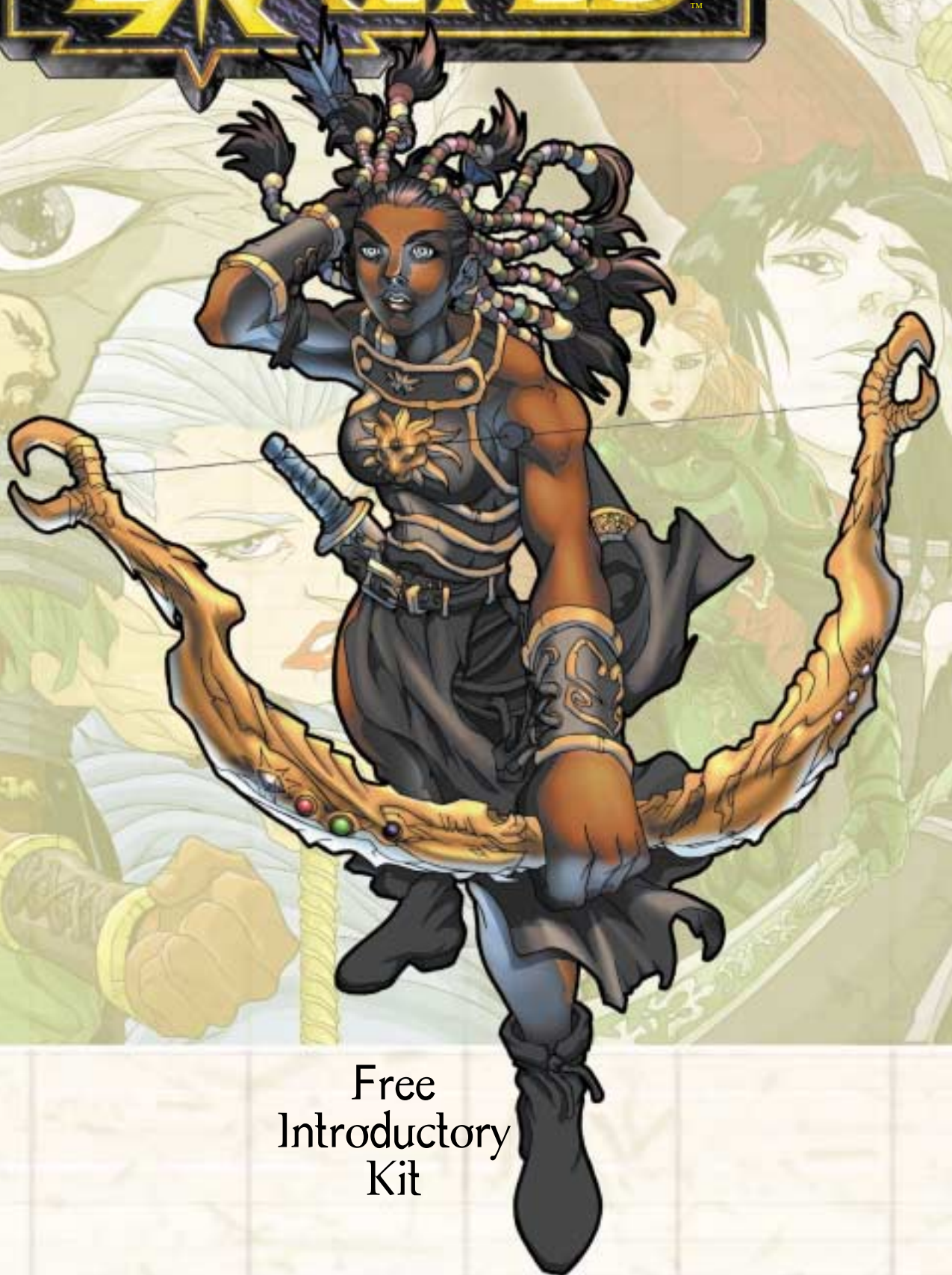


EXALTED



Free
Introductory
Kit

OPEN YOUR EYES.
THE REALM IS IN CHAOS.
THE DRAGON-BLOODED'S
WYLD HUNT IS IN SHAMBLES.
THEY CAN HOLD US BACK
NO LONGER.

A THOUSAND YEARS AGO, WE RULED THIS WORLD TOGETHER.
OUR MIGHT WAS SUCH THAT WE SLEW THE FOES OF THE GODS
WITH OUR BARE HANDS. AND FOR OUR SERVICE, THE HIGHEST
AMONG THE GODS, THE UNCONQUERED SUN, GRANTED US
EXALTATION.

WE ARE THE EXALTED.

WE CHANNEL ESSENCE, THE POWER OF THE COSMOS, THROUGH
OUR FINGERTIPS, OUR FISTS, OUR FEET. OUR BLADES ARE CAST
OF ORICHALCUM AND SET WITH HEARTHSTONES, AND THEY
NEVER DULL.

YET OUR ENEMIES ARE MANY. ALTHOUGH THE EMPIRE OF THE
DRAGON-BLOODED IS DISTRACTED BY INTERNAL CONFLICT, ITS
SOLDIERS ARE STILL POTENT FOES. AND THE OTHERS ARE
WORSE. DEATHKNIGHTS RISE FROM THE UNDERWORLD FOR
GODS KNOW WHAT PURPOSE. THE FAIR FOLK SEE THAT THE
REALM IS IN TURMOIL AND WAIT WITH COVETOUS HEARTS TO
UNDO CREATION ON THEIR MERCURIAL WHIM.

JUST THE WAY WE LIKE IT.

OUR TIME HAS COME AGAIN.



Exalted Introductory Kit



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION — WHAT IS EXALTED?	2
SETTING — THE WORLD OF EXALTED	2
THE SOLAR EXALTED	3
OTHER EXALTED: THE LUNARS, SIDIREALS, AND TERRESTRIALS	4
THE THRESHOLD AND ITS DANGERS	8
CHARACTER CREATION — EXALTATION OF A SOLAR	14
TRADITIONS — THE CASTES	15
TRAITS — POWERS OF THE EXALTED	18
HEALTH AND ESSENCE — POWER BEHIND THE POWERS	19
RULES — PLAYING THE GAME	19
COMBAT — PHYSICAL AND MAGICAL CONFRONTATION	21
STORY IDEAS — EXALTED ADVENTURE SEEDS	23

Because of the mature themes involved, reader discretion is advised.

Based on the Exalted game created by Robert Hatch, with Justin Achilli, Andrew Bates, Dana Habecker, Sheri M. Johnson, Chris McDonough, Richard Thomas, Stephan Wieck. Phase 2 design by Geoffrey C. Grabowski, with Ken Cliffe, Richard Thomas, Stephan Wieck. Developed by Geoffrey C. Grabowski.

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Do not believe what the scientists tell you. The natural history we know is a lie, a falsehood sold to us by wicked old men who would make the world a dull gray prison and protect us from the dangers inherent to freedom. They would have you believe our planet to be a lonely starship, hurtling through the void of space, barren of magic and in need of a stern hand upon the rudder.

Close your eyes to their deception. The time before our time was not a time of senseless natural struggle and reptilian rage, but a time of myth and sorcery. It was a time of legend, when heroes walked Creation and wielded the very power of the gods. It was a time before the world was bent, a time before the magic of Creation lessened, a time before the souls of men became the stunted, withered things that they are today.

This is the story of that time.

This is the story of the Exalted.

WHAT IS A STORYTELLING GAME?

Storytelling is a sophisticated way for adults to play make-believe. Rather than playing soldier or house and running around in your backyard or the alley behind your apartment, you and your friends sit in a comfortable room and describe the heroic feats that your characters accomplish. To help make sure that you all share the same vision of what's going on, a mediator and narrator (the "Storyteller") describes events and keeps the story moving. In order to prevent arguments of who did what first and whether an action is possible, there are rules that describe what your character can and can't do. In order to prevent bitterness over someone beating someone else in a fight, the characters are usually allies against imaginary opposition that the Storyteller tries to portray as even-handedly as possible. In order to prevent jaded adult imaginations from being bored quickly, the setting is much more intricate and complex than most people's childhood fantasies.

THE EXALTED

The Exalted command the fundamental forces of the Tellurian. Additionally, their life spans are greatly lengthened; the Dragon-Blooded live hundreds of years, while the life spans of the Celestials are orders of magnitude longer than those of humans. Some Celestial Exalted even retain memories of the First Age.

The time when the Exalted embodied virtue was called the First Age, and it was a golden age of peace and wonder. But the virtue of the Celestial Exalted — those Exalted who had been taught to harness the power of the heavens — waned. It was eaten away by their decadence and powers and, some whisper, by a terrible curse laid on them by the enemies of the Five Elemental Dragons. They became twisted, mad things — the Anathema — and they were destroyed or exiled for the good of the world.

Within the Realm, this is the stuff of myth and legend. Even the tales of the Celestials' greatest feats have been lost to the common folk. The majority of the Realm's inhabitants believe only in what they see — the semi-mythical Anathema, who lurk at the edges of Creation, the Terrestrial Exalted, called the Dragon-Blooded, who rule, and the mortal men, who are born to strive and die.

But the Celestial Exalted were real, and they had the power to make the world tremble at their passing. And now, they are returning. In the mad scramble for their empire's vacant throne, the Dragon-Blooded have failed to maintain their age-old purge of the Celestial Exalted. Now, the children of sky are surviving long enough to realize their vast powers.

POWERS OF THE EXALTED

The primary difference between human and Exalted — Terrestrial or Celestial — consists of the ability of the Chosen to channel the fundamental force of the universe, called Essence. The power of the Exalted depends on both their skill at manipulating Essence and having adequate Essence to work with. Although humans are composed of Essence and are ruled by its ebb, flow and vicissitudes, they are unable to command its nature or direction consciously. The power an Exalted has corresponds directly to the strength of her connection to the Essence around her. A young and inexperienced Exalted may seem like a moderately talented magician, capable of only a few practical tricks or simple feats of sorcery. Older, more experienced Exalted who have a greater understanding or command of Essence are like unto the Incarna in their ability to shape the world.

The abilities of the Exalted are constrained, however, by the amount of Essence available to them. Without Essence to command, even the greatest of the Exalted is little more than human. Essence exists within all facets of the natural world and flows through all healthy living beings. Exalted typically breathe in the ambient Essence that flows through the world, storing it up until they need it. The amount of Essence an Exalted can hold within her body at any one time is determined both by her magical ability and her force of personality, and it is an important measure of her strength.

The Essence powers of the Exalted take three forms: innate abilities, Charms and sorcerous spells. The innate abilities are talents that the Exalted exercise simply by flooding their animas with Essence. For example, a Solar Exalted of the Dawn Caste can use her anima to appear to be a fearsome warrior, so terrifying that enemies literally cannot bear to look directly at her.

Charms refer to the ways in which Exalted can imbue their own actions with Essence. With the aid of Charms, the Exalted uses Essence to empower her otherwise normal skills or talents, thereby making them

extraordinarily powerful. For example, an Exalted who was a blacksmith can forge amazing weapons, an Exalted warrior can perform mighty feats in battle, and an Exalted leader can command anyone and expect to be obeyed.

Spells are the most difficult and powerful means of channeling Essence, and they can be devastating. When an Exalted casts a spell, he manipulates Essence with his words and gestures, according to the laws and principles of magic, and in so doing, he reweaves reality itself.

SOLAR EXALTED

The Solar Exalted are the mightiest of the Exalted, and during the First Age, they were the rulers of the world and the leaders of the Exalted. Their great enlightenment was intended to be a beacon and inspiration to all of humanity — they shine brightest who are meant to be seen by all. Their power flows from the sun, and the day belongs to them. Logic, heroism, inspiration and nobility are their spheres of influence.

