

THE THREE BANNERS FESTIVAL



An Exigents Jumpstart

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Part One

Exalted

Long ago, the gods made war against ancient monsters who forged the world. They chose as their champions mortals, and through the gift of Exaltation uplifted these heroes with divine power. The goddess of the moon made the Lunar Exalted, who could take the forms of beasts. The five Maidens of the stars made the Sidereal Exalted, who could compel destiny. The world-dragons made Dragon-Blooded heroes with elemental power, weaker individually than their peers but manifold. The Unconquered Sun, King of Heaven, made the mighty and righteous Solar Exalted.

And the smaller gods of Creation — of river, road, or forest; love, war, or birdsong — made champions called Exigents, each one a singular miracle birthed in flame.

Together they overthrew the world makers and came to rule Creation. But the ancients laid a death curse upon the Exalted and, as the First Age passed, its Exalted rulers waxed mighty and tyrannous. The Sun turned his face from his Chosen and Creation, and he would henceforth only rarely dispense the spark of Exigence to the little gods.

When the Sidereals and Dragon-Blooded shattered the Old Realm and banished the Solars, the First Age passed in fire and death to inaugurate an Age of Sorrows. The Sidereals vanished from history, and Dragon-Blooded stewards chased Lunars beyond the world and feuded with one another as Shoguns, before plague and fae broke the age of the Shogunate.

The great, imperial Dragon-Blooded Realm that rose from their ashes at the Creation's center has lost its immortal empress, and its subjects chafe to be free of her dynasty's yoke.

Into this Time of Tumult, the Solars have returned, and with them has come the spark of Exigence. The Sun once more bestows Exigency to gods he deems worthy, birthing myriad Exigent champions who now congregate in the temple city of Great Forks.

What Is Exalted?

Exalted is a tabletop roleplaying game where the players take the role of heroes empowered with divine might. In this scenario, players will take the role of the Exigent Exalted, idiosyncratic chosen of Creation's smaller gods. Additional books provide rules for playing other character types, with the core book covering Solars.

Exalted makes itself distinct from conventional fantasy in that rather than drawing its primary inspirations from the works of J.R.R. Tolkien and what followed in his wake, it sets its roots elsewhere — **Exalted** is material inspired by ancient Greek, Middle Eastern, Indian, and Asian myths; as well as pulp fantasy works like Robert E. Howard's Conan and Michael Moorcock's Elric. **Exalted** draws heavily from wuxia, anime, and manga for look and feel — characters in **Exalted** might be able to run along walls or on the surface of a lake, fell a foe with a sword blow delivered from 10 yards away, or craft an argument so perfect none may deny its truth. But while the Exalted are powerful, they are not necessarily wise, and while their magics aid great deeds, only their human judgment can help them discern worthy action from unworthy.

Creation and the Exigents

Creation is a flat world of five elements floating in an ocean of chaos. This adventure takes place within the city of Great Forks, located in a region of Creation's east called the Scavenger Lands: a place of fertile forests, rivers, and plains, where ten thousand city-states and petty kingdoms have resisted the Realm's rule. More information on Great Forks is contained in Part Three.

Spirits abound across Creation. The base and physical elementals, who arise from firmament and natural processes, toil to keep Creation's elemental cycles in balance. The souls of those who can't let go linger on as ghosts, taking material form in shadowlands that lead to a sunless Underworld. Demons, locked away in Hell at history's dawn along with the gods' vanquished enemies,



slip back into the world to conduct their mischief — or are summoned and bound to servile duty by the sorcerers of the Exalted. The rarefied gods oversee the purviews assigned to them by post in Heaven's Celestial Bureaucracy, the privileged in Heaven, the humble within Creation.

Of these spirits, it is the gods that empower Exigents. They may petition the Unconquered Sun for the burning spark of Exigency, a numinous catalyst by which they might make their Chosen — those he finds honest and righteous, he answers. Some unrighteous gods have tricked the Most High into receiving the Exigence; others have stolen it from worthy peers to create *illicit Exigents*. Gods seek Chosen for any number of reasons: to glorify themselves, to find assistance in fulfilling their duties, to protect beloved mortals, to see their purviews rise, and more. Most Exigents are singular, but some small groups of them exist.

Exalting a champion always diminishes the god, risking their annihilation regardless of their puissance. Some gods seek to share this burden, cooperating with gods of similar purviews; those without overlap create *patchwork Exigents* tormented by their own Essence. Most Exigents

possess might on par with that of a Dragon-Blood, but a rare few possess might that far exceeds that — the outcome is entirely unpredictable.

Every Exigent is unique; should two harvest gods empower champions, they would be utterly unlike. Their powers are more specific and limited than those of other Exalts, informed by their patron, circumstances of Exaltation, and personality.

Though still few in number, the Exigents have ever left their marks on Creation and can be found across its breadth. For centuries, a lineage of scholar heroes called Torchbearers have spread light and knowledge across the world, patrons to the scattered Sadghu people. In the eerie Northwest, the patchwork Sovereigns of Uluiru intrigue for the throne of a kingdom mantled in aurora and gemstones. Essential Silence, the enigmatic chosen of mysteries unveiled, leaves grand conspiracies and strange phenomena both unraveled in his wake. All Exigents change and have changed the world in their own idiosyncratic way, dramatically impacting lives and birthing legends of their deeds, be they saviors, conquerors, savants, or tyrants.

As one of the Exalted, what legends will they tell of your deeds?

Basics of Play

To play **Exalted** you'll need this book or the **Exalted Third Edition** main rulebook, paper and pencils, 10-sided dice (10 to 15 dice would be best), and friends.

In this scenario, each player selects from one of four pre-generated Exigent Ready-Made Characters, presented beginning on p. 36. Their names are: Strawmaiden Janest; Clear-Eyes Lai, the Sovereign of Uluiru; Pakpao the Puppeteer; and White Rose, the Architect of Kleithe. Players with a passion for game mechanics may want to finish reading Part One of **The Three Banners Festival** before selecting a character, in order to get a sense of what the traits and dots on each character's sheet mean; other players may wish to choose a sample character they like first and learn the rules through play.

One player, however, does not play a single character. They take the role of the Storyteller, whose job it is to be familiar with the entire scenario, describe the setting, adjudicate the rules and game mechanics, and describe the actions of Storyteller characters. The Storyteller should read this whole booklet. **Only the Storyteller should read Part Two.**

The Three Banners Festival plays best with three to five players — one Storyteller, and between two to four Exigents.

Traits on the Character Sheet

Characters in **Exalted** are mechanically described by traits, most of which have an associated dot rating. See Part Three for four sample characters and their sheets.

The nine *Attributes* at the top of the character sheet describe a character's most basic characteristics — how strong or dexterous she is, her charisma, and her intelligence.

The *Abilities* running down the sheet's left side describe the skills she's learned. Most actions a character takes are resolved by taking an Attribute and an Ability, combining their total number of dots into a dice pool, and rolling that many dice. See "Dice and Actions" below for more details.

Merits are a catch-all trait category for unusual or singular character traits, or for traits external to the character herself — wealth and political power are Merits, for example. Merits are not covered in this scenario; you'll need to read **Exalted Third Edition** for details.

WHAT'S ALL THIS, THEN

Part One of **The Three Banners Festival** first covers **Exalted Third Edition's** basic rules for resolving actions. It then explains the basics of combat, including the rules for stealth in combat, by which the actions of large numbers of similar opponents are resolved together. Next comes social influence, by which Exalted characters make friends and influence people. After that come rules for recovery from injury and exertion. Finally, it explains the rules for the magic by which the Exalted make their mark on Creation.

The main rulebook covers these topics in more depth and many other topics besides, but even for groups not using the scenario in **The Three Banners Festival Part Two** or the characters in **Part Three**, a player who's read Part One should understand the game and be set to play.

Willpower is the measure of a character's mental tenacity and force of will. It has both a permanent rating in dots and a temporary rating in points, marked in the boxes below those dots. Players spend Willpower points to do things.

Essence represents a character's raw magical potency and, below it, her personal and peripheral mote pools are how much magical power she can muster before she exhausts her inner wells of mystical strength. Committed motes are any she has dedicated to active powers.

Limit Break and *Limit Trigger* represent the curse twisting at the souls of the Exalted, levied when they slew the enemies of the gods. Experience is what players use to advance their characters. Limit is dealt with only loosely in this Jumpstart.

The space for weapons, below that, provides a spot to record values associated with any weapons characters carry.

Under *Health & Defense* are a variety of static values derived from a character's other traits, as well as soak, which is resistance to injury. See "Static Values" below for details. Health Levels represent injuries a character takes. Intimacies represent what the character believes and cares about. They're used in social interaction.

Finally, *Charms* are the supernatural powers of the Exalted. Fueled by Essence, Charms represent Exalts' capacity to perform near-divine feats of heroism.

Keeping Time

Exalted Third Edition uses five measurements to describe the division of time within the game. From largest to smallest, they're as follows.

A *chronicle* is an extended game focusing on a single group of characters, like a series of books or multi-season TV show.

A *story* is a discrete narrative within a chronicle, usually focusing on a connected series of events. It's one phase within a larger narrative — a single book or movie, or a single plot arc within a comic or TV series. **The Three Banners Festival** provides enough material for one (short) story's worth of play.

A *session* is a single period of gaming — one evening, or maybe one day during an extended weekend of play.

A *scene* is a portion of play that takes place within a particular location and period of time. Usually, any given sequence of immediately connected events makes up one scene.

A *round* is an abstract time measurement most often used during combat, in which everyone present gets to act once. Rounds are usually about three seconds. The point during a round when a character takes action is called that character's *turn*.

Finally, there's *downtime*, which is time between scenes and stories when things are happening off camera or out of the spotlight. Three months of travel could be downtime, as could the waiting period between an afternoon of planning and a heist beginning at midnight. During downtime, players may wish to describe brief vignettes about what their characters are doing, but downtime ends, and a scene begins when characters' actions come into focus.

Dice and Actions

Players determine the success and failure of many of their characters' actions in **Exalted** through rolling dice. The player chooses what she wants her character to do, the Storyteller selects an Attribute and an Ability appropriate to that action, and the player adds her character's dots in those traits together to get a dice pool and rolls that many 10-sided dice. Sometimes, powers or circumstances provide bonuses or penalties to those dice pools.

When rolled, each die that shows 7 or higher (0 counts as 10 when using 10-sided dice marked 0-9) is called

a success. A roll with no or insufficient successes is a failure. A roll with no successes in which one or more dice show a result of 1 is a *botch* — a disastrous failure that complicates the story (If the character is trying to pick a lock, perhaps the lockpick breaks and jams it). The Storyteller should describe a botch that makes sense given the action, dramatically escalates the situation, and isn't too punitive.

Every action has a *difficulty* — how many successes the player needs to roll to succeed. Difficulties normally range from 1 to 5, but modifiers can push them above 5 or down to 0. (Difficulty 0 rolls are unusual. They still require at least one success but cannot be botched.) Successes in excess of the difficulty are called threshold successes, so three successes on a difficulty 2 roll provides one threshold success.

For most rolls, a die showing 10 counts as two successes — this is called the *double 10s* rule. Some powers or Charms expand the range of numbers that count double, so a roll under the effect of *double 9s* counts both 9 and 10 as two successes. A very few rolls don't benefit from the double 10s rule; these exceptions are called out explicitly in the text when they apply.

Other circumstances may alter the way the dice work, usually in self-explanatory ways — for example, a power might say "Re-roll 6s until 6s fail to appear," or "Re-roll 9s until 9s fail to appear, keeping any extra successes gained along the way." Again, these are called out explicitly in the text when they apply.

Finally, players may spend a Willpower point to gain one automatic success on a roll, above and beyond any shown by the dice. This can only be done once per roll and must be declared before rolling.

Static Values

When one character takes a rolled action against another (for example, attacking), one of the target's static values may serve as the difficulty of the roll. **Exalted Third Edition's** static values are *Parry* (used to block incoming attacks), *Evasion* (used to dodge them), *Defense* (the actual value used to defend against incoming attacks, usually the higher of Parry or Evasion), *Resolve* (used to resist attempts to sway characters' thoughts or feelings), and *Guile* (used to hide characters' motives). Just as players can spend a Willpower point to enhance a roll, they can spend one to enhance a static value by one.

Soak and Hardness (other defensive stats explained later in Part One) do not count as static values.

DIFFICULTIES

Difficulty 1 actions are run of the mill by the standards of puissant heroes. Examples: Picking a lock or removing a patient's appendix, assuming sufficient illumination and materials and no hurry.

Difficulty 2 is harder. Examples: One of the above actions performed in the dark and in the midst of a storm.

Difficulty 3 actions daunt even heroes. Examples: Plucking a gem from a nest of writhing serpents without being bitten, breaking a monstrous man-eating horse so it accepts the character as its rider.

Difficulty 4 is harder than that. Examples: Snatching the gem while the temple collapses around you, breaking the horse in the midst of a forest fire.

Difficulty 5 is nearly impossible for mortals. Examples: Reading a letter by feeling the texture of the ink on the page, running without food or sleep for three consecutive days.

Bonuses and Penalties

Modifiers — bonuses or penalties — apply to certain dice pools, adding or subtracting dice.

Situational penalties are modifiers applied to rolls where the difficulty is already set. For example, when one character attacks another, the attacker's difficulty is set by the target's Defense, so further hindrance applies as a penalty to the attack pool. They also apply to rolls with no difficulty, like opposed actions (see "Extended and Opposed Actions," below). *Equipment modifiers* apply when equipment aids or hinders an action, and *Charm modifiers* apply when magic modifies it (see "Magic of the Chosen," p. 19).

While equipment and Charm modifiers are generally preset by the quality of equipment or the rules for whichever magic applies, situational penalties span the same 1-5 scale as difficulty, arbitrated by the Storyteller. Remember, apply situational penalties only to rolls with pre-fixed difficulties.

A situational penalty applied to a static value reduces that value by the penalty. Penalties cannot reduce a dice pool or a static value below 0.

Stunts

Nobody wants a fight scene that plays out as "I attack with my sword" on repeat. Stunts reward players who describe their characters' actions in exciting terms: "With a two-handed grip, I thrust my spear's point into a gap in the rebel's armor." To qualify as a stunt, an action must fulfill two conditions; it must be cooler than a basic declaration of intent, and it must be punchy and cool. The Storyteller decides what counts as a stunt and what doesn't.

One-point stunts provide two extra dice to any action they enhance. If they're used to describe the application of a static value ("I twist out of the way; her spear's point glances across my breastplate"), they raise that static value by one.

Two-point stunts grant two extra dice and one automatic success to whatever action they enhance, or raise a static value by two; also, when a player describes a two-point stunt, her character regains a point of Willpower, up to the maximum of her Willpower dots. A two-point stunt must stand out above a one-point stunt and is probably one of the highlights of the scene.

Three-point stunts grant two extra dice and two automatic successes or raise a static value by three. They award two points of Willpower, which can go above the character's Willpower dots. A three-point stunt needs to stand out as one of the highlights of the evening — it's rare to see more than one per session.

One-point stunts are not meant to be difficult; any description cooler than a basic declaration of intent is a one-point stunt, and players should be able to use them on essentially every action. Likewise, Storytellers should try to award at least one two-point stunt per scene, and one three-point per session.

Finally, stunts provide some protection for characters who take risky actions. Storytellers should provide a player who *fails* a dangerous stunt a way to avoid grievous consequences — having failed a leap, she catches the edge of the cliff; having caught her clothing on fire, she rolls to extinguish herself and springs back to her feet.

Extended Actions and Opposed Actions

Extended actions are for when it's important to know how long an action takes. It's just like a normal action, except with multiple rolls. Generally, the character needs some total number of successes (the *goal number*), and

the Storyteller should decide how much time each roll represents (the *interval*).

Each time the player rolls during an extended action, count the successes that meet or exceed the roll's difficulty and add them to a running tally — when this reaches the goal number, the character has succeeded. (So, if the difficulty is 2 and the player rolls 3 successes, add 2 to the tally, because the second success met the difficulty and the third exceeded it.) If the player fails a roll, she accumulates no successes that interval; if she botches, the attempt is ruined, and her character must start again from scratch.

Some extended actions have a *terminus*, which is the number of rolls allowed. If the player doesn't reach the goal number before the terminus, the extended action fails.

Use opposed actions when two characters compete directly. Opposed actions have no difficulty; both players roll their characters' dice pools, and whoever rolls more successes wins. Ties go to whoever has the better stunt.

Reflexive Actions

Most of the time, you can only take one action in a round, on your turn, but some actions happen automatically or by reflex. Characters can take *reflexive actions* whenever appropriate — for example, the Storyteller should allow a reflexive (Perception + Awareness) roll to spot a stalker. Certain Charms or powers grant reflexive actions, and normal movement is usually a reflexive action.

Combat

Exalted Third Edition's combat rules emphasize the tension of rising and falling action via the tracking of two important traits — *Initiative* and *Health*.

Order of Actions

At the start of a fight, every participant's player makes a *Join Battle* roll. A character's Join Battle pool is Wits + Awareness; everyone rolling Join Battle at the beginning of the fight **adds three successes to this roll**. The result of this roll is your starting Initiative, which dictates who goes first. During each round, every character takes a turn in order from highest Initiative to lowest. Each Initiative number is called a *tick*, so if your starting initiative is 6, you act on tick 6 of the round. Characters with identical initiative act on the same tick and their actions normally resolve simultaneously. If it becomes necessary to decide which action to declare or resolve first, players

RANGED ATTACKS

Ranged attacks get their accuracy bonus to their Dexterity + [Archery or Thrown] roll based on what range they're made for, not from the quality of the weapon. See "Movement and Ranges During Combat," below, for range explanations.

