

Chapter Two: Traits and Permutations

This chapter explains the Traits used by the **Exalted Demake**, particularly where they differ from the official **Exalted** corebook you are using as a reference point while playing this unofficial fan-created edition, without which **EXD** doesn't function.

This chapter also has rules for playing mortal, God-Blooded, and ghost protagonists.

Nature

A *nature* is a profound archetype which sits at the heart of each character. This is their most central and immutable self: the sort of person that, fundamentally, they are.

In game terms, this trait serves three purposes. First, Nature acts as a powerful element of social intrigue. It takes very powerful magic to force a character to violate her Nature; but by the same token, someone who understands a person's Nature has a much easier time manipulating them by appealing to that Nature.

Second, **Nature is used to regain Willpower**. Once per scene, a character may regain a point of Willpower by acting in a way that satisfies her Nature, or by witnessing the world behave in a way that affirms the fundamental rightness of her Nature's outlook.

Third, **Nature is used to regain Motes**. Once per scene, a character may regain a Mote of Essence by acting in a way that satisfies her Nature, or by witnessing the world behave in a way that affirms the fundamental rightness of her Nature's outlook.

The list below is meant to be a representative sample. If none of the Natures below fits your character, feel free to work with your Storyteller to come up with your own, or look through various **World of Darkness** books or the First Edition **Exalted** corebook and consider one of the Nature archetypes to be found there.

Architect

You are driven to build something that lasts, something that matters, something that will *make a difference*. This could be a work of art, a social revolution, a kingdom, or the founding of a dynasty.

Gain Willpower when you accomplish a significant goal to bring your dream closer to reality.

Bravo

You like to be the big dog. Your fundamental sense of self is rooted in being the toughest thing in the room. You might use that strength to bully others, or to protect them, but either way, you're the sort that has to make sure everyone *knows* you're stronger than them.

Gain Willpower when you demonstrate your dominance.

Bureaucrat

You take deep comfort from knowing that there's a right way to do everything: that systems exist to impose order on a world otherwise inclined to chaos. The system you look to might be the laws of the land, a labyrinthine set of bureaucratic codes that you spent years mastering, or just a sense of traditionalism. Whatever it is, it's your rock.

Gain Willpower when adherence to protocol saves the day.

Caregiver

Your sense of self-worth is rooted in uplifting others. When you've helped someone else, put them ahead, or gotten them out of a jam, then you know that the world is a better place because you are in it. This affirms that you are where you're supposed to be, doing what you're supposed to do.

Gain Willpower when you receive evidence that your actions have helped someone else.

Conniver

You move other people around like pieces on a Gateway board. You might be a callous manipulator, but you might also be a helpful matchmaker. Whichever the case may be, you're only at ease when everyone is where you think they should be, doing what you think they should be doing.

Gain Willpower when you get someone to do what you want.

Critic

You're here to make things better, and the first step to that is figuring out what's wrong. Nothing's perfect, and you're the sort of person who cannot help but point out what, exactly, is standing in the way of that. This might make you an excellent middle manager. It also might make you a colossal asshole.

Gain Willpower when a significant problem is avoided because of your criticism.

Explorer

The horizon calls to you. You are never satisfied with what you have or what you know. You always need more: a new day, a new sky, a new vista, a new revelation. Routine is death.

Gain Willpower when you make a significant discovery.

Follower

Everyone can't be a chief or general. You take pride in playing your part, whatever that might be, and doing it well. It sets you at ease to know someone else, someone more suited to that sort of thing, is in charge and directing you to play your part.

Gain Willpower when you receive evidence you helped out by carrying out your assigned role.

Gallant

You thrive on attention. When nobody's paying attention to you, it feels like you don't exist. Accolades are the best, of course, but the truth is that you'll take notoriety in a pinch.

Gain Willpower when you make yourself the center of attention.

Hedonist

Being completely honest, you're here to have a good time, preferably with others. Yes, life certainly is full of pressing concerns, but you really see them all as impediments to be dealt with so you can get back to the crucial business of enjoying yourself.

Gain Willpower whenever you are able to indulge yourself and have a good time.

Jester

Man bursts into tears. “But Doctor,” he says, “I am Pagliacci.”

Gain Willpower whenever you are able to lighten the mood or ease a tense situation.

Judge

You can't relax in the presence of strife or discord, and so take it upon yourself to act as mediator, peacemaker, or even arbiter for others. You implicitly believe that your judgment is the best, and so offer it freely to others.

Gain Willpower when you forge amicable resolution or at least issue a final judgment that others abide by.

Leader

There are two ways to do things: Your way, and the wrong way. You think of yourself as a natural leader, or perhaps just *competent*, but the truth is that you cannot stand it when you're not in charge.

Gain Willpower when others follow your instructions without a lot of back-and-forth about it.

Martyr

You find proof of your own worth in laying out all you have for others. You could have low self-esteem, or you might have learned to give up your own portion to satisfy the mighty. Perhaps you do it to prove your ethical superiority to yourself, or perhaps you went without for so long and survived with the help of others that you only feel right when you're paying it forward. Whatever the case, you only find comfort when you deprive yourself on behalf of another; otherwise, you feel you're grotesquely indulging.

Gain Willpower when you give up something of yours on behalf of another.

Paragon

You are a dedicated ideologue. You've found your specific ethic or philosophy and made it your rock, the harbor where your heart shelters. You evaluate everything in light of this ideology. This Nature might make you incredibly concerned with justice and ethics. It also might make you a completely heartless and ruthless villain; not all ideologies are kind.

Gain Willpower when you accomplish a significant task that furthers or promotes your chosen ideology.

Rebel

You're only really happy when you're going your own way. It's not that you can't stand the company of others — fellow-travelers along whatever road you've decided to walk are welcome — it's that you *really* hate being told what to do, and bristle at the very idea of authority or rules that you didn't set for yourself.

Gain Willpower whenever you defy an established authority.

Reject

You don't fit in. You never fit in. You never have, and it feels like you never will. You yearn to be accepted by those around you, to have a personal connection, to be loved and valued. In your deepest heart, you don't think any of those things are possible, and it makes you want them all the more.

Gain Willpower when someone makes you feel unconditionally accepted.

Savant

You see the world as a puzzle or riddle, waiting to be solved. Implicit in this view is the notion that everything has *rules* and *answers*, and that with sufficient diligence, both may be understood and leveraged to get things done.

Gain Willpower when you triumph by applying a methodical, rational approach.

Survivor

You understand, deeply and profoundly, that everyone walks a tightrope above the teeth of the world and that there is no safety net. You understand that the only thing keeping you on the rope and out of the pit is your own diligence. The thought of being forced to rely on someone else, of being powerless to act to ensure your own best interests and safety, sickens you.

Gain Willpower when you survive a difficult or dangerous situation through your own cunning and perseverance.

Thrillseeker

You're in it for the rush, honestly. You might dress it up in reasons, but at the end of the day, you only feel *really alive* when you can see destruction and ruin looking back at you from kissing distance, and kept there by your own talent.

Gain Willpower when you make it out of an extremely dangerous situation.

Visionary

You're driven by a great *idea*: a philosophy, goal, or way of being. This isn't an ideology or a drive to *make*, those are the provinces of the Paragon and the Architect; what you're enamored of is living up to or realizing a personal dream.

Gain Willpower when you embody or make progress toward realizing your dream.

Intimacies

If Nature is the bedrock of a character's soul, Intimacies are the buildings raised atop that fundamental land. They describe the ideas, ideals, people, places, and things that are most important to a character: the things that really *move* her.

Intimacies are generally articulated either as an ideal to be adhered to ("Always look out for number one"), or a focus and accompanying context ("My Circlemates (Friendship)").

Most characters have three Intimacies, though it's also possible for temporary Intimacies to be built through social influence. At the end of each story, a player evaluates her character's current Intimacies and, if there are more than three, selects the three she wishes to keep. She may also discard one of her existing Intimacies and replace it at the end of each story, if she feels it no longer reflects her character's heart.

A character whose actions powerfully affirm or reinforce one or more of her Intimacies may gain a point of Willpower once per scene.

Derangements

Sometimes characters are afflicted by maladies of the mind. Ordinary mental illness, a god's curse, and the twisting influence of the Wyld: these are all modeled by the same mechanic, known as Derangements.

Derangements can be used as leverage points for social influence exactly as though they were Intimacies: it's entirely possible to manipulate someone through their acute paranoia, or for the paranoiac to use her condition to shut people out because she doesn't trust them. Unlike Intimacies, Derangements make a character's life difficult in particular ways. Characters can pay a point of Willpower to suppress a Derangement for one scene. Permanently curing a Derangement generally requires powerful healing magic or very dramatic roleplaying moments.

Because Exalted is a pulp fantasy game, Derangements are modeled after the sensationalized madness of weird fiction tales, and not calibrated to reflect the real-life contours of actual mental illness. They also bundle everything from acute trauma responses to divine curses under one broad umbrella, since that's how people in the setting tend to think of anyone exhibiting signs of an unbalanced mind. It's not terribly realistic, but neither is the combat engine. Examples of potential Derangements include:

Disconnection: The character is dissociated from her emotions and processes the world around her as a series of logical puzzles and scenarios to analyze, making it difficult to empathize with others or even herself. The difficulty of all Empathy rolls increases by +2, along with all attempts to inspire others (see p. XX).

Hysteria: In conditions of extreme stress or anxiety, it becomes difficult (+1 difficulty) for the character to do anything but lash out or flee.

Madness: Once per session, the Storyteller may cite this Derangement as grounds for the character to see and/or hear things that aren't there.

Mania: The character suffers a constant sense of restless dissatisfaction with everything in the world but her most deep-seated goals. Nothing else brings her either real satisfaction or even reprieve from the urge to fixate on her most deeply embedded impulses. She can only regain Willpower by indulging her Nature or by engaging with one specific Intimacy (chosen by the player at the beginning of each session). Rest, victory, and all other criteria fail to replenish her.

Megrims: Something very much like a lead curtain hangs between the character and any feelings like hope or joy. On the really bad days, even anger and sorrow lose their power to motivate, though not to wound. Make a Willpower roll against difficulty 8 at the beginning of every session. A failure indicates that the character cannot spend Willpower for any purpose that session, save to suppress this Derangement for a scene.

Obsession: The character becomes fixated on a certain object, idea, or action. Whenever the character is reminded of her obsession, she must succeed at a difficulty 8 Willpower roll or else the difficulty to do anything unrelated to it rises by +2 for the rest of the scene.

Paranoia: The character is intensely distrustful of the motives of others, and believes someone is out to get her. She must suppress this Derangement for a scene to gain any benefit from positive Intimacies toward others.

Attributes

EXD uses the same nine Attributes as the three core editions of **Exalted** do. On the off chance you somehow came here from **Exalted Essence**, those are, *very* briefly:

The Physical Attributes:

Strength: Sheer muscle power. Used for power weapons in close combat and for Blocking.

Dexterity: Agility and grace. Used for graceful and ranged weapons in combat and for Dodging.

Stamina: Toughness. Used to resist fatigue, hardship, poison, and disease, and to calculate Soak.

The Social Attributes:

Charisma: Force of personality, passion, and conviction. Used when you say what you mean.

Manipulation: Guile and emotional appeal. Used when you say what they want to hear.

Appearance: Attractiveness and appeal. Used when you get people onboard by being striking or sexy.

The Mental Attributes:

Perception: The five senses. Observational ability.

Intelligence: Depth of thought. The ability to reason through complex ideas.

Wits: Speed of thought. The capacity to respond appropriately, quickly.

All of these Abilities are rolled as part of dice pools. None of them are expected to exist solely to provide passive modifiers, like Second Edition Appearance did.

Caste and Favored Traits

Most Exalted have *Caste Abilities*, special traits which through which their divine blessings flow.

Rolls utilizing a Caste Ability are immune to the rule of 1s.

A few Exalted instead have *Caste Attributes*. Rolls using Caste Attributes are also immune to the rule of 1s.

Damage rolls are *never considered to be rolls utilizing Caste Attributes or Abilities*, even if some special rule adds one of those traits to the value referenced for forming a damage dice pool.

Exalts also often have *Favored Abilities or Attributes*. Favored Traits can be purchased at a discount, and allow for certain Charms to be more easily obtained. Unlike Caste Traits, **Favored Traits do not enjoy protection from the rule of 1s.**

Abilities

EXD uses 25 Abilities. These are a little bit different than the list from any official version of Exalted, so we'll go over them in short detail, particularly since a few of the returning Abilities are wildly divergent across various editions.

Archery: Archery is used to shoot bows, crossbows, and firewands. In general, it's the default "ranged attack" Ability for anything that isn't obviously Thrown. If, somehow, you gain the power to turn into a dragon and shoot fireballs out of your mouth, you're probably aiming them with Archery.

Athletics: Athletics is the Ability of actively using your physique to do things. It's the Ability of gymnastics, acrobatics, feats of strength, footraces, swimming... and dodging. In **EXD**, Athletics has absorbed the Dodge Ability found in First, Second, and Third Editions.

Awareness: This is what you roll to spot stuff. Usually paired with Perception.

Brawl: Punching! Also kicking. Sometimes grappling. Occasionally biting. If you use a weapon but still fundamentally attack by punching (such as with katars, aka "punch daggers") you still use Brawl. Brawl also covers the use of improvised weapons such as chairs and kitchenware.

Bureaucracy: Understanding, navigating, or designing complex systems to get things done.

Craft: I've collapsed this one down to just one Ability for the sake of everyone's sanity. Is it particularly realistic that being a talented blacksmith also makes you a master painter and carpenter? No. Is it worth making this Ability five times as complicated as any of the others to stop that? Also no. Do I expect you to just, you know, self-police what your character can and can't do with Craft according to your character concept? *It would be nice.*

Empathy: The Ability to understand what other people are thinking and feeling, and respond to them appropriately... or to viciously turn that understanding against them. One of the ugliest lessons young Dynasts learn growing up is that it's very possible for someone to perfectly *understand* you without *liking* you in the slightest.

Investigation: Fantastic clues and how to find them. This is the Ability that figures stuff out.

Larceny: Crime: the Ability.

Linguistics: This version of Linguistics tracks eloquence with words. It's used for written social influence, as well as highly-rehearsed deliveries and poetry composition. It does not have anything to do with number of languages known. Characters must have at least Linguistics • to be literate.

Lore: Knowledge of history, art, culture, and so on. The business of savants and academics.

Martial Arts: Formal systems of combat, often unarmed or utilizing exotic weapons. The gateway to powerful supernatural combat styles that can be shared by different supernatural beings. Only needs to be purchased once to cover all styles the character means to practice, for the same reason as Craft.

Medicine: Does what it says on the tin.

Melee: The Ability of hitting people with swords and other close-range weapons until they stop being alive.

Occult: Knowledge of the supernatural world. Useful knowledge about gods, ghosts, the Fair Folk, and the nature and behavior of Essence.

Performance: Song, dance, oratory. Emotional self-expression intended for an audience.

Presence: Impassioned or rational argument; or projecting force of personality; or personal appeal. In in doubt, this is your default Ability for talking to people.

Resistance: Enduring hardship, resisting disease and poison. Usually rolled with Stamina.

Ride: The Ability of controlling a mount effectively.

Sail: The Ability of operating a ship and knowing how to navigate at sea.

Socialize: Etiquette. The Ability of operating correctly in formal social environments. This is what you use at a salon, a party, or a formal dinner. The weapon of politicians.