The Dragon-Blooded murdered the Solars at the fall of the First Age. Although a few continued to reincarnate again and again, they were always dispatched quickly by the forces of the Realm. Only since a year or two after the disappearance of the Empress have the Solars been reappearing in significant numbers. With newfound numbers and the Realm beset by foes and instability, the emerging Solars have an opportunity to make their power known.

DAWN

Dawn Solars are fierce warriors, yet their ferocity does not make them bloodthirsty or stupid. Of those who have been recently Exalted to this caste, there have been bloody-handed killers, but none who were without redeeming characteristics. Others are scholar-generals, hard-bitten militiamen who fought to protect their homes, monks who practiced the martial arts for spiritual reasons, pit fighters, street warriors who led gangs rather than armies, even heroic city guards who carried out their own war on the corrupt officials and criminal parasites who infest the cities of the world.

Dawn Castes are universally skilled in all forms of fighting. They are natural masters of the bow, the sword and unarmed combat. When they channel Essence to manifest their anima, they seem to become terrifying giants — harbingers of destruction with eyes like molten gold, whom only the bravest of warriors can bear to regard directly.

ZENITH

The Zenith Castes are the priests and mystics of the Exalted, and in terms of personality, they are the most varied of the castes. Many were once shamans or priests of

the Immaculate Order, while others were simply passionate individuals with a thirst for righteousness. Although they are priests, Exalted of the Zenith Caste are more missionaries, evangelists and rough-jawed crusaders for justice than self-righteous scholars or pretentious theologians.

Zenith Caste Solars excel in public speaking and persuasion, but that is not their only forte. They are also incredibly durable, able to resist immense hardship and pain and to survive in the wilds as they pursue their missions. By channeling Essence through their animas, Exalted of this caste can cause fire to consume the bodies of dead foes, so that those foes' souls can reach the afterlife rather than rising as hungry ghosts or walking dead. Also, the Zenith Castes are fierce enemies of demons and the undead, and they may channel Essence through their auras to scorch and repel these horrors.

TWILIGHT

The Twilight Exalted are learners and doers, adventurer-scholars, warrior-mages and meddlesome cunning men. Most Twilight Caste Exalted were learned before their Exaltation, yet they are by no means all scholars. Storytellers, architects, merchants and engineers have all been Exalted to this caste. While there are a certain number of bookworms in this caste, most of them are durable enough to endure the hardships of campaigning and the stress of life as powerful public figures.

The Twilights excel at sorcery, but they are more than simple scholars. They are learners, meddlers, doctors and tinkers. They not only work magic with Essence, but with tools, needles and thread and with their wit and insight. By channeling Essence through their animas, they may protect themselves from attack, an important power given their active and dangerous lifestyles.

NIGHT

Night Caste Solars are the spies, scouts and assassins of the Solar Exalted. Night Caste Exalted are often tricksters and vagabonds, but they are not necessarily thieves and killers. They are often peddlers, hunters, guides, police officers and the like — anyone partaking in an active life for whom stealth and ingenuity are more important than raw strength. Note that there are a fair number of cutpurses and assassins among those who are Exalted to this caste, but they are by no means the sole members of the caste.

Night Caste Exalted are unparalleled in stealth, acrobatics and getting where and what they shouldn't. These Exalted also possess a preternatural awareness of their surroundings. By channeling Essence through their auras, Night Caste Exalted may conceal their presence, making them difficult to sense. Night Caste Solars may also mute their animas, allowing them to more easily use Charms without revealing their true nature as Exalted.





ECLIPSE

The Eclipse Caste is made up of the ambassadors and negotiators among the Exalted. Eclipse Caste Exalted are typically chosen from among those who make their living with words and negotiations. Merchants, diplomats, bureaucrats, confidence men, beggars, peddlers, teachers — any of these can be Exalted into the Eclipse Caste.

The Eclipses are as masterful at governance, business and politics as the Zenith Caste is at persuasion and leadership. Although they are not charismatic, they are intuitively able to sense and exploit the flows of power and influence in an organization. These Solars also demonstrate amazing language skills and are master horsemen and sailors. (After all, in order to negotiate a treaty or make a deal, the negotiator must first arrive at her destination.) By channeling Essence through her anima, an Eclipse may swear or witness oaths that neither party can break without incurring a terrible curse. Members of this caste may also walk among spirits and demons without fear, protected by ancient and inviolable treaties of safe passage sworn during the height of the Old Realm. Eclipses may even learn the Charms and powers of other Exalted, and even of spirits, to aid their dealings with these beings. Although this learning is not as easy as mastering the tricks of their own kind, it allows the Eclipse Caste unparalleled flexibility.

LUNAR EXALTED

Lunars are master shapeshifters capable of taking the form or partial form of any animal whose blood they have tasted. This ability alone makes Lunars dangerous enemies, but in conjunction with their dominion over beasts and their familiarity with the night and the wilderness, they are among the most dangerous opponents in the world. Those Lunars who retain their sentience also have a deep connection with the unconscious mind, and they can use it to create complex and deadly illusions or to evoke primal emotions — love, rage, despair and the like — in the minds of those around them.

Many Lunars have been deeply warped by the Wyld's odd energy. While Lunars are often bestial, mad or both (and they may not even remember that they are Exalted), all remain dangerously cunning. Of all the Exalted, Lunars have the worst reputation for being monsters and stalkers of the night, for many of them are. The worst of them stalk men like beasts and think of humans as prey.

SIDEREAL

Among the Exalted, the Sidereals are the prophets, warlocks, rogues and spirit-binders. While they maintain relatively close communication among themselves, they remain silent to most other Exalted, unless circumstances dictate otherwise.

The Sidereals have a great understanding of magic, and they use it frequently and competently. They are capable of affecting the powers of fate directly, or alternatively, they can have spirits do their work for them. Of all the Exalted, the Sidereals have the greatest connection to spirits, and they utilize it very carefully. Each Sidereal must forge a relationship with the spirits or courts of spirits that she wants to deal with.

DRAGON-BLOODED

The most common of all the Exalted, the Dragon-Blooded are at once despised and feared. They are significantly more powerful than any mortal, and they have used that power to establish a mighty Realm of their own. They hold most civilized nations as tributary, and they wield tremendous political and economic influence. A family squabble among the most powerful Dragon-Blooded can result in nations warring in the Threshold.

There are five kinds of Dragon-Blooded, each with an affinity for one of the five elements. Each type of Dragon-Blooded has power over the earthly elements and certain of the elemental spirits as well. While they aren't as proficient at spirit-mastery as the Sidereals, many of the higher-tier aristocrats are capable of calling on ages-old pacts and agreements made with the elemental lords in the First Age.

With the disappearance of the Empress, the Dragon-Blooded are being forced to enter into actual combat with the forces that threaten the Blessed Isle. While their magic is notably weaker than that of many of their new enemies, particularly the deathknights and many of the invaders from the Wyld, the Dragon-Blooded have maintained a rigorous regimen of martial training that, when combined with their elemental talents, makes them formidable opponents on the field of battle.

ABYSSAL EXALTED

It is unknown how these Exalted were created, but they have appeared only recently. Indeed, it is not clear whether they are Exalted at all. Dragon-Blooded soldiers have had a number of encounters with the Abyssals, and they tell of the dark ones manipulating Essence to speak with ghosts and to control the bodies of those who are already dead. While such information makes it seem highly likely that the Abyssals are Exalted of some variety, no such creatures are mentioned in any of the books that have survived from the First Age. Where such a twisted Exalted would come from is an enigma, and a disturbing one.

The Abyssal Exalted are the antithesis of what the Exalted are in every particular. Where the Celestial Exalted channel radiance and foster life and growth, deathknights are masters of darkness and necromancy. They are capable of manipulating shadows for diverse purposes, and their command of the dead is like a nightmare version of the Celestial rule. Most terrifyingly, the



Abyssals do not appear overly inclined to use the natural flow of Essence through the world, even in Manses and Demesnes. While they are capable of pulling Essence from the Underworld to replenish their reserves, they gain Essence fastest when drawing it from living beings, and they appear to prefer, even enjoy, it. They feed in a variety of ways, including drinking blood from living creatures, stealing souls and eating the flesh of men.

THE EXALTATION

While anyone can manifest as one of the Celestial Exalted, the weaker Terrestrial Exalted are born only to Dragon-Blooded parents. However, normally not all of a Dragon-Blooded family's children will be Exalted. Both Celestial and Terrestrial Exalted rarely manifest before early adolescence. The rules of Terrestrial heredity are complex and poorly understood, and the only rule of Celestial Exaltation is that the Exalted individual is already far above average — always in terms of potential, and usually in terms of life-accomplishment as well.

When the Empress reigned, newly born Celestial Exalted were almost assuredly doomed to destruction at the hands of the Wyld Hunt of the Dragon-Blooded. For at that time, the Dragon-Blooded watched closely for signs of recently Exalted Celestials and hunted the Celestials wherever they were found. These Celestial Exalted were either killed or captured and taken to the Empress. It is whispered among the Dragon-Blooded that the Empress devoured their souls, for her understanding of Essence was such that she was able to strengthen herself and lengthen her existence with each such meal. Only the Sidereals could hide from the scourge, due largely to the central role those Sidereals had in the imposition of the Wyld Hunt.

Since the disappearance of the Empress, the feuding houses of the Realm have begun to divert all the empire's resources to fuel their internecine squabbles and their jockeying for the throne. The once-ubiquitous network of spies and informants with which the Empress searched for the Celestials has begun to unravel, subverted by the intelligence apparatuses of the various houses or reassigned to deal with the nobles' growing disloyalty. And at this dark moment, the one moment when the Dragon-Blooded are no longer in a position to do anything about it, it seems as if more Solars than have ever been seen before has entered the world. Today, the Wyld Hunt must often rely on mortal assassins and outcaste bounty hunters, rather than the massive and well-armed hunting parties of the past.

CAUSES OF EXALTATION

The powers of an Exalted frequently manifest after a period of stress, such as severe injury, terrible illness, terror. The trigger events vary greatly from Exalted to Exalted. At his hour of greatest need, it is as if the character is given the strength to triumph and endure.





Some Celestials also manifest when they are exposed to a large amount of magic or when a great deal of Essence is moved or channeled near them. Finally, some seem to manifest due to vast exposure to their element — many Solars are Exalted during a period of overexposure to sunlight for example.

ESSENCE

The world is not still; it flows, expanding and contracting with the interaction of a thousand tiny cycles. Essence is the power behind those eternal cycles. Every storm, every birth, every wave in the ocean is nudged by the flow of Essence through the universe. The Exalted, unlike most humans, are gifted with the ability to perceive and manipulate the flow of Essence, and it is this ability that distinguishes them from the dull chaff of humanity.

THE SIGNS OF POWER

The power of the Exalted does not hide. On the contrary, it seeks to shine forth and mark the user. Although an Exalted can use some power and remain hidden, those Exalted who exert themselves must necessarily give themselves away. Citizens of the Realm are taught to be on guard for any child exhibiting these traits or markings, particularly those of the Solar Exalted, who are to be destroyed wherever they are detected.

SOLAR CASTE MARKS

Of the Celestials, the Solar Exalted are perhaps the most easily discovered. All of them bear a so-called “Caste Mark” on their forehead, as if it were a burning third eye. This mark manifests whenever the Exalted channels Essence, and it can sometimes be seen during the time of day to which the Exalted’s caste is affiliated. Similarly, each Solar burns with a brilliant aura, his “anima,” which increases in intensity as the amount of Essence he channels grows. When an Exalted burns large quantities of Essence, it may even take the shape of a great fire or of the animal that the Solar most closely resembles.

Dawn Caste Solars are marked by a brilliant golden sunburst that adorns the center of their brow. Their anima tends to be bright white and pale gold, sometimes tinged with red or light violet.

Zenith Caste Solars are known by their large, bright-gold circular Caste Marks. Their animas are a brilliant burning white or a thick, majestic gold.