None of the sample characters use Archery. For Thrown weapons, the range modifiers are +4 at Close, +3 at Short, +2 at Medium, -1 at long, and -3 at Extreme.

Ranged withering attack options in Part Three don't take these into account — if you're playing a character who throws knives and makes an attack at Short range, you'll need to remember to add +4 dice to your withering attack pools. Ranged weapons also have limits beyond which they can't attack; see "Equipment," p. 14.

can discuss which order of events makes the most sense; in a dispute, flip a coin.

If you want to act on a lower tick than your Initiative, you can *delay*; delaying costs 2 Initiative but allows you to act on any later tick that round (yes, even just one tick later).

Aside from dictating who acts when, Initiative is a resource carried from round to round and will raise and lower depending on the actions characters take, so keep this in mind: Characters get *one turn per round*. If you start a round with 6 Initiative, take your turn, and then on tick 4 another character takes an action that knocks your Initiative down to 3, you don't get another turn right away — you'll have to wait until tick 3 of the *next* round.

On the other hand, if you haven't taken your turn yet in a round, and on (for example) tick 4, some effect increases your Initiative *above* 4, you get your turn *on the next tick* — you don't have to wait until your new, higher Initiative number comes up next round.

Making Attacks

The most common action during combat is an attack. Different avenues of attack use different Abilities— Archery to attack with a bow, Brawl to scrap, Melee to attack with a sword or a club, Thrown to attack with thrown weapons, or a Martial Arts skill to attack with one of Creation's esoteric combat disciplines. But ultimately **Exalted Third Edition** uses two types of attack to measure the rising and climactic action of a fight: **withering**

attacks and **decisive** attacks. **Withering** attacks seize the flow of battle, stealing a foe's Initiative and adding it to one's own. **Decisive** attacks leverage that advantage to do real damage to opponents' Health.

Barring Charms that specify otherwise, the dice pool for an attack is always Dexterity + [Archery, Brawl, Martial Arts, Melee, or Thrown]. **Withering** attacks add an accuracy bonus to this roll based on the sort of weapon used (unless they're ranged; see sidebar). **Decisive** attacks do not—they use only Dexterity + [Ability]. The character sheets in Part Three have precalculated **withering** and **decisive** dice pools for each character's various weapons and unarmed attacks.

The difficulty of an attack roll is the target's Defense — that is, whichever of Parry or Evasion he wishes to apply (usually the higher). Every time a character is attacked, he accrues a -1 *onslaught penalty* to his Defense, which lasts until his next turn. The onslaught penalty applies whether the attack hits or misses.

LANDING A WITHERING ATTACK

When a **withering** attack succeeds, it's time to figure out the attack's *raw damage*. Raw damage is the attacker's Strength plus the damage rating of their weapon (listed on the character sheet) plus the threshold successes on the attack roll — if an attacker rolls five successes against a target with Defense 3, she adds 2 to her weapon's damage trait to determine the attack's raw damage.

Then figure out the damage pool: how many dice of damage the attacker will roll. The damage pool is the attack's raw damage, minus the target's *total soak* (also listed on the character sheet). Charms can reflexively raise soak, but they cannot reduce the damage pool below the weapon's Overwhelming value, which is usually 1. (But see the Balanced tag under "Equipment" for an exception.)

Finally, roll the damage pool. The attacker gains one point of Initiative for landing a successful **withering** attack. Then, subtract the successes on the damage roll from the target's Initiative and add it to the attacker's Initiative.

EFFECTS OF INITIATIVE DAMAGE

A character knocked to Initiative 0 or lower enters *Initiative Crash*, a terrible state in which he's completely lost control of the fight. He has Hardness 0 (see "Landing a **Decisive** Attack," right), cannot make **decisive** attacks of his own anymore, and cannot use Charms with the Perilous keyword (see "Magic of the Chosen" for what that means). A character who enters Initiative Crash on his own (by taking an action that costs Initiative) immediately loses another 5 Initiative.

I WITHER MY FRIEND FOR EXTRA INITIATIVE!

Nope. Every attack, whether withering or decisive, represents a character's attempt to land a meaningful blow; you can't gain advantage by attacking allies. Storytellers can and should say no to attempts to game the system like this.

Then I Wither This Helpless Foe!

Nope again. If an enemy has no way of winning and is only alive for players to farm Initiative, the Storyteller can just declare him defeated. Same applies to attacks against helpless bystanders — withering attacks do damage to their Health and yield no initiative at all.

A character in Initiative Crash can recover by either raising his Initiative above 0 by making **withering** attacks or surviving three consecutive turns. If he does, his Initiative is set to 3 — this is called *resetting to base Initiative*.

An attacker who knocks a target into Initiative Crash gains an *Initiative Break* bonus. She immediately gains +5 Initiative. However, you don't gain this bonus if you knock a character into Initiative Crash during the round he's recovering from one, or the round after that. When a character enters Initiative Crash due to his own actions, the Storyteller should award the Initiative Break bonus to whichever character she judges most provoked whatever action caused the Crash.

If a character is Crashed, and then Crashes the foe that Crashed her, she enters *Initiative Shift*. She immediately resets to base Initiative (unless this would lower her Initiative), and then rolls Join Battle, adding the successes to her Initiative. Her turn is then refreshed—she can take an action, immediately. However, if she chooses to attack, she must attack the foe she just Crashed.

LANDING A DECISIVE ATTACK

When a character makes a **decisive** attack, the outcome depends on whether it succeeds or not.

If a **decisive** attack fails — that is, if the successes on the attack roll are less than the target's Defense — the attacker loses 2 Initiative if she had Initiative between 1-10. If she had Initiative of 11 or greater, she loses 3 Initiative.

If a **decisive** attack succeeds but the target has *Hardness* (marked on the character sheet) equal to or greater

than the attacker's total damage dice (that is to say, total Initiative plus magic that adds dice of damage), the target suffers no damage. Certain characters can reflexively raise their Hardness, causing **decisive** attacks to fail. If the attacker's Initiative is greater than the target's Hardness, roll the attacker's full Initiative as a dice pool. **The double 10s rule does not apply to this roll.** The target takes Health damage equal to the successes on this roll.

Finally, after a character lands a successful **decisive** attack (whether or not it actually inflicts damage), reset the attacker's Initiative to 3.

EFFECTS OF HEALTH DAMAGE

Exalted Third Edition applies three types of damage to characters' Health Levels: bashing, lethal, and aggravated.

Bashing damage represents blunt trauma; unarmed strikes inflict bashing damage, as do blows with blunt weapons such as staffs, hammers, and clubs. Mark a level of bashing damage with a slash across the target's leftmost unfilled Health box. Once the character's Incapacitated Health box is filled with bashing damage (that's the box marked INC), that character is unconscious. Further bashing damage "wraps around" and begins inflicting lethal damage.

Lethal damage represents cutting, tearing, or piercing damage to the target. Mark a level of lethal damage with an X across the target's leftmost available Health box — this "pushes" bashing damage to the right. If a character's Incapacitated Health box is filled with lethal damage, that character is either dead or dying at Storyteller discretion (see "Recovering Health and Willpower").

Aggravated damage is the result of magic that leaves grievous wounds unaffected by normal healing. It's marked with an asterisk — that is, an X in the Health box, plus a vertical line through it. It pushes both bashing and lethal damage to the right. (Nothing within **The Three Banners Festival** inflicts aggravated damage.)

Every Health box has an associated *wound penalty* — either -0, -1, -2, or -4. Characters suffer the wound penalty associated with their rightmost damaged Health box. They subtract that wound penalty from all rolled actions and all static values except soak and Hardness. It does not affect damage rolls or other Initiative rolls.

CLASH! (SIMULTANEOUS OPPOSED ATTACKS)

Two characters who attack each other on the same tick perform a *clash attack*. This is an opposed attack roll that *bypasses Defense* — whoever rolls more attack successes lands her attack.

A successful **withering** clash attack adds the threshold by which the winning fighter beat her opponent's roll to its raw damage and adds three extra levels of Initiative damage after the damage roll. A successful **decisive** clash attack adds one automatic level of Health damage. The loser of the clash attack suffers a -2 penalty to his Defense until his next turn.

Characters can clash a withering attack with a decisive attack or vice versa.

Movement and Ranges

DURING COMBAT

Exalted Third Edition uses abstract movement — at any point, a given character is within one of *five range bands* in relation to any other character:

Two characters at *close range* are close enough to fight with sword, spear, or fist. They're not necessarily within arm's reach of each other at all times, but they can close distance trivially. Any character within close range of an opponent is embattled and must use a disengage action if he wishes to move away (see "Movement Actions," below).

Two characters at *short range* are outside the range of hand-to-hand attacks, but close enough to reach that range with a quick sprint.

Two characters at *medium range* are a fair distance away — far enough apart they need to shout to communicate. Characters need to take aim actions (see "Other Combat Actions," below) to attack each other with ranged weapons at this range or greater.

Two characters at *long range* are very far apart — too far apart to clearly hear each other even when shouting, necessitating signaling devices or enthusiastic pantomime to communicate. They need powerful ranged attacks to attack each other.

Two characters at *extreme range* are usually effectively in different scenes; they're tiny specks to each other. Communication and combat are effectively impossible. All range bands beyond long are considered extreme range, and it's possible for two characters to be multiple extreme range bands away from each other (though groups rarely need to track this).

While **Exalted** eschews grid-based maps, it's still good to have a rough idea of where all the characters are. A character who moves away from one foe also moves in relation to everyone else on the battlefield, and it's up to the ST to sensibly arbitrate the results.

MOVEMENT ACTIONS

- The basic *move* action is just moving one range band toward or away from any other character or landmark on the battlefield. It can be taken on the character's turn, once, as a reflexive action (see "Reflexive Actions," p. 10). All the other sorts of move actions, below, are combat actions; that is, they consume the character's action for a turn and, to be performed along with an attack or other sort of action, must be placed in a flurry (see "Other Combat Actions," below).

- *Rush* must be directed at an opponent within short range. A rush is a contested Dexterity + Athletics roll between character and foe. If the character succeeds, then the next time the opponent moves away, the character moves one range band toward him, keeping pace. This movement is reflexive and can occur outside the rushing character's turn.

- *Disengage* is an action characters must take if they wish to retreat when embattled — that is, a character at close range cannot use the basic reflexive move to escape an enemy. Disengage is an opposed Dexterity + Dodge roll against the Dexterity + Athletics of all close opponents who want to contest the escape; a character who takes this action immediately loses 2 Initiative. If the character defeats all his opponents on the opposed roll, he moves out to short range; also, if one of the disengaged opponents moves toward him on her next turn, he immediately and reflexively moves one range band away from her, even outside his turn. If a character fails the opposed roll, he can't find a safe opening and doesn't move.

- Characters knocked to the ground by certain attacks can *rise from prone*, which is usually automatically successful. If a foe is within close range, however, rising requires success on a difficulty 2 Dexterity + Dodge roll. A prone character suffers -1 to Parry, -2 to Evasion, -3 to his attacks, and cannot take movement actions except to rise from prone. He automatically fails all attempts to resist rush and disengage actions

- *Taking cover* puts something between a character and her attackers. It requires a Dexterity + Dodge roll at a difficulty set by the ST based on how difficult nearby cover is to find and reach. Light cover protects a significant portion of a character's body (leaning into a doorway, standing behind a waist-high wall) and raises Defense by 1. Heavy cover conceals most of the character (leaving, at most,

part of the head and a shoulder and arm exposed) and raises Defense by 2. Full cover protects the entire character and makes incoming attacks impossible. Remember that cover is situational and subject to common sense, so taking cover against attacks from one direction doesn't help against attacks from the other side, and characters in cover can only move without leaving it if the cover itself allows (consider the difference between a tree and a long, waist-high fence). Also, two characters exchanging close-range attacks both benefit from cover equally — if you take light cover behind that fence from an enemy swordsman while continuing to exchange blows with him, he likewise gains light cover against you.

- *Withdrawing* is how characters escape from a fight entirely. It's an extended (Dexterity + Athletics) roll, difficulty 1, goal number 10, interval one round, and may only be attempted while at medium range or longer from all opponents; a character who takes a withdraw action loses 10 Initiative per round. Withdrawing moves the character one range band away from all enemies, and a character who reaches extreme range and succeeds at the extended roll successfully escapes the battlefield, evading immediate pursuit.

Difficult terrain modifies movement actions. It can model almost anything: swamp, thick snow, a deadfall- or underbrush-strewn forest, a panicked crowd, or even the interior walls of a building. In difficult terrain, characters need to take two actions to move a single range band. Attempts to rush, disengage, or withdraw across difficult terrain suffer a -3 penalty, but difficult terrain often makes taking cover easy.

Other Combat Actions

Aside from attacking and moving, Exalted characters have a variety of other options for acting in combat.

- A *flurry* is when a character needs to act twice during a single turn. The rules for flurries are simple: Each action, if rolled, suffers a -3 penalty to its dice pool, and a flurrying character takes a -1 penalty to his Defense until his next turn. Two of the same type of action cannot be placed in a flurry; you can't attack twice, not even with two different weapons or two different attack types.

- A character who *aims* spends a turn preparing an attack against a chosen target. If she attacks that target on her next turn, she gains a +3 bonus to her attack pool. Ranged attacks from medium

range or longer require a turn of aiming to make *at all*, and a player who wants the +3 bonus on such an attack must spend two turns aiming to get it. The aim action cannot be placed in a flurry.

- *Defend other* is the action of shielding an ally within close range. Performing this action, you may apply your Parry against any attacks targeting your ward until your next turn. If the attacker succeeds on his roll, he must choose between damaging you or applying his attack's threshold successes against his initial target's Defense. If he chooses to strike his original target with a decisive attack, he loses one Initiative die from his damage roll for each two points of your Parry.
- *Draw/ready weapon* represents unsheathing a close-range weapon or readying a long-range one. It inflicts -1 Defense until the character's next turn and is used for drawing a weapon after being subjected to an attack unexpectedly, or for changing weapons mid-combat. Characters who enter combat knowingly are assumed to start with a readied weapon and don't have to take this action.
- *Full defense* represents a character who's dedicated completely to protecting himself. He loses 1 Initiative, but gains +2 Defense until his next turn. A character suffering Initiative Crash can't use full defense, and full defense can only be flurried with social influence (see "Social Influence," p. 15) or miscellaneous actions.
- *Miscellaneous action* is a catch-all term to cover non-combat actions characters might take during combat, such as picking a lock or searching a fallen foe's pockets. The Storyteller decides what is or isn't possible as a miscellaneous action. A character who performs a miscellaneous action suffers -1 Defense until his next turn.

Gambits

Gambits are a sort of **decisive** attack used to represent unusual maneuvers: situational actions that would be unbalanced if characters could attempt them easily, but still important enough to have a place in the rules. To perform a gambit, a player makes a **decisive** attack roll against the opponent's Defense, and then rolls her Initiative at a difficulty depending on the gambit (no double-10s on that Initiative roll). Success inflicts no damage and costs Initiative equal to the gambit's difficulty +1, but it achieves some desired effect. The **Exalted Third Edition** main rulebook has more gambits than presented

here, including the rules for grappling. Whenever a player wants to do something unusual in combat, the ST can declare it a gambit and chose an appropriate difficulty.

- *Disarming* an opponent (difficulty 3) knocks the opponent's weapon away out to short range. Retrieving it normally requires moving to the weapon and using a draw/ready weapon action.
- When *distracting* an opponent (difficulty 3-5), the player chooses a target to distract, an ally (not in Crash) to benefit, and a difficulty for the Initiative roll. That ally gains as much Initiative as the distracting character loses (difficulty +1), but she must use it to attack the target on the ally's next turn or else loses it immediately.

Stealth and Unexpected Attacks

All stealth attempts are opposed rolls, usually Dexterity + Stealth against Perception + Awareness. Penalties can apply to the hiding party's roll (noisy underbrush, bright light, scant cover) or to the seeker (noisy crowd, poor light). A character who's successfully hidden herself can make an unexpected attack, either an ambush or a surprise attack.

- An *ambush* is an attack against a target who not only doesn't see the attacker, but who doesn't even know he's in a fight. It's only possible during the first round of a fight, against an opponent with lower Initiative. An ambush target is considered to have Defense 0 against the incoming attack.
- An *unexpected attack* is an attack against an enemy who knows he's in a fight but doesn't know where his attacker is hiding. The target of an unexpected attack suffers a -2 Defense penalty.

A stealth roll to hide and *reestablish concealment* is a combat action that can't be placed in a flurry, opposed by all enemy combatants. Attempting stealth during combat inflicts a -3 penalty to the roll. A character in stealth cannot rush, and if she wishes to move, she must have someplace to hide in her desired destination and must make a reflexive Dexterity + Stealth roll to stay hidden while moving (again, opposed by all opponents). If there's no cover between her previous and new hiding spots, the penalty to the roll increases to -5.

Equipment

For **The Three Banners Festival**, most of the way equipment works is self-explanatory. The character sheets in Part Two list attack and damage values for weapons, and

soak and Hardness values for armor. Two things need calling out, though: the mobility penalty for armor and tags.

