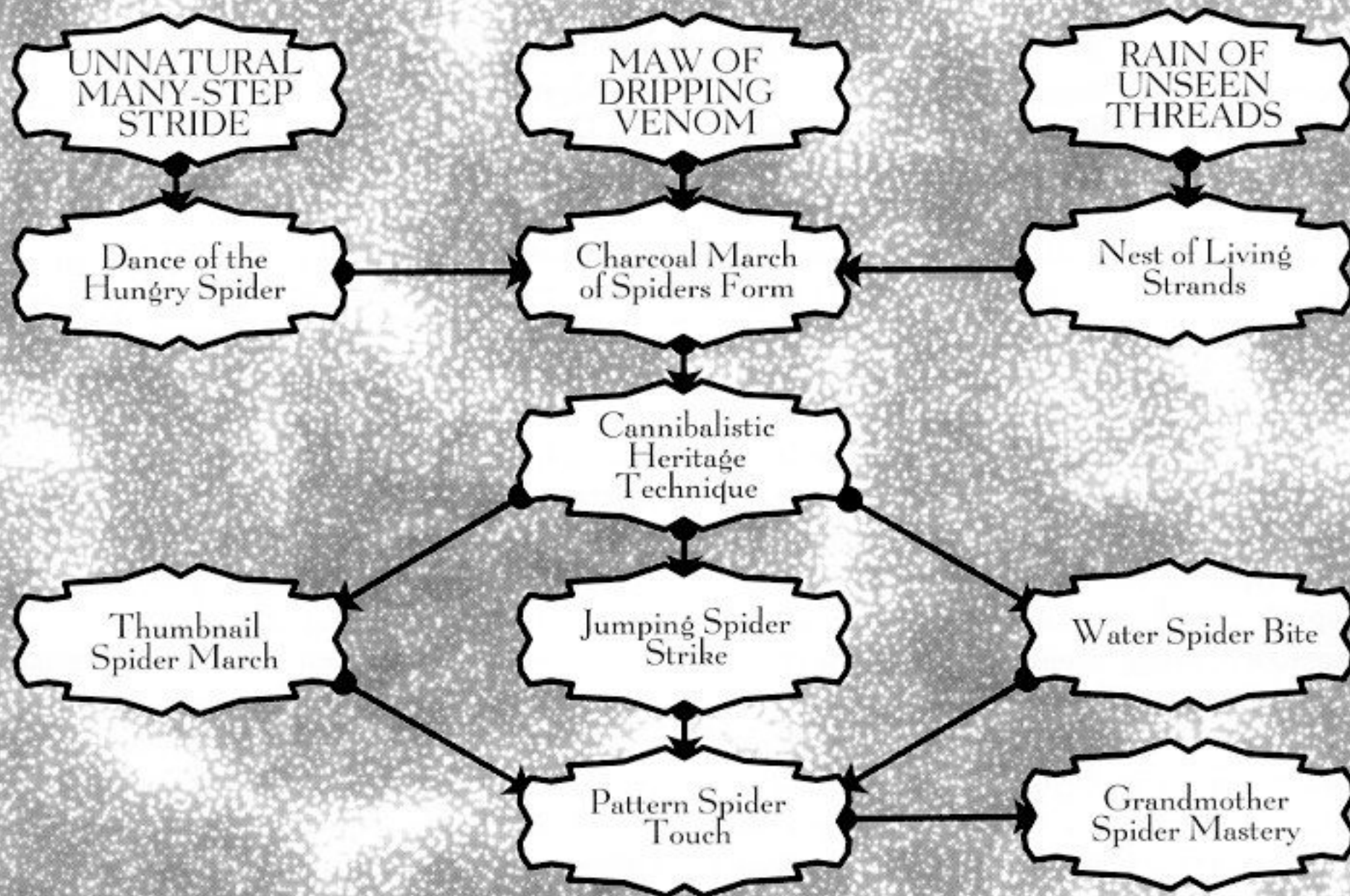
Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: None

Charcoal March of Spiders Style



WEAPONS AND ARMOR

Charms in the Charcoal March of Spiders Style treat attacks the Sidereal makes with knives or seven-section staves, including serpent-sting staves, as unarmed attacks. A staff represents the nimble leg of a spider, while the knife represents its fang. Also treat the wires/threads generated by certain Charms in this style as unarmed attacks. If a Charm allows the character to choose between issuing bashing or lethal damage, this applies only to barehanded, staff-based and thread-based attacks. A knife must do lethal damage.

Characters cannot use this style while wearing armor.

...whose skill was great enough to climb a whirlwind over water.

The character scuttles on the threads of fate like a pattern spider. He can run through or stand upon the air as easily as on the ground. He can reflexively spend a mote of Essence to dematerialize from the beginning of his initiative to the beginning of his next initiative,

allowing him to become as invisible and intangible as those who weave fate. This does not count against his actions for the turn. When he is under this Charm's influence, the Sidereal's gait both disturbs and horrifies those who see it. Except for the Sidereal's allies, the player of a witness who does not have this Charm must succeed at a difficulty 1 Valor roll each turn, or her character loses her action.

DANCE OF THE HUNGRY SPIDER

Cost: 8 motes

Duration: Five turns

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Unnatural Many-Step Stride
Arrows fell upon her, forcing her to descend.

This Charm emulates a spider's motion, balanced on six legs and striking with two, never lacking the leverage — regardless of what might tangle its blows — for a lightning retreat or advance. The character begins a shuffling, sliding, shifting kata, her feet constantly in motion and nearly impossible for mortal eyes to track. Only the third of three separate, successful attempts can

sweep her, knock her down, clinch or hold her or make a targeted attack against her lower body.

When the character uses this kata, she can shift herself almost instantaneously out of the path of a blow. Becoming aware of a physical attack allows her to glide away, moving up to twice her Dexterity in yards. If the attack can hit her at this range — as with archery or the Lightning Strike Style (see *Exalted: the Dragon-Blooded*, p. 246) — this Charm increases any associated range penalties. Attacks that must hit her before she moves away (such as hand-to-hand attacks if she puts more than three yards between herself and her attacker) suffer a dice pool penalty equal to half the character's initiative for that turn, rounded up. After the first attack, the attacker must move into range again to hit her at all. Similarly, the character can glide forward up to twice her Dexterity in yards to make any of her unarmed Martial Arts attacks. Attempts to parry her attack suffer a dice pool penalty equal to half her initiative for the turn, rounded up. Dodging her requires less awareness of her angle of approach; dodge attempts only suffer a penalty equal to her permanent Essence.

When a character uses this Charm to dart quickly through her enemies, splitting her Martial Arts action to maximize the extra movement derived from this Charm, it is sometimes called the Dance of the Pouncing Spider. When she uses it to skate away from a barrage of arrows, quickly exceeding their maximum range, it is the Dance of the Spider in the Rain.

MAW OF DRIPPING VENOM

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: None

But the Essence burning within her set the arrows afire.

The character's fingers rain across her opponent like a thousand poisoned fangs, tainting the target's Essence so that his soul begins to dissolve from the inside. The character makes a normal unarmed Dexterity + Martial Arts attack, which does normal damage. In addition, the target begins to hemorrhage Essence. He loses 5 motes every turn, exactly as if he had spent them. This effect lasts one turn for each damage die rolled. Multiple applications of this effect are cumulative. When the target runs out of motes, he collapses, comatose, for a number of days equal to the character's Martial Arts. Storyteller characters may die outright. Given three turns of physical contact with a comatose target, a character with this Charm can suck out and devour the target's soul. This restores the devourer's temporary Essence to its normal maximum. The target does not move on to the afterlife. If the character consumes a

Celestial Exalt, she will grow sick sometime within the next three days and spit out the indigestible Celestial Essence, suffering six dice of lethal damage in the process, which ignores armor and soak.

RAIN OF UNSEEN THREADS

Cost: 8 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Extra Action

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: None

She answered the arrows' flight with a storm of her own.

The character casts forth a number of hair-fine threads equal to his permanent Essence. Each can attempt one of the following maneuvers, at a range of (the Sidereal's Essence x 10) yards:

- Pick up a single unattended weapon or object. Attacking or parrying with a weapon held by a thread is a normal Martial Arts action.

- Pierce an opponent's skin, as a normal Martial Arts attack that does lethal damage.

- Disarm, sweep or hold an opponent (see *Exalted*, pp. 238-240). This attack uses the character's full Dexterity + Martial Arts pool and does not count against the character's actions. Further, the character can maintain a hold with his full Strength + Martial Arts pool, without losing or splitting his action, so long as he invokes this Charm every turn. However, each thread can hold only a single limb; a held character can take actions with her other limbs. If the character devotes multiple threads to holding an opponent, resolve the attack with a single roll.

Make reflexive Perception + Awareness or Perception + Martial Arts checks at difficulty 4 for other characters to see the threads. Otherwise, except for attacks with a visible weapon, targets are unaware of the attack and can only use defenses that specifically state they work on attacks the character is not aware of. The threads are tangible and slightly reflective, and opponents can use stunts to make them easier to spot or predict.

NEST OF LIVING STRANDS

Cost: 15 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Rain of Unseen Threads

And the small maiden began

Hundreds of near-invisible filaments spun from the character's Essence launch from her hands, whipping around physical and spiritual leverage points and weaving amongst themselves to snarl and tangle all opponents within (the Sidereal's Essence x 10) yards. Each turn, the



Sidereal's player reflexively rolls Dexterity + Martial Arts. Enemies inside the Charm's area of effect, or who enter that area before the character's next turn, suffer a cumulative penalty to their dice pools for all physical actions equal to half the number of successes. They receive the same penalty to their natural movement rate in yards. This penalty fades by one die and one yard per turn that the victim spends outside the radius, as the threads reluctantly disentangle themselves.

The weave of thread moves with the character, easily catching new opponents brought into the radius and twitching out of the way of those she wishes to give unhampered passage. If the character does not keep moving, the threads thicken toward the point of visibility, first as glints of reflected light in the air, then a faint visual impression like cobweb and ultimately (after five minutes of stillness) an opaque forest of webbing around the character, as impassible — for those she does not offer passage to — as stone (use the statistics for Stone Wall on page 239 of *Exalted* for each one-yard cube attackers wish to clear).

CHARCOAL MARCH OF SPIDERS FORM

Cost: 12 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 5

Prerequisite Charms: One complete martial art (all Charms), Dance of the Hungry Spider, Maw of Dripping Venom, Nest of Living Strands
to climb the waterspout again.

The character moves in the fashion of an arachnid sifu, her hands weaving lazily through three sets of interwoven kata. Such is her grace and coordination, in Essence as in body, that she may take three fully independent physical actions in each turn. For example, she might invoke a full dodge when attacked, then invoke Flight of Mercury while making an ordinary Martial Arts attack and, finally, split her dice pool to use Maw of Dripping Venom against two nearby opponents.

Fully independent actions follow exactly the same rules as taking single actions on multiple successive turns, except that:

- Only one turn actually passes, which matters for some Charm effects and durations and also means the sutra discount applies only once.
- Characters who have split dice pools can interweave their actions. For example, they can split one action's dice pool between an attack and a parry, taking another action in between.
 - The character only moves once.
 - Characters cannot also use extra action Charms or Combos containing those Charms when taking more than one independent action.

In addition, if the character chooses to use this ability in a given turn, she cannot take any non-reflexive dice actions depending on Social or Mental Attributes. (This final limit is not intrinsic to fully independent actions, but a feature of this Form.) The character does not have to use this ability in a given turn if she would prefer to use an extra action Charm, use a Combo or take a Social or Mental action.

Characters using the Charcoal March of Spiders Form automatically receive the benefits of the Unnatural Many-Step Stride and Dance of the Hungry Spider in every turn.

Characters cannot use more than one Martial Arts Form-type Charm at a time.

CANNIBALISTIC HERITAGE TECHNIQUE

Cost: 20 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Martial Arts: 6

Minimum Essence: 6

Prerequisite Charms: Charcoal March of Spiders Form

The Elder Sutra of Consumption: The maiden became a mother...

Just as the widow spider devours her mate to feed a thousand children, the character consumes the force of one blow to give rise to a wind of vengeance. She may use this Charm immediately after someone successfully attacks her. The swirling pattern of her hands forms a raw vortex to draw in and disrupt the Essence and physical substance of the attack. She immediately inflicts her Dexterity + Martial Arts in dice of unblockable, undodgeable lethal damage against an unarmed attacker or shatters any mortal weapon used against her. If this kills an unarmed attacker or destroys an armed attacker's weapon, she takes no damage from the attack. Her opponent can use a perfect block or a perfect dodge to avoid the vortex damage — however, this requires aborting the original attack, and again, the Sidereal takes no damage. Either way, from the heart of the vortex, the Exalt may issue a number of unarmed counterattacks equal to her Martial Arts score, doubling their raw damage. She can use this Charm in response to a counterattack Charm such as Crimson Palm Counterstrike but does not receive counterattacks against any counterattack Charm.

THUMBNAIL SPIDER MARCH

Cost: 12 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Extra Action

Minimum Martial Arts: 6

Minimum Essence: 6

Prerequisite Charms: Cannibalistic Heritage Technique

And to one child she said, "I have many things to show you."

In the jungles of the East, one sometimes finds nests of thumbnail spiders: thousands or millions of tiny spiders sharing a funnel-shaped web. They normally wait for prey to fall into their home but are more than happy to swarm over anyone or anything that arouses their ire. When something destroys their web, such spiders migrate for miles, devouring everything they pass, until they decide upon a new home. A character using this Charm is every bit as destructive. He moves up to (his Essence x 10) yards and makes three Martial Arts attacks at his full dice pool. Every opponent within five yards of his path suffers the effects of each attack. Each dodges or blocks individually. If the targets have defensive effects that hurt attackers — such as counterattacks, spines or an angry invocation of the Shield of Mars — the character is immune to the effect. The blur of his passing fist or foot fades away into nothingness as the counterattack triggers, for the death of a single spider does not hurt the swarm. The Exalt's attacks affect both material and spiritual targets with equal facility, and the character can launch these attacks while dematerialized.

Characters using Thumbnail Spider March do not receive offensive benefits from reflexive movement Charms such as the Dance of the Hungry Spider, although they can still receive defensive benefits.

JUMPING SPIDER STRIKE

Cost: 20 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Martial Arts: 6

Minimum Essence: 6

Prerequisite Charms: Cannibalistic Heritage Technique

And to another, she said, "You may rest within my home, and eat; no need to fly."

In the South, surrounded by the sands, there stands the great idol Ma-Un-Enle, and there are spiders that come before it. Sometimes, a spider hears Ma-Un-Enle speak a name, and it bows with all its legs, and it walks out into the wind. It buries itself under the sands, growing ever larger with age, for hundreds or thousands of years. Then, when the person whose name it has heard comes within 10 miles, it strikes in one smooth bound. A character using this Charm can spring at any visible target, issuing an unarmed attack at the completion of that leap.

Against a person, this attack does normal damage, adding the character's Essence in automatic successes to the damage roll. In addition, the target's player must make a reflexive opposed roll of Stamina + Resistance against a difficulty equal to the Sidereal's Essence; on

failure, the force of the attack reduces the point of impact (such as the target's head or chest) to a cloud of blood and dust. The target has one turn left to live, or rather, one turn before her Essence realizes that she should be dead. No mortal medicine can help. The application of a magical effect that heals one or more health levels makes her Incapacitated but stable, but with one less dot of permanent Stamina.

Treat attacks against inanimate objects as feats of strength used to break them; the character's total on the Feats of Strength table (see *Exalted*, p. 252) is (her Essence x 5). This does mean a minimum total of 30 — the character automatically shatters cliff faces, but a powerful Manse might only lose its gate.

WATER SPIDER BITE

Cost: 20 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Martial Arts: 6

Minimum Essence: 6

Prerequisite Charms: Cannibalistic Heritage Technique

And to a third, she said, "How beautiful you are."

In the oceans of the West live green hunting spiders, bulbous and hand-sized, scurrying along the underside of the surface as easily as if were a web. They kill fish — sometimes, even great sharks or whales — for their meat, paralyzing them with a pinprick bite and burrowing into their flesh, floating to the surface years later, sated, when they have eaten it all. A character with this Charm possesses a touch every bit as deadly. With one swift blow, she can render an enemy helpless and begin to devour him for his Essence.

To use this Charm, she makes a normal unarmed attack. If she succeeds and does even one health level of damage, she also paralyzes the Essence of her opponent. Paralysis means that the target cannot spend motes, cannot regain Willpower or Essence and receives the benefits of the Heartless Maiden Trance (see p. 133). He can overcome this effect for one turn by spending a Willpower point and having his player succeed at a reflexive Stamina + Occult roll against a difficulty equal to the character's Essence. He must do this successfully a number of times equal to the character's Martial Arts score to completely free himself from the effects. Meanwhile, until the victim is completely free, the martial artist can spend his motes of Essence as if they were her own. This can invoke the target's anima banner but does not increase the Sidereal's.

When a character uses this Charm on a consenting subject, allowing her to draw on that subject's Essence, it is known instead as Seven-Leg Walking.

PATTERN SPIDER TOUCH

Cost: 20 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Martial Arts: 6

Minimum Essence: 6

Prerequisite Charms: Thumbnail Spider March, Jumping Spider Strike, Water Spider Bite

And as each heard her words and came to the center of her web,

The master of this Charm learns the eight secret atemi practiced by the firstmade of the pattern spiders, Asna, who dwells surrounded by her teeming young in a sanctum web larger than the Realm. With a successful unarmed attack, the character can change her target, reweaving the structure of the target's existence from the Essence outward. This causes one of the following effects:

- Transforms the target into a beast, stripping him of his mind and shape.
- Transforms the target's flesh into one of the five elements: a gust of wind, a gout of fire that fades into ash, a statue, a watery haze or a living oak. The target is still alive, but unless he is an elemental of the relevant type, he can take no actions.
- Grants the target a new life and identity. This uses the same rules as the Ceasing to Exist Approach (see p. 173), save that the effects are permanent and the target forgets his original identity.
- Unmakes the target utterly. In the unlikely event a Primordial fails to use a perfect defense, that Primordial becomes a Malfean. Any other target instantly ceases to exist, in life and in afterlife, as the strands of his Essence come violently apart and scatter to the corners of Creation.

This replaces the normal damage of the attack.

The reapplication of this Charm, extremely potent blessings such as the Endowment spirit Charm (see the **Exalted Storyteller's Companion**, p. 53) and specific transformative agents such as the Wondrous Lunar Transformation (see **Exalted: The Lunars**, p. 130) can return transformed targets to normalcy. Gathering the pieces of elementally transformed targets before returning them to normalcy is advisable. Normally, these methods provide an immediate restoration. However, targets transformed into other people and back may have difficulty relinquishing their new memories and recovering the old ones. Nothing can remake the unmade.

This Charm does not affect tattooed Lunar Exalted, whose bodies reject external transformation. This applies even to the final version of the Charm.

GRANDMOTHER SPIDER MASTERY

Cost: 20 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One turn

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 6

Minimum Essence: 7

Prerequisite Charms: Pattern Spider Touch
she ate them.

To master this style is to approach the grandeur of Asna Firstborn herself. When the character strikes, she does not seem to move so much as to divide into many warriors at once. She may cast forth endless invisible filaments of web, as with Rain of Unseen Threads, or simply strike so quickly as to occupy many locations simultaneously. In either case, fighting her does not resemble opposing the master herself so much as challenging an army of her young: The attacks rain down from every side, skittering inward in the unsettling many-stepped strides of the form to surround and bewilder her foes.

The character applies each unarmed Martial Arts attack she makes this turn against all visible opponents, twice each, regardless of distance. Grandmother Spider Mastery, as a simple Charm that cannot be in a Combo, gives no benefit to characters without access to fully independent actions. (That is, characters not using Charcoal March of Spiders Form.)

ESSENCE: THE PRISMATIC ARRANGEMENT OF CREATION

WEAPONS AND ARMOR

Characters cannot use this style while wearing armor.

The Student's Sutra of Essence: Once, there were maidens...

DEADLY STARMETAL OFFENSIVE (JI)

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: Five turns

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

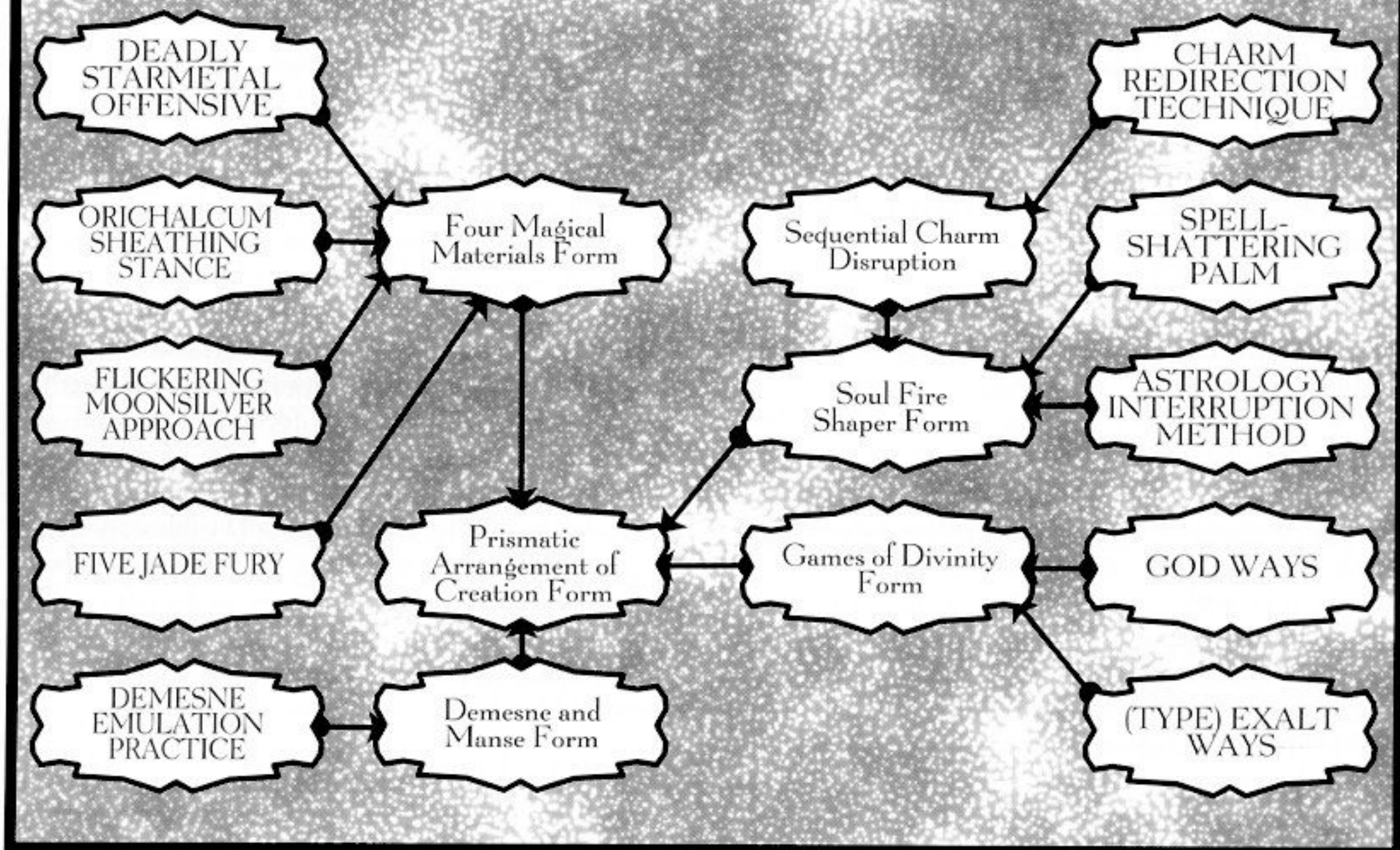
Prerequisite Charms: None

...and their names were JI and PENG and LU and ZHOU

The character infuses her fingernails with Essence, hardening them, sharpening them, lengthening them into weapons — and, most importantly, causing them to



Prismatic Arrangement of Creation Style



bend, influence and predict the path of fate in the manner of starmetal. They inflict Strength + 7L damage, with +2 to Speed, Accuracy and Defense, and can parry both lethal and ranged attacks. Treat attacks and parries enhanced with this Charm as unarmed; they are legal weapons for any martial arts style.

ORICHALCUM SHEATHING STANCE (PENG)

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Five turns
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Martial Arts: 5
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: None

The character wraps her body in a sheath of Essence, mirroring in its interaction with her own anima the link between Solar Exalted and orichalcum. She adds (12L/12B) to her soak. This bonus acts as armor in all respects save one: It does not interfere with the use of any Martial Arts Charm. Thus, attacks that ignore armor ignore this soak, while aggravated damage does

not. The character can invoke this Charm on her initiative. She can also invoke it when attacked but must declare the use of the Charm before her opponent's player makes his attack roll.

FLICKERING MOONSILVER APPROACH (LU)

Cost: 10 motes
Duration: Five turns
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Martial Arts: 5
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: None

The character traces patterns through the air that echo the slippery, mutable ways in which moonsilver twists the flows of Essence around it. Opponents cannot precisely determine the Sidereal's location: He can make an unarmed Martial Arts attack against anyone within (his Essence x 5) yards, and the target subtracts his Martial Arts from her dice pools to defend against him.

FIVE JADE FURY (ZHOU)**Cost:** 10 motes**Duration:** Five turns**Type:** Reflexive**Minimum Martial Arts:** 5**Minimum Essence:** 4**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The character binds the substance of Creation to her Essence, shifting into a pattern of attacks that radiates the elemental authority of jade. Each gives a gift, which applies only to unarmed Martial Arts attacks. Her blows can be bashing or lethal, as she chooses, reflecting the compassion and conviction of green jade. The grace of black jade steers her attacks well: She supplements attack rolls with one extra automatic success for every three dice rolled, rounded up. The reliability of white jade ensures reasonable damage: She supplements damage rolls with one extra automatic success for every three dice rolled, again rounding up. The force of blue jade knocks opponents back one yard for each level of damage inflicted. Finally, the swiftness of red jade adds +3 to her initiative.

FOUR MAGICAL MATERIALS FORM (HOU TUI)**Cost:** 15 motes**Duration:** One scene**Type:** Simple**Minimum Martial Arts:** 5**Minimum Essence:** 5

Prerequisite Charms: One complete martial art (all Charms), Deadly Starmetal Offensive, Orichalcum Sheathing Stance, Flickering Moonsilver Approach, Five Jade Fury *and* HOU TUI

The character attunes herself to the Essence of the world, drawing on the flows of interwoven fates, raw power, progressive change and elemental stability that play out all around her. In this fashion, while she maintains the Form, she becomes a living artifact. This Form does not mimic the Essence of soulsteel.

When using this Form, the character continuously receives the benefits of the four stances from which it derives. In addition, she becomes unbreakable: She automatically converts any lethal damage she receives to bashing damage, before soak, unless the attack could damage one of the Five Magical Materials.

Characters cannot normally use more than one Martial Arts Form-type Charm at a time.

CHARM REDIRECTION TECHNIQUE (AN)**Cost:** 7 motes**Duration:** Instant**Type:** Supplemental**Minimum Martial Arts:** 5**Minimum Essence:** 4**Prerequisite Charms:** None

and AN *and* CAI *and* LI *and* HUA JI

The character learns to catch, tangle and throw the Essence flows of Charms as if they were the flailing limbs of her hapless foes. This is a Martial Arts parry action. Therefore, before the character's initiative, she can abort to the Charm Redirection Technique. Afterward, she can use Martial Arts parry actions (obtained through a pre-split dice pool or a Combo with a Charm allowing a reflexive Martial Arts parry) for the Charm Redirection Technique.

When someone uses a Charm against her or when someone within three yards uses a Charm, the Sidereal's player rolls her character's Dexterity + Martial Arts against a difficulty equal to the Charm user's Essence. The character must invoke the Charm Redirection Technique before her opponent's player rolls the Charm's effect, if applicable.

Should the Charm Redirection Technique succeed, the Sidereal learns a one-sentence summary of the chosen Charm's effects. She can then choose a new target for the Charm (if possible) or annul it entirely. The rules for annulling Charms are as follows:

- The target must have the option to not use the Charm. (Charms that invoke themselves, such as Surprise Anticipation Method, are immune.)
- The target pays for the Charm normally, but nothing happens. For simple or extra action Charms, this also means the target cannot act that turn. For supplemental Charms, he must take the original dice action, unassisted by the Charm.
- Annulling a reflexive Charm allows the target to immediately reuse it. For example, if the character annuls Seven Shadow Evasion, the target can reinvoked it before the relevant attack resolves.

The key rules for redirecting Charms are as follows:

- A redirection is only valid if the original user could apply the Charm to the new target. For example, the Sidereal can redirect a Solar's Sandstorm-Wind Attack against any target within (10 x the Solar's Essence) yards of the Solar. The redirection must also make sense. A Solar's impassioned words can accidentally seduce the wrong target, but Eye-Deceiving Camouflage cannot accidentally hide the wrong person.
- Redirecting the Charm does not change the variable effects. Base these on the original user's Traits and mote expenditure. For example, a redirected Blazing Solar Bolt uses the Solar's Dexterity + Melee pool, not the Sidereal's.
- The victim whose Charm the Sidereal redirected pays for the Charm normally. For simple Charms, the Charm also represents his action for the turn.
- Redirecting a supplemental Charm also redirects the associated dice action. This uses the original user's dice pool.
- Reflexive Charms cannot be redirected.



- Redirecting extra action Charms redirects all possible associated dice actions to the new target. If the extra action Charm does not allow the application of every roll to a single target — the Arrow Storm Technique being an example — the character chooses as many actions to redirect as possible, and any remaining actions proceed normally.

This Charm does not work against Charms established in previous turns or against Combos. It does not work against Martial Arts Form-type Charms or sorcery—they cannot be redirected or annulled.

SEQUENTIAL CHARM DISRUPTION (CAJ)

Cost: 5 motes + mote cost of Charms affected, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Charm Redirection Technique

This Charm extends the Charm Redirection Technique, allowing the character to:

- Annul the effects of established Charms. For example, she can cancel an ongoing Flow Like Blood Charm.

- Annul or redirect a Combo. This follows simple rules: If the Exalt can legally redirect all the simple, supplemental and extra action Charms in a Combo, she can do so, as a single invocation of Sequential Charm Disruption. If she can legally annul all of them, she can do so, again with a single invocation. She chooses whether to annul or ignore the reflexive Charms in a Combo individually, as they are used.

To use Sequential Charm Disruption, the character must be a target of the Charm or effect or the character must come within three yards of the Charm's original user. She then uses a Martial Arts parry action against the Charm itself, her player rolling Dexterity + Martial Arts against the Charm user's Essence. When disrupting Combos, if applicable, the Sidereal must invoke Sequential Charm Disruption before her opponent begins rolling the Charms' effects.

Like Charm Redirection Technique, this Charm does not affect Form-type Charms or Sorcery. The Essence cost for this Charm equals the Essence cost for all the Charms affected, plus 5 motes.

For Example: Swan's Combo, as described on page 215 of *Exalted*, includes *Striking Serpent Speed*, *Crippling Pressure-Point Strike*, *Serpentine Evasion* and *Thunderbolt Attack Prana*. Nerys wishes to thwart Swan and his associate Imri using *Sequential Charm Disruption*. The Sidereal splits her dice pool and attacks him. Swan invokes *Serpentine Evasion*, declaring the Combo and spending 1 Willpower.

Nerys ignores this Charm, and Swan successfully evades. Then, Swan attacks. He spends 4 motes and 1 Willpower on *Striking Serpent Speed*, his player rolling the Eclipse's Essence and discovering that he can make three attacks that turn. Each attack costs 6 motes and 1 Willpower, for a total cost of 22 motes of Essence and 4 Willpower. Nerys uses her second action to parry and disrupt the Combo, with a difficulty equal to Swan's Essence. This costs 27 motes and 1 Willpower. She cannot redirect Swan's actions to different targets because of the rules for redirecting extra action Charms. However, if Imri happens to be standing near Swan, Nerys can legally redirect all of these Charms at her. Swan shrinks into a tight crouch, then explodes upward in a leap, blazing with golden Essence. Nerys catches and twists the power radiating from Swan. Instead of enabling a terrifying assault against Nerys, the energy flow from Swan's Combo draws him, with absolute grace and helpless beauty, into a series of three fierce attacks upon Imri. Each blow casts off spherical shockwaves of white energy, and not until all three land can Swan wrench himself free from the tangled Essence flow.

SPELL-SHATTERING PALM (LI)

Cost: 12 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character uses martial arts to yank the threads of a delicate construct of sorcery out of place. Upon contact with the effects of sorcery, she activates this Charm and makes a reflexive unarmed Martial Arts attack against the structure of the spell. The difficulty equals the sorcerer's Essence plus the spell's circle. If she succeeds, the spell shatters, as if dispelled by counter magic of its own circle.

The Exalt can work an even greater mischief if someone actually casts a spell within her reach. Her player makes an unarmed Martial Arts attack roll as described above. If she succeeds, the Sidereal can abort the spell as above. Alternately, she can cause the entire structure to unravel as if the sorcerer had botched a distraction roll (see *Exalted*, pp. 216-217).

This Charm functions against necromancy as well as sorcery, but only if the Sidereal Exalted has had extensive opportunity to study the dark magics of the Abyssal Exalted.

ASTROLOGY INTERRUPTION METHOD (HUA JI)

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character uses her education in the nature of fate in conjunction with her martial skill to disjoint, snarl and otherwise tangle the fates the spiders weave. By lightly striking the target in the five points where the threads of the Loom of Fate attach, the Sidereal can negate the effects of Sidereal astrology. Upon contact with a Sidereal astrological effect, she may activate this Charm and make a reflexive unarmed Martial Arts attack against the threads of destiny. The difficulty equals the Essence + College of the Sidereal who created the effect. If she succeeds, the effect is dangerously torn or frayed, and the pattern spiders abandon it. This causes • Paradox to both the martial artist attacking the effect and the Sidereal who created it and may trigger an inquiry by the bureau.

This Charm can target resplendent destinies, even ones lurking in the target's background. If the target has multiple effects active at once, the martial artist will have to attack them each separately. Roll first for any active resplendent destiny, then any other effects, highest Essence + College first.

SOUL FIRE SHAPER FORM (QIAN JING)

Cost: 15 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 5

Prerequisite Charms: One complete martial art (all Charms), Sequential Charm Disruption, Spell-Shattering Palm, Astrology Interruption Method
and QIAN JING

The character balances her actions so perfectly to the local flow of Essence that the world around her — whether Creation, the Wyld, the Underworld or Malfeas itself — cannot help but support her victory.

While using the Soul Fire Shaper Form, the character increases her effective permanent Essence score to 10. This does not give her additional temporary Essence, although it does increase her maximum temporary Essence. It does not allow her to purchase Charms, familiars or acquaintances she would otherwise be unable to possess. Otherwise, treat her Essence as 10 for all effects.

In addition, the character can make one free use of Charm Redirection Technique, Sequential Charm Disruption, Astrology Interruption Method or Spell-Shattering Palm in each turn. This is part of the Form's effect and does not count as the character's action or Charm for that turn.

Characters cannot normally use more than one Martial Arts Form-type Charm at a time.

GOD WAYS (ZUO GU)

Cost: 6 motes

Duration: Indefinite

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: None
and ZUO GU and YOU PAN

The character steps into an object or person, displacing its natural spirit with his Essence manipulations as easily as a master of legerdemain might steal a mortal's coat. The Sidereal's player rolls Charisma + Martial Arts against a difficulty equal to the Essence of the Exalt's target — the body he wants to steal or the god or least god of the thing he wishes to possess. The target's player can make a simple Willpower roll against difficulty 2 each turn to regain control over her body. In the meantime, the Exalt's body dematerializes. He can move and take Martial Arts actions through the stolen flesh, using the body's Strength, Dexterity or Stamina if they exceed his own. This Charm imbues the stolen body with supernatural flexibility and mobility. Thus, possessed trees can attack and unattended ox-carts can charge.

The character cannot possess soulsteel. He can only possess objects made of other Magical Materials if he knows the style's Charm for emulating that Magical Material (see pp. 189-191).

(TYPE) EXALT WAYS (YOU PAN)

Cost: 10 motes, 1 health level

Duration: Five turns

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character strikes his throat, abdomen, spine, brow and crown chakras, forcibly reshaping his Essence and altering how his anima interacts with the world. This is actually a set of Charms. Each allows the character, for five turns, to mimic the anima banner and anima effects of one other type and caste of Exalted. Most Sidereals on this path choose No Moon or Changing Moon Lunar Ways, Zenith or Night Solar Ways or Dragon-Blooded Aspect of Air Ways. However, even Alchemical, Abyssal and alternate Sidereal castes are viable choices. This Charm temporarily replaces the Exalt's anima banner. It does not change his Caste Mark or suppress his ability to make his Maiden's Lesser Sign. The character also adds his Essence in automatic successes to one of the relevant caste's favored Attributes or Abilities while this Charm operates. He can choose a new Attribute or Ability each time he invokes this Charm.



Knowing Exalt Ways, even Eclipse Caste Solar Ways or Moonshadow Caste Abyssal Ways, gives no special ability to purchase normally forbidden Charms.

GAMES OF DIVINITY FORM (WU JI)

Cost: 7 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 5

Prerequisite Charms: One complete martial art (all Charms), God Ways, one Exalt Ways Charm and WU JI

The character adopts the attitude and posture of the spirit courts, moving with the infinite baroque complexity necessary to the management of Creation. Directed by the four powers of her mind — aspiration, effort, intention and analysis — the whole of her Essence flows as one. Simultaneously, even the smallest mote of her being directs itself toward managing its own affairs.

Though no imperfect creature can truly master it, this Form has a perfect beauty to it. While the character uses this Form, enemies' players must fail a Compassion roll if these enemies wish to harm her. Subduing her or manipulating her remains acceptable. Enemies cannot spend Willpower for the roll to deliberately fail. Those who witness the Games of Divinity Form become addicted: So long as they remember the Sidereal or the Form, they crave to see it again. Their players must succeed at Temperance rolls for their characters to refuse any reasonable opportunity to behold, once again, the Games of Divinity Form.

Dreamstones (see p. 18) provide a more intense experience than this Form. Dreamstone addiction both wipes away and prevents addiction to the Form. However, witnessing or performing the Games of Divinity Form is an unpleasant but palatable dreamstone alternative for even the most desperate of addicts.

Characters cannot normally use more than one Martial Arts Form-type Charm at a time.

DEMESNE EMULATION PRACTICE (KAO)

Cost: 20 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: None and KAO

Tugging gently on the flows of Essence around him, the character forms himself into a nexus, a convergence point through which power pours. The Sidereal's player rolls Dexterity + Martial Arts, unmodified by any other Charms. For the remainder of the scene, each of the Exalt's successful unarmed attacks also does aggravated

damage equal to the number of successes rolled for the Demesne Emulation Practice Charm. This damage is soaked separately. The Sidereal's hand upon an enemy's chest burns her with raw Essence, his elbow in her ear fills her head with Essence lightning, and his foot against her knee is as terribly cold as the Essence of a saltwater siren's heart.

DEMESNE AND MANSE FORM (CHUNG TING)

Cost: 12 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 5

Prerequisite Charms: One complete martial art (all Charms), Demesne Emulation Practice and CHUNG TING!

The character adopts the stately grandeur of a temple and radiates the ancient power of a Manse. She can now properly channel and constrain the raw Essence flow that the Demesne Emulation Practice feeds into her, coalescing it around her Caste Mark into a Hearthstone set in her brow. This Hearthstone only exists while the character is using Demesne and Manse Form. When the Sidereal terminates the Form, the Hearthstone fades.

When using the Form, the character receives the Hearthstone's benefits, as if it were properly set in a starmetal circlet. The player and the Storyteller should work together to determine its effects, developing a 4- or 5-dot Hearthstone that reflects the character's personality. Treat major changes to the character's nature as architectural alterations to a Manse, adjusting the Hearthstone's abilities appropriately.

Characters cannot normally use more than one Martial Arts Form-type Charm at a time.

PRISMATIC ARRANGEMENT OF CREATION FORM (TAO)

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 5

Prerequisite Charms: Four Magical Materials Form, Soul Fire Shaper Form, Games of Divinity Form, Demesne and Manse Form

The Elder Sutra of Essence: The last maiden's name was TAO. These were their names, but they knew them not.

As she assumes this Form, the character vanishes into the flows of Essence around her. For a long moment, she is nowhere and everywhere, embodied in the dance of all things. Then, she manifests again, in every movement consummately aware of everything around her, reacting to intentions before they are formed, actions

before they are taken and to the battle as a whole as easily as to a single blow.

This Charm doubles the character's base initiative (Dexterity + Wits). Charms such as Opportune Shot and Thunderclap Rush Attack do not automatically win initiative over her. The Exalt is aware of every attack against her and is immune to sensory penalties — this is a perfect effect. She can sense every effect, object and creature within (her Essence x 10) yards. Noticing something hidden requires a reflexive Perception + Awareness roll, adding the Sidereal's Essence in automatic successes.

While using the Prismatic Arrangement of Creation Form, the character can also invoke any or all of its subsidiary Forms, paying the normal Essence cost. As long as the Prismatic Arrangement of Creation Form is active, the Four Magical Materials Form, Soul Fire Shaper Form, Games of Divinity Form and Demesne and Manse Form can coexist with it and with one another. The character can also invoke other Form-type Charms, but this limits her to a total of two other Forms. For example, she could invoke Prismatic Arrangement of Creation Form followed by either Earth Dragon Form and Games of Divinity Form, Tiger Form and Ebon Shadow Form or Snake Form and Charcoal March of Spiders Form. The Prismatic Arrangement of Creation Form is transcendent and embraces other Forms as lesser parts of itself.

While this Form is active, the character may have access to unexpected weaponry. Any weapon treated as an unarmed attack by a style whose Form-type Charm she has active is treated as an unarmed attack for the purpose of all Martial Arts Charms. This is a specific benefit of the Prismatic Arrangement of Creation Form and not a general rule. For example, Tiger Form allows the use of tiger claws as unarmed attacks. If she has both Prismatic Arrangement of Creation Form and Tiger Form active, the Sidereal can use tiger claws to inflict the Water Spider Bite — whether or not she also has Charcoal March of Spiders Form active. This effect does not extend to armor.

The Prismatic Arrangement of Creation Form is complete and perfect in every respect, but to perform it correctly requires a deep understanding of the other styles that it subsumes. Sidereal masters estimate that a complete understanding of roughly 40 styles would allow an essentially accurate adoption of this Form, possibly increasing the power of this Charm.

DECAY: THE CITRINE POXES OF CONTAGION

INFECTIOUS MARTIAL ARTS

With the careful application of martial force to the patterns of an enemy's soul, one can disrupt the patterns of his Essence and afflict him with a spiritual disease.

WEAPONS AND ARMOR

Charms in the Citrine Poxes of Contagion Style treat attacks the Sidereal makes with a staff, seven-section staff, serpent-sting staff, hammer or goremaul as unarmed attacks, but only if the character inflicts bashing damage with them. This usually means accepting a +1 difficulty penalty and "pulling ones blows." The primary purpose of the style's attacks is to affect the target's Essence flows by connecting with a series of key pressure points. Crushing the target's bones lacks the subtlety and precision this technique requires.

Characters cannot use this style while wearing armor.

First, the character must hit with an unarmed Martial Arts attack. The character can choose whether this attack does its normal damage or not. After resolving damage, the victim's player reflexively rolls Stamina + Resistance against a difficulty equal to the character's Essence. On a failure, the victim succumbs immediately to the appropriate spiritual affliction.

All infectious martial arts affect spirits as easily as mortals, whether they have materialized or not. If the character's attacks cannot normally damage spirits, they still do no damage — but the blows passing through it corrupt the spirit's Essence flow and inflict the disease.

SPIRITUAL DISEASES

An Intelligence + Medicine roll can cure most spiritual diseases. The difficulty ranges from 3 to 10, depending on the disease's virulence but also upon how greatly the disease differs from a mundane infection. For the sample diseases below, this is labeled as the Mundane Treatment Difficulty.

In addition, spiritual diseases have a Magical Treatment Difficulty. This reflects the number of successes necessary for a Charm such as Contagion-Curing Touch or the Ailment-Rectifying Method to cure the disease.

Unless otherwise specified, characters suffering from a spiritual disease can make an extended Stamina + Resistance roll to recover. The difficulty is twice the Magical Treatment Difficulty, and spirits and Exalted may roll once per week. Mortals roll once per season.