Twilight Caste Solars have a golden circle, filled in with gold on the top, but having only an empty ring on the bottom half. Their animas tend to the most spectacular colors, containing bright golds as well as bright and dark reds, purples and even blues.

Night Caste Solars have an empty golden circle as their Caste Mark. The animas of these Exalted are ghostly whites and golds, tinged with purple and purple-gray.

Eclipse Caste Solars have a golden disc within a circle for their Caste Mark. Their animas are brilliant whites and golds, almost sparkling, but filmy and fluctuating, like the corona of the sun during an eclipse.

LUNAR CASTE MARKS

All older Lunars are marked with extensive tattooing, scars and brandings, which are believed to be of ritual significance in their savage religion of moon-veneration.

SIDEREAL CASTE MARKS

The Sidereal Exalted may be known by their star-filled eyes or, occasionally, by the faraway, distracted look that frequently washes over their faces as visions assail them. When they channel Essence, Sidereals are marked by a Caste Mark the color of their patron Maiden. Chosen of Mercury radiate yellow, those of Venus blue and those of Mars red. Chosen of Jupiter burn green, while those of Saturn glow with the orange of a banked fire.

ABYSSAL CASTE MARKS

The Abyssal Exalted bear marks that give them away clearly to anyone bothering to look. Some Abyssals have an appearance that suggests a rotting corpse. Ironically, however, as they grow older and more powerful, Abyssal Exalted appear less decayed and develop a cold allure. The most powerful Abyssals are stunning creatures of dangerous beauty, with skin like alabaster, hair the color of onyx and lips like fallen rose petals. They bear black, eternally visible versions of the Solar’s caste markings, and it is believed the Deathlords do so to mock the former rulers of the world or to terrify the Dragon-Blooded.

TERRESTRIAL CASTE MARKS

Like the Celestials, the Dragon-Blooded have clear marks that distinguish them from one another and from mere mortals. The features of the Dragon-Blooded have a certain coarseness not seen in those of the Celestial Exalted, and their appearance directly reflects their affinity for their element.

Aspects of Air are surrounded by gusting winds. While they can calm these gusts for short periods with concentration, they find it difficult to do so while performing any other activity.

Aspects of Earth have the coarsest features of all the Terrestrial Exalted. Their bodies are frequently compact or stocky, and they smell of freshly turned soil.

Aspects of Fire are marked by a clear reddish tint to their skin. It is not uncommon for older Dragon-Blooded of this aspect to emit puffs of smoke from their mouths as they speak.

Aspects of Water are characterized by hypnotic grace and beautiful iridescent skin. Their skin often takes on a slight blue-green tint as they get older.

Aspects of Wood sometimes have a light layer of bark on their skin, especially on the back and the shoulders. The young or less powerful among them may have a greenish tint to their skin.

MANSES AND DEMESNES

Throughout most of the world, Essence flows across, beneath and through all things, clear and quiet as a spring. Essence is in the tides of the sea, the light of the sun and the solidity of the earth. Moreover, it is the source of spirit that animates all living things. All life, dreams and emotion arise from the ebb and flow of Essence. Essence is the rhythm the world moves to, the mad and vital dance that holds the void at bay.

While Essence is usually invisible to all but powerful Exalted, there are places where the stream becomes a river and the raw power of Creation is manifest for all to see. Where Essence roars through Creation, it creates places of power. These sites are sacred and full of magic. In the First Age, they were often the sites of the mansions of the Exalted, and today, they are frequently the sites of temples and shrines. Exalted can sense such places at a distance, and even the dumbest humans feel something akin to awe in these places. When edifices have been built to channel and focus the flow of Essence, they are called Manses. When the power is untamed by architecture, these holy places are called Demesnes.

ARTIFACTS

The Old Realm lasted for millennia and spanned vast leagues — more land, it is said, than currently comprises the world. In that time, the Celestials and their servants manufactured objects of astonishing power. Weapons, jewelry, books and any other sort of item could have been enchanted in such a way as to channel Essence for myriad purposes. That was another Age, and the products of that era have become exceedingly rare and valuable. Time, the warring of the Dragon-Blooded and the encroachment of the Wyld have seen to it that most of the powerful artifacts have been used up, hidden or destroyed. Fair Folk have seized many of them, while others lie deep within Wyld regions, worshiped or hoarded by warped creatures that have no comprehension of the devices' true value or power.

THE REALM

A majestic and decadent empire, the Realm is nothing less than the hub of reality itself. A hallowed consensus governs the heart of the empire, keeping the unreal, the uncertain and the unholy to the lands of the periphery. The Realm is also the hub of political reality. From the labyrinthine streets and towering spires of the Imperial City to the vast standing legions sent to secure tribute from the Threshold, the Realm is the undisputed center of power in Creation.

Or at least, it used to be. Since the disappearance of the Empress five years ago, usurping nobles, petty conquerors and unruly tribes have picked apart the once-unified hierarchy of the empire. For the Dynasty, things have never been worse; for ambitious patricians waiting to seize power for themselves, the current instability gives them the perfect opportunity.

The average citizen of the Realm has white skin, black hair and brown eyes. Full lips and strong noses are typical, and most men and women stand nearly six feet tall when full-grown. Builds are generally slim, but men tend to develop a paunch later in life. Bear in mind, however, that the Realm is a conquering empire. Many of its inhabitants — even members of the Scarlet Dynasty — show signs of alien blood from foreign concubines.

THE EMPIRE IN DECLINE

A coalition of Exalted despots that ruled the Realm in its infancy, the Dynasts quickly rose to rank their power according to the size and prosperity of their estates or the magnitude of their Charms. These noble families were as querulous as their modern counterparts in the Dynasty — the authority of the Empress was all that kept their ambitions in check.

Since the Empress' disappearance, the Dynasty has increased tributes from the outlying provinces to outrageous levels through the decrees of its figurehead regent. Barbarian and bandit raids, along with the tributary lords' faltering confidence in the empire, sapped the imperial treasury. Even with the heavier tributes paid by the lords that remain loyal, seven of the Realm's legions have been decommissioned to compensate for the disruption of trade and tax revenues. Why pay the Realm's tribute when it offers no stability? Far better, think some tributaries, to cultivate their own power and grow stronger (and richer) without the interference of the Realm.

In theory, the Realm still controls the Blessed Isle and the surrounding lands. In reality, it has as much influence outside the isle as its legions allow it. A hierarchical system of leadership governs the Realm, from the smallest village to the Imperial City itself. Imperial influence remains absolute on the isle, but it grows less sure farther away from this center.

THE PERFECTED HIERARCHY

The Immaculate Philosophy, the state-mandated religion of the Realm, holds that the Dragon-Blooded are superior beings who have traveled farther down enlightenment's road. The law forbids citizens, peasants, slaves and the disenfranchised from looking them directly in the eye. Even today, while no one worships Dynasts as deities, their advanced spirituality and frightening powers inspire awe among the peoples of the Realm. Some citizens flock to any public ceremony that promises a





THE FIRST AGE

What was the First Age like? All that mortal and Dragon-Blooded scholars have to go on are the ruins left standing and the texts that survived the turning of the Age. The Cult of the Illuminated sees it as a golden age when the Solar Exalted brought the land enlightenment and harmony. The Dragon-Blooded see it merely as an older civilization than the one that has succeeded it, a civilization that had time to mature and prosper. Most individuals, particularly those who follow the teachings of the Immaculate Order, venerate it as a long-lost paradise that will be reclaimed when the world is set aright.

Certainly, many of the Celestial Exalted who survived through the calamities remember the First Age, but few of them are willing to share their memories. Some argue that the wisdom of the First Age is not gone, but merely, that the complex civilization that made the Age possible has passed away. Others contend that the world changed irrevocably when the Great Contagion struck and that, even if the lore of lost First Age were reclaimed and put to use, it would mean little. So far, neither group is organized or determined enough to put its theories to the test.

glimpse of one of the Dragon-Blooded, while others will go to any lengths to avoid their Exalted presence. Many peasants rationalize the fact that they could never afford to travel to the Imperial City by declaring that they'd never visit a place so full of the terrifying Dragon-Blooded.

THE DYNASTY

During her centuries-long reign, the Scarlet Empress had four husbands and dozens of lovers. The 11 houses of the modern Dynasty descend from the Empress's brood. Aside from House Nellens, each house associates itself with an elemental aspect of one of the Five Dragons. These houses constitute the aristocracy that governs the Realm. Once these Dragon-Blooded lineages lorded over their growing empire like enthroned gods.

Although all the houses are rather decadent and given to back-stabbing and dirty deals, each has its own distinct character. Houses are made up of individuals with their own priorities, and the houses are more alike than their members want to believe. Also, some Dynasts are products of marriages between members of two houses. From these unions, children can side with one house or another, remain aloof or play them both off one another for the Dynasts' own gain.

THE THOUSAND SCALES

The Dynasty's Thousand Scales bureaucracy is one of the foundations of its rule. Each level of government is

responsible for the one immediately below it. In theory, this chain of command keeps everyone looking out for corruption on the level below them. The Thousand Scales consists of the tax collectors, judges, surveyors, wardens, rangers and other functionaries who execute the decrees of the Deliberative.

THE ORDER OF THE IMMACULATE DRAGONS

The Order of the Immaculate Dragons — the state religion of the Realm — is arguably the most important political faction in the Realm, more important than the Dynasty and all the patricians. A simple accusation from the Mouth of Peace is enough to topple even the most powerful official or disgrace one of the Dragon-Blooded. The order does not use this power lightly, making it all the more formidable when it is deployed.

Even if many peasants pay homage to spirits outside the strictures of the Realm's only legal faith, the Immaculates can still put the fear of oblivion into the hearts of the weak. Immaculates are regarded as deadly warriors and wise men beyond all conventional limits of learning. Even less superstitious folk hesitate when their actions might attract the attention of the order. When facing a Dragon-Blooded Immaculate, one faces a near-perfect warrior, a foremost scholar of the Realm and one of the most powerful Exalted to have ever existed, all in one.

THE THRESHOLD

There is a great deal of world between the roiling chaos of the Wyld and the urbane sophistication of the Realm. Although the scions of the Dynasty condemn the outlying lands as barbaric and keep them as tributaries, these lands are, in truth, vibrant and dynamic. Unfettered from the convoluted politics and the corruption of the Dynasty, the Threshold embodies possibilities and new solutions, innovation and a vibrant determination to succeed against the odds.

In the past, this meant imperial rule in everything but name. The Dragon-Blooded and their legions made the Empress' word law in almost all lands bordering the Inner Sea. All paid homage to the Immaculates and acknowledged the spiritual superiority of the Dragon-Blooded, even though doing so was purely a matter of honoring the imperial cult in many places. But recently, the power of the Realm has crumbled, and more and more of the states that border the Inner Sea are reducing their tribute or eliminating it altogether.

THE EAST

To the farthest east lies the Elemental Pole of Wood. As one proceeds further east, the forests become gradually thicker and stiller and more hostile. The trees grow taller,

the beasts of the wood larger and fiercer, and the almost-sentient, almost-malicious air one sometimes feels in an unfamiliar forest grows ever stronger. Finally, progress is blocked by a seemingly unending wall of deadfalls, widowmakers and harsh terrain. It is said that if one goes far enough east, the ground gives way, and the traveler sees only an endless cathedral of trees, stretching up and down, from zenith to nadir, a holy green perfection of leaves and still air.

The Near East was always the heartland of the Old Realm, with fertile soil, regular rains and abundant resources. It was heavily settled and the source of much of the Old Realm's prosperity. Consequently, when the Great Contagion and the subsequent incursions of the Wyld and the Underworld occurred, it was one of the areas hardest hit. In a way, this was a blessing, at least for the survivors. Even with much of it reduced to chaos-scarred ruins, the survivors had a vast trove of resources to scavenge from as they rebuilt their shattered world.