Stealth: Not being seen.

Survival: Not starving to death or getting mauled by wild animals in the forest. Also, animal training and shelter-building.

Thrown: Hucking stuff at people. This is the default Ability for ranged attacks that come from your hands.

War: The Ability of commanding troops, devising strategies, and figuring out how the other general is planning to fuck you and what to do about it.

Whither Specialties?

This edition doesn't use Specialties.

Backgrounds

The **Exalted Demake** uses Backgrounds, as did **Exalted** First and Second Editions.

Backgrounds are rated from one to five dots, like most of the stuff in this system, and they reflect *who you are* and *what your place in the world is*.

The Backgrounds in this chapter are the universal Backgrounds that (almost) all characters work with. Unique Backgrounds specific to various Chosen can be found in their respective chapters.

Backgrounds come in four varieties, which determine *how you get more of them* and *when you can take them*. These are:

Innate Backgrounds: These Backgrounds either describe an in-born quality of the character (such as being God-Blooded), or else exist to let her get a head-start in some way out of the gate at character creation. They *usually* can't be advanced during play at all, although Storytellers are encouraged to treat them as Social Backgrounds when an exception makes sense (a character might gain the Uncanny Background during play through being mutated by exposure to the Wyld, for example).

Purchased Backgrounds: These Backgrounds represent the mastery or refinement of some esoteric quality. They can be purchased or increased by spending experience points.

Panoply Backgrounds: These Backgrounds describe property or possessions that the character owns, such as magical fortresses or ancient magical items. Panoply Backgrounds *cannot be purchased with experience points*. They are altered *by events in the story which would logically cause them to increase or decrease*. To gain Artifact, make a daiklave, or loot it from a tomb, or take it from someone else.

Social Backgrounds: These describe a character's standing and relationships in the world. They encompass the people she can depend on, her reputation, and who she knows. Social Backgrounds *cannot be purchased with experience points*. They are altered *by events in the story which would logically cause them to increase or decrease*. To gain more Allies, make friends.

Allies

Social Background

This Background works much as it does in any other version of **Exalted**, providing boon allies, fast friends who are willing to help you out. Allies are generally willing to help the Exalt without asking for repayment, but it's worth remembering that they are not servants, and may eventually feel ill-treated if the Exalt never holds up her end of their relationship.

This Background can be taken more than once to represent additional allies.

X No one stands by your side.

- One mortal ally of substantial expertise or standing in the world.
- One minor supernatural ally such as a little god or elemental; or a mortal ally of tremendous stature, such as the ruler of a city-state.
- One ally of equivalent power to a young Dragon-Blooded.
- One ally of equivalent power to a young Celestial Exalt or veteran Dragon-Blooded.
- One ally of equivalent power to a seasoned Celestial Exalt.

Artifact

Panoply Background

This Artifact represents the character's ownership of magically potent items. The character begins play with an Artifact whose power is equal to the dots taken in this Background. Magical items can be found in Chapter Nine.

This form of the Background can be taken more than once to represent a character who has acquired several different magical items. Other chapters contain variations of Artifact which cannot be taken repeatedly.

X You have claimed no items of supernatural power.

- You have a single lesser wonder.
- You have an impressive supernatural item such as a magical weapon.
- You have a very impressive supernatural item such as a mighty suit of magical armor.
- You have an exceedingly puissant magical item which gives you some sort of potent and unusual capability.
- You have somehow obtained a magical item whose power is so great that your reputation probably revolves around the fact that you possess it.

Backing

Social Background

This Background represents standing in a powerful organization such as the Guild, a Great House, the Bureau of Destiny, or the Cult of the Illuminated; or service to a mighty patron such as a Deathlord. Higher ratings represent greater authority to draw upon the organization or patron's resources.

This Background can be taken more than once to represent standing in different organizations.

X You are either on your own, or at the bottom of the ladder: a grunt with only responsibilities and no privileges.

- A low-ranking position of minor authority.
- A comfortable rank, with most unpleasantness delegated to underlings.
- You're able to throw your weight around, though not without consideration for your peers and superiors.
- You are trusted by the elite, and allowed to act with sufficient autonomy and leeway.
- You are a leader in your own right, or the trusted right hand of your patron.

Command

Social Background

You command a military force. This might be a mercenary company, a part of the Realm's legions, or a hideous shambling horde of the animated dead. The higher the rating, the larger and better the army. For more information on groups, see pages XX-XX. Traits for bandits, soldiers, and zombies can be found in Chapter Twelve.

Though unusual, this Background can potentially be taken more than once to represent substantially different military forces under one's command, such as an Abyssal who commands both a crack team of soldiers and a swarm of zombies.

X You command no troops.

- Choose one: A retinue of soldier bodyguards (Size 1, Drill 8); a surly band of bandits (Size 2, Drill 5); a cluster of zombies (Size 2, Drill 4; perfect morale).
- Choose one: A squad of soldiers (Size 2, Drill 8); a company of conscripts (Size 3, Drill 6); a mob of zombies (Size 3, Drill 4; perfect morale).
- Choose one: A crack company of elite troops (Size 2, Drill 9); a small army of soldiers (Size 4, Drill 7); a zombie swarm (Size 4, Drill 4; perfect morale).
- Choose one: A company of elite veterans (Size 3, Drill 9); a professional army (Size 5, Drill 7); a zombie horde (Size 5, Drill 4; perfect morale).
- A deadly army of elite veterans (Size 4, Drill 9); a highly seasoned army of career soldiers (Size 5, Drill 8).

Connections

Social Background

You know people. Connections is always purchased with a context describing *what kind of people you know* or *where you're connected*. The more dots, the deeper the well of information and minor favors you can draw on. You can combine this Background with an Attribute and roll it to try to call in little favors or acquire information.

Cult

Social Background

You're an object of worship in your own right. The prayers of your followers empower you, granting you a richer and more potent flow of Essence. If you want your cult to also obey you in other ways, you'll need to represent that with other Backgrounds. For example, if you want a wavy dagger cult that kills your enemies, you'll need Command. If you want your cult to funnel

information back to you, you'll need Connections. This Background only covers the volume of worship you've accumulated.

A number of times per story equal to the character's Cult rating, when a character would gain any number of Motes, she may choose to gain 1 more Mote than she otherwise would have.

X No one worships you.

- You have a couple of actual priests and a handful of dedicated worshipers.
- Your cult consists of several hundred individuals. It might constitute an entire village or township.
- You are venerated across a wide region, or perhaps openly rule a city-state as its god-king.
- Tens of thousands offer their prayers up to you.
- Your cult spans an entire Direction, making you one of the major religious figures of the Age of Sorrows.

Echoes

Purchased Background

The power of your Exaltation has passed through many hands before your own, stretching back to the dim vestiges of the First Age. Sometimes, when you sleep, you dream of memories not your own, glories and tragedies that befell the former bearers of your power. Sometimes you might even experience waking visions of the ancient past. And sometimes you can even grasp a resonance of ancient might, drawing upon strength you have not yet truly claimed as your own.

A character with Echoes has a pool of bonus dice equal to this Background's rating that can be drawn upon to enhance any rolled action. These dice can be expended all at once or parceled out over multiple rolls, as desired, but once rolled, they're used up until the character experiences additional visions of past lives. In game terms, Echo dice fully refresh at the beginning of each new story, and one Echo die refreshes at the beginning of each session within a story.

X You have never experienced memories of your former selves.

- Your past-life memories are few and far between, and even then fleeting and fragmentary things.
- You've dreamed a few coherent memories of your former selves, enough to get a sense of who you used to be.
- Your dreams are lucid enough to have perhaps revealed one or more of your former lives' secrets.
- You have a strong sense of connection to the former bearers of your Exaltation.
- You think of your past selves almost as a pantheon of mentors, guiding you back to the heights of power.

Familiar

Purchased Background

You have an animal companion with which you share an uncanny bond. You can have a number of familiars equal to your Essence rating. Each dot in this Background gives you one Familiar Point. Familiar Points may be spent to purchase features from the list below. At least one point must be spent to determine the animal's type.

This Background can be taken more than once to represent different familiars.

Companion Animal (1): Your familiar is something not terribly threatening or nimble, but which would not raise remark in most circumstances, such as a small dog or goat.

Small Animal (1): Your familiar is something small and either swift or inconspicuous, such as a bird, cat, squirrel, or monkey.

Predatory Animal (2): Your familiar is a predator of some sort, one that would pose a danger to human beings. It might be an omen dog, tiger, or claw strider.

Riding Animal (2): Your familiar can be ridden, like a horse, austrech, or giant hawk.

Great Animal (3): Your familiar is something enormous and very powerful, like an elephant or tyrant lizard. You might be able to ride it as well, given how big it is.

Communication (1): Your familiar can't actually *talk*, per se, but you can clearly understand it when it wants to communicate with you, and it can understand your commands.

Sense Sharing (1): By shutting out all other stimuli and concentrating completely, you can share your familiar's senses.

Silent Speech (1): You can issue orders to your familiar and it will hear them, wherever it may be.

Immortal Bond (2): If anything fatal should happen to your familiar, it dissolves into a wash of Essence and reforms from your anima at the beginning of the next story. If your familiar dies and doesn't have this feature, you may find a new animal to act as your familiar in a later story without having to re-purchase this Background.

Followers

Social Background

You've attracted useful people who look up to you. They might be your students, assistants in research or craftsmanship, spies, or personal aides. They're *not* people who fight for you for a living (although they might still be willing to fight on your behalf); that's Command. Followers are usually mortal, but this is not mandatory; Followers are simply loyal individuals less mighty than the Exalted. This Background might also represent loyal ghosts, a faerie lord's retinue of Fair Folk commoners, a sorcerer's automaton butler and golem servants, or a Haltan's intelligent animal comrades.

- X No one follows you.
- You have five followers.
- About 25 followers.
- Around 100 followers.
- Hundreds of followers.

•••• Multitudes.

Influence

Social Background

You have pull in the world around you. This Background hasn't really changed across the three editions, aside from becoming a 1 to 5 dot Merit rather than Background in Third Edition. It represents broad political and social influence in the world at large, rather than within a particular organization.

X Your fame has yet to spread.

• You are a figure of local note: a folk hero or villain.

•• You swing some weight in the city-state or satrapy where you reside: a wealthy investor, ambitious young politico, or notorious adventurer.

••• You are very important to the region where you reside and are known in the surrounding areas. Those who make it their business to be aware of the political state of your Direction have heard your name: a powerful general, accomplished politician, or major economic driver.

•••• Your words carry significant weight throughout a region, and you probably rule whatever place you dwell in: a satrap, remote warlord, prince of a backwater nation, or grand financier.

••••• You either rule over a very important place, or have your fingers in almost every pie in the Direction where you reside: the satrap of a key satrapy, a warlord feared by all, the prince of a mighty nation, or a financial lynchpin for a Direction.

Inheritance

Innate Background

There's something strange in your heritage. You might have been crafted in a sorcerer's lab or born atop a demon's spire, but most likely one of your parents was a spirit of some sort, making you God-Blooded or something like it. Your rating in this Background gives you a number of points to spend on God-Blooded Inheritances, detailed later in this chapter on page XX.

Exalted cannot raise Inheritance above three dots. Any stronger pre-existing connection to the supernatural world invalidates them as candidates for Exaltation.

X Like most folks, you are of mortal man and woman born.

• 2 Inheritance Points. You are touched by the strange.

•• 4 Inheritance Points. One of your parents was a minor power.

••• 6 Inheritance Points. You are of substantial supernatural heritage.

•••• 8 Inheritance Points. You are descended from power.

••••• 10 Inheritance Points. You are the child of one of the great powers of the world or the places beyond it.

Languages

Purchased Background

You've developed fluency in a number of different languages. Consult whichever **Exalted** corebook you have for a list of the languages of Creation. Third Edition probably has the best list.

X You only speak your native tongue.

- You're fluent in a cluster of related languages allowing you to get along more or less wherever you go in a specific Direction. Alternately, you know one secret cipher (like Guild Cant), academic or magical language (like Old Realm or the Testament), or trade language (such as Riverspeak or Low Realm) that isn't native to the Direction where you live.
- You're fluent in all the languages spoken in your part of the world, as well as three or so foreign tongues.
- You know most or all of the major Directional dialects, and have thorough familiarity with all languages spoken in your native region, along with one exotic language.
- You're fluent in all major languages and conversant with a wide range of minor, obscure, or scholarly dialects.
- You have assumed fluency with any language you encounter unless you and the Storyteller agree on particular exceptions. It's not that you know *every* language — there are a dizzying number of tribal dialects around the edges of the Threshold, not to mention a number of thoroughly lost mystical tongues, some of which date back to before the creation of mankind — but rather that you know *so many* that the exceptions are few and far between.

Manse

Panoply Background

You control either a Demesne or a Manse with a rating equal to your rating in this Background. Details on Manses and Demesnes can be found in Chapter Nine.

When a character respire Essence at sunrise or sunset while on the grounds of an attuned Manse or Demesne, or while bearing the socketed Hearthstone of an attuned Manse, she substitutes the Manse or Demesne's rating for her Essence rating if it is higher. If her Essence rating is equal to or higher than the rating of the Manse or Demesne, she instead increases her Mote respiration by +1.

This Background can be purchased repeatedly to obtain ownership of different Manses and their respective Hearthstones. See pages XX and XX for more on Manses, Hearthstone sockets and attunement.

Multiple Hearthstones

A character bearing multiple Hearthstones in Evocation or power sockets gains bonus Motes only from the most powerful Hearthstone among them, but Hearthstones in dedicated attunement sockets can stack their Mote recovery benefits. When this happens, the highest-rated Hearthstone is used to set daily respiration rate (if applicable), while each subsequent Hearthstone adds +1 to that respiration total. Thus, an Essence 1 Solar with a level 4 Hearthstone in an Evocation socket and a level 2 Hearthstone in an attunement socket would treat her Essence as 4 and gain 1 additional Mote each sunrise, for a total of 5. If she was Essence 4, she would instead gain 2 bonus Motes each sunrise.

Mentor

Social Background

A powerful and well-informed supernatural being has taken a personal interest in guiding and tutoring you. Not only can you go to your mentor for advice, you can also gain material advantage from their tutelage.

X No one that matters has taken you under their wing.

- Your mentor provides you with wise advice and one of the following: access to a martial arts style; instruction in a handful of spells; the loan of a dot of some other Background, such as Resources or Allies, once per story.

- Your mentor provides you with either two of the boons listed at one dot, or access to several martial arts styles, up to a dozen spells, or can bend a 4 or 5-dot Background to your benefit occasionally.

- Your mentor provides some access to whatever sort of specialized tutelage you need, be it in spells or esoteric battle arts, *and* is willing to bend a high-rated Background to your advantage now and again.

- Your mentor is either a powerful and reputable figure whose name you can call upon to make others think twice about trifling with you, or is a deep master of some field of particular expertise. If they are a sorcerer, they can teach you an exotic initiation and bestow either an enormous array of Terrestrial Circle spells, or a substantial selection of such spells and a few Celestial Circle spells. If they are a martial artist, they can teach you numerous styles including at least one rare and difficult-to-acquire style such as (at least for a non-Dragon Blooded) the Immaculate Dragon styles.