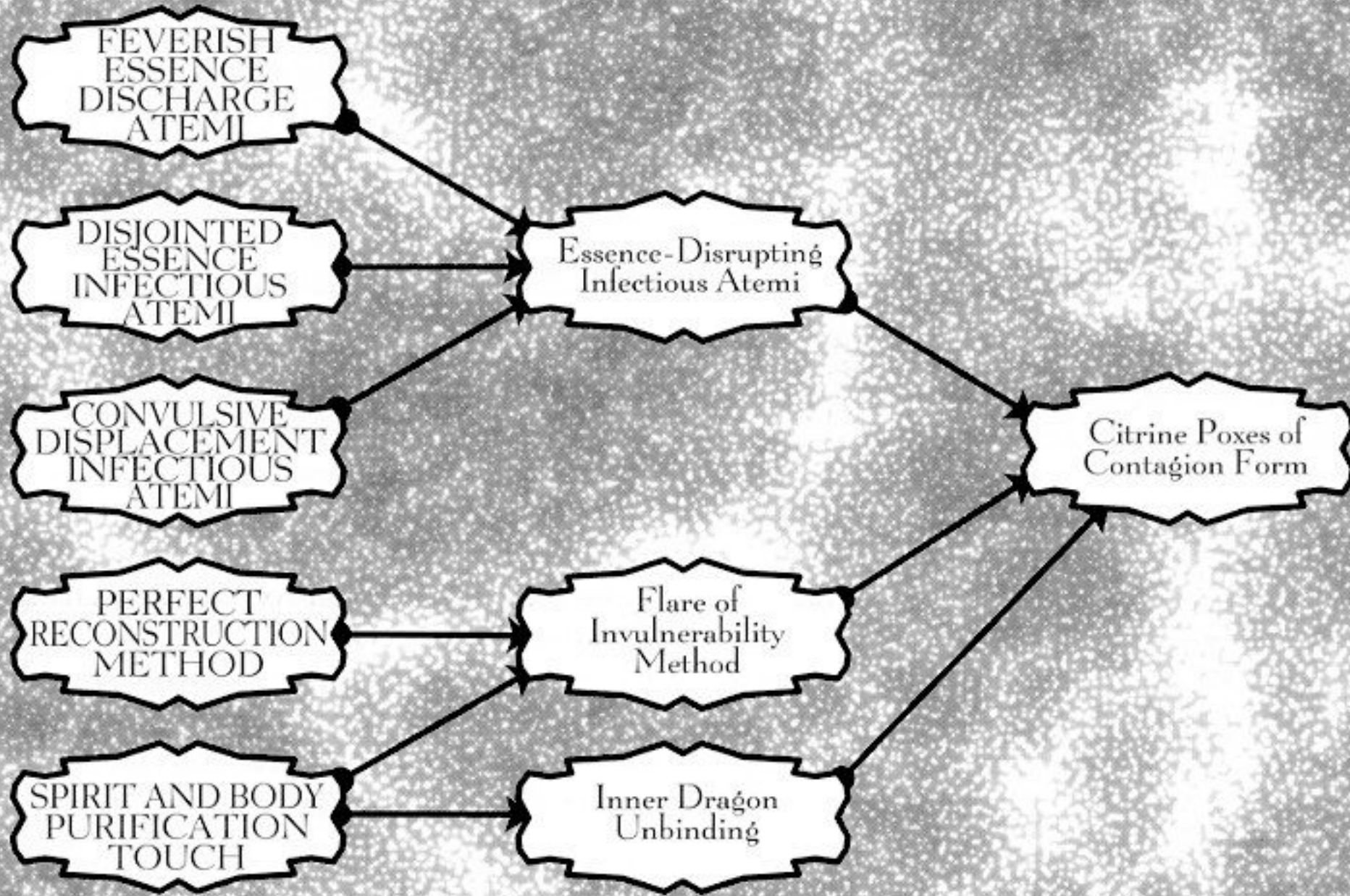
Spiritual diseases are rarely contagious. Even those that can spread are very difficult to catch.

THE CIRCLES OF SPIRITUAL DISEASES

Spiritual diseases come in three Circles.

The First Circle is the Deadened Circle, ruled by the languid god Kel-Aina, and takes effect by weakening certain aspects of the victim's Essence. It contains illnesses of a minor nature. The victim could radiate a scent

Citrine Poxes of Contagion Style 1



that nauseates mortals, attracts the amorous attention of spirits or both. The victim's bones could calcify temporarily into granite, reducing many Dexterity pools by two dice but granting her an extra point of lethal soak. She could find herself compelled to engage in exaggeration and flights of fancy. Such diseases have a Magical Treatment Difficulty of 1 or 2.

Second Circle illnesses represent those typically accessible to the infectious martial artist. This Frenzied Circle, ruled by Sylvi, the Crone of Fire, can both weaken Essence and stir aspects of it to an unhealthy strength. These sicknesses can substantially hinder the Exalted and easily cripple most mortals. The victim might temporarily lose two Attribute points. He might find himself cursed to botch whenever he hears a certain note whistled — forcing him, in combat, to cover his ears. He might find his head facing the wrong way around, or angry snakes and bees might continuously clamber out of his mouth and nose. The Drunken Moth Sickness, White Sun Sickness and Jigsaw Organ Condi-

tion, below, are all Second Circle illnesses. Such diseases have a Magical Treatment Difficulty of 3 or 4.

The Third Circle is the Changing Circle, ruled by the nameless god of the utter West. Third Circle illnesses are the worst of all Essence afflictions. In most cases, their victims would be substantially healthier if they were dead. Some of them have sufficient virulence to infect not only people, beasts and spirits, but Manses, Demesnes, Exalt shards and artifacts. However, not even Third Circle illnesses can entirely destroy the Exalted, and a sufficiently powerful Solar might even fight on while carrying two or three. These diseases have a Magical Treatment Difficulty of 4 or 5 — rivaling the Great Contagion in intricacy and raw potency, save that they do not spread. Reduce the dice pool to resist Third Circle illnesses to 0, before the effects of Stamina or Resistance Charms. However, even a Third Circle illness cannot permanently damage an Exalted victim — if he can find a way to cure the disease, even the lowliest Dragon-Blooded is guaranteed to recover.

Citrine Poxes of Contagion Style 2



Spiritual illnesses can offer benefits, but these are always significantly outweighed by the disease's drawbacks. Each is, after all, an imbalance in the structure of the victim's soul.

The Student's Sutra of Decay: Once, there was a disease — but before that, there was a maiden...

FEVERISH ESSENCE DISCHARGE ATEM1

Cost: 7 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: None

...whose lover's practices displeased the sun. The all-seeing sun no longer could sustain

Tormenting the enemy like the bites of a hundred mosquitoes, the character delivers a spark of poisoned Essence into the core of his enemy's soul. This is an infectious Martial Arts attack that carries the White Sun Sickness.

A victim of White Sun Sickness suffers from a fever of the soul. Each time she spends motes of Essence on a Charm, the disease increases the Charm's cost by 1 mote. This effect is a cumulative one: The second expenditure costs 2 extra motes, the third costs three, and so forth. Reduce the accumulated total by five in each day the victim spends no motes. The victim also hallucinates. In stressful situations, this reduces all of her dice pools by her *own* permanent Essence. Without external stressors, she may detach entirely from reality. Finally, the victim gains Limit at twice the normal rate. This is a coincidental interaction with the Great Curse and not a direct effect of the Charm.

White Sun Sickness occurs in nature. It afflicts — though very rarely — those who spend too long meditating on the ways of the Fair Folk, the ever-changing spirit of Luna, the power of the Elemental Dragons or the inspiring greatness of the Unconquered Sun.

Mundane Treatment Difficulty: 6
Magical Treatment Difficulty: 3

DISJOINTED ESSENCE INFECTIOUS ATEM1

Cost: 12 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: None

These practices, but with enraged disdain, darts forth such pestilent malignant beams,

Her fingers brushing past the victim's defenses like contaminated water seeping into a pool, the character infects a victim's Essence with the spastic, divisive Drunken Moth Sickness. This is an infectious Martial Arts attack.

A victim of Drunken Moth Sickness no longer entirely controls his behavior. The disease comes with a general purpose specified by the Sidereal — something like "embarrass yourself," "protect me" or "beat up your friends." In each turn, the character has three choices: Use a simple Charm, use a Combo, or spend at least half of his non-reflexive actions serving the disease's purpose. (Splitting his dice pool or buying extra actions is recommended — if he only takes one action, then it goes to the illness.) The disease only forces him to take action when an obvious way of fulfilling its purpose exists, either without using Charms or using Charms already active.

Otherwise, the actions that go to the Drunken Moth Sickness are wasted — the character does nothing.

This disease occasionally occurs in nature, generally when someone eats something into which a spirit has been bound.

Mundane Treatment Difficulty: 6

Magical Treatment Difficulty: 4

CONVULSIVE DISPLACEMENT INFECTIOUS ATEMI

Cost: 12 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: None

As shed infection on air, earth and streams;

One precise punch or kick disrupts the entire functioning of the victim's body and soul, shattering his Essence into the jagged pattern characteristic of the Jigsaw Organ Condition. This is an infectious Martial Arts attack.

A victim of the Jigsaw Organ Condition lacks the physical coherence of his peers. Struck in combat, he loses limbs or extremities with abnormal ease, simply falling apart. Fortunately, when he *does* lose a limb, he need simply stick it back on, and it begins to heal. Similarly, if he loses an organ, he can spend a turn swallowing it, and it slides back into place. Individual organs remain alive, connected and under the victim's control when separated from the body. The victim still takes damage normally, however, due to the sheer physical trauma of it. Whenever a victim suffers damage, roll his Stamina against a difficulty equal to the number of health levels lost. On a failure, a limb falls off, he coughs out a lung, or some similar event transpires.

If the Sidereal successfully infects someone with this disease, the target automatically loses a limb or organ of the Sidereal's choice. The Exalt can attempt to catch it with a reflexive Dexterity + Athletics action at her full dice pool. For example, she might infect her victim with a measured blow to the back, cartwheeling past him to catch his heart as he coughs it into her hands. She can again force a lost limb of her choice and, again, try to catch it, any time she does damage to the afflicted target — the target cannot defend himself with a Stamina roll.

Defensive Charms only protect such organs or limbs as they are naturally applicable to. By default, limited leverage reduces the dice pool for a severed limb's actions to 0 before the influence of Charms. Further, most Charms simply do not function when employed by a severed organ. However, appropriate stunts or the help of a friend can give a victim's limb access to his full dice pool.

The Sidereal Exalted are only aware of 40 naturally contracted cases of Jigsaw Organ Condition this Age. The vector for this disease is unknown.

Mundane Treatment Difficulty: 10

Magical Treatment Difficulty: 4

ESSENCE-DISRUPTING INFECTIOUS ATEMI

Cost: 12 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Feverish Essence Discharge Atemi, Disjointed Essence Infectious Atemi, Convulsive Displacement Infectious Atemi

From whence this malady its birth received.

The character's understanding of the art of infectious martial arts increases. She learns the 25 underlying principles of infection and may apply them in combination to inflict arbitrary First or Second Circle illnesses upon her opponent. This requires an infectious Martial Arts attack supplemented by this Charm.

Characters develop their own First or Second Circle infections for use with Essence-Disrupting Infectious Atemi. Creating such a sickness requires an Intelligence + Medicine roll. The player describes the disease desired, and the Storyteller decides upon its Circle and treatment difficulties. The difficulty of the Medicine roll equals the Magical Treatment Difficulty for the sickness. Reduce this difficulty by one point if another Sidereal Exalted teaches the character how to inflict the disease. The Sidereal can attempt to realize a general infection concept, her player making the appropriate roll, no more than once per story.

Normally, characters practice the infliction of new spiritual infections before testing them in battle. Developing diseases on the fly imposes a +2 difficulty penalty. It also requires the Storyteller's permission and requires a separate action from the blow that inflicts the disease.

PERFECT RECONSTRUCTION METHOD

Cost: 8 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 experience point

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: None

...On him the dreadful lot did fall, who now was placed before the altar bound,

With precise blows, the character batters the target into the perfect shape written into the core of the target's Essence. Violent as the Exalt's attacks may be, they do no damage. The target's bones and flesh, when struck, slide perfectly into their most appropriate place. The Sidereal's player rolls Dexterity + Martial Arts against a difficulty

equal to the target's Essence. Add the character's Medicine score in automatic successes. The target can dodge or parry normally. If the Sidereal hits, the target experiences the following beneficial effects:

- The target heals all bashing damage.
- The target heals a number of lethal damage levels equal to the character's Martial Arts score. Treat any aggravated damage levels as two lethal damage levels, and heal them first.
- The target can immediately spend one experience point to heal one point of permanent Trait loss. This cannot raise a Trait above the highest level previously purchased. (In other words, the target cannot lose a point of Willpower, buy it back between stories and then take advantage of this Charm to raise it further.)
- Any effect that has locked the target into an undesired shape is instantly shattered.

After a successful application of this method, the target's player must succeed at a Temperance roll against difficulty 2, or the target falls unconscious in a moment of transcendent ecstasy.

The character can use this method on herself. This Charm does not affect tattooed Lunar Exalted, who treat it as an external attempt to modify their shape (see **Exalted: the Lunars**, p. 121).

SPIRIT AND BODY PURIFICATION TOUCH

Cost: 8 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: None

His head with sacrificial garlands crowned,

Like the rain that comes after a battle to wash away the blood and tears, the gentle fall of the Sidereal's hands or feet upon a target's Essence cleanses the target of disease and ill effects. The Sidereal's player rolls Dexterity + Martial Arts against a difficulty equal to the target's Essence. Add the character's Medicine score in automatic successes. The target can dodge or parry normally. If the character hits, the target experiences the following beneficial effects:

- Spiritual and physical diseases instantly leave her system, and she fully recovers from their effects. The Exalt's player must roll Intelligence + Medicine against the Magical Treatment Difficulty to cure a Third Circle illness or the Great Contagion (difficulty 5) with this Charm.
- All poison and drugs leave her system, and addictions are broken.
- Any Possession Charm affecting the target is broken, and all lingering effects disappear.
- The Sidereal Exalted can transfer as many motes of his Essence to the target as desired.

- The Sidereal Exalted can transfer as many points of his temporary Willpower to the target as desired.

- Curses upon the target are broken, although permanently lost Attributes are not recovered. This includes most debilitating effects imposed through non-physical means.

- The character can erase painful memories, that he is aware of, which afflict the target. In the future, the target must spend a Willpower point to recall these memories for a scene, and even then, they return only dimly.

The target has even greater difficulty remembering the events leading up to the use of this Charm — specifically, the scene in which this Charm was used. Remembering those events later requires not simply a Willpower point, but a successful Conviction roll against difficulty 2. Again, the memory only lasts for a scene.

The character can use this method on herself.

INNER DRAGON UNBINDING

Cost: 12 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One turn

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit and Body Purification

Touch

His throat laid open to the lifted knife, but interceding Gaia spared his life,

The character guides her actions with the quadrumvirate of redress, four fundamental patterns of Essence flow designed to overcome restraints upon the heart, body, mind and soul. This instantly breaks any debilitating magical effects upon her, save for those imposed by the limits of her own Charms. In addition, for the remainder of the turn, the players of others must succeed at an Essence roll with a difficulty equal to the character's permanent Essence for their characters to affect the Sidereal with a Charm, spell or Charm-assisted attack. The Exalt can invoke this Charm reflexively to impede a magical attack against her.

FLARE OF INVULNERABILITY METHOD

Cost: 10 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Perfect Reconstruction Method, Spirit and Body Purification Touch

commands them in his stead a heifer slay, for the sun's rage was now removed away.

The character stirs the Essence within her into a furious conflagration of pure life and energy. For the remainder of the scene, she adds her temporary Essence to her bashing and lethal soak. However, she must burn

through at least 10 motes of Essence each turn (losing any she does not spend). Further, no combination of effects can allow her to regain more than 5 Essence in a given turn.

CITRINE POXES OF CONTAGION FORM

Cost: 15 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 5

Prerequisite Charms: One complete martial art (all Charms), Essence-Disrupting Infectious Atemi, Inner Dragon Unbinding, Flare of Invulnerability Method

...*From him the malady received its name.*

The character moves in a sinuous pattern that makes the flows of Essence about her weep. An anima banner-like effect rises above her, displaying a lattice-work of iron dripping with sea water and blood. This is the symbol of the sickness named Iphimedeia, the Revel Outside the Sealing of the Gates. The air out to (her Essence x 10) yards from the character becomes redolent with contagion. Starting the next turn, all those within that distance of the Exalt risk infection. The Exalt can protect a number of allies up to her permanent Essence from this effect. This is an infectious Martial Arts attack. It does not require that the character strike her targets, but perfect blocks and perfect dodges still protect against the outpouring of disease.

A victim of Iphimedeia finds the flesh of his body twisting and flowing, melting while remaining yet alive. This does one level of unsoakable aggravated damage per turn but stops when aggravated damage fills the -0 and -1 wound tracks. Characters protected against the influence of the Wyld do not suffer from this effect.

The infected also find their legs twitching with the desire to dance. In any given turn, a victim can choose to succumb, devoting a dice action to dancing, adding his Essence in automatic successes to the Performance roll and losing control over his movement. He normally dances around an object or person chosen by the Storyteller at a distance of 10 yards. Alternately, he can resist. Struggling with his own body reduces his effective Dexterity to 0.

The greater a victim's self-control, the more Iphimedeia impedes him. In each turn, he must fail a Temperance roll, spend a Willpower point or lose his action as patches of the air become as hard as iron to him. Choosing to dance does not protect him from this effect. If appropriate to the game style, female Dragon-Blooded Aspects of Water may find themselves pregnant after catching and recovering from Iphimedeia. If so, the child always Exalts.

The Revel Outside the Sealing of the Gates is a Third Circle illness. Characters whose players roll

against the Sideral's Essence to resist lose all dice from their Stamina + Resistance pool before the application of Charms.

Characters using this Form are immune to all disease and poison, as if employing the Immunity to Everything Technique.

Mundane Treatment Difficulty: 10

Magical Treatment Difficulty: 4

SPIRITUAL PERFECTION

Cost: 1 mote

Duration: Instant

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Martial Arts: 6

Minimum Essence: 6

Prerequisite Charms: Citrine Poxes of Contagion Form

The Elder Sutra of Decay: Once, there was a crippled maiden...

The character's understanding of the processes by which one balances or unbalances the flow of a person's Essence helps him shield himself from any disability. For a single mote of Essence, he can render himself permanently immune to any poison or disease to which he has been exposed. He can also spend a mote of Essence to halve the damage from a single attack, after damage is rolled, or to reflexively protect himself from any disabling effect upon his body or mind. He must invoke the Charm once for each such attack or effect. For example, hit by a Lightning Torment Hatchet, the Sideral could spend 1 mote to halve the damage taken and 1 mote to block its painful, disabling effect. The character cannot cure disabilities originating outside his body, such as shackles binding his wrists. All of these effects are perfect. The character is the master of his own body and mind.

GENTLE TOUCH OF THE WICKED HAND

Cost: 15 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Martial Arts: 6

Minimum Essence: 7

Prerequisite Charms: Spiritual Perfection

...*who told me this: "You shall know your enemies when they teach you to forget"*

One who approaches mastery of Decay-style martial arts learns ten thousand subtle principles of infection, each of which she can employ ten thousand different ways. Applying them in combination, she can wreak the greatest forms of havoc upon the Essence flows of her enemies. The character can use this Charm as an infectious Martial Arts attack to contaminate others with arbitrary Third Circle illnesses.

Characters develop their own Third Circle illnesses for use with Gentle Touch of the Wicked Hand. Infection follows the ordinary rules for infectious Martial Arts, save that it is intrinsically more difficult — as noted above — to resist Third Circle infection. Creating a Third Circle illness requires an Intelligence + Medicine roll. The Storyteller sets a difficulty between 5 and 10, based on the disease's effects. Reduce this difficulty by one point if another Sidereal teaches the character how to inflict this disease. The Sidereal can attempt to realize a general infection concept, her player making the appropriate roll, no more than once in every year.

Normally, characters practice the infliction of new spiritual infections before testing them in battle. Developing diseases on the fly imposes a +2 difficulty penalty. It also requires the Storyteller's permission and requires a separate action from the blow that inflicts the disease.

GLORIOUS SIDEREAL PROTECTION

Cost: 15 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 6

Minimum Essence: 7

Prerequisite Charms: Spiritual Perfection
what is whole

The character learns to guard himself and others from even the most terrible attacks. This Charm manipulates one target's Essence. Under its effects, she automatically converts any aggravated damage

she receives to lethal damage, before soak. This stacks with Charms that convert lethal to bashing damage; characters under both effects convert all damage directly to bashing. The character can use this Charm on himself.

ESSENCE-SHATTERING TYPHOON

Cost: 6 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One turn

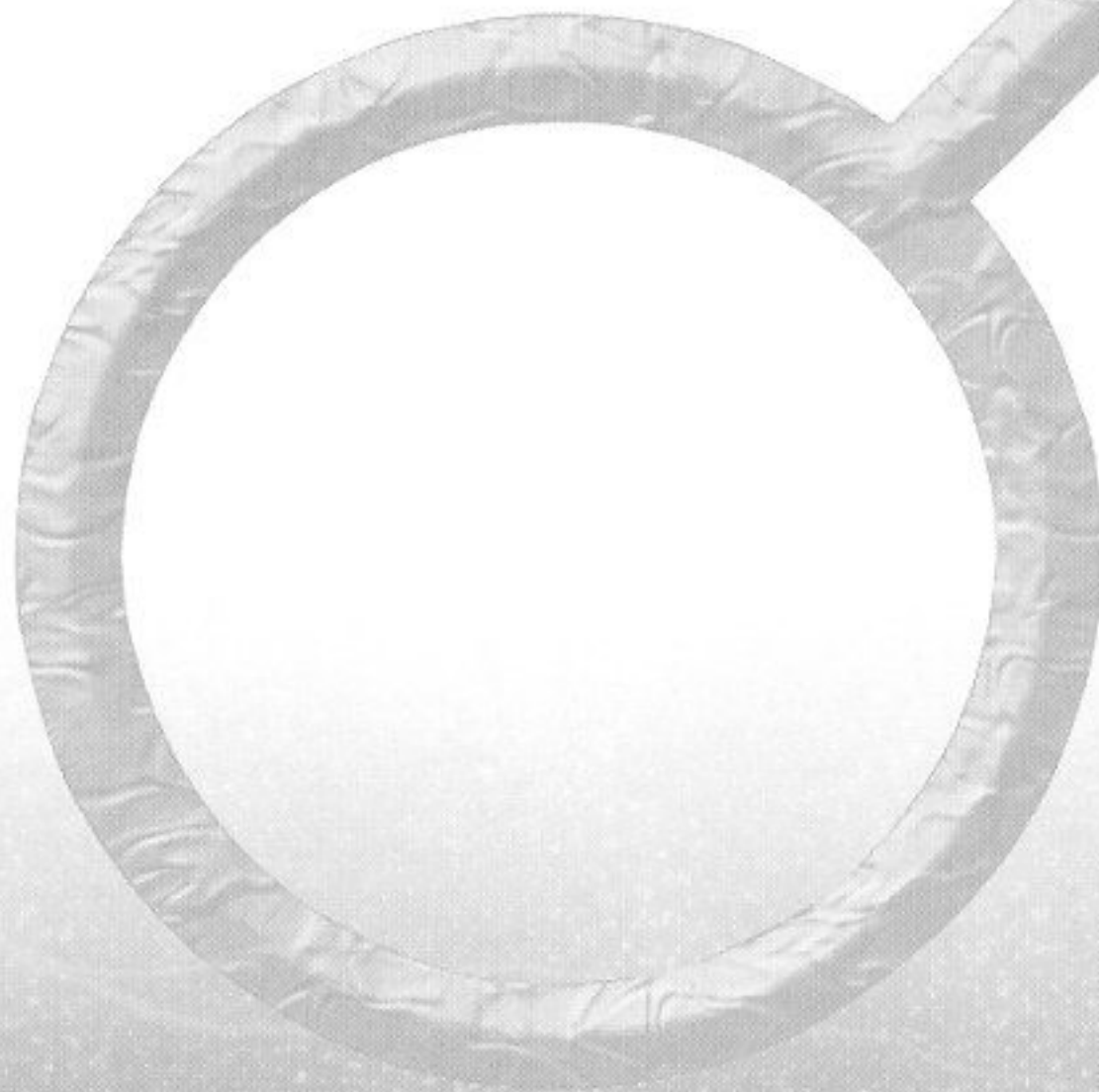
Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 7

Minimum Essence: 7

Prerequisite Charms: Gentle Touch of the Wicked Hand, Glorious Sidereal Protection
and what is diseased."

The character's fists blur as she pounds them against the air, shattering the currents of the world and casting a storm of broken and tainted Essence toward her foes. In the first turn, the effects extend three yards beyond her fists. Anyone and anything immediately in front of her suffers either 15 dice of aggravated damage or a Third Circle illness she has learned to inflict (targets can resist the disease normally.) This is an unblockable, undodgeable effect. For each turn that the Exalt continuously performs this Charm, the effects stretch one mile further forward and a tenth of a mile further to each side. This Charm is a semi-physical effect, and does not reach through unbroken walls, earth, trees, etc. until the turn it either destroys them or has a route around them. It does not extend behind the character or to her sides.





Sad Ivory finished filling out the paperwork, and her destiny soon lay in the House of the Golden Barque, in the precincts of the Ship's Wheel. Then, she followed the stick and wore the mien of the Rudderless Ship on her way to the city of Thorns. It was a useful destiny, and the stars of the Sidereals flitted in and out of its precincts like fireflies on a summer field. But closer to Thorns, there were no mendicants, and the roads were too well-watched for even the cleverest of tatterdemalions.

Thus, Sad Ivory undertook to become a shadow. It wasn't an easy destiny to put on, especially in the rapidly darkening forests around Thorns. She burned a petition to the Maidens written on fresh white linen with black and scarlet ink. She offered up an "I love you" she would never say to Nara-O for its special favor, and so, it countersigned her petition.

Then, for three days, Ahn-Aru hid from the sun. For three nights, she ran naked with the foxes and took care that no thinking beast saw her. She was hard-pressed to hide from the raitons, but she walked carefully and kept her eyes and nose wide. In the end, she felt her new destiny wrap around her like a cold white sheet. Glancing up, she saw her star lay now in the precincts of the Mask.

And as a shadow, she made her way to Thorns. She was not like a ghost, for their ghostly treadings were far heavier than her feet. Even the Essence-keen noses of the city's spectral wardens did not detect her. Sad Ivory lingered in low places and kept herself out of the sun's eye. She laid long behind the ruins in the hamlet where Arianna bested the city's ghostly defenders. She couldn't follow the trail of Anja Silverclaws, but she watched as two scouts from the Thousand Fang Army boldly ventured almost to the wall. She saw Raksi's puppets leave their mark and flee, and watched the Mask of Winters pursue them and slay one. The other escaped in a manner so undignified that the Sidereal thought the Deathlord might have let him live, knowing he had crushed the Lunar's spirit.

Ahn-Aru also watched with some interest the sorcerous endeavors that accompanied the movements of the Juggernaut. Where the huge corpse-fortress crawled, it was as if a glacier had passed, leaving behind a trail of snapped trees and ruined land, torn down to the bedrock and covered in pus and rotten flesh. She appreciated the power of the spell that moved it, not just from her abstract understanding that such a spell must be of phenomenal power, but from the actual witnessed effects. She was scalded even as a shadow by the beam of ultraviolet power pouring down from the abysses between the stars, by the eerie coronas of black lightning and by the hails of teeth and iron that accompanied the ritual.

Ahn-Aru reflected Kejak was definitely right that the Mask of Winters was some kind of master occultist, and it was definitely not sorcery he wielded. You didn't need to be a Solar Circle initiate to know that wasn't any normal magic that the Deathlord practiced.

When the time came, she fled from Thorns like a shadow before the dawn. Beneath a bridge far away, she abandoned the Everywhere and Nowhere Technique and returned to the shape of a woman, though her destiny still lay in the precincts of the Mask. What she knew, she must share with her superiors. Now, her challenge was to travel far enough away from the city that her Infallible Messenger would not draw undue attention.

Sad Ivory estimated that distance to be about 250 miles. She didn't even dare change her destiny for another 100 miles. So, avoiding always the eye of the sun, she swept across the land untouched, running footless before the light.



CHAPTER SIX SIDEREAL ASTROLOGY

Astrology as practiced by mortal sorcerers is a limited art — by watching the positions of the stars in relation to the 25 constellations, the astrologer seeks to guess the future plans of the Maidens for an object. This is not so much a hopeful science as one might immediately suppose, for it is the function of the night sky to reveal the short-term future of Creation.

In the days before the First Age, when the Primordials ruled Creation from Yu-Shan, the gods dwelt on the Blessed Isle. The Primordials didn't trust the gods enough to give them unimpeded access to the Celestial City. Not even the Maidens had constant access to Heaven, and so, the Bureau of Destiny was forced to operate the Loom of Fate remotely, using the stars as both a status and planning display. Though the Maidens have rarely operated the Loom since the creation of the pattern spiders, the stars continue to show the future of the Tapestry.

However, since they're currently just indicators and purely secondary to the way the Loom of Fate is controlled, the weaving on the Loom now sometimes takes paths that make the stars seem to skip or lie. This means that Sidereals who wish to see the future must stay familiar with the relevant planning documents. Usually, this is done via seasonal Skipping Star Update Seminars, with each Exalt required by bureau policy to take such a seminar at least twice a year.

Rare is the Sidereal who doesn't exceed the required number of refreshers because each of them has a license to operate the Loom of Fate graven on their Exaltation. The difference between mortal astrology and Sidereal astrology is that when the mortal is done reading the stars, he draws up a horoscope that lists the results of his observations. When the Sidereal is done, she draws up a petition for what changes she'd like to see in the near future and sends it to the pattern spiders for immediate implementation.

COLLEGES AND CONSTELLATIONS

This ability is part of every Sidereal Exalted — the license to manipulate the Loom of Fate is an irrevocable part of the Sidereal Exaltation and fundamental to the design of the pattern spiders. The current basis for Sidereal destiny magic are the colleges, predispositions among the pattern spiders. Once, very early in history, the Sidereals amended the Tapestry itself, but the Maidens quickly had Autochthon build the pattern spiders for them and altered the procedures. Since that time, the Sidereals' authority to make emendations to the fabric of the Tapestry has been executed through the intermediation of the spiders.

Autochthon was the most gifted of artificers, but even he was limited by the need to not just automate the task of weaving, but also the strain of planning events. In order to ease the effort of planning fate, Autochthon built certain predispositions into the spiders, making them

especially skillful at planning certain stereotypical sorts of destinies and fates.

There are five colleges of spider for each of the Maidens, and this collection of colleges is called the Maiden's astrological house. Since the early First Age, most destinies have lain in the purview of the Colleges of the Constellations and are autonomously planned and executed by the pattern spiders. The spiders of a given house or college take each thread placed in their charge and subject it to certain general kinds of fate until its time in their care has elapsed, then they pass it on to the next scheduled superintendent. Even this scheduled shifting among houses and colleges is generally resolved by the spiders, who use internal metrics to determine the fate of their threads. Divinities and elder Sidereals handle only broad-scope planning and contingency-based destiny planning for high-Essence individuals.

In Creation, the colleges are visible as a certain number of fixed stars: the 25 constellations. Through the movement of various stars, the internal metrics the spiders use can be discerned, and mortal astrologers chart them without knowing it when they draw up projections of the procession of the heavens.

CHECKS AND BALANCES

Before the creation of the pattern spiders, the Sidereals were authorized to directly alter the Tapestry of Fate, but subsequently, when the Maidens had Autochthon build the pattern spiders for them, destiny was simplified for automation. For the most part, this was just an adaptation to the needs of the new weaving method, but it also offered a check on the ultimate power of the Sidereals to reorder the Tapestry.

It is unknown if the pattern spiders will heed Sidereal instructions over those of the Maidens, but it's certain that the spiders cannot fundamentally reorder the Tapestry. Autochthon was skillful, but his contrivances are not nearly flexible enough to fundamentally alter the illusion of natural law they project, nor can they pull the moon into the face of Creation or move the Blessed Isle. To change the fundamental nature of Creation, the Maidens would have to go back to spinning destiny or the pattern spiders would need a total redesign, making change extremely unlikely. It is unknown if the old procedures for altering fate would even still work, but they were never passed down by the early Sidereals and are now lost.

Sidereals cannot affect other Sidereals with Sidereal astrology, but they can affect themselves. The Exaltation of a Sidereal cannot be unwritten, erased, torn or otherwise obliterated from the Loom of Fate by any force, although the Exalt herself might be slain.

SIDEREAL POWER

The power of Sidereal astrology is to make pronouncements and have those pronouncements come true. To make such a pronouncement, the Sidereal prays to the pattern spiders of a particular college, asking that the spiders of that college act on the target in some fashion the Sidereal requests. The spiders can perform one of eight functions on a target, and if they agree to the Sidereal's petition, the Exalt need merely touch her target to set their new destiny in motion.

And the hand of the Sidereal Exalted upon destiny is not gentle. They are not witches, building a curse through 20 years of repetition that culminate in a broken neck on a lonely back stair. No, the destinies written by the Chosen of the Maidens are brutally direct, shoving their targets this way and that through life by the weight of a great and terrible heavenly edict. And the power of the Sidereals is not limited to a single individual, but can impel families, cities and even whole nations in new directions through history. Mortals are helpless before such terrible forces, and even the Exalted can be steered by the masters of destiny.

The limit on this power is the degree of authority the Sidereal possesses and the trust that the colleges of the pattern spiders place in the Exalt. By passing certification examinations and training in the specific twists of each particular college's style, the Sidereal may increase his initiation and degree of influence. The spiders also become more trusting with Sidereals as the Exalt's Essence increases.

USING SIDEREAL ASTROLOGY

Through the pattern spiders, the Sidereals are able to alter the destinies of individuals, groups and even themselves. Though these effects are subtle (for the powers of the Exalted) they are pervasive and difficult to detect. No sorcerous senses, Charm or spell can discern the effects of Sidereal astrology. Even among the Exalted in the Age of Sorrow, there are probably only a dozen familiar with the existence of the Loom of Fate, and all these individuals can do is wonder if their accomplishments are their own or the result of Sidereal planning.

The basic act of altering the Tapestry is simple. First, the Sidereal must contact the college. To do this, the Sidereal Exalted prays to the spiders of the college, petitioning them to take a star into their precincts and act upon it. The roll for this is a standard prayer roll, as described on page 335-336 of the main Exalted book. The prayer is merely a front end for the spiders, and Sidereals are automatically priests of any constellations they have any initiation in, meaning the base difficulty of the Charisma + Performance roll to contact the spiders is 5. Sidereals may not invoke constellations they have no initiation in, for the spiders listen only to their priests.



Other forms of contacting the pattern spiders, such as Infallible Messenger, do not work: The spiders listen only for prayers.

Unfortunately, because the spiders are only listening to the prayers for technical reasons, they are disinterested in most sacrifices: There is no difficulty reduction for sacrifices of mortal or even heavenly Resources. However, some specific ways exist for Sidereals who wish to ease the difficulty of communication with the heavens.

PETITIONS

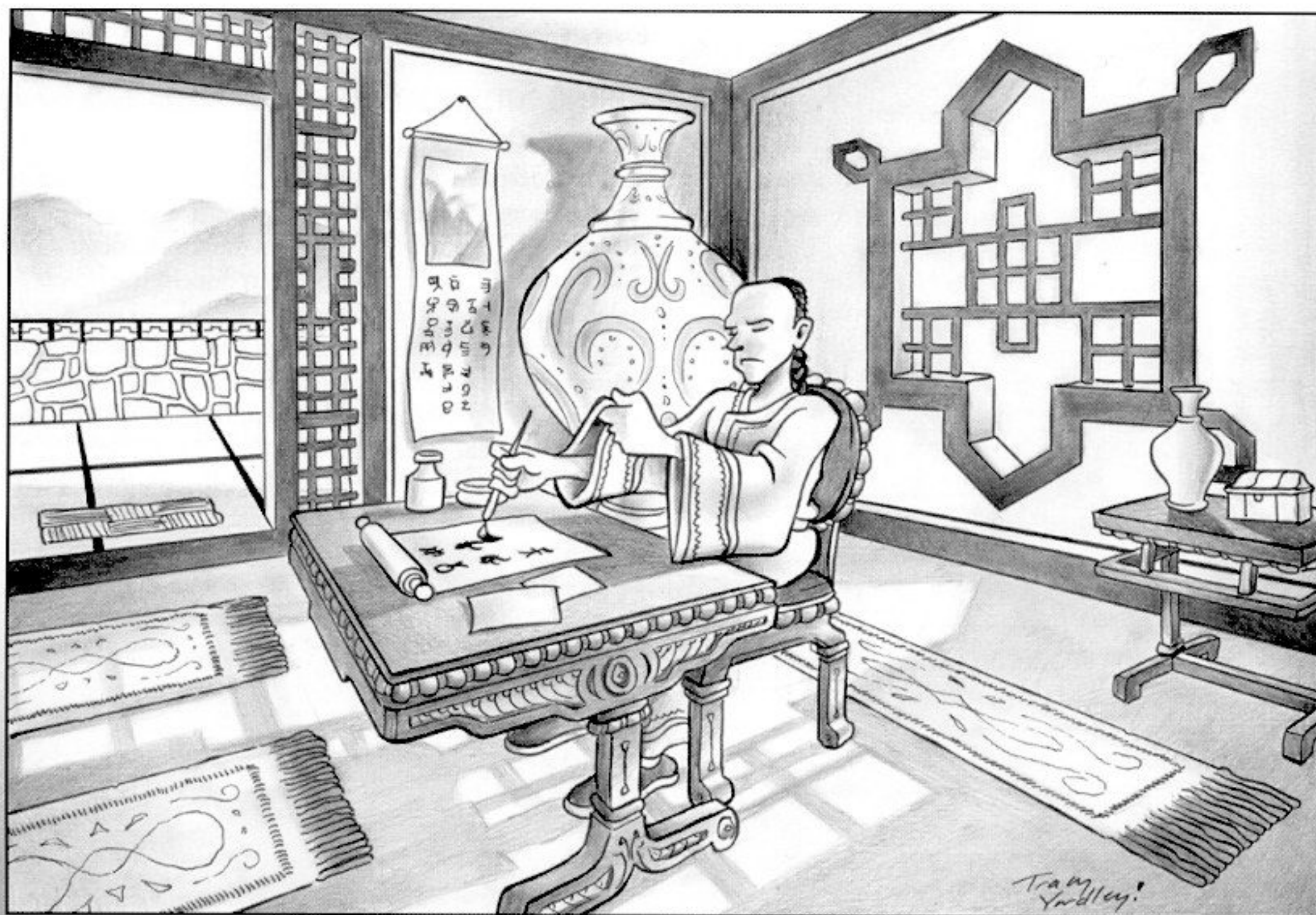
The best and most common way for Sidereals to improve their communication with the pattern spiders is through written communication. Heaven is a bureaucracy—Sidereals who expect prompt action on a prayer must fill out the proper forms.

This paperwork is called a *divine petition*, and is a prayer strip like those used for Sidereal Charms and sutras (see p. 130). Like those strips, divine petitions cost Resources •• each to prepare. However the spiders prefer a more free and spontaneous style of calligraphy, and the Sidereal's player must roll Wits + Linguistics or Wits + Craft (Calligraphy) at difficulty 2 for the Exalt to execute the strip properly, rather than using Dexterity. The difficulty of this roll increases to 4 if the character seeks to write the strip in a single turn.

Celestial paperwork is in the form of memoranda and circulars and does not submit well to boilerplating. Characters cannot prepare prayer strips ahead of time and “fill in the blanks” when it is time to ask for something. The allusions would clash and ruin the document. The petition for an effect must, instead, be written immediately prior to making the prayer roll. Players of characters operating without a petition are at +2 difficulty on their prayer roll.

Calligraphy: As beings whose function is to reinterpret the same act again and again, the pattern spiders are great admirers of fine calligraphy. If the player attains four or more successes for the Linguistics or Craft (Calligraphy) roll, the difficulty of the prayer roll decreases by 1, and if the player rolls six or more successes, it decreases by 3. Any further godliness of brush is lost on the spiders. Note that there is no difficulty reduction for basic calligraphy, but there is a difficulty penalty for prayers without a properly drawn-up petition. Remember to increase the difficulty by an additional 2 if the Sidereal is writing out the calligraphic strip that turn.

Cosignatories: Other Sidereals can sign the character's documents. This is an expression of bureaucratic and legal support, and characters shouldn't be cosigning prayers that they wouldn't want to be associated with the effects of. In general, cosignatories have the Severity of the offense reduced by 1 for merely cosigning such a document.



Producing a good signature requires a successful difficulty 1 Wits + Linguistics or Wits + Craft (Calligraphy) roll. Failure simply means the character's signature does not count to decrease difficulty.

Each cosignatory adds one die to the prayer roll. Characters can sign only once, and there can be only one signature for each "office" of being, so a character who fails her signature check cannot try again, and no other individual can sign the petition in that capacity. A character who botches ruins the petition. The character making the petition does not roll to sign it — that is subsumed in the roll to execute it.

The maximum number of characters who can legally cosign a petition are one member of the other four Sidereal castes, a number of fellow initiates in the astrological college in question up to the petitioning character's Essence, a Lunar and a Solar. Excess signatories may attach their names for tactical or ideological reasons, but to no magical effect. Characters signing in support of a fellow member of their astrological college may only make their mark in support if they have Essence equal to or lower than the petitioning character.

Countersignatories: Characters can have the god in charge of the college's division of the Bureau of Destiny authorize the petition as in the interests of Heaven and destiny in general. Gaining the head of a division's agreement requires a successful prayer roll to the deity and subjects the character's petition to official scrutiny. Normally, heads of the divisions will make a countersignature for nearly any petition, but blatant political machinations will be declined and reported, and deities keep copies of petitions they've countersigned.

Persuading the head of a division to make a countersignature is a normal prayer roll, as per pages 335-336 of *Exalted*. Characters are considered a priest (and thus lower the difficulty by 1) if the god is also the head of their division.

Characters may also have divinities other than their superiors countersign a petition. This is normally done when a character wants to make sure his superior doesn't find out about something or else when he's making miracles happen at the behest of a god and wants the god to see him offer the prayer. The latter looks bad if the character does

it for remuneration, but it happens more and more all the time now, and nobody in charge seems to want to say anything. Also, the Bureau of Destiny has a long unofficial policy of selling unimportant fates to lobbyists if the gods approach the bureau first and offers unspecified favors, so characters may get a god outside of their division signing their petition when acting in a semi-official capacity.

For seeking a countersignature from a god who is not the character's direct supervisor, the character must generally make a minimum sacrifice of Resources •••, unless the god is the one looking for the miracle. Also, subtract 3 from the actual value of any sacrifices offered for the purposes of making the prayer roll — the price of gods goes up considerably when they're helping you break the laws of Heaven.

Success on a roll to get a god other than the head of the character's division to countersign a petition does not mean an automatic countersignature, merely serious consideration. Characters who are serious about the matter should probably offer one of the special prayers from pages 123-125 of Chapter Four: Traits. Gods will not normally sign the petitions of individuals they do not know, nor do the Celestial Incarna generally heed the entreaties of the Celestial Exalted.

Regardless of who they are, no more than one god can countersign a petition. These are separate, side-negotiations from the petition for the effect and are carried on with whatever degree of formality the god prefers. Superiors normally sign without reading, while gods outside the bureau tend to drive hard bargains. **A countersignatory god adds three dice to the prayer roll.**

EXTENDED PRAYERS

The pattern spiders can be given general orders, but they prefer explicit instructions, repeated several times so there can be no misunderstanding. As mechanical contrivances, they're generally happiest if all the thinking is done for them. In addition, Sidereals who are busy praying for fate to change one way are not asking for another at the same time. **Sidereals who make a long-winded affair out of their prayers may add one die to the prayer roll per three hours of ritual, to a maximum of three dice.**

PREFERRED SACRIFICES		
Divinity	House	Favorite Offerings
Ruvia	Golden Barque	Money, secrets revealed, dedication of shrines, roads and bridges
Yaogin	Cerulean Lute	Unrecompensed patronage of poets and artists, artworks sacrificed to him, fine dreamstones
Hu Dai Liang	Crimson Panoply	Weapons, battle loot, dedication of war memorials
Nara-O	Forbidding Manse	The destruction of mirrors, clocks and astrological implements
Wayang	Violet Bier	Gardens walled off and abandoned, requiems sung for Creation, onyx statues of Wayang treading Setesh underfoot

Decrease the Resources value of the proffered sacrifice by • if it is not of the preferred type.