Armor has a *mobility penalty* ranging from -0 to -2. A character wearing armor subtracts that armor's mobility penalty from all nimbleness-based Athletics rolls, as well as any rolls involving chasing, running, or dodging, and any Stealth rolls to move silently. (It's also normally subtracted from Evasion, but the Part Two sample characters' Evasion scores already take their armor into account.)

Tags are keywords used to describe equipment behavior. Descriptions of all the tags used in **The Three Banners Festival** follow.

Balanced: This weapon's Overwhelming value is one greater than normal. The weapons the sample characters start with in **The Three Banners Festival** have base Overwhelming values of 1, so starting weapons with the Balanced tag have a minimum raw withering attack damage of 2.

Bashing: **Decisive** attacks with this weapon inflict bashing damage.

Brawl: This weapon can make close-range attacks using the Brawl Ability.

Chopping: This weapon can make *chopping attacks*. A chopping attack costs the attacker 1 Initiative and inflicts -1 to her Defense until her next turn, but it raises a **withering** attack's raw damage by 3 or allows a **decisive** attack to treat the target's Hardness as two points lower than its true value.

Cutting: This weapon can be thrown to cut ropes, sails, and similar objects.

Lethal: Decisive attacks with this weapon inflict lethal damage, but players can stunt to inflict bashing damage with it instead.

Martial Arts: This weapon can make close-range attacks using a Martial Arts Ability.

Melee: This weapon can make close-range attacks using the Melee Ability.

Natural: This weapon is part of the user's body; it can't be disarmed and never requires a draw/ready weapon action to make ready.

Piercing: This weapon can make *piercing attacks*. A piercing attack is a **withering** attack that costs the attacker 1 Initiative and inflicts -1 to her Defense until her next turn but ignores 4 points of armor soak.

Reaching: This weapon negates the +1 Defense advantage that mounted combatants get against unmounted ones.

Smashing: This weapon can make *smash attacks*. A smashing attack costs the attacker 2 Initiative and inflicts -1 to her Defense until her next turn but, if successful, knocks the target either prone or back one range band, at the attacker's choice, in addition to inflicting damage.

Special: This weapon has some unusual property explained in its description.

Thrown: This weapon can make ranged attacks using the Thrown ability, out to a maximum of the listed range (unless magic extends it).

Two-Handed: This close-range weapon requires a two-handed grip to wield, granting a +2 bonus to Clash attacks but preventing the wielder from performing actions with her other hand.

Social Influence

The Exalted are gifted in all fields of human endeavor. Their Charms represent superhuman puissance with every Ability. Like most people, they spend much more time living than fighting. The social influence rules represent the ways people in Creation gain each other's trust, convince each other of things, and change each other's minds.

Intimacies are the traits key to social influence. An Intimacy is a belief or feeling dear to a character's heart. **Exalted Third Edition** recognizes two types of Intimacy, at three intensities.

Ties are Intimacies that describe attachments to people, organizations, or other concrete entities. They include the object of attachment and an emotional context. For example, The Realm (Hatred), My Spouse (Love), or My Commanding Officer (Grudging Respect). On the other hand, *Principles* are beliefs and abstract ideals, usually written as a statement. "There's nothing worse than a traitor" is a Principle, as is "I believe everyone looks out for herself first."

Minor Intimacies are beliefs or attachments sincerely but not strongly held. They come into play only when the object is directly relevant to the current situation. *Major* Intimacies are both sincere and influential, and come into play even if the subject is only indirectly or tangentially related to the situation at hand. Finally, a *Defining* Intimacy holds sway over every aspect of its adherent's life. A man with My Spouse (Love) at Defining intensity conceptualizes his life in terms of that relationship.



Characters can gain or lose Intimacies in play; the ones written on the character sheet aren't fixed. At the end of a scene, based on what happened during that scene and whether the Storyteller thinks it's appropriate, a player can gain a new Minor Intimacy or strengthen or weaken one of her Intimacies by one step. Losing or weakening Intimacies usually takes longer than gaining them, and should generally take multiple scenes of applicable roleplaying.

The method by which players have the greatest influence on the Intimacies of other characters is social influence. Social influence is about influencing other characters' emotional lives, as represented by discovering their Intimacies, strengthening or eroding them, inspiring new ones, or persuading them to act based on the Intimacies they hold.

TAKING SOCIAL ACTIONS

The core of the social influence system is the *influence roll*, by which a player rolls a social action against a target's Resolve (or, more rarely, Guile). The social influence system doesn't have special timing like Initiative or turns. When the group reaches a point during a scene of roleplaying where it seems as though one character

is exerting influence on another, as determined by the Storyteller, that's when the influence roll happens. A player can explicitly declare an influence roll when she feels her character has made a social play, in which case it's up to the Storyteller to decide if the timing is right.

An influence roll is usually a combination of a social Attribute (Charisma for personal magnetism, Manipulation for emotional appeal, or Appearance for sheer striking presentation) and an appropriate Ability (most often Presence for conversation; Performance for oratory, acting, dance, and so on; and Socialize for etiquette). Players or the Storyteller choose the most appropriate dice pool.

If rolling against a target's Resolve, the target's Intimacies modify the difficulty. Minor Intimacies offer a +2 Resolve bonus against influence rolls that oppose them, but they inflict a -1 Resolve penalty against influence that aligns with them. For Major Intimacies, the modifier is either +3 or -2. For Defining Intimacies, it's either +4 or -3. Influence rolls are modified by only one Intimacy-related bonus and one Intimacy-related penalty at a time — the strongest of each that applies.

Characters with high Appearance find it easier to persuade the weak-willed. A character taking an instill or persuade action (see below) and who has an Appearance greater than the target's Resolve gains bonus dice equal to the difference, so a character with Appearance 5 gains a +2 bonus against a target with Resolve 3.

When an influence roll *targets a group*, it suffers a -3 penalty—it's easier to shrug off an argument not directly addressed to you. The player rolls only once, and the successes are compared against the Resolve of every member of the group. When targeting a large group of background characters, the Storyteller should consider the successes on the roll and the crowd's average Resolve (usually 2 or 3) and likely Intimacies, to decide how many in the crowd are swayed. The Appearance bonus applies against the group's average Resolve as well.

- The *read intentions* action is a roll of (Perception + Socialize) against a target's Guile and represents trying to discern what the target wants or believes. The player can ask the Storyteller to either describe what the target is trying to accomplish with whatever he's doing this scene, or what he cares about or believes in general ("Does he love anyone?"). If the roll succeeds, the Storyteller should answer, either revealing the target's goals or one of his Intimacies. (If he has no Intimacies applicable to the question the player asked, the ST should indicate this.) Success on the read intentions action is limited by the context in which the player observes the target — you can tell if a target is lovestruck by the look of longing in his eyes, but unless the object of his affection (or some evidence of their identity) is around, you won't know by whom. Finally, targets unaware they're being observed suffer a -2 Guile penalty.
- The *instill action* represents attempts to change others' feelings and beliefs. It's used to inspire new Intimacies or alter existing ones. If the belief the character is attempting to instill is particularly implausible or hard to believe, the Storyteller can inflict a situational penalty to the roll, within the usual scale of -1 to -5. A character can always attempt to instill a new Minor Intimacy, but strengthening or eroding existing Intimacies is subject to restriction. Attempts to strengthen a Minor Intimacy to Major or weaken a Major Intimacy to Minor can only succeed if the target already has a different Intimacy at Minor intensity or higher that supports the attempt. Strengthening a Major Intimacy to Defining or weakening a Defining Intimacy to Major requires the support of a different Major Intimacy. Finally,

strengthening an existing Intimacy requires the argument or evidence used be stronger than whatever led the target to the Intimacy at its current strength.

- The *persuade action* represents when one character tries to convince another to do something. The scale of task it can provoke is limited by the Intimacies of the target.

Characters can always attempt to persuade characters to perform trivial tasks that take a scene or less and offer no danger, such as begging a coin from a passing stranger or asking a neighbor to visit for dinner when the neighbor had no plans that night. For things more onerous than this, the influencing character must target one of her target's Intimacies that would support this influence.

An **inconvenient task** poses some potential danger to the subject or might take longer than a scene to carry out. They're the sort of thing you'd only do for a person or cause you care about — and then only if the person asking were genuinely persuasive — but which still resolve quickly and may not carry long-term consequences. "I need you to deliver this parcel to that big house up in Cinnabar District, with the red lion statues by the door. If the doorman has a scorpion tattoo, don't leave it with him; insist to see the master of the house." The target must have at least a Minor Intimacy in support of the action for the persuasion to have any chance of working.

A **serious task** carries risk of extreme harm, impediment, or requires long-term commitment such as joining an organization. Convincing a farmer to join your militia, or an apothecary to provide you with a poison he could be jailed for if it's traced back to him might each count. The target needs a Major Intimacy in support for this to work.

Life-changing tasks can be almost anything. Convince a follower to hold the enemy at bay while you retreat. Convince a wealthy patron to give the majority of his fortune to your cult. The target needs a Defining Intimacy for persuade attempts at life-changing tasks to be applicable at all.

- The *bargain action* functions as persuade, but instead of appealing to Intimacies, involves offering a bribe, gift, or favor to the target equal in value to the task asked for in exchange. The Storyteller should take into account the Intimacies, wealth, and social status of the target in deciding what they will consider sufficient payment. A bribe that would motivate a beggar is likely to insult a prince.

- The *threaten action* is like bargain in reverse. Instead of offering something, it represents threatening harm to the target unless he performs the request; for this to work, the target must be more afraid of what you threaten than the action you're demanding. It can also function as an instill action to inspire or strengthen a Tie of fear or hatred. Using a threaten action almost always inspires a negative Tie in the target and weakens any positive Ties the target has toward the threatening character.

- The *inspire action* incites emotion in others' hearts, and usually involves rolling Performance. The player chooses an emotion her character tries to inspire and, on a successful roll, the target is impassioned by that emotion and inspired to take action appropriate to it. The target's *player* chooses what form that passion takes, and what action follows. Characters needn't drop everything and act immediately, but they're genuinely motivated and will proceed under sincere intentions. For as long as a character is acting on an inflamed passion, it's treated as a Major Intimacy for purposes of other social actions. Unlike other influence rolls, *inspire doesn't suffer a -3 penalty for targeting a group*. Players don't necessarily know the effects of their inspiration on others without a successful read intentions action afterwards.

RESISTING SUCCESSFUL INFLUENCE ACTIONS

Players may spend a Willpower point to resist forming a new Intimacy, even if targeted by a successful instill action. They may likewise spend a Willpower point to resist weakening a Major or Defining Intimacy, or to reject the effects of a successful inspire action.

A character subject to a successful attempt to make him take action — that is, *do something*, rather than just change Intimacies — and who wishes to further resist, enters a state called a *Decision Point*. At the Decision Point, the player must choose an Intimacy and explain how it justifies resisting that influence. Which Intimacy he can use is subject to two restrictions: first, it must be of equal or higher intensity than whatever Intimacy permitted the influence attempt in the first place, and second, it must be a different Intimacy than the one that strengthened his Resolve against that attempt. If it meets both these conditions and the Storyteller agrees it's applicable, the player may spend a Willpower point to resist the influence. Resisting influence is easier if it's opposed by more influence; characters are usually loath to abandon a course of action once they've set themselves upon it.

SOCIAL INFLUENCE IN COMBAT

In combat, social influence actions count as combat actions — that is, they're not reflexive — and can be placed in flurries. A request that the enemy accept your surrender generally counts as a trivial task, but it might be an inconvenient task if the enemy has reason to believe your surrender is a ploy, or even a serious task if they really want you dead.

A character who's been persuaded to do something via influence receives a further +3 bonus to his Resolve against any influence that would cause him to abandon or disregard that persuasion. Furthermore, any petitioner who seeks to overturn the effects of influence on another must spend a Willpower point before making her counterinfluence roll. If contradictory persuasion succeeds and pushes a target into a second Decision Point, the target need not spend a Willpower point to resist the counterinfluence — instead, he must spend it not to resist. This reinforcement lasts for one story.

Unacceptable influence is influence a target can successfully resist automatically at no cost. There are four main types of unacceptable influence. First, any sort of influence described above as inapplicable (e.g. persuade attempts on a target without an Intimacy at sufficient intensity to permit them). Second, any influence that would cause the target's certain demise. Third, any influence that would cause the target to completely abandon or end one of his Defining Intimacies or make fulfilling it impossible. Fourth, any seduction attempt that violates a character's sexual orientation as defined by the player (and see the Red Rule under "Using Social Influence," p. 19).

RETRYING SOCIAL ACTIONS

Once a social action succeeds, has failed, or has been resisted, trying it again gets more difficult. Just how much more difficult depends on what sort of action it was.

To *retry a failed or resisted instill, threaten, or bargain action*, you must escalate your argument — present your target with substantially greater evidence for whatever you're trying to convince him of, or offer a substantially better bargain or greater threat. Alternately, wait until the next story.

To *retry a failed or resisted persuade action*, you must either make a different argument playing to another of the target's Intimacies (of equal or greater strength than one they used to resist), wait until the Intimacy that supported your initial influence roll is strengthened somehow, or wait until the next story.

To *retry a failed read intentions action or a failed or resisted inspire action*, you need to wait until the next scene.

USING THE SOCIAL INFLUENCE SYSTEM

Social influence isn't mind control. It's here to lend weight to the way people relate to each other and represent the charm of great heroes. Groups should take care to interpret its effects as representative of real social dynamics; for example, a Charisma + Presence instill action to instill a Tie of "Me (Loyalty)" may represent less one character's conscious attempt to suborn another and more the process by which the target is, well, inspired to loyalty. This isn't an assertion that all social influence is good or legitimate — it can represent bullying, brainwashing, or just taking advantage of others — merely a reminder that it isn't all evil.

More important than any mechanic is a safety tool called the **Red Rule**: *A player-controlled character can only be seduced or otherwise put in a sexual situation if the player consents.* Otherwise, any such attempt fails automatically. This rule applies per attempt, and consent can be withdrawn at any time. Remember, the Storyteller is a player, so all Storyteller characters count as player-controlled characters. Respect everyone's boundaries.

Recovering Health and Willpower

Characters may lose Health in combat, and players may spend Willpower points to augment rolls or resist social influence. Here's how to recover them.

Health recovers from right to left along the Health Track, with bashing healing first, then lethal, then aggravated. For the Exalted, a -0 health level heals in one hour if bashing, or one day if lethal. A -1 health level takes 12 hours to heal if bashing, or two days if lethal. A -2 health level takes one day if bashing, or three if lethal. A -4 health level takes two days if bashing, or five if lethal. Aggravated heals at the same rate as lethal damage.

Recovery from Incapacitation is up to the Storyteller; if bashing, the Incapacitated health level usually heals at the end of the scene, but it might happen shortly after combat's end but before scene's end if the Storyteller wants the player back in action. Incapacitation via lethal damage is usually fatal, but a character so wounded may linger at death's door long enough for other players to stabilize him with medical treatment, in which case it may take hours, days, or even weeks before the character regains consciousness, depending on what's best for the story and most fun for the players

Willpower recovers in a number of ways. Six to eight hours of rest or sleep recovers one point of Willpower once per

day. Once per scene, a character may gain a Willpower point if she undergoes significant hardship or sacrifice to uphold a Major or Defining Intimacy, which may exceed her Willpower dots. At Storyteller discretion, achieving a major character or story goal may reward between one and three Willpower points, depending on scale and significance, which may likewise exceed a character's Willpower rating. Finally, two- and three-point stunts recover Willpower as described under "Stunts," earlier.

Magic of the Chosen

Essence underlies all of Creation; it's the universal flow of energy that sustains life and existence. The Chosen harness their god-given power, and sometimes also that of puissant Artifacts or the Essence of the world around them. The most common way of expressing this power is through *Charms*, by which the Exalted push their human abilities to superhuman limits.

A single "point" of Essence is called a *mote*, and players spend their characters' motes to empower their actions. Every Exalted character has two mote pools: their *Personal Essence*, which represents their deepest reserves; and their *Peripheral Essence*, which represents the power they can draw most freely from their immediate surroundings. Additionally, the players keep track of *committed motes*, which are motes that power the persistent or ongoing effects of Charms that provide ongoing benefits.

During combat, characters regain five motes at the end of every round, first to the peripheral pool and then to the personal pool once the peripheral pool is full. Outside of combat but during normal activity, they replenish at five per hour.

During sleep or other rest, motes replenish at a rate of 10 per hour. A committed mote cannot replenish until the Charm it powers is no longer in effect. Committed motes count against the total for the mote pool they're spent from. Some Charms cost both Willpower and motes to activate; Willpower is never committed.

THE ANIMA BANNER

As an Exalted hero uses her magics, her might spills forth and becomes visible around her, lighting the world. This is the *anima banner*, which marks her as Chosen by the Gods. Those Exalted who wish to hide from sight or pass for mortal must choose carefully when they express their divine power — and how much of it. *Whenever a character spends five or more motes of Peripheral Essence in an instant, her anima intensifies by one level for every five Peripheral motes spent.*

Every Exigent's anima banner looks different, so the following examples describe the animas of the Ready-Made Characters in Part Three.

The levels of anima are as follows:

Dim anima is invisible. When she's not spending Essence, an Exalt's anima resides at this level.