- Your mentor is an incredibly powerful figure such as a high-ranking god, Deathlord, or elder Lunar, and has access to First Age-quality training techniques. They can hook you up with almost anything you might desire in the way of mystical tutelage or material support, although they're so busy that your access to them is fairly limited. Alternately, your mentor is a Sidereal. A Sidereal mentor can grant access to a wide array of spells, martial arts styles both common and rare, and even the Forbidden Arts if you are capable of practicing them. In either case, once per story you may buy an Attribute dot, Ability dot, Charm, or spell as though it were favored when it is not.

Mystic

Purchased Background

You are familiar with a school of minor magic such as enchantment, fortune-telling, or weather-working. Select a particular Mystic Art from those detailed later in this chapter, starting on page XX. Each has an associated Attribute. You roll your rating in this Background with that Attribute when working your mortal magics.

This Background may be taken more than once to reflect investment more than one Mystic Art, but no instance of it can be raised higher than your Occult rating.

X You are wholly unfamiliar with low magic.

- You know a tiny bit about the magic of Creation, probably inherited from a grandparent who had the gift.
- You have made active study of one of the lesser magics of the world.
- You have a noteworthy facility with a field of lesser magic.
- You are a renowned practitioner of a form of low magic.
- If you have not hidden your talent, then people will travel from far and wide to petition you to employ your mastery of one of the low magics on their behalf.

Resources

Social Background

You have steady income and money to spend. This Background hasn't really changed across the three editions, aside from becoming a 1 to 5 dot Merit rather than Background in Third Edition.

X You are homeless and destitute. You own whatever you can carry.

- Getting by: You have a place to live and some shoddy belongings to keep in it. You may own some livestock, but certainly no riding animal. You are accustomed to missing meals, and to eating rude fare.
- Comfortable: You have a comfortable cottage or apartment, and may possess a riding animal if such would be of use to you. Your possessions are of decent make, and may include a few expensive items such as serviceable armor. Your meals are unexciting but filling. You can afford hard liquor rather than only beer.
- Affluent: You own a townhouse or prosperous farm. You probably have one fine riding animal and a backup or two beyond that. You may own a suit of fine armor and several well-made weapons. You likely have a servant or two. You are able to regard food and drink as sources of excitement and pleasure rather than necessities of survival.
- Rich: You own several properties, all staffed by servants, and adorn yourself in the finest clothing, armor, and equipment. You are able to produce lavish outlays of funds on short notice, though you cannot do so indefinitely.
- Grossly Wealthy: You are a grand potentate, merchant prince, or king of thieves. You certainly own at least one ship, even if you've never seen it, and might potentially command a small fleet if such is the focus of your wealth. You have numerous properties. Silver and jade flows in rivers through your coffers, and an army of servants waits to realize your least desire.

Uncanny

Innate Background

Your body is... different. You may be beastfolk, a Wyld mutant, or an unfortunate whose flesh was warped by sorcery run wild (or wielded deliberately). Each dot in this Background entitles you to one feature from the list found later in this chapter, starting on page XX.

This Background is largely used for making beastfolk characters. Beastfolk are of various origins: some are stable tribes of Wyld mutants who blend animal and human features, but most are distant descendants of the Lunar Exalted.

Most people outside of *extremely* cosmopolitan areas such as Nexus fear beastfolk and will at best shun them; being driven away with rocks and spears isn't uncommon. This fear isn't wholly unfounded. Beastfolk tend to dwell at the world's borders, and more than one tribe has fallen under the sway of the Fair Folk and been transformed into their hunting hounds. Despite this prejudice, beastfolk are fundamentally just odd-looking humans, and are as capable of Exaltation as anyone else.

This Background's other primary use is to depict characters whose body has been transformed by the touch of the Wyld. There are many Wyld mutants in Creation, some living in semi-stable tribes, others uniquely twisted wretches. They face an even more intense form of stigma than beastfolk, both out of fears that they may fall under the sway of the Fair Folk (a valid fear; Ravagers are a very real threat) and out of the irrational terror that their condition may be contagious (wholly superstition, but a compelling superstition nonetheless). Most characters with this Background go to some pains to conceal their unusual features, unless they dwell in a culture dominated by others like them, such as the serpentfolk and raitonfolk of Ixcoatl.

X Like most people, you are simply human, or at least appear to be.

- You have some strange feature, which can probably be hidden and which you likely do take pains to hide.
- You have a couple of unusual features. You are likely one of the beastfolk,
- You have three distinctly unusual features. If beastfolk, your body is very strongly defined by animal features. You are more likely a Wyld mutant.
- You are almost certainly a Wyld mutant or have been exposed to sorcery run terribly amok.
- You are as heavily transformed by the touch of the Wyld as a person can be while still being able to leave the bordermarches without slowly sickening and dying.

Willpower

Willpower is a trait that measures your personal fortitude, your resolve, and your ability to dig down deep when it matters. You have both a **Willpower rating** and a pool of **Willpower points**.

Your permanent Willpower rating is the number of dice you roll when something tells you to roll your Willpower, and is often used to set the difficulty of rolls to change your mind.

Your Willpower points are a resource that can be spent in a number of ways detailed in Chapter One. Most notably, you can spend a point of Willpower to re-roll a roll you don't like (see p. XX), to reject social influence (see pp. XX-XX), to cut ahead (see p. XX), to Block or Dodge (see pp. XX-XX), and sometimes to activate Charms. **All protagonists begin play with Willpower points equal to their Willpower rating, and can have a maximum of 10 Willpower points at any time.**

Many forms of supernatural attack that target the mind or spirit ask the target to roll Willpower to resist, or use his Willpower rating as the difficulty for a targeting roll. When this occurs, **Exalted characters add their Essence rating to their Willpower to form a resistance pool or to set the difficulty to affect them.** This only occurs when the Exalt is *resisting a Charm, spell, or other power*, not when she rolls Willpower to invoke a power herself, nor when

responding to normal social influence. (“Normal social influence” includes social influence empowered by Charms which simply add dice or lower a roll’s difficulty.)

Willpower can be gained through the following methods:

- Once per scene, you can gain a point of Willpower by affirming your Nature.
- Once per scene, you can gain a point of Willpower by strongly upholding, defending, or advancing one of your Intimacies.
- After getting a solid night’s rest, you gain a point of Willpower. If there’s an extended period of downtime (“a week later, you all arrive in Nexus”) then rather than gaining a point of Willpower for each night that theoretically passed, only gain one Willpower in this fashion, as it is assumed some Willpower was also spent during the days of downtime. If a period of extended downtime is spent relaxing (i.e. not doing rigorous crafting, politicking, or other work) in luxurious accommodations, gain another point of Willpower at the end of the downtime.
- If you end a story by accomplishing some significant goal or triumphing over substantial adversity, then begin the next story by rolling your Willpower against difficulty 6 and getting one Willpower point per success.

Health and Wounds

Characters begin with a maximum Health rating of 7. Health can be reduced by suffering normal or Aggravated damage, as detailed in Chapter One, and Wounds can be suffered if the character takes an instance of damage equal to or greater than their Stagger Threshold. This is all explained in greater detail in Chapter One.

Healing times are repeated here, for convenience:

Mortal Healing Times

Mortals erase one level of damage from their Health track after two days spent without undertaking any particularly strenuous activity. Only once there is no damage left in their Health track can they begin healing Wounds.

Wounds are healed in the following order, in the listed time:

Maimed and **mauled** Wounds take six weeks to heal.

Burned, blinded, disabled arm, and **disabled leg** Wounds take two weeks to heal.

Drained and **lacerated** Wounds take one week to heal.

Bruised and **dazed** Wounds take three days to heal.

Exalted Healing Times

Exalts erase one level of damage from their Health track every two days, even if they are highly active during that period; or they erase one level of damage after a day spent without strenuous activity. Only once there is no damage left in their Health track can they begin healing Wounds.

Wounds are healed in the following order, in the listed time:

Maimed and **mauled** Wounds take two weeks to heal.

Burned, blinded, disabled arm, and **disabled leg** Wounds take five days to heal.

Drained and **lacerated** Wounds take three days to heal.

Bruised and **dazed** Wounds take one day to heal.

Combat Traits

While making your character, there are several traits that will come up constantly during combat. Calculate them now so you don't have to do so on-the-spot during a fight:

Defense

Your Defense is 5 + a modifier based on your fighting style and armor (see Soak, below).

Soak

Your Soak is based on a value provided by your armor, as follows:

Class	Defense	Dodge	Soak	Stagger	Fatigue
Unarmored	+1	-0	4	2+	+0
Light (mundane)	-0	-1	5	3+	+2
Heavy (mundane)	-1	-2	6	4+	+3
Light (artifact)	-0	-1	6	4+	+1
Heavy (artifact)	-1	-2	7	5+	+2

This value is then modified based on your Stamina rating:

If you have Stamina 1, modify your Soak rating by -1.

If you have Stamina 4+, modify your Soak rating by +1.

Dodge

Your base Dodge value is equal to your Dexterity Attribute, as permanently recorded on your character sheet. Temporary modifiers to Dexterity from things like Charms and Lunar shapeshifting to not adjust your Dodge rating. Base Dodge can also be modified based on the armor you're wearing (as seen above), your fighting style, and your current total Wound penalties.

Block

Your base Block value is equal to your Strength Attribute, as permanently recorded on your character sheet. Temporary modifiers to Strength from things like Charms and Lunar shapeshifting to not adjust your Block rating. Base Block can also be modified based on your fighting style and your current total Wound penalties.

Stagger Threshold

Your Stagger Threshold is the amount of damage that will cause you to become Staggered if you suffer it all at once. This is set by your armor, as seen above.

Fighting Style

Your other combat traits can also be modified by your preferred fighting style. If you plan to mostly use one fighting style, factor this into your calculations.

Sword and Board: The sword in this case isn't necessarily an actual sword — most soldiers prefer spears — but the point is, the character fights with a weapon in one hand and a shield in the other. The benefit of this arrangement is that the shield provides +1 to the character's Defense rating and +1 to her base Block value while she is using it.

Freehanding: The character carries nothing but a single one-handed weapon, which she can freely switch between a single or two-handed grip. Thanks to this versatility and her greater ability to use feints and tricks by switching hands, or to use a free hand to wrestle with an opponent, once per battle the character may Dodge without spending Willpower and once per battle she may Block without spending Willpower.

Two-Handing: The character carries a huge weapon requiring two hands to use effectively. In addition to the high Damage value of two-handed weapons, when someone attempts to block a two-handed weapon, they suffer a -1 penalty to their Block against their attack. If forced to use a two-handed weapon in one hand, the weapon's Damage value is reduced by -2 and it does not penalize the target's Block value.

Dual Wielding: The character fights with a weapon in each hand. If the weapons are of different kinds, then the character may choose to attack with either weapon on any given turn. Once per scene, after making an attack which fails to damage its target, the character may immediately and reflexively attempt the attack again. This does not cost Willpower or use up her once per scene re-roll (it is not treated as a re-roll at all, but rather as an entirely new attack), and any Charms that enhanced the first attack attempt still enhance the second attack attempt.

Unarmed: The character fights with only those weapons nature has provided her, generally meaning her fists and feet. While fighting unarmed, she increases her base Dodge value by +1 and her base Block value by +1.

Essence

Exaltation carries with it a fragment of power handed down from one of the great powers of Creation. When one of the Chosen is newly-Exalted, this is little more than a humble ember, but it may grow with time and experience into a howling inferno of divine might. The intensity of this personal divinity is measured by a character's Essence rating.

Essence rating governs an Exalt's overall level of power. Crucially, it determines **how many Motes she may store in her Mote pool**, as well as how **many Motes she may spend in a single round**.

Exalted generally begin at Essence 1, and may raise this value over time through active exercise of and intense meditation upon the power within them (or, in plain language, by spending experience points; more detail is given below).

Mote Pool

The Chosen power their miracles with Motes of Essence: the quintessential power of the cosmos, distilled from their body, spirit, and breath, and granted divine power by the radiance of their Exaltation. The nature of a character's Exaltation and the power of her Essence rating determine how many Motes she can store at once, as well as how quickly she can spend her Motes to evoke Charms and other miracles.

Spending Motes

The number of Motes an Exalt can spend per round is limited by the power of her Essence rating. If she wants to use a Charm which demands more Motes to activate than she can spend in a single round (or is willing to spend without flaring her anima banner), then she must spend several consecutive turns spending Motes to fuel the effect before it activates.

Regaining Motes

Essence refines itself from the furnace of an Exalt's soul, empowered by the inherited power of a great divinity. While there are ways to stoke an Exalt's Essence to replenish itself more quickly, the Chosen are ultimately not reliant on external sources of power to renew themselves.

Of course, *renewable* power isn't the same thing as *limitless* power. An Exalt who spends her divine might with reckless abandon may soon find herself tapped out, trying in vain to conjure an inferno from the dim ashes of her exhausted spirit. This is a terrible thing, for an Exalt who has exhausted her Essence is little more than a particularly robust and resourceful mortal, and easy prey for her enemies.

Exalted characters may regain Motes in the following ways:

- Solars, Infernals, Dragon-Blooded, Getimians, Alchemicals, and Revelers gain (Essence rating) Motes of Essence when the sun rises each day, whether they can see the sunrise or not. Lunars, Sidereals, Liminals, Nightmares, and Heart-Eaters gain the same amount at sunset.
- Once per scene, when a character acts in a way that affirms her Nature, she gains 1 Mote.
- At the end of any scene in which a character triumphs over some meaningful obstacle or difficulty, she gains 1 Mote.

To elaborate, her opposition doesn't need to be terribly daunting, nor does she have to succeed single-handedly; for example, an Eclipse and her Circle might be accosted by bandits while trying to cross a bridge. So long as the entire group manages to cross, they would all gain 1 Mote, regardless of whether the Eclipse talked her way past herself, the Dawn slew the bandits, or the Zenith recruited them as followers. Characters *can* impose challenges upon themselves to regain a Mote in this fashion, but there must be some sort of significant stakes attached to failure. Picking a locked box that you own isn't a triumph, but performing agility training by racing through the uppermost branches of hundred-foot-tall trees could be.

- If a character begins a scene with 0 Motes, she gains 1 Mote.
- Different sorts of Exalted generally have a variety of unique methods for regaining Motes.
- The Cult and Manse Backgrounds can help a character regain Motes.
- Some Charms help characters regain Motes.

Essence Economy

In other versions of **Exalted**, Essence is a nearly limitless resource which characters can fully replenish with a few hours of rest; moreover, in those editions, it is usually easy to regain significant amounts of Essence even in the middle of scenes, and to perform mighty feats while remaining "Essence-neutral," regaining Motes at an equal or faster rate than that at which they're spent.

EXD takes a different approach. In this version of the game, Motes are a valuable resource, actively sought after. Passive respiration is a reliable way of regaining

power, but slow. The Chosen must consider how much of their overwhelming power they wish to apply to any given problem, because it isn't guaranteed that they'll be able to renew themselves before the next challenge presents itself.

Anima Banner

All human beings are surrounded at all times by an invisible spiritual aura, known as the *anima banner*. Within mere days of Exaltation, almost all Exalted instinctively learn to moderate their Essence expenditure, releasing its power with careful, measured precision as they bring forth miracles into the world through the use of their Charms. Such efforts are buffered by the invisible mantle of the anima, and do not disrupt the world.

There are times, however, when control and finesse must go by the wayside: when an Exalt needs to burn through her Essence with wild abandon, channeling *as much power as possible, as quickly as possible* in response to crisis or danger. When she does so, excess fragments of elemental or divine power flood into her anima and cause it to become visible to the naked eye, glowing and burning with a color and texture characteristic to her brand of Exaltation.