EFFECT ROLL

Assuming that the character's prayers succeed in attracting the attention of the spiders of the college, her player must determine the effectiveness of the orders. **If the character's prayer succeeds, spend a point of the character's temporary Willpower and roll her Essence + her rating in the college she is invoking.** This is a relatively small number of dice, but Sidereals have a number of ways to increase this, including artificial specialties, preplanning, astrological precomputation, the aid of other Sidereals and, of course, stunts. All of these are described below. The effect roll is a reflexive action that occurs immediately after the character's player makes a successful prayer roll.

Players must state in advance of making the prayer what the goal of the prayer is and what or who the central target is. While the specific effects of the prayer are determined by the degree of success, the player must, at a minimum, decide if the Exalt is invoking the college in its ascending, descending or resplendent mode. Ascending invocations have generally positive effects, while descending invocations have generally negative effects. Both ascending and descending invocations are generally targeted at others. Resplendent effects are unique Traits achievable by Exalted who place their own destinies in the precincts of a given constellation. Players must also name which bonuses they're taking on the Essence + College roll ahead of time and have them approved by the Storyteller. When the player makes the roll, write down the number of successes the player rolls. There may be a lot of scratchwork done with the effects, so if you preserve the original number, people won't forget it.

DETERMINING EFFECT

Sidereal astrology is essentially a bureaucratic function, and like most bureaucratic documents, astrological petitions are written in a "take what you can" tone. Sidereals request more than they expect to get from the pattern spiders, so that even if their request is cut, they'll still get as much as they really require.

The mechanical result of this is that, while the Sidereal must choose the target and the type of effect ahead of time, he determines the actual Scope and Duration of the effects after his player makes the Essence + College roll. Speaking generally, successes are "spent" to strengthen the effect, to increase how long the effects last and to determine how many beings they affect. The specific effects are determined by consulting the Catalog of Constellations (see pp. 220-235) while the Duration and Scope are determined by consulting the Power Effect chart on page 219.

FORMULATING THE EFFECT

Once the effect dice have been rolled and the effect successes spent, the Sidereal must formulate the effect

of her petition. The standard format for such a formulation is this:

"I pronounce that *the subjects* be taken into the College of the *constellation invoked* and there be subjected to *the destiny you plan for them* with *effect frequency* until the *Duration* elapses."

When the character formulates a Sidereal astrological effect, her player should write down the pronouncement, so she has a record of the effects the Sidereal has created. A player without a written record of the effect is at the Storyteller's mercy if any difficulties arise in interpreting the astrology or convincing the Storyteller that an effect was determined to be in place.

The destiny can be anything the Storyteller agrees is part of the purview of the college the Sidereal is invoking — anything that falls under its purview is valid, if the Storyteller says it is. The targets need not already be under the influence of the astrological house (though that increases the effect dice). Remember that this is an exercise in the interpretation of deliberately oblique and general symbols to justify actual concrete effects. It is not important that there may be other, "better" ways to explain or justify an effect, only that the justification the Sidereal's player offers is good enough to convince the Storyteller of its plausibility. Players should remember it's generally better to clear a given effect with the Storyteller rather than waiting until after all the prayer rolls are done.

ACTIVATING EFFECTS

After a character has finished his prayer and the player has made an effect roll, ascending and descending astrological effects are said to be "contagious." The destiny is hanging on the character, waiting to cling to its target. Any successful touch or attack on the target will do, and the target need never even know the Exalt's feather-light touch was upon her. A Sidereal can have only a single contagious destiny on her at a time, but can bear a contagious destiny intended for another and exist within the precincts of a resplendent destiny she has donned at the same time.

Resplendent effects cannot be attached to others, only to the Sidereal. Sidereal astrology does not work on beings outside of fate (see p. 129 for details). The effect successes of a resplendent destiny are reflexively available to the Sidereal immediately after the effect roll. The Sidereal's access to the fruits of a resplendent destiny cannot be preempted after the Sidereal's player makes the effect roll.

EFFECT MODIFIERS

There are a large number of ways Sidereals can increase their dice pool for astrological magic. They can and often do employ several such techniques at once. A given dice bonus cannot be used more than once — a given prayer can be offered with only one set of planned destinies, one set of horoscopes and so on. Now, if multiple Sidereals are

taking part in the ceremony, the best among them may make the various rolls, but they cannot each bring their own horoscope, destiny and prayer roll to their superiors.

Most effect modifiers add a given number of dice to the effect roll, usually one die per three successes the character achieved on some preparatory roll. Where a Sidereal has a fractional number of dice, round up. Rounding up should be applied to each individual effect booster separately.

Artificial Specialties: Although there is no Ability involved in the Essence + College roll, the Sidereal Exalted can develop specialties that are not directly related to any give Ability through Charms such as World-Shaping Artistic Vision (see p. 144), Systematic Understanding of Everything (see p. 167) and the Methodology of Secrets (see p. 167). Such specialties may explicitly add to Sidereal astrology rolls if the specialty in question is applicable. Specialties in Sidereal astrology can never be broader than a single college — players cannot create specialties that cover entire houses or the entire act of making a Sidereal astrology effect roll.

Destiny Planning: The pattern spiders appreciate it greatly when the Sidereal sends along plans for the alternate destinies they'll have to weave along with his petition. A Sidereal's player may roll Intelligence + Craft (Fate) to preplan certain aspects of the altered destinies his character's use of astrological magic will generate. This pleases the spiders and lets them do more advanced work during the duty cycles they allot to the character's request. The difficulty of the planning roll is the highest permanent Essence of any being targeted by the astrology. This is not subject to the regular (8 - successes) minimum for planning high-Essence destinies (see p. 63). Each planning attempt takes one day (24 hours) of work. For every three successes (round down) on the planning roll, the Sidereal's player receives an additional die on the effect roll.

Precomputed Horoscopes: Sidereals can further assist the pattern spiders by precomputing the horoscopes of the affected parties. This requires a full day and night of observing the sky while taking astrological measurements as well as a great deal of arcane mathematical computation.

The Exalt must have access to astrological measurement devices costing Resources ••• and of a quality not available outside a major city (or a large town in Varangia). The difficulty of the Intelligence + Occult roll for precomputing horoscopes is 1, but the roll must follow a successful destiny planning roll, and the player cannot count more successes than he rolled on the destiny planning roll. This represents the fact that the character's figures cannot be any better than the plans they support. For every three successes on the Intelligence + Occult roll, the player can add one die to the effect roll.

Excellent Petition: As discussed above, the spiders perform more effectively when they are addressed clearly

and enjoy reading their crisp but spontaneously written orders. For every three successes over the difficulty of the prayer roll, add one die to the player's effect roll.

Multiple Sidereals: Multiple Sidereals may join together not just to sign petitions, but to actually throw their metaphysical weight behind some effect. When multiple Exalted work together, the Exalt with the highest rating in the college the Sidereals seek to invoke must present the petition and lead the prayer ceremony. When College ratings are equal, the character with the highest Essence leads, and in case of a continued draw, the players should roll to see who is more auspicious, with the high roll winning. The roll off is not optional, and the leader's player must make the prayer and effect rolls.

The Sidereals who are taking part in the ritual must be legal cosignatories to the petition. The players of everyone accompanying the prayer must make a Charisma + Performance roll at difficulty 3 to perform the accompaniment successfully. Each successful partner adds her Essence to the effect roll. Sidereals must have a rating of at least 1 in the college in question to assist in making a prayer.

It should go without saying that participating in the prayer is seen as complicity to the eyes of the senior members of the bureau and the laws of Yu-Shan in general. Characters who take part in Sidereal astrology and add their Essence to the effect roll share equally in legal culpability. After all, the only reason a given character isn't leading is that she doesn't have the highest initiation in the college.

Ritual Behavior: Spontaneously rewriting destiny is difficult, but it can be easier if the Sidereal has aligned himself with the powers and predispositions of his college before making the prayer and effect roll. Each of the colleges in the Catalog of Constellations has a listing for its trappings. Players of characters who openly display three of those trappings for three days prior to the ritual (that is, before drawing up the petition) can add one die to the effect roll.

Characters who instead don the resplendent destiny for the college they are invoking entirely and continuously for three days prior to beginning the ritual receive a three-die bonus to the effect roll. This means a character cannot activate his anima banner above the 1-3 level, cannot don the destiny of another college and must openly bear three of the five trappings of the college.

EFFECTS

The effects of Sidereal astrology are not dissimilar to the effects of certain Sidereal Charms, they are just lower-powered and of far longer Duration and, most important, require no committed Essence. The primary limitation is that Sidereal astrology works very well on mortals, animals and plants, but not so well on beings of high Essence and not very well at all on abstract targets such as the weather or terrain.

Below are the eight different functions that can come as part of a Sidereal astrology effect. Each of these functions can be part of either an ascending or a descending destiny — and the mechanism for a blessing or a curse. There is no reason that the Sidereal cannot use what might seem to be a positive effect to impel a family to ruin or arrange it so that a negative effect makes a man into a prince, and such art is much appreciated in certain quarters of the Bureau of Destiny. Each of these can be laid on the subjects of the 25 constellations, allowing Sidereals to create a wide variety of effects.

Artless Prodigy Blessing: -1 to target number for a roll.

Blissful Idiot Blessing: -1 difficulty to a roll involving the blessing. May be +1 success in an opposed test.

Hound-Chases-Rabbit Blessing: The target regains 1 temporary Willpower from accomplishing a task related to the blessing.

Fortified Spirit Blessing: The target gains +1 to (a Virtue determined when the blessing is laid) in a roll related to the blessing.

Sloped Floor Curse: +1 to target number for a roll involving the curse.

Ruin Without Failure Curse: +1 difficulty to a roll involving the curse. May be -1 success in an opposed test.

Heart-Piercing Curse: Any failure on an Ability roll relating to the curse causes the character to lose a point of temporary Willpower.

Name-Destroying Curse: The target loses -1 to (a Virtue determined when the curse is pronounced) in a roll related to the curse.

Generally, Sidereal astrological bonuses are a separate sort of bonus from anything else in Creation, and their effects stack with the effects of various forms of Essence manipulation. The only exception is that target numbers for a roll cannot be reduced below 4 or above 9.

It is worth noting that Sidereal Exalted are never required to overdo a petition. They can freely discard extra successes on a Sidereal astrology effect roll.

BUYING EFFECT SCOPE

After determining what effect the astrology will have, the Sidereal must spend successes to determine how much area the ascending or descending effect encompasses. What exactly the Sidereal targets varies.

Sidereals targeting effects of large Scope can choose to make the curse quite specific — for a price. The more judgment the pattern spiders have to exhibit in administering the effect, the less they like it. The Sidereal can have the pattern spiders use a simple test to determine the effect. Simple triggers can include up to three conditions that the Sidereal specifies that can be answered with a yes/no answer and the use of the Efficient Secretary Technique (see p. 164). For example, a rather stereotypical Sidereal who lays with a mortal woman might bless her that all her

WHERE DO THE STUNTS GO?

Stunts aren't just for combat. Clever and descriptive players can fit stunts into creating Sidereal astrological effects. The following are some suggestions of when the stunts might be appropriate.

- **Ritual Behavior:** If the player makes her character's strange magical behavior before she draws up the petition both cool-sounding and mystically appropriate, the Storyteller should give a stunt die bonus on the effect roll.

- **Prayer:** Clever players can probably think of neat descriptions for their prayers to the pattern spiders and for the strange machine-god things the pattern spiders might do to them on receiving them. There is certainly room for stunts in the prayer rolls to arrange divine countersignatures.

- **Preparing Support Materials:** These are hard stunts to make repeatedly because the players will soon wear out all the easy descriptions, but stunts for preparing the destinies, horoscopes and petitions that go with the effect roll can significantly improve a character's effect dice pool.

Like combat, Sidereal astrology and its preparations are inherently chancy endeavors. There is no stunt insurance for them — even characters who get a stunt bonus can fail to accomplish anything. Storytellers should limit the number of stunts possible for each effect — it's strongly suggested the characters, no matter how many are involved, not be able to perform more than a total of two stunts. Allowing more than this will make Sidereal astrology increasingly powerful and increasingly time-consuming.

children are successful in magic unto the seventh generation, but only if they are his lineal descendents and male. This sort of simple trigger only annoys the pattern spiders slightly, adding one die of Paradox to the effect.

However, the effect can be made clever and have its own pattern spiders delegated to plan and maintain it. The advantage is that such effects are effectively self-aware and can strike at the time and place where they are most appropriate. Such curses are always appropriately crushing and ironic, and the blessings are always properly fortuitous and useful, and this sort of trigger makes even a low Scope, Power 1 curse go a long way. However, they offer few benefits to high Power effects, and the pattern spiders absolutely hate them, adding three Paradox dice to the total for the effect. Sidereals can decide to use either type of the more intelligent triggers after they make their effect roll, effectively paying Paradox to extend the effectiveness of a weak Power.

Keep in mind, Scope is a measure of the area affected, not the number of rolls that take place. The Power is not diluted as Scope increases — an Power 3 blessing will positively affect everyone in the Scope every scene. Likewise, it is a measure of area affected, not the total number of individuals struck. An effect with an Scope of 7 that struck down redheads would afflict all the redheads in a particular principality, not enough redheads to fill one.

Also, even if the effect is created in a sparsely inhabited area, the size of the region will not increase dramatically — humans are not the only things in the world with fates. Sidereals contemplating the Scope of an effect are just as likely to frown at the many complex fates of trees in a forest as humans in a crowded marketplace.

Sidereals need not target humans, but Sidereals cannot directly command the sun and the moon or the procession of seasons or the weather, and they have limited control over natural disasters. In general, their powers work best on humans, plants and animals — beings with free will and without a large Celestial Bureau controlling them. Sidereal sorcery cannot discriminate between mortals and Exalted. Gods can also be placed under the effects of Sidereal astrology, though there are political limitations on using Sidereal astrology on gods with Essence 5 or higher and on Celestial deities of any Essence, and characters who do so without legal authorization can be charged with violating the rights of said gods.

Note that while the Effect Scope table at first makes prodigious manipulations of history seem trivial, this is balanced by the fact that, in order to affect an area of large Scope, the Exalt must spend enough successes to provide for every being of elevated Essence in the population. As a rule, there is an individual with Essence 2 for every 100 beings affected, either representing the many God-Blooded and sorcerers of the Threshold or the comparatively fewer but more powerful Terrestrial Exalted of the Blessed Isle. Sidereals don't need to spend successes to cover gods and elementals unless those spirit beings are deliberately targeted or extremely disobedient to the law of Heaven.

Obviously, this is a rule of thumb — the Imperial City, Nexus, Lookshy, Great Forks and certain other cities have hundreds or even thousands of beings of Essence 2 or higher in them, and affecting the entirety of these areas with Sidereal astrology effects is effectively impossible. Sidereals who want to affect the precincts of these locales will have to use effects of very narrow Scope.

This requirement is generally seen as a real limit on Sidereal astrology's effectiveness because individuals with Essence of 2 or higher must be included in the effect to be affected profoundly by Sidereal magic. With their magical powers and their generally high dice pools, these beings are far less likely to be compelled or deterred by Sidereal curses. This is called the "Essence burden" of an effect, and most Sidereals resent at some level that it's

harder to affect three middle-aged Dynasts than every single mortal on the Blessed Isle.

Sidereals affecting themselves with Sidereal astrology must always spend two successes to do so, regardless of their Essence.

BUYING EFFECT DURATION

The Duration of a Sidereal astrological effect can be very long, even by the standards of the Exalted, but it is worth noting that none of them last "forever." Sidereals are aware that whatever they cobble together through rough manipulation of fate must be able to stand on its own eventually. Generations are assumed to be 20 years long for the purposes of these figures, and the notation of what generation the effect extends to is purely for reference — effects unto the 13th generation do not guarantee indefinite effects when attached to Dragon-Blooded. However, blessings and curses that have an Duration longer than the target's life will pass to their target's closest legal heir after a remission of one lunar month upon the target's death, in order to keep affecting a number of individuals appropriate to their Scope. For example, a death curse which affected an individual out to the seventh generation would act on the individual before it slew him, then after one month, would start working on the target's closest legal heir. The law used is that of the victim's home culture or the predominating law of Creation (currently imperial law) if the applicable law is unclear. Under imperial law, the spouse is the primary inheritor, with the elder child inheriting next, and all Exalts inheriting before any unExalted relations.

Given the extreme effect of Sidereal curses, this pause is to prevent inherited death curses from killing dozens or hundreds before the Sidereal can stop them. It is for similar reasons that effects of large Scope have a cultural and geographic dimension as well, so they will, at worst, depopulate a region, rather than killing all the inhabitants and then sweeping across Creation in search of valid victims. Sidereal Exalted who toss deadly curses are expected to clean them up after they have claimed their intended victims. Sidereal curses are very powerful against mortals, and left to run on their own, they'll soon be killing off unintended victims.

Sidereals are, in general, strongly encouraged within the Bureau of Destiny to keep their effects as short as possible, and the pattern spiders are even more easily angered than the elder Sidereals. Sidereals activating resplendent destinies on themselves don't generally spend many successes on their Duration. Those that will be mined for resplendent power activations rarely need to last more than a month. Even those that the Sidereals expect to sustain for social reasons are rarely kept for more than 100 years.

BUYING EFFECT POWER

Effect Power is the one effect that the Sidereal must spend successes on. This represents how close to the heart of the college the target's star is. If the effect of the constellation is weak, then the effect will only assert itself occasionally, while if the effect is very strong, it will be a constant burden on the target. Even weak Sidereal effects are very strong compared to normal dice pools, and their occasional curses are the misfortune of a lifetime for a mortal, while an omnipresent curse is certain to be quickly fatal for the unExalted.

THIS BREAKS THE GAME!

Yes, the blessing of the Chosen of the Maidens is worth something, and the system for determining the effects is labyrinthine and arcane. It's detailed and designed for a game where Sidereals are the center of attention. If you let them, Solar and Lunar players will scuttle to power their characters up with long-term Sidereal blessings, and their Sidereal benefactors really have no reason to refuse, and your game can become a maze of Celestial paperwork.

Don't just throw this material into your game because you bought Sidereals this week. Think about what you're doing — Sidereal magic is a new kind of bonus to keep track of, a new way to gain an unbalanced edge and a new way to slow down play. Just to start, the characters should probably have had Sidereal curses and blessings trailing behind them all along, so what effects are they under?

If you're currently running a game of *Exalted* and don't want to integrate these complicated rules into your game, *then don't*. The Sidereals are the secret masters of history — they write history and fix flaws in the world. Don't bother figuring out their motivations if they're not central to the game. Obviously, the effects of their astrological manipulations are the events of your game. However things come out is either exactly how they wanted all along or some threat to their carefully laid plans — whichever the plot demands.

If you do insist on integrating these effects into other *Exalted* games with Sidereal Storyteller characters, make sure that you portray Sidereal influence evenly. If Dragon-Blooded have the blessings of the Maidens, then their Solar prey may well also bear Sidereal effects, and likewise, Solars who benefit from a Gold Faction training camp are likely to have their own set of effects. The Sidereal hand must have always been behind both sides all along, or your game will veer wildly out of kilter as the only Sidereal who's showed up so far showers effects on those characters close to her, and everyone else's power suddenly shrinks in comparison.

MULTIPLE EFFECTS

Normally, an individual can be the target of no more Sidereal astrology than he has points of permanent Essence. If too many effects are placed on a given individual, the ones with the lowest Essence + College rating fall off and dissipate. If there are effects tied for lowest, roll dice to see which is less auspicious. The higher-rolling effect persists. Beings cannot be under the same effect more than once, and if at the Storyteller's judgment, two Sidereal effects on an individual are the same, the one generated by the higher Essence + College roll knocks off and replaces the current one. In case of a tie, roll off to determine which is less auspicious. Resplendent destinies are always the same as other resplendent destinies of that college.

CANCELING EFFECTS

Sidereals cannot just "call off" Sidereal astrology effects. After all, they're not performing the effect — the pattern spiders are. However, through official requests, Sidereals can cancel their own astrology. In fact, bureau policy requires that the Sidereal draw up the petition containing the cancellation order when she draws up the petition for the effect. The difficulty to draw up a petition of cancellation is the usual 2, but the difficulty of the prayer roll is only 3. Fine penmanship counts as usual.

Sidereals can only cancel their own astrology, not that of other Sidereals. If a Sidereal dies, her next incarnation must terminate the effect — another reason the elders urge young Sidereals to keep the Duration of their effects short.

If a character cancels an effect with cosignatories or a countersignator, those individuals all become aware that the effect was canceled (even unofficial cosignees are notified). If the character had other Sidereals present in the ritual to add to the effect roll, they must give their permission and be physically present when the character sends the petition of cancellation to the pattern spiders. If they are deceased, then their next incarnations must attend to the matter.

THE COST

Nothing short of possibly the Maidens can stop the Sidereals from using their powers to intervene directly in the Tapestry. There are some things that can deter them, however. Manipulating the Tapestry is dangerous. It's dangerous to Creation as a whole, and it's dangerous to the Exalt. Sidereals use their powers sparingly, deterred by the twin forces of censure and Paradox.

CENSURE

Censure is exactly what it means — the formally expressed disapproval of one's peers and superiors. The Tapestry includes everything that is, even the Exalted and the Loom of Fate, and Sidereals have the genuine ability to manipulate that Tapestry, even in ways that are harmful to

MORTAL ASTROLOGY AND SIDEREAL EFFECTS

It seems logical that individuals would be able to use mortal astrology to tell what Sidereal astrological effects are in place on them — after all, they can just look and see what constellation their star is in.

The problem is that individuals don't normally have stars — there just isn't enough space in the sky, and in any case, Heaven doesn't care about any one person enough to give him a star. The constellations certainly indicate predispositions, but the stars speak of destiny as a whole, not of the fate of any given individual. Even omens such as comets and eclipses frequently have several events associated with them to save on Celestial labor.

Astrology functions by carefully noting the time and location of the individual's birth, the major events in his life and other clues about his existence. This is then used, along with observed, stolen or reconstructed data about Heaven's general predispositions, to guess at the character's future. Sidereal astrology constitutes special orders to the servants of the Loom of Fate. There is no way for a mortal astrologer — or even another Sidereal not using the special powers of the Treasure Trove's resplendent destiny — to tell what Sidereal effects an individual is under. All the most successful mortal astrology can generally reveal is that the target's destiny seems awry, as if powerful occult influences were acting on him.

it. The attitude of the Sidereal Exalted as a group is that they don't go making changes unless they have a genuine reason.

This doesn't mean that Sidereals don't use their astrology for their own ends. The elder Sidereals see the use of astrological petitions as one of the few perks of an extremely demanding job. Sidereals who use their astrological magic to further their own ends won't face any real censure. What attracts censure is casual use of astrology, particularly using only a prayer and verbal orders to generate astrological change as a simple action. The bureau places heavy emphasis on the fact that astrological magic is not a supernatural martial-arts technique — it is manipulating the fundamental underpinning of Creation.

First of all, use of astrological magic makes everyone in the Bureau of Destiny work harder. When Sidereals alter destiny, it is the rawest sort of alteration. Although there might be no sign of it on the visible Tapestry, on the Loom of Fate, there's a tangled mess where threads were shifted wholesale. Elder members of the character's convention and division may even be required to take time out of their schedule to deal with the snarl. Characters who are routinely doing that because someone splashed mud on their boots had better expect to hear about it from their

superiors. The bureau watches for abuse of this sort primarily by having divine clerks regularly audit the paper trail of the character's destiny manipulation and draw attention to destiny manipulation targeted against individuals not otherwise involved with the Sidereal's own destiny (i.e., people unimportant to the character and her goals).

Proportionality is also considered critical. It is not considered appropriate for Sidereals to curse individuals for ridiculous lengths of time or to plunge whole regions of Creation into prosperity or ruin. Those sorts of thing require a ridiculous amount of work to plan around and police the edges of. How is a curse unto the 30th generation going to make a wrong against the Sidereal any more avenged or really amount to anything more than another hard red line across the planning committee's already-tangled map for future history? There aren't really any mechanisms for handling abuse of Scope — there don't need to be. Any meaningful abuse of Scope is going to trigger a meeting of at least the directional convention and possibly several other conventions as well.

Thirdly, the way it affects the department's image is considered. If an effect makes the Bureau of Destiny look stupid or ineffectual in the eyes of the rest of the Celestial Bureaucracy, then that is no longer a problem the individual Sidereal is creating for herself, but a problem she's creating for the bureau. Sidereals are expected to uphold the bureau's professional face of mystery and enigmatic power. Being scourged across the face of Creation by the Wyld Hunt would make manipulating destinies much more difficult. It's quite possible that despite the Arcane Fate, the Terrestrials could be persuaded by enough evidence to believe in a third type of Celestial Exalted in need of extermination. Miracles need to be subtle because part of the department's image is "no image at all," and it really needs to stay that way.

In addition, the elders feel that the overuse of the Sidereal signature ability in the heavenly eye degrades the mystery and gives others a chance to study it. Also, putting the bureau in a position where it has to publicly reverse itself is unforgivable, so Sidereal astrology should be secret to allow the bureau the most graceful climb down from any problems it might cause.

Finally, there are just things that are not done. Senior members of the Dynasty are *not* to be subjected to Sidereal astrology (and in any case, most of them are already under the effect of long Duration effects with Essence + College of 13 or higher). In general, Sidereals are expected to refrain from any Sidereal astrology on the Blessed Isle without the written permission of Chejop Kejak or a member of the Inner Circle. In addition, gods with Essence 5 or higher and their mortal lovers, priests and playthings are off-limits for political reasons. Using Sidereal astrology on a Celestial deity of any sort requires approval from a censor (usually given only to permit the Sidereal to exact

punishment for a crime), or the character is guilty of violating the rights of the deity.

There are no direct mechanical effects for censure, but there are many indirect ones. Keep track of all the different characters' fiascoes and abuses of fate. When the Sidereal interacts with someone else in the bureau, ask yourself if that Exalt has had to deal with one of those problems, and have it modify the difficulty of rolls to socialize. No supervisor is eager to spend time with a pain in the ass who keeps her away from her Manse and at the office at least three nights a week.

PARADOX

The elder Sidereals aren't the only ones who object to trivial use of Sidereal astrology. The pattern spiders themselves resent constant orders to veer from their normal weaving. Their discontent with a given Sidereal is called Paradox because it is a measure of how much the pattern spiders feel the Exalt's actions run directly against the natural course of destiny.

There are two ways Sidereals gain Paradox: by using Sidereal astrology at all and by using it in ways that displease the pattern spiders.

The first is simple to understand: As far as the spiders are concerned, the best amount of use for Sidereal astrology is "none," and so, they penalize all Sidereals merely for invoking it. Every time the Sidereal invokes an astrological effect, her player must roll a die. For every

success rolled, the Sidereal gains a single point of Paradox. 10s count as two successes on this roll, and so, Sidereals may get more Paradox than they expect from a given effect.

In addition to this, there are certain well-known criteria that affect the spiders' feelings toward a character. These are included in the Paradox Table and the Duration and Scope tables on pages 218-219. Certain resplendent destiny effects generate Paradox when invoked. In general, the longer the Sidereal effect and the more individuals it affects, the less the spiders like it. For each point of disfavor the Sidereal incurs, roll an additional die. As with the die his player must roll for invoking the effect at all, 10s add two points of Paradox, so Sidereals incur the especial anger of the pattern spiders at their own risk.

PATTERN BITE

Paradox is more than just a tally of displeasure — when the pattern spiders have been sufficiently displeased, they make their consternation known in more concrete ways, called pattern bite. The instant a Sidereal accumulates 10 or more points of Paradox, the furious spiders call out to their brothers, who jab at the Exalt's thread with their fangs. The venom causes a variety of negative effects to the Sidereal, with the intent of persuading her toward greater discretion in her manipulations of destiny. Roll 1d10, and consult the Pattern Bite table below for details.



PATTERN BITE

1. **Power-Neutralizing Venom:** The Sidereal loses all her temporary Essence as her player makes the effect roll and cannot regain Essence for 1-10 days.
2. **Blunted Mind Venom:** The Sidereal loses all her Willpower as her player makes the effect roll and cannot regain Willpower for 1-10 days afterward.
3. **Burning Muscle Venom:** -3 wound penalty for 1-10 weeks. Cannot be neutralized or modified.
4. **Divine Anaesthetic Venom:** -1 to permanent Essence for 1-10 weeks. Cannot raise Essence during this period.
5. **Resolve-Decaying Venom:** The character loses all remaining temporary Virtue points for the remainder of the story.
6. **Essence-Weeping Venom:** +1 mote to the cost of all Charms for 1-10 days, and the character cannot activate Combos or sorcery. The penalty must be paid on each activation of every Charm.
7. **Visage-Twisting Venom:** The character is reduced to Appearance 0 for 1-10 months.
8. **Black Voyage Venom:** The character sleeps for 1-10 days, dreaming terrible nightmares of toil at the Loom of Fate. Nothing can awaken him until then.
9. **Essence Venom:** Take 1-10 dice of aggravated damage.
10. **Dead Wife Venom:** Some living person or creature the character loves dies horribly. The victim must have Essence 1. If the character does not love anyone of Essence 1, the venom lies in wait until the moment the character does love such a thing, then slays it instantly. This is the only pattern spider venom that one can become immune to through repeated exposure.

The spiders are completely incorrigible in their collective pressure tactics, which are an immutable part of their nature. This behavior of the pattern spiders is the most convincing argument that the Maidens used the creation of the pattern spiders as an excuse to stifle the power of their own Exalted. Fortunately, the pattern spiders' anger goes out with their venom: When a Sidereal suffers pattern bite, immediately decrease her Paradox to 0.

DISSIPATING PARADOX

The pattern spiders have deliberately finite memories for offenses. Every season (three months), they collectively forget one point of the Sidereal's Paradox. This means that even a Sidereal literally on the verge of pattern bite can dissipate her Paradox by going just a year and four seasons without invoking any Sidereal astrology effects. Realistically, most Sidereals gain Paradox much more quickly than that and use the Wrapped Fly Ritual to dissipate it. All Sidereals who have been initiated into any college have knowledge of the Wrapped Fly Ritual.

In order to perform the Wrapped Fly Ritual, the Sidereal must offer 25 hours of her life to the pattern spiders. The character must make no Ability rolls and spend no Essence or Willpower. The character regains no Essence and loses her Conviction roll the next time she wakes up. This sacrifice is offered up so that the spiders who would normally weave the character's destiny can instead spend time fixing errors the character has induced. If the character successfully remains still (generally a Temperance roll), her player can make the roll to offer the day up to the spiders.

The Wrapped Fly Ritual is a form of prayer, like most communication with the spiders, and must be accompanied by a written apology and a verse describing the succulent nature of the offered day. Only if the pattern spiders are pleased with the character's versifying will they reduce the character's Paradox. Luckily for the Sidereal Exalted, the pattern spiders have made known that their tastes include precisely seven verses, which they all like equally well, and the offering is merely a test of the character's penmanship. The character must spend a full eight hours laboring to produce an acceptable copy of one of the verses the pattern spiders enjoy—a task represented by a Wits + Linguistics or Wits + Craft (Calligraphy) roll, difficulty 2. The pattern spiders have only a limited ability to appreciate their favorite verses, and extra successes do not increase the effectiveness of the Wrapped Fly Ritual through outstanding calligraphy.

The difficulty of the Charisma + Performance roll for the prayer is 3, and this automatically includes the value of the sacrificed day and the petition. If the prayer is successful, the character loses a point of Willpower and a point of Paradox. Remember, the character will not roll Conviction to regain Willpower when she next awakens.

Less popular but sometimes painfully necessary is the so-called Wrapped Diamond Ritual, a more advanced form of the Wrapped Fly Ritual. Rather than presenting the pattern spiders with a mere day, the character instead offers up a meaningful part of her soul. The character spends a day in a state of enforced lassitude (Temperance, difficulty 2), and if the character's player also makes successful calligraphy and prayer rolls, he loses a point of experience and reduces his Paradox to 0. It doesn't matter if the character doesn't have enough experience to pay, allow her to go into arrears—fate will collect its due out of the next experience point award.

RESPLENDENT DESTINIES

Resplendent destinies are a sort of Sidereal astrology effect that Sidereals can target only on themselves. Unlike most Sidereal astrology effects, which are a sort of template destiny, the resplendent destiny is a sort of simplified identity anthropomorphizing the traits of the constellation. Sidereals don't buy Power when they invoke a resplendent destiny on themselves and need only spend two successes on Scope, regardless of their Essence. Instead, they retain the extra successes until the resplendent

destiny's Duration expires and can use them to power the special abilities of the destiny. If the character ever uses up all the extra successes on a resplendent destiny, the destiny ends immediately.

Originally, resplendent destinies were an amplifier for Sidereal astrology and a gateway to an assortment of minor but interesting powers that the spiders provided in addition to the ascending and descending precincts of the colleges. However, when the Sidereals damaged the Mask in order to conceal themselves during and immediately after the Solar Purge, the ability to assume resplendent destinies became considerably more important.

Resplendent destinies are now, by far, the easiest way for Sidereal Exalted to take on false identities strong enough to withstand the Arcane Fate and make themselves able to influence others for stretches of time longer than a few moments. By assuming the generic destiny outlined by a constellation, the Sidereal can have a limited sort of identity, so long as she stays "in character" for the constellation. Sidereals who don't act the part of the constellation annoy the pattern spiders and attract Paradox. If this seems harsh, consider that the character is acting inappropriately while wearing a metaphysical archetype like a cloak.

More painfully, the destinies are temporary, woven to fulfill the needs of the moment. They were never meant to serve as identities, and when a destiny's effect points are used up, it is no more. That specific life and history can never be revived, and Arcane Fate quickly means everyone forgets it ever existed. The character's brief existence as that individual disintegrates, and her former acquaintances no longer recognize the character, as they have never met her. This is excellent for the sort of intervention operations the Sidereals prefer but extremely hard on Sidereals who want to build meaningful relationships with others. Other Sidereal Exalted see the Exalt normally and can tell he's wearing a resplendent destiny, but they don't know anything about it other than whatever the Sidereal's trappings suggest.

CHANGING WHAT YOU ARE

Changing destinies takes time and effort. Normally, the Sidereal is "herself," the Exalt concealed behind the Arcane Fate. However, by spending a Willpower and taking no action for a turn, she can don one of the resplendent destinies active on her. People will now recognize her as a person of that college's "type," and she can give her name and have it remembered. The persona the Sidereal assumes for a given identity must always be the same, but that is only for a given resplendency (that is, a given Sidereal astrology effect), not for every resplendent destiny created for the character by the college. Whatever identity she establishes for it will remain even after it is sent into the background.

WANTING, CEASING AND WALKING

OUTSIDE FATE

There are certain Charm effects that can dramatically alter a character's fate. They include Ceasing to Exist Approach, Wanting and Fearing Prayer and Walking Outside Fate. Where these Charms are in effect at the same time as such a resplendent destiny, the Charms' effects take precedence over the Sidereal astrological effect, but do not supercede it.

Characters with resplendent destinies who are subject to Wanting and Fearing Prayer adopt their new station and identity with their resplendent destinies intact. Sidereals who use Ceasing to Exist Approach on themselves must choose new identities for their resplendent destinies as well, but don't bother to do this unless the character actually plans to don them.

Characters who are Walking Outside Fate cannot invoke any resplendent destiny powers while they are walking outside of fate, for, at that time, they have no destiny, but the resplendent destinies do not end, they are merely inaccessible.

This is not a form of impersonation — the character cannot be someone specific or someone who already exists. It simply brings the rudiments of an identity together around the character. Prior to the Solar Purge, it used to merely give the Sidereal the air of someone belonging to the college. The effect hasn't changed since then, but now that the Sidereals have so little identity of their own, it is the sketched-out self of the resplendent destiny that predominates.

Those unable to discern Sidereals may still recognize the Exalt if they meet her again as herself or as another resplendent destiny. They are at -3 dice to notice or remember who the Sidereal is, and the Sidereal is at +3 dice to any attempts to conceal or explain the matter. Even this sort of hefty penalty means insightful mortals will occasionally become confused as to the Sidereal's identity if they are forced to meet the Sidereal again and again with the Exalt appearing in many different resplendent destinies.

Since this can cause Paradox, Sidereals typically apply a perfunctory disguise to establish their new identity. Since the Arcane Fate means observers will be at -3 dice to see through it and the Sidereals gains +3 dice for imitating a resplendent destiny on top of their facility for disguise, only the most skilled Exalted observers have a chance of seeing the Sidereal as something unusual.

Yet, even this sort of discretion can anger the pattern spiders. As a result, Sidereals tend to sustain destinies they use as stable identities for social interaction rather than

mining for resplendent powers, and most members of the Bureau of Destiny are careful not to cross their own tracks too often. Those in the Capital Convention have established day-to-day identities within the Heptagram, the Immaculate Order and the Thousand Scales, which they abandon only under the utmost duress.

BEING WHAT YOU AREN'T

Sidereals have become gifted imitators. The Arcane Fate means that the Intelligence + Larceny roll to masquerade as their resplendent destiny is at +3 dice, and the difficulty is 1, even if the Sidereal is disguising himself as someone of a different build or gender.

However, the downside is that a character *must*, to some extent, live the existence of her resplendent destiny. Creative reinterpretations of the constellations are something of an art form in Yu-Shan, but the character must be fundamentally true to the college's description and trappings. In addition, a character who dons a resplendent destiny must choose a single identity and maintain it — someone who is resplendent as the Gauntlet cannot act and dress as a brutal policeman today and as a wicked stepmother the next day through the use of the same resplendent destiny.

Keep in mind this is only if the character is actively donning the resplendent destiny. If the Exalt is being her regular Exalted self or some other identity given by another resplendent destiny, she need not assume a persona, but if the character is going to use the constellation as an identity, she must make the identity internally consistent and consistent with the college.

RESPLENDENCY PARADOX

Sidereals who don a resplendent fate but act against its fundamental assumptions attract the ire of the pattern spiders, as they're forcing the spiders to perform acts outside of their specialty and generally working against the general flow of Creation. Whenever a Sidereal acts

out of character for the college, her player must roll a single die for Paradox. In terms of how strict the Storyteller should be, use this simple rule of common sense: If you saw the kind of person the Sidereal is imitating performing the act, would you think it was uncharacteristic? Not good or bad, positive or negative, but not what you'd expect from a person like that? If so, it's an out-of-character act and causes the Sidereal's player to roll a die for Paradox. Remember that the pattern spiders have to spin the universe even if nobody is watching. Unwitnessed out-of-character acts are still out of character. Sidereals will have to carefully justify their desired actions through the lens of their resplendent destiny or else put aside that identity for a moment and risk confusing anyone who happens to be watching.

Luckily, the bounds of resplendent destinies have a feeling of magical rightness that makes them easy to stay within. Whenever a character is going to perform an act outside of his college, the Storyteller has to warn the Sidereal's player and work with the player to allow her to reconsider or rephrase the action to stay in-character. If these Paradox penalties seem extreme, keep in mind how rare they are likely to be. Unless the Sidereal actively undermines herself, nobody is ever going to see through her false identities. All she needs is a turn to shuck aside her resplendent destiny and become her Exalted self in order to avoid anima banner Paradox. Resplendent destinies are easy to abide by, and if they were not severe, the Exalted would hardly be deterred from tinkering with fate.

USING RESPLENDENT POWERS

Sidereal characters have access to the powers of all their resplendent destinies at all times, even if they are simply being "themselves" or actively masquerading behind a different resplendent destiny. Invoking resplendent powers is generally reflexive unless they allow attacks, in which case they're simple actions.

PARADOX GAIN

Event

Every out-of-character act.

Every month you live in a location where you've had a dozen or more known resplendent destinies in during the last 10 years.

Character wearing a resplendent destiny causes her anima banner to activate at the 4-7 level

...at the 8-10 level or above.

Confusing meeting as her Exalted self with someone she's had contact with while wearing a resplendent destiny.

Confusing meeting as another resplendent destiny with someone she's had contact with as a resplendent destiny.

...and they conclude she's one resplendent destiny imitating another.

...and they conclude she's a supernatural being.

Paradox Dice

•

•

•

+••

•

••

+•

+••

Resplendent powers never generate Paradox for the Exalt, even if they are used in front of large crowds and are out of character for the destiny — they may cause many questions and difficulties, but the pattern spiders will not strike the character down instantly for it. Unlike ascending and descending effects, the powers of resplendent destinies work on creatures outside of fate.

Note that the character cannot exercise her powers in a destiny if she wishes to maintain it as an identity. If the destiny's effect points are expended and it ends, the identity will dissolve in the Arcane Fate, and a character cannot have two of the same destiny on herself. This was initially not a problem as the effects were never meant to provide a total identity. Now, it leads to some very strange situations, as Sidereals in deep cover habitually use the resplendent effects of other colleges to support their identity.

CATALOG OF COLLEGES

The following are the 25 constellations of the Exalted horoscope. Each is controlled by a college of pattern spiders, and each is predisposed to various sorts of fates and destinies. These predispositions are not merely mythology or speculation in a book of horoscope, but details of the actual division of responsibilities among heavenly bureaus. At the same time, keep in mind that responsibilities among pattern spiders have more to do with the texture and tone of the Tapestry than with any single objective mortal measure. While the spiders are actual creatures, they are strange and difficult for human logic to understand. This is a guide, not an exhaustive reference. Characters may justify unlikely effects through esoteric logic or find that intuitive solutions are more difficult than they appear.

WHAT DO MORTALS KNOW?

Mortals know the names of the constellations and the images and astrological houses associated with them. Those with Occult 1 know the trappings associated with them and may use them to attempt astrological magic, though this is ineffectual, since the spiders only listen to Sidereal prayers. In short, mortals know a fair amount about the constellations' purviews and effects but nothing at all about the Loom of Fate, the Bureau of Destiny or the Sidereal Exalted.

PROCEDURE FOR SIDEREAL ASTROLOGY

(Optional) **Plan Destinies:** Roll Intelligence + Craft (Fate) with a difficulty equal to the highest Essence of any being to be directly affected by the invocation. Charms may apply to this roll. Every three successes or fraction thereof add one die to the character's effect roll, to a maximum of the character's Essence. Requires one day of planning.

(Optional) **Compute Horoscopes:** Roll Intelligence + Occult, difficulty 1, but the character cannot apply more successes than his destiny planning. Requires one day of observation.

(Optional) **Ritual Behavior:** By bearing the trappings of the constellation for three full days before invoking the effect, the character can add one die to the effect test. A character who instead dons the resplendent destiny for the constellation gains three dice.

Prayer Roll: The Sidereal's player rolls Charisma + Performance, difficulty 6 (5 if it is one of the five colleges of his Maiden's astrological house). If the prayer fails, any destinies and horoscopes produced for it are ruined. Add 2 difficulty to the prayer roll if the character doesn't have a petition.

Prayer Roll Modifiers:

Create Petition: Roll Wits + Linguistics or Wits + Craft (Calligraphy) at difficulty 2. Add 2 difficulty for drawing up the petition in a single turn.

If the character rolls two or more additional successes creating the prayer strip, subtract 2 from the difficulty of the prayer roll. If the character rolls four or more additional successes, subtract 4 from the difficulty of the prayer roll. If the character has no petition, add 2 to the difficulty of the prayer roll.

Cosignatures: Other Exalted can sign the petition if they are so authorized, see p. 207 for details. The player of each cosignatory must succeed at a difficulty 1 Wits + Linguistics or Wits + Craft (Calligraphy) roll. Each cosignature adds one die to the prayer roll.

Countersignatures: The god controlling the division of the college may also sign off on a petition. This requires a separate prayer and sacrifice. Characters praying for countersignatures are considered priests if they are praying to the head of their own division. The signature of a character's superior adds three dice to the prayer roll.

Lengthy Prayers: Add one die per three full hours of ritual, to a maximum of +3 dice.

Stunts: Well-described rolls add one to three dice as normal. These stunts also often qualify as ritual behavior.

Effect Roll: The character spends a temporary Willpower, and his player rolls the Sidereal's Essence + College, plus any bonuses he accumulated from planning, drawing horoscope and ritual behavior. All effect adders round up. All effect adders stack with all other effect adders.

Excellent Petition: +1 effect die per additional three successes on the prayer roll.

Preplanned Fate: +1 effect die per additional three successes on the Craft (Fate) roll.

Precomputed Horoscopes: +1 effect die per additional three successes on the Occult roll.