Today, the East consists of city-states of various sorts, largely autocratic or democratic, with a fair handful of bizarre governments in the mix. Most are built around the area's numerous rivers, and they serve as manufacturing centers and redistribution points for local produce. As one goes farther east, the cities give way to towns, and the towns give way to logging camps and steadings. Despite the hospitable nature of the Near East, the Far East can be quite dangerous. There are a rather large number of shadowlands in the area, and the woods often crawl with barbarians.

The average inhabitant of the East has a brownish skin tone, ranging from light tan to an almost bark-like brown in the Far East. Blond, red and brown are all common hair colors, and even red hair is typically straight and without body. The typical Easterner is tall, with even women standing nearly six feet. Eastern families tend to be matriarchies, centered around a female and successive generations of female offspring. Male children are raised by their mother's brothers, and marriage is uncommon but not unheard of.

THE SCAVENGER LANDS

At the heart of the Near East is the River Province, the military and administrative center for the eastern sections of the Old Realm. The population here was devastated during the Contagion, but the area's reputation for prosperity drew displaced persons from all over the plague-blasted lands. This influx of new blood created an open, cosmopolitan society of immigrants eager to make their lives anew and create something for their children. It also attracted a large number of entrepreneurs, would-be conquerors, spirits, embittered dissidents from the Realm, hermits and renegade theoreticians. Together, this strange rabble created a new society over the top of, in the ruins of and built





from the scraps of the Old Realm. Although these “Scavenger Lands” don’t approach even the tawdry, remanufactured splendor of the modern Realm, their inhabitants are lively and eager, willing to take risks and plot their own course. The more advanced and warlike inhabitants, many of whom are wise in the ways of First Age artifacts, have consistently provided a major resource in the restoration of the region to habitability and in defense against the Realm. Accordingly, tinkers and wise men are held in high regard, and to have a son or daughter involved with scavenging is much the same as having a child take holy orders of some sort.

Most of the Scavenger Lands consist of walled towns and cities and the farm lands immediately around them, surrounded by sparsely populated wilderness, connected by trade routes and a common heritage of immigration and restoration of the ruins that surround them. Inhabitants of the region value individual initiative and self-reliance, and it’s well they do, because powerful Essence flows make the region attractive to the Deathlords and Fair Folk alike. Ironically, while most of the Threshold is extremely superstitious, the Scavenger Lands verge on atheism. This doesn’t mean that they don’t acknowledge the existence of the supernatural, but that there is much practicality and little reverence in their interactions with the world. You cannot live at the crossroads of Creation without becoming jaded. Exalted, Fair Folk, spirits and other supernatural beings are treated with the respect that such dangerous creatures deserve but, generally, not with an obsequious air.

Inhabitants of the Scavenger Lands come in all shapes and colors, but many are of mixed stock, coffee-and-cream complexioned, with wavy peach or black hair. Strong, aquiline noses are common in the Scavenger lands, as are relatively sharp features in general — probably the result of a heritage of interaction with the Fair Folk, much of it sexual. Marriage and family customs vary wildly from household to household, and the matter is complex and routine enough that it is culturally acceptable to find it funny.

NEXUS

At the center of the River Province lies Nexus. With three-quarters of a million inhabitants, Nexus is one of the largest cities outside the Realm. Like most other major cities of the province, Nexus is built on the ruins of a city of the Old Realm. Once the provincial capital, the city of Hollow was decimated by the Contagion and devastated by the Wyld incursions that followed. The streets were filled with bones and wreckage, and the city’s three great rivers choked with the masonry of countless fallen towers. Because of its excellent location (and strong possibilities for salvage), Hollow was one of the

first cities of the area that people moved back into after the chaos of the Contagion.

THE SOUTH

To the south is the Elemental Pole of Fire. As one travels farther south, the weather becomes hotter and hotter. Near the sea, it blends slowly into tropical forest in the east. Rain is frequent, and while rugged, the land is not brutal or water-scoured. As one travels farther south, the rain becomes less frequent, and the olive trees and grass give way to scrub and tumbleweeds. It is a land of cacti, ice plants and yucca trees, where arroyos and wadis cut the landscape into a classic badland. The narrow canyons are full of fallen trees piled up like jackstraws and boulders chocked snugly into place, a tribute to the force of the flash floods that race through these narrow spaces.

Still further south, rain ceases to fall at all. Mesas give way to sand and stone outcroppings, and oases become increasingly infrequent. The cloudless sky does nothing to hold the sun’s heat in, and blasting hot daytime temperatures plummet to subfreezing lows until one arrives at the True South, where the sun provides only light and the heat continues unabated day and night. None can reliably claim to have traveled to the uttermost south and returned, and reports conflict as to what lies there. Some say that it is a field of black glass with a never-setting sun, and others claim that it ends in a field of glowing red magma beneath a black and starless expanse, while still a third school says that in the True South, there is nothing but colorless fire.

INHABITANTS

Along the northern coast, the inhabitants of the South gather in great cities, supported by a brutally oppressed agricultural underclass. Although they are not as large and certainly not as splendid as the great cities of the Realm, at least three Southern cities (Gem, Paragon and Chiaroscuro) have a million or more inhabitants. They, like almost all the cities of the South, are hereditary autocracies, and they crawl with palace intrigues and secret police. As one travels farther to the south, the cities and towns end abruptly at the edge of the badlands. Go further south, and there are only nomadic tribes feuding and stealing from one another to subsist. What keeps these nomads active is the harvest of the sands to the south. Just beyond where the heat becomes constant, the sands give up a bounty of gems — rubies and garnets, opals and topaz.

Southerners are extremely superstitious, as a rule. They take great stock in portents and signs, and everyone can read their own basic horoscope. Those who can afford to do so employ one or several astrologers to supplement their own efforts, but no Southerner in his right mind wouldn’t draw up his own basic horoscope to work from before consulting an outsider’s predictions. Likewise, most



Southerners sacrifice daily to their familial patron spirit, the patron of the task they're about to undertake, one or several spirits of good fortune, the spirit of their city and the ghosts of their ancestors. The cities of the South are seen as debased and decadent by those outside it, displaying all the corruption, greed and lascivious behavior of Nexus without the brutal opportunism and vibrancy that makes Nexus so different. Those from the South simply see themselves as civilized and enjoy the benefits thereof.

The average Southerner is dark-skinned, with blond, black or red hair. Unlike Easterners, however, most Southerners' hair has a great deal of body, though the blondes tend toward less kink and more curl. People from the South typically dress in silk, if the wearers can afford it, or else cotton. Only the poorest nomad wears wool, and it is considered an invitation to awful luck to wear leather — most armor is metal and canvas. Silk, cotton and large quantities of tobacco and marijuana are produced domestically on the same latifundia that feed the cities, and the export of these goods is the source of much of the cities' prosperity.

THE WEST

To the west lies the Elemental Pole of Water. As one travels outward, the islands are, at first, large and common, then smaller and less frequent. Past a certain point, there are no more islands, only a horizon where the sea and sky come together. This horizon can be distinguished only at sunrise and sunset. During the day, it is as if one sails in a surfaceless ocean of blue and green, and at night, it is as if the sea is absent and the boat rocks gently as it sails among the stars. The ocean has no scent here because the "smell of the sea" is the smell of dead things rotting in seaside swamps, and it has no sound because the winds are gentle and the swells low. Even experienced seamen find it maddening to sail too far out past the far islands, and it is rarely done. After all, what is there to find, save more ocean, stretching out until the end of time?

INHABITANTS

The West is the least populous of the directions. There is simply less space for human beings to live. Those men who do dwell here on the Western Ocean's countless islands and archipelagos are seafarers and shipbuilders. There is little arable land, making vegetables other than cultivated kelp a luxury. Subsistence food consists of clams, lobster, small fry — anything that lives close to shore. Those who are not merchants or pirates or sailors of some sort are fishermen or shipwrights. A child who cannot sail a boat by the age of six is a child misraised.

Fair Folk and water spirits are forever a menace to the cities of the West, picking and choosing where and when to land. On some islands, the problem with siren blandishments is so severe that it is traditional to artificially

deafen unwanted children placed into the public trust by puncturing their eardrums repeatedly. These orphans are set to patrolling the shore when they come of age, to hunt mermaids who creep close to shore. Most eventually succumb to the seductions of the ladies of the deep or are killed by vengeful husbands, but it's better than drowning at birth.

The average Westerner is bronze-skinned, with those who dwell in the Far West or Southwest having an almost golden skin tone. Those from the Central West tend toward hair colors in sea shades — green, blue, dark gray. Those in the Southwest tend toward darker shades, primarily purple and black. Westerners dress in sturdy clothes, ankle-length dresses, jerkins and shawls for the women and canvas pants, thick jerkins and waterproof ankle-length canvas jackets for the men. Both sexes wear wool pullover caps when the weather is up, and boots from ankle to knee length are the standard footwear.

THE NORTH

To the north is the Elemental Pole of Air. Near the shores of the Inner Sea, the climate is chilly grasslands and pine scrub. But as one goes farther north, the cold becomes increasingly bitter, and the wind grows in strength, until the taiga stops and the tundra begins. Winters here are long and cruel, and the short summer barely gives the surface of the tundra time to thaw before the ice closes in again. Even in the summer, this is a frigid and windy land, and pelting, freezing rain lashes the herds of elk, mammoth and reindeer than eke out a marginal existence from the bleak landscape. Feeding on the herd animals are omen dog packs, and at times, it seems as if the natural sound of the northern winter night is the low, endless sound of lupine baying.

The tundra eventually turns to a permanently frozen waste that runs to the foothills of the northern mountains. It is said that in the farthest north, past the mountains' divide, there is naught but a great gray expanse of snow and frigid winds. Certainly, this is a hard land, by far the most brutal of the four directions.

INHABITANTS

The North is populated, yet not so densely as the South or East. A large number of petty kingdoms and city-states fringe the coastlines of the Inner Sea and the more northerly White Sea. In the south, most are tributaries or puppets of the Realm, with the cities becoming progressively more independent as one travels northward.

Northerners primarily make offerings to the ancestor cult and to the dark spirits of snow and frost and hunger. Herders and hunters typically offer sacrifices to the herd animal spirits and to the spirits of the hunt, respectively, but the vast majority of devotions go to the ghosts of the departed. This ancestor worship, combined with the miserable conditions of Northern existence





and the extreme weakness of the Shroud between the living and the dead in this place where life barely exists at all, makes the natives easy prey for the Deathlords. There are many shadowlands in the North, particularly in the steppes and bogs where the Wyld tribesmen dwell. At least two Deathlords — the Bishop of the Chalcadony Thurible and the Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears — dwell in that region with their deathknights, and both enjoy large followings among the living.

Northerners dress in sturdy clothes, usually leather with the fur left on it and turned inward for insulation. Footgear usually consists of wool or felt puttees and sandals worn under a fur-lined, waterproof overboot. Mittens are common, as are large poncho-like parkas woven loosely out of thick yarn and covered with a windproof leather layer. Long wool caps, turbans and even longer scarves are worn, and skis are common as well.

THE WYLD

The primal energies of creation still run strong and deep during the current age. In most places, the static fabric of reality is only a thin film atop the endless potential of unformed chaos. During the Old Realm, the world was stable, but after the Great Contagion, it began to fray at the edges and in the thin spots. Tiny clusters of survivors were not enough to remember the shape of the world, and the Fair Folk opened the gates at the edge

of Creation and caused great spirit-storms of mischance and unchained possibility to enter the world through them. The effect was devastating. Vast swaths of Creation simply disappeared, and in the places where the barbarians and Fair Folk rode were sewn madness and discord, devastating not only the inhabitants, but twisting the nature of reality itself.