For most of the Chosen, when the anima banner first manifests, it does so as a bright but restrained nimbus of uncoiling power, like luminous smoke rising from the Exalt's silhouette, but continuing to burn Essence soon agitates it into a roaring, churning bonfire towering ten or twenty feet into the air, and sometimes even higher. For most sorts of Exalted, in moments of peak exertion this raging storm of divinity may even become a totemic image surmounting the character, one intensely personal to and emblematic of her, such as a raging aurochs or family crest.

Manifesting anima is thus *voluntary* on the part of the player. (It may or may not be voluntary on the part of the Exalt; young Exalts, in particular, can be startled into an anima manifestation by sudden threats or strong emotional responses.) An Exalt can only manifest her anima while spending Motes: the banner can't be forced into visibility simply by willing it to be so. She also must be spending her motes *on* something, like a Charm; she can't simply spend Motes on nothing to provoke her anima into visibility.

Once provoked into visibility, a manifested banner fades away (Essence rating \times 3) minutes after the Exalt stops actively spending Essence, dwindling slowly from a raging inferno to guttering embers before finally fading from sight altogether.

Once she decides to manifest her anima, the Exalt immediately gains more ready access to her Essence. She can spend Motes more freely than an Exalt who is carefully throttling her Essence so as not to provoke her anima into visibility.

Caste Marks

The Solar, Lunar, Sidereal, Abyssal, and Infernal Exalted, along with Nightmares and Getimians, are marked by invisible power-symbols upon their foreheads, denoting their castes. With a moment's concentration, any of those Chosen may reflexively cause the mystic symbol of their caste to appear and blaze upon their forehead in an unmistakably supernatural display. A character's caste mark also involuntarily appears while her anima banner does, glowing brightly enough to be visible through anything covering her forehead.

Essence and Mote Values

The following charts show how many Motes per round (MPR) an Exalt may spend with her anima muted, how many with it visible, and how many Motes overall she may hold at once.

Solars, Abyssals, and Infernals

Essence Rating	MPR (Muted)	MPR (Visible)	Mote Pool
1	1	2	10
2	2	3	12
3	2	4	15
4	2	5	17
5	3	5	20
6+	4	6	25

Dragon-Blooded

Essence Rating	MPR (Muted)	MPR (Visible)	Mote Pool
1	1	2	5
2	1	2	6
3	1	2	7
4	2	3	8
5	2	4	10
6+	3	5	13

Liminals

Essence Rating	MPR (Muted)	MPR (Visible)	Mote Pool
1	1	2	6
2	1	2	8
3	1	3	10
4	2	3	11
5	2	4	12
6+	3	5	15

Everyone Else

Essence Rating	MPR (Muted)	MPR (Visible)	Mote Pool
1	1	2	8
2	1	3	10
3	2	3	12
4	2	4	14
5	2	5	15

Charms

The miracles of the Exalted take the form of a selection of distinct, Essence-fueled miracles known as Charms. Charms are divine acts channeled through human action, and generally manifest as incredible displays of prowess or power.

Different Exalted employ different Charms, and these various and sundry miracles are detailed in the chapters devoted to the particular varieties of Exalts. Exalted can generally only use their own Charms; Solars may only purchase and use Solar Charms, never Lunar or Sidereal Charms. Martial Arts Charms form a notable exception to this rule, and are detailed in Chapter Eleven.

Ratings

Charms come in three tiers of power, with accompanying dot ratings, measuring their relative power.

One-dot Charms are known as *lesser miracles of Essence* and are simple (but potent) expressions of Essence, easily-grasped and easily-manifested.

Two-dot Charms are known as *greater miracles of Essence* and are more complex and difficult to grasp than their one-dot counterparts. These are the workhorse Charms by which the Exalted accomplish most of their great feats.

Three-dot Charms are known as *superlative miracles of Essence* and are the most powerful and challenging of the divine powers of the Chosen. These are Charms of incredible power, able to change the course of history by their invocation. An Exalt is often defined by those superlative miracles she knows.

A Charm's dot rating represents how taxing it is for one of the Chosen to master its intricacies, and thus determines how expensive it is to purchase with experience points. Exalts are **not** obligated to purchase Charms in any sort of order. A player might purchase nothing but three-dot Charms for her character if she wishes, never buying a single two-dot Charm.

Caste and Favored Charms

Charms are divine power channeled through mortal effort. They spring from the aptitudes and abilities of the Chosen. As such, it's easier for Exalts to learn Charms that strongly resonate with their Caste or the things they're good at.

Charms are organized in lists by caste. Furthermore, most Charms are described as *Resonant* with certain Abilities or Attributes. You can purchase all Charms that match your caste at a significant discount, and can also apply this discount to any Charm *outside* of your caste list if its Resonance matches at least one of your Caste or Favored Abilities or Attributes.

Charm Type and Timing

The **Exalted Demake** doesn't make use of Charm Types. By default, Charms must be used on your turn, using a type of action specified in the Charm's text. Some Charms, however, say in their rules that they are activated *reflexively*. These Charms do not use up an action, and can be used whenever they say they're to be used; if no further specifications are given, they can be used whenever you like. Occasionally, Charms also give other specific timings for their use.

Charm Use Restrictions

If you're familiar with Combos from **Exalted** First or Second Edition, the **Exalted Demake** doesn't use them. An Exalt can activate as many Charms as she likes, whenever she likes, so long as she's able to spend enough Motes that round to pay for them all; and within the limitation that she can only take one simple and one swift action per turn, if any of her Charms require such actions to use them.

Rarely, a character will be able to temporarily or permanently access Charms or similar powers that she would not normally have access to, such as via the Eclipse anima power or the Abyssal Vow of the Unconquered Hero. "Excellence" type Charms are never valid targets for such abilities; nor are the Sidereal Charm: Weaving the Threads or the Getimian Charm: Breaking the Threads.

Charm Conflicts

Occasionally, a Charm makes an absolute pronouncement and runs into another Charm in play that contradicts it. For example, if two Solars are fighting and both of them use Thunderclap Rush Attack (see p. XX), which of them holds the initiative? They can't *both* have it.

In these cases, both conflicting parties roll their Essence rating against difficulty 6 until one of them gains more successes than the other. The party with more successes gains precedent.

"Excellence"

Most playable supernatural beings have a Charm that enhances the basic power of their actions, usually by adding dice. These *usually* (though not always) have the word "Excellence" in their name, and are the first Charm listed in a chapter. Their equivalents in prior editions were the "Excellency" Charms, or, in First Edition, Charms such as Excellent Strike.

Unlike older editions, characters in **Exalted Demake** do not have an intrinsic limit on how many dice they can add to a roll; instead, they have only a very limited selection of Charms that enhance their dice pools directly. In many cases, their "Excellence" Charm is their only such option. While characters themselves do not have an intrinsic dice-adder cap, individual "Excellence" Charms do.

Essence Exhaustion

"Excellence" Charms represent an Exalt instinctively pushing raw Essence into their attempts to overcome adversity, gaining divine speed, power, precision, acuity, insight, eloquence, and so forth in the process. They are the most basic techniques available to the Exalted, and as such are very powerful, but neither refined nor efficient. Compared to more specialized Charms, "Excellence" Charms are mighty but wasteful. They carry with them an additional price known as Essence Exhaustion.

Essence Exhaustion is this: After using any Charm that inflicts Essence Exhaustion, the next time the character gains Motes *for any reason*, they gain 1 less than they would have otherwise.

Essence Exhaustion does not stack with itself. Whether a character uses the Solar Charm: Excellence of the Blazing Sun once in a scene or seven times across two scenes, the price is the same either way: forfeiting 1 Mote the next time Motes should be gained.

Threat

Charms also have a *Threat range* listed at the bottom of their writeup. This is only relevant when the Charm is being used by an antagonist, with rules for Threat detailed in Chapter Nine, on page XX. Threat range has no relevance to protagonists.

Charms and Diegesis

So, to loop back to the old question: Are Charms actual things in-setting that characters talk about and learn and practice? The answer is *yes and no*.

Charms are a thing in-setting. They're a part of knowledgeable Exalted nomenclature. Dragon-Blooded talk about their Charms and learn about Charms at their secondary schools. There are First Age compendiums which attempted to compile every known Charm of several different eras. Peasants might not really know what Charms are, but people with any dots in Occult recognize the term and would define it as "a particular supernatural power not deriving from sorcery."

However: The Charms *in this book* aren't *necessarily* the Charms that people in the setting use. Some of them are; some of them aren't. Wyld-Shaping Technique is a very particular and famous Charm. The Lunar Charm Lore-Speaking Method is another example of a diegetic Charm: a lot of very, very powerful Lunars put a lot of work into designing it. On the other hand...

There's a Charm in Chapter Three, Fire and Stones Strike. It can be applied to any sort of attack and increases that attack's damage. Does it exist in-setting? Kind of. In-setting, Solars probably employ over a dozen different damage-boosting supernatural techniques that are particular to different fighting styles and weapons. One Solar drags her arrowheads across the ground before firing them and when she launches them, they're surrounded by a comet-trail of exploding sparks. She calls it the Glorious Solar Spike. Another sends Essence surging from the chakra at the pit of his belly into the tip of his mammoth tetsubo when he swings it overhead, causing it to flash with light and strike with enough force at the tip to pulverize a boulder. He calls it the Stone-Crushing Blow. I don't have time to write 300 Dawn Charms, so they all kind of get swept together into Fire and Stones Strike, which *is* probably a real Charm in-setting but is being used here as a stand-in for a lot of similar effects, the same way "based on true events" movies tend to compile the actions and accomplishments of a whole team of epidemiologists into one composite doctor character so as not to overwhelm the audience.

So yes, Charms are a real thing. Sometimes particular ones have some history and lore, and I'll talk about them. Sometimes a Charm is being presented as a broad abstraction of an array of different effects. Treat the presented Charmset as a thematic representation rather than an exhaustive be-all-end-all of Exalted potential. I've tried to make the powers in this book flavorful and revealing, but ultimately the map is not the territory.

Finally, not every magical output is necessarily a "real" Charm, even if it's modeled as one. "Terrestrial Circle Sorcery" is more of a narrative gateway than an actual Charm. Spells are their own different sort of magic. The "Excellence" Charms aren't particularly technique-like; the ability to push raw Essence into an action is so fundamental that it's nearly as much a part of an Exalt as her ability to spend Willpower. Charms have a particular logic and execution to them. Most of the things gods do tend to be described and thought of as "miracles." A river god who makes the river's banks swell and overflow is said to be enacting a miracle; when he repeatedly throws solidified lances of water at his foes, *that's* a Charm.

Experience Points and Character Advancement

The **Exalted Demake** uses two kinds of experience points, a bit like Third Edition. These are *standard experience points* and *supernal experience points*.

At the end of every session, the Storyteller goes over a checklist and talks to the players about the adventure they just had. This determines how many experience points get handed out. This also happens at the end of every story, with a few minutes spent reflecting on the story that was just told.

The basic expectation is that you'll *normally* hand out around 3 points of each sort, with higher values for really exciting sessions and fewer on slow nights.

End of Session Rewards

Automatic Reward (1 Standard): At the end of the session, everyone gets one standard experience point. If someone spent the whole session playing on their phone, or distracting everyone and deflating every scene with stupid jokes while you were trying to actually build a goddamn mood, or otherwise was disruptive, *don't withhold this reward*. That's a bitch move, you're not a cop or their mom, don't do that to your friends. They showed up and played; if their behavior was a problem, talk to them about it after the game like goddamned adults. Experience points are for buying cool new powers, not passive-aggressive behavior correction. If someone had to miss a session, they get the point too; no point penalizing them because their kid got bronchitis or whatever.

Character Spotlight (1 Standard): If, during the course of the session, any of the protagonists memorably expressed their Nature or Intimacies, or underwent a moment of character development, then everyone gains one standard experience point.

[Where Appropriate] On the Down-Low (1 Standard): The Solars are newly resurgent in a hostile world; Lunar Exalted frequently operate deep in the heartlands of the enemy's strength; Sidereals best serve destiny's needs by operating quietly; and so on. If the protagonists are a group of Exalted who have reasons to operate covertly, and they overall managed to achieve their goals without making a gigantic anima-flaring spectacle of themselves, they've all earned a standard experience point.

[Where Appropriate] Princes of the Earth (1 Standard): The Dragon-Blooded rule over the world by birthright; the Abyssal Exalted are the new royalty of the Underworld; the Infernal Exalted are the beloved of Hell. If the protagonists are a group of Exalted who have reasons to openly comport themselves as living divinities, and behaved according to that station, they've all earned a standard experience point.

Caste (1 Supernal): If any protagonist memorably expressed their character's Caste, Aspect, or theme of Exaltation, everyone earns a supernal experience point. This means if the Dawn solved problems with violence, if the Fire Aspect showed her deep passions (either by giving in to them or making a point of restraining them), if the Getimian had angst about the world being all wrong, or if a Solar just generally made a big splash in the world, everyone gets rewarded.

Support (1 Supernal): Sometimes the session is a frantic search through an ancient library and there's nothing for the Dawn Caste to punch. Sometimes it's an all-out fight scene and there's no chance for the Eclipse to do anything more social than yelling "Oh shit, everyone duck." If other protagonists whose skills didn't match the situation helped put the spotlight on the ones that did,

if they helped another protagonist to shine and look cool doing *their* thing, then everyone gets a supernal experience point.

Stunting (1 Supernal): If the players went to the trouble of detailing what they were doing with neat descriptions, flashy moves, and acting out their dialogues more often than they just said “I hit him with my daiklave” or “I roll to (Charisma + Presence) to convince him to fuck off,” everyone earns a supernal experience point.

Big Damn Hero Moment (1 Standard, 1 Supernal): If during the session there was ever any point where everyone at the table sat back and was impressed at how cool someone was, or the thing they’d done, or the badass entrance they made, or just how well they described their coolest Charm or whatever, then everyone gets a standard and a supernal experience point to celebrate.

End of Story Rewards

Survival (1 Standard, 1 Supernal): If a protagonist made it to the end of the story still alive (or at least not *permanently* dead), well, hey, it’s the Time of Tumult out there. Just making it is worth a point of both varieties.

Success (1 Standard, 1 Supernal): During the story, the protagonists were trying to do *something*. Did they get it done, at least to some reasonable degree? If so, everyone gets a standard and supernal experience point.

Tragedy (1 Standard, 1 Supernal): If the Great Curse (or a rough equivalent thereof) manifested and disrupted at least one protagonist’s life, then everyone in the group gets one standard and supernal experience point.

Danger (1 Standard, 1 Supernal): Did the characters face actual genuine no-shit danger and triumph in the face of it? If so, then triumphing over something *that* nasty is surely worth one standard and one supernal experience point.

Fuck That, I Hate Quiz Time

If you don’t care for the checklist, just hand out 3 standard and 3 supernal experience at the end of every session, and an additional 3-and-3 when a story wraps up.