Ritual Behavior: Add one effect die if the character bears at least three trappings for three days. Add three dice to the effect roll if the character dons the resplendent destiny in question during that time. Add an additional die if the target already resides in the precincts of the college.

Multiple Sidereals: Add each Sidereal's Essence to the effect roll. All additional Sidereal participants must be legal cosignatories of the petition.

Choose Effect: Must touch the target to activate the effect. Consult the Catalog of Constellations and the tables in this section to buy the effect. Sidereals must affect each being with Essence greater than 1 individually. Remember, Sidereal astrology doesn't work on other Sidereals and beings outside fate.

Paradox Roll: Roll one die for invoking Sidereal astrology at all, plus any additional. Each success adds 1 Paradox. Characters who reach 10 Paradox suffer pattern bite (see pp. 214-215).

TABLE KEY

This key is used to read the notations on all three Sidereal effect tables.

- * The Sidereal invites the censure of his peers.
- The Sidereal rolls one additional Paradox die.
- The Sidereal rolls three additional Paradox dice.

EFFECT SCOPE: AFFECTING HIGH-ESSENCE BEINGS

Being of Essence greater than 1 require one success per point of permanent Essence to affect. Sidereals wishing to affect a large population must also affect all the high-Essence members of that population, or the effect will fail. The Sidereal does not need to spend successes to affect obedient local gods.

EFFECT SCOPE: AFFECTING MASSES OF MEN

Successes	Number affected
0	Individual. The fate may affect the world around him.
1	Individual alone. Effects will never significantly alter the world around him. A private paradise or hell.
2	Small group/clique (Up to 10)
3	Extended family /hamlet (Up to 25)
4	Clan/village (Up to 100) *
5	Town/neighborhoods (Up to 1,000) •
6	City (Up to 10,000)
7	Principality/prefecture (Up to 100,000) •••
8	Kingdom/dominion (Up to 1,000,000)
9	Local region (About 10,000,000)
10	Astrological direction (About 100,000,000)

Add one Paradox die if the effect has a simple trigger, three Paradox dice if the effect has an intelligent trigger.

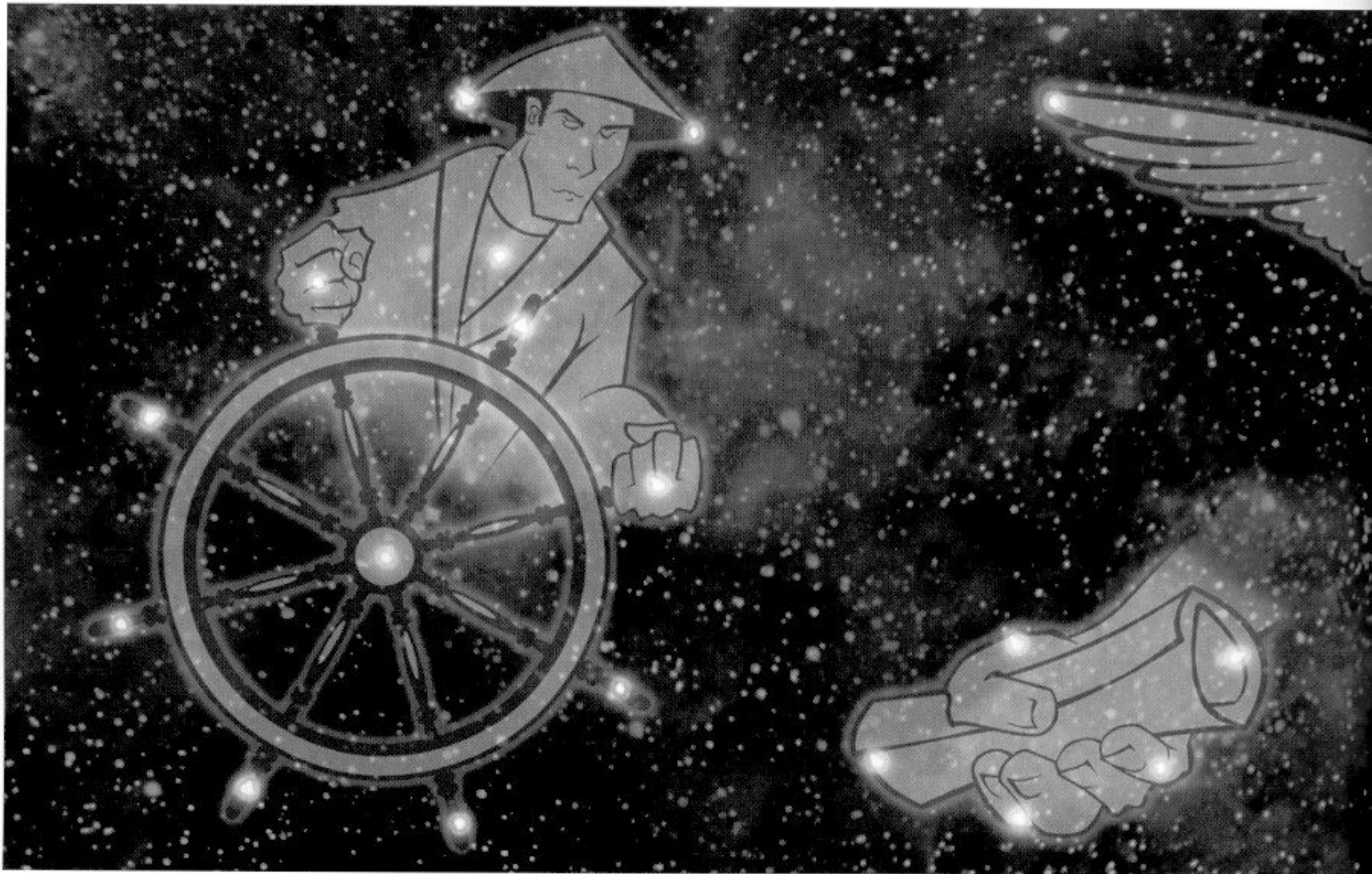
EFFECT DURATION

Successes	Duration
0	One month
1	One season
2	One year •
3	10 years
4	20 years
5	60 years (unto the third generation) •••
6	140 years (unto the seventh generation) *
7	260 years (unto the 13th generation)
8	600 years (unto the 30th generation)
9	1,000 years (unto the 50th generation)
10	2,000 years (unto the 100th generation)

EFFECT POWER

Successes	Frequency of Effect
1	The effect is moderate. It manifests about once per week.
2	The effect is strong. It manifests about once per day. •
3	The effect is very strong. It manifests about once per scene. *
4	The effect is overpowering. It manifests every chance it gets. •••

Sidereals do not spend successes on the effect Power when using resplendent effects on themselves — resplendent effects consume successes when invoked.



THE HOUSE OF JOURNEYS

The Captain
The Gull
The Mast
The Messenger
The Ship's Wheel

THE CAPTAIN

This is the college of strength, determination and orderliness. As a captain sails a clean and well-disciplined ship into danger and survives, so do those in this constellation use their strength and stern demeanor to overcome problems through organization and drill. In its descending aspects, this constellation's precincts are a land of obsessive desire for authority, the paranoia of power and the navel-gazing worship of organization for its own sake. It is the college of the ship's officer and the professional soldier, the work gang boss and the stern matriarch.

Trappings: The Captain wears an *emblem of rank* and carries a *token of authority* such as a scepter or wand of office. He is *fearless*, and he *shows no sign of fatigue*. He is not kind, but he is always fair and *concerned for the wellbeing of his followers*.

Correlations: Military command, fatherhood, tyranny, crystals, bureaucracy, discipline

Resplendent Effects:

- **Ship-Commanding Attitude, 1 effect point per week:** The character radiates intimidating charisma. Un-

der his command, everything is always just so, or there's hell to pay. Add the character's Essence to Presence rolls to command and control the crew, but only so long as the character rules absolutely.

- **Choosing for Fangs, 1 effect point per month:** The character can naturally choose the best fearsome subordinates. Under the Captain's command, the men best able to work a man to death while convincing him to love it naturally gravitate to positions of command. The Captain will hear no complaints from any underling with a Valor lower than the Sidereal's Charisma. This effect includes the Exalted, but the Chosen cannot be intimidated into staying on the job if they wish to quit.

- **Iron Drill Exercise, 1 effect point per week:** Through personal example, the character shows his followers how to perform some task, and they learn. For each week of drill, the followers gain 1 in an Ability, but they cannot gain a rating higher than the Sidereal's rating in that Trait. The Sidereal can train up to (her College rating x 10) individuals at once in this fashion. Any one individual can never learn more points of Abilities from a Sidereal than that Sidereal's Conviction.

THE GULL

The Gull is the college of travel for its own sake, just pure wanderlust without regard for profit. The travel of the Gull is metaphysical as well as physical, and it is the constellation of self-examination and inner change. In its



2013
 2012
 2011
 2010
 2009
 2008
 2007
 2006
 2005
 2004
 2003
 2002
 2001
 2000
 1999
 1998
 1997
 1996
 1995
 1994
 1993
 1992
 1991
 1990
 1989
 1988
 1987
 1986
 1985
 1984
 1983
 1982
 1981
 1980
 1979
 1978
 1977
 1976
 1975
 1974
 1973
 1972
 1971
 1970
 1969
 1968
 1967
 1966
 1965
 1964
 1963
 1962
 1961
 1960
 1959
 1958
 1957
 1956
 1955
 1954
 1953
 1952
 1951
 1950
 1949
 1948
 1947
 1946
 1945
 1944
 1943
 1942
 1941
 1940
 1939
 1938
 1937
 1936
 1935
 1934
 1933
 1932
 1931
 1930
 1929
 1928
 1927
 1926
 1925
 1924
 1923
 1922
 1921
 1920
 1919
 1918
 1917
 1916
 1915
 1914
 1913
 1912
 1911
 1910
 1909
 1908
 1907
 1906
 1905
 1904
 1903
 1902
 1901
 1900
 1899
 1898
 1897
 1896
 1895
 1894
 1893
 1892
 1891
 1890
 1889
 1888
 1887
 1886
 1885
 1884
 1883
 1882
 1881
 1880
 1879
 1878
 1877
 1876
 1875
 1874
 1873
 1872
 1871
 1870
 1869
 1868
 1867
 1866
 1865
 1864
 1863
 1862
 1861
 1860
 1859
 1858
 1857
 1856
 1855
 1854
 1853
 1852
 1851
 1850
 1849
 1848
 1847
 1846
 1845
 1844
 1843
 1842
 1841
 1840
 1839
 1838
 1837
 1836
 1835
 1834
 1833
 1832
 1831
 1830
 1829
 1828
 1827
 1826
 1825
 1824
 1823
 1822
 1821
 1820
 1819
 1818
 1817
 1816
 1815
 1814
 1813
 1812
 1811
 1810
 1809
 1808
 1807
 1806
 1805
 1804
 1803
 1802
 1801
 1800
 1799
 1798
 1797
 1796
 1795
 1794
 1793
 1792
 1791
 1790
 1789
 1788
 1787
 1786
 1785
 1784
 1783
 1782
 1781
 1780
 1779
 1778
 1777
 1776
 1775
 1774
 1773
 1772
 1771
 1770
 1769
 1768
 1767
 1766
 1765
 1764
 1763
 1762
 1761
 1760
 1759
 1758
 1757
 1756
 1755
 1754
 1753
 1752
 1751
 1750
 1749
 1748
 1747
 1746
 1745
 1744
 1743
 1742
 1741
 1740
 1739
 1738
 1737
 1736
 1735
 1734
 1733
 1732
 1731
 1730
 1729
 1728
 1727
 1726
 1725
 1724
 1723
 1722
 1721
 1720
 1719
 1718
 1717
 1716
 1715
 1714
 1713
 1712
 1711
 1710
 1709
 1708
 1707
 1706
 1705
 1704
 1703
 1702
 1701
 1700
 1699
 1698
 1697
 1696
 1695
 1694
 1693
 1692
 1691
 1690
 1689
 1688
 1687
 1686
 1685
 1684
 1683
 1682
 1681
 1680
 1679
 1678
 1677
 1676
 1675
 1674
 1673
 1672
 1671
 1670
 1669
 1668
 1667
 1666
 1665
 1664
 1663
 1662
 1661
 1660
 1659
 1658
 1657
 1656
 1655
 1654
 1653
 1652
 1651
 1650
 1649
 1648
 1647
 1646
 1645
 1644
 1643
 1642
 1641
 1640
 1639
 1638
 1637
 1636
 1635
 1634
 1633
 1632
 1631
 1630
 1629
 1628
 1627
 1626
 1625
 1624
 1623
 1622
 1621
 1620
 1619
 1618
 1617
 1616
 1615
 1614
 1613
 1612
 1611
 1610
 1609
 1608
 1607
 1606
 1605
 1604
 1603
 1602
 1601
 1600
 1599
 1598
 1597
 1596
 1595
 1594
 1593
 1592
 1591
 1590
 1589
 1588
 1587
 1586
 1585
 1584
 1583
 1582
 1581
 1580
 1579
 1578
 1577
 1576
 1575
 1574
 1573
 1572
 1571
 1570
 1569
 1568
 1567
 1566
 1565
 1564
 1563
 1562
 1561
 1560
 1559
 1558
 1557
 1556
 1555
 1554
 1553
 1552
 1551
 1550
 1549
 1548
 1547
 1546
 1545
 1544
 1543
 1542
 1541
 1540
 1539
 1538
 1537
 1536
 1535
 1534
 1533
 1532
 1531
 1530
 1529
 1528
 1527
 1526
 1525
 1524
 1523
 1522
 1521
 1520
 1519
 1518
 1517
 1516
 1515
 1514
 1513
 1512
 1511
 1510
 1509
 1508
 1507
 1506
 1505
 1504
 1503
 1502
 1501
 1500
 1499
 1498
 1497
 1496
 1495
 1494
 1493
 1492
 1491
 1490
 1489
 1488
 1487
 1486
 1485
 1484
 1483
 1482
 1481
 1480
 1479
 1478
 1477
 1476
 1475
 1474
 1473
 1472
 1471
 1470
 1469
 1468
 1467
 1466
 1465
 1464
 1463
 1462
 1461
 1460
 1459
 1458
 1457
 1456
 1455
 1454
 1453
 1452
 1451
 1450
 1449
 1448
 1447
 1446
 1445
 1444
 1443
 1442
 1441
 1440
 1439
 1438
 1437
 1436
 1435
 1434
 1433
 1432
 1431
 1430
 1429
 1428
 1427
 1426
 1425
 1424
 1423
 1422
 1421
 1420
 1419
 1418
 1417
 1416
 1415
 1414
 1413
 1412
 1411
 1410
 1409
 1408
 1407
 1406
 1405
 1404
 1403
 1402
 1401
 1400
 1399
 1398
 1397
 1396
 1395
 1394
 1393
 1392
 1391
 1390
 1389
 1388
 1387
 1386
 1385
 1384
 1383
 1382
 1381
 1380
 1379
 1378
 1377
 1376
 1375
 1374
 1373
 1372
 1371
 1370
 1369
 1368
 1367
 1366
 1365
 1364
 1363
 1362
 1361
 1360
 1359
 1358
 1357
 1356
 1355
 1354
 1353
 1352
 1351
 1350
 1349
 1348
 1347
 1346
 1345
 1344
 1343
 1342
 1341
 1340
 1339
 1338
 1337
 1336
 1335
 1334
 1333
 1332
 1331
 1330
 1329
 1328
 1327
 1326
 1325
 1324
 1323
 1322
 1321
 1320
 1319
 1318
 1317
 1316
 1315
 1314
 1313
 1312
 1311
 1310
 1309
 1308
 1307
 1306
 1305
 1304
 1303
 1302
 1301
 1300
 1299
 1298
 1297
 1296
 1295
 1294
 1293
 1292
 1291
 1290
 1289
 1288
 1287
 1286
 1285
 1284
 1283
 1282
 1281
 1280
 1279
 1278
 1277
 1276
 1275
 1274
 1273
 1272
 1271
 1270
 1269
 1268
 1267
 1266
 1265
 1264
 1263
 1262
 1261
 1260
 1259
 1258
 1257
 1256
 1255
 1254
 1253
 1252
 1251
 1250
 1249
 1248
 1247
 1246
 1245
 1244
 1243
 1242
 1241
 1240
 1239
 1238
 1237
 1236
 1235
 1234
 1233
 1232
 1231
 1230
 1229
 1228
 1227
 1226
 1225
 1224
 1223
 1222
 1221
 1220
 1219
 1218
 1217
 1216
 1215
 1214
 1213
 1212
 1211
 1210
 1209
 1208
 1207
 1206
 1205
 1204
 1203
 1202
 1201
 1200
 1199
 1198
 1197
 1196
 1195
 1194
 1193
 1192
 1191
 1190
 1189
 1188
 1187
 1186
 1185
 1184
 1183
 1182
 1181
 1180
 1179
 1178
 1177
 1176
 1175
 1174
 1173
 1172
 1171
 1170
 1169
 1168
 1167
 1166
 1165
 1164
 1163
 1162
 1161
 1160
 1159
 1158
 1157
 1156
 1155
 1154
 1153
 1152
 1151
 1150
 1149
 1148
 1147
 1146
 1145
 1144
 1143
 1142
 1141
 1140
 1139
 1138
 1137
 1136
 1135
 1134
 1133
 1132
 1131
 1130
 1129
 1128
 1127
 1126
 1125
 1124
 1123
 1122
 1121
 1120
 1119
 1118
 1117
 1116
 1115
 1114
 1113
 1112
 1111
 1110
 1109
 1108
 1107
 1106
 1105
 1104
 1103
 1102
 1101
 1100
 1099
 1098
 1097
 1096
 1095
 1094
 1093
 1092
 1091
 1090
 1089
 1088
 1087
 1086
 1085
 1084
 1083
 1082
 1081
 1080
 1079
 1078
 1077
 1076
 1075
 1074
 1073
 1072
 1071
 1070
 1069
 1068
 1067
 1066
 1065
 1064
 1063
 1062
 1061
 1060
 1059
 1058
 1057
 1056
 1055
 1054
 1053
 1052
 1051
 1050
 1049
 1048
 1047
 1046
 1045
 1044
 1043
 1042
 1041
 1040
 1039
 1038
 1037
 1036
 1035
 1034
 1033
 1032
 1031
 1030
 1029
 1028
 1027
 1026
 1025
 1024
 1023
 1022
 1021
 1020
 1019
 1018
 1017
 1016
 1015
 1014
 1013
 1012
 1011
 1010
 1009
 1008
 1007
 1006
 1005
 1004
 1003
 1002
 1001
 1000
 999
 998
 997
 996
 995
 994
 993
 992
 991
 990
 989
 988
 987
 986
 985
 984
 983
 982
 981
 980
 979
 978
 977
 976
 975
 974
 973
 972
 971
 970
 969
 968
 967
 966
 965
 964
 963
 962
 961
 960
 959
 958
 957
 956
 955
 954
 953
 952
 951
 950
 949
 948
 947
 946
 945
 944
 943
 942
 941
 940
 939
 938
 937
 936
 935
 934
 933
 932
 931
 930
 929
 928
 927
 926
 925
 924
 923
 922
 921
 920
 919
 918
 917
 916
 915
 914
 913
 912
 911
 910
 909
 908
 907
 906
 905
 904
 903
 902
 901
 900
 899
 898
 897
 896
 895
 894
 893
 892
 891
 890
 889
 888
 887
 886
 885
 884
 883
 882
 881
 880
 879
 878
 877
 876
 875
 874
 873
 872
 871
 870
 869
 868
 867
 866
 865
 864
 863
 862
 861
 860
 859
 858
 857
 856
 855
 854
 853
 852
 851
 850
 849
 848
 847
 846
 845
 844
 843
 842
 841
 840
 839
 838
 837
 836
 835
 834
 833
 832
 831
 830
 829
 828
 827
 826
 825
 824
 823
 822
 821
 820
 819
 818
 817
 816
 815
 814
 813
 812
 811
 810
 809
 808
 807
 806
 805
 804
 803
 802
 801
 800
 799
 798
 797
 796
 795
 794
 793
 792
 791
 790
 789
 788
 787
 786
 785
 784
 783
 782
 781
 780
 779
 778
 777
 776
 775
 774
 773
 772
 771
 770
 769
 768
 767
 766
 765
 764
 763
 762
 761
 760
 759
 758
 757
 756
 755
 754
 753
 752
 751
 750
 749
 748
 747
 746
 745
 744
 743
 742
 741
 740
 739
 738
 737
 736
 735
 734
 733
 732
 731
 730
 729
 728
 727
 726
 725
 724
 723
 722
 721
 720
 719
 718
 717
 716
 715
 714
 713
 712
 711
 710
 709
 708
 707
 706
 705
 704
 703
 702
 701
 700
 699
 698
 697
 696
 695
 694
 693
 692
 691
 690
 689
 688
 687
 686
 685
 684
 683
 682
 681
 680
 679
 678
 677
 676
 675
 674
 673
 672
 671
 670
 669
 668
 667
 666
 665
 664
 663
 662
 661
 660
 659
 658
 657
 656
 655
 654
 653
 652
 651
 650
 649
 648
 647
 646
 645
 644
 643
 642
 641
 640
 639
 638
 637
 636
 635
 634
 633
 632
 631
 630
 629
 628
 627
 626
 625
 624
 623
 622
 621
 620
 619
 618
 617
 6

+ Athletics by 10 to determine how much she can lift. This effect does not work if the Mast is alone.

- **Structure of the Mast, 1 effect point:** The Sidereal may add three dice to any roll so long as she is simply passively supporting the task and not actually making any rolls or assigned to some job that requires her special expertise.

- **Invisible at the Center, 1 effect point, one Paradox die per week:** The Sidereal knows how to work hard and do what she's told. In just a few hours of searching any populated area, she can find a menial job that will ensure that she is fed, clothed and sheltered from the elements but nothing else.

So long as the Sidereal is employed as a menial laborer and lives meekly and without question, she will avoid all legal, bureaucratic and official scrutiny. Those attempting to deliver summonses to her are powerless without supernatural tracking, and those attempting to follow her must beat her Stamina + Athletics roll, with her Essence added as automatic successes. She must be in a state of virtual slavery, sleeping at the job and living only to perform — she has seven free hours per week.

THE MESSENGER

The college of the Messenger is the abode of the professional servant, symbolized by the horse-courier who must brave great danger to accurately deliver his precious information. In its ascending precincts, it is the sign of skilled, professional and brave service. In its descending aspects, its precincts are place of good service for bad ends, of thoughtless abuse of power (and associated with the Inconsiderate Horseman of Immaculate theology) and, more generally, of the abdication of moral responsibility. This is the constellation of the courier, the valet, the aide, the diplomat and the young Terrestrial Exalt living in the household of her cousins. This is the sign of non-migratory birds, including raptors and owls, and of service to one's family.

Trappings: The Messenger has a *mount* and rides on *urgent business*. She is *daring* and *armed*. She carries a *package*, from which she cannot be separated.

Correlations: Duty, raptors, bravery, arrogance, journeys, communication, selflessness, news

Resplendent Effects:

- **Iron Heart, Iron Horse, 1 effect point per month:** While carrying a message, the Sidereal and her familiar will not fail any Valor roll if that would mean the message was delayed or the route lengthened.

- **Blow Wind Blow Style, 1 effect point per week:** Make all Fatigue checks for the Sidereal and her mount without any modifications due to heat, cold, precipitation or other weather effects. Both she and the and the mount wake well-rested every morning, regardless of the poor conditions under which they may have slept.

- **Field Mouse Rider, 1 effect point, three Paradox dice per day:** The character may cause any familiar to bear and carry her, no matter how unsuitable it is for use as a mount. The familiar suffers no real ill effects from this

misuse, but may be at small penalties due to muscle fatigue for several days.

THE SHIP'S WHEEL

This is the college of perseverance in the face of hardship, as a steersman lashes himself to the wheel so that a ship can ride out a storm. In its ascending aspects, the Ship's Wheel is an ultimately hopeful constellation, symbolizing the success of perseverance. In its descending precincts, it contains quixotic obsession and clinging to doomed causes. This is the college of the steersman, the furnace-stoker and those witlessly in pursuit of their beloved.

Trappings: The steersman at the wheel is *sleepless* and *unwashed*. He wears a *long cape or jacket* and *wristlets or a belt of rope*. The steersman has a determined demeanor and is *unspeaking*, for none can share the burden of his post.

Correlations: Underdogs, cult beliefs, Solars, obsessive love, martyrdom, burdensome debt, wild animals as a group

Resplendent Effects:

- **Stronger Than This Job, 1 effect point:** So long as the character has a job to do, any Fatigue penalties the character would suffer are treated as bonus dice, so long as the penalties do not reduce his dice pool below 0. However, after the task is done, the character takes a number of unsoakable bashing levels equal to the Fatigue penalties and is subject to the Fatigue.

- **Marshaling Infinite Strength, 1 effect point:** So long as the character was able to perform a task when she began, she can finish it. Regardless of penalties for fatigue, conditions or injury, the character can adequately carry out any task she could accomplish when she started. The character is not immune to the negative effects but will continue to perform despite them until the task is done. Characters who are violently killed are sure to stay dead, but the bodies and ghosts of those who die of natural causes or bleeding tend to continue performing their tasks until relieved.

- **Poetic Sacrifice Insurance, 2 effect points, 1 Paradox die:** The Sidereal's player may roll again for any Sail or Survival roll made to travel in inclement conditions and add the successes of the two rolls together. If the Exalt is using Charms or other effects to enhance Survival rolls, he must boost both rolls separately. Extra successes must be used to travel farther than the character normally would have, and any number of extra successes can be so used, regardless of the implausibility of the distance traveled. The character cannot stop traveling during this time.

THE HOUSE OF LEISURE

The Ewer

The Lovers

The Musician

The Peacock

The Pillar

THE EWER

The Ewer is the sign of partnerships based in affection, of romantic pursuit or for the love of some other dream. In its ascending aspects, it is the sign of enduring adoration, flirtation, seduction and coquettish banter. In its descending precincts, it is the sign of the devouring matriarch and of thoughtless, obsessive or impossible love. It is the sign of the marriage-seeker, the idealist, the revolutionary and the good monk. The Ewer is the sign of incestuous couplings and amphibians.

Trappings: The Ewer bears *flowers* and a *work of poetry*. He is *blissfully happy* and *in love with love*. He wears his *finest clothing* to see his beloved.

Correlations: Love, motherhood, righteousness, idealism, monastic duty, obsession, seduction, dreams and fantasies

Resplendent Effects:

- **Sweet Flirtation Smile, 1 effect point:** The Sidereal's player can add his character's Charisma to any Bureaucracy, Socialize or Presence roll.

- **Snappy Banter Approach, 1 effect point:** If the character's Wits are equal to or higher than the Wits of his partner, he may activate this power to allow either of their players to reroll a social roll the other player has failed.

- **Frenzied Courtship Dodge, 1 effect point, one Paradox die per week:** The character makes himself an easy target for the arrows of love. Within a day wandering in any populated area, the character will find himself in the midst of an ongoing whirlwind affair or courtship. In cultures where marriage is strictly formal, the character will become embroiled in difficult marriage negotiations instead. The character will never marry while under the power of this effect, but the courtship will also never cease to be an all-consuming obsession.

So long as the character lives only for his beloved and their eventual blissful union, he avoids all legal, bureaucratic and official scrutiny. Those attempting to deliver summonses to him are powerless without supernatural tracking, and those attempting to follow him must beat his player's Wits + Athletics roll (he will do any mad act to be with his intended), with his Essence added as automatic successes. He must live for the job, for he has just seven free hours per week.

THE LOVERS

The Lovers is the constellation of physical lust, carnal indulgence and uneven relationships. In its ascending aspects, it symbolizes relationships that are symbolically or situationally uneven, like a sex act. In its descending aspects, it is symbolic of sexual depravity and sexual or social rape of the helpless or entrapped. It is the sign of the fixed-price prostitute, the slave, the debtor, the beggar, the pedophile and all individuals engaging in sex acts. This college is also the sign of vermin and rodents and of ravagers and other victims of the Fair Folk.

Sidereals generally take this constellation to explain a great deal about the outlook of the Maidens and the general nature of the destiny they weave.

Trappings: The lover is dressed in *silk robes*, and his *hair is rumpled*. He is *superficially friendly* and *attractive* but betrays *some sign of violence or restraint*, though it may only be in the form of love-bites.

Correlations: Service, submission, slaves, vermin, Ravagers, lust, the sex act, rape, abuse

Resplendent Effects:

- **Handsome Boy Eyes, 1 effect point:** The Sidereal's player can attempt a seduction roll without the Exalt actually seducing or even speaking to the target — the character need only see him from across the room. Apply the result of the roll if the Sidereal actually attempts to seduce the target.

- **Celestial Bliss Trick, 1 effect point per performance:** It is a simple trick, but it brings about total sexual ecstasy in under three minutes. It works on individuals of both genders. The players of those subjected to it will need to make successful Willpower and Temperance rolls, both difficulty 1, for their characters not to fall under the Sidereal's sway.

- **Whore-And-Virgin Stance, 1 effect point, one Paradox die per week:** According to the character's tastes, she becomes a god to be worshiped or an object to be possessed. By spending a day out and about in any populated area, the character can become a kept courtesan or pimped prostitute.

So long as she lives an empty life of sex and submission, she will avoid all legal, bureaucratic and official scrutiny. Those attempting to deliver summonses to her are powerless without supernatural tracking, and those supernatural trackers attempting to follow her must beat the Sidereal's player's Manipulation + Presence roll, with the Exalt's Essence added as automatic successes. She must be in a state of virtually mindless self-indulgence or always on the job — she has seven free hours per week.

THE MUSICIAN

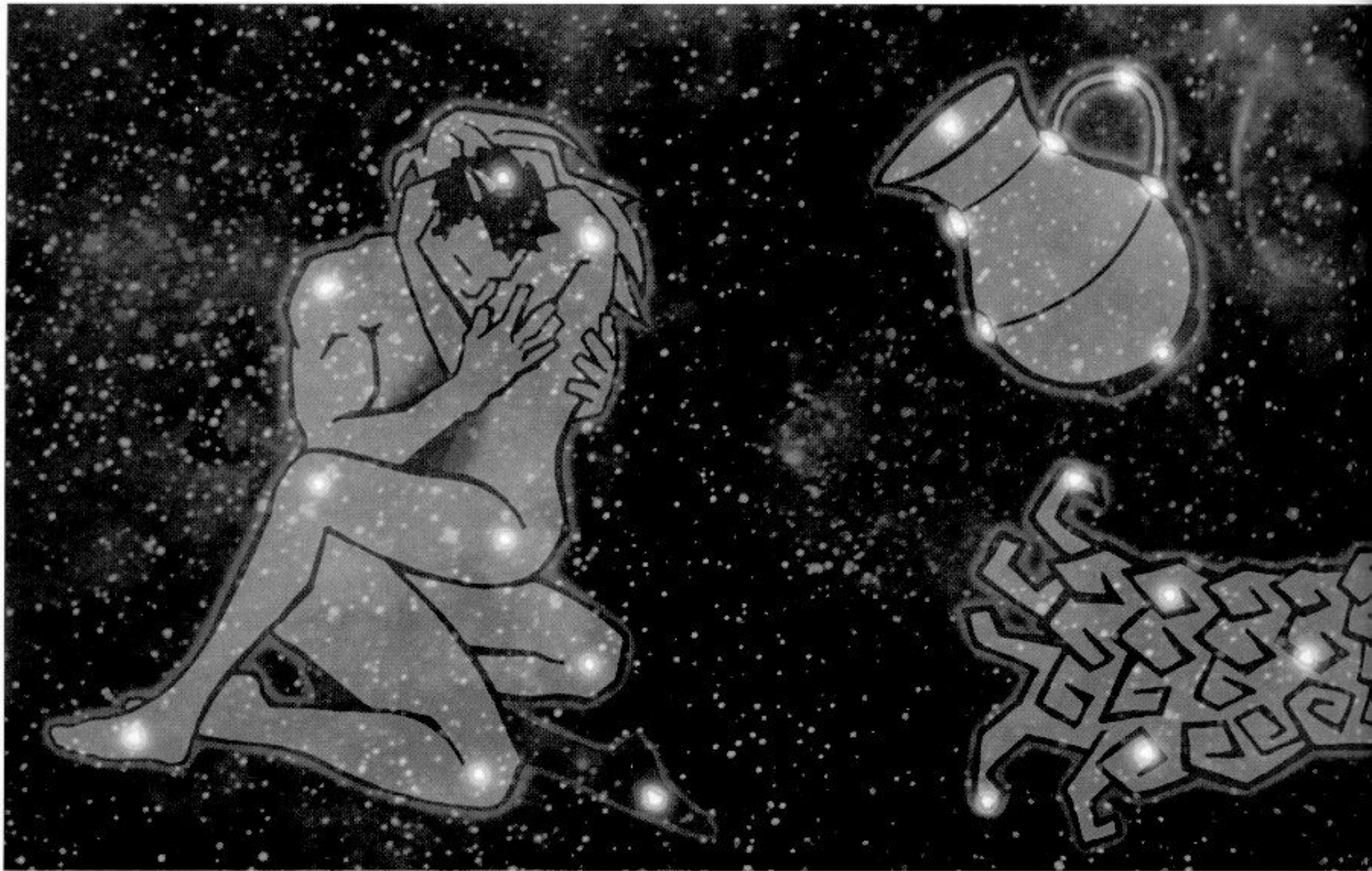
The Musician is the sign of contentment in the act of living. It is the college of joy-in-plenty and enjoyment of the finer things — it is also the sign of gourmets, gluttons and poets. In its descending aspects, it is the constellation of hollow avarice, blind materialism and scandalous excess. Under Sidereal influence, this constellation is called the Painted Boy in Immaculate practice, for it is also the sign of homosexual couplings. It is the sign of herbivores who travel in small family groups.

Trappings: The Musician wears *facial makeup*, dresses *outlandishly* and always carries a *musical instrument*. He is *cynically wise* and *uninhibited*.

Correlations: Excess, laughter, hedonism, music, homosexuality, drug use, finery, greed, extramarital pairings, contentment in living, theater

Resplendent Effects:

- **Strange Days, 1 effect point:** The character may force the player of a being presented with a possible source



of gratification or intoxication to make a Temperance roll or succumb, even if the target would never normally consider the possibility.

- **Impossible-to-Remember Party Approach, 1 effect point per night:** While the character performs, either by being the center of attention, laying down a line of conversation on an individual or performing some sort of music or dance, the difficulty for Temperance rolls for everyone in the vicinity increases by 1.

- **Brigand-and-Carouser Attracting Style, 1 effect point, one Paradox die per week:** By going home with a waitress or going to a party with someone he meets at a teahouse or tavern in a populated area, the character may attach himself to a family or friendship group of marginal personalities. They may be actual brigands, or they may just be louts or rejects. The character will quickly find a place among these eccentric and addled personalities, and by the end of the day, they will have accepted him as one of their own.

So long as the character wastes his days living large with the maniacs of his new troupe, he avoids all legal, bureaucratic and official scrutiny. Those attempting to deliver summonses to him are powerless without supernatural tracking, and those attempting to follow him must beat his player's Stamina + Presence roll, with the Sidereal's Essence added as automatic successes. The marginal life is a full-time endeavor, and the Exalt has just seven free hours per week.

THE PEACOCK

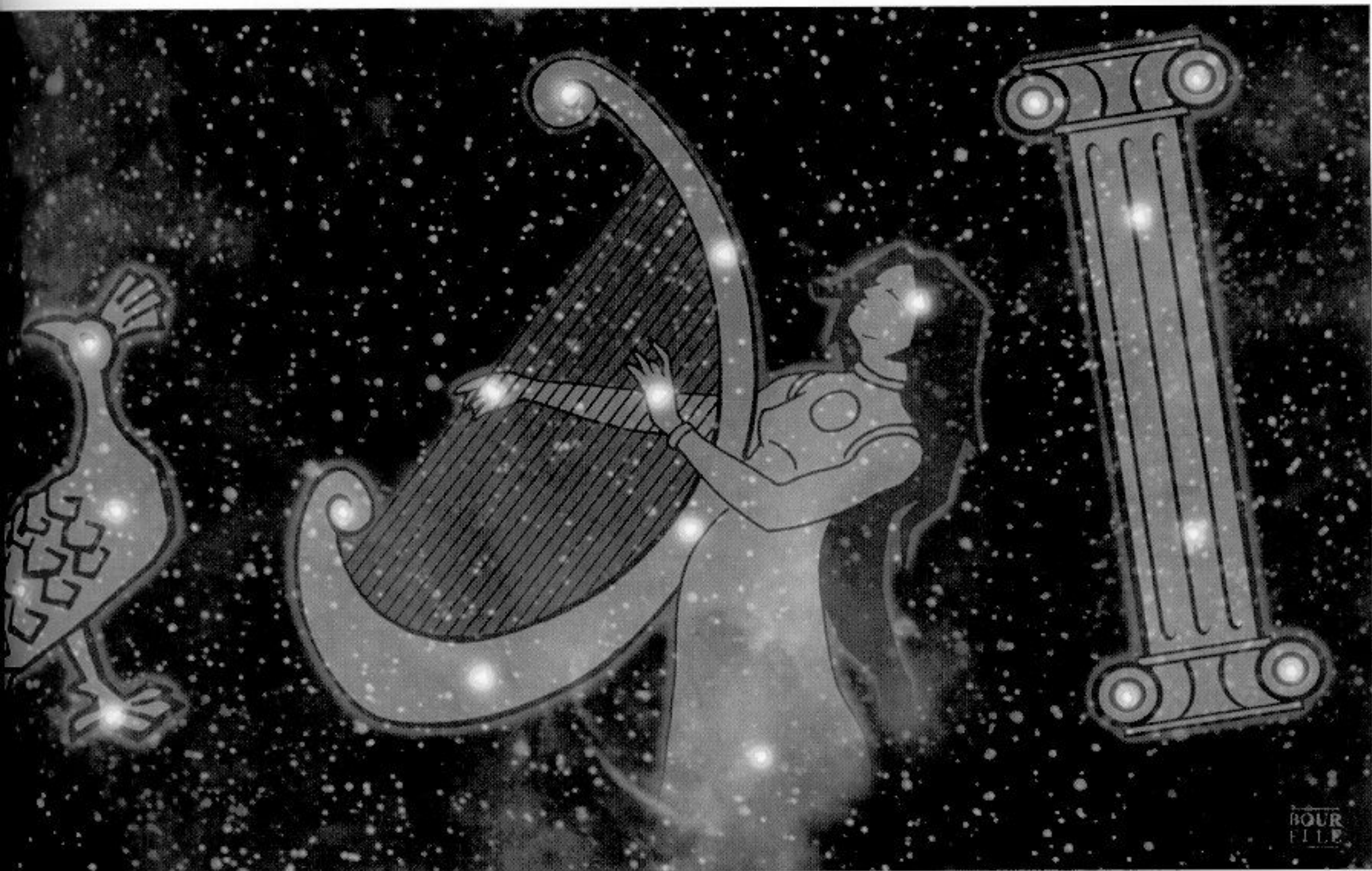
The Peacock is a sign of practical alliance, thoughtful breeding and considered partnerships. As the peahen chooses a cock by the beauty of his tail, thus do those under the influence of this sign look carefully at the advantages of prospective mates. In its descending aspects, the precincts of this sign are a place of loveless marriages, forced alliances and other half-functional partnerships. It is the sign of the courtesan, the goodwife, the thoughtful matriarch and the established Dragon-Blooded household. This is also the sign of predators who hunt in packs.

Trappings: The Peacock struts his *magnificent finery*, be it gang stylings, armor or court clothing. He is *proud* and has *excellent bearing*. He shows *discerning taste*, and he is *obviously sexually available*.

Correlations: Greed, love for wealth's sake, procreation, dualities, alliances, bright colors, necessity, traps, distraction

Resplendent Effects:

- **Proper Plumage, 1 effect point, one Paradox die:** Whatever the situation, whatever the demands, the Peacock can find a way to look divine. As long as the character has access to a large closet, second-hand clothing store, pile of cloth scraps and so on, he can look good enough to gain +1 to Appearance-based rolls at any social event, no matter where it is or what the guests wear.

BOUR
FILE

BOUR
FILE

• **Spouse-Saving Grace, 1 effect point:** Whenever the Sidereal is present with his mate and her player fails a Bureaucracy or Socialize roll, he may spend a point of Conviction or Temperance to have his player make the roll himself.

• **Wife-Procuring Tailfeathers, 1 effect point, one Paradox die per week:** The character is an obvious catch as well as an expert at such assessments. Within a day wandering in any populated area, the character will find himself married and managing a large and prosperous household. The character may not marry on the first day, but the tumultuous course of events will immediately begin to occupy all the character's time and result in a marriage within the week.

So long as the character lives as the full-time manager of the family's affairs, he avoids all legal, bureaucratic and official scrutiny. Those attempting to deliver summonses to him are powerless without supernatural tracking, and those attempting to follow him must beat his player's Charisma + Bureaucracy roll, with his Essence added as automatic successes. He must live for the job, for he has just seven free hours per week.

THE PILLAR

The Pillar is the sign of partnerships tested and found stable. It is the sign of the just empress, the just matriarch and the caring parent. In its descending aspects, this is the sign of bad parenting and of partnerships and authority tested and found wanting. The Pillar is the sign of the

asexual partner — the mother, business partner or drinking buddy. It is also the sign of service in the Thousand Scales and of herd animals such as mammoth and elk.

Trappings: The Pillar wears a *wedding ring* and *dresses plainly*. She is *perceptive* and *practical*. She is *firm but just*.

Correlations: Family, friendship, stability, civil society, unjust authority, stagnation, queens and princes

Resplendent Effects:

• **Comforting Matriarch Embrace, 1 effect point:** The character may hold and comfort one other person before putting him to sleep. When that target awakens, his player may roll the character's Conviction twice for him to regain Willpower.

• **Equitable Partnership, 1 effect points, one Paradox die:** The character may find a monetary backer for a business plan who is as well-funded as the character's competence and the plan's plausible merit. The characters may not take individuals for a ride, but they will not sit idle on a good idea for lack of funds.

• **Best Friend's Couch, 1 effect point, one Paradox die per week:** By ambling up to the nearest habitation where the character speaks the language, the Sidereal may present himself as a long-lost friend and will be fed as well as anyone in the house and be allowed to sleep on the floor, the couch or a spare bed. The character can't stay in any one place for long, but at the same time, all of humanity is the character's friend, so she need merely



move to a new house every few days when she begins to wear out her welcome.

So long as the character spends time with her newfound long-lost friends, she avoids all legal, bureaucratic and official scrutiny. Those attempting to deliver summonses to her are powerless without supernatural tracking, and those attempting to follow her must beat her player's Charisma + Presence roll, with her Essence added as automatic successes. Hanging out with friends is a full-time endeavor, so she has just seven free hours per week.

THE HOUSE OF WAR

The Banner
The Gauntlet
The Quiver
The Shield
The Spear

THE BANNER

The Banner is the college of reputation, story and awe. In its ascending aspects, the Banner governs fame, glory, heroic reputation and leadership. In its descending precincts, the Banner encompasses the use of terror as a weapon, the wild-eyed panic of rumor, infamy, uninspiring leadership and living on reputation. It is the sign of the rumormonger, the crier, the witness, the martyr, the tyrant and all those possessing heroic renown.

Trappings: The Banner is *strikingly clad* and *always among you*. He his *fearless, victorious* and *larger than life*.

