

# UNDER THE ROSE™



**EXALTED**  
SECOND EDITION



# UNDER THE ROSE

**Under the Rose** is a story set within a possible future of Creation in which the Scarlet Empress has reclaimed her throne and ended the brutal Realm Civil War as told in the **Return of the Scarlet Empress** saga. This supplement is intended for play as a one-shot story with pre-generated protagonists or inserted into an ongoing series as a major plot point. By default, the story features the signature Solar circle of Dace, Panther, Arianna, Harmonious Jade and Swan as they attempt to break into the Imperial Manse, extract the Roseblack and stop the resurgent Scarlet Empress from destroying another city with the Realm Defense Grid. These events take place at a critical juncture in history, the turning point at which the Second Age becomes the Third and the end of days truly begins.

Storytellers who want a more detailed look at the events leading up to **Under the Rose** or who are curious where the story can go following its conclusion can find these answers in **Return of the Scarlet Empress**. It is possible to play through the epic break-in with nothing but the **Exalted** core


rulebook. Yet, access to other supplements can greatly enrich the play experience with more ideas for terrifying guardians, wondrous traps and further setting elements to make the journey through the manse even more memorable and exciting. Readers who plan to enjoy **Under the Rose** as players rather than Storytellers, however, are warned that reading past this point will spoil the Imperial Manse's surprises.

## PRELUDE

Years after the disappearance of the Empress, the Scarlet Dynasty at last exploded into brutal civil war. Many candidates initially vied for the ultimate prize, but as the conflict raged on, factions dissolved and merged until only those of Tepet Ejava (better known as the Roseblack) and Mnemon remained. Over time, it became clear that Mnemon's forces could not prevail in battle, so she reorganized them into a guerilla insurgency. In the end, this move proved insufficient. Although Mnemon never surrendered or conceded to her rival, her insurgents could not stem







the Roseblack's rising popular appeal or the inertia of her claim. With no meaningful challenge remaining, Ejava proclaimed herself Shogun.

Ejava's reign lasted precisely five days.

On the fifth day of the Second Dragon-Blooded Shogunate, the Scarlet Empress used a warning setting on the Realm Defense Grid to announce her return to the world. She invited the Roseblack to attend her and receive honor for keeping the Realm intact. Ejava accepted this invitation and journeyed into the Imperial Manse, returning not as Shogun, but as the Realm's first Minister of Reconstruction. Equal parts majordomo and regent, the Roseblack took over the day-to-day operations of rebuilding the Realm so her liege-ancestor could focus on solving the nation's bigger problems. Mnemon, meanwhile, simply transferred the target of her rebellion to her mother in a continuance of her bid for power, recruiting criminals and political malcontents alike into the Righteous Orphan Rebellion.

The return of the Scarlet Empress took Creation by surprise. The Threshold nations were not overjoyed to see her back on the throne, but she did offer stability after a very frightening and devastating civil war, so the response wasn't entirely negative. Ultimately, most governments settled on bribing her to leave them alone with a combination of favorable trade deals, outright tribute and promises to welcome Immaculate missionaries and Wyld Hunt expeditions.

Although the Scavenger Lands maintained their usual quiet defiance, this stance did not protect the Solar circle consisting of Dace, Panther, Arianna, Harmonious Jade and Swan from repeated ambushes by fanatical warrior monks. The circle's constituents remained divided on how to react to the change of regime, so they kept a relatively low profile and waited for the Realm's next move.

It wasn't long in coming. The city of Thorns vanished in a typhoon of red fire and stone-smashing force, taking with it the taint of the Mask of Winters and his vile undead hordes. It was a city stained with the stink of massacre and the ineffable evil of the Deathlords, a beachhead from which the dead could plague the living. Nevertheless, thousands of living citizens still squatted throughout the conquered bastion of culture and learning when the Scarlet Empress unleashed the full might of her Defense Grid upon the land.