Standard Experience Point Costs

Trait	Cost per dot
Attribute	12
Caste/Favored Attribute	9
Ability	6
Caste/Favored Ability	3
Purchased Background	3
Willpower	3

Supernal Experience Point Costs

Trait	Cost
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Caste or Favored Charm	Charm rating x 3
Other Charm	Charm rating x 4
Martial Arts Charm (Favored)	Charm rating x 3
Martial Arts Charm (Unfavored)	Charm rating x 4
Forbidden Arts Charm (Favored)	Charm rating x 4
Forbidden Arts Charm (Unfavored)	Charm rating x 5
Terrestrial Spell (Favored)	3
Terrestrial Spell (Unfavored)	4
Celestial Spell (Favored)	6
Celestial Spell (Unfavored)	8
Solar Spell (Favored)	9
Solar Spell (Unfavored)	12

Essence Progression

Essence progression in the **Exalted Demake** works a lot like Third Edition. Would just having you spend experience points to raise the trait feel more old school? Yes. Did doing it that way absolutely gargle balls? Also yes. So we're not doing that.

Essence passively rises over time as you gain experience wielding your Exalted might. When you've earned *and spent* certain total amounts of supernal experience points, your Essence rating goes up.

Essence doesn't generally rise *immediately* after spending sufficient experience, although it's possible for it to happen in a blazing moment of dramatic glory. What's more common is for Essence to increase after the end of the current story, when the Exalt feels the burgeoning power and potential within herself and either withdraws into seclusion to meditate upon it and coax forth its awakening, or else engages in feverish training to break that nascent power out of its shell.

The chart below shows how many supernal experience points are necessary before an Exalt becomes eligible to raise her Essence. You *can* still spend bonus points during character creation to "jump ahead" and have a higher starting Essence rating. If you do so, subtract 20 from all given numbers if you start at Essence 2, 55 if you start at Essence 3, or 100 if you start at Essence 4.

Essence Rating	Supernal Experience Points spent
2	20
3	55
4	100
5	250

You also might notice that, compared to the chart in **EX3**, this uses *substantially* lower experience thresholds. If you're using the recommendations in this chapter, you'll be averaging

four-ish supernal XP per session overall (roughly 3 per session, plus roughly 3 more as end-of-story bonus every few sessions), compared to **EX3**'s flat 5-per-session. Thus, smaller numbers.

No value for Essence 6+ has been provided, as if you want to go there, that's an epic accomplishment even by the lofty standards of the Chosen, and you'll need to craft an appropriate story for your ascension rather than just spending enough experience to float up there.

Essence Progression and Diegesis

These are the assumptions the **Exalted Demake** makes about Essence ratings and Essence progression:

First, Essence as a trait runs from 1 to, potentially, 10. The most powerful beings in the entire cosmos have an Essence rating of 10. The Unconquered Sun is an Essence 10 god. The Yozis are Essence 10 beings. There are, theoretically, Essence 10 Exalted. A being's Essence rating measures, in simple terms, the intensity and scale of its spiritual and supernatural power.

For the vast majority of beings, Essence is a fixed value. Nearly every mortal is born with Essence 1 and dies with Essence 1. Most gods come into being with a particular Essence rating, dictated by the size and importance of their domain, and remain that way for eternity. Demons, likewise, are born with a fixed Essence rating, and this does not change over the course of millennia.

(There are, of course, always ways to cheat. If a god manages to get herself assigned a new divine portfolio, this might make her drastically stronger or weaker. Gods granted a great deal of worship sometimes see their Essence rating rise by a point, and the same is true of demons. But for the most part, Essence is static.)

For a few beings, this is not so. Elementals grow mightier as they grow older, though this accumulation becomes increasingly marginal as time goes on. Fair Folk may unpredictably increase in power as they strengthen their internal narratives. Ghosts can somewhat refine their Essence through spiritual cultivation and worship.

The Exalted, most of all, possess the capacity for dramatic personal growth.

Essence 1: Newly-Exalted, the Chosen have an Essence signature hardly above that of the mortals around them. The power within them is yet but a spark, shedding ambient divinity... which, *unlike* the mortals around them, one of the Exalted may channel into potent miracles in the form of her Charms. Still, at this point her supernatural manifestations are weak and fleeting, and her command of her Essence slow and sluggish, accomplished only with difficulty, and her reserves of might easily exhausted.

Essence 2: This is the "maturity" of Exalted power — the point where the supernatural world generally considers an Essence-user to have gained competence and control over her Essence. Essence Fever is less of a constant burden. Charms are no longer brief flickers of power. Motes flow more freely.

It is the nature of Exaltation's power to increase over time, but only up to a point. Even the most idle of the Chosen will eventually find that her Essence thickens and intensifies enough to bring her to Essence 2 within a matter of a few short years, or a couple of decades at the outside.

Beyond this point, she has no guarantees, and must seek power for herself. Active, ambitious

Celestial Exalted may reach this rank in a matter of months, while for Dragon-Blooded the process generally takes several years.

Essence 3: There are many, many, *many* roads an Exalt might walk in the course of increasing her potency. Vigorous exercise of her supernatural powers, exposure to new vistas and experiences, and the simple thrill of danger, accomplishment, and emotional highs and lows are generally enough to goad an Exalt to Essence 3 sooner or later. At this stage, she commands substantial reserves of Essence and may generally channel her power with sufficient freedom to produce truly impressive miracles by weaving several Charms together in tandem.

Most Exalted eventually reach this level of power, and some never pass beyond it.

Essence 4: No one reaches Essence 4 simply by having adventures and a keen knack for personal growth. This is the point where Essence cultivation becomes an active process, requiring a conscious effort to push the boundaries of an Exalt's power. Many Exalts delve into sorcery and study the characteristics of Essence itself in the course of trying to strengthen their own, while others engage in martial arts practices to cultivate and refine their supernatural strength. Meditation, exercise, and study are the steady companions of those seeking advanced mastery of their divine power.

This is the point where Essence growth becomes incremental. The Chosen do not leap to new heights of power, they gain a few precious inches of progress toward their next landmark at a time, and they sweat and struggle for each of those inches. Many Dragon-Blooded never reach Essence 4; for those who die of old age, this is the most common rating at which they do so. The majority of Celestials get to Essence 4 sooner or later, but it's a journey of decades or centuries for many, and often the end of the road to power.

Essence 5: True mastery. Reaching Essence 5 requires an intensification of the practices that lead to Essence 4, often combined with special dietary regimens, specific training regimens intended to produce no result other than cultivating stronger Essence, petitioning blessings from powerful spirits, deliberate exposure to dangerously powerful Essence manifestations, and harrowing ordeals that demand the Exalt push her already quite considerable supernatural power to the limit and beyond.

Few Dragon-Blooded accomplish this level of Essence refinement. Setting aside those who die before they have the chance to challenge these rarefied heights, only about half of Celestial Exalted ever manage to reach Essence 5. Having done so, they enjoy comprehensive command of their supernatural might, bountiful reserves of power, and potent miracles whose effects linger well past the moment of their invocation. Further cultivation is possible at Essence 5 — indeed, a great deal of it — but simply repeating the steps that led to this rating produces only minute, incremental gains in power. These can add up over a very long time, but not enough to constitute a true breakthrough.

Power Beyond Reason

Very, very few Exalted in the Age of Sorrows ever surpass Essence 5. The territory beyond that point is sparsely documented and largely unexplored. Even in the First Age, breaking through “the Essence barrier” was a noteworthy accomplishment. Not impossible, but so daunting and demanding that even in an age of incredibly sophisticated cultivation theories and artifacts dedicated to facilitating such exercises, few made serious attempts at the challenge and fewer still succeeded. It is not, after all, as though an Essence 5 Exalt lacks for power. Solars with

“mere” mastery of their Essence could and did erase cities, turn deserts into verdant forests, and slay the makers of the world.

For more details on Essence 6+, see **Volume IV**'s Appendix. For standard games, Essence 6+ is considered to be an aspirational state rather than something to be accomplished during the scope of a chronicle. Those who pursued such power, even in the former Age, almost never achieved it within the span of a mortal lifetime.

Uncanny Features

Characters who take the Uncanny Background visibly differ from the common folk of Creation. Usually, taking that Background means that a character was born beastfolk: a person with animalistic features. Beastfolk are widely feared and discriminated against. They're often descended from the Lunar Exalted, though some beastfolk are the result of Wyld mutations that have stabilized within a population over time. Despite their odd appearance, beastfolk are as human as anyone else, and entirely capable of Exaltation.

The next most common source of Uncanny features is the Wyld, which can warp the bodies and minds of those who suffer prolonged exposure to its power. There's a certain threshold beyond which Wyld mutants can't effectively survive within Creation, their anatomy simply too impossible for prosaic reality, but that threshold is somewhere past the scope of what you can buy with five dots of Uncanny. Wyld mutation doesn't disqualify a hero from receiving the power of Exaltation; moreover, Exaltation doesn't provide immunity to permanent transformation by the Wyld!

Finally, there are a few people who have been granted strange transformative blessings by gods (or demons), or been subjected to mystic experimentation by a sorcerer. The transformations inflicted on them can also be modeled with the Uncanny Background.

Features

- **Bioluminescent:** The character's body can illuminate itself and its surroundings with natural light-producing organs without recourse to anima flare. The character has significant control over the colors and patterns she displays, and might devise a secret language around her bioluminescent signals.
- **Body Spikes:** The character is covered in spikes, quills, bony protrusions, or something similar. Anyone who directs an unarmed attack against her must resist a one-time hazard (difficulty 8, damage 2, lacerated). If she grapples someone or is grappled by them, this becomes an ongoing hazard for as long as the grapple continues.
- **Bonesmasher:** The character is equipped with blunt weapons such as a bony club-tail, spiraling horns, or massive crushing fists made of stone. Her unarmed attacks inflict +1 base damage and may inflict dazed Wounds.
- **Bounding Legs:** The character may use a move action to leap up to a vertically adjacent zone she would otherwise have no means of reaching, and may bypass using complex movement when performing complex or difficult leaps.
- **Brutal Might:** The character can wield two-handed weapons in a single hand without penalty—at least where the two-handedness is a matter of strength and size rather than

mechanical function (thus, greatsword: yes; bow: no;). If they choose to dual wield two-handed weapons, they are considered to be using the dual wielding fighting style.

- **Burrower:** The character's body is adapted for digging. She can tunnel through anything softer than solid rock as a form of complex movement.
- **Camouflage:** The character's body is adept at blending in with her environment. Reduce the difficulty of Stealth attempts by -2 so long as the most of the character's skin is showing.
- **Centaur:** The character has the lower body of a horse, antelope, or similar quadruped. Alternately, she might have the lower body of a spider, or a serpent. In any case, she enjoys the benefits of mounted combat (see p. XX), substituting Athletics in place of Ride.
- **Deadly Breath:** The character can issue some deadly expulsion such as fire or corrosive gas (Essence rating) times per scene. This is an attack made with Dexterity + (Archery or Thrown) against targets up to one zone away, and inflicts 4 base damage.
- **Extra Limbs:** The character possesses more than the normal compliment of arms and legs, or perhaps sports a prehensile tail or trunk. When she re-rolls any action, if unsatisfied with the result, she may re-roll a second time. This feature can be called on one per chapter.
- **Fins:** The character has piscine anatomy. She doesn't treat swimming as complex movement, and while in the water she enjoys the benefits of mounted combat (see p. XX), substituting Athletics in place of Ride, but treats all movement on dry land as complex movement.
- **Flexible/Slime:** The character can slither, squirm, or disjoin herself to gain great flexibility, or else is covered in glistening slime. The difficulty of all rolls to squeeze through tight spaces or escape from bonds are reduced by -2. Squeezing through tight gaps doesn't count as complex movement. She may use a swift or simple action to escape from grapples without a roll.
- **Gills:** The character is fully amphibious and may breathe underwater or in the open air.
- **Hardiness:** The character is immune to environmental penalties and incidental damage from a certain type of harsh environment, and doesn't count the terrain in that type of environment as requiring complex movement.
- **Horrible Odor:** The character can project a nauseating stink which inflicts a -2 dice penalty on all actions taken by anything within the same zone which has a sense of smell.
- **Keen (Sense):** One of the character's senses (sight, hearing, or smell) is incredibly acute. Lower the difficulty of all Perception rolls using that sense by -2.
- **Natural Weapons:** The character is equipped with deadly natural weapons such as claws, fangs, or horns. Her unarmed attacks inflict +1 base damage and can inflict lacerated Wounds.
- **Nightvision:** The character can operate in the dark with no more difficulty than in broad daylight.
- **Poisonous Flesh:** The character's flesh and blood are deadly if ingested. Anyone who bites the character or drinks her blood is immediately dosed with arrow frog poison (see p. XX).
- **Rugged Hide:** The character is covered in some manner of natural protection: a carapace, thick fur, scales, or just a tough, leathery hide. Increase her Soak rating by +1.
- **Stealthy:** The character has foot pads, dark coloration, and other adaptations to help her creep up on her prey. Add +2 dice to all Stealth rolls.

- **Swift Stride:** Lower the difficulty of all chase or foot race rolls by -2 . Once per scene, the character may move two zones on her turn, but doing so uses up both her swift and simple actions.
- **Tentacles:** The character has, if not actual tentacles, then at least some body parts of unusual length, such as a long prehensile tail, frog tongue, or very long neck. The character can take appropriate actions against targets in an adjacent zone.
- **Terrible Grasp:** Once per scene, the character may prevent someone she strikes with an unarmed attack from moving for the rest of the current *and* the following round, so long as she also doesn't move.
- **Venomous:** The character may inject snake venom (see p. XX) with one of her natural attacks, so long as that attack is capable of inflicting lacerated or mauled Wounds; if she lacks exotic options such as tail stingers or claws, a bite and 1 Willpower to upgrade the attack's Wound profile will do the trick. Her envenomed bite counts as an unarmed attack.
- **Wall Crawler:** The character can climb up and cling to walls without the need of a roll, and without treating the wall-climbing as complex movement.
- **Webbed Hands and Feet:** The character can move through water as easily as though on dry land. Swimming doesn't count as complex movement.
- **Webbing:** The character can project a sticky substance such as webbing or a slimy glue, with a range up to one zone away. Use a simple action and roll Dexterity + (Archery or Thrown) to aim this projectile. Anyone struck by it suffers a -2 die penalty to all actions per coating until they use a simple action to roll (Strength + Athletics) against difficulty 7 to disentangle themselves. Webbed or otherwise "stuck" victims also cannot leave their current zone until they free themselves.
- **Wings:** The character is capable of flight, though it is considered a form of complex movement.

Mysticism

Creation abounds with minor miracles which those of proper inclination or learning can enact. Mysticism is the common magic of mortal folk across the five directions, stirring the Essence of the natural world through ritual or proper action.

Exalts may enhance the Mystic Arts with "Excellence"-type Charms. Attribute-based Exalted do so by empowering the rolled Attribute, while Ability-based Exalted may treat a rating in a given Mystic Art as though it were the Occult Ability. Thus, a Solar rolling Intelligence + Astrology could use Excellence of the Blazing Sun to add a number of dice equal to her Intelligence + (the lower of Astrology or Occult ratings).

Alchemy (Intelligence or Stamina)

There are two major forms of alchemy in Creation: external and internal.

External alchemy is the standard form of the art, in which different substances are combined to produce mystically efficacious results. This form of alchemy is rolled using Intelligence + Alchemy, with a difficulty that varies depending on the complexity and power of the preparation.

Internal alchemy is a rare and much more dangerous art, in which the alchemist imbibes the ingredients in their raw forms herself and transforms them into a magically effective (and non-lethal; many alchemy ingredients are incredibly toxic) substance within her own body. This process uses (Stamina + Alchemy), with a difficulty that varies based on the toxicity of the ingredients and fairly dire repercussions for a failure.