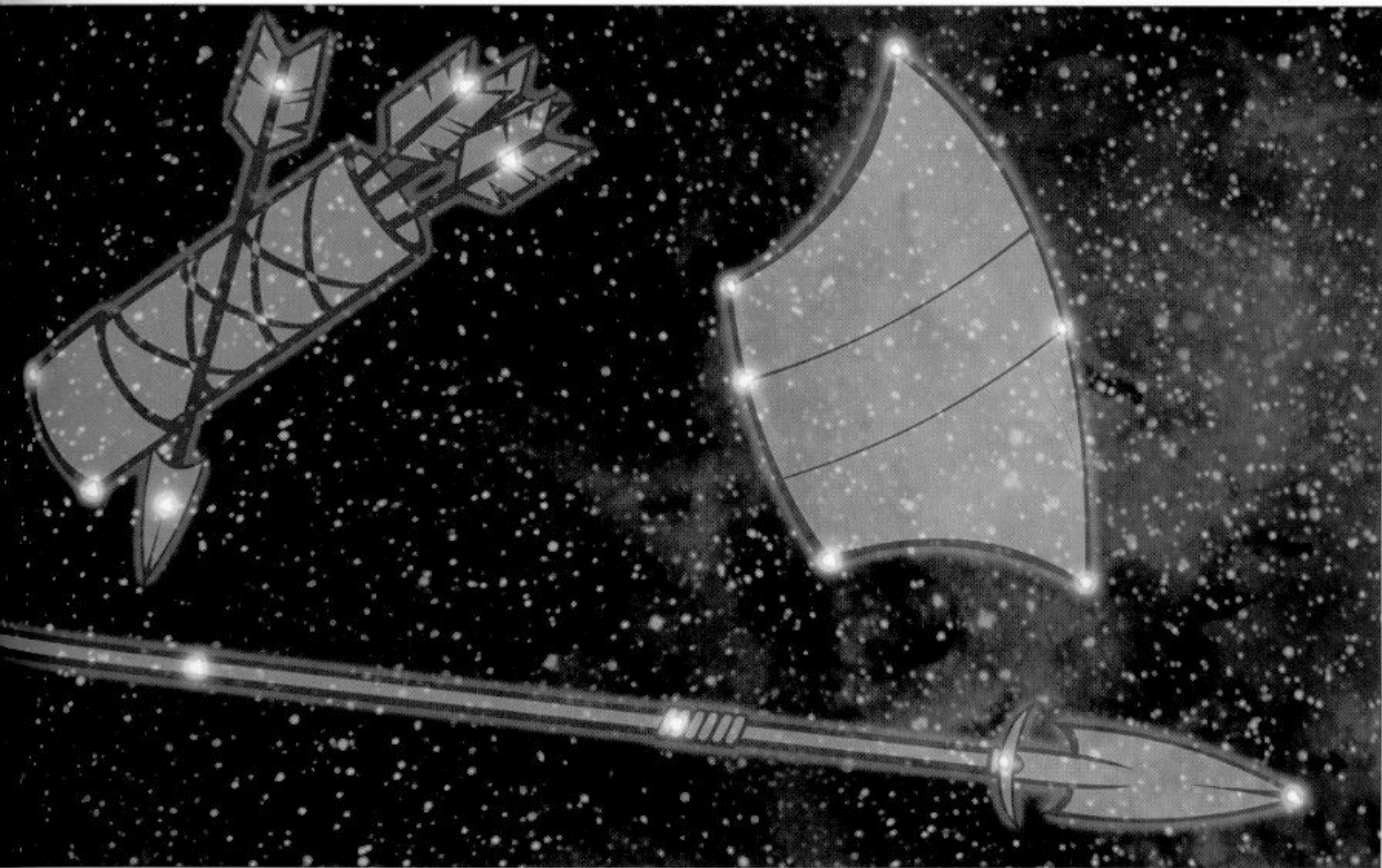
Correlations: Reputation, pageantry, leadership, epics, infamy, reigns of terror, philanthropy, tidings, symbols, heraldry

Resplendent Effects:

- **Heroic General Presence, 2 effect points per scene:** The Sidereal exhibits himself at the forefront of battle. The difficulty of all Valor checks for those under his direct command is reduced to 1.

- **Battle-Fellow Attitude, 1 effect point per month:** The character can draw back to him any soldier who has ever fought for him. The character must publicly post that he is calling up troops. Thereafter, every week this effect is in place, a Willpower roll, difficulty 2, must be successfully made for every soldier who has ever served in a unit the Sidereal directly commanded, or those soldiers come to serve beneath his banner again.

- **Tide of History, 3 effect points, one Paradox die per month:** The troops who march beneath the Sidereal's banner are without fear or hesitation — they fight as if their cause were endorsed by history itself. Those troops under his direct command never fail Valor checks of difficulty 1 or suffer wound or fatigue penalties (they can be worked or marched to death, but they will not complain or slacken).



2013

THE GAUNTLET

The Gauntlet is the college of the choice between bad and worse, of ruthless expediency and battlefield logic. In its ascending aspects, it represents the courage to undertake unpleasant necessities. In its descending precincts lie callousness, ruthlessness and a willingness to justify the whims of the moment as necessity. Its precincts are the home to the sergeant, the martinet, the surgeon, the judge, the policeman, the thug in uniform and the practical matriarch.

Trappings: The Gauntlet is *bloodstained* and *brutal*. She wears a *uniform* and carries a *cudgel*. She makes *meaningless demands* and then punishes those who do not obey.

Correlations: Sergeants, confrontation, callousness, sacrifice of others, necessity, livestock management, pragmatism, surgery, the greater good

Resplendent Effects:

- **Weak-Spine Sense, 1 effect point per week.** The Exalt can know instantly who among the people facing her are intimidated by or frightened of her and to what degree.

- **Knuckle-Cracking Stance, 1 effect point.** The character can add her Essence to an intimidation attempt, but the target perceives her as using her physical Attributes as part of the roll.

- **Thug Fist, 2 effect points, one Paradox die.** Activated reflexively before an attack is rolled. If the character's next unarmed attack does damage, the target loses 1 Appearance permanently due to disfigurement.

THE QUIVER

This is the college of flexibility and fleetness of thought. As the archer has many arrows in his quiver, so does a character under the influence of this sign have many ideas and stratagems. In its ascending precincts, the Quiver is the sign of quick-wittedness and versatility. In its descending precincts lie stupidity, bad ideas explained convincingly and thinking in lockstep with one's peers ("just another arrow in the quiver"). This is the sign of the duelist, the know-it-all, the Dragon-Blooded in secondary school, the socialite, the general, the quick-witted scholar and the urbane boor.

Trappings: The Quiver carries a *bow* or a *map case*. He is *clever* and *witty*. His valor is not so important as his *education*.

Correlations: Strategy, choices, haste, pride, archery, boorishness, self-absorption, clever ideas

Resplendent Effects:

- **Apologetic Feint, 1 effect point.** The Sidereal can rephrase his demand again but make it look like an acceptable compromise. On any roll involving the Social Attributes, the Sidereal's player can reflexive roll a number of dice equal to the Social Attribute used in the roll and add the successes to the total for the roll. This can be done even after the dice are counted.

- **Instant Genius Style, 1 effect point.** The Sidereal's player may make any Intelligence + Lore, Intelligence + Occult or Intelligence + Bureaucracy roll that normally

requires long research time immediately — the character simply knows the answer.

- **Several Arrows of Reason, 1 effect point per three arrows, one Paradox die.** The character is now armed with several of the arrows of reason. These are target arrows that ignore gossamer armor and cause any creature outside fate struck and damaged by one to become part of destiny until the end of the scene. Like their effects, the arrows dissipate at the end of the scene.

THE SHIELD

The Shield is the house of the ecstatic warrior, who seeks battle without regard for victory. It is also the sign of those who fight and die for their peers or draw strength from pain. In its ascending aspects, it represents courage and heroism without regard for consequences. In its descending aspects, its precincts are a place of sadism, masochism, suicidal bravery and battle literally without thought. This is the sign of scouts, assassins, heroic warriors and lone predators who hunt with teeth and claw.

Trappings: The Shield always carries a *shield* or a *leather strap* for biting. He is *always armed* and *always eager for battle*. He carries *trophies* of his kills.

Correlations: Barbarians and the barbarian code, fearlessness, protection, bragging, pain, heroism, heroic suicide, wrath, Lunars

Resplendent Effects:

- **Wounded Lion Strength, 2 effect points:** The character may add a number of dice to the damage of a single attack equal to the number of health levels of damage from which he's currently suffering. This is added before armor is applied.

- **Hero's Iron Skin, 3 effect points per scene:** So long as the Sidereal is wearing no armor, he has the effect of +9L/+9B armor. This is treated as natural soak for the purposes of effects that penetrate armor.

- **Aspect of the Bear, 2 effect points, one Paradox die per scene:** The character's anima banner is transformed into the shape of a great bear. Whenever the character's anima banner is visible, the players of all those who see it must make a Valor roll, difficulty 1, to have their characters face the Sidereal. While in this state, the Sidereal's player cannot fail Valor rolls or suffer Fatigue penalties.

THE SPEAR

This is the sign of skill and discipline in armed conflict. In its ascending aspect, it indicates skill, professionalism and discipline. In its descending aspects, it is the sign of superficial professionalism, professional myopia and the inability to see alternate solutions outside one's scope of interest. It is the sign of the bodyguard, the long-service professional soldier, the skilled militiaman, the arms instructor and the mercenary. It is also the sign of other skilled professional competitors, such as the gambler, the gladiator and the athlete.

Trappings: The Spear wears a *uniform* but possesses no rank. He is called by his *family name* or *nickname*. He is *disciplined* and *brave*.

Correlations: Soldiers, bodyguards, bravery, professionalism, training, taking initiative, lack of vision, tactics, skillfulness, competition

Resplendent Effects:

- **Someone's Son Style, 1 effect point, one Paradox die per lunar month:** People of all cultures know an honest soldier knows no politics. This is their compact with that soldier — so long as the Exalt makes no pretensions, protects them with his weapons and avoids drawing the war to them, common folk will aid and feed the soldier. They will do so even if they cannot speak the Exalt's language, no questions asked, and without revealing his location to any enemy troops.

So long as the character maintains this contract and keeps his weapon close at hand, he avoids all legal, bureaucratic and official scrutiny. Those attempting to deliver summonses to him are powerless without supernatural tracking, and those attempting to follow him must beat his player's Stamina + Presence roll, with the Sidereal's Essence added as automatic successes. This fugitive existence is a full time endeavor, and the Exalt has just seven free hours per week.

- **Hero-Supporting Performance, 1 effect point per scene:** If someone in the Sidereal's unit can do something, the Sidereal can too. For the rest of the scene, the Sidereal can choose to accept the highest number of successes anyone going before him has rolled on a given Athletics-related roll. Likewise, the Sidereal can carry his share — he has the Strength + Athletics total of the strongest person helping him lift.

- **Battle-Carrying Presence, 1 effect point per scene:** No one fighting under the Sidereal's immediate command can fail a Valor check unless the Sidereal does or suffer a wound or Fatigue penalty higher than the Sidereal's.

THE HOUSE OF SECRETS

The Guardians

The Key

The Mask

The Sorcerer

The Treasure Trove

THE GUARDIANS

This is the college of practical knowledge and rewards earned through long labor. It contains the wisdom of the beast and the elderly. Those within the ascending precincts of this college exhibit a fundamental understanding of the nature of Creation from long observation or inbred wisdom. Within its descending precincts lies quackery and meaningless superstition. It is the sign of the shaman, the snake-oil salesman, the talisman seller, the midwife and the old duffer.

Trappings: The guardian is *uneducated* and carries a *talisman*. He is *suspicious*, he *knows the weather* and a *wisdom that can aid you* in your current task.

Correlations: Hearth wisdom, respect for the elderly, age, superstition, charlatans and mountebanks, tradition, patience, observation, inevitability

Resplendent Effects:

- **Lazy Works Smart Style, 1 effect point:** -2 to the difficulty of any Athletics roll to perform physical labor, but only if the extra successes are used to shorten the time the task takes.

- **Hayseed Eye, 1 effect point per week:** The character can detect if someone she is interacting with has hostile intentions toward her. This is not a preternatural sense for danger. Rather, it is the ability to tell when someone is planning to take advantage of the Sidereal.

- **Talisman-Making Touch, 1 effect point, one Paradox die:** The character creates a talisman of any type from some personal possession or object she blesses. The Sidereal and circumstance determine what sort of talisman. It cannot be kept. It must be given to one in need.

THE KEY

The college of wisdom discovered through scholarly study and intellectual understanding. This is also more generally the astrological sign of rewards gained and tasks accomplished by cleverness. In its ascending aspects, this College is the sign of experimentation, inquiry, sharp thinking and new solutions. In its descending precincts lie pointless or wasteful experiments, tinkering with things best left undisturbed and sharp practice. It is the sign of the physician, the scavenger lord, the tinker and the junk seller. This is the sign of monkeys and other primates.

Trappings: The Key has a *measuring stick* and a *pen*, but no wax tablet or notebook. He claims he is *innocent*, but he has a *dishonest expression*, so this is doubtful. He is a creature of *large appetites*.

Correlations: Innovation, hubris, corruption, automata and mechanical devices, books, libraries, medicine, curiosity

Resplendent Effects:

- **Never Cease Moving, 1 effect point per week:** So long as the character is making preparations for a Lore or Bureaucracy roll, he need only sleep for one heartbeat per day, and he can live on Essence alone.

- **Ascending Destiny Mien, 1 effect point, one Paradox die per week:** The character can lower the difficulty number by 1 when interacting with anyone whose Temperance is lower than the Exalt's Intelligence.

- **Provable Location of the Gate, 1 effect point, three Paradox dice:** The character proves through certain measurements and mathematical formulas that the calibration gate should be present right at that moment in his current location, and so it is. There may be a slight delay if the gate is elsewhere.

THE MASK

This is the college of secret wisdom, of things known but concealed. In its ascending aspects are the precincts of

religious mystery, rites of passage and the secrets of the bed. In its descending aspects, it is the college of humbug, deliberate obfuscation and the mountebank. This is the sign of the spy, the priest and the librarian.

This sign was damaged by the Sidereal Exalted shortly after the Solar Purge, when the Chosen of the Maidens twisted destiny again and again to conceal their existences. As a result of this damage, Sidereals suffer from the Arcane Fate (see p. 121), and they cannot use ascending or descending effects of this college on themselves, only resplendent effects.

Trappings: The Mask *wears a mask* to conceal his face and *clothes of soft fabric*. He is *quiet*, and *he does not announce himself*. The Mask *clings to sacred places* and lingers around Manses and Demesnes.

Correlations: Secrets, lies, security services, guarded individuals, religious worship, extortion, trickery

Resplendent Effects:

- **Privacy-Enhancing Gesture, 1 effect point:** The area within (Essence x 10) yards of the character becomes proof against supernatural scrying, teleportation and other forms of intrusion, such as taking the form of a shadow. This explicitly includes observation using Everywhere and Nowhere Technique.

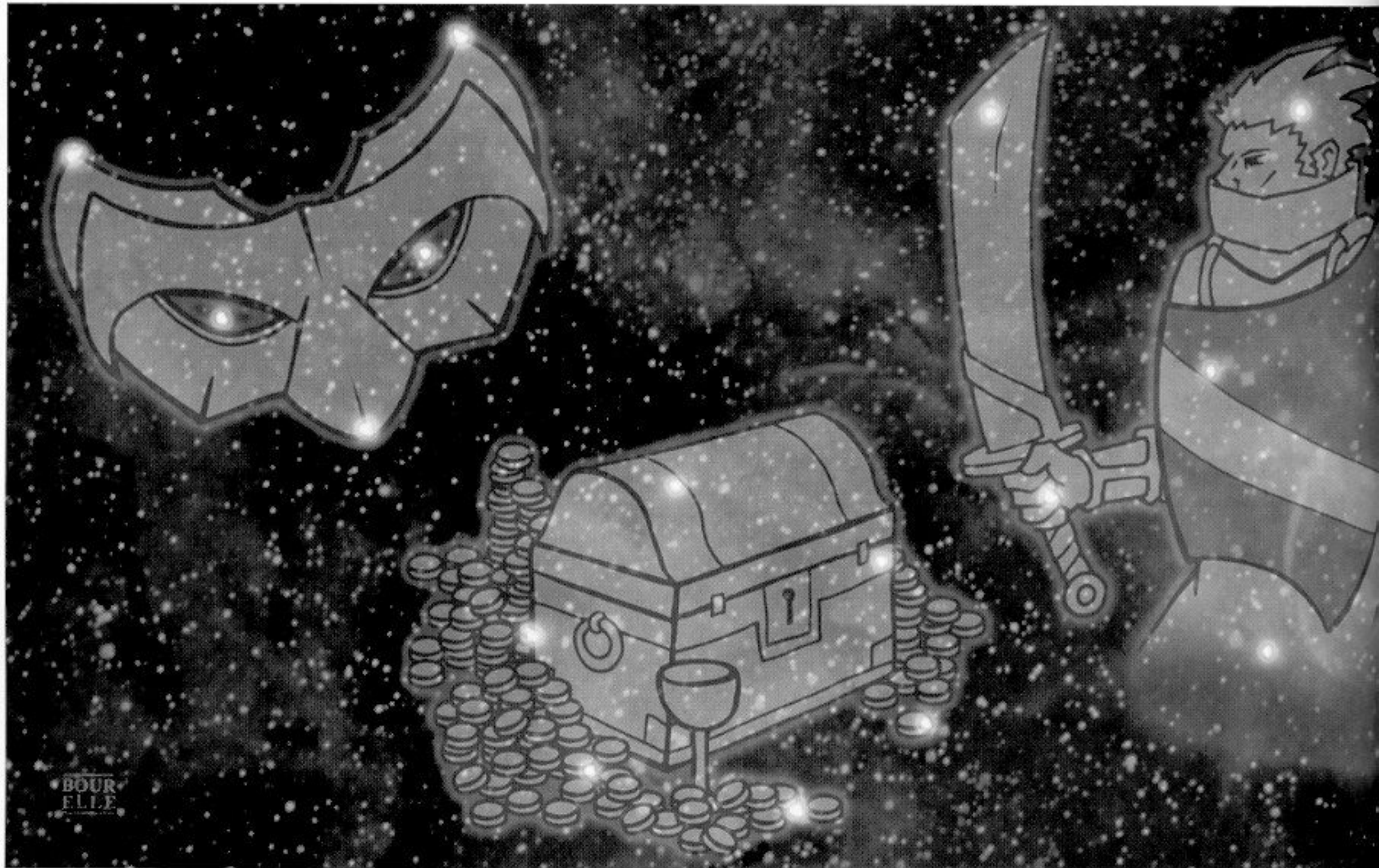
- **Foot Treads No Twig, 1 effect point, 1 Paradox die:** The Sidereal's player may reroll a single Dexterity + Stealth roll before it is compared to an enemy's roll.

- **Everywhere and Nowhere Technique, 1 effect point, three Paradox dice per week:** The character can conceal himself in the most unlikely of places — she hides between raindrops, between the moments and the hour and behind the curtains on a dusty stair in a faraway town. The character eats by dining on the food of others when they look away, and sleeps only in the secret places where no eye can linger that her division salts across the Tapestry like safehouses. None see the character, but she sees much.

By tipping her hat and slowly fading from view in any place where there are shadows and she is unobserved, the character can instantly disappear from view. So long as the character persists in this furtive occult existence, she avoids all legal, bureaucratic and official scrutiny. Those attempting to deliver summonses to her are powerless without supernatural tracking, and those attempting to follow her must beat her player's Intelligence + Occult roll, with the Sidereal's College + Essence added as automatic successes. This existence of supernatural occultation is demanding, and she has just seven free hours per week to spy and observe on those within a number of miles equal to the character's Essence, so long as those places are not proof against scrying and supernatural intrusion.

THE SORCERER

Some secrets are worth more than others, and those of the College of the Sorcerer are the valuable sort, for they are the secrets of power. It is the sign of the Exalt,



the god, the geomancer and the talisman maker. In its ascending aspects, it is the symbol of artifice, sorcery and geomancy. In its descending aspects, it represents the black arts of demon summoning, Yozi worship and necromancy. The Sorcerer is the astrological sign of tasks accomplished through the use of Essence.

Sidereal Exalted commonly use this college to set up front identities as Sidereal Exalted so they can smoothly conduct business in Heaven and with other Exalted. Many individuals throughout Creation who think they know a Sidereal Exalt may one day have a hard time naming or describing or even remembering him. Most Sidereals don't keep such identities for more than 100 years.

Trappings: The Sorcerer is one of the Exalted, and a prince of the earth. He displays goods of the *Five Magical Materials*, a *Caste Mark* and a *regal bearing*. He wears *armor* and carries a *daiklave*.

Correlations: Humanity, geomancy, artifice, demon summoning and infernalism, talismans, Essence use, egotism, Yozi-slaves

Resplendent Effects:

- **Invincible Essence Core, 1 effect point:** If the character has this destiny active and is the target of a hostile effect that lowers his permanent Essence, causes him to lose his memory or makes him lose access to spells, Charms, Combos or Abilities, he may opt to reflexively spend 1 effect point to block that effect.

- **Prince of the Earth, 1 effect point per scene:** The character may have many peers but no superiors. +3 to all social rolls with the unExalted, so long as the character is acting the part of an Exalt. This does not imply a sense of superiority.

- **Seer, X effect points:** If the character takes part in astrology to determine or plan the future with another Sidereal, he may spend any number of effect points to give bonus dice to the attempt. The process of different Sidereals endorsing one another's petitions for resplendent Exaltation and staging lengthy rituals for maximum effect is one of the hallmarks of a major Sidereal gathering.

THE TREASURE TROVE

This is the college of revealed wisdom, of understanding and knowledge held up like a beacon for the world. This is also more generally the sign of rewards earned and tasks accomplished through excellence. In its ascending aspects, it is the college of erudition, education and enlightenment. In its descending aspects, it is the domain of intellectual elitism, pointless cerebration, the bookworm and the know-it-all. It is the college of the teacher, the revolutionary, the prophet and the savant and of animals that hunt by stinging or leaping upon their prey.

Trappings: The Treasure Trove carries a *book of wisdom* and wears *scholar's robes*. She is *poor* in terms of



The Haywain
 The Rising Smoke
 The Sword

money but *educated* in formal learning. The Treasure Trove is deeply *impractical* but well-meaning.

Correlations: Horoscopes, schools, scholarship, savants, blight, blindness, inflexibility, secret societies, prophecies

Resplendent Effects:

- **Stab the Seer's Eye, 1 effect point per season:** The character is instantly aware of any mortal astrological inquiry about her and can cause it to result in any reading she pleases.

- **Dismissive Scholar's Sniff, 1 effect point:** The character may always appeal to an authority yet unread. She may add her Essence to all Lore or Bureaucracy rolls involved in arguments with people whose Lore is lower than or equal to hers.

- **Professorial Mien, 1 effect point per month:** Those around the character will treat her as if she were cultured and educated and turn to her to resolve linguistic disputes, solve difficult problems and so on. The Sidereal's player may add the character's Essence to Presence or Socialize rolls, but only if his Lore is higher than the target's Intelligence.

THE HOUSE OF ENDINGS

The Corpse
The Crow

The Haywain
The Rising Smoke
The Sword

THE CORPSE

This is the college of the end of lives, both literally and in the metaphorical sense meaning modes of existence. In its ascending aspects, those existences end with planning, dignity and grace. In its descending aspects, those existences end with agony and wailing. It is the constellation of the man on his deathbed, the affianced youth, of the family moving house and of the middle-aged man forced to change professions. It is also the sign of the butterfly, the dragonfly and other non-amphibious creatures that metamorphose halfway through their lives.

Trappings: The Corpse wears *his best clothes*. He is *calm*, and he bears the emblem of a *butterfly* somewhere on his person. He carries a *textbook*, which may be a guide to a new trade or a guide to the Underworld. Like the Sword, he is *unshod*.

Correlations: Quick and painless deaths, exits, sudden change, transformation, unfinished business, shapechangers, thresholds

Resplendent Effects:

- **Dignity of the Dead, 1 effect point:** The character may ignore the effect of one Social roll her player loses with no ill effects.



- **Shadow of the Reaper**, 3 effect points, one Paradox die: To all things, death must come. By making the Superior Sign of the Corpse, the character fills the target with intimations of mortality. The target loses all points of temporary Willpower in excess of her permanent Conviction.

- **Rising Butterfly Prayer**, 3 effect point, 3 Paradox dice: By saying a short homily and burning a silk memorial to Lytek (with a copy also going to Taru-Han), the Exalt can ensure that an individual's soul is given due consideration for reincarnation in a body chosen for Terrestrial Exaltation. Because this request crosses division boundaries, it is not certain to happen, but the Division of Abstract Matters traditionally gives grave consideration to the recommendations of Sidereals. The prayer must be offered at the formal funeral for the individual, simultaneously to the funeral or at the grave immediately thereafter — any more delay means the memorial will probably arrive in Heaven too late for processing.

THE CROW

The Crow is the college of the end of illusions and dreams. It is the college of inevitability and the recognition thereof. In its ascending aspects, it is the college of comfort in death, morbid humor and the heroism of the forlorn hope. In its descending aspects, it represents a rush to death disguised as acceptance, of false bravado lurking behind

the skull mask of the Calibration dancers and of indifference to the suffering of others. It is the college of the ancestors and the ancestor cult, and of the young widow and the old man. This is also the college of death by old age.

Trappings: The Crow carries *black feathers* and wears a *black cloak*. She is *morbidly humorous* and *clever*, and *she is attracted to shiny objects*.

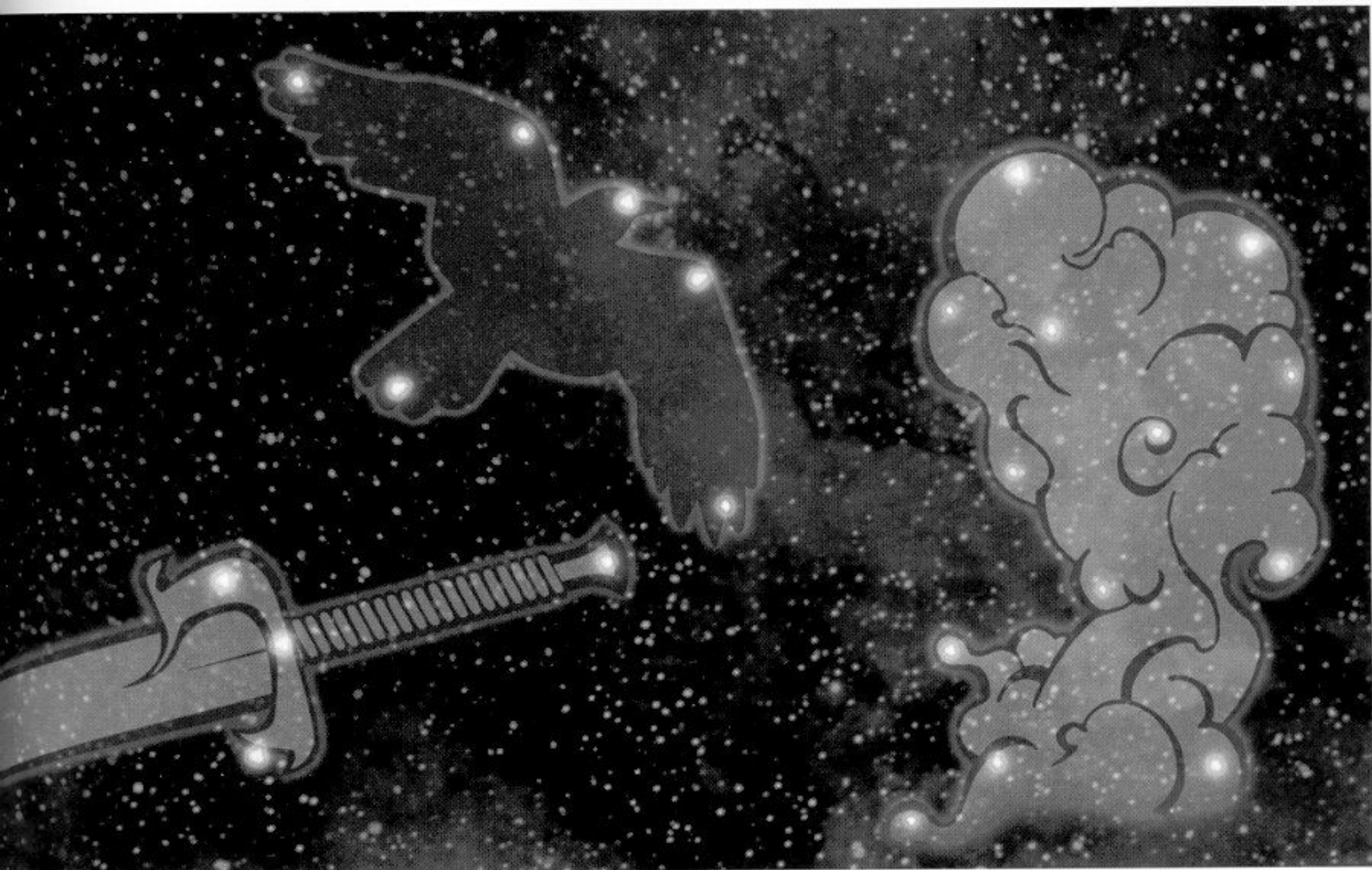
Correlations: Slow and painless deaths, inevitability, ancestors, widows and orphans, acceptance of death, dark humor, depression, waking, indifference

Resplendent Effects:

- **Reading Dead Eyes**, 1 effect point: By eating the eye of a corpse, the character can know of the last thing the corpse saw before she died. The character sees the last scene of the target's life and becomes aware if the target left a ghost or a hungry ghost.

- **Bold Filcher**, 1 effect point, one Paradox die: The character can take something from plain sight, and the players of those witnessing it must win an opposed Perception + Awareness roll against the character's Dexterity + Larceny to notice.

- **Feathered Cloak Trick**, 3 effect points, three Paradox dice per day: The character makes the Superior Sign of the Crow and turns into a raven, crow or other corvid. It has a Strength and Stamina of 1, the character's Dexterity, health levels, Social and Mental Attributes and Abilities. The bird has a 0L/1B soak, and all the character's equipment changes with her.



Yozis

THE HAYWAIN

The Haywain is the college of those endings that cannot be easily described. It is the sign of the gradual decline and failure of systems with fuzzy boundaries and imprecise definitions. It overlooks the broken circle, the faltering alliance, the deteriorating government and the troubled family. In the ascending aspect, the ruin gives way to new growth. In its descending aspect, it leads to placid stasis and bucolic decay. This is the college of death by sorcery, divinity and senescent senility and is the sign of the Dragon-Blooded retiree.

Trappings: The Haywain wears *disheveled robes* and an *informal attitude*. It is *hard of hearing*, but it *demands bribes*. It is *arrogant*, ambitious and unconcerned with the big picture.

Correlations: Muddled and difficult to categorize deaths, mystery, cover-ups, treachery, comebacks, aging and decrepitude

Resplendent Effects:

- **Harvest Ripe Wheat, Father Falling Hay, 1 effect point:** The Sidereal can tell by merely waiting in the reception area or visiting the shop floor once if a business or bureau is “wholly corrupt,” “mostly corrupt,” “somewhat corrupt,” “mostly honest” or “totally honest.” Only one of those five answers is provided, and it pertains to the character of the organization as a whole, not to any given individuals within it.

If the Exalt is contemplating some bureaucratic or criminal misdeed, she can activate this power to know if the deed “will not,” “may possibly” or “is certain to” receive official scrutiny. Only one of those three answers is provided, and it only pertains to the deed at the moment the Exalt is presented with the opportunity to commit it, not a deed to be committed at some future date.

- **Celestial Intervention Appeal, 1 effect point, five Paradox dice:** The Sidereal makes the Superior Sign of the Haywain and summons the most severe of all bureaucrats to attend to a legal or security matter of Celestial import. The being notified is one of the heavenly censors, and he is made aware of the situation of the contact. The censor’s reaction may vary, but he will generally choose to arrive through the use of the Portal Charm. He may or may not have a retinue of celestial lions, thunderbirds or huraka, but all censors have one just a whistle away.

Keep in mind that this is a call for official attention by the Bureau of Heaven and should not be made lightly — anything said or witnessed by the censor is outside the confines of the Bureau of Destiny and, thus, much more politically sensitive. The Bureau of Destiny is Creation’s first line of defense against threats to the tapestry such as the Yozis. Sidereals who ask for censors from the Bureau of Heaven to come in and act as heavy cavalry are admitting that the Bureau of Destiny can’t handle the situation. Lesser elemental dragons are not creatures

who enjoy having their influence used for trifles, nor are they known for their generous disposition. All are prone to handing out a variety of Severity 2 and 3 citations if they feel their good humor is being abused.

• **Old Fellows Society Luncheon, 1 effect point:** By marching up to any meeting of public officials or merchants in any area populated enough to support a business community and bureaucracy, the character may immediately ingratiate himself with them. By the end of the day, he will have a position of great importance yet little responsibility in a government bureau or business concern. Thereafter, his existence becomes a whirl of meetings, junkets and presentations, luncheons and business dinners, dinner parties and time with his mistress.

So long as the character immerses himself in purposeless upward mobility, he avoids all legal, bureaucratic and official scrutiny. Those attempting to deliver summonses to him are powerless without supernatural tracking, and even those supernatural trackers attempting to follow him must beat his player's Wits + Bureaucracy roll, with the Sidereal's Essence added as automatic successes. Business and government work is a demanding endeavor, and the character has just seven free hours per week.

THE RISING SMOKE

This is the college of the end of journeys, both literally and for metaphorical paths such as initiation, puberty and apprenticeship. It is the college of the young man, the journeyman, the corpse on its way to burial, the pubescent Dynast who has not yet Exalted and those up on charges or entangled in lawsuits. In its ascending aspects, the paths end in transformation to a new state. In its descending aspects, this is a college of bootless errands and death by accident, heart attack, stroke and murder.

Hundred Gods Heretics in the Realm often take terrible risks to make offerings to this constellation on the death of a loved one, praying for Exaltation in his next incarnation, but the pattern spiders ignore these ill-formatted, unauthorized requests.

Trappings: The Rising Smoke carries *good luck prayer strips*, a *purse of money from her teacher* and *brand new journeyman's equipment*. She is *optimistic* and *naïve*.

Correlations: Quick and painful deaths, rest, stagnation, growth, chance, new employment, fresh prospects, murder

Resplendent Effects:

• **Record-Obtaining Inquiry, 1 effect point:** When making any roll involving his character's Charisma with a god, the Sidereal's player may add the Exalt's Essence to the roll. This power also works on judges and magistrates.

• **Superior-Entreating Memorial Style, 1 effect point:** The character burns a letter written on fine silk to one of his fellow Sidereals. It appears discreetly hidden against the recipient's skin and vibrates gently to let her

know of its arrival. If the recipient is unclothed, it awaits a discreet moment to arrive. In any case, it is extremely subtle, requiring a Perception + Awareness roll of 6 or more successes to spot its appearance. The recipient may make markings on the letter in emerald-colored ink and return it to the Exalt free of charge, provided it is returned within three days of its arrival. It arrives at the originating Exalt with similar subtlety.

• **Chains of Adorjan, 3 effect points, one or three Paradox dice:** The character makes the Superior Sign of the Rising Smoke and summons Adorjan, the deadly and silent wind of the Demon Realm, to scour the target, who she must touch. The effects last 13 turns and cause only one Paradox die if the target is a demon. It lasts only three turns and costs three Paradox dice if the target is not a demon. Every turn for the duration of the effect, starting in the current turn, the target's player must make a reflexive Stamina + Resistance roll at difficulty 4. If the roll succeeds, the target takes only 1A. If it fails, he suffers 4A. In Creation, Adorjan's winds are somewhat attenuated, and this damage is rolled, rather than inflicted automatically. Activating this power is a reflexive effect.

THE SWORD

The Sword is the college of the end of hope. In its ascending aspects, these hopes and dreams are realized. However, this is not the constellation of fulfillment but of the realization that the individual must then continue on without the assistance of that hope. In its negative aspects, the hopes and dreams wither and die, and this is also the constellation of the broken, the crushed and the worn down. It is the college of the salesman, the has-been, the virgin, the ghost and the pregnant woman. This is the college of death after prolonged suffering and illness.

Trappings: The Sword is *worn out*. She carries or wears a *withered flower*, and she dresses in *burial ceremonies*. She *weeps but cannot be consoled*. She is *unshod*.

Correlations: Slow and painful deaths, perseverance, failure, illness, tribulation, inheritance, resignation, the vanquished

Resplendent Effects:

• **Style-Discerning Eye, 1 effect point, one Paradox die:** The Sidereal need no longer dream of study under a particular tutor but can realize that dream. By activating this effect reflexively whenever the Exalt observes clearly as another individual activates a Martial Arts Charm the Sidereal does not know, the Exalt can learn the trick of that technique. The Sword must spend experience points to learn the Charm but can do so without a tutor (normal doubled training time applies). Sidereals must learn all the prerequisites to the Charm as usual, and cannot activate Charms for which they don't have the Minimum Abilities and Essence. The stolen knowledge fades in a year and a day.

- **Minimum Legal Defense Competence, 1 effect point:** The character may make a parry or dodge attempt at her full dice pool against an attack, but that defense cannot be enhanced by Charms, Virtues, Willpower or any other effects.

- **Tears of the Blade, 3 effect points, one Paradox die:** Those who see the apparition of the College of the Sword are said to be doomed. In this case, that is true. The character makes the Superior Sign of the Sword at one individual. Mortals are slain instantly or die horribly within five days (the Exalt's choice). Those among the Exalted subject to the sign will die instantly and irrevocably the next time they are reduced to Incapacitated or below. This effect lasts for the rest of a Terrestrial Exalt's lifetime but merely persists for a year and a day on Celestial Exalt. This sign has no effect on those outside of fate or on gods and elementals.

GREATER SIGNS

The Greater Signs are to Sidereal astrology what the prayer strips are to Sidereal Charms — culminating effects whose power far surpasses the power of the rest of the effects for the power type. They are the gestures the Five Maidens once used to order the universe in the time before the pattern spiders. Their effect is lessened by the fact that they are mimicked by the Maidens' Chosen, but they completely bypass the pattern spiders and operate directly on the fabric of the Tapestry and, thus, retain immense power.

In order to use a Greater Sign, the Sidereal must satisfy the following conditions:

- She must have a permanent Essence of 4 or higher.
- She must be a Chosen of the Maiden whose Greater Sign she wishes to mimic.
- She must have a minimum rating of 3 in all five colleges of the Maiden's astrological house.

Sidereals can make these signs as a reflexive action. They cost 10 motes, 1 permanent Essence and 1 permanent Willpower. These effects cannot be combined with and supercede the Lesser Sign of their Maiden's house (i.e., their anima banner).

The Greater Sign of Mercury — This is the Sign of Travel, the gesture by which all things are set in motion. It manifests as a brilliant yellow aura (16+ anima banner level) around the Exalt. When the Exalt makes this gesture, she may instantly move herself and any or all her allies within (her Essence) miles to any location that is part of fate, excluding the Jade Pleasure Dome or the Lotus of the Bureau of Destiny. She must go with them to guide them.

The Greater Sign of Venus — This is the Sign of Serenity, the gesture by which all things are brought to rest. It manifests as a brilliant blue aura (16+ anima banner level) around the Exalt. When the Exalt makes

this gesture, all Essence effects that are not Solar Circle Sorcery or the doing of the Celestial Incarna, including Charms that are not permanent enhancements to the Exalt, Terrestrial and Celestial Circle Sorcery, Sidereal astrology, artifact powers and other magical effects, are instantly and without display snuffed out. This effect extends a number of miles from the Exalt equal to the character's Essence.

The Greater Sign of Mars — This is the Sign of War, by which peace is transformed into victory. It manifests as a brilliant ruby aura (16+ anima banner level) around the Exalt. When the Sidereal makes this gesture, all attacks against her allies by those caught within the aura have a maximum raw pre-soak damage of the attacking character's Essence. Armor reduces this damage normally.

This effect extends a number of miles from the Exalt equal to the character's Essence and is unailing in its effects. The effect lasts a number of hours equal to the character's Essence. Beings that enter the aura are placed under the effect of the Greater Sign, but beings who leave it do not escape its effects until its duration has expired.

The Greater Sign of Jupiter — This is the Sign of Secrets, by which the unknown is made known. It manifests as a brilliant green aura (16+ anima banner level) around the Exalt. When the Sidereal makes this gesture, all beings outside of fate caught in the aura are temporarily made part of the Tapestry, as if they had all been successfully affected by the Charm.

This effect extends a number of miles from the Exalt equal to the character's Essence and is unailing in its effects. The effect lasts a number of hours equal to the character's Essence. Beings that enter the aura are placed under the effect of the Greater Sign, but beings who leave it do not escape its effects until its duration has expired.

The Greater Sign of Saturn — This is the Sign of Endings, by which all things are brought to a close. It manifests as a brilliant violet aura (16+ anima banner level) around the Exalt. When the Sidereal makes this gesture, all damage rolls made by her allies against foes caught within the aura are automatically converted into perfect successes. Soak is applied as normal — only unsoaked or minimum damage dice are converted into automatic successes.

This effect extends a number of miles from the Exalt equal to the character's Essence and is unailing in its effects. The effect lasts a number of hours equal to the character's Essence. Beings that enter the aura are placed under the effect of the Greater Sign, but beings who leave it do not escape its effects until its duration has expired.



In the place beyond all places, where time and shape were just distant nightmares, the lords of that domain gathered in the halls of madness for a council of war. Their objective was, as always, the same — the destruction of the great engine that churned on. It swallowed up vast stretches of chaos, molded them and shaped them — and then expelled them as half-shaped poison that tainted the Wyld for its own.

Too long had the hell-machine churned endlessly. Too long had it torn apart the selves and possessions of the tribes of madness. By its very existence, it had lessened the perfect and incomparable Wyld. It was the inescapable centerpoint of a previously centerless cosmos. It provided a frame of reference, single-handedly defining near and far, large and small, before and after. For too long had refugees, exiles and criminals hidden in its deadly corona, half-dying in order to exist in the poisonous edges of its vast penumbra. That it was unacceptable was without question — all the Wyld suffered for its intrusion. The debate focused largely on the method of attack.

For many years, the Wyld had shrunk before the great and immutable machine, and the tribes of madness could do nothing against it, for the Exalted defended it. Though the tribes of the mad knew not their name, they knew too well the anger of the Exalted. When they used strength, the tribes were met by the gold and silver and elemental cascades of the terrible defenders. Where they deployed stealth, they had been trapped in webs of efficient communication and crushed by the vast weight of defensive capital flows. Those that survived were quickly slain by the parti-colored servants of the machine itself.

But the madness had stopped shrinking long ago, and the great machine's defense slackened. Afterward, when every being of madness had suddenly doubled in size compared to the uniform sterility of the machine, the tribes of the Wyld had taken that as their cue to attack. They still smarted from the deaths of the greatest and wisest of the storms among them in that war and the loss of many subsidiary patterns and eddies as well. Yet, the tribes had achieved much destruction, and their stinging repulse had not lessened their resolve to destroy the terrible poisonous engine, only their strength.

Now, the strength of the tribes had grown again, and still, the Wyld had not shrunk before the engine. Thus did the tribes come together in council to debate their plans of war. Yet, as was the way of the tribes of madness, their opposition to Creation was the only way in which the tribes were united. Schisms of pattern, composition and intent divided them, and their council of war could reach no firm decision. As was often the case in such affairs, disagreements became heated, and the parties intractable. In the end, the solution chosen was to purge the ranks of the tribes, that they might have a unified opinion on Creation.

The ranks of those insufficiently eager for war were supplemented with overly independent subsidiary patterns and other objectionable characters, leaving the tribal armies uniform in their determination and free of political dissidence.

Those who had been purged were not destroyed, for it was the way of the Wyld that there could be no permanent death, only a lessening of circulation or an absorption into greater patterns. Instead, the exiles and dissidents were lashed with whips of spite and rejection and driven into the penumbra of Creation, as a penal battalion before an assault. Those who fought to reclaim their sullied honor would weaken the defenses through military action, while those who dwelt on the poison edges and colluded with the blasphemy of shape would weaken the defenses through their own incompetent collusion with the defenders.

And thus, free of such encumbrances, the tribes of madness drew up their battle plans. This time, there would be no stinging repulse.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Storytelling

Storytellers not only have the responsibility of writing and planning a story, they must also maintain the illusion of a world full of life and wonder through the use of mere words. In order to make things genuine, Storytellers must always allow players to experience the nuances of the setting as much as possible. It is not an easy task, but Chapter Seven of *Exalted* provides a good starting point for the craft. While the rest of this book should give ideas about what Sidereals do and what sort of stories they become involved in, this chapter discusses the matter in terms of in-character growth and out-of-character enjoyment.

Because *Exalted: The Sidereals* explores a setting filled with wonders and mysteries where meeting gods is an everyday occurrence, Storytellers must deviate a bit from the normal techniques of Storytelling and redefine the craft to allow players to experience this new and exciting setting. It is as much of a journey to participate in a Sidereals game as reading this book from cover to cover, with each page revealing something new. Players wanting to experience this journey and explore exotic Yu-Shan and meet its citizens for the first time in play should avoid reading this chapter in-depth since the following pages are primarily aimed at Storytellers running Sidereal Exalted games.

STORYTELLING IN YU-SHAN

To take characters into Yu-Shan is to take the players into a different and alien world. They will need a frame of

reference they can recognize and understand. Storytelling in Yu-Shan is no more difficult than running the characters in Creation or anywhere else, but it does require a different approach if it is to be believable and exotic.