Glowing anima surrounds an Exigent's body with faint light in colors that reflect her Exaltation and personality, shining through anything placed over it. Attempts at stealth suffer a -3 penalty; other characters add +3 dice to see through her disguise.

A *burning* anima blazes brightly, wisps of power coiling and rising into the air around the Exigent. Stealth becomes impossible, and certain sensory phenomena appropriate to her may manifest, such as the sounds of a city for Architects, or the smell of verdure for Strawmaiden Janest.

When an Exigent's anima is at *bonfire/iconic*, it takes on a grand display of power reaching high into the air and is visible for miles. When it first reaches this level and during particularly dramatic displays of power thereafter, it projects personal iconography appropriate to the Exigent's character and Exaltation — a cobalt miniature aurora for Clear-Eyes Lai the Sovereign, or a purple-and-black spider with silk threads for Pakpao the Puppeteer.

It takes about 15 minutes for bonfire anima to recede to burning, another 15 minutes from burning to glowing, and about a half hour to fade from glowing back to dim.

Charms

Charms represent the Essence-laden power and skill of the Chosen. Each is a discrete block of rules or mechanics representing a specific thing a character can do. Each Charm has a *name*, *prerequisites*, a *type*, and a *duration*. It then has a description that says how much it costs to use and what it does, possibly including keywords (italic, in brackets; see "Charm Keywords," right). A Charm's prerequisites and type are important because they determine what other Charms it can be combined with.

CHARM TYPES

Simple Charms count as combat actions; they can only be used on a character's turn. They can't be placed in flurries.

Supplemental Charms enhance an action. By default, unless their text states otherwise, this Charm *must benefit an action that uses the associated Ability or Attribute*

(so a supplemental Melee Charm can't enhance a Brawl attack, or a Perception Charm an Intelligence roll). Exigent Charms frequently do state otherwise, however: both Strawmaiden Janest and Sovereign Charms exist in Abilities that cross-apply to multiple Abilities. Attribute Charms can stack to enhance attacks together by default, but usually not with powers outside the Charm set. Characters are free to use as many supplemental Charms per round as they have motes for, but they can't enhance one action with the same supplemental Charm multiple times to stack the Charm's effect.

Reflexive Charms create or enhance reflexive actions or enhance non-dice actions. Characters may use any of their reflexive Charms any time it makes sense to do so, and this is a "player-level" choice — you can use a reflexive Awareness Charm to enhance your opposition to a foe's Stealth attempt even if your character wouldn't "know" you're engaged in an opposed Awareness vs. Stealth roll. A character can't enhance something with the same reflexive Charm multiple times to stack the Charm's effect.

Permanent Charms permanently enhance a character's prowess.

CHARM DURATIONS

Charms with an *instant* duration expel their magic immediately. Charms with a *longer duration* require committing their mote costs until it expires; players can end them prematurely by withdrawing the commitment. One-tick Charms last only until the next Initiative tick, while one-turn charms last until the character's next turn, and one-scene Charms last until the end of the scene. Charms with indefinite duration last until commitment is withdrawn. Durations like one day or one story are self-explanatory.

CHARM KEYWORDS

Charm keywords are like weapon tags, briefly noting something about the Charm. Charm keywords applicable in **The Three Banners Festival** are as follows.

Mute: This Charm's cost doesn't add to the Exalt's anima level unless she wants it to.

Stackable: This Charm's effects can stack multiple times.

CHARM LIMITATIONS

Players (including the Storyteller) must openly declare which Charms their characters are using, and all Charms (unless the text indicates otherwise) must be declared and paid for before any dice are rolled.

Many Charms add to dice pools or raise static values, subject to limits. When adding to dice pools, no combination

of Charms can add more dice to a pool than exceeds the relevant *dice cap*. Each Exigent Ready-Made Character has a unique dice cap, explained in Part Three. The exception is rare magic that adds (usually limited numbers of) “non-Charms” dice to certain rolls.

Sometimes, Charms add successes — treat each success as two dice for the purpose of dice-adding limitations. Charms can only raise static values by half the Attribute + Ability total that goes into creating that static value, rounded down. So, a character with Manipulation 3, Socialize 2 could use Charms to raise Guile by no more than 2.

EXCELLENCIES

The most common sort of Charm that Exalts know is called an Excellency. It’s supplemental (or reflexive when used to enhance a static value), with a duration of instant. A character with an Excellency in an Ability or Attribute may spend motes to directly add dice to actions taken with that rating (or static values derived from it), at a rate of one mote per die (or two motes per +1 static value), up to the usual limitation. The Charm sections of the characters in Part Two list which Abilities or Attributes they possess Excellencies for and note which Excellencies can be applied to raise static values.

Sorcery

A sorcerer uses her Essence to bend the fundament of Creation to her will. Beyond supernatural expression of mortal skill, her magic can call up storms, enslave spirits, or kill at a glance. Each expression of sorcery is a spell.

Sorcerers don’t cast spells using their own motes; instead, they draw sorcerous motes from the environment around them using the *shape sorcery* action. It’s an extended Intelligence + Occult roll at difficulty 1 with an interval of one round and a goal number of the spell’s mote cost. It cannot be placed in a flurry. A sorcerer interrupted in the middle of casting can take a few turns to perform other actions before returning to her spell, but she loses three sorcerous motes from her running total at the end of every round in which she hasn’t gathered any. Once the sorcerer gathers enough motes, she releases the spell and invokes its effects.

In addition to motes, spells cost Willpower. The sorcerer pays the spell’s Willpower cost when taking the first shape sorcery action toward its casting. If she successfully casts her spell, she regains one Willpower point. A sorcerer in Initiative Crash does not regain a Willpower upon successful casting, and her spells all cost three more motes to cast.

SHAPING RITUALS

Sorcerers all learn at least one shaping ritual: a ritual action or ceremony they can perform to gather (and often hold) a number of extra sorcerous motes. Sorcerers can call on these “banked” motes only to help pay spells’ mote costs.





Part Two

The Three Banners Festival

The Three Banners Festival centers around a group of Exigents who have arrived in the temple-city of Great Forks. Preparations are underway for the eponymous festival, an annual week-long event of brightly adorned street parades and raucous games in celebration of the anniversary of Great Forks' founding. Each received a letter requesting assistance from Blue Murmur, a lesser but well-connected god of rumors, who offered each Exigent something in return for their help: patronage for Clear-Eyes Lai, favors for Pakpao and White Rose, and a good story for Janest. They arrive together at the arranged meeting place, only to find the god himself has been kidnapped after a violent confrontation. Worse, the player characters find themselves framed for the deed by corrupt law officers.

The Exigents must use their unique skills to track down the true perpetrator of the crime and clear their names. The true perpetrators are the Barrow Hounds, a shrine-gang of criminal gods who have stolen the power of Exigence from Blue Murmur and seek to create their own Chosen to act as their enforcer.

How to Run Exalted

This adventure is intended to serve as an on-ramp to Exalted 3e even if you've never run a roleplaying game before. To that end, here's some general advice for running **The Three Banners Festival** scenario.

The First Session

Before you sit down to play the first session, players should pick their Ready-Made Characters then define what relationships, if any, their characters have with each other. They could have become friends on the way to Great Forks, met within the city, or be meeting for the first time now. Avoid adversarial relationships; the Exigents are meant to work together.

Storytellers should start close to the action and hit the ground running with Scene 1. Ask a player a leading question about what their character has been up to today and use that to establish everyone's moods going into the scene.

Great Forks is a city of contrasts, a beautiful and holy place yet full of crime and iniquity, and that should inform how Storytellers set the scene; parts of this scenario are intended to evoke crime fiction, so watching a noir film or reading a Raymond Chandler novel in advance might be helpful.

Riding The Wave

It's *impossible* to truly railroad or predict Exalted player characters. Exalted magic grants players more control over the narrative than in other games; they're often strong enough to simply fight their way through any problems they face, and charismatic enough to bend others to their goals. This means it's more productive to focus on the consequences of players' actions and remember to have them come up later in the adventure, rather than say "no." The nature of these consequences should be congruent with the scenario's tone and themes; Storytellers should note down specific things they want to have come up again later. For example, sparing the life of an enemy could either help or hinder players later, depending on if a Storyteller wished to emphasize the grace of compassion or man's self-serving nature.

Storytellers should prompt inactive or lost players, so they're included, and focus on providing opportunities to act for each character that highlight their powers, personality, and character arc. Don't be afraid to directly propose actions that'll make someone feel cool; do that, and the story will almost tell itself.

When to End a Scene

Ending a scene at the right time is the difference between a tolerable session and a good one. Look for a moment that feels good to stop on, but that doesn't kill momentum; you always want players to end excited for more. Stopping after an event that answers a big dramatic question or poses a new one is a good way to do this — critical information is revealed, something dramatic is about to happen, or it just did, and the player characters have yet to react.

ON LENGTH AND PACING

The Three Banners Festival is intended to last between two and five sessions, though it can be done in one if players hustle. Options for playing beyond its scope are presented at the end of this chapter. There are multiple combat encounters in the adventure, so try to structure things so that the Exigents are able to rest if a strenuous battle wounded them or took up much of their Essence, and likewise so that players can relax without being worn out by too much back-to-back action. Make liberal use of the optional encounters at the end of Chapter 2 if you're not sure how to do this: enjoying a meal with Janest's friends, petitioning Pakpao's husband for help, or attending a festival party with Lai's rival are good ways to give players time to roleplay and characters time to rest.

Part 3 contains multiple Ready-Made Character sheets for Storytellers to use, but names more characters than there are sheets. For some of these characters, sample Intimacies and base Resolve are provided for ease of use. Storytellers are encouraged where relevant to assign them a Guile rating anywhere between 1-3.

A Guide to Great Forks

This section contains historical and geographical details about Great Forks to give you a better idea of how its society works and help you portray it during the events of the story. The Golden Rule of **Exalted** says that if a rule is getting in the way of you having fun, you should throw it out. This applies to the setting as well. Never hesitate to change things if you think it will make your game more fun; you know your table better than we can.

THE CITY IN BRIEF

At the confluence of two of the mighty rivers of the Scavenger Lands in Creation's East lies Great Forks, also known as Decadence. Here is a holy city, teeming with gods great and small, elevated by prayer and blessings, made prosperous by trade and tribute. Here too is a corrupt city, where priests grow fat on the offerings of starving pilgrims, and gods vie against one another in grasping

power games to reach the city's gleaming peaks, ousting their peers from temples built on the labor of countless slaves. The streets ring with festival bells and the moans of the downtrodden.

Great Forks is not only a city of gods, but of their champions. More Exigents, the Chosen of the lesser gods, can be found here than anywhere else in Creation. Patrons seek champions here, and divine smugglers barter and vie for the miracle of Exaltation in the city's shadowed corners. As like attracts like, Great Forks is a common destination for Exigent travelers, beckoned by their patrons or simply curious to meet their peers.

HISTORY

Great Forks was founded in RY 278 — 490 years ago — in a region of the East of Creation called the Scavenger Lands. Three migrating peoples met here, each led by a mighty god. The Mileti fled the collapse of their homelands in Laris and Velen. The Houtholan sought refuge from the plagues that ravaged their nomadic river ranges. The Veh were displaced by religious persecution by the Empire of Prasad far to the southeast.

Settling together at the confluence of the Yellow and Rolling Rivers, these peoples and their gods negotiated peace and founded a new nation. The Mileti were led by **Shield of a Different Day**, whose features slip from memory, goddess of defensive warfare, deception, and forgetfulness. The Houtholan were led by itinerant **Spinner of Glorious Tales**, the once-mortal god of storytellers and travelers. The Veh were led by **Weaver of Dreams of Victory**, the goddess of dreams, war, and looms who appears as a shimmering waterfall of shapes.

Their settlement grew over time into the city of Great Forks. Together, Dayshield, Talespinner, and Dreamweaver proclaimed that the city should welcome any spirits who would abide by their law, and named themselves the *thearchs*, highest among its gods.

DENIZENS

The City of Temples boasts more gods than perhaps any other save the heavenly city of Yu-Shan. Gods are not permitted to rule over mortals directly, as to do so would be an unacceptable violation of heavenly law. However, it is not uncommon for ministerial positions to be filled by priests who ultimately answer to their gods. The *thearchs* themselves claim not to be rulers of the city but exert enormous influence over the civilian government whenever they choose to intervene, and their proclamations are taken as law. On the opposite end of the scale, small gods deemed too insignificant for official worship often band together in illicit shrine-gangs to extort worship from mortals at the fringes of society.

Other magical beings live in the city as well. With many gods and mortals living in proximity, the city has a large population of God-Bloods, mortals of divine parentage. Rarer but still present are elementals, the dead, Fair Folk and other magical beings, some of which have half-mortal offspring of their own.

As well as its Exigents — rare, but still more common than in any other place in Creation — Great Forks also boasts a number of outcaste Dragon-Blooded among its citizens, as well as a bare handful of stranger and rarer Exalts like Liminals. If any of the Solars and Lunar Exalted, considered to be dangerous Anathema, go among the city they do so quietly; to do otherwise would invite the wrath of Lookshy, the Scavenger Lands' hegemons.

SOCIAL CLASSES

The **koruphai** (singular **koruphe**) are the city's elites, each with an annual income of over one silver talent. The highest posts in the civil service and military are limited to koruphai.

The city's middle class are the **mesoi** (singular **mesos**), those whose assets produce at least 100 dinars annually. Most bureaucrats and priests are mesoi, as well as the wealthier merchants.

Citizens too poor to qualify as mesoi are **lakkoi** (singular **lakkos**). They enjoy the legal protections of citizens and are able to enlist in the army and low levels of the civil service.

Beneath the lakkoi are slaves, who comprise about a third of the city population and have only rudimentary legal protections.

CULTURE

Cultural enclaves of the three founding peoples remain after centuries, joined by an endless procession of gods and their followers that make Great Forks singularly cosmopolitan. Its many religions have no central authority, not even the thearchs, but many of its cults are united in the theological framework called the Grand Mythopeia. The Mythopoeia holds all gods as expressions of a single godhead, a numinous being of dream and story; Creation is the story the godhead tells itself. This philosophy greatly values wit and eloquence, promising favorable reincarnation to those that embody these characteristics, perhaps even reincarnation as one of the gods.

Storytelling is therefore highly regarded in Great Forks' culture. Storytelling contests and poetry recitals are popular at gatherings of the wealthy, while the poor enjoy puppet shows and street theater during the city's many festivals.

DISTRICTS

The Hill of Hollyhocks is the highest in the city, and the holiest of the temple districts. The temples of the city's mightiest gods are situated here, including the thearchs, the gods of the Yellow and Rolling Rivers, the prominent rice god Araz Who-Feeds-Us-All, and the corrupt elemental censor Emperor Stag who ignores all divine crimes in exchange for regular festivals.

Holymaze rings the Hill of Hollyhocks and contains most of the city's temples. Gods constantly jockey for better positions in Holymaze's hierarchy, with larger temples going to more favored gods, and unpopular gods being slowly forced out of the district. Holymaze's plazas are some of the few public areas of the city where it is legal for preachers to proselytize to the public.

Colonnade is the seat of government near the Hill of Hollyhocks. It's home to the city's ministries, courts and embassies. Gods can't legally take positions in Great Forks' civil service, but they still exert great influence through appointed priests, worshipers, and God-Blooded ministers. **White Rose** makes their temporary home at the embassy of Kleithe here.

Little Yu-Shan is Great Forks' entertainment district and home to many of its God-Blooded citizens. It contains innumerable theaters, massage parlors, eateries and winehouses, and is also the hub of the city's organized crime. The mystical underside of Little Yu-Shan is the **Heronry**, a network of interconnected godly sanctums accessible through secret paths throughout the district. **Clear-Eyes Lai** rents a room over a popular bordello in Little Yu-Shan.

The Marshes are home to the city's poorest, so named because these districts have been reclaimed from the marshlands near the historical city borders. Oldmarsh was the first settled and comparatively the richest, Newmarsh is home to crowded six-story tenement buildings that house many of the city's workers and slaves, while the destitute dwell in Knotgrass on the other end of the city, poorly reclaimed and prone to flooding and disease. The Marshes are often where gods expelled from Holymaze find themselves, eking out a living of granting small miracles for worship around illicit shrines. **Pakpao** has claimed a crumbling Oldmarsh villa as her lair, while **Janest** lodges with a family of poor pilgrims in Knotgrass.

Other districts include the exclusive gated community of **Wolf's Hill**, the famed academy **Violet Meadow**, the militarized **Kerin's Gate**, the north-facing port district of **Quayside**, the market district of **Beehive**, and the cliffside cemetery district of **the Urns**.

THE THREE BANNERS FESTIVAL

The game takes place during the Three Banners Festival, an annual event that celebrates the founding of Great Forks. The streets are packed with masked pilgrims from across the Triune League, food carts, games, enormous floats, colorful parades and raucous parties (even more than usual for Great Forks). While it is not the central focus of the plot, it serves as a useful framing device; the festival is chaotic and busy, and authorities and other actors will be too occupied to respond to much of what is going on. The Exigents will have more of a free rein to run rampant than they otherwise might have, but this same chaos also allows the Barrow Hounds to enact their plan beneath notice.

NEIGHBORS

The **Triune League** is a group of co-religious polities defined by their proximity to Great Forks, comprising outlying settlements, trade partners, and long-ago military conquests. Notable members include **Fallen Petal**, home to the sacred mercenaries of Sunipa, the Eastern God of War, and **Kleithe**, City of Sacred Geometries, ruled by the philosopher-priests of Nisca, a god of formal logic.