External alchemy is used to prepare a variety of wondrous substances, including but not limited to drugs that permit their users to interact with ghosts; anagathic elixirs that prolong life; incense that helps those who breathe it fight off disease; and even rare and expensive vials of sweet cordial, a miraculous healing potion. Internal alchemy can also produce these results, but they are only of use to the alchemist herself, as the reaction occurs within her body and cannot be stored or passed on to others.

Most alchemists stick to tried-and-true formulas passed down from their mentors or uncovered in alchemical manuscripts of hopefully genuine authenticity (nonsense alchemy formulae manufactured by con-artists abound, sadly). This is because the art is potentially fairly volatile when something goes wrong, and because alchemy always uses at least one or two uncommon ingredients with some degree of intrinsic magic to them, often harvested from a Demesne or the lands near one of the Elemental Poles, cut from the corpse of a Wyld mutant, and so on. That is to say, alchemy ingredients are often difficult to procure, quite specific, and *expensive*. Trying to use a substitute ingredient causes a formula to demand three successes rather than merely one.

Designing a new alchemical formula from scratch is a difficult and dangerous process requiring months of experimentation with mystically potent ingredients. This is represented by an extended roll (Intelligence + Alchemy) roll at difficulty 9, with an interval of one month and a goal of (the formula's final difficulty to make once perfected times 5). Use the example formulae provided here as benchmarks.

Most alchemy takes a couple of hours to mix up once the ingredients have been procured. A few formulae can take much longer, involving hours of steeping, ritually preparing, or purifying certain materials until they are suitable for use.

- **Alchemical Poison (difficulty 6, Resources •):** This distressingly cheap and easy formula makes a dose of alchemical poison, as seen on page XX.
- **Cleansing Unguent (difficulty 6, Resources •):** This paste, smeared on a patient's wounds, acts as an automatically successful attempt to stanch bleeding and to treat infection. It can retain its potency for up to three years if stored somewhere cool and dry.
- **Maiden Tea (difficulty 6, Resources •):** Produced from the bitter fruit of a low bush that grows in warm climates throughout Creation, this drug renders a woman infertile for a month or a man infertile for a week. This drug is a favorite of concubines, high-class courtesans, women having affairs while their partners are away and wealthy men who wish to avoid siring bastard heirs.
- **Philtre of Desire (difficulty 6, Resources ••):** This nasty mixture makes the person who drinks it intensely suggestible for the next hour, treating any request that doesn't violate their Nature or an Intimacy as an inconvenience.
- **Randy Ox Formula (difficulty 6, Resources ••):** This gritty drink, made primarily of ox-blood and sands gathered near the Pole of Fire, acts as a reliable cure for impotence.

• **Draught of Blessed Respite (difficulty 7, Resources ••):** This soothing, mint-green drink puts the person who consumes it into a deep and restful sleep. It takes a Willpower roll against difficulty 8 not to fall asleep within fifteen minutes after consuming the formula, and the sleeper automatically regains Willpower upon awakening even if she would normally be prevented from doing so by a Derangement or by failing a Fatigue roll.

• **Heroic Revitalization Brew (difficulty 7, Resources •••):** Made of the blood of predators mixed with certain herbs, this drink causes a mortal who imbibes it to heal her next Wound as though she were Exalted.

• **Night Eagle Potion (difficulty 7, Resources •••):** Whoever drinks this potion—which must be very carefully mixed indeed, as its primary ingredient is several varieties of nightshades—gains superlative night vision and keen sight for the next six hours, ignoring all penalties to vision due to distance or poor lighting.

• **Universal Antivenom Tincture (difficulty 7, Resources ••):** This potion acts as a universal antidote to all poisons that do not inflict Aggravated damage. It retains its potency indefinitely so long as it is not subjected to sunlight, which causes its components to separate and lose their efficacy within three hours.

• **Ghost Tea (difficulty 8, Resources •••):** Made from the petals of rare flowers that grow in certain shadowlands, anyone who imbibes this tea becomes able to perceive and interact with dematerialized ghosts for several hours afterwards.

• **Seven Bounties Paste (difficulty 8, Resources •••):** Seven Bounties Paste is made from the roots of seven rare plants. Mixed with alcohol, it makes a bitter, red, hot-tasting paste usually mixed with rice and broth to make it palatable. It is used to treat disease: after imbibing Seven Bounties Paste, someone trying to throw off a disease does not increase his penalty after failing a resistance roll the next seven times this occurs.

• **Tiger Heart Salve (difficulty 8, Resources •••):** Rubbed into several major muscle groups, this greasy mixture makes the person who uses it completely immune to Wound penalties or any other pain-based penalties for one scene, but inflicts an Aggravated drained Wound at the end of the scene as it overtaxes their body.

• **Wind-Fire Potion (difficulty 8, Resources ••):** This powerful battlefield elixir strengthens warriors as they head into battle, at the cost of clouding their thoughts. For one scene after taking a Wind-Fire Potion, a character gains +1 to one of her physical Attributes, but suffers a –1 penalty on all mental Attribute rolls for the next 24 hours. Taking a double dose of Wind-Fire Potion can raise a second Attribute by +1, but inflicts an Aggravated drained Wound. Taking any more than, while it does grant a +1 to the remaining physical Attribute, also provokes an immediate difficulty 9 (Stamina + Resistance) roll, requiring a number of successes equal to the number of dosages past two the foolhardy fighter has taken. Success merely inflicts a second Aggravated drained Wound, while failure inflicts an Aggravated mauled Wound in the form of a massive heart attack.

• **Age-Staving Cordial (difficulty 9, Resources ••••):** Created from the sap of a vine found in the deep jungles of the Far East combined with the diluted poison of a species of small, brightly-colored clams found on the coasts of the South and West, this drug takes the form of small packets of dark-red powder which are mixed with wine. Depending on how frequently this brew is imbibed, the user's aging is slowed by anywhere from 10% to 45%.

• **Heavenly Transmutation Process (difficulty 9, Resources ••-•••):** This is actually a wide variety of different formula for transforming one substance into another, such as lead into gold, granite into marble, and so on. Unfortunately, no formula has ever been found that can refine raw common elements into the magical materials, and alchemy is a poor money-making scheme as the solvents necessary to transform a few nuggets of, say, zinc into silver, tend to cost about as much as the silver nuggets produced at the end of the process.

• **Sweet Cordial (difficulty 9, Resources ••••):** Brewed from orchids found only in the Southeast jungles, tubers from the slopes of the Imperial Mountain, and the glands of certain deep-sea fish found only near the Elemental Pole of Water, this purple cordial's overwhelming sweetness is matched only by the astronomical prices it commands on the open market. A character who imbibes Sweet Cordial heals the most severe Wound she is afflicted by over the next hour, even if it Aggravated. If she has no Wounds, she heals all damage she may have over the course of that hour instead. Taking Sweet Cordial again before 28 days pass to clear its effects from her system does not heal the character, but instead inflicts hours of violent, upsetting hallucinations, inflicting a -4 penalty to all actions.

Astrology (Intelligence or Wits)

The workings of destiny, many believe, are writ in the stars. Through painstaking study of the night sky, the astrologist may draw up a horoscope and determine the most likely course for the future to take, or determine whether or not a particular course of action is likely to be auspicious. All of these are (Intelligence + Astrology) rolls requiring most of a night spent studying the stars. The difficulty to determine if a particular enterprise is auspicious is 6. The difficulty to determine what the future is likely to hold for a person is 7. The difficulty to determine the same for an organization, nation, war, or other broad sweep of history is 8.

Despite the name of this form of mysticism, there are many other forms of divination in Creation in addition to the reading of the stars. Some mystics attempt to glimpse the future in tea leaves, the cracks that form in scapulae set in a hot flame, or in the patterns made by the unwinding entrails of sacrificial animals (or even people). These methods are generally much quicker than astrology, and do not require waiting for a clear night, but are substantially less precise. They use (Wits + Astrology), and the difficulty of all inquiries is +1 higher than with stargazing.

Banishment (Manipulation)

Banishing a ghost, demon, or elemental is a very specialized form of ritual involving abjurations of the target that mix together particular anathemas they cannot stand such as the ringing of bells or the burning of incense with prayers for intervention. Generally this culminates in a contested (Manipulation + Banishment) roll against the target's (Willpower + Essence); if the exorcist gains more successes, the target is driven from her presence. If she gains five more successes, a ghost is sent howling back into the Underworld, an elemental is forced to flee the area for a month, and a demon is driven from her presence for three days, during which time the Bureau of Destiny dispatches a Sidereal Exalt to deal with the disruptive spirit.

Enchantment (Wits)

The art of enchantment is a means of stealing a bit of luck from the world and sealing it into a special talisman, often known as a walkaway. Talismans can look like almost anything, and fakes abound. A true talisman must be crafted by a mystic, who rolls (Wits + Enchantment)

during its forging. The difficulty of this roll is based on the worth of the talisman: (9 – the object's Resources value).

A walkaway will deflect one terrible mishap per two successes rolled during its creation. This reduces the difficulty of a roll to avoid some sort of calamity by –1, staves off one incidence of Wyld mutation, or leaves a character merely injured when she might have otherwise been killed.

Exorcism (Charisma)

Evicting a ghost or other spirit from a person, beast, or object is a contested ritual roll of (Charisma + Exorcism) against the spirit's (Willpower + Essence), both at difficulty 6. If the exorcist gains more successes, the spirit is forced out of its host. Exorcism generally demands that the host be restrained or idle.

Summoning (Charisma)

Many and varied are the arts of summoning. Unlike the sorcerer's art, mystical summons entice and invite but do not bind. A mystic merely opens the way for what she calls and intrigues it enough to answer her summons.

Summoning beasts requires the mystic to possess at least Survival 3+. After enacting an appropriate ritual, roll (Charisma + Summoning) against a difficulty of the beast's Willpower. The mystic may either attempt to summon a great number of her target species, or may endeavor to receive a swift response to her summons; in any case, the more successes rolled, the more the result of her endeavors matches her desire. Calming a summoned creature requires another (Charisma + Summoning) roll, again rolled against its Willpower. One success is enough to prevent a creature from immediately attacking or fleeing. Three or more are needed to interact with it safely, while five will compel its obedience (but cannot make it betray its Nature).

Summoning a person requires that the summoner know the target's name and possess a part of his body, such as nail clippings, hair, or the like. This sample is consumed in a summoning ritual. Make a resisted roll of (Charisma + Summoning) against the target's Willpower, with the summoning roll at difficulty 8 and the Willpower roll at difficulty 6. Depending on how many more successes the summoner wins by, causality will nudge her target toward her presence with greater and greater urgency. Exalted are generally too powerful to be turned from their course with such feeble magic unless they're already letting happenstance carry them where it will.

Demon summoning is perilously simple, requiring only a difficulty 9 (Charisma + Summoning) roll and a suitable offering. Neomah and teodozjia will often answer a summons for nothing more than the opportunity to ply their respective trades, while an erymanthus will answer the blood of a cat; most other demons require a human sacrifice. The demon arrives in the summoner's presence unbound and free to do as it pleases. Demons of the Second Circle require specialized, difficult-to-discover rituals. Five successes are required to beckon them, and they can only be invited, not compelled to appear. Third Circle demons are beyond the power of lesser magic.

Elementals can be readily beckoned with simple rituals by rolling (Charisma + Summoning) against difficulty 8 and generating a number of successes equal to their Essence rating, but arrive free-willed and often impatient to discover why they have been diverted from their course to answer to a mortal.

Summoning ghosts is extremely easy. All that is required is the individual's name and a dish full of human blood (one damage level's worth). The difficulty of this (Charisma + Summoning) roll is 7, or 6 if at the ghost's grave or the location of her corpse. Simply calling a ghost does not compel him to obey the summoner in any way.

Finally, it is not possible for humans to compel a god to appear before them. Prayer (see p. XX) is as close as humans can come to beckoning the divine.

Warding (Manipulation)

Warding is the simplest and most fundamental of the mystic arts, and nearly every community of any size in Creation possesses a number of individuals initiated into its secrets.

Warding comprises a very great number of rituals tailored to barring different sorts of supernatural beings. A ward of salt is efficacious at repelling ghosts, while talismans of iron bar the advance of the Fair Folk. More specifically, hungry ghosts are afraid of lily blossoms, while a dreamcatcher will defend against silverwights. Establishing a ward to repel a broad class of beings requires a long ritual and a (Manipulation + Warding) roll against difficulty 8, while repelling a particular sort of creature is difficulty 7.

When a barred being tries to bypass a ward, subtract its Essence rating from the successes rolled to create the ward. Essence 4+ entities and all Exalted double their Essence rating for this purpose, while Essence 8+ entities triple their effective Essence rating. Consult the remaining effective successes to determine what happens:

Successes	Result
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0	The target hesitates for a turn before tearing through the ward.
1	The target can approach the ward and even reach through it, but cannot employ magic against anyone on the other side of the ward.
2	The target can walk up to the ward but cannot penetrate it at all.
3	The target must make a successful difficulty 9 Willpower roll to even approach the ward.
4+	The target cannot approach the ward at all and must roll Willpower against difficulty 8 to even remain within sight of it.

Most wards require regular maintenance and refreshing of their power to remain efficacious unless created with painstaking care and expensive material outlays (investing either Resources 4+ or spending months or years on their creation).

Weather Working (Charisma or Appearance)

It is not possible to directly influence the weather through mere ritual action. What *is* possible is to enact dances, performances, songs, and rituals known to be pleasing to gods and elementals who influence the wind and sea. Weather working requires long, long hours of extended rituals, chants, dances, song, or other offerings which stir local Essence flows into patterns which induce particular moods in spirits touched by them.

Weather working is a roll of (Charisma or Appearance) + Weather Working. Six hours of work produces a difficulty of 9, twelve hours difficulty 8, and an entire day's uninterrupted labor

difficulty 7. The more successes rolled, the stronger the result. Weather working can't produce flatly impossible results such as a snowstorm in the deep desert.

Inheritance

Characters with Inheritance are born to power or had it infused into them, though that Background describes lesser powers than Exaltation. Most of the time, characters with Inheritance are the offspring of a mortal and a supernatural being: God-Blooded, Ghost-Blooded, Demon-Blooded, or Fae-Blooded. Inheritance also sometimes describes the mortal children of powerful Celestial Exalted, such as the Moon-Touched heroes who often serve as champions or emissaries of elder Lunars. On rarer occasions, Inheritance represents a person transformed by the power of sorcery.

It is possible for Exalted to be uplifted from among the ranks of the God-Blooded and other minor inheritors of supernatural power, though they cannot have an Inheritance rating above three dots.