Despite the civilian casualties, the Empress's attack endeared her to Thorns' neighbors, even warming relations with the Confederation of Rivers. The message to the Solar Exalted of the Scavenger Lands was clear: The Realm was back and would not tolerate Anathema empires in their backyard. This left the circle with the uncomfortable conclusion that it had to somehow seize control of the Imperial Manse (or at least disable it) before the Empress decided to move past saber-rattling and turn her full trigger-happy attention to the "Anathema problem."





Chartering passage on a commercial freighter under false names as a pair of scavenger lords and their bodyguards, the circle crossed the Inland Sea to the port city of Dragonsmouth and traveled by river on to the Imperial City. By keeping a low profile, the Solars easily blended in with the crowds of other businessmen and secured lodging in a modestly upscale rental townhouse. After a fitful night of sleep, they split up for a day of scouting and gathering information across the city. They returned without any real progress on how to get past the new barrier wall erected around the manse and the legion garrison protecting the site. The story begins as the Solars return to their rented townhouse that evening to find a green-eyed stranger waiting for them.

with one hand resting on his lap and the other holding a cup of steaming tea.

At a glance, the man's unassuming ubiquitous gray robes mark him as a professional savant or academic bureaucrat, someone of minor intellectual talent and no particular consequence who counts tedious numbers and memorizes menial facts for the Thousand Scales. Myriad individuals of like aspect live and work throughout the city.

His wrinkled and tired face is not so much old as it is worn out, but he would be rakishly handsome if he smiled instead of letting worries furrow his brow in a perpetual scowl of disapproval. His hair is close-cropped salt-and-pepper with much more salt than pepper, and he is remarkable at least for being unflappable in the face of whatever the Solars do to take control of the situation. If questioned as to his identity or given the chance to speak freely, he says the following:

"I have a message of the utmost importance for the five of you. My name is Master Heron, Chosen of the Maiden of Secrets. I mean you no harm." He accompanies this declaration by setting aside his teacup and raising his arms in a gesture of cooperative surrender as the emerald sign of Jupiter appears on his brow.

### SKIPPING TO THE GOOD PARTS

The prelude of **Under the Rose** establishes considerable action for the protagonists leading up to the story, glossing over the actual challenges that could reasonably be associated with crossing the Inland Sea and traveling across the Blessed Isle—from pirates to military checkpoints to dogged Immaculate hunters. All of these events offer considerable story potential. Yet, they ultimately serve to fill the time spent getting the characters from the Scavenger Lands to the Imperial Manse so they can focus on staging the most epic and harrowing break-in since the theft of necromancy from the Neverborn. Therefore, the story hits the fast-forward button to pick up where the real action is.

Storytellers incorporating the plot of **Under the Rose** into an existing series rather than running a one-shot story can certainly use the narrative-gloss approach taken with the default plot. Yet, ongoing games allow the luxury of time in which to explore subplots in detail and can afford to spend more time on the cloak-and-dagger heroics and clever plots required to successfully penetrate enemy territory. **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. I—The Blessed Isle** offers in-depth information on the Imperial City and the Realm that Storytellers can use to expand the scope of infiltrating the heart of the Dragon-Blooded regime.


### CHOSEN OF WHAT?

This is (most likely) the circle's first encounter with a Sidereal Exalt. All of them with a dot or more of Occult are familiar with Jupiter as the Maiden of Secrets and can logically infer that a Chosen of Jupiter would be tasked with finding and protecting knowledge. Arianna has read apocryphal accounts of First Age Exalted called Viziers, but she has never had reason to suppose any survived the Usurpation (assuming they ever existed).

If the characters actually attack him, Master Heron uses a Sidereal Charm named Avoidance Kata, bending fate so that he was never present. He's no longer there, and the characters have no recollection of having met him. He had planned for such a contingency, though, and previously alerted his secretary familiar in Yu-Shan of an appointment to visit the Lawgivers precisely one half hour later. He meets that later appointment in the precise nick of time, stepping out of yellow starlight in their midst with another Charm called Yellow Path. When the Solars suddenly remember having met him before, he cuts out the preamble to deliver shocking revelations in hopes that the circle will hear him out. Ultimately, the Solars would have to be acting considerably out of character not to give him such a chance absent any demonstration of hostility on his part. Hopefully, the face-off never gets to actual violence. As soon as the circle allows him to proceed, he does so:

### A FATEFUL WARNING

Given recent run-ins with assassins, the likeliest response of the circle to the intruder is drawn weapons or even actual combat. Bitter experience has taught them that people who consider them interesting and know where to find them are dangerous. The visitor does not make any sudden or hostile movements to antagonize the Solars, though, regardless of what aggressive posture they assume. Instead, he sits calmly



“Earlier today, I was granted a personal visitation by my lady, the Maiden of Secrets, who called me away from my duties guarding fate and commanded me to meet you here in this place at this time. She spoke of your intent to penetrate the Imperial Manse before the Scarlet Empress makes another attack with the Realm Defense Grid. No doubt, you carefully guarded the secret of your plans, and that secrecy drew them to my lady’s attention. Your mission is the fulfillment of necessity. You *must* succeed, and you *must* know certain things if you are to succeed.”

Master Heron reaches into a fold of his robe at this point and hands a small book to Arianna. It is the capstone journal of noted contemporary Realm geomancer V’neef Bijar, chronicling her lifelong obsession with the secrets of the Imperial Manse. The Twilight is familiar with Bijar’s work from her connections within the sorcerous community, but the Terrestrial and her research disappeared toward the end of the Realm Civil War and neither has been seen since.

### BIJAR’S JOURNAL (RESOURCES ●●●● [UNIQUE])

The research treatise of the Imperial Manse is full of notes, drawings and images painstakingly copied from archival fragments. It is clear that Bijar went beyond verifiable historical accounts to plumb a host of texts deemed apocryphal and untrustworthy by reputable scholars. Thankfully, Master Heron has marked through the worst of these errors and scribbled dryly humorous corrections in the margins.

The book adds a three-die equipment bonus to any Ability roll to know information about the Imperial Manse, but reliance on the text means any failure is treated as a botch because of misinformation. Storytellers can also use the book as a narrative device to share information about the manse, steering the characters away from traps that are presently beyond their ability to handle and toward obstacles they can bypass with sufficient effort.

“Consider this a token of goodwill. Don’t take anything you read in there as holy writ, but it’s more information than you had, so you’re welcome. I’ve taken the liberty of adding a few comments of my own. My last incarnation helped drag the manse down the mountain to Vanchow during the After-shock War, so I like to think I know a thing or two about it. Now *that* was a Neighborhood Relocation Scheme! Anyway, something terrible is going to happen tonight. Jupiter didn’t see fit to tell me what, and I didn’t ask. I do know many will die, somehow making the manse vulnerable. When you see the signal—evidently you can’t miss it—the legionnaires

will leave, and you can go over the wall. Bring a lot of rope. You will know what to do from there.”

The elder Sidereal is apologetically evasive if questioned on the details of his message, claiming his instructions did not include more information than he has shared. If Arianna checks the veracity of this claim or anything else the Sidereal says with Judge’s Ear Technique, he believes he is telling the truth. He paces the room as he explains the last details, walking back and forth beside an open window without stopping to look through it.

“There is one more thing. The Empress will not be there, but the Minister of Reconstruction will, and she is only minimally guarded—if you don’t count the maze of deathtraps between you and her, obviously. Something terrible from beyond fate threatens to disrupt Tepet Ejava’s ordained destiny to bring lasting peace to the Dynasty. If you don’t rescue her tonight from this unknown menace, she is lost, and events that must happen will not. Her fate is tied to your fate. Save the Minister, and she will help you end the threat of the Defense Grid. I wish all of you good fortune from the bottom of my heart. Do not fail. Do not falter. All our fates lie in your hands.”

With his speech complete, the Sidereal dives out of the window and tumbles in midair, grabbing a handful of glittering powder from a belt pouch and hurling it ahead of him at a large puddle on the street. He vanishes with a splash as though slipping beneath the waves of an ocean. The water settles with no trace of him. Unsurprisingly, no one else on the street happens to be looking at the right place to notice this bizarre occurrence.