WYLD PLACES

For centuries, there have been places where the sky swims with ever-changing colors and the ground crawls with snow, with ash, with writhing flesh or with carnivorous steel ants. Some occur naturally, but most are the remains of places where the Wyld claimed an ancient Manse or Demesne. These places shrink with the passage of centuries, but there are still large areas of the Threshold where the rules of Creation are enforced loosely, if they have any jurisdiction at all. The border marches of such places tend to resemble the areas in which they occur, save that they are rife with prodigies — crystal flowers, birds of many colors, briars that bleed wine instead of sap. As one travels deeper, the landscape quavers and shifts as if it were hallucinatory, and the prodigies grow more marvelous and fell. One might find dandelions whose seeds are small warriors in mail, carnivorous shadows and oak trees whose galls are full of diamonds so poisonous that a single whiff from them will kill a man.



WYLD BARBARIANS

At the borders of Creation, where the line between reality and chaos shifts with the cycles of the moon, there dwell strange and twisted men. These inhabitants of the fringes of Creation are warped by the power of the Wyld. Some tribes exhibit shocking deformities — gigantism, dwarfism, more or fewer limbs or sense organs than normal for the human form and other similarly radical mutations.

Like most inhabitants of the Threshold, the tribes of the Wyld worship spirits. Most barbarian communities have shamans who use a combination of folk magic, ecstatic meditations in Wyld areas and offerings of blood and edible plants to converse with the spirits. As a rule, Wyld barbarians hold spirits in extreme reverence. In many of the areas that the barbarians inhabit, spirits may enter the material world at will. Indeed, many barbarian tribes are led by spirits of some sort.

Although each barbarian tribe is unique, some are exemplary of their type or particularly numerous. These are described later, but it should be kept in mind that the list provided is by no means exhaustive.

SHADOWLANDS

The land of the dead lies perilously near that of the living, and in places where the boundaries have been crossed and recrossed, the dividing line often frays into nonexistence. In these places, known as shadowlands, the Underworld thrusts through, and the dead walk among the living. During the daylight hours, those who cross the borders of these places traveling outward find themselves in the lands of the living. Those who leave them during the night find themselves traveling farther into the Underworld.

There is no place that the Underworld does not go, nowhere that death cannot touch. But despite their endless variety, there are certain common traits to the places where the dead walk among the living. The absence of animal life, the terrible nightmares, the tendency of those who live on the edges of such places to die early — all are common to every shadowland. But there are other, less obvious signs as well. Storms in these areas are often of unusual strength, the raindrops sometimes mixed with blood or ash or bone or, sometimes, quicksilver. This, the Deathlords say, is the rotting flesh of dead gods, shed from their bodies as they lie unquiet in their tombs.

DEATHLORDS

Most shadowlands are the products of little more than happenstance. The wall between life and death is new and fragile, and too many sudden deaths or a spate of hauntings is all that it takes to rend the Shroud deeply enough that event follows on event and tears a true opening. Yet, at the heart of the greatest shadowlands lie the Manses of the Deathlords, ancient ghosts whose

hatred has allowed them to master the power of the Underworld itself.

Deathlords vary wildly in appearance, having reshaped themselves to match their self-images and the images that they wish to project. Some are alabaster angels, wrapped in wings of sobbing knife-edged steel, with diadems of pale white fire and glittering ruby orbs and scepters of hungry yellow gold upon their belts. Others are no longer anything resembling human, having made the descent into the dark hallways under the land of the dead. These Deathlords are among the more personally powerful of their kind. Although they command the very elements of the Underworld and walk between life and death as if it were a simple doorway, these creatures no longer think as men think or feel as men feel. Their eyes behold an infinity of darkness, and their hearts know only the leaping exaltation of silence.

The Deathlords fight amongst themselves incessantly, constantly warring to advance themselves and their plans or for the sake of ego or simply for the love of strife. Although they command great forces, they have no common center. Each wishes to lash out at the world around her in her own personal fashion to recompense it for her death. The result is 100 little kingdoms of bone and steel and not a military juggernaut whose sole purpose is to crush the living and reunite all things across the Shroud.

THE FAIR FOLK

These malevolent creatures spring from the Wyld, where chaos mixes and gives rise to something that might generously be described as life. Although they are similar in appearance to mortals, their appearance is their only similarity. The faerie are made half from the mad passion of dreams and half from the primal energies of the Wyld, and they know neither morals nor fear. They hurl themselves into their timeless existences without hesitation or regret, and there is nothing in Creation that can deter one from its wrath or love.

The most powerful of the Fair Folk dwell beyond the edges of Creation, eschewing shape and form to dwell in the primal chaos that is their natural home. Only the outcasts, refugees and weak among them put on shape and enter the world of men.

Most Fair Folk who dwell in our world live in Wyld regions or else on the very edges of Creation. The natural alchemy that permits their existence is unstable without a high level of ambient Essence, and if deprived of it, they will soon fade into dust and scraps of memory. But Essence is not the only requirement for their survival. Just as natural predators must eat other creatures to survive, so the Fair Folk must consume dreams to continue their existence. Some are adept at snatching dreams from sleeping mortals or at feeding from the ambient imagination released during the creative process.





More commonly, the faerie feed on captive prey. Through their sorceries and their vast beauty, they ravish the souls of their victims, shearing away love and dreams and hope with a surgeon's skill and taking it all into themselves. The shells that survive this treatment are forever devoid of dreams and desires, and they know neither grief nor hope. The faerie often trade these husks to the Guild in exchange for fresh slaves. The Guild, in turn, sells the husks for use in mining or construction, where the work is hard and risky but simple.

The Fair Folk are vulnerable to the bite of unalloyed iron, and they fear and hate those who wield it. Although they are adept liars, they are unable to break their sworn word, and a promise given is a promise kept. Similarly, although they are often master shapeshifters, the faerie do have a true form, which they must assume when someone speaks their true and secret name. To know a Fair One's name is to be proof against her magic, and she will plot and scheme endlessly to destroy those who can use her name against her and to obliterate the name from memory.

CHARACTER CREATION

Now that you've learned the basics of the world of Exalted, it's time to generate your own Exalted character. Creating a character is easy, and it involves just a few simple choices. It is a good idea to have a general concept of what you want your character to be like (Was he a farm boy who always wanted to grow up to be a hero, or a

spoiled child of the middle class? Is she a hard-bitten vagabond or an introspective scholar?). You can also choose to create a concept as you go.

The next step is selecting your character's caste — the role he fulfills in Exalted society. All characters in the main Exalted book are Solar Exalted, but there are five subgroups of which you can be part. Your character's caste helps define what she is best at, and can also help you get a grasp on your character's personality. For example, if you want to create a veteran mercenary who spent much of his life drifting from war to war, a Dawn Caste character would be a logical choice.

Once you've selected a caste, write down the listed Anima Effect for the caste and mark your in-caste Trait by putting an "x" in the checkbox beside it. Then, look at the character sheet and decide another Trait that suits your character. Mark that one with an "x" too. Those are your Favored Traits.

Next, you get to decide your character's Trait levels. Characters have five Traits in all, each of which represents one general area of endeavor. Those areas include Fighting, Magnetism, Scholarship, Stealth and Embassy. Each represents your ability in that field.

To determine your Traits, rank them from 1 to 5; 5 is the best, 1 is the worst. (Each number may only be assigned to one Trait — you can't give your character a 4 in everything!) So, if you assign Fighting 5, Magnetism 3, Scholarship 4, Stealth 1 and Embassy 2, your character is



CHARACTER CREATION QUICK CHART

- Choose Caste: Write down the character's anima power and mark his in-caste Trait as Favored.
- Choose Favored Trait: Mark another Trait as Favored.
- Choose Traits: Rank the character's Fighting, Magnetism, Scholarship, Stealth and Embassy from 1 to 5; 5 is the best, 1 is the worst.
- Increase Favored Traits: Add one to both of your character's Favored Traits, even if this raises the Trait to 6.
- Give your character a name, and make up some details about her appearance, personality, mannerisms and other features that will help you roleplay her.

an excellent warrior and scholar, fairly enjoyable to be around, not very well traveled and very loud and clumsy.

After you're done assigning the numbers, add one to each of your Favored Traits. This represents the preternatural skill you've developed in those areas as an Exalt. It's tempting to assign your 4 and 5 to your Favored Traits, but you should think twice. Your magical powers will make you very good at your Favored Trait, unless it's a 1. It can pay to have a high value in a Trait that isn't Favored, in order to make your character better at different things.

Finally, every character starts with 10 Essence. This rating represents your reserve of magical power, which you expend to perform superhuman feats with your Favored Traits.

With that, you're ready for the finishing touches. What is your character's name? How does she dress? What was his Exaltation like — was he pursued by the Wyld Hunt? Does she still have mortal friends? Does he have a cult of mortals who venerate him as a godling? What notable personality traits does he have? Once you've come up with these details, your character is ready for play.

Details about Traits and your character's magical abilities can be found on the following pages.

CASTE

In the long-vanished First Age, the different Solar Exalted fulfilled differing roles in the government. Some were mighty generals, while others were spies and assassins, sorcerers, diplomats or leaders. Although that government is long gone, the divine energy within each Solar still remains predisposed toward certain deeds.

DAWN CASTE

As the Unconquered Sun rises in the morning sky, its light flares forth, burning away the darkness and turning the sky red — as if the horizon was soaked with the blood of light's enemies. Thus do the warriors of the Dawn Caste strike against the minions of darkness, staining the ground crimson with the blood of all who dare to stand against them.

Members of the Dawn Caste are chosen from among those who have struggled to master the arts of war and combat. Master swordsmen and archers only scratch the surface of this caste. Gang leaders who excel at urban warfare, hulking brutes who dominate gladiator arenas, philosopher-monks who seek enlightenment through

the martial arts, swordsmiths of legendary skill, hot-headed youths with the courage to fight for what they believe in; all these and more are found among the Children of the Dawn.

Anima Effects: By spending 1 point of Essence, the character can appear huge and terrifying for the remainder of the scene. Creatures attempting to face the Exalted are unable to look directly at the character or strongly oppose him, subtracting 1 die from all attempts to attack the character. Golems and automata, demons and the undead and other creatures that do not know fear cannot be affected by this power.

Caste Trait: Members of the Dawn Caste excel in all forms of combat, armed and otherwise, and they are Favored in the Fighting Trait.

Concepts: Mercenary prince, city guardsman, warrior-scholar, grizzled veteran, daring young farm boy, famous pit fighter, heroic bandit, barbarian raider, swordsmith

Quote: I am not a wise man, but I am a strong one, and I know right from wrong. Surrender, and I will see that you are judged fairly. Resist, and I will end your tyranny with your life.





ZENITH CASTE

As the Unconquered Sun reaches its height amid the noonday sky, its light shines down, banishing shadows, blazing with power and revealing the Sun's immeasurable might for all to see. And so do the Zenith Caste crusade to banish the shadows of doubt and confusion, infusing the masses with faith and revealing its power — the channeled strength of the Unconquered Sun — to all those around it.

Exalted of the Zenith Caste are chosen from those who thirst for righteousness and justice, as well as from among those who are natural leaders of men or who are willing to endure great hardship in the name of what they believe in. All members of this caste have been granted a vision of the Unconquered Sun, and this vision helps fire their passion and faith to new heights. No matter what the Zenith Solar fights for, he fights for it with every fiber of his being, never quitting — no matter what.

Anima Effects: The Zenith Caste is empowered with the touch of the Sun himself. With but a touch, they can burn the bodies of the fallen, sending the smoke (and soul) to Heaven and preventing the body from rising after death as a zombie or hungry ghost.

They can also strike down demons, the undead and other creatures of darkness. As her action for a turn, a Zenith Exalted may spend a point of Essence. The player then rolls her character's Magnetism. For every success, the character does one health level of damage, which cannot be soaked.

As fierce enemies of darkness, the Zenith Exalted may spend a point of Essence and cause their anima to flare. The effect is the same as the anima flare of the Dawn Exalted, but it only applies to demons, ghosts and other such unclean creatures.