To the west, hundreds of miles down the Yellow River, lies the great mercantile metropolis of **Nexus**, one of the largest, richest, and most cutthroat cities in Creation. Still further west where the Yellow becomes the Yanaze and opens to the Inland Sea, is **Lookshy**, the great military power of the Scavenger Lands, home to powerful families of Dragon-Blooded that trace their ancestry back long before the founding of Great Forks. Nexus, Lookshy, and Great Forks form the backbone of **the Confederation of Rivers**, a loose defensive alliance that secures the region's interests against the mighty Realm and other aggressors.

Chapter 1: An Interrupted Rendezvous

The Opening

Ahead of when they were supposed to meet Blue Murmur, the player characters each receive an urgent letter from his acolyte, the God-Blooded **Amber-Eyed Himiko**, asking for them to meet him early. She implies that his temple is unsafe and provides directions to a run-down,

one-story residence in the Beehive district, made from dilapidated timbers and with a bolted door.

Upon arriving, the player characters find no answer, but the door has been forced open. The house is ransacked and Blue-Murmur nowhere to be found. Characters that case the scene will find claw marks, as though from a giant beast, as well as charred surfaces. Spilled ichor indicates that a god was injured here. Worse yet, a group of Arrows — law-cultists who serve as the city's law enforcement — either finds the group at the scene or approaches them as they are departing. Their leader, **Seven Hawks Pursue the Wicked**, is confrontational and all-too eager to blame the characters for the ransacked house. Protestations of innocence won't help; these corrupt enforcers have been paid off to frame and arrest the characters on trumped-up charges, a motive that can be intuited by reading their intentions (p. 17). However, it is possible that the Exigents can avoid combat by intimidating the Arrows, fleeing the scene, or through some more creative solution.

There is one Arrow for each of the player characters, in addition to Seven Hawks. They are confident in their abilities but woefully unprepared to face down a circle of Exalts. This conflict should provide a helpful introduction to the social system and (most likely) the combat system of Exalted.

If interrogated or otherwise convinced to disclose what they know, Seven Hawks will reveal that he is on the payroll of the Barrow Hounds, a notorious up-and-coming shrine-gang in Great Forks' criminal underworld, and he's far from alone. If players don't think to do this or don't have the opportunity, don't worry; they will have other opportunities to uncover this information. However they dealt with the situation, the Exigents are now wanted by the authorities. They must track down this shrine-gang, find out what happened to Blue Murmur, and clear their names.

BUT JANEST KILLED SEVEN HAWKS...

Don't panic if your players don't ask the right questions or even permanently miss a clue. You can introduce the missed clues in other encounters, like the Arrows in Hundred Whispers offering the information about the Barrow Hounds. If you or the players are stumped on how to proceed, bring in one of the optional encounters at the end of Chapter 2 to push things along by offering players a clue or a hint on where to find one.

Chapter 2: Piecing the Threads Together

Initial Investigation

The scenario splits here, as the characters are unable to return to their normal lodgings. Three key pieces of information are required to reach the end, each contained within three scenes that can play out in any order. **Scene 1** sees the players investigate Blue Murmur's temple, **Scene 2** sees them go to a Barrows Hound establishment, and **Scene 3** sees them speak to Amber-Eyed Himiko.

Directing players to these scenes should be accomplished via integration of their character backgrounds. Although some have only been within Great Forks briefly, each Exigent has allies or friends within the city that can help them progress within the adventure or offer more generally useful information. After each of the above scenes, Storyteller should invoke another background to further direct the players, or, if players get creative, direct them anyway and have the backstory examples come up later anyway.

Here are two examples per Exigent. Storytellers are encouraged to make up their own as they desire:

- A family who Janest assisted in their pilgrimage for the Three Banners Festival recognizes her and offers their cramped lodgings to the group as a place to rest. They'll ask what she's up to; one knows Amber-Eyed Himiko and can point them to her nearby apartment.
- Janest is asked for help by an exhausted laborer in clearing a damaged street of rubble for the festival. After clearing the street, the Strawmaiden finds out that its broken buildings used to belong to a trio of now-spurned goddesses called the Pauperhouse Three.
- Karana offers Pakpao knowledge about Blue Murmur and his divine enemies, if only she'll do him a favor later within the adventure that Pakpao doesn't want to do. This might be blackmailing criminals or spirits into working for her, stealing from Blue Murmur's temple, or something similarly rewarding but morally compromising.
- One of Pakpao's criminal informants directs her to a Barrow Hounds hideout and arranges for her uncontested entry by scheduling her to entertain the criminals with a tavern puppet show.

- A visiting Dragon-Blooded Dynast from the Realm named Cynis Felona passive-aggressively invites Lai to a gala she's throwing. A rival of Lai's after he (correctly) identified one of her dresses as an imitation, Felona has ties to Decadence's criminal underworld; her associates could be convinced to sell out the Barrow Hounds.

- Lai's celebrity even extends into the Arrows, though the law-cultists in question are chagrined by it. One such Arrow waves down Lai in the street with a smile, and rather than arresting the Sovereign, warns him that Blue Murmur's temple is due to be raided and to avoid it.

- The city mother Auspicious Vertex sends a message to White Rose, requesting compromising gossip about city officials or high-ranking spirits. In return, she tells her Architect that Blue Murmur was in possession of a spark of Exigence.

- An ambassador from the embassy of Kleithe forestalls the Arrows by threatening diplomatic retribution, before telling White Rose that he's heard tell of happenings within Little Yu-Shan.

The Arrows will chase the player characters as they progress through the adventure, appearing every other scene; they can be outrun with Athletics rolls, seen coming with Awareness, hid from with Stealth, or similar.

Additionally, invoking characters' backgrounds is a good way to engage a player who feels their character is being ineffective or minimally involved with the story, or to give information to prompt players who are lost. Storytellers are encouraged to be proactive about this to maintain momentum.

At any of the key locations in Chapter 2, players could also face a member of the Barrow Hounds who have arrived to head them off. One of the Pauperhouse Three shouldn't be too much of a threat for the Exigents, but all three of them or their leader Acerra One-Eye are formidable enough to challenge the group. That said, not every encounter has to have combat; be careful not to fatigue your players.

Scene 1: The Hundred Whispers

Blue Murmur's temple in Holymaze is a small, delicately arched building situated under a bridge to the upper reaches of Holymaze. Inside, the temple is full of long shadows and the air is thick with lavender incense. The bump and clatter of moving furniture and the mutter of muted conversation can be heard within.



The Exigents will find more corrupt Arrows sent here to secure the place and ransack its contents for any incriminating information. They might not be on the lookout for the player characters yet, but they will be suspicious of anyone trying to enter the temple. There is one Arrow for each of the player characters, but they aren't as full of bravado; they are more likely to give up at the first sign of supernatural power or other serious threat.

Clues: Blue Murmur and his clergy have already abandoned the Hundred Whispers, leaving little information to be found except that Blue Murmur was looking for a particular mortal. Storytellers are encouraged to have the Arrows name drop the Barrow Hounds or their leader Acerra in conversation, although they don't know anything specific about what the Barrow Hounds are planning. A senior Arrow, tougher than his peers with a base Resolve 4, can be persuaded to give up that the Hounds'



BANNERS FESTIVAL

stranger who dares ventures in here will be mugged by the resident Barrow Hounds. The dimly lit establishment is heavy with tobacco smoke, grain alcohol, and sweat, an unpleasant contrast to the performer on the cramped stage. All eyes turn to the Exigents as they enter.

One or more of the Pauperhouse Three (p. 33) can be found here, work gods who form the gang's middle management. They might put up a fight, but if wounded or sufficiently intimidated, they will use their Hurry Home Charm to flee back to their sanctum in the Heronry, leaving their mortal followers to their own devices.

Clues: After defeating or otherwise driving off the gods, their mortal followers are in no position to refuse the Exigents' inquiries. None of this group has any idea where the sanctum is located — they're all juniors and are only ever brought there blindfolded — but one of the gangsters does have a way to help find it. He produces an enchanted medallion he stole from a sorcerer, one that glows as the wearer approaches the spirit they seek; though limited in range, it will serve to confirm the Hounds' sanctum if the Exigents can get close.

Scene 3: Ashban Tower

Investigation might reveal that the priestess Amber-Eyed Himiko lives in Ashban Tower, a crowded eight-story slum in Newmarsh. The Exigents find her hiding there in a small, spartanly decorated attic room, aching from bruises and cuts. The thin walls reverberate with the sounds of the festival on the streets below. She's reluctant to speak with them, having fled the scene of the attack and fearing that the Barrow Hounds are on her trail.

Clues: With encouragement, Himiko can reveal that the Barrow Hounds had been threatening Blue Murmur for some time, trying to extort him for some sort of treasure

sanctum is located somewhere within the Heronry's labyrinthine depths, though he couldn't say where.

Scene 2: Arcadelt's Lapse

A drinking hole and hangout for ruffians and criminals in one of the seedier parts of Little Yu-Shan, Arcadelt's Lapse serves as a place of business for the Barrow Hounds. Though the street is crowded with festivalgoers, they know to avoid this notorious den of iniquity: any

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Players might want to explore parts of the city not presented here, either because they have ideas on how to pursue the investigation or because they want to do something else. If you feel comfortable improvising encounters elsewhere in the city, you can transplant the clues to other missions the players undertake on their own initiative. For example, if they seek out law enforcement not bought out by the Barrow Hounds to explain their situation, they could be tacitly encouraged to visit Arcadelt's Lapse.

he possesses. He was attempting to hire the player characters as bodyguards in the event of an attack, but the shrine-gang conducted a brutal ambush faster than expected. She describes it as a nightmarish and cruel raid, including the distinctive physical appearance of Acerra, a one-eyed jade lion-dog with crack-scars patched with silver.

Blessed with divine parentage manifest in her glowing eyes, Himiko warns the group that the Hounds' sanctum will surely be trapped with vicious wards. With a pulse of amber light, she confers her blessing on the Exigents, allowing them to breach the sanctum when the time comes and survive its perils.

Himiko has a Defining Tie of loyalty toward Blue Murmur, a Major Tie of fear toward the Barrow Hounds, and a base Resolve of 3.

For the story to proceed, the Exigents must go through all of these scenes and (1) learn that the Barrow Hounds' lair is within the Heronry, (2) acquire the medallion that will identify the Hounds' sanctum, and (3) receive Himiko's blessings to pass through the Hounds' sanctum wards.

END OF CHAPTER 2: MEET THE BOSS

Having gathered all the relevant information, the Exigents either head to the Heronry, or first go to catch some rest or tie up loose ends. Either way, they find themselves near a crowded parade full of garishly colorful parade floats when **Acerra One-Eye** catches up to them.

The corrupt lion-dog wants the player characters out of the way so he can proceed with his plans. He will offer to clear their names; trying to frame them for the kidnapping to tie up loose ends was clearly a mistake. He will attempt to bribe the characters or turn them against one another.

How things proceed from here depends on the temperament of your group and how their characters react to Acerra. They could simply fight him; he's a formidable adversary for a starting group, and the parade would descend into panic at the sight of Exalts battling a martial god. Rather than a conventional combat encounter, Acerra One-Eye could stalk the Exigents through the parade as they try to evade his keen senses, alternately fleeing him, hiding from him, or rallying the crowd to cause distractions.

If Acerra looks likely to lose the fight, or if the Exigents give him the slip, he will use his Hurry Home Charm to return to his sanctum.

If players decide to negotiate with Acerra and agree to leave without entering the sanctum, he will proceed with his plans in Chapter 3, and the Exigents may have to deal with the Jadeweaver as they rampage through the streets in a few hours, endangering civilian celebrants. Otherwise, all paths now lead to the Heronry.

Chapter 3: A Miracle Profaned

The Heronry beneath Little Yu-Shan is a strange, arcane place. Gods often make sanctums for themselves, dwellings that exist outside Creation proper and are accessible only in the proper place with the proper key. Here, many of these sanctums bleed into reality in overlapping ways, warping the city's underground caves, tunnels, gardens, and abandoned halls into an eerie maze inimical to humans. Unease lies heavy on the player characters as they descend to the Heronry's depths, witnessing pale lights shimmer like oil amid deep shadow and blurred outlines dart in at the edge of their vision, accompanied by the faint echo of chants and the feeling of being watched.

The entrance to the Barrow Hounds' sanctum is at the end of a dimly lit stone tunnel, marked with barely visible claw scratches. Walking through the wall, the Exigents feel a lurching sensation as they enter a stretch of hazy corridors filled with arcane traps.

What follows is a series of magical challenges the shrine-gang intends to repel, beguile, or kill intruders. It is wholly inadequate against four powerful Exigents blessed against it; this is an opportunity for Storytellers to let their players shine by making rolls that highlight their characters' strengths.

Each character should be presented with at least one challenge from difficulty 3 to 7 they have a high dice pool for attempting. Storytellers should provide each character with one roll that targets them specifically, and one roll that allows the group to advance.

Pakpao could roll Dexterity + Larceny to disarm a fire-dust trap; Janest could roll Strength + Athletics to hold up a collapsing segment of cave; Lai could be subject to a sense-warping curse resisted with Wits + Integrity; and Rose could roll Perception + Awareness to judge the right way through a crossroads. **Himiko's blessing comes into play here, granting characters +1 non-Charm success on all rolls to make it to the end of the corridor.**

Failure doesn't actually stop the Exigents; it just inconveniences them, wearing on their minds, spirits, and bodies.

Storytellers should impose an appropriate consequence, such as costing a point of Willpower, inflicting a level of lethal or bashing damage, or imposing a -1 or -2 penalty to physical, mental, or social rolls. At the Storyteller's discretion, players should be allowed to make another roll to bail each other out in a way that makes sense.

Finally, the characters arrive at the sanctum proper, a shadow den of profaned shrines and moldering pillars, the air cloyingly thick with luminescent dust. They're just in time to see the Barrow Hounds have already wrested their prize from Blue Murmur. All the characters recognize it instinctively; how could they not? It is the golden burning spark of Exigence, exactly like the ones that empowered them. Acerra One-Eye and the Pauperhouse Three are all present for the moment; even if the Exigents previously dispatched them, they have reformed in this sanctum, albeit down three health levels.

There is a mortal here, also. Acerra One-Eye, confident in his victory now that his new enforcer is within his grasp, condescends to the Exigents: "the interlopers shall be the first to fall to the Barrow Hounds' Chosen, the Jadeweaver, and all shall fear the gods they serve!"

The identity of the Jadeweaver is left up to the Storyteller to decide; they could be Seven Hawks Pursue the Wicked or another minion of the Barrow Hounds, or another mortal suitable to the shrine-gang's designs. Depending on the preceding events of the game, making the Jadeweaver a mortal with whom the player characters have previously established a rapport, like a kidnapped Amber-Eyed Himiko, might provide a more effective climax for the adventure.

If it feels appropriate to the scene, the Exigents should have a chance to try to talk the prospective Exigent out of this devil's bargain or set up Pakpao to attack from stealth. Even if the mortal decides to back out or is otherwise unwilling, Acerra will forcibly bestow the spark of Exigence, trusting that he will be able to cow the Chosen into submission later. A character like Seven Hawks likely serves the Barrow Hounds willingly in promise of becoming a full partner in their enterprise, while the loyal Himiko could be compelled by promises of the Blue Murmur's safety.

Whatever the identity of their candidate, Acerra and the Pauperhouse Three believe they can handle the cost demanded of Exigence between them and come out of the bargain with a powerful enforcer who will owe them an ongoing debt for their patronage. In this they are disastrously wrong. As they complete the process of Exaltation, they are destroyed by the cost demanded

of them, their Essence consumed by divine fire. Their Exigent, clad in armor reconstituted from Acerra's cracked jade shell, screams in pain as the fire scorches them also.

The Barrow Hounds gravely underestimated the price of Exaltation, but even if they had survived, they also gravely underestimated the demands it would place on their Chosen. The process of becoming a patchwork Exigent — Chosen by multiple gods of disharmonious natures — is painful and traumatic, as their Essences clash together. Even a Chosen of the Pauperhouse Three alone would have unpleasant side effects, but their Essence conflicts strongly with Acerra One-Eye. Lai, himself a patchwork Exigent of a lesser degree, recognizes the problem well. The Jadeweaver is overwhelmed by pain and berserk anger and begins to lash out indiscriminately, targeting the player characters as the grievously injured Blue Murmur escapes his now-broken bonds.

If the group has previously gained the trust of the Jadeweaver, they might be able to inspire calm then persuade them to stop after having reduced them to their last health levels. But if the enraged Jadeweaver reaches the streets above, it will mean mass carnage; escape simply isn't acceptable. However it plays out, it all ends here in the Barrow Hounds' sanctum.

Epilogue

The wounded Blue Murmur is freed to return to his priesthood, and he can testify to the Exigents' heroism and clear their names. Though disappointed at the loss of his hard-won Exigency, he is grateful to the player characters and will make good on everything Himiko promised them and more. With the Barrow Hounds destroyed in their own hubris, all that remains to determine is the fate of the Jadeweaver and the future of the circle.

If they weren't killed, the Jadeweaver might be imprisoned for their crimes (especially if they were Seven Hawks or another willing minion of the Barrow Hounds). Alternatively, they might slip away and be a future antagonist for the circle. A more sympathetic Jadeweaver like Himiko might become an ally instead. In any case, the cost demanded of patchwork Exigence remains great, and the road to recovery will be long and difficult.