Once the characters enter Yu-Shan, begin to portray a huge city where the streets are full of spirits and gods instead of mere mortals. Have the characters listening to a cacophony of sounds where gods and spirits chat and make deals while waiting for the distribution of the daily Quintessence. Add a description of ebony and white buildings glimmering with traces of Essence, while the interiors are even more luxurious and vividly described. It is important to relay that Heaven, while exotic to the players, is a realm full of life that goes on in a way similar to the way of life in Creation. Continue to paint a vivid portrait of Yu-Shan by using the descriptions in Chapter One to convey the image of a vast and extremely beautiful city that they may live and work in when they advance and grow in power. In order to make the characters attached to Yu-Shan in another way besides the portrayal of its beauty, show it to be a realm that clearly works opposite to the characters' lives in Creation.

In Creation, the Sidereal Exalted live, act and die in the shadows, alone and forgotten by the history books. In Yu-Shan, they are the arbiters and censors of fate. They are Exalted, with permission to maintain Celestial Manses and secure the path of the worshipers of gods, and in

Heaven, nothing moves slowly. Have characters pushed from one meeting to another, receiving one assignment after another. Heaven is a melting pot of politics and corruption among gods and spirits. *There is a clear contrast between Creation and Yu-Shan that allows Storytellers to tell two different stories at the same time.* Utilize this because it is a treasure served on a silver platter. By making full use of both worlds, you have twice as much space to integrate the core elements of **Exalted: The Sidereals** — treason, intrigue, betrayal and complex characters in elegant and glamorous settings.

STORYTELLING & CREATING GODS

Everywhere characters travel in Yu-Shan, there is a god in sight, varying from those of lesser statue to powerful creatures that are best left undisturbed unless the Sidereals' duty to destiny says otherwise. Many of the previous books have established gods that live and work in Yu-Shan and Creation, and if the players are familiar with **Games of Divinity**, try to incorporate the gods from that book into the game because it lends a sense of familiarity to the players. All the same, it is fun sometimes to invent gods. When doing so, do not allow standard conventions of shape and appearance to limit the creation process. Use the full color spectrum and combine elements of animals, objects and man to create gods of both lesser and major pantheons. This may result in an appearance straight out of *The Muppets*, but after adding an **Exalted** character to them, the players will not notice.

To separate them from normal Storyteller characters, give the gods a certain element of exotic behavior. For example, they might keep a mortal or even a Terrestrial Exalted as a pet and have the extremely strange habit of eating prayers that enslaved spirits working at the Bureau of Humanity must deliver at sundown in Creation. Perhaps they appreciate a horrifying cacophony as mortals would a symphony. A good idea is to connect the god's eccentricity to his domain. A god of wool might keep servants dressed in clothing of said material, and if they dress otherwise, even in their spare time, the god extracts a severe punishment. Meanwhile, a god of musical notes only speaks through melody, and its servants are only allowed to sing their messages.

The main thing to do when portraying gods is to make them exotic but avoid going overboard with the eccentricity they display. While they are otherworldly, gods should be no different from any other normal type of Storyteller character in the sense that players' characters should be able to bond with them or dislike them, depending on their intended role in the story. Doing otherwise risks pushing the characters away from Yu-Shan as it becomes too incomprehensible for the players, and then, it doesn't matter if they portray Sidereal Exalted or not. They simply won't like being in a Heaven that makes no sense.

Instead, emphasize the exotic character of the gods in a commonplace matter. For the Sidereal Exalted, a god is just another eccentric neighbor. On the other hand, to other Exalted who lack memories of Yu-Shan and the proceedings of the Celestial Bureaucracy, gods become larger than life, and such characters (most likely Solars) might believe gods to be superior to them. If there is a Solar in the player group, enhance the description of the gods' eccentricity and appearance, in addition to making the description of Yu-Shan even more vivid and full of strange and mysterious creatures.

SIDEREAL EXALTED AND PRAYERS

The wealth and power of Yu-Shan's gods is not only determined by political maneuvers and shadowy alliances. As described in Chapter Two of this book, the economy of Heaven is based on prayers and the form that they assume in Yu-Shan. Sidereal Exalted have no direct bond to either Quintessence or Ambrosia other than that they use it to bribe spirits or to convince gods to join their cause in exchange for the substance. Yet, prayers are also the only means that mortals know of to contact the citizens of Yu-Shan to call upon aid or guidance. It is an important part of the setting in more ways than just being a part of the economic system.

There are three different prayers that are useful for Storytellers of a Sidereal series. The first type is the common prayer, which is the type of prayer used by those (Exalted and mortals) who are unable to utilize these more advanced techniques or who lack the knowledge of how to do so. These prayers are not directed at a specific god, but rather, to Yu-Shan and all its gods. Creating a single unit of Quintessence through common prayer requires hundreds of prayers, and the actual prayer is commonly ignored, unless those praying offer something exceptional in sacrifice for heavenly aid and one of the gods finds their request interesting.

The second type of prayer is focused on a single deity, and it generates Ambrosia when the prayers and sacrifices of hundreds of mortals accumulate. Ambrosia is much less common than Quintessence, which is the main reason that it is the currency of Yu-Shan. Although these two types of common prayers are weak, they make up the foundation of Yu-Shan's economic system due to the fact that most mortals pray several times each day when confronted with adversity.

Common prayers may seem superficial to the players as their characters are too few to make a difference. They might also feel that their characters' prayers mean nothing to the gods during negotiations. As a Storyteller, the best way to let the craft of prayer become a major part of the series is to use it in symbolic and practical techniques, rather than just as a component of a Cult rating. When players' characters attempt to convince a god to join their

cause, require that they pray in order to succeed. Allow them to use successful normal prayers as a means of communication with divine allies.

The third type of prayer consists of specialized prayer techniques, such as those detailed in Chapter Four. These are techniques available exclusively to the Sidereals. Storytellers attempting to emphasize the strange and magical nature of the world of *Exalted* should probably include these sorts of prayer techniques in their games, since prayer is a relationship unique to supernatural beings. Every time you depict prayer as a mode of interaction, you're setting the beings involved apart from normal mortals.

HANDLING THE GODS

It is not until the Sidereal Exalted are placed in conjunction with the gods that the game's themes of complex political intrigue truly come to surface. You should not fear using the gods and their intrigues in your game on top of faction politics and duties because such wild bureaucratic maneuvering is what makes *Exalted: The Sidereals* unique. Emphasize that. The gods play their own political games with each other, sometimes using the Sidereal Exalted as pawns in their great game of chess, but the gods are just as often dragged into the ideological conflict of the factions. While each god has a different way of reacting to the current problems, Yu-Shan's different bureaus often influence them more than they realize. As a result, there are a few things Storytellers can keep in mind when the Sidereal characters encounter a god from a specific bureau and ask for assistance.

- **The Bureau of Seasons:** While it has very little political influence, the Bureau of Seasons has an extremely powerful force of military spirits—reason enough to make any Sidereal Exalt want its support. While these conservative gods favor the status quo due to catastrophic use of martial weather in the past, they naturally



OPTIONAL BACKGROUNDS

Favor and Heavenly Favor are Backgrounds that the Storyteller should only approve of if they serve the story or plot in some way as they truly set the Sidereal characters apart from each other. These Backgrounds can be too powerful in their effect on the game and can lead to player/Storyteller hard feelings, and they are therefore subject to Storyteller approval.

Although they may change the course of an entire game, player-driven change isn't something to be feared — after all, fate is unpredictable, so its servants can be, too. Plus, this is **Exalted**, and you might as well resign yourself to the realities of such things occurring. But while uncertainty is an exciting factor in a game, it should also be kept balanced. Therefore, it is extremely important that you and the player detail why the character possesses the Background and create a *framework* for its use.

If Storytellers allow these optional Backgrounds into their games, they should probably give characters two additional Background points, so that the increased number of Backgrounds don't force the characters to spread their points too thin.

FAVOR

Cost: 1 Background or bonus point per dot

Your character aided an influential person with something so important that he granted the Sidereal a favor to call on at any time. It doesn't matter if the one granting the favor is long dead; the family is bound by his promise. Only Creation-bound individuals such as Dynasts, Exalted and lesser spirits can grant Favor. The Background aids the character in difficult circumstances or when she is in trouble (stopping a formal investigation, enforcing an alliance when there would be none, adverting soldiers to do ones bidding for a short period of time, etc.). More often than not, using a favor involves the climax of a long period of planning in which the Background is required to ensure a success. Needless to say, there are times when favors are more immediate, such as when called in to avoid a death sentence or to make a quick escape out of a besieged area. Also, keep in mind that some individuals are unlikely to perform certain favors because they are not able to. An Immaculate monk of some renown will not successfully order an entire Cathak legion to let its prisoner go, while a respected member of the Great House would be able to accomplish this by pulling some strings. Each use of a favor lowers the Background's score by one.

The individual owing the character the favor will have a permanent Essence rating of 3 at minimum and 5 at maximum *or* possesses a Background equal to Influence or Backing 4 or 5 depending on which organization or society the character can collect the favor from. Individuals providing favors also have a minimum Resources (or its equivalent in Backing-derived monies) of 3.

- One favor
- Two favors
- Three favors
- Four favors
- Five favors

HEAVENLY FAVOR

Cost: 2 Background or bonus points per dot

Whereas creatures in Creation grants Favor, only *powerful* (Essence rating of 6 or more) gods and spirits can grant this Background. Because it involves such great beings, the favor may range from obtaining their assistance in an assassination to arranging an earthquake with the purpose of causing destruction to an enemy's domains. The Storyteller is the final arbiter on what a favor can accomplish (as settled in the framework during character creation). When designing the effects, remember that they are never so severe that the favor causes strain in fate's threads. Also, the effects are always tied to the domain of the god performing the favor. For example, if Burning Feather (see **Games of Divinity**, pp. 28-29) performs the favor, the effects must be related to intoxication of some kind. These favors are more direct and often occur at the instant the character calls on her patron's aid.

Prayers are not uncommon for the Sidereal to use when they wish invoke the attention of the god. In order to collect on Heavenly Favor, the Sidereal's player must make a successful roll according to the rules for prayer on pages 335-336 of the **Exalted** book. If the roll is unsuccessful, the god fails to hear the prayer, and the favor remains unused. A botch on the roll means that the Sidereal somehow insulted his benefactor with the request to such an extent that the Heavenly Favor is considered forfeit and future dealings (Social rolls) with the god are at a +2 difficulty.

- One favor
- Two favors
- Three favors
- Four favors
- Five favors



tend to favor the Gold Faction. Many of these gods believe that the Solar Exalted might restore the bureau's glory if they support them in the coming years. Yet, the senior members of the bureau are servants of necessity, not the Solar Exalted, and are likely to side with whatever group they think endanger Creation least. The gods of the Bureau of Seasons are good allies against direct and obvious threats to Creation but are highly unlikely to enter into political frays.

- **The Bureau of Nature:** Full of disenfranchised gods and many other divinities waiting for their turn to hit the bricks, this bureau is a fertile recruiting ground for the Gold Faction. These gods are already in collaboration with the Lunar Exalted to hold back the Wyld — they'll be suckers for the possibility of reclaiming the lost lands of Creation with the aid of the Solar Exalted.

- **The Bureau of Humanity:** While these gods have lost much influence in Yu-Shan, they have gained much more in Creation since the fall of the Celestial Bureaucracy. As a result of its members attempts to maintain the fallen bureaucracy, the Bronze Faction has earned numerous enemies among Humanity's gods. On the other hand, the Gold Faction is attempting to restore the Solars to their thrones, something that also collides with the gods' personal agendas for Creation, since many of these gods have taken up an active rule there and left Yu-Shan. The bureau as a whole has no real preference for either faction. Because of this shifting loyalty among the spirits of the bureau, Sidereals will have to earn the support of one god at a time in a slow process. In truth, however, since many of the old gods long for their glory days when they lived in Yu-Shan and held great courts, they have a tendency to lean to the Gold Faction's support even if that means giving up their strengthened grip on Creation.

- **The Bureau of Heaven:** Being the only other bureau in Yu-Shan with meaningful influence and power, some of the gods of the Bureau of Heaven have grown overly fond of themselves. Gifts, prayers or rituals in their honor are often required to get their attention. Only if the characters perform well (success according to the rules of the Prayer of the Chosen or Essence Prayer, pp. 123-125, or some other similarly theatrical display) will the gods acknowledge the Sidereals' presence and grant an audience.

Another matter is their vanity. Because of the gods' of this bureau's personal status, they are bound to have titles and specialized rituals to show their status in comparison to other gods inside and outside of the bureau. Characters will have to rely heavily on Presence, Bureaucracy, Socialize and Occult to keep themselves in favor with these status-conscious divinities. Likewise, the burden in bribes, gifts and favors can be crushing, and characters currying the favor of this bureau should prepare for expensive business.

At the same time, once the characters gain a patron in the Bureau of Heaven, many minor gods are bound to

follow in hopes of being seen favorably by the higher positioned god. Whenever the characters invoke their divine patron in some matter, roll the god's Essence, difficulty 2, to determine if the lesser gods are favorable to the characters cause. On a success, lower the difficulty by 2 when the characters attempt to make alliances with lesser gods in this bureau. A botch increases the difficulty by 2 as there are floating rumors that the alliance between the god and the characters may be a danger to Yu-Shan. This will, in turn, attract the attention of the celestial lions, and if the characters are unable to convince them lions that the alliance poses no danger to Yu-Shan (Manipulation + Presence, difficulty 3), they call an audit of the god and the characters.

SERVING FATE

Unlike any other type of Chosen, the Sidereal Exalted have duties they must perform. These duties supercede any of their personal agendas in the eyes of Heaven, and for the most part, this is something the Chosen of the Maidens accepted. While characters should spend time exploring Yu-Shan and interacting with its citizens, make the players understand that it is the core of their characters' workplace. While this book explains it in great detail, page 40 of the *Exalted Storyteller's Companion* gives a good summary to one of the trickiest parts that Storytellers have to deal with when running Sidereal games: *"What does it mean to be favored by the Maidens? Each of them is a great power within the Celestial Hierarchy that plans the fate of the world. Their favor allows an Exalted to play a direct part in manipulating those webs of fate that the Maidens lay across the world. Once functionary spirits within the Celestial Hierarchy carried out those tasks alone, but now they have to share responsibility with the Sidereal Exalted."*

Working with the conceptual terms of "fate" and "destiny" is one of the hardest things you must do. Commonly, the terms are perceived to either involve a great prophecy that the protagonists must fulfill after going through several harsh trials, or they are simply used as a figure of speech.

But dealing with these concepts within the context of *Exalted: The Sidereals* requires a different approach, as the characters are actually part of a group that acts as censors and arbiters of destiny. This is by far the most complex issue concerning Sidereal characters, for they deal with something that is totally alien to players. Before giving insight into how to implement this part of the characters' lives into the games, one requires a more concrete approach to the concepts of "fate" and "destiny" and how the two terms are distinct from each other.

Fate stands close to each individual and object in Creation because it is the destined path of an object forward through time. Everything that happens to an object is part of its fate, though most of the trivial details



are determined by the pattern spiders, who busily provide the illusion of natural law rather than working to fulfill some particular divine plan. By contrast, “destiny” implies something greater. Destinies are part of the actual pattern of history rather than the course of daily events.

The primary difference between fate and destiny is the level at which they are determined. Destiny is generally determined in long-term planning meetings by the Maidens and other senior gods and Sidereals in the Bureau of Destiny. Fate is determined lower in the bureaucracy, as gods and pattern spiders attempt to tailor the ongoing progress of history to match the demands of high-level planning.

Picture the hierarchy of destiny as a company, where the Five Maidens constitute the board of directors. Together with their assistants (senior divinities and the oldest Sidereals), they weave the threads of fate upon documents that they send to the Bureau of Destiny for treatment and execution. Within the bureau, the Sidereal Exalted and senior divinities divide into several interdepartmental action groups that specialize in certain kinds of destiny, such as wars, disasters and political crises.

The groups begin to discuss and plan during various meetings where the effort should lie in determining the fates leading up to the destiny they have been issued to execute. Of course, these practical details must not break any other destinies. Thus, it requires several more meetings to sort out eventual conflicts that might occur on planning stages. Add to this many employees who desire a higher position within the bureau or who are self-interested and thus engage in secret meetings to make sure that their opinions carry the debate. Most of the directives from these meetings are passed directly to the pattern spiders, while the more complex issues are handed to middle-ranking gods and Sidereals in the various conventions, who plan them and then either weave them into the Tapestry manually or pass the plans to the pattern spiders for execution.

After the various groups involved in planning destiny settle on how the destiny should be executed and put the matter aside, there are only two ways to intervene in a way that is probably not already foreordained and anticipated. One is to call upon aid from those whom the Loom of Fate cannot control, typically meaning the Yozis. The other is to file a petition with the Maidens. While it is *extremely* rare that the Maidens change fate due to a petition, all gods are welcome to fill out the paperwork and submit for consideration.

Much of what younger Sidereals do is troubleshooting when these events don’t work out properly. To young Sidereals, the demands of their job often seem maddeningly arbitrary because they are confronted with fates with no idea what destiny is involved. To help simulate this, several boxed descriptions containing fate charts are in-

cluded later in this chapter. These charts detail minute, medium and larger fates that must occur despite all complications. Storytellers may wish to use them to establish the capricious and demanding nature of fate.

Sidereal Exalted are the direct servants the Maidens, and in turn, that makes the Sidereals masters of fate. Even if they are of insufficient rank to take part in the bureau’s planning efforts, they are authorized to affect destinies through the minute means of manipulating individual fates. This is the reason the Bureau of Destiny sends the younger Sidereals to sort out any problem strands in the Tapestry. While some minor fates may be left to run tangled until the pattern spiders resolve the matter, the grander destiny of things must be steered on course by sorting out as many of the problem fates (preferably all) before they occur. You should emphasize as much as possible during the series that the continued stability of the Tapestry is *the* most important aspect to being a Sidereal Exalted in both Creation and Yu-Shan.

But just because it’s an important job doesn’t mean it’s a popular or an easy one. Not all mandates from the Maidens are popular, and sometimes, there are leaks or spies that ensure outsiders learn about what they are planning. Add lobbyist groups that approach the Sidereal Exalted in order to gain their favor — or blackmail and threaten the Exalts to get it. Anything goes because destiny is serious business to all in Yu-Shan, not least of all to the gods whose power depends on the prosperity of their worshipers or domain.

At the same time, the gods aren’t the only ones who are corrupt. While characters have the means to sort out the strands of fate, there are those who fall to corruption, using their influence to personally benefit from the changes. It is not easy to sway a Sidereal from being an honorable follower of duty to a corruptive Exalt, but neither is it impossible. Whether they are players’ characters or Storyteller characters, such Chosen pose a grave threat to the Celestial Order and to Creation.

USING ARCANES FATE

Arcane Fate is perhaps *the* most substantial result of the Sidereals’ tampering with destiny. Because of this, Storytellers should never forget its positive and negative aspects. Always begin encounters with others’ hesitation about who the players’ characters really are, then have the Storyteller characters vaguely remember or simply pretend that they know to get over the awkward situation. At the same time, if the characters succeed with their mission and leave before getting too acquainted with someone, the Storyteller characters should not remember them at all.

STORYTELLING IN CREATION

Many Sidereal series will consist of the characters spending considerably more time in Creation than in Yu-Shan, either because it is where the plot works best or because Heaven seems too complex a place to base the characters in. Using Creation as the foundation for games is not peculiar since it is the place where the Sidereal characters must ensure that fate proceeds as planned without any hindrance from outside forces. What makes Creation-based Sidereal games special compared to running other types of Exalted in the setting is that to the best knowledge of everyone but a small number of Dragon-Blooded, the Sidereal Exalted died or vanished a long time ago. They are the Anathema Creation does not need to worry about because they do not exist. This forces the Sidereal Exalted to operate through clandestine means to ensure their own safety.

To get players more accustomed with working through clandestine means, place the characters in key positions as advisors, chancellors and trusted allies to influential and powerful individuals. These might be Dynasts or patricians in the Realm or princes, priests and notables in the Threshold. Getting the players to work through subtle and manipulative means to ensure a successful outcome to their plans is most easily achieved by putting the characters in a situation where at least one of the player Sidereals is on friendly terms with the subject of their manipulations. Then, have someone move against the Sidereal catspaw, but avoid making the antagonist a fellow Sidereal as that removes focus from the sensation that the Sidereals are in control of the world. In order for the Sidereals to save their friend, they must subtly exert their influence. Once the players become used to working undercover, you should situate them in hostile environments.

Example: Characters must convince the local Dragon-Blooded satrap, who at least one character is on friendly terms with, that his son must marry the daughter of his rival, the satrap of a neighboring possession, to ensure peace and economic stability in the region. Of course, the characters do this with the ulterior motive of securing observance of the Immaculate Philosophy in the region — their ally is a resolute defender of the faith, and his neighbor, who is soft on spirit worship, will crack down on Hundred Gods' cultists to secure the marriage. But in the chambers of power, treachery is a common thing, and the neighboring satrap's court does not want peace since that hinders their personal agendas. Members of the court immediately begin plotting against the marriage, possibly even striking a deal with local enemies of the Sidereals' satrap ally. The characters must subtly dispose of their foes without spoiling the marriage negotiations or ruining the rival's court by killing all its top officials.

STORYTELLING THE FACTIONS

In Creation, the Sidereal Exalted are divided into two factions that adhere to different ideologies. Whatever their rivalries, the two factions have historically worked side-by-side to ensure the progress of destiny rather than being hindered by political differences that have no place in Heaven. But the truce between factions ends at the gates of Yu-Shan. Once the Sidereals enter Creation (while not there on official business), the faction politics become a strong influence in the choices they make, something that can put people working in the same convention at odds with each other. They used to be much less important, but since the return of the Solars, the factions have assumed a central role in Sidereal internal politics.

Now, both factions, despite their opposed ends, must still strive to reinforce destiny and protect Creation. The Bronze Faction tends to keeping the Dynasty together, while the Gold Faction now does what it can to stabilize the harsh Threshold, working through the same means to the same ultimate ends. For all their animosity, the factions know they cannot fail in their ultimate task.

But while that is easy to write here, maintaining discipline in their defense of destiny is the greatest challenge facing the factions. The Sidereals are trained in deception and betrayal. By betraying the Sidereal mission to protect Creation and destiny and concentrating wholly on the ends of their factions, the Sidereals can not only outperform competitors who actually tend to responsibilities, but also burden their competitors with the critical duties the plotters shirk to pursue political ends. Every Sidereal knows this, and every one of them is tempted by it and made suspicious of her peers by it. Abetted by the Great Curse, it is a chasm into which the Sidereals can cast Creation.

The difficulty lies in portraying this accurately to players who know very well what the Great Curse is and have the distance from the events to do the right thing. It's probably easiest to assume that the players' characters will be the heroic exceptions, at least in the beginning. Don't wait around for the characters to go bad — allow the players' characters to continue doing the right thing while their rivals abandon cosmic responsibilities for the sake of their faction. Then, heap the players with the neglected duties of their rivals and let them watch their enemies race ahead, unworried by the risks posed to all existence and unpunished by the uncaring Maidens or their own equally heedless superiors.

Maybe the players' characters will carry the day by heroic effort, somehow bearing the burdens of both faction and destiny or somehow harnessing the broken mechanisms of the Celestial Bureaucracy to bring the miscreants to justice. Such stories are, after all, the point of the game. Alternately, they may join in the festival of irresponsibility and shirk their own duties in order to advance political

goals. The characters may even do the right thing, choosing to serve Creation rather than their own goals, and still lose.

As a Storyteller, you should always remember that the Great Curse lurks in the Sidereals as well as in the other Exalted. Any gathering to discuss these matters is likely to result in the decision that the faction in question can afford to set aside its duties for just a bit to pursue political ends. For each cool head that whispers that the Sidereals must stay true to their offices, another will say that it is easy to pick up their duties after the inevitable victory that just one more moral compromise will bring. The challenge is to let the characters have a chance of victory while not letting them talk you into agreeing to how sensible everyone doing the right thing is. Just as in a real life bureaucracy, just because something is a sensible solution to an important problem doesn't mean it will be implemented.

CHOICE OF FACTION

Regardless of which faction you choose to use as the focus of your game, it is extremely important to decide which type of game to run from the outset, before characters are created. It is strongly suggested that you have characters from only a single faction for your first series. It is much easier to run games that only focus on the views of one faction than to run mixed games.

THE BRONZE FACTION

Always keep in mind that the Bronze Faction Sidereal Exalted are portrayed as the Realm's true masters. Because of this, players have certain expectations that they want fulfilled. Do not place characters in meaningless positions in a Bronze Faction game. Storytellers that don't want them to feel as if they run an entire society should still give the characters plenty of servants and underlings they can order around. Favored of the Maiden of Battle are ideal for martial arts and combat instructors at secondary schools and in Sidereal-influenced houses such as Ledaal, while the Chosen of Endings are suited for positions as spymasters and even as respected and well-known undertakers for Dynastic families.

Giving players a sense of power equals establishing the theme of power for the game. Doing this whets the players' appetites enough to feed the corrupting power that tempts the Sidereals. Characters tasting power are bound to get involved in games of political intrigue and manipulation. While they are bound to throw off these identities as the series progress, catering to them helps set the tone and establish the "base" feel of the series.

Members of the Bronze Faction commonly occupy residences on the Blessed Isle or in areas under imperial control. These are luxurious and decadent environments

where the Sidereals move among the influential, manipulating them to carry out mandates from Yu-Shan or to see that their personal or factional agendas succeed. This is the way the Sidereals have clandestinely guided the Realm for over a millennium. While it is getting harder to do so as more groups gain influence and power over the machinery of empire, it is still an essential part of these Sidereals' faction's mission.

Put players' characters in the great halls of the Dynasty, and play up the frailty of the greedy Dragon-Blooded, and allow the characters to see or participate in the games for power the Terrestrials play. When involving characters in Dynastic plots—whether it is a marriage affair or an assassination—make the events at least important enough that they affect either the goals of the Bronze Faction or the characters' personal agendas. Otherwise, there is no reason to involve the players' characters in that, barring a direct mandate from Heaven to assure the outcome of something fated.

Stories in major cities on the Blessed Isle should reflect politics and intrigue for the Sidereals. Bronze Faction members are unlikely to engage in physical combat as it might reveal their presence to the unwanted, but if they do, play up the consequences as the Dragon-Blooded begin to hunt for Anathema (even if Arcane Fate is working as it should).

Bronze Faction Sidereals also spend much of their time enforcing the Immaculate Philosophy and the Celestial Bureaucracy so that spirits within the bounds of the Realm refrain from overstepping their station. Once in a while, put the characters at odds with a god that demands the locals to venerate him more than the Celestial Order allows. When the local monks attempt to deal with the god, make it so few of them survive.

Place the players' characters in a temple controlled by the Immaculate Order, set up as members of the Order newly arrived as replacements for battle casualties, possibly as members of some mysterious god-hunting sect of Immaculates. This gives the characters free movement and a motive for putting down the spirit as well as an explanation for any unusual Essence effects they invoke. Once they have bested the god, the storyline can be taken to Yu-Shan for a session in the heavenly courts as the Sidereals press a legal case against the deity.

This is a flashier and more combat intensive scenario than what the Bronze Sidereals commonly participate in. Set the action sequences in such scenarios outside heavily populated areas so that the players may utilize their powers. Being able to let go of the mask of subtleness for just a short period of time is a relief to many players. The combat helps them understand their Sidereal Exalted further while fulfilling their action cravings prior to further undercover sessions. Wyld Hunts provide a similarly useful outlet to let players exercise their characters' powers against dangerous foes.

The Bronze Faction is currently in a tight position, as it loses more members each year, and it is important for the faction to emphasize a close connection to those remaining members who are still alive. Because of this, players whose characters go against the faction suffer its censure, but insubordination almost never has a serious outcome since the faction needs all Chosen it has.

Allow Bronze Faction characters to pursue their personal agendas so long as they do not come into direct conflict with the faction's plans. If this occurs, intervene with Storyteller characters, and allow the players to make the final decision on whether or not to halt or to continue and take the eventual consequences of their actions — most likely censure without any real punishment. After all, it's not as if the characters' superiors aren't helping themselves with both hands, and it's not as if characters who stray from the straight and narrow are disposable. Since the consequences are not very severe, most of them will surely decide to follow the path of personal gratification, but it's of their own free will — the Storyteller provided a choice for them.

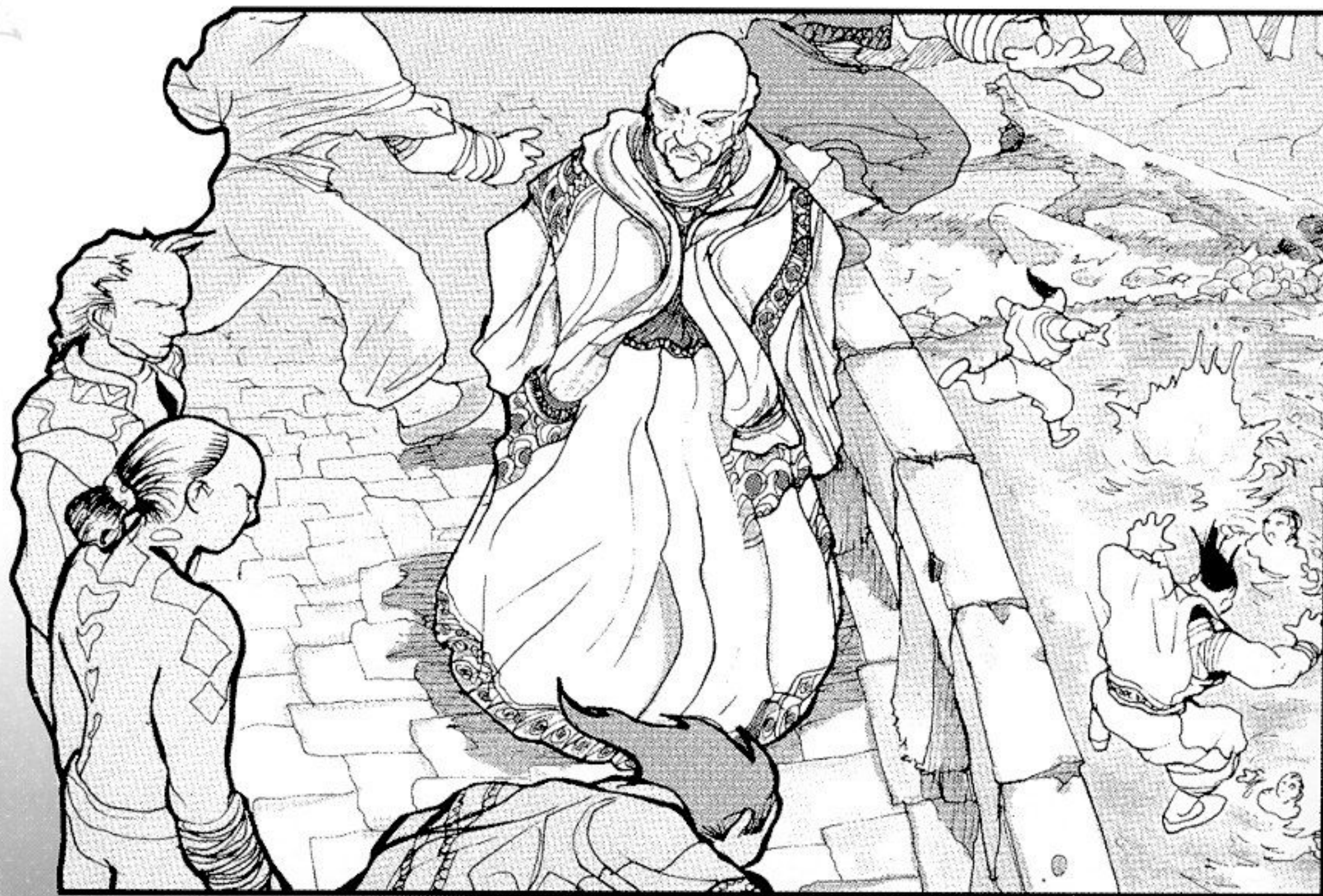
Kejak's control over the Bronze Faction creates a stricter hierarchy than what the Gold Faction has, and this is often reflected in Bronze characters, in that they are orderly and disciplined, or that they exhibit extremely logical and structured thinking. Storytellers using the Bronze

Faction in their game should try to keep the hand of Chejop Kejak and his Inner Circle always in mind. These ancient geniuses control the core of the faction's policy as well as much of destiny in general — what they want to happen happens, and there are none save the uncaring Maidens to appeal to. In addition, the Bronze Faction often incorporates its own designs into the fabric of fate, meaning that the tasks they set the younger Sidereals combine responsibility to both their faction and the Maidens. The result is that the demands of faction leaders can be as oblique and incomprehensible as those of the Maidens.

THE GOLD FACTION

This is a faction on the move. In just a few years, its members have established cults, secret training camps for Anathema and increased their span of influence throughout the Threshold. Reflecting this within the framework of the game should have members of the faction constantly offered new and different assignments. This means that placing Gold Faction characters in different scenarios across Creation is not quite as tough as it is with the Bronze Faction.

Unlike Chejop Kejak and his followers, the Gold have never moved through the halls of power in Creation, as they withdrew clandestinely and isolated themselves from the world while waiting biding their time. Now, even



that is changing as the faction seeks support from powerful patrons to expand its sphere of influence and grow in power. While characters might occasionally spend time with powerful Dynastic Dragon-Blooded, more common power centers for this faction are Threshold leaders. These may be spirits but are most often local politicians, soldiers and priests — individuals closely affecting the daily lives of people. The distinction of local versus Creation-wide power is important because one of the reasons the Bronze Faction's power slips away is that it focuses more on the latter in a time when the instrument of that power — the Realm — is faltering.

The Gold Faction settles with making small changes until it and its Solar protégés are ready to take on Creation and the Realm. Unfortunately, the increase in Gold members and their successful exploits in protecting the Anathema from the Wyld Hunt are antagonizing the Bronze Faction to such a degree that the old status quo is deteriorating. Fearing that everything they work for will go to waste, Bronze Faction Sidereals attempt to oppose the Gold members whenever they can. Consequently, using Bronze Faction antagonists in a Sidereal series focused on members of the Gold Faction in Creation is easier than the opposite.

It is a dangerous and extremely exciting time to be a Gold Faction Sidereal as nonlethal violence between Sidereal factions is becoming a thing of the past. Gold characters should notice this through a gradual change in their Bronze Faction co-workers attitude toward them when in Yu-Shan. Allow the characters to discover that someone close to a known Bronze Faction member is actively spying on them and reporting back to his Bronze patron. There are no full-blown hostilities between factions at this point (an extremely important matter so that your series does not turn into a “*Hunt for the Gold Faction*” game), but the deteriorating state of relations is very real and omnipresent and should be emphasized to the players.

If the “*Manipulators of the Dynasty*” is the stereotypical Bronze Faction game, then the stereotypical Gold Faction game is the “*Secret Trainers of the Solars*.” Running a secret training camp for Anathema requires both the skill to operate an establishment so that no prying eyes get involved and the talent to manipulate local law enforcement and politicians to protect the facility. For the Bronze Faction, such a camp provides a target that can be destroyed without provoking open hostilities with the Gold Faction, so these facilities are always a major flashpoint for conflicts.

The Gold Faction often establishes training camps in areas where the locals are divided in their views on the Realm or where opposition to the Dragon-Blooded rule is strong. Nevertheless, locals are not going to want Anathema in their backyard as they attract unwanted attention, and while the Sidereals may be forgotten by the citizens, the locals are not blind to the anima flares and use of Charms that occur while the Solars are in training. There-

fore, it is important that the local citizenry become bound to the camp in order to stop their tongues from wagging. Sidereals might terrorize the locals into silence, but without powerful magic, it's unlikely they'll stop the spread of rumors. More effective is positive persuasion. Gifted Exalted orators are a start — it's easy to get local support when the populace has converted to the Cult of the Illuminated. Bribery is also helpful. People are happy to have individuals who build roads and irrigation works, bring favorable weather and fend off bandits and tax collectors.

Sidereals on a budget may find that converting the local ruler is cheaper and easier than co-opting the entire local populace. While not as good as a loyal population, a local ruler can use his security services to limit the spread of news and dampen government reaction to the characters. However, Sidereals attempting to control governments by seizing control of their executives should be wary of imperial spies and other factions within the government. The government structures of most autocracies are rife with would-be dictators seeking to advance themselves, and Sidereals who control the leader of a nation or district may have to spend a considerable amount of time and effort policing their puppet's ranks.

Another problem faced is that recruiting Anathema is not as easy as setting up a camp. The most common way is to distract the attention of a Wyld Hunt by creating a diversion (perhaps by arranging for some enemy to attack the hunt before it reaches its destination) and then take the new Exalt it was hunting with them to the camp before the Wyld Hunt has a chance to catch up with them. It requires the Sidereals to foster trust in the Solar so that they can mold him and guide him as they want to. The easiest way for Gold Faction members to recruit someone is to appear from time to time and provide advice on how the Solar should act. Eventually, they offer him full-time guidance and support if he is willing to come to their camp.

Should the Bronze Faction find out about the camp and arrange an attack on it, resolve the situation by allowing the characters and their pupils to escape — or put the Bronze up against the Anathema the characters trained. Getting the players each to think “*My character helped them become this cool*” is a good way to make those players happy. Storytellers should probably let the players control their Solar Exalted protégés during the battle. Action-oriented groups may want strike back at the Bronze before moving the training camp. Just make sure that they are aware of the consequences that might occur if they actually kill another Sidereal, even through proxies.

UNALIGNED SIDEREALS

Games with unaligned Sidereal Exalted are a blessing and curse. While Storytellers do not feel pressured to detail the intricacies and dynamics of the interaction between the factions, the characters have a fairly narrow



predetermined plot. When factions are not an issue in the character concept, all that remains are personal agendas and the duties to the Bureau of Destiny. While they must serve with the other Sidereals in Yu-Shan, in Creation, they are governed by their personal agendas, and those may change at the whim of the player and turn the game down an entirely different path than the intended one.

These characters are constantly pursued by the factions in attempts to sway them in their direction. Should the characters refuse to join a faction and that faction fears that the unaligned Sidereal poses a grave threat, the faction leaders might decide to kill him in the hope of securing the reborn soul at a later date. This may happen even if that is unwise given the current situation of Creation.

One of the best storylines for factionless Sidereals is to use them as enablers of a player group, especially if running crossover games. There is simply nothing that keeps an unaligned Sidereal from mingling with Solar Exalted or Lunars and using them to protect destiny or further her own ends. The Sidereal might be a player's character or an older Storyteller character. This latter doesn't exclude the possibility of a player's character being an unaligned Sidereal. He might be the elder's protégé or student.

SIDEREALS REVEALED

Player groups that want to throw away the shackles of secrecy should be able to do so and take a more active hand in Creation without having to be afraid that the game has reached its end. Instead, take a short pause (a week or so) from the game, and look at the setting as it is provided in the books. Then, look at some of the possible results that occur when the Sidereal Exalted expose their existence to Creation:

- The Sidereal Exalted become unable to exert the control they previously had over the Wyld Hunt and, instead, risk becoming victims of their own creation.
- The Dynasty grows ever more suspicious of friends and advisors who attempt to convince them to take another direction than they originally intended to take. Within years, the Realm is full of even more paranoid rulers, all fearing advice as much as the dagger's blade.
- The other Celestial Exalted push the Sidereals for answers on what went on during the uprising during the First Age and possibly even hunt those Sidereals who do not swear fealty to nascent Celestial Exalt rulers.
- Due to their involvement with changing fate, the effects of the Arcane Fate makes it quite impossible for the Sidereals to maintain a stronghold and a base of influence in a single domain as both the locals and rivals tend to forget that the Sidereals actually exist.

By examining all aspects of the changes that the characters affect, you can give the players much more

NO MORE SECRETS?

When using the deteriorating truce as the theme for a series, do not be surprised if players of Gold Faction Sidereals suddenly ask why they should keep the secret of their existence when it is a creation of the Bronze Faction to start with. Allow them to consider the fact that if they blow their cover and reveal themselves as Celestial Exalted, they will all be hunted as Anathema, and their ability to effectively manipulate fate will be dramatically eroded. While you should not normally send the characters on a mission that is doomed from the beginning, it is something you should consider if you want them to realize this danger in-game. By having them fail a crucial mission and becoming exposed as Anathema to the local population of an imperial tributary state, they get to experience the danger the Solars and Lunars constantly face.

Since Anathema appear occasionally, their revelation is not something that spreads to the history books as the return of the Sidereals, but rather, as another conflict against the demons of the past. In this way, you limit the exposure of their failure while the players' characters discover the consequences of revealing their existence.

Also, it's worth pointing out to players that causing the collapse of the Realm is a magnificently unwise idea for members of a faction who want to found a successor state, and the exposure of the Sidereal as the secret masters of the empire would precipitate just that very collapse. The consequences of the Realm's collapse would be numerous successor nations with Dragon-Blooded emperors or empresses, all in conflict with each other. The Sidereal would first have to unite all nations and force them to agree on a mutual government again before they could even begin to work with building the Realm anew.

authenticity. In general, make sure to plan the events most significant to the setting on the whole before looking on how things change for each individual. If you're ignoring the major setting changes due to plot developments, the game may take a twist for the worse when the players start thinking of things and asking questions with a larger scope than the ones you've considered, so work from the top down. In addition, when planning major setting changes, discuss with the players what they expect and what they believe is happening when things change. Players don't normally try to change the setting for no reason. Find out why they're doing what they're doing, and discuss it with them if you don't think they'll get what they're expecting.

SIDEREAL EXALTED

Making a game interesting and lasting requires not only an understanding of the actual techniques involved, but also a firm grasp of the beings the story focuses on. This means having a working understanding of the Sidereal Exalted as a single group of Chosen and how they function in conjunction with the setting. To run an enjoyable game, Storytellers must understand the mechanical nature of the Maidens' Chosen. This section examines some of the aspects of being a Sidereal Exalt.

FRAILTIES OF BODY AND SOUL

The difference of greatest importance between Sidereals and other Exalts is the Charm Ox-Body Technique. This Charm normally provides an increase of several health levels each time a character purchases it. But, whereas Solar or Lunar Exalted are able to quickly multiply their health levels through the purchase of the Charm, the Sidereal Exalted can only raise theirs by a single -0 per purchase. Since Endurance limits the number of times a character can purchase the Charm, Sidereal Exalted at normal character Essence levels can only raise their health levels by a maximum of 5. Even if a character has a high Stamina rating, all that supplies the Sidereal with mechanically is a soak of 2L, which aids extremely little while in combat with another Exalt.

Many players only look at the actual statistics of how much damage something causes and compare that to how much a character is able to withstand before dying. While making this comparison is not wrong at all, they often ignore the underlying concept of avoiding damage. The most important statement players should think of when participating in combat sequences: *Dying requires wounding. Wounding requires hitting the target.* Instead, players often solve the problem with the low soak and number of health levels by giving characters armor. Heavy armor is effective, but it replaces one problem with several others: barring the Sidereal from using many Martial Arts Charms, limiting the Sidereal in social situations and leaving the character vulnerable to armor-piercing attacks such as Armor Penetrating Fang Strike. While a strong active defense is, in general, crucial in **Exalted**, the Storyteller should encourage players of Sidereals to make especially sure their characters can parry and dodge effectively.

THE NUMBER OF CHOSEN

During the course of the last five years, the Solar Exalted have increased their numbers from a dozen to several hundreds. The Lunar Exalted have always strode Creation in their hundreds, even if they too have faced the wrath of the Wyld Hunt. Meanwhile, the 10,000 Dragon-Blooded openly proclaim themselves the true rulers of Creation and the only defense against Anathema. Cur-

rently, as the Age of Sorrows dawns, the Maidens' Chosen only number approximately 100 Sidereals. Within the context of the game, this leads to two thematic elements: the individual Sidereal's important role in Creation and, also, their isolation and worries for the future.

Conveying the low number of Sidereal Exalted to players is most easily done by making contact with new or unknown Sidereal Exalted an infrequent event. Characters should know mostly every Sidereal in Creation — they will certainly know all of them in their convention quickly enough. Another good way to making the players (and thus their characters) understand the low Sidereal population is to begin the game by using the first few sessions (perhaps three to five) to establish a mindset of isolation that lasts throughout the game without the needing constant Storyteller emphasis.

The time to plant this seed is during each character's prelude, whether it is fully played out or just written down. Accentuate that the characters simply were not like anyone else, not only because they were obviously chosen to be Exalted, but because that affected their behavior as children and even as young teenagers (depending on when Exaltation took place).