Caste Abilities: Members of the Zenith Caste excel at surviving great hardships, both physical and mental. They also possess amazing skills of persuasion and inspiration. They are favored in the Magnetism Trait.

Concepts: Former priest or shaman of another god, brilliant astrologer, two-fisted laborer, wandering tinker, desert hermit, physician, peasant rebel, tax collector, pirate, old man on the mountain, runaway slave

Quote: The stars and the prophets have long foretold a day when the forces of righteousness would come vanquish that which is wicked. I have come in from the wilderness to tell you — that time is now at hand.

TWILIGHT CASTE

As the Unconquered Sun slips below the horizon, its light retreats. The shadows grow long as dedicated scholars and craftsmen light their candles and lanterns, seeking to continue their work into the night. And so, the Twilight Caste seek to hold back the night by bringing forth the light of learning and knowledge and banishing the darkness of ignorance.

Members of the Twilight Caste are chosen from among those who apply their skills and knowledge to create solid, lasting results. Few are found among their numbers who were naught but withered scholars, pouring the years of their life into the pages of dusty tomes. The way of the Arrows of Heaven is the way of the scavenger,



the engineer, the healer, the detective, the craftsman and the warrior-wizard. Each possesses not just a thirst for knowledge, but a burning desire to use it. When knowledge is needed, the Twilight Caste leads the way.

Anima Effects: Solar Exalted of the Twilight Caste may channel Essence through their anima as a last-ditch protective act. If a Twilight Exalted will lose health levels to an attack, then she may spend a point of her Essence to strengthen her Anima. The character may spend one point of Essence to reduce the damage she suffers from an attack by two health levels. This is done after soak is applied, and it can totally negate damage from an attack.

Caste Abilities: Members of the Twilight Caste excel in the search for knowledge and in the application of that knowledge. They are Favored in the Scholarship Trait.

Concepts: Elderly scholar, warrior-sage, cunning courtier, slave on the run, destitute student, child prodigy, ambitious courtesan, educated merchant, village wise woman, cunning tailor, traveling healer, town constable, optimistic young scavenger, blacksmith

Quote: You would enslave these people with ignorance and keep their minds small and their lives miserable in order to fatten your own belly. I cannot abide such wickedness. I come bearing the light of learning for all who wish to see.

NIGHT CASTE

When the Unconquered Sun descends below the horizon to slumber until the next dawn, the world is shrouded in darkness and secrecy. It is the time of those beings — conspirators, criminals and wicked spirits — that cannot survive the bright light of truth. The Night Caste fights these enemies on their own turf and walks in a world of secrecy and lies.

Members of the Night Caste are chosen from those who excel in stealth and guile, and they can formulate clever solutions to difficult problems. Thieves and assassins are chosen but also secretive scholars, clever city constables, master woodsmen, sly courtesans, fast-talking merchants and devious nobles. Any who favor the use of cunning, wit and skill over raw power may be Exalted into this caste.

Anima Effects: The Hidden Suns may mute their animas, allowing them to exert their powers without the display of power. When a Night Caste Solar expends Essence, she may spend another point of Essence to prevent the expenditure from causing her anima banner to flare.

The character may also extend her muted anima like an imperceptible veil around her. Doing so costs 1 point of Essence to evoke, and it mutes the senses of those attempting to perceive the Night Caste. Shadows are darker, sounds muffled, and scent and footprints are both much lighter than normal. In game-mechanic terms, subtract one success from all Stealth rolls attempting to spot or follow a character, or from Magnetism rolls to track him in the wilderness.



Caste Abilities: Members of the Night Caste excel at noticing what others miss and in going places where they are not wanted. They are Favored in the Stealth Trait.

Concepts: Troubleshooter for hire, bounty hunter, neglected youngest sister, escaped fugitive, king of thieves, nobleman's mistress, gang leader, crafty merchant, highwayman

Quote: Hide your wickedness behind closed doors, skulk beneath the earth, even conspire in the land of dead if you wish — it will avail you not. You may conceal your evil from the light of the Unconquered Sun, but you cannot evade his eyes.

ECLIPSE CASTE

When the sun and the moon are in perfect alignment, the result is a spectacular solar eclipse. Visible from every corner of the world, it is a most auspicious event. The Golden Lord and the Silver Lady become one — a crown of light flares out, and the day dims enough that the Five Maidens are visible. All of Heaven can be seen, displaying the unity and harmony of the natural order. So the Eclipse Caste brings unity and order to the people of the world. Its members touch all corners of society, crossing boundaries and bringing people together.

When the Solars returned, the world witnessed the first solar eclipse since the Terrestrial Exalted took power. Now, the Eclipse Caste has begun the difficult process of reunifying the world. With diplomacy and trade routes, the Crowned Suns forge links between distant people and places, binding groups together into something greater than the sum of the parts.

Members of the Eclipse Caste are chosen from those who excel at social interaction. Unlike the Zenith Caste, which is a shining beacon for all to see, the Crowned Suns work quietly. They are socialites who move with effortless grace, influencing the opinions of others. They are the shamans who make pacts between men and spirits and the



censors who keep governments functioning honestly. They are the true masters of communication and organization.

Anima Effects: When an Eclipse Caste Solar is party or witness to an oath, he may use his anima to sanctify it. The Exalted spends a point of Essence to sanctify the oath, and thereafter those who break it will never profit from the oathbreaking. The Exalted need not be alive when the curse takes effect — he sanctifies the oath, but Heaven enforces it.

Also, Eclipses are protected by ancient pacts with the spirit world, the demon princes and the Fair Folk. Eclipses and their companions who are on legitimate business with those beings may not be attacked without just cause (although they may be goaded into attacking and nullifying the oaths), and such creatures must honor the rules of hospitality.

Caste Abilities: Members of the Eclipse Caste excel in all forms of communication, organization and travel. They are Favored in the Embassy Trait.

Concepts: Elderly society matron, ambitious young noble, professional diplomat, trade intermediary, village shaman, careful spy, ambitious courtier, professional messenger, adventurous sailor, army quartermaster

Quote: I negotiate in good faith, yet you respond with treachery. Sadly for you, I have learned to anticipate such duplicity. Even if you survive the wrath of my Circlemates, you must answer to Heaven as well.

TRAITS

The power and skill of an Exalted (or of any character) are measured by her Traits. An Exalted has five Traits that represent Abilities possessed by all humans to some extent. These five Traits are:

Fighting: This Trait measures an Exalted's ability in all forms of combat — armed and unarmed hand-to-hand combat, thrown weapons and archery. This Trait is used to resolve all tasks involving fighting.

Magnetism: This Trait measures an Exalted's personal appeal and ability to lead. It is used to resolve all tasks involving leading people or impressing single individuals. It also includes inner strength, and governs the character's resistance to poison, disease and fatigue, as well as her ability to survive in the wilderness.

Scholarship: This Trait measures an Exalted's degree of learning, her ability to make and build things, her command of languages and also her occult knowledge. Scholarship is used to resolve all tasks concerned with trying to figure something out, speak another language or perform magic.

Stealth: This Trait measures an Exalted's innate criminal instincts. It is used to resolve all tasks involving stealing things, sneaking, picking locks and so forth. It is also a measure of the character's alertness, and if you must check to see if a character noticed something or someone, roll her Stealth. Stealth also governs the character's innate athletic potential, and it is used when the character is attempting to perform an acrobatic feat or dodge an attack.

Embassy: This Trait represents the Exalted's ability to understand and manipulate social situations. Use it to resolve any task in which the character is attempting to manipulate or understand a group or society. Embassy also represents a character's ability to travel safely, and it is used to resolve any attempts to ride horses or sail ships.

Finally, all Exalted have a trait they share called Essence. All Exalted start with 10 points of Essence.

Essence: Command of Essence is the ability of an Exalted to change reality. Most Exalted channel their Essence through their other Traits to enhance their abilities to superhuman levels. By spending a point of Essence, an Exalted may double her Trait rating for a single action.

If an Exalted spends Essence, it returns slowly, as her natural reserves of strength return. An Exalted regains one point of Essence for every hour spent working, marching or otherwise engaged in strenuous activity. She regains two points of Essence for every hour spent walking casually, engaged in enjoyable conversation or otherwise relaxing. She regains four points of Essence for every hour spent sleeping, relaxing in a sauna or bath, receiving a massage or otherwise recovering her power.

THE ANIMA BANNER

All Exalted have an "anima," an aura of power that surrounds them. Normally, this aura is so faint that it is imperceptible to normal human senses, but when the Exalted spends points of Essence, the anima intensifies to form a so-called banner. With the exceptions of the "1" and "5" entries, the anima banner fades at the rate of one table entry per scene, or per 10 to 15 minutes if the scenes are very long.

Points of Essence Spent Effect

1 The character's Caste Mark glitters and is visible from certain angles. Anyone seeing the Exalted may make a Stealth roll to notice the Caste Mark. The character can use the Stealth Trait normally to hide. This effect can persist for as long as an hour after the character has ceased to burn Essence.

2 The character's Caste Mark burns and will shine through anything placed over it. It is impossible to mistake the character for anything but what she is. All Stealth rolls are at +2 difficulty, above and beyond any other modifiers.

3 The character is surrounded by a coruscant aura bright enough to read by, and his Caste Mark is a burning golden brand on his forehead. Stealth is impossible.

4 The character is engulfed in a brilliant bonfire of Essence, which burns from his feet to at least a foot above the character's head. Objects that come in contact with the aura may be left bleached or faded, as if they had been exposed to the sun for many days. The character is visible for miles. The light is bright and steady enough to read by out to a spearcast's distance. The character's Caste Mark will remain etched in the vision of anyone who sees it for minutes afterward.

5+ The character is surmounted or surrounded by a burning image totemic to his person — a warrior might be surrounded by a great golden bull, a Twilight Caste magician by an incredibly elaborate mandala, and so on. This effect fades during any turn the character does not spend Essence, but it leaps back into existence from the solar bonfire of the character's anima if the character again spends a point of Essence.

TRAIT RATINGS

Traits are rated from 1 to 4; a rating of 1 indicates a mediocre level of ability, while a rating of 4 indicates a Trait at the absolute peak level of human ability (an Olympic athlete, a genius, a great statesman, or so forth). It is possible to have a zero in a Trait, reflecting a crippled or decrepit character, but players' characters never start out with zeros in any Trait. It is also possible for Exalted to attain superhuman scores — all Exalted characters start out with a 5 in one Trait, and that can be raised to 6 if it is in a Favored Trait.

Most humans possess ratings of 1 or 2 in all Traits. However, beginning Exalted are operating at the pinnacle of human ability and beyond it. Various monsters and enemies, created by the Storyteller, can also have very high traits. A pack of mutated barbarians might have Traits ranging from 1 to 3, whereas a huge 12-legged demonic monstrosity with serpent-heads for legs might have Traits of 5 or even more.

Trait	Ratings
0	Enfeebled
1	Mediocre
2	Pretty good
3	Really good
4	Human perfection
5+	Superhuman (supernatural beings only)

HEALTH AND INJURY

Exalted characters have seven health levels, representing various stages of wounding. They are "-0, -0, -0, -1, -1, -3 and Incapacitated." The minus signs followed by a number indicate the degree of impairment from pain

and injury that the injury causes the character, and it is a penalty applied to all Trait rolls.

As wounds accumulate, check off the wound boxes on the character sheet, starting with the first -0 box and going down from there. When all health levels are gone, the character falls unconscious and begins to die. A character takes the largest penalty listed beside any health level he has suffered, so a character who had suffered three -0 health levels in damage and two -1 health levels in damage would have a penalty of -1 to all Traits.

DEATH AND HEALING

A character who has suffered health levels of damage heals them back slowly. For every day of relaxation and rest, an Exalt heals back one health level. This is not true for normal mortals — for the average mortal in the world of Exalted, a blow from a sword is a crippling injury that will take weeks or months to heal, and which may well lead to a lethal infection. However, the Exalted were created for war, and their bodies heal quickly, and are all but immune to infection.