- **Anima Imitation (1 point):** The character gains a replica of an Exalted anima power. If it requires the expenditure of a Mote or anima flare, the character may instead spend 1 Willpower to trigger it. Exalted cannot have this power, as they already have an anima power; this feature is normally seen on their children.
- **Atrocity Gateway (1 point):** Temporary paths between Creation and Hell sometimes open when an exiled man starves to death in darkness, when a temple of the gods is ritually defiled by vivisection of one of the faithful upon the altar, when a statue of the Unconquered Sun is brought to life and commanded to engage in sexual congress with a corpse, and in the wake of other highly-specific atrocities. The character has the gift of sanctifying any such baroque atrocity she witnesses or commits by spending a point of Willpower to travel into and out of Hell, potentially bringing along a few companions with her. This Inheritance is restricted to Demon-Blooded.
- **Attunement (1 point):** The character can attune to a single magical item, reducing her permanent Willpower rating instead of Essence if it has an attunement cost higher than 0. Exalts can't take this Inheritance since they already possess this power.
- **Banquet of Blood (2 points):** Once per day, the character may drink at least one health level's worth of human blood that has been offered to her freely. Doing so allows her to regain a point of Willpower. Many Ghost-Blooded have this Inheritance.
- **Beauty of the Dance (1 point):** When the character dances or sings, observers without extremely pressing business must succeed at a difficulty 8 Willpower roll to do anything other than watch her perform. This is a common Inheritance of Demon-Blooded, but not exclusive to them.
- **Brand of Power (1 point):** The character may, with a moment's concentration, manifest a supernatural mark somewhere on her body, indicating her connection to a great supernatural power — generally her parent. If she is the daughter of Ligier, the Green Sun, then lesser demons who see the mark know that they are trifling with one who may be precious to one of the penultimate lords of Hell. If she is the daughter of Ahlat, then other gods know they risk the war-god's ire by harming her.

- **Defensive Power (1 point):** The character can spend 1 Willpower to conjure some manner of supernatural protection, be it hardened flesh like stone or an aura of steel-edged feathers swirling about her. She gains +1 Soak rating for the rest of the scene.
- **Deathwalker (1 point):** The character can always perceive and interact with ghosts, regardless of either of their states of materialization. This power is usually exclusive to Ghost-Blooded.
- **Dematerialization (3 points):** The character may spend 2 Willpower and a simple action in concentration to translate her flesh to spirit-stuff. At the end of the *following* round she dematerializes. She may later resume her material form by spending a simple action in concentration, becoming solid and visible again at the end of the next round.
- **Divine Blessing (2 or 3 points):** The character's efforts are touched by the grace of divinity. Each purchase of this Inheritance grants a Caste Ability (for 2 points) or a Caste Attribute (for 3 points). Exalted characters cannot take this Inheritance.
- **Domain Manipulation (3 points):** The character may spend 1 Willpower and roll her Essence rating as a simple action against a difficulty set by the Storyteller to evoke natural miracles from her parent's domain. Natural miracles are things that it would make sense for the domain to do. If the domain is a river, then it might flood its banks or offer up an abundance of fish. If the domain is a field, it might become free of pests or offer a bountiful harvest. If the domain is a city, all the shops might be closed, but the city could not be made invisible or commanded to fly, for that is not the way of cities. This Inheritance is only available to God-Blooded.
- **Draught of Passion (2 points):** Once per day, whenever the character witnesses someone experiencing a particular powerful emotion, she may roll her Willpower rating against difficulty 9 as a swift action. Success allows her to regain Willpower as though she had satisfied her Nature.
- **Dreamscape (1 points):** The character may spend 1 Willpower and use a simple action to send her mind into the dreams of a sleeping target within the same zone. There, she can make a contested Willpower roll against the dreamer to take control of his dreams.
- **Elemental Dominion (2 points):** The character can manipulate one of the five elements by rolling (Appearance, Charisma, or Intelligence) + (Craft or Occult) as a simple action, causing trees to bend into new shapes or grow quickly, flames to sculpt themselves into pleasing designs or spread rapidly, boulders to reshape themselves into thrones, and so forth. The more impressive the display, the higher the difficulty. Used as an attack, the elements have a base damage of 5 (bruised, lacerated, or burned, depending). This Inheritance is primarily found among the offspring of elementals, but might also be imbued by a sorcerer or inherited from a god with strong elemental associations.
- **Elemental Immunity (2 points):** The character can reflexively spend 1 Willpower to become immune to harm from a specific element for the rest of the scene (in the case of water, she also gains the ability to breathe underwater; earth does not provide immunity to metal weapons). This Inheritance is primarily found among the offspring of elementals, but might also be imbued by a sorcerer or inherited from a god with strong elemental associations.
- **Feral Soul (3 points):** The character may spend 1 Willpower and a simple action of concentration to separate her lower soul from her body as a hungry ghost for the rest of the scene, which promptly attacks her enemies. The character cannot spend Willpower while her

lower soul is elsewhere. If it is destroyed, she immediately loses all of her Willpower points and cannot use this power again for the rest of the story. This power is exclusive to Ghost-Blooded.

- **Goblin Body (Variable points):** For each point invested in this power, select one Uncanny feature. The character may spend a simple action in concentration and make a difficulty 8 Willpower roll to transform into her Goblin Body shape, then do the same to change back.

- **God-Body (1 point):** The character heals at the same rate and with the same perfection as one of the Exalted. Exalts can't take this Inheritance since they already possess this power.

- **Harrow the Mind (2 points):** The character can craft phantasmal illusions. She must spend a point of Willpower, suffer a level of Aggravated damage, and make a (Manipulation + Empathy) roll as a simple action to craft these illusions. The difficulty for the illusionist is set by how elaborate the illusions are. **Illusions must relate to the character's heritage.** The daughter of a fire elemental could conjure phantom flames or an illusory fire spirit, but not illusory zombies. The daughter of a ghost could devise haunting, creepy images, or craft illusions of the dearly departed. A cursory examination reveals that the illusions are precisely that, but they can still serve to make a point, establish a mood, or frighten people. Stunts taking advantage of the illusion for dramatic effect lower their difficulty by -1. The character must suffer another level of damage every ten minutes to sustain the illusions.

- **Impossible Beauty (3 points):** The character gains one additional dot of Appearance, which may raise her rating as high as 6.

- **Longevity (0 or 1 point):** The character ages very, very slowly, and barring violence or mishap can expect to live for centuries. Exalts can't take this Inheritance since they already possess this power. This power generally doesn't cost anything since most games won't last long enough for it to matter, but in a game that anticipates downtime periods lasting for years or decades, it is worth 1 point.

- **Measure the Wind (1 point):** The character can sense Essence, identifying it by flavor and intensity of power. She can scrutinize other characters with (Perception + Awareness) to determine if they are an Essence-user, and if so, what sort of being they are. The more successes gained, the more detailed the information will be. If the target is utilizing a supernatural disguise such as a Resplendent Destiny or the Solar Charm Flawlessly Impenetrable Disguise to pretend to be something they are not, they must make an Essence roll against difficulty 6. Success causes Measure the Wind to report that they are what they are pretending to be, rather than what they truly are. This power always has a particular method to it — it's never as simple as just looking at someone. If the character's parent was the god of a vineyard, she might need to share a glass of wine with someone to taste their Essence. If she is the daughter of a ghost or a Lunar, she probably needs to taste their blood. If she is the offspring of a demon, she might need to witness them praying.

- **Mien of Passion (1 point):** The character can shroud herself in a powerful cloak of overriding emotion by reflexively spending a point of Willpower. Any attempt she makes for the rest of the scene to evoke or exploit that emotion in others lowers its difficulty by -1.

- **Obfuscation (1 point):** The character may spend 1 Willpower and use a simple action to conjure an obscuring effect of some kind, such as a fog bank, a smothering darkness, a choking smog, or a flood of luminous butterflies, filling a zone of her choice and obscuring vision

through it. Anyone performing an action depending on sight through this obscuring haze suffers a -3 dice pool penalty.

- **Ordination of Lies (1 point):** Once per scene, when attempting to deceive someone, the character lowers the difficulty of her action by -1.
- **Phenomenal Restoration (2 points):** While in the presence of a strong manifestation of a certain element or phenomenon, the character heals her injuries at twice the normal speed.
- **Read the World (2 points):** Define a particular narrow circumstance such as “participating in a funeral,” “while drowning,” or “while impaled upon a hook.” The character may hear the thoughts of anyone who falls under the selected circumstance.
- **Sense the Unseen (1 or 2 points):** By reflexively spending a 1 Willpower, the character can see dematerialized beings and the entrance to spirit sanctums for the rest of the scene. For 2 Willpower points, she can also interact with them. Many God-Blooded have this Inheritance.
- **Sovereign Self (1 point):** The character is unconditionally immune to any form of possession.
- **Transformation (2 points):** The character may spend 1 Willpower and a simple action to transform into an animal. This is always one particular animal. Use the traits found in Chapter Five on pages XX-XX.
- **Unfettered (2 points):** The character can untether her soul from her body and walk invisibly by night. She must lay down and close her eyes to do this. She is for all intents and purposes a dematerialized ghost while walking free of her flesh (including being able to interact with the living in shadowlands). She is well advised to return to her body before sunrise, as the touch of the sun upon either her wandering spirit or her unhoused flesh acts as a hazard with difficulty 8, damage 3 (burned), penalty -0 and a one round interval. This Inheritance is exclusive to Ghost-Blooded.
- **Wyld Immunity (1 point):** The character is unconditionally immune to the transformative power of the Wyld. This Inheritance is usually bequeathed to Fae-Blooded.

Heroic Mortal Character Creation

Creating a mortal protagonist works a lot like it does in any classic edition of the game. The steps are outlined below:

Step 1: Character Concept

- Consult with the other players and come up with an appealing concept.
- Select Nature.

Step 2: Attributes

- Mark down one dot in each Attribute.
- Rank categories of Attributes (Physical, Social, Mental) in order of importance to your character.
- Divide 6 dots among primary Attributes, 4 dots among secondary Attributes, and 3 dots among tertiary Attributes.

Step 3: Abilities

- Divide 23 dots among Abilities.
- No Ability can have more than 3 points without spending Freebie Points.

Step 4: Advantages

- Select 5 dots of Backgrounds.
- Write down three Intimacies.

Step 5: Finishing Touches

- Record Willpower (3) and Essence rating (1).
- Record Health (7).
- Calculate and record Defense, Soak, Dodge, Block, and Stagger Threshold.
- Spend Bonus Points (21).

Bonus Point Costs

Trait	Cost (per dot)
Attribute	4
Ability	2
Terrestrial spell	4
Martial Arts Charm	(rating x 5)
Backgrounds	1
Willpower	1

Backgrounds

Mortals can use any Background found in this chapter. They also have some particular considerations for certain Backgrounds.

Allies

Panoply Background

Mortals use a somewhat different scale for this Background, since “a starting Exalt” isn’t a peer, but a vastly more powerful figure than the protagonist herself. Instead, the basic comrade provided by this Background is highly dedicated and competent, but also only mortal himself.

X No one stands by your side.

- One ally of modest ability, roughly equivalent to a young hero.
- Two allies or one ally of significant power.
- Three allies, or fewer allies of correspondingly higher power. Three dots in Allies can produce a single young Exalted ally.
- Four allies, or fewer allies of greater might. Four dots in Allies can produce a couple of young Exalted allies, or one somewhat seasoned Exalted ally.

••••• Five allies, or fewer allies of immense might. Five dots in Allies can produce a Hearth or Circle of young Exalted, or a single mature and powerful Exalt.

Artifact

Panoply Background

Mortals don't resonate with any magical material, and cannot attune to artifacts, meaning that they can only use those artifacts which don't require attunement. This Background can still be taken to confer ownership of an artifact, even if the character can't use it.

Cult

Social Background

While it's technically possible for a mortal to take this Background, prayer doesn't provide any sort of mechanical advantages to her.

Echoes

Purchased Background

As they are not the heritors of the ancient power of Exaltation, mortals cannot take this Background.

Familiar

Purchased Background

Mortals cannot take the Immortal Bond feature.

Manse

Panoply Background

As with the Artifact Background, you might control it, but you can't attune to it.

Mentor

Social Background

Mortals can generally only benefit from material aid and advice from this Background, though sorcerers might also derive the benefit of instruction in spells.

Mystic

Purchased Background

In addition to the Background's regular uses, a mortal can make a five-dot investment in this Background (without allocating it to any of the Mystic Arts) to gain access to a sorcerous initiation (see p. XX), enabling her to cast Terrestrial Circle spells, perform sorcerous workings, and claim a control spell.

Special Rules for Mortals

Mortals use a few special rules to reflect their relative fragility and lack of divine favor, detailed below.

Drive to Survive

Mortal heroes are able to employ stunts in the same fashion as the Exalted. What they don't have access to are Charms of any kind, making them very fragile in a system where attack rolls tend to be fairly accurate and antagonists can hit very hard.

Mortal Healing

As noted in Chapter One, mortals heal much more slowly than the Chosen. They're also prone to lasting Wounds from things like having their spine broken or their teeth smashed out. Their healing times are repeated here for convenience:

Mortal Healing Times

Mortals erase one level of damage from their Health track after two days spent without undertaking any particularly strenuous activity. Only once there is no damage left in their Health track can they begin healing Wounds.

Wounds are healed in the following order, in the listed time:

Maimed and **mauled** Wounds take six weeks to heal.

Burned, blinded, disabled arm, and disabled leg Wounds take two weeks to heal.

Drained and **lacerated** Wounds take one week to heal.

Bruised and **dazed** Wounds take three days to heal.

As a reminder, mortals can only heal from maimed Wounds by resting around the clock.

Bleeding Out

Gaping injuries tend to bleed profusely. When a mortal suffers any severe Wound or lacerated Wound, she begins bleeding out. During combat, the effects of blood loss manifest every (Stamina rating) turns, causing the character to suffer another level of damage. Out of combat, this damage occurs every minute or so. Once this damage starts inflicting Wounds (usually after incapacitating the bleeding mortal), these are drained Wounds.

After getting out of immediate danger and resting for a few moments a mortal can roll (Stamina + Resistance) against difficulty 9 to get a bleeding wound to clot, stopping further blood loss. Otherwise, wounds need to be stanching with bandages, wet leaves, or torn-up bits of clothing to stop bleeding. Doing so requires using a simple action to roll (Wits + Medicine) roll against difficulty 6.

At the Storyteller's discretion, sufficiently strenuous activity can reopen an unhealed Wound and set it to bleeding again.

Infection

At the end of any scene in which the character suffers a Wound other than bruised, dazed, or drained, she must make a (Stamina + Resistance) roll. If the roll fails, her injury becomes infected. This roll must be repeated at the end of any scene in which her wounds are left undressed or are exposed to potential infecting agents (such as being plunged into swamp water, after grappling with a zombie, and so on). The difficulty of the roll is dictated by the circumstances in which the wound is received or to which it is exposed.

If a character's injuries become infected, she must beat the infection or die. Each day, she must make a (Stamina + Resistance) roll (factoring in the character's Wound penalties, if any). This

roll begins at difficulty 6. Success lowers the difficulty of the next day's roll by one, while failure raises it. If the difficulty drops below 3, the character beats the infection. If the difficulty rises above 9, she dies after (Stamina rating) days. Characters' Wounds cannot heal while infected.

Successful medical treatment of infected wounds (an Intelligence + Medicine action against whatever difficulty the patient is currently rolling against) reduces the difficulty by -2.

Healing Complications

Catastrophic injuries tend to produce lingering consequences for mortals. Bones don't quite heal straight. Damaged muscles are never again as strong as they used to be. Body parts may need to be removed to prevent death from gangrene. Blinded, disabled arm, disabled leg, and maimed Wounds all specify the sort of lasting Wound penalties they inflict. In addition to these, after a mortal heals from a lacerated, burned, or maimed Wound, her player must describe the fashion in which it produces lasting medical complications such as a weakness in one arm, a stiffness in the joints in wet environments, and so on. In situations where that impairment would logically apply, the character suffers a -1 dice penalty. For long-haul career fighters, injuries of this sort can stack up over time.