In fact, make sure they know their behavior was such that others never felt comfortable around them. After all, they had an uncanny knack for pointing out the flaws of others, and their constant desire to create structure from chaos projected an extremely demanding attitude. Because of this, even if they were loved, there was no one that understood the young Sidereal, except possibly for their divine or Sidereal tutors. Friends whispered behind their backs, and ordinary folk looked strangely at them.

Avoid playing up the element of childhood isolation too much as that might lead the players to create an angst-consumed character, and that sort of character is better suited for Abyssal play. Keep them alienated, but not totally so — while the friends secretly badmouthed the young Exalt, they still hung with her, or maybe she was part of a loser's club. Many adults were uncomfortable, but most still remained courteous. Make it clear that they have always felt special or alone while still being a part of their group.

After characters undergo Exaltation, switch to describing the obvious — that the characters finally understand why they were special as children and that they've finally taken the first step on the path to their true destinies. Give them a session's rest from the focus on the isolation, and allow the characters to feel as a part of the Sidereal family for a short time.

When it feels right after running the elements of the prelude, introduce the characters to an Exalted antagonist that appears to be an easy target at first, but whom the Sidereals later discover is able to call upon others of his kind for aid. Sessions set among the hundreds of Dragon-Blooded



in the Imperial City are perfect tools for this. As the players' characters call upon aid from other Sidereal, they learn that there is no one to help them because the Sidereals are so few and the other Sidereals have more pressing duties to attend to. Suddenly, the characters' world once again shrinks and they find themselves isolated and alone as a group and forced to live with this reality. Though it may seem harsh, it makes the players see the seriousness of the Sidereals' low numbers as well as tying them together as a group because the characters realize that their Circlemates are all they have when push comes to shove. Even if the characters manage to assemble a large number of Sidereal to act in a common cause, the Great Curse immediately strikes where it hurts them the most.

Of late, the low numbers have become an increasing concern since many of the oldest Sidereal Exalted have begun to die of old age, and with those deaths comes a loss of important knowledge and power. Currently, there are only a handful of Sidereals who remember the instigation of the Solar Purge at the height of the First Age and a small number more who remember the days before the Contagion.

To convey the loss of future wisdom and knowledge through the death of ancient Sidereal Exalted, introduce the characters to an elder who will train them in a selected area of expertise (astrological magic, Charms, martial arts, duties to Yu-Shan, etc.). Make it obvious to the characters that the elder is on his final years and that this is a special opportunity for them to learn all they possibly can before he passes away. If the characters lack the Mentor Background, consider giving it to them for free (though make sure to compensate players who bought Mentor in this case).

This also aids in establishing a unified focal point in the game that can often be used to settle disputes between characters. Simply remind the players that the characters share a mentor and that they were all worthy of his attention. Through it all, always play the mentor as an individual with an almost infinite knowledge. Emphasize his long life by talking about how the world has changed from his youth to today. Discuss ancient prophecies and history. In short, use him to plant the seeds of future scenarios.

Eventually, there comes a time when it simply fits the series to get rid of this character in order to call attention to this ongoing loss of the Maidens' Chosen. If running this plot simultaneously with the one accentuating their low numbers through isolation, kill the character off shortly after the lesson sinks in. Perhaps you might even want to kill the mentor as she helps them to succeed with a mission, to make it clear that there are certain kinds of "victory" worse than defeat.

Then, rather than introducing a backup mentor, simply cut their previous supply of information off from them and force the young Exalts to stand on their own two

feet. This changes the direction of the game, but not for you, since you've anticipated the matter. Again, while it is a harsh thing to do, the death of an elder that they care about helps to make the players realize that, while their characters are Celestial Exalted, they are *not* immortal, and even one dead Sidereal is too many.

SKIPPING THE EARLY YEARS

Not all Storytellers want to run a game that makes such extensive use of characters' preludes and training years before the intended story. There are ways to accentuate both the low numbers of Sidereal Exalted and the loss of elders even in those circumstances. Instead, use flashback scenes or sessions, involving the characters' first years as Sidereals, for accomplishing this. In this way, the actual narrative can progress without preamble, and flashbacks can provide a break from the main storyline when there are players missing or the group doesn't seem ready to pursue the narrative. Use the flashbacks to establish important clues to where the normal plot is heading. By using direct clues to what lies ahead in the game, the flashbacks have more influence on the actual storyline than if they were mere memories that would only be there to focus on the Sidereals' long lifespans.

STORYTELLING THE GREAT CURSE

The Great Curse of the Sidereal Exalted is unlike that of any other type of Exalted. It especially differs by not having firmly established mechanical and in-game effects. Because of this fact, it is important to convey those consequences to the players without them realizing what is going on. The short form of its effects is that the Sidereal Exalts are blinded by a great hubris, rendering them completely incapable of adhering to their own wisdom at times when they should. As a result, they often turn on the world, ignoring anything else but their own firm opinions. Also, this hubris often prompts them to divide at the worst probable time, causing huge rifts in Sidereal society.

Always remember that while the Great Curse does not affect the Chosen individually, it is planted in all of them, but only surfaces when the Maidens' favored gather in larger groups. One such event that stands out among all others is the convocation that resulted in the Great Prophecy, when the Chosen performed the ritual showing them three possible futures depending on what was done. Instead of consulting with their patrons or the Unconquered Sun or even Luna, they made a choice for what direction the future would take. As a result, their society split in two parts — the Gold Faction and the Bronze Faction.

Conveying the grave danger that the Great Curse represents really requires a specific way of looking at its effects and what it does to the Sidereal Exalted as a group. The following two analogies explain them in simple modern terms that are easy to relate to. However, keep in mind that these are for the Storyteller, not the players. The point of the Great Curse's effects on the Sidereals is that they *are* so insidious. Don't explain them to the players, but let them act as guides while imagining the way it works.

First, you can imagine the Sidereal Exalted as modern day politicians that do not trust the general public with information and have no conviction that the populace can make the correct choices for themselves. That is the prime aspect of the Great Curse — the hubris. Since these politicians do not trust any outsiders, they must settle matters, and they all see things differently. Countless debates and arguments precede any decision, and when it is time to see things through, the group splits because of the compromises required achieving a resolution, making them weaker as a whole.

Another way to describe the Curse is to imagine the Chosen as individuals participating in a parenting convention. As the Great Curse surfaces, the Sidereal Exalted turn into patronizing overprotective parents that hold no trust whatsoever for anyone else's ability to rear their children. Because each Sidereal knows and trusts her

individual way of parenting, they argue, and eventually, several Sidereals leave the gathering in disgust.

Nevertheless, this is a plain description of the Great Curse. As a Storyteller, you can't just explain the effects to the characters in a straightforward manner because it is a subtle ailment that has gone undetected so far during the course of history. You must instead understand its basic effects and convey them subtly to the players. To make it an active and serious part of a game requires several carefully executed ploys to establish it firmly in the players' minds.

THE CURSE: PLAYERS' CHARACTERS

Working with the Great Curse's effects on players' characters without revealing its nature and existence to the participants requires a subtle approach that departs a bit from normal storytelling techniques. As with creating the sensation of being few in number through repeated social isolation of the characters, the key is to make the players adopt a specific mindset. In this case, the goal is to establish a mindset of pride and arrogance early on in the game — but without encouraging the players to become unbearable showoffs.

The goal is to make the players believe that their characters are better than all non-Sidereals. Accomplish this by using an abundance of positive adjectives during



scene descriptions where their characters are the direct focus. Balance them out with slightly negative ones to avoid suspicion (and to prevent players from becoming so cocky that their characters become impossible to bear).

Meanwhile, descriptions of non-Sidereal Storyteller characters should emphasize negative adjectives and balance them out with faintly positive ones. If done correctly, this will establish a mindset of superiority in the players. Throughout the sessions where the positive adjective technique is in use, be more than usually tolerant of player mistakes and bad decisions. Allow even a plan with obvious frailties to succeed, but do not reveal that it could have failed and what its weaknesses were. Just keep in mind these are not “free” successes. Make the characters work hard to reach their goals, just allow the players success when the characters do cooperate. That way, they also learn to function as a group while being prideful Chosen.

As the Storyteller, you must eventually decide if you should keep using this technique for the duration of the series or not. If the characters become cockier than what you desired, it may be a good time to switch back to a less biased storytelling technique. Making the transition without players noticing it requires careful handling. Once everything returns to normal, the players and their characters have already experienced the seed of the Great Curse. While it does not have any further active effects, the players have still gotten an impression of superiority. When the time comes to resume portraying the curse, all that must be done is to return to positive and negative adjectives. On the other hand, if the characters work well with the theme and mood of the game, there is simply no need to switch back to the standard technique. Keep feeding the characters’ egos, but not so much that their judgment seems superficially unsound.

Willpower is another way to establish the Great Curse that is both subtle and makes the players active participants. Normally, characters in *Exalted* regain Willpower by acting according to their Nature, by their players rolling Conviction or by transforming Essence gained on two- or three-die stunts. To use Willpower to implement the Great Curse, add the following and make it an exclusive Sidereal Exalted rule:

Because Willpower supplies the characters with confidence and self-assurance to be able to accomplish tasks or even to resist convincing arguments from others, allow the characters to regain lost Willpower immediately when they enter a room with other Sidereal Exalted in a scene where the Great Curse plays an important role. In fact, if they already have their full rating, make a hidden Conviction roll for each character and add the number of successes in secret temporary Willpower for the duration of the scene. Apply this Willpower freely to rolls they make without revealing why or what you’re doing.

When the characters mingle with other Sidereals, describe each one present at the convocation individually

to the players (even if the characters know them from earlier). Describe their steady pace and firm handshakes, but also convey the subtly confident facial expressions and measured body movements of those with extremely high Willpower ratings. This gives an appearance of incredible self-confidence. Also, make sure to go out of your way to be certain that each player perceives the other players’ characters in the same way, if at all possible. Introduce the scene individually to each player, and let her take it from there. Once the scene ends, return the characters’ Willpower to normal levels.

THE CURSE: STORYTELLER CHARACTERS

Storytelling the effect of the Great Curse on younger Sidereals is easy. They’re just like players’ characters who always do what you want. You don’t really have to do anything special other than to show them to have poor judgment when making certain crucial decisions.

Elder Sidereals are a little different, though. Elder Sidereals, particularly at this late date, are always making decisions that are colored by the Curse. There is only one thing to do to reflect the Curse’s growth in older Exalted — skip the subtlety, and just blame the obvious effects on other causes. Elder Sidereals are arrogant bastards who rarely listen to reason from younger Sidereals. This is because they are genuinely smarter than their inferiors and because their own arguments are canny and effectively convincing, not just to others, but to themselves as well. Characters should quickly learn that it’s nearly impossible to get a word in edgewise after their betters settle on a matter, and they should also learn that their elders are generally entirely correct. Don’t make your game about generational conflict. The Great Curse of the Sidereals is not that the wisdom of a younger generation is ignored by pig-headed elders, it is that their collective wisdom fails them when they need it most. When characters follow their elders into folly, the players should feel their characters are doing the right thing.

Sidereal elders should come across as arrogant and extremely prideful but never wholly coldhearted. They act the way they do because they truly see no other alternative. The players will adopt this worldview if you present it and effectively create an illusion of necessity and deliberately confuse it with their sense of urgency in accomplishing their political goals.

Even when in the throes of the Curse, Sidereal elders never come to the conclusion that they do not agree with destiny and have decided to oppose it. They instead see their own success as crucial to ensuring the well-being of Creation and lose track of where the interest of destiny ends and their own agendas begin. Think of how many centuries they have spent enthroned at the pinnacle of Creation, and imagine how legitimately difficult it is for them to see the difference between what they want and what’s good for Creation.

When portraying them, it is also a good idea to make elder Sidereals slightly irrational. Always remember to portray it as eccentricity or other less-serious psychological trouble. Elder Sidereals have lived a long time in Yu-Shan, with little or no contact with Creation, while working side by side with pattern spiders, gods and the Maidens. That clearly twists their minds in such ways that they may perceive younger Sidereals in the same dismissive way that they would Lunar or Solar Exalts. They may refuse to speak with anyone at a convention unless the supplicant has applied for an audience with the elder in question. These are all natural eccentricities for a being of the age and power of an elder Sidereal, and they effectively conceal the symptoms of the Curse. Keep in mind that this is not a storytelling ruse — it is an accurate portrayal of the characters.

THE GREAT CURSE: GATHERINGS

Storytelling the Great Curse becomes very important to do during large gatherings of Sidereals, when the Curse most strongly manifests itself. The best way to portray the pervasive effect of the Curse at such affairs is through the conceit of generalizing the attitudes of the players' characters onto Sidereal society as a whole.

Before running such a gathering, look at the characters' interests and attitudes and what they personally want to accomplish. Talk to each player separately and ask how the character views the matter at hand and what she wants to accomplish while attending the gathering. After doing that with all of the players, look at the notes and find common threads of interest for the entire Circle. They don't have to all agree on every element — after all, part of the effect of the Sidereal Curse is its splintering effect on Sidereal culture. If characters disagree about certain issues but consider the issue itself important, so much the better. Let their difference define the factions of the community.

Take the common interests, concerns and suggested solutions that you find and make them the center of the meeting, and use them to determine the result of any large prognostications of the future. You don't need to make the desires of the characters match fate completely, but you do want to use the thoughts of the players' characters as a window into the collective thoughts of the Sidereals. By finding out what the players' characters will take into the meeting, you can understand what the Great Curse has been planting in the minds of the elders as well. Yet, because the characters' desires are not entirely catered to, the characters can participate in the debates and make a difference.

STORYTELLING CURSE EFFECTS

Making the Curse subtle but active also requires a careful approach to its effects. The Curse does more than work on the characters — it also changes the setting. The decisions the Sidereal Exalted make while

influenced by their hubris have both short- and long-term effects on Creation.

The primary concern is not to tell the players about every little mistake or misjudgment. The reason for this is that if you emphasize minor errors and remind the players they'll be punished for every slip in judgment, they'll automatically begin to assess whether or not they made the correct choices for the characters. This would be okay normally, but it means they'll continue to do so when the Great Curse is next affecting them. You don't want to encourage that. Instead, keep the minor consequences of their actions a secret unless they're obvious. Write them down in secret as the Sidereals eventually may find out about them.

SIDEREAL PLOTLINES

While the previous examination of the Sidereal Exalted suggests several plots that you should use to convey specific aspects of the game, the following focuses explicitly on stories that involve the Maidens' Chosen. Storytellers deciding to run a long-term Sidereal series should make things as easy as possible on themselves during the planning stages of the game — attempt to document the future course of the setting's major storylines or, at least, the major storylines you'll be using in your game. Don't work on too small a scale. You don't want to worry about the fate of small kingdoms so much as major Creation-wide plotlines. Worry about which faction will prevail, where Solar kingdoms will sprout up, which Lunars will lead the march against civilization and who the factions in the imperial civil war will be.

Throughout the course of a series, player actions can change the direction of the setting, and if such things happen, it is good to be able to go back to a document containing each specific storyline and see what the players' actions will do to each of them. This is also good policy as it gives you a wider overview of the game setting than detailing just one location to start. Sidereals move all over the face of Creation, and you need to plan accordingly.

Draw up three different categories for your plots. All of these categories affect each other, but by separating them in planning stages, you gain a better overview of the entire game. Write them down, and then, intertwine them the best way possible. It's suggested you plan several outcomes in advance to especially important occurrences.

- **Plots in Creation:** This category involves players' characters' personal plots — missions involving the characters and factions but not sanctioned by the Bureau of Destiny.

- **Plots in Yu-Shan:** Not all stories in Yu-Shan involve fate or the worldly matters of those in Creation. Yu-Shan is a kettle of heated arguments, corruption and politics that will explode some time soon. This is the category for stories set in Heaven that either involve the characters directly or that simply affect them.

• **Plots involving Yu-Shan and Creation:** Some plots involving the Sidereal characters are not limited to either of the two worlds, but overlap the boundaries by relying on cause and effect. This third category details such events that occur in either Creation or Yu-Shan that are severe enough to have repercussions in the other world. Plots involving destiny fall into this category.

• **Overall Game/Series Plot:** Major events that will change the face of Creation are detailed here. Refer to the notes on this whenever in doubt or if the players change the storyline so much that it becomes a bit dubious where they are going. This category is where you list the movers and shakers in your world and what they plan on doing.

The following are some examples of regular Sidereal Exalted plots. You should use them and the basic information they provide as foundations for games while expanding on the details.

MARCHING FOR DESTINY

There are two primary ways that the Sidereal Exalted work with and for fate in plotlines. The more unusual makes them Yu-Shan-based employees of the Bureau of Destiny. In this role, they have to participate in the planning and development of destiny from the conception of a fate to its final fruition in Creation. Along the way, they must resist (or succumb to) corruption and deal not only with internal Sidereal politics, but with the politics of the various Celestial Bureaus and with their personal lives in Heaven. Needless to say, this requires a lot of planning, but it is well worth it because of the interesting stories that take place when gods and spirits attempt to sway things in their own favor by attempting to use the characters to that end.

Since Storyteller characters must cooperate with the players' characters during the meetings, they easily get the sense of creating something interesting. Storytellers should seriously consider giving the characters Celestial Manse for free. Perhaps they even share lodgings. Several Sidereals sharing a Manse, and thus to some extent a life, is an excellent way to keep the group together even when its members are not in the office. Games following this format are excellent if you want players to explore the history of Exalted in-game, as more important destinies require a look on what's preceded the event that they plan.

To run a game this way, simply work out a place for the characters somewhere in the process of fate design described on page 63 of Chapter Two and discussed in "Serving Fate" on page 242 of this chapter. However, remember that, in the end, the characters should somehow receive credit for being in the planning group. Give the characters a token so the players can know they've done well. Promotions or a separate Manse are good rewards, as are more important assignments or more direct control over matters. The primary challenge for Storytellers using

this pattern for their series lies in the immense number of heavenly personages that need to be detailed. Characters will be in constant contact with members of the Celestial Bureaucracy and all of their peers, superiors, lobbyists, hangers on and social contacts will need to be detailed.

The second alternative, serving fate through direct action, is easier to plan and closer the roots of adventure gaming. Characters are given missions by their superiors and must go into Creation to sort out tangled or problematic fates and ensure that history unfolds as it is planned. Charts are provided to generate arbitrary missions for characters. Storytellers can pick from the lists or roll. Randomness can be an advantage here, as the demands of fate are unpredictable and not necessarily related to the world of martial arts combat that most Exalted inhabit.

The benefit of this sort of mission is that you do not need to spend hours planning what caused the rift in destiny. It could be nothing more than a snarl in the threads of fate, or it might be something that a Third Circle demon did months ago that is now causing a repercussion. The characters do not have to be told what caused the rift or what might happen if they fail with the mission. All they need to know is that there is something wrong and that they are required to keep the problem from growing. Indeed, knowing more might cause the characters to err.

Fates that the characters deal with are things such as arranging for a lost key's discovery, taking a dog from her owner and placing her in the middle of a street just before a yeddim attempts to escape, killing an entire family or ensuring that a marriage in turmoil is saved. They are all minor things that history requires to unfold properly.

If you wish to avoid the use of randomized events during planning stages and in-game but still desire to incorporate these sorts of plotlines, you should create your own assignments for the players' characters. Take into consideration the fact that destiny, particularly areas of destiny that develop problems, are more often difficult situations than dangerous ones. Characters serving fate are more likely to be given a weird or meaningless assignment than a *Mission Impossible*-style commando raid. Those sorts of missions come when hunting demons or pursuing the characters' personal goals.

Whether you roll for a random result or simply pick a fate, bear in mind that the charts below only provide a basic plot — the actual core of the mission — that still needs development and adaptation to suit each individual game. Sidereal Exalted receive many assignments that are close to their deadlines. Give the players a specific amount of time to ensure a success before fate changes and the Sidereal Exalted have failed in their duties to the Maidens and to destiny.

Even if it involves minute fates, you should plan ahead and detail a possible outcome, should the players' characters fail. These outcomes may appear minor to the

characters as well. For example, the yeddim used as an example in the previous paragraph may escape without incident when it was really fated to kill the dog standing on the street. This is nothing that affects the storyline on the whole, but it lets you continue on if they fail their missions. Think not just of the immediate consequences, but of the consequences to destiny as a whole. See Chart 6: Breach of Destiny for ideas.

Players who enjoy taking an active hand in steering the game (or simply find random events entertaining) should be allowed to roll on the charts occasionally. While rolling for new missions during the course of a session works for experienced Storytellers, beginners should roll at the end of each session to give themselves time to plan.

BATTLING FOR DESTINY

Although destiny has both Sidereals and spirits working to assure that everything proceeds as planned, fate faces constant threats from both creatures that stand outside of destiny's control and treachery from within the Celestial ranks. Occasionally, Sidereal characters must face these enemies to prevent them from snarling up fate's threads. The Chosen can do this either by killing them or by thwarting their plans before it is too late. While much of this chapter's previous focus has been on how to serve fate and integrate those parts into

a game, bear in mind that the Sidereals are not only servants of fate, they are its soldiers, too, constantly waging war against all threats to the unfolding history of Creation.

Games in this genre have many appearances, from glittering magical wars fought with the aid of other Exalted to gritty espionage-type scenarios based on infiltration and secret assassinations. By using an antagonists antithetical to all Creation, plots using this genre work well for mixed groups of characters, as well as in games where the characters come from different factions, since the threats to Creation unite the Sidereals in a common goal that surpass their ideological differences.

Storytellers that enjoy random results from dice rolling can use the chart below to decide what type of antagonists the characters must face. Below are also a few plot suggestions that are easily integrated into a game or can work as the foundation for an entire series. Simply replace (*antagonist*) or (*antagonists*) with the type of enemy the Opponent chart details. Nevertheless, it also serves as a complement to the fate charts. When utilizing Chart 1 or Chart 2, Storytellers often want to detail the surrounding events leading up to the mission. Therefore, make a roll to see what sort of beings initially caused the tangle in the strand in fate (exceptions are those fates that actually mention the antagonist).



THE TWISTS OF FATE

Determine the outcome in two steps. First, roll to determine what type of fate the characters must ensure, and then, roll to decide the amount of time characters have to perform their duties before failing.

Step One: Roll 1d10 to determine which Fate Chart provides the current plot.

- **Odd:** Fates that appears meaningless at first glance and can be preformed without much hardship, use Chart 1. While they often have no impact on a game other than to get the Sidereals to perform their duty and allow players to grasp that aspect of the game, some of them do, in fact, have long-term effects if you make an outline of what they affect in destiny.

- **Even:** Just as Chart 1, Chart 2 provides minor fates that the Sidereal Exalted must ensure the outcome of, but in this case, the Sidereals have to work within an environment of opposition. The exact nature of the opposition is something each Storyteller must decide, but each fate implies certain conditions the characters have to work in.

CHART 1: UNOPPOSED FATES

Each number supplies two options to choose from. Should you want chance to decide, roll a 10-sided die again and have odd numbers represent the first choice.

10-Sided Die	The Sidereal Exalted Must...
1	Aid a Guild merchant to avoid an ambush, <i>or</i> delay a citizen from his meeting with a mistress.
2	Convince a Dynastic family to adopt an orphan, <i>or</i> make it rain over a drought-stricken landscape.
3	Ensure that an unimportant peasant family dies while traveling to Nexus, <i>or</i> help an aged wealthy man find a suit able wife to impregnate before dying.
4	Remove all but a single copy of a particular book from the libraries and archives of a city, <i>or</i> frame an innocent soldier for murdering an officer and then help him escape.
5	Steal seven rubies from unExalted Dynasts and hide them in a woodchopper's cabin in the Imperial Mountain, <i>or</i> prevent onlookers from aiding a drowning man.
6	See that an important arcane text is delivered to a library or Immaculate temple, <i>or</i> ensure the safety of a group of refugees hunted by mercenaries.
7	Evict a lesser god from Yu-Shan to open up her position for her replacement, <i>or</i> replace an ancient artifact belonging to a mortal with a fake.

8 See that a voting procedure is properly rigged, *or* convince the servant of a Dynast to plant incriminating evidence against his master in the hands of his rivals.

9 Force a homeless beggar to knock on the door of a peasant and sing a song, *or* set all clocks in the governor's mansion back one hour so he'll miss an important meeting.

10 Ensure that someone kidnaps a wealthy man's dog, *or* make sure that the broken temple bells ring 20 times when a procession leaves a nearby house.

CHART 2: OPPOSED FATES

Each number supplies two options to choose from. Should you want chance to decide between them, roll a 10-sided die again and have odd numbers represent the first choice.

10-Sided Die	The Sidereal Exalted Must...
1	Smuggle a pendant inside a satrap's palace and hide it in a vase standing next to the throne, <i>or</i> kidnap a Dynast's seven babies and leave them tied in the town square by the next dawn.
2	Prevent a group of ghosts from establishing themselves as inhabitants in a living city, <i>or</i> see that every trooper in field-deployed wing of an imperial legion is fed a hearty, nutritious meal.
3	Hide a newly Exalted Sidereal from a Wyld Hunt passing through the city, <i>or</i> kill a Dynast's pregnant wife.
4	Plant flower seeds on seemingly infertile ground, and water them until they grow, <i>or</i> lure a Guild caravan into a barbarian trap.
5	Maintain the illusion that a murdered family is alive until a caravan leaves town, <i>or</i> steal all documents from an Immaculate temple.
6	Recapture five criminals that escape justice before they leave the city, <i>or</i> convince a satrap to give up his job for seven months and take up tailoring.
7	Trick a minor god into leaving Yu-Shan forever, <i>or</i> rebuild one of the ruined towers in Rathess.
8	Convince the head of an Immaculate temple that he is an Exalt, <i>or</i> kill the living servants of an Abyssal Exalted while they are on their way to Gem.
9	Help a child Anathema to escape a malevolent spirit, <i>or</i> destroy a silver mine that belongs to House Sesus, leaving no survivors.

10 Roll on Chart 3: Major Fates, or prevent an unforeseen attack by demons of the Second Circle.

CHART 3: MAJOR FATES

Each number supplies two options to choose from. Should you want chance to decide between them, roll a 10-sided die again and have odd numbers represent the first choice.

10-Sided Die	The Sidereal Exalted Must...
1	Provide a clandestine escort for a Dragon-Blooded through a known Lunar Exalt's domain, or locate and detain a corrupt Sidereal Exalt.
2	Pursue a settlement between two conflicting parties, or stage the murder of an influential person and his wife while not personally dealing the killing blows.
3	Ensure that an assassination attempt proceeds uninterrupted by the meddling Fair Folk, or stop the Fair Folk from supporting an infamous pirate family.
4	Help a political refugee to establish a new identity while keeping pursuers away, or free a group of prisoners held captive by Abyssal Exalted.
5	Bring a tyrant spirit's rule to an end, or prevent the truth about a local myth from surfacing.
6	Prevent incriminating evidence about the Sidereals' existence from reaching its destination, or shatter a cult without killing any of its members.
7	Secretly switch a poor man's newborn son for a wealthy Dynast's, or locate a magical poison that can overcome the powers of a healing artifact used on a sick man before he can recover completely.
8	Bring about the destruction of a famous and well-guarded library or public archive, or find a lost tomb and ensure that the information therein falls into the hands of the Immaculate Order.
9	Lead a caravan astray before herding it to its intended destination, or participate in a Wyld Hunt in order to divert it from a newly Exalted Sidereal.
10	Roll on Chart 4: Mythic Fates, or prevent the excavation of an old Anathema gravesite.

CHART 4: MYTHIC FATES

Mythic fates are extremely important assignments that Sidereals can receive. Some involve actual menaces to destiny. Others are simply menaces to Creation in general. If the

series isn't ready for this kind of plot twist, send the characters off to guard a Solar tomb instead. When rolling for time, Storytellers generating mythic fates will generally want to use the second, longer time value.

10-Sided Die

1-2

3-4

5-6

7-8

9-10

The Sidereal Exalted Must...

Strike back against a powerful faerie lord who is working with a secret Guild slave ring to purge villages and cities on the border while avoiding bloodshed. The Sidereals must venture into the Wyld and assassinate the faerie lord and his court before they move an army into the abandoned cities and expand the Wyld's influence on Creation. Meanwhile, they must also expose the Guild's activities to the victimized domain's ruler.

Against harsh opposition, investigate and charge several major gods with treason. The evidence must be such that it would stand firm when and if the Sidereals manage to get the Five Maidens, Luna and the Unconquered Sun to judge the gods and purge Yu-Shan of conspirators working with the Yozi.

Find and destroy a Third Circle demon that is attempting to ensure his Yozi's manifestation in Creation. Only by locating the Yozi's secret cult and the direct servants of the demon can the Sidereals find out that the Yozi's true power lies within its magically hidden temple. The only way to put an end to the demon's plans is to destroy the temple — and, possibly, even the Yozi. Manipulate influential people, through clandestine means, to divert soldiers to the borders of a spreading shadowland and avert a coming invasion. Characters must also travel into the Underworld and dispose of the Deathlord while the Abyssal Exalted fight the border war, in order to prevent the shadowland from spreading further.

Prevent other Celestial Exalted from assassinating the Regent and several Dragon-Blooded Senators whose deaths would ignite a full-scale civil war that would ruin the Realm and spread to the Threshold nations. Also, the Sidereals must find the Celestial Exalts and dispose of them before another assassination attempt occurs.

CHART 5: TIME

This table decides how much time the characters have to succeed with their assignments before fate changes and a strand escapes their oversight. Should the characters fail and the fate is of huge importance to the game, you should consider opening up another opportunity to rectify the error some time later. When applying this table to Chart 2, you must decide if this is how long the characters have before they can start or if it's how long they have before they must succeed. If you decide to allow the characters more time, use the second choice on the result. Roll 1d10 and match the result with the chart.

10-Sided Die	Time Before Deadline
1	4 hours/3 days
2	6 hours /4 days
3	8 hours/5 days
4	10 hours/6 days
5	12 hours/7 days
6	14 hours/8 days
7	16 hours/9 days
8	18 hours/12 days
9	22 hours/17 days
10	24 hours/24 days

CHART 6: BREACH OF DESTINY

Breaches of destiny may occur when a Sidereal Circle fails to complete a mission in the allotted amount of time. Mostly, this is a matter for the Storyteller to determine, and in general, failure to implement a specific fate should just force the characters to report failure and request instructions for trying again. Similarly, Storytellers who want to have a faerie or demonic breach should probably have something in mind and introduce it when the characters next fail, rather than rolling for it. However, Storytellers who want to portray the dangerous and unpredictable results of failure may wish to roll on this table, especially if the players don't seem to be taking their assignments very seriously, since it offers a 20 percent chance of a breach if they fail.

10-Sided Die	Extent of Breach
1-2	No breach. The problems resulting from the failed fate must be corrected, and there may be minor displays of broken logic, but there are no disastrous violations of causality.
3-5	Minor paradox. The effects last no longer than a scene and have only a few witnesses. <i>Examples: A drinking party results in a riot even though there is no wine present. A man drowns despite the fact he was pulled safely from the water.</i>
6-7	Serious paradoxes. The effects may have hundreds of witnesses, or they may continue for several hours or even days until the destiny can be rerouted.

Examples: A politician gives a memorable speech without attending, a fire is not extinguished on schedule and so cannot be extinguished at all and continues to spread for hours.

Major paradox. The paradox is large enough to cause widespread panic or to disrupt the politics and economics of the region. The paradox can equal a Solar Circle spell in its effects or a major natural disaster such as a severe earthquake or volcanic eruption. It might destroy a city or cause crop failure over a radius of tens of miles.

Examples: A prince is assassinated, and his kingdom falls into chaos despite the fact that he is still alive. A mortal sorcerer banishes unseasonal rain, and the spell never ends, rendering a city-state into a waterless desert.

Faerie breach. The breach will create a Bordermarch Wyld zone and admit one to ten commoners or one noble if it is a minor fate. A major fate will create a Middlemarch with a faerie Demesne and one to ten nobles commanding 20 commoners each. Mythic fates and special events can call down worse or summon Wyld storms. The manifestation is not always immediate. Roll on Chart 6: Time, and use the righthand (longer) time to determine how long until the breach appears.

Demonic breach. A breach in a minor fate will bring forth one to ten First Circle demons. A major fate will bring forth one to ten Second Circle demons and their entourages. The size of the entourage may vary. Octavian (see *Games of Divinity*, pp. 103-104) would probably arrive with an army of erymanthoi (see *Exalted*, pp. 294-295) and tomescu (see *Games of Divinity*, pp. 122-123), while Mara might arrive with only a handful of bisclavarets (see the *Exalted Storyteller's Companion*, pp. 73-75) and neomah (see *Games of Divinity*, pp. 118-119). Mythic fates and special events can draw Third Circle demons or even manifestations of the Yozis. As with the faerie breach, above, the manifestation is not always immediate. Roll on Chart 6: Time, and use the righthand (longer) time to determine how long until the breach appears.

8

9

10

OPPONENT

1d10	Opponent
1-4	Deathlords (possibly using Abyssal Exalted)
5-6	Primordials (including Yozis and Malfeans)
7-9	Fair Folk
10	Other (behemoth, Eye of Autochthon, etc.)

MILITARY CONFLICTS

- **The War:** A region's prolonged war with the (*antagonists*) must quickly come to an end before the (*antagonists*) growing strength proves too much for the forces opposing it to handle. The characters must make surgical strikes at the (*antagonists*), weakening them before the region's own army can proceed and end the conflict in favor of Creation.

- **Conquering the Manse:** An ancient and extremely powerful Manse falls into the hands of the (*antagonists*), and the characters must regain control over it before the opponents attune to it and gain control over all its secrets, including several First Age weapons or other powerful items. There is no time for undercover work, only tactical planning and direct confrontation.

POLITICAL CONFLICTS

- **The Coronation:** A Threshold kingdom anxiously awaits the coronation of its new prince. In secret, the (*antagonists*) plan on making a swift strike at the heart of the kingdom by assassinating the future ruler during the coronation ceremony. As the citizens' morale shatters upon the death of their leader, the (*antagonists*) invade the kingdom, starting with the capital. Unfortunately for the (*antagonists*), their presence has disturbed fate's threads slightly enough for spirits to notice their activity. As the characters attempt to sort out the minor strands caused by their opponents, they realize the full scope of what the (*antagonists*) plan.

- **The Deal:** The (*antagonists*) are on the verge of striking a deal with a local ruler that allows the (*antagonists*) to safely transport supplies through the area and establish a base of operations in the domain for the war they're planning, causing a major rift in destiny's grand weave. The characters must infiltrate the capital and assassinate the governor or convince him to change his mind before he strikes the deal, but they face grave opposition from advisors and guards that the (*antagonists*) assigned to the governor's court as a safety net.

FIGHTING FOR IDEOLOGY

The Sidereal Exalted must sometimes defend their faction against threats or aggressively pursue an aggressive campaign to further the faction's goals. Previously, the factions worked amicably together in order to firmly enforce the will of fate on Creation. With the return of the Solar Exalted five years ago, everything changed. Story-

tellers not wanting to use any of the plots described here should write down a list of what each faction's ideology means to players' characters and to the setting. By comparing the list with the intended plotline, you are able to fashion the plot after the players, which is considerably more entertaining than the other way around.

- **Working the Heathens:** The Bronze Faction sends the players' characters to an area that has only recently come under the Realm's control. The citizens previously venerated spirits living nearby and accepted them as their spiritual superiors. The characters must convert the general public to the Immaculate faith, while facing opposition from the firm believers in the Hundred Gods Heresy. Meanwhile, the Bronze Faction Sidereals must also impose the Celestial Order on the spirits that have overstepped their boundaries and evict a Gold Faction Sidereal living in the area.

- **Riding with the Wyld Hunt:** All the signs and portents suggest that a new Lunar or Solar Exalt is about to awaken somewhere in the Threshold. The Bronze Faction, seeing also that a new Sidereal is emerging somewhere in the same domain around the same time, sends the players' characters to ride with the Wyld Hunt to ensure the death of the reborn Anathema — but also to divert the Hunt from the Sidereal.

- **The Puppet Solar:** The citizens of a Threshold principality previously under imperial control have thrown off their shackles. The Realm prepares to retake the area as soon as a legion can be deployed. The general public, determined to eradicate everything that the Realm imposed on it, rejects the Immaculate Philosophy and looks to the Hundred Gods Heresy for guidance. The Gold Faction, having spies both within the Realm's ranks and inside the area, learns of the uprising and realizes that it is a golden opportunity to firmly establish its presence and weaken the Realm's influence in the Threshold. The citizens lack a leader because they lack something firm in which to believe. That is why the faction assigns the characters to locate a recently Exalted Solar who they must quickly train and introduce to the people, thus establishing a Solar cult that may spread to nearby domains.

- **Herding the Lost Sheep:** Characters of either faction must locate and convince a rogue Sidereal to join their ranks again in exchange for immunity against punishment. The Sidereal, believing that the Maidens' Chosen should be gods themselves and not lead their lives in secret or submit to either the Realm or Solar Exalted, is not easy to convince, but he agrees to hear what the characters have to offer. Meanwhile, in Yu-Shan, the opposing faction learns of the characters' business with the outcaste and moves for immediate apprehension and judgment of the renegade. The players' characters must now work in both Yu-Shan and Creation to ensure the fate of the Sidereal.



POWER CONFLICTS

Getting players motivated to participate in a game that focuses on power struggles is easily done by examining each character and appealing to what the Circle, when taken as a whole, feels is important. This means not just what's important to Creation as a whole, but to their faction and to their personal lives. As the Age of Sorrows dawns, it becomes increasingly important to ensure one's position and power in Yu-Shan and in Creation.

Most Sidereals understand that there is a war coming and intend for their faction to be ready for it. Some even strike deals with horrifying creatures such as the Fair Folk and the Deathlords to gain their support in the event of a war. Meanwhile, elder Sidereals and gods use their lessers as pawns in their personal games by putting characters in positions where they can be of use. Treachery brews within the factions and the Sidereals as a whole, and all that matters is the quest for power. Stressing this element and conveying it to players is not difficult. Just have them experience a loss of influence at the behest of another Sidereal or his allies.

It is also in these scenarios the players' characters commonly turn on each other to ensure their personal power and status. However, do not actively encourage retaliation. Instead, remind the players of certain critical elements so that the Circle remains intact.

First of all, the characters all serve Yu-Shan, and the loss of one Sidereal can lead to severe flaws in the fabric of destiny. Secondly, even if they hate each others' guts, they are all they have. The Sidereals are few and are not getting a boost in numbers any time soon. Finally, play on the classical phrase: The enemy of my enemy is my friend. Creation is crawling with immediate threats, and revenge is best served cold and well planned. Encourage the players' characters through Storyteller characters and players through direct advice to save revenge for another day and cooperate to fix the more urgent issues at hand. Always rely more on external antagonists than on working to create rivalry between characters. Otherwise, the game suddenly turns into a backstabbing tournament.

Keep in mind that players' characters' rivals may very well decide to start a smear campaign, creating false evidence or using the characters' dark secrets to blackmail them. In fact, they may even use the same means to increase their power with Storyteller characters. Should this happen, Storytellers should try to portray the matter as fairly as possible.

- **The Elder's Support:** The old status quo between the factions is broken even in Yu-Shan. Both sides attempt to sway gods to support them in their efforts. Many join the Bronze as they fear the Solar Exalted's vengeance, while others join the Gold Faction because they believe in the old order. The characters gain information that one of the older and more influential gods residing in Yu-Shan is

beginning to take an active interest in the factions' affairs but has yet to decide where to put his support. The support of the respected god also brings the support of his allies and friends, giving one faction the advantage over the other. The god listens to both sides before making a decision. If he chooses the players' characters faction, will the opposing faction attempt to diminish the god's influence and status by attacking his Creation-bound worshipers and tying him up in legal actions? Storytellers should expand on such consequences and also consider what the characters will do to the god if they lose.

- **Bluebook Fate Project:** While the characters are performing routine business in Yu-Shan, a lethally wounded spirit ally approaches them with warnings of personal danger. Before being able to reveal anything, the spirit perishes, leaving the characters to pursue the validity of his warnings. As they investigate things further, the characters encounter only reluctant spirits and gods, none wishing to talk about it, but through diligent investigation, they come to realize that the spirit's final destination before coming to them was the Manse of an adversarial Sidereal Exalt or god.

Through bribes and threats, the characters discover a group of individuals within the different bureaus who secretly cooperate with each other to ensure their power. In covert meetings, they plan several fates that they will enforce upon the Bureau of Destiny and see that they are submitted directly to the Maidens closest assistants for consideration through a campaign of blackmail, murder and corruption. But danger lurks from within the players' characters' Circle. One of the characters' most trusted allies is responsible for the spirit's murder and well aware of the ongoing investigation.

- **The Dark Deals:** The characters discover that a close friend is striking deals with an enemy of Creation or an enemy of her faction in order to secure her own hold over a specific domain in Creation. To make things worse, they witness a rival Sidereal gathering evidence of the treachery. The characters must decide whether to aid their friend by stealing back the evidence or to allow the rival to further his own status and influence.

Even if they manage to retrieve the evidence, will the players' characters simply allow their friend to continue with her actions, or will they use the evidence to further their own ends? Storytellers using this plot must allow the players' characters freedom and plan out the most likely consequences ahead of time. Always remember that, in this scenario, there is no real winner. The players must chose between having their characters aid a friend who committed treason against all they hold dear and allowing her to continue or standing firm and sacrificing her to strengthen their positions. If they decide to cover it up, an entirely new plotline comes up as they have to cover up both their protection of the other Sidereal and her mis-

deeds, while coming to terms with the knowledge that their actions allowed the enemies of Creation a victory.

FIGHTING FOR PERSONAL GOALS

Remove the factions and duties to Yu-Shan, and individual interests remain. Each Sidereal character leads a personal life outside of serving his faction and fate as a whole. Occasionally, the interests of their community clash with the interests of the individuals, at which point, characters must decide how to proceed next. Even in a game about the majestic and mysterious Sidereal Exalted, everything is not about “the greater good.”

Sidereals fight for power, attempt to steer fate in different directions and are willing to go to great lengths to get what they want. Yet, beneath their powers, the Maidens’ Chosen were once ordinary men and women, capable of love and mortal desires. Some have their normal jobs in Yu-Shan but still have to worry about all the other things that affect their daily lives. Of course, there are exceptions. Many Sidereal Exalted completely forsake their personal lives in favor of the factions or Heaven, but that creates difficulties as well, and characters who choose to exist entirely in Heaven must adapt to the mad intensity of divine politics.

In the end, the characters must decide how to proceed with their personal lives in the face of the growing divisions between factions, wars in Creation, further invasions from Wyld servants or spreading shadowlands. In fact, using personal life plots in a game such as **Exalted: The Sidereals** can prove tricky if combined with faction- or fate-based plots, as these latter stories generally take the upper hand for players who insist on giving greater attention to issues they perceive to be more objectively important. If combining such plots with personal agendas, decide from the outset which should have the largest focus in the game. Run the primary one as if it was the only storyline going on, while using the other as a secondary, more relaxing environment where characters can take a break from the major plot and focus on something less stressful.

Love is an important part of the average character’s life. Nevertheless, because it is not necessary for them to marry or have relationships with mortals, the Sidereals often tend to find mates in other Exalted or among the gods and spirits. This is both an assurance of future power and status as well as a psychological defense against having to witness the death of a loved one. Marriages constitute the basis for several good storylines that fall into the personal category. You should consider the possible storylines that may come from a player’s character believing that his loved one is having an affair with a friend or rival. Stories of broken hearts are often rich in dramatic potential without threatening to cause a major upheaval in the entire setting.

Wealth often measures a man’s status in society, and the Sidereal Exalted can be just as greedy as any avaricious Guild merchant. Their greed does not have to stem from a desire to gain personal wealth, but can, instead, focus on ensuring relatives’ and friends’ fortunes. With the aid of their Charms, Sidereal characters can make business deals go smoothly. And then, some other common stories that fall into this genre often place the characters as chancellors to a governor or king where they have to work against Exalted upstarts that desires their positions. Business stories and political intrigue often goes hand in hand. Have the characters secretly negotiate a major business deal with a mining company, and after they believe the affair is settled, have an upstart from their “master’s” court convince him to actually acquire the contract for the good of the state. Of course, the upstart targets the characters simply because they are a threat to his future social advancement. The players’ characters must then work to ensure their future fortunes without angering the ruler they work for or giving away their identity as Sidereals.

- **The Mercy Killer:** The family of a fellow Sidereal Exalt is found dead with no clues to the perpetrators. As the players’ characters support their friend through his grief, they slowly become aware of his inner turmoil and madness. His view of the role of the mortal families of the Sidereal Exalted has taken a drastic turn for the worse, and now, he looks at them as an illness that must be terminated to ensure the peace and well-being of the Maidens’ Chosen. The players’ characters must either help him work through his madness or gather evidence against him that will stand up in a trial, before another Sidereal family suddenly dies.