When a character takes a health level of damage beyond Incapacitated, she falls unconscious and dies. A slain character is out of the game forever. The player must create a new character.

RULES

Most of the action in Exalted is determined by the players and Storyteller, but we provide a few rules to help arbitrate complex situations.

This system uses six-sided dice, which are available in supermarkets and toy stores. You might already have some from a board game like Risk. When a player decides that his character is going to attempt an action for which the outcome is in doubt (trying to impress a prince, swinging her sword at an enemy, etc.), the Storyteller decides which Trait is most relevant.

Storyteller assigns a difficulty. This is usually 1, but it can go as high as five for all but impossible tasks (like running across several hundred yards of water on sheer speed). The player then rolls a number of dice equal to the character's rating in the Trait. Every one of the dice that rolls a 4 or 5 is called a success. If a die comes up 6, it counts as two successes. If the character rolls a number of successes equal to or greater than the difficulty of the task, the action succeeds. If not, the action fails.

AUTOMATIC TASKS VERSUS DICE ROLLS

Most tasks are automatic. If Alia says, "My character Turquoise Nova runs up the steps and through the door!" no roll is necessary. It happens automatically. Even though there's a chance of botching routine actions (like slipping on wet stone steps or being thrown from a horse that panics for no reason), you don't have to roll for everyday events. Nobody wants to play a game about a hero who can't get out of the house without worrying about breaking his neck.





However, if Turquoise Nova were trying to run up the stairway with a leg on the wall to either side so she didn't touch the individual steps, or if she were ducking behind a door as protection from a hail of arrows, then dice rolling would be necessary. Dice rolling only begins when the action becomes dramatic.

SPENDING ESSENCE

Remember, if a character Favors a Trait, he may spend a point of Essence to double the value of the Trait for a single roll.

DIFFICULTIES

Difficulties range between 1 and 5. When in doubt, a difficulty is always 1.

Difficulty	Task
1	Normal (climbing a fieldstone wall, racing through the woods on horseback)
2	Hard (climbing a sheer stone wall, racing through the woods on horseback at night)
3	Extremely Hard (Walking silently when covered in bells, racing through the woods on horseback blindfolded)
4	Almost Impossible (lifting a millstone, persuading a horse to run through a field full of screaming ghosts)
5	Impossible (running across a ceiling, pulling a ship over land with a hawser)

EXTRA SUCCESSES

If a character rolls more successes than the difficulty of an action, he has succeeded exceptionally well. In combat, the effects of exceptional success are easy to determine — very successful attacks do extra damage. However, in other actions, it is up to the Storyteller to determine the effects of extra successes.

STUNTS

Exalted is a game of exciting, cinematic action. The point is for every player to enjoy himself as much as possible, and to have fun while playing. Part of what makes a game fun for everyone is when you give a cool description of what you're doing, rather than droning out "I hit him with my mace" or something equally uninspired.

To encourage such artistic flair, Exalted uses stunts. A stunt is whenever a player describes an action her character is undertaking in a really cool fashion. Whenever a player describes what her character is doing in an interesting way, the Storyteller should award her an extra die to roll to determine if the character succeeds or not. In addition, if the character succeeds in the action he used the stunt to attempt, and he has less than 10 Essence, the character immediately gains back a point of Essence.

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

Will's character, Black Mask, is being pursued through Nexus by a pair of hired assassins working for the Wyld Hunt. Knowing that two-on-one isn't good odds, Black

Mask runs. The Storyteller describes the street scene that's flashing by as Black Mask runs, and he decides to throw an obstacle at Will. He tells him that the street Black Mask is running up to is blocked by a parade of the Church of Dace warrior-cult.

Will decides that Black Mask will try to leap over the parade so that the assassins will have to try to plow through a bunch of militant cultists to follow him. The Storyteller decides that since this is athletics, it's a Stealth feat — Black Mask is already running, but the cultists are carrying banners and waving placards in support of the demigod they worship. Black Mask has a Stealth score of 6, and Will decides to spend Essence, because he wants it to work, and because leaping into the middle of a bunch of well-armed fanatics is probably a bad idea. Therefore, he has a total of 12 dice to roll. He rolls a 1, 2, 2, 2, 2, 3, 4, 4, 5, 6, 6, 6, for a total of 9 successes!

This is an incredible, godlike result. The Storyteller decides that Black Mask sails over the procession in a flash of golden light, and is taken as a divine potent by the cultists. When the assassins arrive and attempt to plow through the procession, they'll find the members of the Church to be quite eager to strike out against anything they perceive as evil — like a pair of obvious toughs with poisoned knives.

CONTESTS

Sometimes, a character will be in conflict with another person, Exalted or other rival, not simply a situation. Such events are known as contests. To resolve a contest, each player rolls, and the character with the most successes wins. The Traits rolled by the players may be the same, or they may be different, depending on the situation. The contestant who scores the most successes wins. Ties reroll.

Example: Simon Whitecrown (Magnetism 4) is attempting to stare down a rebellious courtier (Magnetism 2). Simon's player rolls four dice and scores 1, 2, 4, and 5 — two successes. The Storyteller rolls two dice for the courtier and scores 2 and 5 — one success. Simon wins — the courtier grudgingly does his job.

DRAMA

The life of an Exalt is fraught with danger and suspense. The following section looks at some situations that will likely arise over the course of an evening's play, as well as some rules to handle them.

TIME

Exalted uses a fairly loose system of keeping track of time. Although the Storyteller can certainly keep track of the hours and days as they pass, game time is usually measured in terms of turns, scenes and stories.

Turn: A turn lasts about three seconds. It is used when adjudicating dramatic situations involving split-second decisions and actions, such as combat. In one turn, each character can take one action.

Scene: A scene is a sequence of events in roughly the same time and place. So, a brutal fight with a gang or an hours-long discussion of battle strategy both constitute a scene, even though the meeting lasts longer than the fight.

Story: A story is an entire sequence of events in which the characters take part. It has a plot, a climax and a resolution.

Example: In the movie *Star Wars*, each swing of Obi-Wan's and Darth Vader's lightsabers took a turn. The time the heroes spent trapped in the Death Star's garbage masher took a scene. The entire movie was a story.

INITIATIVE

Sometimes it's important to know who acts first. A character who gets the jump on her opponent is said to have the initiative.

Characters act in the following order:

Highest Fighting goes first, followed by the next highest, and so on.

If there are ties, the character with the highest Stealth wins the tie.

If there are still ties, then the character with the Highest Magnetism wins the tie.

If there are still ties, roll one die. The highest roll wins. Keep rolling until the tie is resolved.

Example: Turquoise Nova is cornered by an Abyssal Exalted who means to kill her in order to prove himself to his Deathlord master. Both have a Fighting of 5, as they're both skilled warriors. Since neither has the advantage, the Storyteller compares Turquoise's and the Abyssal's Stealth Traits. Both have Stealth Traits of 3. Comparing their Magnetism ratings, the Storyteller sees that Turquoise has a Magnetism of 4, while the Abyssal has a Magnetism of 2. Turquoise attacks first. If the Abyssal had had a Magnetism of 3, the Storyteller and Turquoise's player would have simply rolled a die, with the highest roll acting first.

COMBAT

The Exalted are warriors, born into a time of tumult. Those who expect to survive must not turn their faces aside from battle.

Combat is conducted in three-second turns. It uses the task system already established. Initiative is determined normally, and most combat actions are considered Fighting tasks. There are two basic types of combat: hand-to-hand and ranged.

HAND-TO-HAND

Hand-to-hand combat is conducted with fists, natural weaponry (such as claws or fangs) or weapons. Initiative is determined normally. Attacks are resolved in order of initiative. Each turn, a combatant can strike a single target. Remember that a fighting character can spend a point of Essence to double his dice pool on an attack or defense roll, if the Trait he's rolling is Favored.

- **Strike:** The attacker rolls Fighting. The character being attacked defends automatically, rolling his Fighting or Stealth (defender's choice) to evade the attack. If the attacker scores a number of successes equal to or exceeding the defender's roll, he has struck the defender.

- **Dodge:** A character may go fully evasive for a turn, and attempt to do nothing but dodge. The evasive character may not do anything else, even attack, this turn. However, the dodging character automatically adds two successes to her Stealth or Fighting roll to avoid all attacks. In addition, if the dodging character evades an attacker and beats the attacker's successes, she gains the initiative on the attacking character next turn!

SOAK AND DAMAGE

Damage: If the attacker hits, he inflicts a number of health levels of damage equal to his Fighting Trait. If he is using a small weapon like a knife, the damage is equal to the attacker's Fighting Trait +1. If he is using a large weapon like a sword or mace, the damage is equal to the attacker's Fighting Trait +2.

Armor: A character wearing light armor, like a long leather battle-jacket, may subtract 1 health level from the damage of an attack. A character in heavy armor may subtract 2 from the damage of an attack. However, heavy armor says, "I'm about to fight a battle," and it causes the character to suffer a -1 die penalty on all defense rolls and Stealth rolls to sneak or perform athletic feats. Armor can never reduce an attack's damage below 1.

Soak: Because Exalted are supernaturally resilient to injury, they may attempt to absorb some of the damage just as a trained boxer can ignore some punches. An Exalted may make a Magnetism roll. For every success she rolls, she negates one health level of damage. This negation applies after the subtraction of armor, and (unlike armor) soak can reduce an attack's damage to zero. If you roll a 6 on a soak roll, it only counts as one success. Normal mortals cannot soak, and they must trust in their skill and the limited protection offered by their armor in combat. A character can spend a point of Essence to double her Magnetism for a single soak roll.

Shields: A character using a shield gets to roll an extra die when defending against attacks, but even more than heavy armor, carrying a shield advertises the fact that you're expecting a fight. Wandering around with one will get you into trouble with the local authorities.

Extras: Often, it isn't worth keeping track of wounds for nuisance opposition. You never see the villain's henchmen staggering away with a flesh wound — they either go down and stay down, or they're unhurt. To reflect this, Exalted has rules for extras. If you are fighting an extra and succeed in hitting them, don't worry about damage; he just dies.

RANGED COMBAT

To conduct ranged combat, the character must have a thrown weapon or a bow and arrow. Each turn, the Exalted may throw a weapon or fire one accurate arrow, provided she has objects to throw or ammunition to fire.





- **Strikes:** As usual, the attacker rolls Fighting to attack, and the defender rolls Fighting or Stealth to evade. Strikes take place at long, medium or short range. Strikes made at long range subtract 2 successes from the attacker's roll. Attacks at medium range subtract one success from the attacker's roll. Attacks at short range are made normally, but the defender can attack the archer in hand-to-hand combat. Shields give their one-die bonus to defense against arrows and thrown weapons, as usual.

- **Dodge:** A defender may dodge normally, but dodging does not give the defender the initiative on the attacker automatically in the next turn.

A defender may also execute a running dodge. A running dodge takes an entire action, and the defender does not gain any bonuses to her Trait; however, she automatically closes the gap between herself and the attacker by one range level (i.e., if she was at long range, she is now at medium range).

- **Straight Run:** A defender may decide to simply charge at the attacker. Doing so takes an entire action, and the defender may not defend against the attacker's shot. However, at the end of the turn, the defender is automatically in hand-to-hand range, and he may attack next turn.

Damage: Damage from thrown weapons and arrows is determined a little differently from hand-to-hand damage. A thrown object inflicts a number of health levels equal to the attacker's successes on the strike roll. An arrow inflicts a number of health levels equal to the attacker's successes on the strike roll +3.

Soak: Arrows and thrown weapons can be soaked normally, and armor applies as usual.