Future Adventures

As for the circlemates, their future depends on them. They have a new ally in the Blue Murmur, and they worked together to resolve a crisis despite difficult

circumstances. Perhaps they will stay together for a while, even if it's just to enjoy the festival together.

Great Forks is full of all manner of opportunities for the Exigents, and beyond its borders Creation is vast and replete with adventures and dangers. If your group wants to continue with these characters, **Exigents: Out of the Ashes** contains full rules for advancing and developing Janest, Pakpao, White Rose and Lai with new Charms to meet their future challenges, as well as more detail on Great Forks. Should you wish to venture forth beyond the city, **Across the Eight Directions** details many other setting locations throughout Creation.

Cast of Characters

The following are the individuals that the Exigents will encounter during their adventures.

Arrows

The Arrows of Zhi-Jen's Justice, better known as the Arrows, are the law enforcers of Great Forks. They are cultists of Zhi-Jen, the Scavenger Lands god of sanctioned punishments. A band of them are in the pay of their corrupt former colleague Acerra One-Eye, and they are minor antagonists in this adventure.

The Arrows captain who players encounter at the start of the adventure, **Seven Hawks Pursue the Wicked**, uses the same profile, but with the dice pools and static values increased by two each. He has a base Resolve of 3, a Major Intimacy of greed, and a Minor Tie of fear toward Acerra One-Eye.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 3; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1×2/-2×2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Investigation: 4 dice; Great Forks Law: 4 dice; Senses: 4 dice; Threaten: 5 dice.

Appearance 1, Resolve 1, Guile 1

COMBAT

Attack (Iron-banded club): 5 dice (Damage 11, minimum 2)

Attack (Grapple): 4 dice (5 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 4 dice

Evasion/Parry: 2

Soak/Hardness: 6/0 (Buff jacket)

Acerra One-Eye

Acerra One-Eye is the leader and namesake of the Barrow Hounds, a shrine-gang and a rising power among Great

Forks' criminal underworld. Guardian lion-dogs like Acerra are a byword for loyalty and probity, but Acerra is corrupt to his core, flensed of his long-held sense of duty by centuries of thankless service. Now he cares for little but personal enrichment and ambition. In the years since Acerra was banished from the Arrows for extortion and graft, the same skills that make all lion-dogs brutally effective enforcers of heavenly law have made Acerra a feared gang leader. However, there are many powerful gods in Great Forks, and he desires an edge that can wrest control of the city's underworld from his rivals. To this end, he seeks the spark of Exigence.

Acerra appears to be a living statue of a leonine mastiff carved from aged white jade, the color of yellowed ivory. The cracks in his ancient hide have been patched with silver, and he wears a colorful silken sash over the right side of his disfigured face, smashed and eroded in battle with a demon long ago.

Essence: 3; **Willpower:** 8; **Join Battle:** 8 dice

Personal Notes: 80

Health Levels: -0×3/-1×3/-2×2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 11 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Heavenly Law: 5 dice; Investigation: 9 dice (see Keen Nose); Read Intentions: 9 dice (see Keen Nose); Resist Poison/Disease: 9 dice; Senses: 9 dice (see Keen Nose); Social Influence: 7 dice; Stealth: 7 dice; Tracking: 9 dice (see Keen Nose).

Appearance 3, Resolve 5, Guile 2

COMBAT

Attack (Bite): 9 dice (Damage 16L/3)

Attack (Claw): 11 dice (Damage 14L)

Attack (Grapple): 9 dice (11 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion: 4; **Parry:** 6

Soak/Hardness: 10/10

INTIMACIES

Defining Principle: I will take what is owed to me.

Major Tie: Heaven (Disdain)

Major Principle: Everyone can be bought or broken.

Minor Principle: Great Forks will fear my name.

MERITS

Keen Nose: Double 9s on scent-based Investigation, Read Intentions, Senses, and Tracking rolls.

OFFENSIVE CHARMS

Fangs of the Hunt (6m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 1): Make a decisive attack with double 10s on the damage roll. Success inflicts a crippling penalty equal to the levels of damage dealt on the victim's

movement actions. If this penalty exceeds his Dexterity, he can no longer move reflexively; he must instead use a miscellaneous action. The penalty lasts until the damage is healed or he receives medical treatment.

Principle of Motion (10m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 2): The lion-dog flurries, ignoring the usual penalties. It can combine two actions of the same type, including two attacks.

DEFENSIVE CHARMS

Impenetrable Hide (5m; Reflexive; Instant; Uniform; Essence 2): An attack against the lion-dog subtracts a success from its damage roll, plus an additional success for each 1 on the roll, maximum (Essence).

SOCIAL CHARMS

Corrupted Guardian (3m; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 1): Add +3 Resolve against influence that requires Acerra to abandon a Defining Principle.

Hero-Smiting Roar (10m; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 2): Add three automatic successes on a threaten roll and ignore multiple target penalties. Affected characters can't attack the lion-dog, interfere with her charge, or violate heavenly law for the rest of the scene. Resisting requires at least a Major Intimacy.

MISCELLANEOUS CHARMS

Hunt the Dutiful (8m; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 2): Add three successes on an Investigation, Read Intentions, Senses, or Tracking roll against someone Acerra suspects of having interfered with his criminal organization.

Hurry Home (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): At the start of Acerra next turn, he vanishes and reappears in the Barrow Hound shrine in the Heronry.

Materialize (40m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The lion-dog materializes, his stony body forming around him.

Measure the Wind (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Acerra takes the measure of someone he suspects of having interfered with his criminal organization.

The Pauperhouse Three

Eigun, Agun, and Uigun are triplet goddesses of working professions: pottery, baking, and weaving respectively. Though they once held prestigious positions in the city's artisan halls, they were displaced from their shared temple by a more prestigious craft god. They tried and failed to regain a following in the Marshes, only to be recruited by Acerra One-Eye to act as his partners in the Barrow Hounds.

The goddesses each look similar: towering, heavyset workers who seem to be sculpted from wet clay. They are

distinguishable by their accouterments; Eigun holds a worn sculptor's chisel, Agun a monstrous rolling pin, and Uigun a spindle that trails coarse threads.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 7 dice

Personal Motes: 70

Health Levels: -0×1/-1×3/-2×3/-4/Incap.

Actions: Crafting (Area of specialty): 10 dice, Feats of Strength: 10 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Senses: 5 dice; Threaten: 6 dice; Tracking: 5 dice

Appearance 2, Resolve 4, Guile 3

COMBAT

Attack (Chisel Stab): 10 dice (Damage 9B, Piercing, Eigun only)

Attack (Rolling Pin): 8 dice (Damage 12B, Smashing, Two-Handed, Agun only)

Attack (Thread Lash): 9 dice (Damage 10B/2, Flexible, Grappling, Uigun only)

Attack (Grapple): 7 dice (9 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion: 3; **Parry:** 5

Soak/Hardness: 7/5

INTIMACIES

Defining Tie: Sisters (Loyalty)

Major Tie: Great Forks (Resentment)

Minor Tie: Acerra One-Eye (Fear)

OFFENSIVE CHARMS

Exploding Clay Attack (10m, 1wp; Simple; Withering-only; Instant; Essence 2, Eigun only): Eigun hurls an Essence-filled jar that explodes into pottery shrapnel. This is an unblockable **withering** attack against each character within short range, rolling once and applying each character's Evasion separately. Each character it hits falls prone and loses Initiative equal to (3 + threshold successes), but Eigun only gains this Initiative from one target, plus one Initiative per additional hit target. Eigun can only do this once per scene, unless she takes a miscellaneous action on her turn to craft another pot.

Open Oven Blast (8m, 4i, 1wp; Simple, One round; Perilous; Essence 2, Agun only): Agun releases a blast of intense heat, fragrant with the scent of fresh bread. All enemies within medium range are exposed to an environmental hazard of difficulty 3 and damage 4B. Enemies that take damage are knocked back one range band.

Threadspinning Snare (7m, 1i, Simple; Instant; Stackable, Withering-only; Essence 2, Uigun only): Uigun uses her power over weaving to ensnare her enemies in threads. She makes a withering attack against an opponent within

close range, dealing, adding a bonus success on the attack roll. If she deals damage, threads tangle her enemies, inflicting a -1 penalty on physical actions. Removing the threads requires a feat of strength or other appropriate action with difficulty 2. If the attack crashes the target, they sufficiently entangled to make movement actions and flurries impossible, the penalty and difficulty to remove the threads increase by 2.

DEFENSIVE CHARMS

Commodity-Shaping Counter (10m, 4i; Reflexive; Instant; Dual; Essence 2): The god summons ephemera of bread, thread or clay to deflect an attack, adding +2 Parry. Even if the attack hits, subtract two dice from a withering attack's post-soak damage or a decisive attack's raw damage. Against a grapple, instead subtract two successes from her enemy's control roll; if she rolls more successes, she grapples her enemy as though she initiated the grapple.

MISCELLANEOUS CHARMS

Hurry Home (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): At the start of her next turn, the god vanishes and reappears in the Barrow Hound shrine in the Heronry.

Materialize (40m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The gods materialize, weaving themselves out of thread or sculpting themselves from clay or stone.

Measure the Wind (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The gods can take the measure of anyone who attempts one of their chosen crafts.

Work of the Endless Night (10m; Simple; One night; Essence 2): By working from sundown to dawn, the god completes a major Craft project of any size within her area of specialty, adding two successes on the Craft roll. Alternatively, she can bestow this effect on someone else in person or in response to a prayer.

The Jade Weaver, Chosen of the Barrow Hounds

Newly Exalted and driven to lash out by the agonizing throes of their patchwork Essence Fever, the Jade Weaver is a formidable adversary, especially if the player characters are already wearied from fighting their patrons. The Barrow Hounds have bestowed a chaotic amalgam of their powers upon their Chosen, allowing them to summon jagged jade-ceramic claws, metallic threads, and red-hot clay armor.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 9 dice

Personal: 9; **Peripheral:** 30

Health Levels: -0×1/-1×5/-2×5/-4×1/Incap.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 9 dice (may perform Strength 5 feats); Integrity: 7 dice; Read Intentions: 6 dice; Senses: 7 dice; Resist Disease/Poison: 6 dice; Social Influence: 6 dice
Appearance 2, Resolve 4, Guile 2

COMBAT

Jade Weapon Emanation: 10 dice (Damage 13L/2)

Attack (Grapple): 10 dice (10 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 9 dice

Evasion: 3; **Parry:** 5

Soak/Hardness: 8/10 (Jade Shell)

INTIMACIES

The Jade Weaver's Intimacies depend on their identity. Immediately after being created, their trauma of their clashing Essence inspires them to berserk anger, which counts as a Defining Intimacy that lasts for the scene.

After they are defeated, the Jade Weaver will form a relevant Intimacy towards the player characters, probably gratitude or resentment depending on the circumstances.

EXCELLENCY

Bonus Dice: The Jade Weaver can add up to 4 dice on rolls for one mote per die. They can add up to 2 to static values for two motes per +1.

Offensive Charms

Lashing Jade Strings (6m; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only): The Jade Weaver targets an enemy at short range with a grapple gambit, ensnaring him with metallic threads on a success and dragging him to close range. They reroll 6s on the attack, Initiative and control rolls of their grapple until they fail to appear.

Terracotta Arsenal Technique (3m; Reflexive; One scene): The Jade Weaver summons a crude jade-ceramic weapon resembling a tooth or claw. It gains +1 Overwhelming damage but is otherwise a mundane weapon of their choice.

Hundred-Brick Impact (4m; Supplemental, Instant; Dual): The Jade Weaver's **withering** attack adds 3 post-soak damage, or their **decisive** attack adds up to 3 threshold successes as dice of damage.

Defensive Charms

Searing Stove Rebuke (4m; Reflexive; Instant): After they are hit from an attack at close range, the Jade Weaver can use this Charm to superheat their body and inflict a Difficulty 3 hazard with 2L damage.

Tangling Web Technique (4m; Reflexive; Counterattack; Instant; Decisive-only): After parrying an attack, the Jade Weaver can counterattack with a grapple or disarm gambit.

Clay Barrier Method (5m; Simple; Instant): The Jade-weaver molds their volatile Essence into a clay barricade which can provide light cover. They gain 3 bonus dice to take cover behind it during the scene. They can flurry this Charm with a take cover action and ignore the penalties to their roll and Defense.

MOBILITY CHARMS

Skittering Spider Alacrity (1m; Supplemental; Instant): The Jadeweaver swings on tangled threads, moving one range band in any direction. If a movement roll is required, they add 3 dice.

Clear-Eyes Lai

Clear-Eyes Lai is a tortured soul from far Northwestern Uluiru, home of the brilliant Sovereigns chosen by dead gods of gemstone and aurora. He earned his moniker young for preciously declaiming others' flaws and lies; for this he was allowed to bathe in the pool of burning blood that makes Sovereigns. Disdainful of intrigue but hungry for acclaim, the young Exigent eventually ventured into the Wyld to retrieve a lost Artifact for his liege Queen Ulu: the Mountain-Piercing Javelin.

He never found it. Lai awakened to sorcery in his long years amid chaos' churn, growing powerful but suffering in mind and body. Thirty years passed before he returned; Queen Ulu had perished, and civil war loomed. Weary and cynical, Lai left Uluiru to wander Creation.

It was Blue Murmur's letters that enticed him to Great Forks, promising acclaim, fame, and glory in the city of the gods in Creation. A sorcerer and Chosen of a powerful but ill-known god, the Sovereign is regarded as an object of curiosity and gossip by the citizenry of Great Forks, and his frequent displays of Exalted power make him a favorite of the city.

Image: Clear-Eyes Lai's handsome face is weathered from years of travel, and his black skin is traced with veins of Wyld-repelling iron. Though he has since exchanged his woolen pants and tunic for clothes better suited to the warmth, the purple cloak that marks him as Uluiran royalty remains, as does his golden crown.

Intimacies: Defining: "Power and glory should go hand in hand," Major:

"The senses are easily deceived," Minor: True Allies (Hopeful Longing), Minor: Intrigues (Exhausted Scorn)

Equipment: Fine clothes, fireglass staff. His Parry of 5 uses his Melee Ability and requires his staff; if he's disarmed, it drops to 3 and uses his Brawl Ability, and he can only apply it against bashing attacks unless he stunts.

Anima

Beloved By All the World: At glowing anima or higher, characters must pay 1 Willpower to initiate hostilities against Lai or allies unless provoked. Resisting renders a character immune for the day.

Crystalline

Cynosure

Radiance: For 5 motes, add +1 non-Charisma success on rolls against characters with Resolve lower than Lai's Appearance. This is free at bonfire anima.

Inspiring Grandeur: For 3 motes, add (Anima) non-Charisma dice on an influence roll involving awe, reverence, wonder, or leverages Intimacies based on those emotions.

Excellency

Lai can add bonus dice on Awareness, Integrity, Melee, Occult, Presence, and Resistance rolls for one mote per die. He can increase his Parry and Resolve by two motes per +1 bonus. His dice limit is equal to (4 + Anima).

Charms

TERRESTRIAL CIRCLE SORCERY (CRAFT, PERMANENT, PERMANENT)

Lai can cast spells (see below). He doesn't recover Willpower from



SOVEREIGN CHARM CONCEPTS

Many Sovereign Charms create things made from *fireglass*, crystalline light that shines in the color of their anima. Fireglass is durable; characters attempting to break Clear-Eyes Lai's fireglass need a minimum of Strength 5 to attempt it and must roll 5-9 successes to succeed.

When Lai's Charms refer to *subordinates*, they mean characters he has legitimate authority over within a group or culture, characters in his debt socially or fiscally, or characters currently deferring to his authority or expertise (though this status ends when they stop deferring).

Where used as a measurement, Anima equals 0 if Lai's anima is dim; 1 at glowing, 2 at burning, or 3 at bonfire/iconic.

sleeping, instead rolling (Wits + Occult) and gaining one sorcerous mote per success from strange visions, lasting until next day. Spending all motes on Peacock Shadow Eyes doubles the total mote value. Once per story, his player may stunt description of how the current scene was foreshadowed in Lai's dreams, gaining (2 × [stunt level + 1]) motes that last until scene's end.

LOUPE-AND-BIT TRICK (CRAFT, SIMPLE, ONE SCENE)

For 3 motes, Lai creates a piece of fireglass equipment sized for personal use: diamond-fire mirrors, scintillating ball gowns, ropes of woven rainbow, etc. He can't create weapons or armor. If he has a relevant Ability rated at 3+, these tools are exceptional equipment.

SUBTLE REALM INSTINCTS (INTEGRITY, REFLEXIVE, ONE SCENE)

For 4 motes, Lai can see dematerialized characters within short range. At burning anima, this extends to medium range, and to long range at bonfire.

DIAMOND MIND CONCENTRATION (INTEGRITY, REFLEXIVE, INSTANT)

For 2 motes, Lai negates up to 3 points of wound penalties or penalties from other distractions on mental actions with any Ability, not including extended actions or attacks, or ignore one point of Resolve penalty from wounds, crippling, poison, or deprivation. For 2 motes more, this can enhance all non-extended actions. If the amount reduced exceeds the original penalty he adds the difference in non-Charm dice, though this can't exceed the total penalty negated.