It's possible to avert this sort of penalty if an expert physician or surgeon tends to the character during her convalescence and succeeds at a difficulty 7 Intelligence + Medicine roll.

Holy Shit, This Fucking Sucks

Mortals, even heroic ones, live in a realistic, gritty, dangerous world which they share with powerful demigods who can run at 100 miles per hour, punch dinosaurs unconscious, and survive being shot with half a dozen arrows. Mortals do not outrun lions, win bare-handed fights against armed and armored soldiers, or walk off blows from swords. They go into battle wearing the heaviest armor they can afford and wielding the finest weapons they can lay their hands on, or they die. Those deaths are often fairly protracted and awful, shaking with fever as sepsis eats them an inch at a time. Exalts jump into huge fights on a whim. Mortals want to be much more discerning about picking their fights, because it's very easy for any given fight to be their last. Fighting without suitable weapons and especially without armor is *terrifying*. Fighting a clearly superior opponent is *terrifying*. People are fragile.

Not everyone is looking for *The Black Company*. If you'd prefer a game more along the lines of a low-powered Hong Kong action movie, just ignore all the bleeding out, infection, and healing complication rules, maybe use the Exalted healing table if you want frequent battle to be a tenable thing. Generally, though, the rules above are presented for protagonists to provide a distinctly different feeling to playing mortals in Creation as opposed to Exalted. Exalts don't bleed out, their Wounds always heal clean, and if their Wounds *do* become infected, the difficulty to throw off the infection never rises above 6 (this book assumes, in fact, that most tables will just skip bothering with infection for Exalts at all, since the worst that can happen as the result of splashing around the Noss Fens with open wounds is an evening or two of fever).

Martial Arts

Mortals, like all beings, have Essence within them. More specifically, like all things, mortals are ultimately *made up of* Essence. However, where the Chosen have an abundance of divine Essence welling up from their Exaltation, all of a mortal's Essence is constantly tied up in acting as her life-force and keeping her, well, alive and extant. Though the gods and the Chosen alike have experimented for all of recorded history in finding ways to "awaken" mortal Essence, there have been no recorded successes to date. It does not appear to be possible for a mortal to gain and wield a native Essence pool in the same manner as the Chosen without first undergoing a transformation into some sort of supernatural being, as with the Yennin of Volivat or the Exalted themselves.

That is not to say that mortals cannot manipulate their own Essence, merely that it can't be done the same way the Exalted do it. For thousands of years, mortals who have practiced extreme exercises in physical, mental, and spiritual conditioning, subjected themselves to exacting diets, imbibed magical herbs, and undergone ascetic training have learned to faintly perceive and touch their own Essence, if not that of the rest of the world around them. Generally, this occurs in the context of advanced practice of the martial arts, where the bleeding-edge extreme of physical cultivation touches on interpreting all of existence and one's interaction with it through a lens of philosophically-centered combat.

All of that is a long, fancy way of saying that it *is* possible for mortal characters to buy Martial Arts Charms, just the same as the Chosen do... albeit with several significant complications to their use. These are:

- To buy Martial Arts Charms *at all* a mortal must first have a minimum of Martial Arts 4+, and to buy anything above the first dot, they must have Martial Arts 5.
- Assuming they can do so at all, mortals must pay (rating x 6) to buy Martial Arts Charms.
- Mortals cannot purchase Charms of the Immaculate Dragon styles, nor the Forbidden Arts.
- When using Charms, mortals are subject to all drawbacks and limitations that Dragon-Blooded would be, but are not granted any special advantages a Dragon-Blooded would enjoy.
- To unlock the use of Martial Arts Charms for the rest of the scene, a mortal must reflexively spend 1 Willpower.
- Mortals are subject to all of the normal prerequisites and weapon and armor restrictions when using Martial Arts Charms.
- Mortals can only ever spend a maximum of 1 "Mote" per round.
- Mortals, of course, do not have Motes. Each time a mortal spends 1 "Mote," set aside one die next to her character sheet. This is her Essence Burden.
- At the end of any round in which a mortal did not spend any Motes, check her Essence Burden. If there are any dice in it, roll them against difficulty 3. The mortal suffers Aggravated damage (drained) equal to the successes produced. Her Stagger Threshold is always calculated against this damage as though she were unarmored.

In summary, the most accomplished mortal martial artists are very briefly capable of unlocking the same transcendent battle miracles regularly employed by Chosen practicing the same styles, but doing so always takes a tremendous act of will, and then the mortal must burn her very life-

force to fuel these magical techniques. Masters rarely steer their students toward this esoteric pinnacle of martial arts mastery, in part because most martial artists are simply not good enough to ever accomplish even this limited command of their Essence, but mostly because it is *exceedingly* easy for a martial artist to cripple or kill herself pushing for a victory in this fashion. Of course, the most ambitious students rarely heed their master's cautionary warnings, and rise like eagles toward the pinnacle of accomplishment before crashing back down in flames.

Perhaps this is fate's price leveled against those who would seek to transcend mortality and usurp Heaven's prerogative; or perhaps it is simply the nature of the clenched fist to bring about its own destruction.

Character Advancement

Mortals cannot advance their Essence rating by spending experience, and do not gain supernal experience points.

God-Blooded

"God-Blooded" is a general appellation referring to the half-mortal offspring of humans (or occasionally animals...) and any sort of supernatural being. Specifically, it refers to those born of a union between a mortal and a god, but is often broadened into a catch-all.

Playing God-Blooded

God-Blooded are generally more mortal than not, although a few show very strong marks of their divine heritage. As such, they use the rules for mortal hero creation, with their supernatural lineage represented by taking the Inheritance Background.

Exalted God-Blooded

Most sorts of Exalted can also at least theoretically be God-Blooded, although in practice such individuals are rarely chosen to receive Exaltation. Perhaps it is because they are already a rare group within Creation, or perhaps the Incarnae do not trust their power in the hands of those with preexisting loyalties to other gods. Dragon-Blooded of competing supernatural lineage are also quite uncommon, as the blood of other supernatural parents competes with that of the dragons and greatly reduces the likelihood of Exaltation.

Still, it *does* sometimes happen. In these cases, the blessings of divine heritage coexist with the power of Exaltation.

Children of Divinity

God-Blooded break down into several distinct groups, discussed in greater detail below.

God-Blooded

The children of the little gods are by far the most common sort of God-Blooded, particularly in the wilder portions of the Threshold. In the city of Great Forks, one in fifty residents can fairly claim descent from some god or other; elsewhere, the numbers hover closer to one in every several hundred. In much of Creation, God-Blooded act as local culture heroes, strongmen, champions; elsewhere, they simply make their way in life as best they can.

The most common of all God-Blooded occupations are those of high priest or herald. While some God-Blooded are the accidental by-blows of divine trysts, most are created deliberately and trained from birth to serve their immortal parent's interests.

Element-Kin

“Element-Kin” is a scholarly term; nearly all ordinary speech simply conflates the children of elementals with their more common divine God-Blooded counterparts; or else refers to them specifically by the element with which they are affiliated (“Air-Touched,” “Fire-Touched,” and so forth).

Elementals have frequent congress with mortals, living in the physical world by default, and mate with animals nearly as often. As elementals are impulsive creatures, their children are often unintended consequences more than deliberately cultivated catspaws. A few Element-Kin make a living passing themselves off as outcaste Dragon-Blooded, but this is a very hazardous trade, both because God-Blooded are not nearly as powerful or hardy as the Exalted, and because Terrestrial Exalted who discover the ruse tend to be terribly affronted.

Demon-Blooded

Like their divine counterparts, many demons are capable of coupling with a human partner and producing offspring. Demon-Blooded grow up strange, not quite at home in Creation. A few are raised under the mad green sun of the Demon City, but Hell is a harsh place for infants and children, and few reared there survive. Demon-Blooded are often creatures of uncanny beauty and strange appetites with little idea why they are the way they are. Others are raised within the closed circle of a demon or Yozi cult as either living saints or future ritual sacrifices.

A notable subset of Demon-Blooded are the woven offspring of neomah, the courtesans of the demon world. Left to her own devices, a neomah will frequently weave together demonic and human flesh to make an infant, simply because these are her most frequent clients; but given an eclectic range of flesh, neomah are given to make very strange and often unique things. While many believe that the children of a neomah are always tainted by the malice and strangeness of Hell, the truth is that if commissioned to do so, neomah are entirely capable of crafting a wholly ordinary human child. Should such a commission eventually grow up to display marks of the infernal despite the commissioner’s desires, this bespeaks flaws in that specific neomah’s work rather than an intrinsic limitation of their kind’s art.

Ghost-Blooded

The children of the living and the dead are the rarest of all varieties of God-Blooded. Ghost-Blooded are found almost exclusively in shadowlands, where the living and dead are able to regularly touch and do things more intimate than touching. In nearly every case, a Ghost-Blooded is the offspring of a mortal woman and a ghostly father, as the cold wombs of the dead lack either the substance or the nature to sustain even the pale life-force of the Half-Dead. That being said, a few ghosts possess strange arts to facilitate more exotic birthing arrangements.

Fae-Blooded

When the scions of the Wyld take on shape, they gain also the ability to tryst with mortals, and trysts in the Wyld are often fruitful. Fae-Blooded are fundamentally human, grounded by the certainties of their Creation-born parent, but touched by the madness and strangeness of chaos. About half display severe Wyld mutations, which usually manifest around puberty, while the other half are almost uniformly immune to the Wyld’s transformative touch altogether. Fae-Blooded are despised and distrusted throughout almost all of Creation, regarded with even deeper suspicion than the children of demons. This is not without some justification; Fae-Blooded raised in the courts of the Fair Folk are almost always trained as Ravagers.

Grandchildren of Divinity

The children of powerful Celestial Exalted sometimes carry the faintest reflection of their parent's majesty. This doesn't extend to Dragon-Blooded, alas. Their children are either Exalted, or simply mortal. If a child's Terrestrial blood is strong enough to mark her with any sort of elemental features, then it is strong enough to produce Exaltation.

Golden Children: The sons and daughters of the Solar Exalted once served as their parents' favored agents, majordomos, and heads-of-household in the First Age, overseeing the upkeep of vacation manses and far-flung estates. They were frequently subjects of tension as they assumed duties and privileges that the scions of Dragon-Blooded gentes serving the Solars felt should have rightfully fallen to them. The Golden Children were noted for their charisma, good looks, and strong health, but rarely manifested any sort of overt supernatural qualities.

Moon-Touched: The children of the Lunar Exalted are hale and hearty beings, sometimes displaying minor shapeshifting tricks, or else the keen senses or smallest gifts of the world of beasts, such as the ability to track by scent or sharp, iron-hard nails. They were oddities in the First Age, unable to keep up with their parents and unusual to boot, since Lunars with Solar spouses bore generally Golden Children instead; but in the Second Age they are much valued by the Society of the Moon. Many Lunars take their sons and daughters into their confidence and rely on them as gamekeepers, heralds, speakers, high priests, and heroes entrusted with leading when the Lunar is away. A Moon-Touched hero is, of course, no match for a Dragon-Blooded, but that is not the point of them. The point is to inspire other mortals to become as excellent as the Lunar's own children are.

Nameless: Few in number, the handful of children produced by powerful Getimians are ruled by a strange and chaotic destiny. Misrule's hand grenades, fate takes strange twists in the presence of the Nameless. The unlikely becomes normal in their lives. Other than being plagued by odd coincidences and improbable odds, they exhibit no consistent supernatural characteristics.

Star-Blessed: The children of Sidereals are often subtly second-sighted, plagued by runs of strange luck, or both. They fall, broadly, into two camps. The first are primarily the results of one-night stands and careless liaisons with mortals during sojourns into Creation. Destiny's bastards almost never realize there's anything supernatural about their heritage, and simply live interesting lives. An unusual number of them become sorcerers by one means or another. Other members of this group include orphans dropped off into the care of mortals by a mysterious stranger, who may or may not stop in from time to time under a variety of guises to see how they're doing. Few Sidereals believe they have either the time or temperament for parenthood. The second group, far more rare, are those actively or semi-actively raised by their Sidereal parent. Many are fostered in Creation, their Exalted mother or father dropping in for visits from time to time, while a rare few are reared in Yu-Shan, within the halls and walled gardens of their parent's celestial Manse. Mortal children (and, speaking honestly, mortal adults) are generally regarded as a nuisance in Yu-Shan and are not tolerated to run about in public without a minder or escort. These Star-Blessed live *very* strange lives, raised and socialized among minor servant-spirits and likely trained to a life of service themselves, as a librarian, cook, secretary, or other menial in their parent's household. Unemployed gods despise such Star-Blessed, who they regard as holding down a job that should rightfully go to one of the teeming masses of unemployed spirits huddled in the slums of Heaven.

Other sorts of divine offspring notionally exist, such as the Shadewalker children of Abyssals and the Hellspawn offspring of Infernals, but none are as yet more than five years old. They will, in all likelihood, closely resemble Ghost-Blooded and Demon-Blooded.

Essence Cultivation and the Great Prize

Mortals cannot actively, consciously command the power of their own Essence in the manner of the Chosen, even those touched by divine heritage. A rare few of divinity's by-blows may, however, consciously cultivate the raw strength of their Essence through assiduous and deliberate exercise of those few supernatural blessings they do possess. This must be accompanied by other experimental regimens to increase understanding of the self and connection to the world: rigorous meditation, elemental ordeals, martial arts exercises, sorcerous experimentation, and philosophical inquiry are all common avenues of cultivation. What works for one God-Blooded may not work for another, as the daughter of a fire elemental and the son of a demon possess Essence whose characteristics vary greatly.

No game systems are provided for this journey; they're purely a matter of storytelling. Game systems would either mimic the Essence-cultivation of the Chosen (making the rise to power feel like a matter of inevitability rather than struggle) or demand vast expenditures of experience points (making it feel like a serious undertaking, but also making the chronicle much less fun as the God-Blooded have to allocate all of their earnings toward... leaving the game).

Increasing Essence to 2 or 3 is a truly herculean struggle for a mortal for fairly limited gains. If they are a sorcerer, a few spells use Essence as a coefficient. A few supernatural powers may have a slightly more difficult time affecting them. Resisting Wyld mutation becomes very slightly easier. A mortal with Essence 2 is likely to live longer than most, frequently celebrating her 90th birthday before her death, while one with Essence 3 sometimes lives to 120. For the most part, that's it.

The real prize is this: reaching Essence 3 primes a mortal's Essence for a profound transformation. A blessing from a powerful god or a writ from the upper echelons of the Celestial Bureaucracy may, at this point, rewrite the individual's nature, uplifting her to the ranks of true divinity. She sheds her mortal flesh and becomes something everlasting.

This sort of transformative blessing is most useful, and most fervently sought, by God-Blooded and Elemental-Kin, who may respectively ascend to godhood or become a full-blown elemental. Demon-Blooded who achieve this sort of apotheosis become a unique First Circle demon, gaining ageless existence — but are also immediately drawn into Hell. A Fae-Blooded cannot bridge the alien gap between their mortal solidity and the ephemerality of their supernatural parent, and achieving Essence 3+ does nothing but extend her lifespan. The grandchildren of divinity, likewise, cannot make the leap to full Exaltation, and their journey ends at Essence 3. Ghost-Blooded can theoretically make a transformative ascension, but there are much simpler ways for them to become a ghost.