- **The Ideological Lovers:** Two Sidereal Exalted, each of them intensely tied to two separate ideological beliefs, fall in love and decide to marry against all odds, both hoping that the other will switch sides. There are two ways to involve the characters in this plot. Either they have to find something to ruin the marriage plans before the lovers stand before the Minister of Celestially Blessed Unifications and tie the knot, or they actively work against others that want to keep the marriage from occurring. Choose the view that fits the players’ characters, and weave them into the story by making the lovers close friends or even co-workers.

APPRECIATING THE SCENERY

One of the things that make Sidereals unique in comparison to both the Dragon-Blooded and the other Celestial Exalted is the beautiful and luxurious settings and the exotic individuals Sidereal characters encounter on a regular basis. Often in roleplaying games, scenery is simply taken for granted because it conveys the environment in which the characters interact. That can’t be allowed to happen in a Sidereal Exalted game.

Most players interested in portraying Sidereal Exalted will be intent on emulating the urbane sophistication of that character type.

Storytellers taking it easy simply narrate the appearance of the surroundings and the image of Storyteller characters. Storytellers must instead strive to make the setting come alive for the Sidereal Exalted and give players what they deserve, always aiming to bring the scenery to life by allowing the characters to occasionally explore it in-game. That way, the scenery becomes something intimately connected to each character. Take them over beautiful meadows, where butterflies or other colorful animals move in unison with the vegetation, creating an imagery of an area where the characters can find peace and harmony even in a chaotic world. Position characters in the Imperial City on the night of a Dynastic ball, and have them mingle with the decadent and glamorous rulers of the Realm. Convey the rich and vivid colors of the draperies, the shining jade armor and shields, and detail the seductive women and men who play subtle games of power in the open. Relay the baroque structures and the magically clean streets of Yu-Shan, with its alien citizens leading ordinary lives per heavenly standards, all dreaming of one day taking a turn at the Games of Divinity.

The key to achieve this is to find something in the series' primary venues that appeals to each player and then to emphasize those things. Bring out the pen and paper, sit down and make a list of everything the players would like to experience or that you'd like to describe, and always

make sure that the scenery, on the whole, affects each of the senses (sight, smell, touch, sound, taste).

Talk to the players about what their Sidereal characters appreciate in life beyond material possessions or the struggle for power and fate. Discuss things normally ignored during character creation, such as the characters' favorite colors and an example of scenery they find appealing. Write about their surroundings and important elements that should convey something specific before detailing the Storyteller characters and their clothing and behavior. Likewise, when planning Storyteller characters and their involvement with the environment, do not be afraid to discuss body posture and body language. People interact with scenery — they sprawl or stoop or sit rigidly.

Once all the elements are in place, make some written notes for a basic narrative description that can be relayed to the players. Remember that, sometimes, even a simple thing such as having the a player's character lift up a vase standing on top of an antique desk to explore its beautiful patterns and gold portrayals of the Five Maidens with their hands and eyes, utilizes four of the five senses. The sound the vase makes as he picks it up, the intricacies of the patterns sensed while moving his fingers over it, its rich and beautiful colors, and the smell of something old that wafts from it.

Once again, remember to show the players, and avoid telling them beforehand. At the same time, remember to give the players some space to operate in as well. The scenery is not there just so it can be relayed. Players must



experience its intricacies. Don't script the characters' actions beyond what's necessary. Take care to let players pick the portions of the cool-looking scenery with which they want to interact.

- **The Hunt or Feast Scenery:** Characters participating in a hunt with a god or being invited to a heavenly feast can appreciate the scenery by exploring the environment through their characters. And by turning the tables and placing the characters in the position of having to arrange a hunt or a feast for gods, the characters are forced to closely interact with the setting and create scenery that gods would appreciate. In this way, the scenery becomes more entwined with each Sidereal, and the players' personal tastes for the luxurious and the glamorous get a chance to take the air. Some players will enjoy having their characters host a beautifully described and arranged banquet as much as any victory in battle. If a player wants to revel in the pattern on the damask tablecloths, by all means, let him, as long as everyone else isn't bored.

- **A Murderous Evening:** A murder mystery where the Sidereals have to look for clues to establish the crime's motive and how it was committed before being able to reveal the culprit is the sort of story that makes the characters appreciate the scenery not just for what it is, but for the role it plays in the game. Once again, feel free to turn the tables. Have the characters arrange a murder mystery, perhaps as an evening's entertainment for a number of gods and spirits of Yu-Shan, and make them aim at making the puzzle solvable but almost impossible for the guests to sort out. The goal is to play up the weirdness of something as prosaic as a mystery when played out against the backdrop of bizarre and dangerous, but all too human, divinities.

DISCOVERING THE GREAT CURSE

No one save the Malfeans knows the extent to which the Great Curse has affected the soldiers of the gods, and they are not about to reveal it to the Exalted anytime soon. All that changes when the players' characters begin to investigate an event that proceeded terribly wrong after the course of action was decided upon in a Sidereal gathering. The aftereffects went far beyond what the Maidens' Chosen planned for, and some, including the players' characters, have begun to doubt their own infallibility.

Throughout the course of this story, the characters must investigate the Sidereals' choices, starting with the events of the Great Prophecy and continuing onward down to the present day. Have them interact with numerous elders that tell them about the actions they took, and hint that something always put them at a disadvantage on these occasions (such as the shattering of Sidereal society into the factions). Eventually, the characters have to take their investigations one

step further to make comparisons with an era when the Curse hadn't rooted itself as much as it has in the modern era. In order to find out about the time directly after the war against the Primordials, they must attempt to locate information through ancient books, the eldest of gods or, perhaps, by gaining access to one of the Celestial Incarna for a short period of time. This final part of the investigation should lead the characters to realize that, as time progressed, they simply turned on the world at the most crucial stages of its development and, in turn, caused their own society great harm.

All information leads to the end of the war and the years during which the surviving Primordials were fettered. In order to find the final evidence they need, the characters have to mount an expedition into Malfeas or the Labyrinth and locate the answers there — one way or another. Before taking them into the enemy's domain, you must decide if you want to continue with a second series that spawns off of this one or if the game's climax should come as the characters obtain evidence — either solid or strongly circumstantial — that there is such a thing as a Great Curse that has affected all of the Exalted.

CURING THE GREAT CURSE

The Sidereal characters find themselves possessing evidence of the Curse's existence and begin to sort out exactly what damage the Primordials' Curse has caused to the Exalted society. Eventually, they have to do something about the information and share it with Yu-Shan. Tensions rise as the gods realize that those held in high esteem have been mere unknowing puppets of the Ancients' revenge. Implicit to this storyline is the assumption that there is a way to cure the Exalted of the Great Curse. Unless you really know the players, don't send the characters searching for a cure just to tell them that, in the end, the quest was hopeless.

When the Curse is revealed, the Storyteller must decide what happens next and if the game should continue at all. If it does go on, decide how the Exalted deal with the problem. Perhaps the two Sidereal factions decide on a complete truce, with the Bronze Faction allowing the recruitment of Solars and Lunars for a massive strike at the heart of the Yozi's domains. Perhaps Gaia, as a Primordial, can counteract the other Primordials' Curse and cure the Exalted? If so, will the Sidereals use their talent for clandestine manipulation to repair the rifts among the Exalted and bring back a new golden age for all — or attempt to manipulate the situation to place themselves at the head of the new political order?

Whatever option you choose to use, make sure that the players' characters come out as the heroes of

the game and not as merely the supporting cast. In this series, Storytellers must push the game's limits and allow players to ditch the canon storyline in favor of your own. Don't cling to the books. If you focus the game around something where the characters can't matter, you shouldn't be surprised if it comes out a failure.

CROSSOVER INFORMATION

The relationship between the Sidereals and the other Exalted is quite unusual. While it is possible to run Sidereal games without having the players' characters encounter other types of Exalted, the Sidereal Exalts small numbers generally make the other types of Exalted an integral part of any Sidereal game. Most stories involving the Maidens' Chosen force Storytellers to rely on other Exalted, especially Solars and Terrestrials, to make up the supporting cast.

While players may want to participate in a strictly Sidereals game, it is strongly suggested that the Storyteller not permit a player whose Sidereal character is killed to make another Sidereal to replace him. Instead, he should play a Dragon-Blood or Solar Exalt brought in on the Sidereal conspiracy. Make sure to limit the experience points of such characters as well. One casualty is one too many in the current climate, and this allows the matter to be realistically portrayed. While other Exalted reincarnate almost instantaneously, it takes as many as three decades for Sidereals to Exalt, and even by using advanced training techniques, the Chosen will never Exalt before age seven, more commonly, not experiencing the Exaltation until their teenage years.

Of the Celestial Exalted, the Solar Exalt is both the most obvious antagonist and ally, depending on what faction the players' characters belong to. As the Chosen of the Unconquered Sun, they are the most powerful type of Exalted there is when it comes to raw Essence control and Charms. Because of this, they are also extremely dangerous in direct confrontation, but the Sidereal Exalted have something they lack — experience. Unlike the Solars, the Sidereals have never had to fear the Wyld Hunt or the wrath of the Realm as they protected one another, training and performing their duties as normal. This is both a blessing and a curse when the Sidereals have to deal with Solar Exalted. While the Solars are generally not aware of the Sidereals' treason, it probably won't take them long to discover it, and when they uncover the truth on their own terms, at least some percentage of them are sure to demand retribution.

The Lunar Exalted, at least the older ones, are well aware that the Sidereals mysteriously disappeared around the time of the Dragon-Blooded uprising, and

generally, they hold a strong grudge against those Chosen of the Maidens. To both the Bronze and Gold Factions, the Lunars are nuisances who often meddle in the Sidereals' affairs and predetermined fates. Yet, they realize the value of having the Lunars as allies rather than enemies, and while the Bronze Faction commonly prefer to see them dead because of it, not all are ignorant of what aid Luna's Chosen could provide to their struggle. Some Gold Faction Sidereals even accept newly Exalted Lunars into their training camps to ensure the Lunars' loyalty and strengthen the Gold Faction's position. Having a Lunar in the player group may prove useful when its forced into combat situations or faces the possibility of an all out war.

THE ALCHEMICAL EXALTED

Just as Second and Third Circle demons do, the Alchemical Exalted stand outside of fate's control, leaving the Sidereal Exalts who encounter them extremely puzzled and curious as to what they are and, especially, what they want. Alchemical players' characters in *Exalted: The Sidereals* are best suited as ambassadors to Yu-Shan from the Theomachy.

Though the Terrestrials are the weakest of the Exalted, the Dragon-Blooded are still capable rulers and adequate warriors. They are useful to have as allies, for they can use their powers openly and take the Sidereals to places where their presence would otherwise look suspicious. Sidereals who decides to allow a Dragon-Blood in on the conspiracy often prepares him in phases so that the Terrestrial can handle the truth once it is revealed to him. The Sidereals also resort to using spells from the Celestial Circle that can never be undone by the Dragon-Blooded in order to bind Terrestrial protégés to secrecy. This secrecy is crucial. If the Dragon-Blooded knew that they were to the Sidereals what their mortal servants are to the Terrestrial Exalted, it would not be long before the Chosen of the Five Maidens were no more.

The Sidereal Exalted hold no special relationship to the Abyssal Exalted — except a dislike for everything they represent. The Sidereals know that some are former Solar Exalted who have make pacts with dark powers, but they are still somewhat puzzled on why and how the Deathlords can Exalt servants themselves. More alarming than their dubious origin is their masters' knack for tricking fate and obvious hostility toward all living things.

Because of this, they are the type of Exalted the Sidereals face most often in direct confrontation.

EXPERIENCE COSTS

Trait Increase	Cost
New Charm	11 (9 if in an Auspicious or Caste Ability)
New Martial Arts Charm	10 (8 if in an Auspicious or Caste Ability)
New Sidereal Martial Arts Charm	12 (10 if in an Auspicious or Caste Ability)
New Sidereal Martial Arts Charm (Other Celestial)*	15 (13 if Martial Arts is an Auspicious or Caste Ability)
New Astrological College	5
Increase Astrological College	current rating x 3

*Terrestrial Exalted cannot learn Sidereal martial arts even if opened to Celestial martial arts with an Immaculate-style initiation.

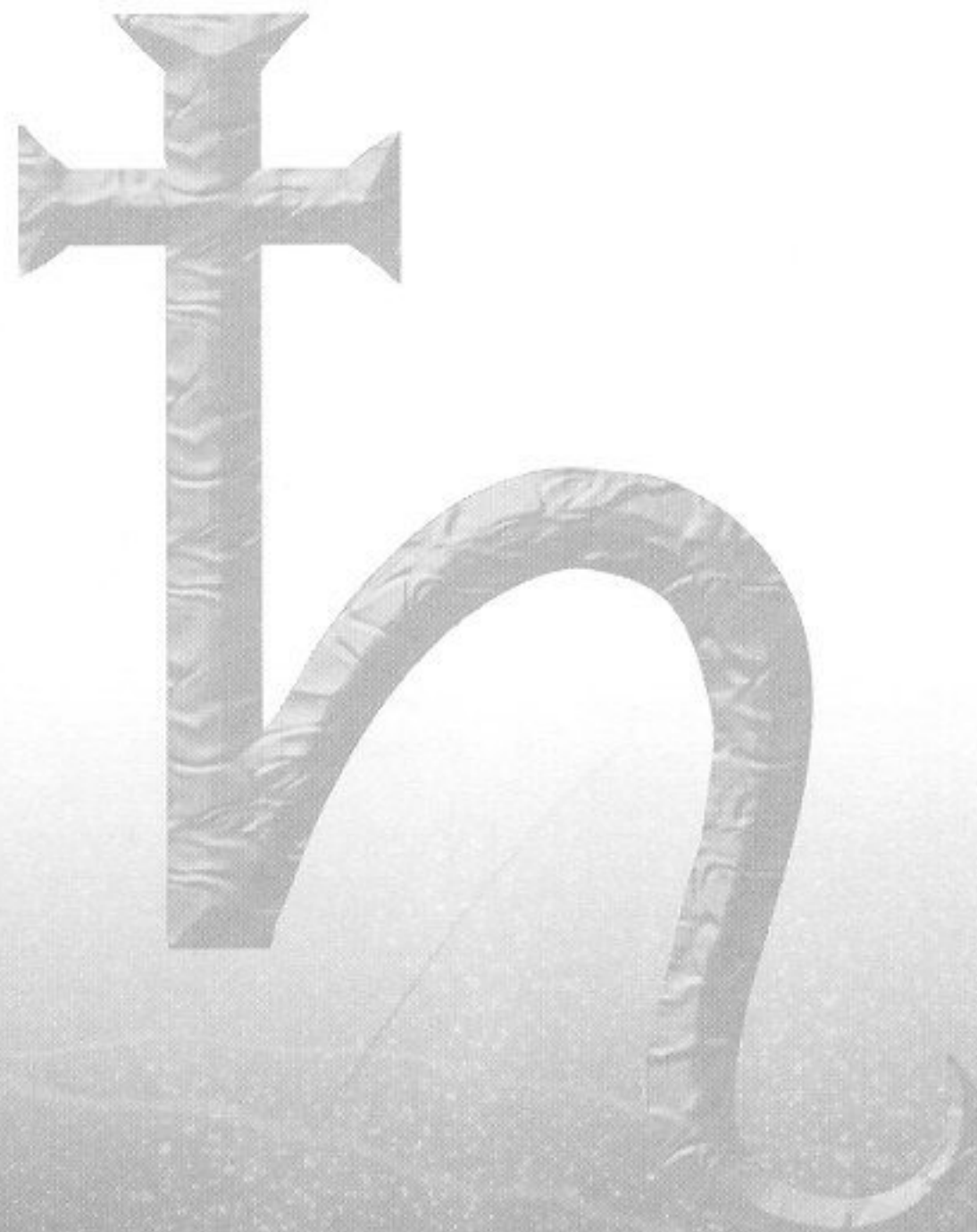
TRAINING TIMES

New Sidereal Martial Arts Charm:	minimum Essence x 1 week*
New Astrological College:	3 weeks
Increase Astrological College:	current rating in weeks

* These Charms cannot normally be developed without a tutor unless the character has Essence 6 or higher and cannot be developed by non-Sidereals at all.

Nevertheless, there are Sidereals who have struck bargains with the deathknights to strengthen those Sidereals' own power and to have a safety net in case they ever need to escape Yu-Shan. Yet, such Sidereals are less than a handful in number. An Abyssal

Exalted character in a predominantly Sidereal group may either be a defector or an ambassador, but Storytellers should generally avoid putting them in a player troupe because what they are most likely to be is "lame."



INDEX

- Ambrosia 27
 moving and forging 27
 astrology, Sidereal 204-235
see also Loom of Fate, rolls for making destiny
 Greater Signs 235
 mechanics summary 218-219
 Paradox 214-215
 Paradox Gain table 217
 resplendent destinies 215-235
 House of Endings 231-235
 The Corpse 231-232
 Dignity of the Dead 231
 Rising Butterfly Prayer 232
 Shadow of the Reaper 232
 The Crow 232
 Bold Filcher 232
 Feathered Cloak Trick 232
 Reading Dead Eyes 232
 The Haywain 233-234
 Celestial Intervention Appeal 233-234
 Harvest Ripe Wheat, Father Falling Hay 233
 Old Fellows Society Luncheon 234
 The Rising Smoke 234
 Chains of Adorjan 234
 Record-Obtaining Inquiry 234
 Superior-Entreating Memorial Style 234
 The Sword 234-235
 Minimum Legal Defense Competence 234-235
 Style-Discerning Eye 234
 Tears of the Blade 235
 House of Journeys 220-222
 The Captain 220
 Choosing For Fangs 220
 Iron Drill Exercise 220
 Ship-Commanding Attitude 220
 The Gull 220-221
 Good Worker Spirit 221
 Honest Face Spirit 221
 Joyous Grasshopper Spirit 221
 The Mast 221-222
 Invisible at the Center 222
 Strength of the Mast 221-222
 Structure of the Mast 222
 The Messenger 222
 Blow Wind Blow Style 222
 Field Mouse Rider 222
 Iron Heart, Iron Horse 222
 The Ship's Wheel 222
 Marshaling Infinite Strength 222
 Poetic Sacrifice Insurance 222
 Stronger Than This Job 222
 House of Leisure 222-226
 The Ewer 223
 Frenzied Courtship Dodge 223
 Snappy Banter Approach 223
 Sweet Flirtation Smile 223
 The Lovers 223
 Celestial Bliss Trick 223
 Handsome Boy Eyes 223
 Whore-And-Virgin Stance 223
 The Musician 223-224
 Brigand-And-Carouser Attracting Style 224
 Impossible-to-Remember Party Approach 224
 Strange Days 223-224
- The Peacock 224-225
 Proper Plumage 224
 Spouse-Saving Grace 225
 Wife-Procuring Tailfeathers 225
 The Pillar 225-226
 Best Friend's Couch 225-226
 Comforting Matriarch Embrace 225
 Equitable Partnership 225
 The House of Secrets 228-231
 The Guardians 228-229
 Hayseed Eye 229
 Lazy Works Smart Style 229
 Talisman-Making Touch 229
 The Key 229
 Ascending Destiny Mien 229
 Never Cease Moving 229
 Provable Location of the Gate 229
 The Mask 229
 Everywhere and Nowhere Technique 229
 Foot Treads No Twig 229
 Privacy-Enhancing Gesture 229
 The Sorcerer 229-230
 Invincible Essence Core 230
 Prince of the Earth 230
 Seer 230
 The Treasure Trove 230-231
 Dismissive Scholar's Sniff 231
 Professorial Mien 231
 Stab the Seer's Eye 231
 The House of War 226-228
 The Banner 226
 Battle-Fellow Attitude 226
 Heroic General Presence 226
 Tide of History 226
 The Gauntlet 227
 Knuckle-Cracking Stance 227
 Thug Fist 227
 Weak-Spine Sense 227
 The Quiver 227-228
 Apologetic Feint 227
 Instant Genius Style 227-228
 Several Arrows of Reason 228
 The Shield 228
 Aspect of the Bear 228
 Hero's Iron Skin 228
 Wounded Lion Strength 228
 The Spear 228
 Battle-Carrying Presence 228
 Hero-Supporting Performance 228
 Someone's Son Style 228
- rules** 205-215
 Backgrounds 104-110, 241
 Acquaintances 105-106
 Celestial Manse 106
 Connections 106-107, 108
 Optional
 Favor 241
 Heavenly Favor 241
 Salary 107, 109
 Savant 109-110
 Sifu 110
 Celestial Bureaucracy 14-93

INDEX

- audits 34-40
 cage of eternal torment 39
 collar of dutiful submission 39
 stages of an audit 38
Bureau of Destiny 52-75
The Most Excellent Designers of Destiny and Sidereal Conjunctions
 conventions 72-75
 directional conventions 72-74
 special conventions 74-75
 Convention on Deathlords 74
 Convention on Essence Wielders 74
 Convention on Natural Disasters 74-75
 Convention on Plague 75
 Convention on War 75
 The Division of Battles 56
The Crimson Panoply of Victory
 Hu Dai Liang, Lord General of the Division of Battles 58
Shogun of the Crimson Banner
 The Division of Endings 56-57
The Violet Bier of Sorrows
 Wayang (Black Puppet Mask), God of Silence 59
 Minister of Endings
 The Division of Journeys 55
The Golden Barque of the Heavens
 Ruvia, God of Roads 57
 Captain of the Golden Barque
 The Division of Secrets 56
The Forbidding Manse of Ivy
 Nara-O of the Hundred Veils 58-59
 Keeper of Secrets
 The Division of Serenity 56
The Cerulean Lute of Harmony
 Yaogin the Fair, God of Beautiful Dreams 57-58
 Bearer of the Lapis Ewer
 The Five Maidens 52-54
Celestial Incarna of Destiny
Bureau of Heaven 40-43
The Commission of Abstract Matters and Celestial Concerns
 Lytek, the Right Hand of Power 42-43
 Daimyo of the Division of Exaltation
 Ryzala, Lady of Bureaucracy and Paperwork 41
Shogun of the Department of Celestial Concerns
 Taru-Han, Lady of Souls 41-42
Shogun of the Department of Abstract Matters
Bureau of Humanity 45-48
The Divine Witnesses of Human Works and Deeds
 Ameru 48
 God of Meru
 Amoth City-Smiter, God of Tumbled Ruins 47-48
 Sub-Director of Bribery and Finance
 alliances with Fair Folk 48
 eats overly recalcitrant gods 46
 Gen 48
 City Father of Nexus
 Gri-Fel 48
 God of the Imperial City
 Jagalza 48
 Satrap of the Realm
 Wun Ja, God of the Shining Metropolis 46-47
 Director of Humanity
Bureau of Nature 48-49
The Superintendency of Nature Grand and Humble
 Burnished Talon, Daimyo of Mammalian Predators 49
Shogun of the Hierarchy of Function
 Flashing Peak, God of the Imperial Mountain 49
Shogun of the Hierarchy of Type
Bureau of Seasons 43-45
The Celestial Monitors of the Seasons and Weather
Aerial Legion 44, 45
 Ghataru 45
Shogun-Regent of the Seasons and Weather
 Nasri, Daimyo of Rainstorms and the Season of Air 45
 General of the Aerial Legion
contacting censors 40
 Celestial Circle Sorcery 123
 Gift of Knowledge 123
 Summoning the Heavenly Portal 123
celestial lions 18, 19, 20
 celestial wine 28-29
cost and effects 29
chargen summary 100-101
 Charms, Sidereal
 Battle
 Archery, The Quiver
 Any Direction Arrow 153-154
 Every Direction Arrow 154
 Five Seasons Approach 154
 Generalized Ammunition Technique 153
 Many Missiles Bow Technique 154-155
 Opportune Shot 154
 Brawl, The Gauntlet 155-156
 Crimson Palm Counterstrike 155-156
 Easily Accepted Proposition Stance 156
 Horrific Wreath 155
 Tolerant Strife 155
 Unobstructed Blow 155
 Melee, The Spear 156-158
 Harmony of Blows 156-157
 Meditation on War 157
 Orchestration of Conflict 157
 Impeding the Flow 157
 Perfection of the Visionary Warrior 158
 Serenity In Blood 157-158
 Smiling at the Damned 158
 Presence, The Banner 158-161
 Demon-Blocking Battle Pattern 160
 Essence-Draining Battle Pattern 160
 Force Decision 159-160
Heroic Essence Replenishment 158-159
 Impose Nature 159
 Predestined Triumph Practice 160
 Presence in Absence Technique 159
 Spirit-Binding Battle Pattern 160-161
 Resistance, The Shield 161-163
 Red Haze 161
 Shield of Mars 162
 Someone Else's Destiny 162
 Storm's Eye Stance 162-163
 Water and Fire Legion 162
 creatures outside of fate 129
 Endings 174-184
 Athletics, The Rising Smoke 174-175
 Burn Life 174
 Forgotten Earth 175
 Hungry Touch 174
 Inexorable Advance 175
 Invisible Motion 175

INDEX

- Awareness, The Crow 175-177
 Conclusive Wisdom 177
 Expected Pain 175-176
 Inevitable Pursuit 176-177
 Prior Warning 175
 Supernal Awareness 176
 Wise Choice 176
 Bureaucracy, The Haywain 177-179
 End Debate 179
 Icy Hand 178
 Slick Essence Replenishment 177
 Terminal Sanction 178
 Underling Invisibility Practice 178-179
 Martial Arts, The Sword 179-182
 Blade of the Battle Maiden 180
 Conclusion-Pursuing Approach 181-182
 Death-Parrying Stroke 181
 Flight of Mercury 179-180
 Joy in Adversity Stance 180
 Life-Severing Blow 181
 Metal Storm 181
 Secrets of Future Strife 179
 Violet Bier of Sorrows Form 181
 Medicine, The Corpse 182-184
 Earth and Sky Bargain 183-184
 Invocation of the Storm-Following Silence 183
 Peaceful Conclusion 182-183
 Smooth Transition 182
 Terminal Illness 183
 Journeys 132-143
 Endurance, The Mast 132-134
 Forward-Thinking Technique 133
 Heartless Maiden Trance 133
 One Direction Invocation 133-134
 Optimistic Security Practice 133
 Ox-Body-Technique 132
 Unswerving Juggernaut Principle 132-133
 Unwavering Well-Being Meditation 133
 Ride, The Messenger 134-137
 Breaking the Wild Mortal 136
 Glory Path 136
 Godly Companion 135-136
 Ordained Bridle of Mercury 134-135
 Riding the Dragon 136-137
 Spirit-Shape Companion 135
 Yellow Path 136
 Sail, The Captain 137-139
 Five Ordeals Odyssey 139
 Mirror-Shattering Method 138
 Salt Into Ash Sleight 137
 Stone Skipping Spirit 137-138
 Survival, The Ship's Wheel 139-141
 Adopting the Untamed Face 140
 Becoming the Wilderness 140
 Dreaming the Wild Lands 140
 Sky and Rain Mantra 140
 Sky Spirit Demand 140
 Wilderness-Commanding Practice 140-141
 Thrown, The Gull 141-143
 Essence Thorn Practice 142
 Life Gets Worse Approach 142
 Pain Amplification Stratagem 142
 Unrelenting Torment Technique 142-143
 Willful Weapon Method 141-142
 prayer strips 130-131
 Secrets 163-174
 Investigation, The Key 163-164
 Auspicious Prospects for (Caste) 163
 Efficient Secretary Technique 163-164
 Embracing Life Method 164
 Marvelous Inclusion of Details 163
 Research Assistant Invocation 164
 Larceny, the Guardians 164-166
 Conning Chaos Technique 166
 Creation Smuggling Procedures 165
 Dream-Confiscation Approach 165-166
 Honorable Thief Spirit 166
 Name Pilfering Practices 165
 Sidereal Shell Games 165
 Lore, The Treasure Trove 166-169
 Avoiding the Truth Technique 169
 The Methodology of Secrets 167
 Of Horrors Best Unknown 168
 Of Secrets Yet Untold 168
 Of the Shape of the World 168
 Of Things Desired and Feared 168
 Of Truths Best Unspoken 167-168
 Systematic Understanding of Everything 166-167
 Transcendent Hatchet of Fate 169
 Occult, The Sorcerer 170-172
 Celestial Circle Sorcery 171-172
 Incite Decorum 170-171
 Innocuous Maneuver 171
 Mark of Exaltation 170
 Tell-Tale Symphony 170
 Terrestrial Circle Sorcery 171
 Unweaving Method 171
 Stealth, The Mask 172-174
 Blinding the Boar 172-173
 Ceasing to Exist Approach 173-174
 Soft Presence Practice 172
 Subordinate Inspiration Technique 172
 Walking Outside Fate 172
 Serenity 143-153
 Craft, The Peacock 143-145
 Destiny-Knitting Entanglement 144
 Elegant Patterns of Fate 143-144
 Elemental Vision 144-145
 Excellent Implementation of Objectives 144
 Implicit Construction Methodology 145
 Mending Warped Designs 145
 World-Shaping Artistic Vision 144
 Dodge, The Ewer 145-148
 Absence 145
 Avoidance Kata 146
 Duck Fate 145-146
 Neighborhood Relocation Scheme 147-148
 Trouble Reduction Strategy 146-147
 Linguistics, The Pillar 148-149
 Blue Vervain Binding 148
 Favorable Inflection Procedure 148
 Ice and Fire Binding 148-149
 Lover's Oath 149
 Performance, The Musician 149-151
 Compassionate Essence Replenishment 149
 Defense of Shining Joy 150
 Faultless Ceremony 150-151
 Harmonic Completion 151
 Heart-Brightening Presentation Style 151

INDEX

- Perfection in Life 149-150
 Song of Spirit Persuasion 150
 Socialize, The Lovers 151-153
 Cash and Murder Games 152
 Hot-Eyed Snake Whispering 153
 Life Without Compunction 152
 Shun the Smiling Lady 151-152
Stern Essence Replenishment 151
 Wanting and Fearing Prayer 153
 You and Yours Stance 152-153
 Charms, Sidereal Martial Arts 184-201
see also Charms, Sidereal; Martial Arts: The Sword
 The Charcoal March of Spiders 184-189
 Cannibalistic Heritage Technique 187
 Charcoal March of Spiders Form 187
 Dance of the Hungry Spider 185-186
 Grandmother Spider Mastery 189
 Jumping Spider Strike 188
 Maw of Dripping Venom 186
 Nest of Living Strands 186-187
 Pattern Spider Touch 189
 Rain of Unseen Threads 186
 Thumbnail Spider March 187-188
 Unnatural Many-Step Stride 184-185
 Water Spider Bite 188
 The Citrine Poxes of Contagion 195-201
 Citrine Poxes of Contagion Form 200
 Convulsive Displacement Infectious Atemi 198
 Disjointed Essence Infectious Atemi 197-198
 Essence-Disrupting Infectious Atemi 198
 Essence-Shattering Typhoon 201
 Feverish Essence Discharge Atemi 197
 Flare of Invulnerability Method 199-200
 Gentle Touch of the Wicked Hand 200-201
 Glorious Sidereal Protection 201
 Inner Dragon Unbinding 199
 Perfect Reconstruction Method 198-199
 Spirit and Body Purification Touch 199
 Spiritual Perfection 200
 The Prismatic Arrangement of Creation 189-195
 Astrology Interruption Method 192-193
 Charm Redirection Technique 191-192
 Deadly Starmetal Offensive 189-190
 Demesne and Manse Form 194
 Demesne Emulation Practice 194
 Five Jade Fury 191
 Flickering Moonsilver Approach 190
 Four Magical Materials Form 191
 Games of Divinity Form 194
 God Ways 193
 Orichalcum Sheathing Stance 190
 Prismatic Arrangement of Creation Form 194-195
 Sequential Charm Disruption 192
 Soul Fire Shaper Form 193
 Spell-Shattering Palm 192
 (Type) Exalt Ways 193-194
 Games of Divinity 16-17, 18
 played in Jade Pleasure Dome 17
 dreamstones of the 18
 lesser elemental dragons 35
 Loom of Fate 59-63
 Essence users rewriting fate 71
 rolls for making destiny 63
 minor servants 30
 pattern spiders 59-61
 peaches of immortality 28-30
 difficulty to steal 28-30
 cost and effects 29
rights in Heaven 21
Sidereal Exalted 61-93
 and other powers 89-93
anima banners 121
anima effects 110
Arcane Fate 121-122
 conventions *see the Bureau of Destiny*
 culture and training 75-78
 duties 67-71
 Exaltation 84-86
Experience table 265
 factions 78-84
 Bronze 78-81
 Chejop Kejak
Leader of the Bronze Faction 79-80
 Immaculate Dragons 81
 Inner Circle 80
 Outer Circle 80-81
 Gold 81-83
 Ayesha Ura
Leader of the Gold Faction 81-82
 Cult of the Illuminated 83
 goals 82
 The Golden Circle 82-83
 rogues 84
 Silver 83
 Great Curse and the... 64, 250-253
 history of the... 62-67
 Sidereal ages 75
Sidereal prayers 123-125
 Essence Prayer 125
 Prayer of the Chosen 123-125
 training and education 86-89
 Terrestrial Circle Sorcery 122-123
 Open the Spirit Door 122-123
twists of fate 256-258
Yu-Shan 16-49
 adamant wall 16
 aerial rickshaw 24
 behemoth ownership 34
 cloud riding 23-25
culture shock 32
dematerializing in 17
 divine unemployment 32
 dreamstone parlors and brothels 33
 dwellings 31, 33-34
 gardens and courtyards 31, 33-34
 mansions and villas 31
entrance to Yu-Shan 18-20
 gates to Yu-Shan 17-22
 Calibration Gate 22
 in the East 22
 in the North 20, 22
 in the West 22
 on the Blessed Isle 20
 unusual 20-22
 Jade Pleasure Dome 17
security forces 26
 sky dome 16
wealth in Yu-Shan 27
 Quintessence 26
 moving and forging 27



NAME: _____
 PLAYER: _____
 CASTE: _____

CONCEPT: _____
 NATURE: _____
 ANIMA: _____

ATTRIBUTES

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

ABILITIES

JOURNEYS <input type="checkbox"/> ENDURANCE _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> RIDE _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> SAIL _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> SURVIVAL _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> THROWN _____ ○○○○○		SERENITY <input type="checkbox"/> CRAFT _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> DODGE _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> LINGUISTICS _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> PERFORMANCE _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIALIZE _____ ○○○○○		BATTLES <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHERY _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> BRAWL _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> MELEE _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> PRESENCE _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> RESISTANCE _____ ○○○○○	
SECRETS <input type="checkbox"/> INVESTIGATION _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> LARCENY _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> LORE _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> OCCULT _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> STEALTH _____ ○○○○○		ENDINGS <input type="checkbox"/> ATHLETICS _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> AWARENESS _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> BUREAUCRACY _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> MARTIAL ARTS _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> MEDICINE _____ ○○○○○		SPECIALTIES <input type="checkbox"/> _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ ○○○○○ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ ○○○○○	

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○	CHARMS <table border="0"> <tr> <th>Name</th> <th>Cost</th> <th>Name</th> <th>Cost</th> </tr> <tr><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td></tr> <tr><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td></tr> <tr><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td></tr> <tr><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td></tr> <tr><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td></tr> <tr><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td></tr> <tr><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td><td>_____</td></tr> </table>	Name	Cost	Name	Cost	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Name	Cost	Name	Cost																														
_____	_____	_____	_____																														
_____	_____	_____	_____																														
_____	_____	_____	_____																														
_____	_____	_____	_____																														
_____	_____	_____	_____																														
_____	_____	_____	_____																														
_____	_____	_____	_____																														
COLLEGES _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○																																	

WEAPONS

ANIMA

PARADOX

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

WILLPOWER

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

HEALTH

SOAK

B _____ L _____ A _____

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

VIRTUES

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

ESSENCE

● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
 PERSONAL _____ | _____
 PERIPHERAL _____ | _____
 COMMITTED _____

EXPERIENCE

ONE CORE RULEBOOK FOUR ESSENTIAL SUPPLEMENTS ALL AVAILABLE NOW!

THE AGE OF SORROWS—A TIME BEFORE THERE WAS A WORLD OF DARKNESS—IS AN AGE OF SAVAGE ADVENTURE. INTO THIS TIME OF TUMULT EMERGE THE EXALTED, HEROES GRANTED POWER BY THE GREATEST FORCES IN CREATION. THEIR ACTIONS HERALD EITHER THE RETURN OF THE GOLDEN AGE OR THE END OF THE WORLD, ALL DEPENDING ON WHAT LEGENDS YOU TELL OF THEIR DEEDS.

AS A SOLAR EXALT, YOU ARE A DIVINE HERO OF LEGEND REBORN INTO A TIME OF WOE. EXALTED IS THE CORE RULEBOOK FOR THIS GAME, CONTAINING RULES FOR PLAY AND CHARACTER CREATION. IT IS THE TOUCHSTONE FOR THIS FANTASTIC AND WONDROUSLY DEVELOPED SETTING. \$29.95



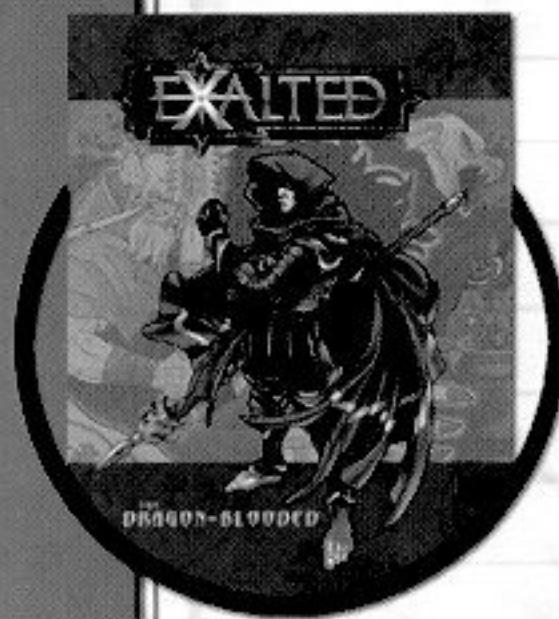
AS A LUNAR EXALT, YOU ARE A CHAMPION AND A PROTECTOR OF YOUR PEOPLE, ONE OF THE DEADLIEST PREDATORS EVER TO WALK THE FACE OF CREATION. EXALTED: THE LUNARS INCLUDES INFORMATION ON THE WYLD OUTSIDE CREATION, AS WELL AS THE CHARMS AND SPECIAL RULES FOR PLAYING LUNA'S CHOSEN. \$29.95



AS A SIDEREAL EXALT, YOU ARE UNSURPASSED IN WIZARDRY, CELESTIAL FORESIGHT AND MASTERY OF SUPERNATURAL MARTIAL ARTS. EXALTED: THE SIDEREALS INCLUDES INFORMATION ON THE HEAVENLY CITY OF YU-SHAN, AS WELL AS CHARMS AND MYSTICAL MARTIAL ARTS OF THE CHOSEN OF THE MAIDENS. \$29.95



AS A TERRESTRIAL EXALT, YOU ARE HEIR TO CREATION'S LAST BASTION OF CIVILIZATION AND CULTURE IN THIS TIME OF BARBARISM. EXALTED: THE DRAGON-BLOODED INCLUDES INFORMATION ON THE IMPERIAL CITY OF THE REALM, AS WELL AS THE ELEMENTAL CHARMS AND IMMACULATE MARTIAL ARTS OF THE DRAGON-BLOODED. \$29.95

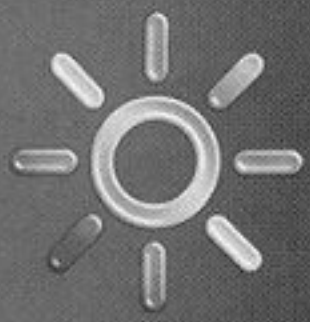


AS AN ABYSSAL EXALT, YOU ARE A DEATHKNIGHT CHAMPION SPREADING THE WORD OF THE ANCESTOR CULT AND BRINGING THE MORTAL WORLD TO WORSHIPFUL HEEL, YET YOU ARE ALSO A SLAVE OF THE ULTIMATE DARKNESS. EXALTED: THE ABYSSALS INCLUDES INFORMATION ON THE UNDERWORLD RULED BY THE DEATHLORDS, AS WELL AS ABYSSAL CHARMS, NECROMANCY AND RULES FOR PLAYING GHOSTS. \$29.95



NOW WITH THESE FIVE BEAUTIFUL HARDCOVER BOOKS YOU CAN INCLUDE THE WONDROUS POWER OF ANY (OR EVERY) ONE OF THESE BREEDS OF HEROES IN YOUR EXALTED SERIES.

THEY'RE ALL AVAILABLE NOW,
SO DON'T LEAVE YOUR EXALTED COLLECTION INCOMPLETE ANOTHER MOMENT LONGER!

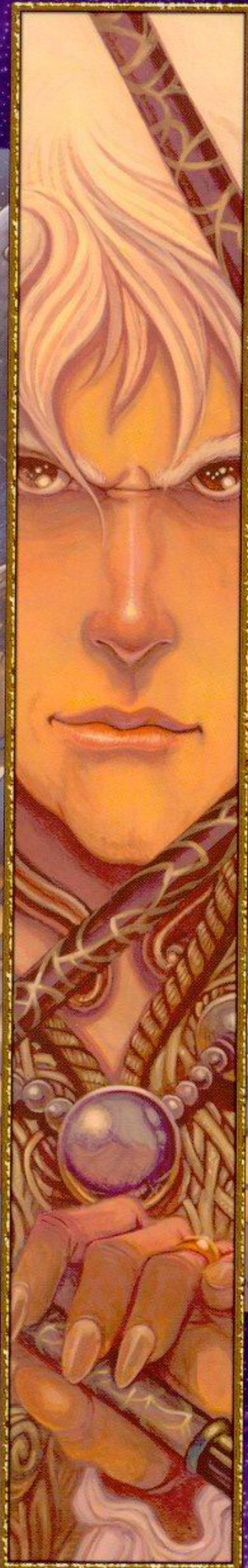


coming next...

KINGDOM OF HALTA



EXALTED



Before there was a World of Darkness, there was an age of savage adventure.

Astride Creation stands the Realm, the last bastion of civilization in a darkening world and a monument to the Sidereals' determination to see that mankind is protected from its many foes.

For centuries, the Bronze Faction has maintained a chokehold on history, manipulating the Immaculate Philosophy and the Scarlet Dynasty to strengthen its grasp on the Realm and on human history.

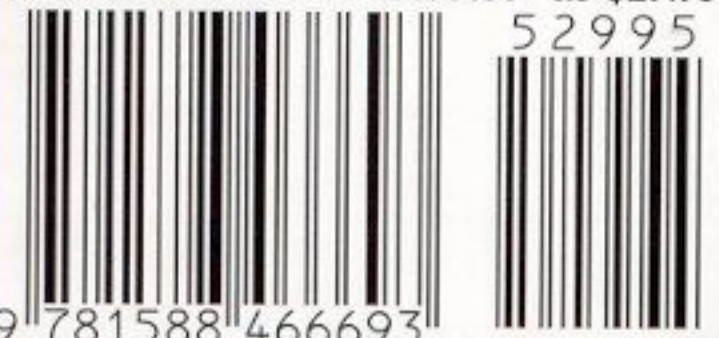
Now, the Scarlet Empress has vanished, and the Solar Exalted have returned to Creation after their long exile. The factions teeter on the brink of civil war, new threats emerge with every passing day, and it seems as if Heaven itself will soon fall into turmoil.

Against this time of tumult stand a handful of heroic Celestial officials. Though they are few in number and forgotten by history, they are unsurpassed in their wisdom, their foresight and their mastery of supernatural martial arts.

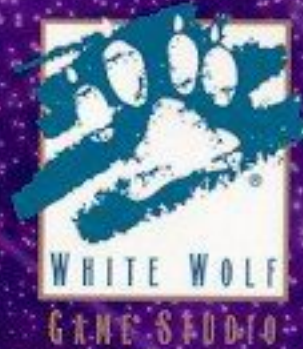
As a Sidereal Exalted, you are the last hope of the unborn future. Will you unite Creation and defend fate against its many enemies, or will you struggle for influence and high station while the pillars of Heaven crumble?

Requires the Exalted main rulebook for play.

ISBN 1-58846-669-8 WW8814 US \$29.95



9 781588 466693



WHITE WOLF
GAME STUDIO

www.white-wolf.com