### CASING THE MANSE

Harmonious Jade has the Charms to sneak past the soldiers and cross the moat, dashing along vast support chains from which elevator pulleys dangle in the dark. Such a scouting mission preemptively reveals the hordes of demon workers and the opportunity to skip half the manse’s defenses by entering it from the chasm depths, validating Master Heron’s suggestion to bring rope.

The Imperial Manse’s front door is warded against all magic that would grant entry with a roll-off pool of 20 dice, but it may explicitly be bypassed with Door-Evading Technique. Inside, the visitor finds herself in a wide, dim aisle lit only by the glow of stained-glass ornamental pillars depicting ancient Solar luminaries. The path leads through a cathedral-like space up a low flight of stairs to a circular jade dais marked with sunburst and gear symbols.

An emotionless voice addresses the Exalt in Old Realm, a language Harmonious Jade recognizes but hasn’t learned. She remembers and can repeat the words later to find out she was told, “I am sorry, oh Prince of the Earth, but your present incarnation has not been licensed for teleportation into the Panopticon Cataclysmic. Please refer further inquiries to the Office of the Hierophant.” The voice belongs to Servant (see p. 15), who can teleport authorized personnel



from the dais directly to the Basilica of Final Victory (see p. 18). Otherwise, the only way in is to twist a well-marked crystal on the far wall, opening the dais to reveal a spiral staircase descending into the labyrinth of war machines and hungry demons below.

### THE SIGNAL

Lacking any better alternatives, the characters wait for nightfall and camp out as close to the Imperial Manse as they can get without drawing attention. They watch the sentries joke with one another and, for a long time, nothing happens. Then two geysers of Essence, burning with the brightness of the noonday sun, erupt from vents set in the ground to either side of the squat structure. The jets reach more than a thousand feet into the air before cutting out as quickly as they appeared. The legionnaires panic and scatter, even as their Terrestrial officers begin shouting orders over the roaring plumes. As a unit, they assume a ready position, weapons drawn, and it seems the signal—if that was the signal—failed to achieve the promised result.


That changes as fires ignite in other parts of the city, first a handful of blazes and then dozens and hundreds. Mobs come out. Looting begins. The overwhelmed Black Helms call upon military backup, and the legions respond. The characters watch in astonishment as the ranks file out to help suppress the riots, realizing that they are witnessing the most spectacular coordinated terrorist strike in the history of modern warfare. They cannot help but be impressed by Mnemon's audacity. With her occult knowledge, Arianna can deduce that the Essence-venting plumes are the manse's way of maintaining geomantic equilibrium in the face of widespread disruption. Until its dragon lines stabilize, which should take several hours at the very least, many of its most deadly defense systems will not work. Seizing the moment fate has given them, the characters may scramble up and over the barrier wall and look down into the great fissure torn into the land around the manse where the legendary Scarlet Garden once stood. It seems the Solars have more immediate concerns.

### GOING DOWN

The moat crevasse is roughly 150 yards wide along most of its length and extends down as far as the Solars can see, illuminated by the flickering glow of torches, smelting furnaces and enormous cisterns full of phosphorescent acid. By these lights and from the smells







wafting up out of the depths, this isn't just an industrial hellhole, but a literal one as well. Thousands of demons roar as they assemble and drag heavy statues of alien form into place, joining them to the rock by pouring out the horrid ichors of the cisterns to fuse them together.

The Solars must rappel more than half a mile down into the moat-fissure in search of an entry point. Although Harmonious Jade cloaks everyone with Spreading Night's Shroud for the descent, this Charm does little to make the journey any less nerve wracking. The circle is mindful that it takes only one perceptive lookout to sound the alarm. No one relishes the prospect of fighting a pitched battle without cover while dangling by a thread over a seemingly bottomless pit.

On the way down, the Solars bear horrified witness to the thousands of demons laboring to pervert the manse's exterior. Gruesome faces and clawed appendages leer from walls where pieces of Second and Third Circle demons have been fused with the living rock as geomantic hellforged wonders, some of which yawn wide enough that they could swallow whole city blocks. Chains of brass and lead visibly charged with unholy energies connect the friezes in a haphazard web, linking them together into a single artifact. The acrid stench of vitriol fills the air with caustic fumes that burn the back of the throat with every tortured breath.