SORCERY

Characters who Favor the Scholarship Trait are sorcerers, and they can perform magic. In Exalted, magic is a diverse and powerful force, but we've simplified it considerably for this quickstart. Sorcery takes time, and in order to practice magic, a character must give up his action for a turn. Such a character cannot attempt to defend against incoming attack. If he is hit, the character must make a Scholarship roll (difficulty 1) or lose the Essence invested in casting the spell, but without generating an effect.

In the Exalted quickstart, a sorcerer can perform one of four spells:

- **Flying Guillotine** — This spell costs two Essence. The character hurls a disc covered in hundreds of spinning blades and knives. He makes a ranged attack using his Scholarship instead of his Fighting, which does an amount of damage equal to the unblocked successes on the attack + 6. A character using Flying Guillotine can double his Scholarship with Essence as usual.

- **Invulnerable Skin of Bronze** — This spell costs three Essence. Until the end of the scene, the character can add her Scholarship and her Magnetism together. If a character Favors both Magnetism and Scholarship and wishes to double them both for the purposes of increasing his soak, he must spend a point of Essence on each.

- **Incantation of Transport** — The spell costs a variable number of points of Essence. When it is cast, the character is instantly transported a number of miles away equal to the number of points of Essence spent casting the spell.

- **Infallible Messenger** — This spell costs one point of Essence. The character sends a magically conjured sprite to relay a message to someone. The message can be up to 10 words in length per point of the sorcerer's Scholarship. The messenger will infallibly follow the shortest route to the target, and it travels at a hundred miles an hour.

Sorcery in Exalted is very spectacular, beyond even the regular displays of anima banners. It is impossible to miss someone using sorcery — the display is visible for miles if there is no obstruction to line-of-sight.

PURSUIT AND CHASES

Sometimes, characters will want to chase other characters. Chases are resolved as is initiative, based on the following chart:

Highest Stealth Trait wins.

If tied, then highest Magnetism.

If tied, then highest Embassy.

If still ties, then use a die roll, as per initiative.

Example: Black Mask has turned the tables on the assassins that are pursuing him, and now they are running from him. He has a Stealth Trait of 6, while the assassins have only 3. The next time they see Black Mask is when he's standing at the mouth of the alley they're running down.

SOCIAL INTERACTION

Only a fool tries to resolve everything with bloodshed, and to reclaim their place in Creation, the Exalted must use guile as well as force of arms. There are a number of social challenges that might arise in a game; a few, along with suggestions for handling them, are listed below.

- **Intimidation:** The character may try to intimidate her target through physical threats (use the Fighting Trait) or social condescension (use the Embassy Trait). When dealing with other Exalted, the most common form of challenge and intimidation is the stare down, which uses the Magnetism trait. The victim may resist with her Magnetism Trait. The highest number of successes wins.

- **Leadership:** The character may issue commands, but the player must make a Magnetism roll to convince a hesitant target. If the target is inclined to disobey, he may make a Magnetism roll to resist. The highest number of successes wins.

- **Fast-Talk:** The Exalted rolls Embassy; the party being conned uses her Magnetism to resist. The highest roll wins.

STEALTH

A the player of a character trying to evade notice makes a Stealth roll. People trying to spot the character also roll Stealth (since Stealth also governs alertness) and compare the number of successes to the sneaking character's total. If the observer doesn't equal the sneaking character's

total, the evading character remains undetected. If the observer wins, she detects the character. If the observing character ties with the sneaking character, she “thinks she hears something” or “sees something out of the corner of her eye”. Any future rolls to spot the sneaking character are at an automatic +1 success. If a character is trying to sneak under difficult conditions (like broad daylight or without cover), the Storyteller should subtract successes from his Stealth total to reflect the difficulty of hiding.

TRACKING

Often, in Exalted, one character will trail another through the wilderness. The character being pursued makes a Stealth roll, just as if he were sneaking under more conventional circumstances. However, rather than making Stealth rolls to spot the character, the pursuers make Magnetism rolls (since Magnetism governs wilderness survival and tracking).

SAMPLE ADVENTURES

The possibilities for adventure in the world of Exalted are limitless. However, the following three mini-adventures are provided to help novice Storytellers get a feel for what kinds of adventures work well in the world of Exalted.

RAIDERS OF THE FORBIDDEN TOMB

When they were destroyed near the end of the First Age, the Solar Exalted were buried with their grave goods in great fortress-tombs. The hope was that the fine burial would lull their ghosts into quiescence, and that the powerful magical wards would protect the tombs from looting. Also, if the Solars were somehow reincarnated, they would be unable to reach their grave goods. Today, the reborn Solars are often drawn to these tombs by a desire to regain their grave goods or by a need that many feel to see the remains of their previous selves.

Originally, the tombs were impregnable, but 1500 years since the murder of the Solars have not been kind to many of the tombs. The tomb that one or more of the player's characters' previous incarnations were buried in is an excellent example. Located in the midst of the poisonous Southeastern jungles, the pyramid-shaped tomb has become the lair of a feral Lunar Exalted, Magnificent Jaguar, and a tribal army of his beastman offspring. Within it lie the enchanted weapons and armor of the characters' previous incarnations, but the characters must fight, sneak or bluff their way past Magnificent Jaguar and his offspring.

To reach the tomb, the characters must traverse hundreds of miles of sweltering jungle, avoiding predators, natural hazards and the barbaric human tribesmen who swarm throughout the area. Once there, they must find a way into the tomb, and then evade the traps that lie within it.

Human tribesmen have all traits at 2 except Survival, which they have at 3. Cat-man warriors have Fighting and Survival 3 and all other Traits at 2. Both sorts of opponents are extras.

Magnificent Jaguar has Fighting 6*, Survival 5*, Scholarship 4, Stealth 4 and Embassy 2. He can spend a point of Essence to shapeshift into a giant cat (add 1 to Survival and Stealth, subtract 1 from Embassy) or a cat-man war form (add 2 to Fighting), and he can shift back to his human shape without effort. Also, rather than doubling his Favored Traits (Fighting and Survival), he can also spend a point of Essence to add 1 die worth of automatic successes to a roll involving them. Mark off the point of Essence, roll one die and add that many successes to the next action he makes. Magnificent Jaguar has five -0 health levels, three -1 health levels, a -2 health level an Incapacitated health level.

BESIEGED!

The characters are in an isolated Threshold city that has been besieged by the forces of one the Deathlords. Although they are safe within the walls, the siege lines manned by legions of hungry ghosts and walking dead outside the walls make escape difficult. Worse, the Deathlord's deathknight servants have arrived, and it will be very hard for even the most daring heroes to defeat the siege. Although the city has plenty of stores put aside in case of siege, the dead need no sustenance, and their necromantic siege artillery specializes in the spreading of foulness and disease. The city is strong for now, but it won't be long until the first outbreaks of cholera and typhus begin. Messengers were sent to neighboring kingdoms asking for aid, but it is unknown if they escaped the Deathlord's troops, or if the neighboring states will send enough troops to help — or any aid at all. Will the characters attempt to escape the city, lead the citizens in a defense until help arrives or sally forth to defeat the leaders of the Deathlord's army and break the siege?

Walking dead and hungry ghosts both have Fighting Traits of 3 and all other Traits at 2, and they are extras. The deathknights are clad in black armor and the finery of the grave, but treat them as mirror images of the players' characters for statistical purposes, with the same Traits, spells, anima powers and general types of equipment.

CARAVAN OF DEATH

The characters are traveling between the great cities of the South with a large trading caravan. Unfortunately, the land crawls with bandits who have multiplied in the years since the disappearance of the Empress. The characters may be part of the caravan's guard force, or they may simply be traveling along with it. The caravan will be threatened for nearly the entire time it is on the road. Will the characters be able to protect it without betraying their identities as Solars and causing a public outcry at their destination? Bandits have 2 in all their Traits. As extras, they are no challenge for a Solar to defeat, but can the outnumbered player's characters succeed without resorting to the use of Essence?

The mighty Exalted face many challenges, and the fate of the world is in your hands!





PLAYER NAME: _____

CHARACTER NAME: _____

CASTE: _____

ATTRIBUTES

FIGHTING _____ ●○○○○ MAGNETISM _____ ●○○○○ SCHOLARSHIP _____ ●○○○○
STEALTH _____ ●○○○○ EMBASSY _____ ●○○○○

ANIMA

ABILITY

DESCRIPTION

ABILITY	DESCRIPTION
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

WEAPONS

SMALL WEAPONS (KNIVES, SLINGS) +1 DAMAGE.
LARGE WEAPONS (SWORDS, MACES, BOWS) +2 DAMAGE

ESSENCE

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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ARMOR

LIGHT ARMOR, -1 DAMAGE FROM ATTACKS
HEAVY ARMOR, -2 DAMAGE FROM ATTACKS, -1 ON ALL ATTACK
ROLLS AND ALL STEALTH ROLLS FOR SNEAKING AND ATHLETICS.
SHIELD, ADD 1 TO DEFENSE ROLLS.

HEALTH

-0	☐
-0	☐
-0	☐
-1	☐
-1	☐
-3	☐

POSSESSIONS

THE WORLD OF DARKNESS GAMES

THE GREAT FLOOD, THE MYTHIC AGES, THE IMPERGIUM, THE SUNDERING AND THE SHATTERING. THESE EVENTS FOLLOWED THE AGE OF SORROWS AND WARPED REALITY INTO A WORLD OF DARKNESS. VAMPIRES WAR AMONGST THEMSELVES FOR DOMINATION OVER MORTALS. WEREWOLVES BATTLE FOR THE LIFE OF THEIR MOTHER EARTH. MAGES WORK WONDERS IN AN EFFORT TO RESTORE THE GOLDEN AGE. BUT IS THE FATE OF THE WORLD WRITTEN IN REVELATIONS OF CATAclysm? YOU WILL DECIDE.



VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE

What does death mean for those who live forever? Vampires have walked alongside their human herds since time began, fighting their Jyhad against each other and vying for dominance over the World of Darkness. Sustaining themselves on the blood of mortals, these undead masters are fearful creatures of legend and postmodern monsters. Do you dare walk among them?



WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE

You are Garou — a werewolf of legend. Throughout history, your brothers and sisters have fought with fang, claw and spirit to protect Gaia — the Earth Mother. Many are Gaia's enemies, from the planet-despoiling subsidiaries of the many-headed Pentex Corporation to metaphysical threats in the Umbra, or spirit world. You are the last generation of warriors.

HUNTER: THE RECKONING

For centuries, supernatural powers have reigned, warring among themselves, culling the human herds and lashing out from the shadows. The creatures of the night have held court since before the dawn of history... but nothing lasts forever. We have been called from among the throngs of humanity. We know the monsters are real, and we have the power to stop them!



MAGE: THE ASCENSION

Reality is a lie invented by a technocratic enemy that has written history to its liking. The truth is magic æ the universe can be crafted with a simple working of your will. Mages have taught this truth throughout the ages, but the proponents of technology have crushed the mystic masters. Join the last stand in the war for reality.

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but you can explore the Age of Sorrows and delve into
its vastly detailed setting with the books below.



Exalted

This hardcover rulebook, some dice, a few friends and your imagination are all you need to begin your adventure into **Exalted**.

Exalted Storytellers Companion

Packed with Additional information on the Terrestrial and Celestial Exalted, the spirit courts and wondrous weapons and magical items, this companion is a must-have for **Exalted** Players.



Scavenger Sons

Coveted by the Dragon-Blooded and contested by savage warlords and merchant kings alike, the Scavenger Lands hold endless treasures... and untold dangers.

Castebooks

Castebooks reveal the variety among the Chosen of the Unconquered Sun, as well as the incredible power they bring to the Second Age.



Trilogy of the Second Age

Reborn into a time of chaos, the Solar Exalted face perils from the Dragon-Blooded, the inscrutable Fair Folk, the mysterious Deathlords, and even their former allies, the Lunar Exalted. Discover new legends in this trilogy of novels.



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