SOVEREIGN LIMIT

This book does not feature Limit mechanics, yet they remain essential for Sovereigns, whose patchwork Essence is tormented. Rather than tracking Lai's Limit uniquely, Storytellers are encouraged to instead have him enter Limit Break — a state in which his patchwork Essence overwhelms him and he loses control — at least once during this Jumpstart at a suitably dramatic opportunity.

Sovereign Limit Breaks manifest in one of two ways: the Diamond Heart Trance, and the Agony Cataclysmic.

In the Diamond Heart Trance, Lai's Essence freezes his heart to crystal. His emotion-based Intimacies become suppressed as if not there. He can't and won't consider the emotions of others, making decisions purely on ruthless logic. This lasts for one session, or if a character Lai has a positive Tie towards shows him how he's violated or harmed the subject of one of his suppressed Intimacies.

In the Agony Cataclysmic, Lai's body cracks and blisters to reveal molten anima. He suffers -4 wound penalty and lashes out at everyone, verbally and physically, though he can refrain from attacking characters he has positive Ties towards. At the start of each turn he rolls (Anima) dice of withering damage against all characters within short range, which doesn't grant him Initiative; crashed characters suffer dice of lethal decisive damage instead. This lasts for one scene.

IMPERIOUS COMMAND (SOCIALIZE, SUPPLEMENTAL, INSTANT)

For 3 motes, Lai doubles 9s on a persuade or threaten roll with any Ability that's unambiguously phrased as a direct order. Against subordinates any Resolve penalty inflicted by Ties to Lai is increased by one.

WREATHED IN GLORY (SOCIALIZE, SUPPLEMENTAL, INSTANT)

For 3 motes, Lai adds (Anima + 1) dice and reroll 6s until they cease to appear on an inspire roll, a persuade or bargain roll for seduction, or an instill roll to create an emotion-based Tie to himself using any Ability. At bonfire anima, he also rerolls 5s. This can't enhance influence rolls against Exalted whose current anima exceeds Lai's.

HEAVENLY FIRE SHEATHE (WAR, SUPPLEMENTAL, INSTANT)

For 3 motes, 1 Initiative, Lai adds (Anima) Overwhelming on a withering attack. If his enemy's soak reduces him to minimum damage, he may spend that many levels of anima to add equivalent dice of post-soak damage. On a decisive attack, he doubles (Anima) 10s on the damage roll.

UNBROKEN CRYSTAL RESONANCE (INTEGRITY, PERMANENT)

Lai gains +4 soak. When his soak reduces a withering attack to minimum damage or his Hardness negates a decisive attack, he steals 1 Initiative from the attacker.

REFUSE TO SHATTER (INTEGRITY, REFLEXIVE, INSTANT)

For 5 motes, Lai gains +5 soak or Hardness. Reduce this Charm's cost by his wound penalty.

Spells

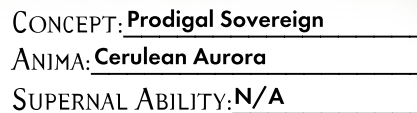
PEACOCK SHADOW EYES

Lai's eyes blaze with enthralling, many-colored flames. He rolls ([Intelligence or Manipulation] + Occult) against the Resolve of a character within medium range. Success induces a trance, imposing a -2 Resolve penalty. They can still act, but retain no memories of their time entranced, rationalizing any social influence used on them during this time as their own thoughts and emotions. Attacking or otherwise harming them ends the trance. Blind or eyeless characters are immune to this.

FLIGHT OF THE GLORIOUS RAPTOR

For 15 sorcerous motes and 1 Willpower, Lai shapes diamond and ruby flames into the form of a garda bird, an elemental. He rolls (Perception + Occult) as a **decisive** attack against an enemy within long range, dealing base lethal damage equal to (his Initiative + his current temporary Willpower) and igniting a bonfire environmental hazard with difficulty 5, damage 4L/round. This engulfs the target and all terrain within short range of him until the end of the scene.





PERCEPTION_____●●●●○
INTELLIGENCE_____●●●○○
WITS_____●●●●●

[illegible]

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

CURRENT: _____ TOTAL: _____ CURRENT: _____ TOTAL: _____

WEAPON NAME	ACC	DMG	DEF	OVW	TAGS	DICE POOL
Fireglass Staff	+2	11	+1	1	Reaching	10
Unarmed	+4	9	0	1	Grappling, Natural	8

PARRY: 5 RESOLVE: 4
EVASION: 1 GUILT: 2
RUSH: 4 DISENGAGE: 4
JOIN BATTLE: 7

Natural Soak: Stamina + Charms • Parry: ((Dexterity + Brawl, Martial Arts or Melee, whichever is appropriate to the character's current armament) / 2, round up) + Weapon's Defenses bonus
Evasion: ((Dexterity + Dodge) / 2, round up) – armor's mobility penalty • *Resolve:* ((Wits + Integrity + specialty) / 2, round up) • *Guile:* ((Manipulation + Socialize + specialty) / 2, round up)

INTIMACIES

INTIMACY	INTENSITY	INTIMACY	INTENSITY
"Power and glory should go hand in hand"	Defining		
"The senses are easily deceived"	Major		
True Allies (Hopeful Longing)	Minor		
Minor: Intrigues (Exhausted Scorn)	Minor		

CHARMS

[illegible]

INVENTORY

Fine clothes	
Fireglass staff	
Reinforced buff jacket	

Pakpao the Puppeteer

The child of impoverished immigrants to Southwestern Zhaojūn, with nothing but her guile and ambition Pakpao rose to power through intrigue. Karana, a regional god of puppetry whose cult was broken by the Realm, saw in her a champion to further his schemes. Karana empowered her as his secret Puppeteer, and Pakpao luxuriated in the riches and power she dreamed of as a child.

Then the Wyld Hunt found her.

Fleeing in disgrace, Pakpao has traveled far to Great Forks to quietly weave a new web of power as a socialite and information broker. Decadence knows her only as the puppetry-loving exotic young wife of Daopai, a minister of the city's Unquestionable Commission on Justice who's wrapped around her finger.

Karana followed Pakpao with a handful of loyal acolytes and works to rebuild his Cult of the Marionette through a puppet theater-temple in Great Forks' slums. His acolytes dislike the Puppeteer for her disobedience of the god, but Karana enjoys whispering temptations through puppet messengers, manipulating her into aiding him and selfishly accruing power. He offered his congratulations when Pakpao received a letter from Blue Murmur requesting assistance in return for helping her expand her web of power.

Image: Wearing saffron dresses depicting patterns and scenes of Zhaojūn, Pakpao stands out even in cosmopolitan Great Forks. Her bright shawls contrast with her dark hair, decorated with flamboyant scarlet flowers.

Intimacies: *Defining:* "I will live a life of power and luxury," *Major:*

Karana ("I will not dance on your strings"), *Minor:* Companions (Pragmatic loyalty), *Minor:* Goldenseal (Homesickness)

Equipment: Clothing, various small puppets. Pakpao's Evasion of 4 uses the Dodge Ability.

Διῆμα

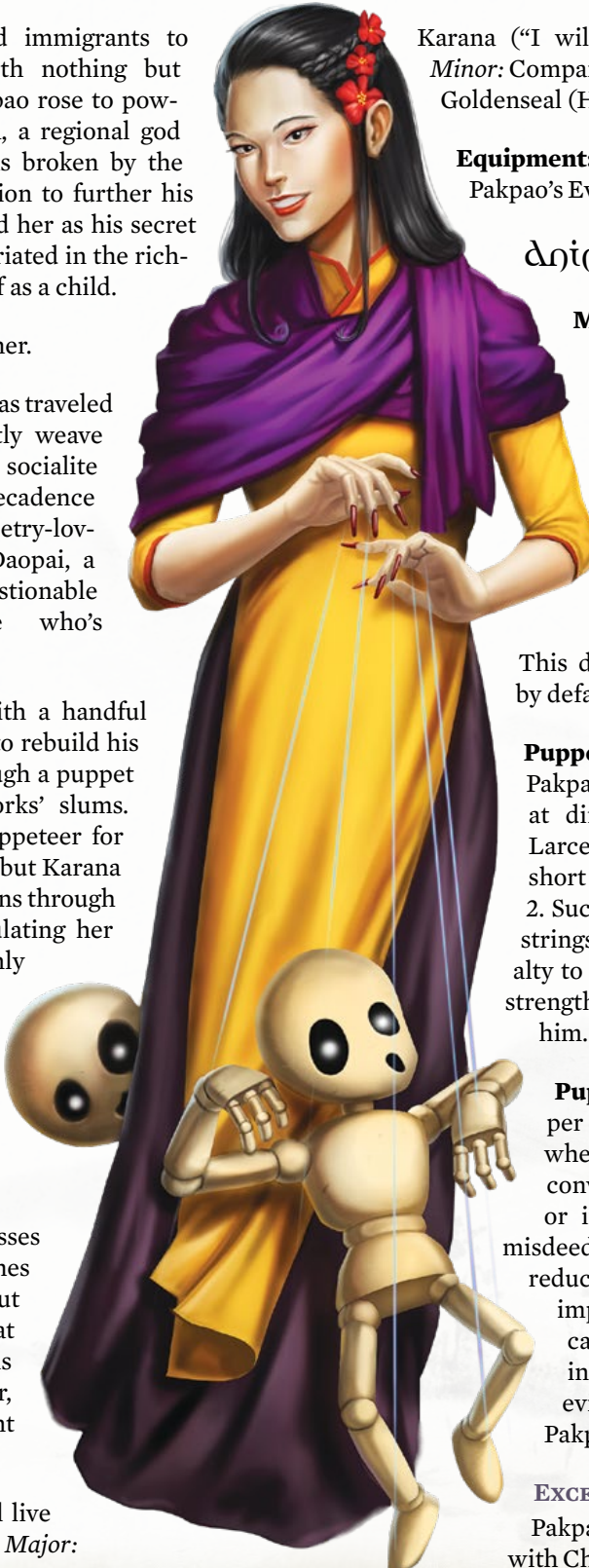
Mistress of Puppets: Pakpao adds 1 non-Charm die on puppetry-based Performance rolls and can perform unrealistic feats of incredibly lifelike puppetry with stunts. For 3 motes, she can make a puppet take a physical action out to short range, using the lower of its relevant dice pool or her (Dexterity + Performance). This doesn't include feats of strength by default.

Puppet-Snaring Strings: For 5 motes, Pakpao can make an *entangle* gambit at difficulty 2, rolling (Dexterity + Larceny) against an enemy within short range. The gambit's difficulty is 2. Success tangles her enemy in anima strings for the scene, inflicting -1 penalty to all rolled movement actions and strengthening certain Charms against him. This is free at bonfire.

Puppeteer's Innocent Smile: Once per day, Pakpao may pay 1 Willpower when she makes an influence roll to convince others of her innocence or implicate someone else for her misdeeds, adding 3 non-Charm dice and reducing any penalties for making implausible claims by 2. Characters can't spend Willpower to resist this influence unless presented with evidence that directly contradicts Pakpao's claims.

EXCELLENCY

Pakpao can add bonus dice on rolls with Charisma, Dexterity, Manipulation,



ANIMATED PUPPETS

These traits can be used for animated puppets that are roughly humanoid in form. They encompass both poppets — puppets no larger than a housecat, with the Tiny Creature Merit — and mannequins, which range in size from a housecat to a human.

Essence: 1; Willpower: 1; Join Battle: 5 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1/-2x2/-4/Incap. (Poppet); -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap. (Mannequin)

Actions: Appear Inanimate: 10 dice; Feats of Strength: 8 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats) (Mannequin only); Fit Through Small Spaces: 8 dice (Poppet only); Senses: 5 dice; Stealth: 8 dice for poppets (see Tiny Creature), 5 dice for mannequins; Threaten: 4 dice.

Appearance 1, Resolve 1, Guile 1

Attack (Unarmed): 10 dice (Poppet: Damage 2B, 9B against enemies their size or smaller; Mannequin: Damage 12B)

Attack (Grapple): 7 dice (Poppet: 5 dice to control, can only grapple enemies their size or smaller and can only savage grappled foes; Mannequin: 8 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion: 3 for poppets (see Tiny Creature); 2 for 3 for poppets (see Tiny Creature); 2 for mannequins

Parry: 1 for poppets; 4 for mannequins. 1 for poppets; 4 for mannequins.

Soak/Hardness: 1/0 for poppets; 8/0 for mannequins.

MERITS

Automaton: Puppets are immune to poison, disease, fatigue, and fear and need neither sustenance nor rest.

Mindless: Puppets treat all social influence as unacceptable and have perfect morale.

Tiny Creature (Poppet only): Add +2 Evasion against larger foes' attacks. Larger characters subtract two successes from Awareness-based rolls to notice puppets.

and Wits for one mote per die. She can increase her Evasion, Guile, and Resolve by two motes per +1 bonus. Her dice limit is 5 for Dexterity, 5 for Charisma and Manipulation, and 4 for Wits; this increases by +1 for Investigation, Larceny, Performance, and Socialize rolls.

Charms

KILLER PUPPET APPROACH

(PERMANENT, PERMANENT)

Pakpao can use puppets to make attacks.

JUMBLED TOY CHEST SILHOUETTES

(SIMPLE, INSTANT)

For 1 mote, Pakpao banishes a puppet elsewhere, where it remains until she uses this Charm again. She can have up to 6 banished puppets at any time. Those capable of perceiving the dematerialized see them as silhouettes in Pakpao's shadow.

ASSASSIN IN THE CHORUS (SUPPLEMENTAL, INSTANT)

For 2 motes, Pakpao reduces the penalty for attempting Stealth in combat by 1, plus 1 for every ally in close range. Succeeding against all enemies awards her 1 Initiative.

KNIFE-TWISTING SUBTLETY

(SUPPLEMENTAL, INSTANT)

For 5 motes, Pakpao adds +3 Overwhelming to a **withering** attack or ignores that much Hardness on a **decisive** attack. If it's a surprise attack or the target's entangled, she further adds 3 dice of post-soak **withering** damage or adds up to three extra attack successes as **decisive** damage dice. This Charm is Mute.

KNOW THE HEART'S STRINGS

(SUPPLEMENTAL, INSTANT)

For 2 motes, Pakpao rerolls 6s until they cease to appear on a read intentions roll. If she succeeds with 3+ extra successes and discovers a Tie to an individual, she learns an additional fact about that relationship.

RAPT AUDIENCE ENTRAPMENT

(SUPPLEMENTAL, ONE PERFORMANCE)

For 5 motes, onlookers must watch respectfully until Pakpao is done putting on a puppet show. Characters must pay one Willpower to leave the performance before its completion, or two to attack or interrupt her. Characters who do so count as being entangled for the purposes of Puppeteer Charms for the rest of the scene, though they do not suffer the mobility penalty. This Charm can't be used in combat, but it remains in effect if combat breaks out mid-performance.

DISCARDED PUPPET SACRIFICE (REFLEXIVE, INSTANT)

For 4 motes, when attacked Pakpao may place a willing ally within close range to intercede per the defend other action. If she uses a puppet, it adds +1 Parry; she can reflexively drag a puppet to protect her, without it counting as her movement action.

COLD-HEARTED BETRAYAL STYLE (REFLEXIVE, INSTANT)

For 1 mote, 1 Willpower, when an enemy attacks Pakpao while she benefits from a defend other action, she can

force the attack to hit her protector even if he beats her protector's Parry.

CAPTURED PREY HUMILIATION (REFLEXIVE, INSTANT)

For 3 motes, Pakpao gains +1 non-Charm Defense against an attack from an entangled enemy. If she successfully defends, he loses Initiative equal to his total mobility penalty, maximum 3.