The exposed lower half of the manse lies riddled with cracks and holes half-drilled, half-clawed into every available surface by the demon engineers swarming over them. Seen from afar, the extent of the damage gives the marble superstructure a porous appearance like the bones of some impossibly huge behemoth. Worse and bigger things can be heard bellowing deeper in the fissure, so prudence suggests swinging into the first suitable hole the characters find.

If Arianna is using All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight, she sees the deadly flares of Essence that surge and writhe like angry serpents throughout the damaged foundations and understands that this is the result of demonic tampering. It behooves her, then, to warn her circlemates to activate Integrity-Protecting Prana. If she isn't watching the dragon lines or doesn't mention them still, the Solars observe a sun-bright arc of energy petrify an entire squad of demons and shatter them into glowing dust, giving ample incentive to activate anti-Shaping defenses.

## USEFUL RULES AND ROLLS

**Descending Safely:** The entire descent is an extended (Dexterity + Athletics) roll with difficulty 2, cumulative difficulty 20 and a roll interval of five minutes. A botch at any point means a character falls (unless she catches herself) and gives away her position to all the nearby demons. Provided nothing outright breaks Harmonious Jade's Charm, the circle remains undetected without need for Stealth rolls.

**Fighting While Suspended:** Called shots to snap a rope that one of the Solars is hanging from suffer a -4 external penalty. Characters who lose their rope or who fall for any

reason while rappelling should certainly get a chance to grab hold of a circlemate or an intact rope to avoid the long drop into darkness. Trying to fight and simultaneously cling to a lifeline requires divided attention like fighting while swimming at difficulty 3 (see **Exalted**, p. 155), save that the character falls if the roll goes badly.

## THE GRAND EXTENSION

The building that Realm citizens call the Imperial Manse is only the structure's main access hatch. The true manse below is not a palace of wonders, but a command fortress buried at the heart of a military industrial complex of deathtraps and doomsday devices. Whether the circle somehow enters from the top or wisely rappels in from the side, the Solars still find themselves in a labyrinth of big halls, bigger rooms and yet bigger machines that compose most of the manse. Those who enter from the top simply have to spend twice as long working their way through the maze.

Collectively referred to as the Grand Extension, the many layers piled atop the manse's original superstructure are the product of many mad geniuses striving to outdo one another's destructive excesses over a period of centuries. The design of the place is quintessentially Solar, with polished jade-alloy architecture, corridors wide enough to ride a tyrant lizard through and graceful (but wholly unnecessary) adornments lit by prismatic strobestone crystals. Every surface seems to shout, "Look at me!" as though jostling for the onlooker's attention against the gaudiness of the wonders around it. Everything is big. Everything shines. Everything is better than the thing it rests on.

## IMPERVIOUS WALLS

As long as Creation endures, all parts of the Imperial Manse are truly indestructible, immune to all physical harm as a perfect defense. It was made to stand unscathed against the Kukla's wrath, the Unconquered Sun's spear and a thousand cracked spheres of She Who Lives in Her Name. This durability also extends to the structure's inner walls, doors and most architectural features, so intruders must run the manse's gauntlet without blazing their own path. If the manse is all that remains of the world, its structures drop to soak 50B/50L. The recent desecration perpetrated against the manse has decayed its foundations to post-Creation fragility, however, allowing the Empress's demons to insert hellforged grafts into its walls.

## WARDS AND LOCKS

The Imperial Manse's walls are as solid to dematerialized entities as to material beings, so curious spirits cannot just drift in and take a peek. Similarly, its geomancy has been calibrated to disrupt all attempts to scry or teleport into it from the outside, resulting in no effect. Attempts to teleport from other parts of the manse into the Panopticon Cataclysmic via means other than the manse itself get diverted to a random point far from the residential area.



All locks within the manse are immune to non-magical efforts to pick them, but magic such as Lock-Opening Touch works normally in most places. Trap or puzzle rooms cannot be bypassed with magical lockpicking. (For example, there's no unlocking the door into the Panopticon Cataclysmic without beating the Infinite Golem Compiler [see p. 14], but unlocking the way back is fine.)