NAME: Pakpao

PLAYER: _____

CASTE/ASPECT: PuppeteerCONCEPT: Mistress of puppetsANIMA: A web of puppet strings

SUPERNAL ABILITY: _____

ATTRIBUTES

STRENGTH _____ ●○○○○○

DEXTERITY _____ ●●●●●●

STAMINA _____ ●○○○○○

CHARISMA _____ ●●●●●○

MANIPULATION _____ ●●●●●●

APPEARANCE _____ ●●○○○○

PERCEPTION _____ ●●●○○○

INTELLIGENCE _____ ●●●○○○

WITS _____ ●●●●●●

ABILITIES

☐ ARCHERY _____ ○○○○○○☐ ATHLETICS _____ ○○○○○○☐ AWARENESS _____ ●●●○○○☐ BRAWL _____ ●●●○○○☐ BUREAUCRACY _____ ●●●○○○☒ CRAFT _____ ○○○○○○☐ DODGE _____ ●●●●●○☐ INTEGRITY _____ ●●●○○○☐ INVESTIGATION _____ ●●●●●●☒ LARCENY _____ ●●●●●○☐ LINGUISTICS _____ ○○○○○○☐ LORE _____ ○○○○○○☐ MARTIAL ARTS _____ ○○○○○○☐ MEDICINE _____ ○○○○○○☐ MELEE _____ ○○○○○○☐ OCCULT _____ ○○○○○○☒ PERFORMANCE _____ ●●●●●●☐ PRESENCE _____ ○○○○○○☐ RESISTANCE _____ ○○○○○○☐ RIDE _____ ○○○○○○☐ SAIL _____ ○○○○○○☐ SOCIALIZE _____ ●●●●●●☐ STEALTH _____ ●●●●●○☐ SURVIVAL _____ ○○○○○○☐ THROWN _____ ○○○○○○☐ WAR _____ ○○○○○○

SPECIALTIES

WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

ESSENCE

● ● ○ ○ ○

PERSONAL _____ | 13

PERIPHERAL _____ | 31

COMMITTED _____

EXPERIENCE

CURRENT: _____ TOTAL: _____

EXIGENT EXPERIENCE

CURRENT: _____ TOTAL: _____

MERITS

_____ ○○○○○○

_____ ○○○○○○

_____ ○○○○○○

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LIMIT BREAK

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

LIMIT TRIGGER

ADDITIONAL ABILITIES

☐ _____ ○○○○○○☐ _____ ○○○○○○☐ _____ ○○○○○○☐ _____ ○○○○○○☐ _____ ○○○○○○☐ _____ ○○○○○○

HEALTH & DEFENSE

ARMOR _____

Buff jacket _____

SOAK _____

3

HARD _____

0

MP _____

0

TAGS _____

FINAL SOAK: 4

PARRY: 3

EVASION: 4

RUSH: 5

RESOLVE: 3

GUILE: 5

DISENGAGE: 9

JOIN BATTLE: 8

HEALTH LEVELS

☐ ☐

-0 -1 -1 -2 -2 -2 -2 -4 Int _____

Natural Soak: Stamina + Charms • Parry: ([Dexterity + Brawl, Martial Arts or Melee, whichever is appropriate to the character's current armament] / 2, round up) + Weapon's Defenses bonus
Evasion: ([Dexterity + Dodge] / 2, round up) - armor's mobility penalty • Resolve: ([Wits + Integrity + specialty] / 2, round up) • Guile: ([Manipulation + Socialize + specialty] / 2, round up)



INTIMACIES

[illegible]

CHARMS

[illegible]

INVENTORY

[illegible]

Strawmaiden Janest

Hailing from the Northern village of Kolisz, Janest was raised from birth as a field-maiden in service to the harvest god Ten Sheaves. When the Realm retreated and left Kolisz alone against invading Fair Folk, it was Janest's humility, hard-working nature, and selfless devotion to her community that saw Ten Sheaves sacrifice himself to empower her. Janest took her Second Breath and became the Strawmaiden, rallying her people to break the invading horde.

Since then, Strawmaiden Janest has become a rustic folk hero wandering Creation, connecting with, helping, and defending the common folk. Tale of her deeds earned Janest a letter from Blue Murmur, requesting the Exigent come to Great Forks and protect him while he searched for a candidate for Exaltation. Ever eager to see more of the world, Janest complied eagerly.

Image: Janest dresses in greens and blues, interspersed with blacks and browns, complementing her auburn hair. Her hands are calloused from a life of farming and tending to the earth, and her body is well-muscled.

Intimacies: *Defining:* "I'll be a big friend to the small folk," *Major:* Bullies (Ardent Opposition), *Major:* Creation (Unbridled Curiosity), *Minor:* "Lying never helps anybody"

Equipment: Final Season (Green jade grim-scythe), plain clothes. Her Parry of 5 uses her Melee ability and requires her grim-scythe; if she's disarmed, it drops to 2 and uses her Brawl Ability, and she can only apply it against bashing attacks without stunting.



STRAWMAIDEN CHARM CONCEPTS

When Janest's Charms mention *communities*, they refer to any group, society, or location whose populace predominantly has positive Ties to Janest. She can have multiple communities at once. When her powers refer to *enemies of the community*, they mean any character who wants to exploit or harm one of her communities or people in it. This depends on their intentions, not Janest's perception of them.

Similarly, where her powers mention *fields*, it means any collection of cultivated plant life: this includes any form of agriculture including vineyards, gardens, and the like. A field must span at least one range band to qualify.

Διῖμα

Autumnal Grimscythe: Janest's grimscythe is part of her and her Exaltation. For 1 mote, she can reflexively call it to her hand regardless of distance.

Guardian Reaper: Once per day, Janest may pay 10 motes, 1 Willpower to make a decisive attack against an enemy of the community without resetting to base Initiative. At bonfire, this only costs five motes.

Harvest Walker: For 10 motes, 1 willpower, Janest may vanish into a field at the start of her next turn, unless forced to move or knocked down. Once the scene ends, she reappears within a single field, rural settlement, or place of significant interest to her community chosen by her Storyteller — typically somewhere within 10 miles.

Εξcellency

Janest can add bonus dice on all her Ability rolls for one mote per die. She can increase her Evasion, Parry and Resolve by two motes per +1 bonus. Her dice limit is equal to (Attribute + [most relevant of Awareness, Athletics, Presence, Resistance, or Survival]); for example, attack rolls connect to Athletics, or Investigation to Awareness. When in doubt, Storytellers should always use the highest value.

Χarmς

FIRST TO THE FIELD (ATHLETICS, REFLEXIVE, INSTANT)

For 3 motes, at the beginning of the round, Janest takes her turn before any other character, unless contested

by similar magic, in which case the character with the highest stunt rating goes first. Ties are resolved with coin flips. If Janest would normally go first, she can reflexively make a **withering** or **decisive** attack. Janest can only use this Charm once per scene, but she can reset this limit by crashing or incapacitating a nontrivial enemy who had higher Initiative than herself.

BUSY HARVEST (ATHLETICS, REFLEXIVE, INSTANT)

For 5 motes, Janest makes a reflexive **decisive** attack against an enemy she just crashed. Against enemies of the community, she doesn't reset to base Initiative if successful, forfeiting only the Initiative awarded by the **withering** attack.

CHAFF-CLEARING ONSLAUGHT (ATHLETICS, SUPPLEMENTAL, INSTANT)

For 1 mote, Janest adds one die of **decisive** damage or post-soak **withering** damage, to a maximum of 4, for every 10 on her attack roll. If she attacks an enemy of the community, or if she moved into close range with that enemy on the same tick, 9s add damage dice as well, and the maximum bonus increases to 5.

HARVEST CELEBRANT'S APPEAL (PRESENCE, SUPPLEMENTAL, INSTANT)

For 3 motes, Janest supplements an inspire, instill or persuade roll made with any Ability, rerolling 1s until they cease to appear and ignoring multiple target penalties. If she's attending a festival, ritual, or significant cultural event for her community, targeted community members can't use Intimacies of apathy, laziness, fear, or sadness to bolster their Resolve or in Decision Points.

OX-BODY TECHNIQUE (RESISTANCE, PERMANENT, PERMANENT)

Two purchases of Ox-Body Technique grant Janest two additional -1 health levels and four additional -2 health levels.

HARVEST-HARDENED SKIN (RESISTANCE, REFLEXIVE, INSTANT)

For 3 motes, Janest adds 4 dice to her natural soak against a **withering** attack or gains Hardness 4 against a **decisive** attack. 1s on the damage roll subtract successes. In fields, she retains this Hardness while crashed.

HERO HOISTS THE BANNER (ATHLETICS, SUPPLEMENTAL, INSTANT)

For 3 motes, Janest treats a successful feat of strength as an inspire roll against witnesses, typically inspiring courage, admiration, or attraction. If the feat required Strength 5+, characters may also form an appropriate Tie to Janest. In combat, beating the Resolve of at least one significant enemy awards her 1 Initiative.

Final Season

Janest's weapon is a huge harvest scythe of black iron shot through with seams of green jade. Before Janest took her Second Breath, the scythe belonged to Ten Sheaves and holding it at an angle against the sun still reveals an Old Realm inscription of devotional poetry to the gods of the days and months.

Final Season has two modes: *growing mode* and *harvest mode*. In *growing mode*, Janest gains one initiative when she parries a nontrivial enemy's attack. In *harvest mode*, Janest doubles 10s on **decisive** damage rolls. Final

Season begins each combat in *growing mode* and may enter *harvest mode* upon successfully blocking or clashing a **decisive** attack. Once in *harvest mode*, landing a **decisive** attack that resets Initiative lets her enter *growing mode*. Final Season counts as iron and deals aggravated damage to most fae.

EVOCATIONS

TIME TO SOW, TIME TO REAP (REFLEXIVE, INSTANT)

For 1 mote, 1 Initiative, Janest may enter *harvest mode* when she crashes an enemy or enter *growing mode* when she takes a full defense.



Natural Soak: Stamina + Charms • Parry: ((Dexterity + Brawl, Martial Arts or Melee, whichever is appropriate to the character's current armament) / 2, round up) + Weapon's Defenses bonus
Evasion: ((Dexterity + Dodge) / 2, round up) – armor's mobility penalty • *Resolve:* ((Wits + Integrity + specialty) / 2, round up) • *Guile:* ((Manipulation + Socialize + specialty) / 2, round up)

INTIMACIES

[illegible]

CHARMS

[illegible]

INVENTORY

Plain Clothes	
Final Season	
Fortified Dress	

White Rose

Sold as a child into Kleithe's philosopher priesthood, White Rose was reared in marble temples to mold them into an embodiment of the city's ideals — shielded from distractions, unconstrained by gender, an enlightened paragon of logic and philosophy to guide the masses. Through brilliant, anger at their family haunted Rose and drove them to learn why they were sold; when they discovered the squalor Kleithe's have-nots lived in, that anger transformed them into a compassionate idealist unwilling to accept things as they are. White Rose grew into a rebellious spitfire, as likely to mercilessly mock the flaws in their teachers' rhetoric and chase self-important peers to heckle them, as wander Kleithe's mandala-regular avenues to connect with the people.

Kleithe's divine city mother, Auspicious Vertex, sought a champion of vision, intellect, and pride to reverse Kleithe's subordination to Great Forks. She requested the spark of Exigence from Wun Ja, celestial Goddess of the Shining Metropolis. Wun Ja acquiesced, seeing an agent to disrupt the thearchs and furnish her allies, and together the pair empowered White Rose as the Architect of Kleithe.

Rose has long been enamored by Great Forks' might and culture, yet they resented the city's dominance of their home. They came to Decadence a month ago to learn all its marvels and further Kleithe's standing within the Triune League and welcomed a letter from Blue Murmur as a perfect opportunity for both.

Image: Androgynously beautiful and long-limbed, White Rose's face is framed by ebon curls. Their thin frame is wrapped in voluminous pleated robes with gold-tasseled hems. Henna on their hands glorifies Auspicious Vertex and Nisca, goddess of formal logic.

Intimacies: *Defining:* "No story too sacred for questioning, no soul too important for mockery," *Major:* "Kleithe is a partner, not a servant," *Major:* "A city is its people, and everyone matters," *Minor:* Great Forks (Fascinated Envy)

Equipment: Clothes, abacus and tools of calculation, scrolls of knowledge, chakrams looped around the neck and



arms. They have a Dodge rating of 4, which can be applied against bashing and lethal attacks regardless of stunting.

Anima

Living Library Concentration: Rose adds +2 non-Charm Resolve against Psyche effects that affect or alter their thoughts, memories, or emotions. They add 2 non-Charm dice on rolls involving memory.

Eye for Detail: Rose ignores up to 2 points of penalties on Perception-based rolls based on the environment or other poor conditions. For 3 motes, they reroll 1s until they cease to appear on a (Perception + Awareness) roll.

Picturesque Visa Embodiment: Once per day, Rose can add 3 non-Charm dice on an influence roll with any Attribute to instill a Tie of lust or attraction toward themselves or a roll to seduce someone with a persuade or bargain roll.

Excellency

White Rose can add bonus dice to their Appearance, Dexterity, Intelligence, and Perception rolls for one mote per die. They may not increase their dice pools by more than (Attribute), or (Attribute + 2) while in cities.

Charms

BLUE LIGHT DISTRICT APPEAL (APPEARANCE, SIMPLE, INSTANT)

For 3 motes when making a persuade roll to seduce a single target, Rose also instills a Tie of sexual or romantic desire towards himself unless he resists the roll. Motes spent on this Charm do not contribute to their anima. If they use this Charm while in a city, they convert up to 2 dice added by their Appearance to non-Charm successes.

OVERHEARD ECHO EAVESDROPPING (PERCEPTION, SUPPLEMENTAL, INSTANT)

For 3 motes, Rose supplements a hearing-based Perception roll and ignores up to 3 points of penalty from distance, background noise, or listening through obstructions made of stone, wood, or weaker materials. If they are specifically listening to make out what someone is saying, they double 9s. In cities, they double 9s even when not eavesdropping.

THE CITY REMEMBERS (INTELLIGENCE, SUPPLEMENTAL, INSTANT)

For 3 motes, Rose double 9s on a roll to introduce or challenge a fact and can draw on Kleithe as a Lore background. This encompasses information about topics and subjects that are prominent in Kleithe, but not every

piece of information found there. This encompasses topics of sacred geometry, philosophy, and formal logic as well as architecture, city planning, and rhetoric. While White Rose is in Kleithe, they double 8s as well when they use it as a Lore background.

GOD-PLEASING PERFORMANCE (INTELLIGENCE, SUPPLEMENTAL, ONE PERFORMANCE)

For 5 motes when putting on a god-entreating dance performance, Rose causes spirits or fae who observe it to suffer -1 Resolve. If they have a positive Tie toward a mortal or group penalizing their Resolve, that penalty is also increased by one. White Rose cannot take non-reflexive actions while using this Charm.

BARRING THE SPIRIT DOOR (INTELLIGENCE, SIMPLE, ONE SCENE)

For 1 mote, 1 Willpower, Rose can render a door, window, or other opening they're touching impassable to dematerialized beings. This can't be circumvented by moving through the wall next to the sealed door; the only way through is to materialize or to find another entrance. A maximum of up to 4 portals can be sealed this way at once. In cities, this Charm lasts for a day instead of a scene, and only the first use in a scene costs Willpower.

DOORS OF THE CITY UNSEEN (INTELLIGENCE, SIMPLE, INSTANT)

For 3 motes, Rose makes a gambit with (Intelligence + Occult) against the Resolve of a spirit within short range to force it to either materialize or dematerialize. The gambit's difficulty is (spirit's Essence + 2). Success forces either outcome at no cost. White Rose may prevent the spirit from reversing this change for two rounds. A spirit whose Essence exceeds White Rose's can pay one Willpower to resist. Spirits that are not capable of dematerializing cannot be dematerialized with this Charm and using it on an allied spirit is free.

CRACK-IN-THE-WALL PRECISION (DEXTERITY, REFLEXIVE, INSTANT)

For 6 motes, after an attack roll ignores (1 + extra successes, maximum 5) points of hardness or soak from armor. In cities, any excess points leftover after reduction convert to dice of decisive or post-soak withering damage.

DISCREET KILLING SPEED (DEXTERITY, SIMPLE, INSTANT)

For 2 motes, 2 Initiative, Rose makes a withering or decisive surprise attack against an enemy, who suffers -2 Defense against it. If they used Runaway Cart Swiftens this round, add +1 success on the attack roll. Once per scene unless reset by succeeding on a decisive attack.

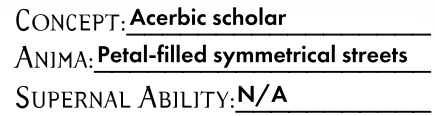
**RUNAWAY CART SWIFTNESS (DEXTERITY,
REFLEXIVE, INSTANT)**

For 4 motes, at the start of the round add +3 to Rose's effective Initiative to determine when they act, and if Rose acts before any enemies they gain +1 Initiative. The former increases to +6 in cities.

**LIVING WALL FORTIFICATION
(STAMINA, REFLEXIVE, INSTANT)**

For 4 motes, Rose gains +3 soak or Hardness 4 against a withering or decisive attack. In cities, this lasts until Rose's next turn instead.





PERCEPTION_____●●●●○
INTELLIGENCE_____●●●●○
WITS_____●●●○○

[illegible]

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

[illegible]

PARRY: 2 RESOLVE: 3
 EVASION: 4 GUILE: 3
 RUSH: 4 DISENGAGE: 8
 JOIN BATTLE: 6

Natural Soak: Stamina + Charms • Parry: ([Dexterity + Brawl, Martial Arts or Melee, whichever is appropriate to the character's current armament] / 2, round up) + Weapon's Defenses bonus
Evasion: ([Dexterity + Dodge] / 2, round up) – armor's mobility penalty • *Resolve:* ([Wits + Integrity + specialty] / 2, round up) • *Guile:* ([Manipulation + Socialize + specialty] / 2, round up)



INTIMACIES

[illegible]

CHARMS

[illegible]

INVENTORY

Pleated Clothes	
Abacus and Tools of Calculation	
Scrolls of Knowledge	
Chakrams	
Concealed Chain Vest	



The Three Banners Festival is an **Exalted Third Edition** Jumpstart for **Exigents**, chosen of the small gods. Four Exigents from across Creation have been drawn to Great Forks, a holy city ruled by gods made prosperous through iniquity, by letters from the god of rumors Blue Murmur. Yet, before they can meet their patron, a horrible crime occurs — leaving the Exalts framed.

An adventure of crime and divinity ensues as the Exigents work to clear their names, moving in the shadows as the holy Three Banners Festival attracts pilgrims and celebration. Can they expose the true culprit in time to prevent Great Forks' packed streets from turning into a bloodbath? Play to find out.

This **Exalted Third Edition** Jumpstart includes the following:

- A full introduction for Storytellers and players to **Exalted Third Edition's** rules, with advice for groups entirely new to role-playing games.
- Four pre-made Exigent characters for players to use.
- A fully written adventure of crime, action, and divinity.