Internal doors close slowly but inexorably, affording several seconds in which characters may take one physical action, such as wedging a bulkhead half open with something indestructible or sliding through just before it closes. Storytellers should consider how fast characters can move and where they are when a door begins closing to determine what responses are possible.

### METASPATIAL ARCHITECTURE

Despite being the largest known manse in history, the Imperial Manse could not possibly hold all the mechanisms necessary to perform its intended function. Thankfully, Autochthon knew how to fold the manse's geometry and geomancy through Elsewhere in tangled loops of collocation and superimposition. This remarkable feature allows many rooms to be larger on the inside than the outside and actively confounds intruders by snaring them in Möbius loops of infinitely recursive tunnels that never escape the maze.

Navigational deflection is an unblockable, undodgeable Shaping attack that assaults the special trait of a character's location through spatial folding and does not target those marked with haloes or signets (see below). The forced "teleportation" that results is extremely subtle, occurring when characters round bends or step out of sight of companions. Victims turn back to find they aren't where they thought, or think it was their friends who suddenly disappeared. They have no way to know where on the same overall height level in the manse they are. Integrity-Protecting Prana and similar Shaping defenses thwart the space-bending maze, as does staying together. The maze attacks individuals and never separates those who maintain an unobstructed line of sight with others, even if they aren't actively looking at one another at all times. Lone infiltrators can stealthily follow guardians to avoid displacement. Characters bearing a halo or signet are not deflected, nor are Exalted who are genuinely attempting to leave the manse rather than penetrate deeper.

### GETTING AROUND

Most of the manse is laid out so that there is a place for an adult human to walk, even if some of the tunnels get pretty narrow and low at times. This is not to say that other forms of locomotion don't have a place or that walking is always easy. Different tiers of the manse connect via spiral staircases, elevators, ladders and open pits over enchanted platforms that negate all damage from falling onto them.

**Under the Rose** is deliberately vague on the subject of how many traps and guardians or other encounters the protagonists must overcome to reach the Panopticon Cataclysmic. Certainly, they will face multiple combats and a wide

variety of hazards, but the overall intention is that the Solars can make it to the hearthroom before the night is through. If this doesn't seem likely, further planned encounters can be streamlined or cut entirely. Yet, if the break-in is going too easily and quickly, a sufficiently large ambush can bog the heroes down and deplete their motes enough to encourage a slower, more cautious approach.

**Climbing:** High ceilings and a glorious abundance of protruding machinery make the Imperial Manse the perfect jungle gym for acrobatically inclined characters. There are plenty of places characters might wish to reach by climbing and no shortage of handholds, reducing the difficulty of climbing-related Athletics checks by one relative to climbing comparable natural inclines such as cliff faces. In contrast, areas slick with oil add two or more to the difficulty of climbing checks, resulting in a fall on any failed roll of an extended climbing action.

**Swimming:** Outside of areas flooded with appropriate elemental energy, there isn't much water to be found in the manse. Vast holding tanks of acid and poisonous chemicals don't make for very pleasant impromptu swimming pools save to characters with the supernatural resilience to ignore the hazard. None of the Solars in the default circle have yet learned such Charms.

**Flying:** Moving through the air is a good way to avoid setting off pressure plates and other triggers built with the assumption that intruders walk. That doesn't make flying safe, however. Many guardians have ranged attacks, and some demons and elementals can fly too. No one in the provided circle presently knows how to fly.


**Slick Terrain:** Not all oils are obvious black sludge; some are nearly transparent, requiring a successful difficulty 4

### HALOS AND SIGNETS

Servant (see p. 15) recognizes two levels of security access to the facility: masters and guests. Autochthon and the bearer of the manse's hearthstone are automatically the former and may extend or withdraw this designation from others by informing Servant. Guests are guardians and others whom a master has given permission to be in the manse and perhaps even to access some of its auxiliary systems.

The manse marks its masters with numinous crowns of light while they are in residence, allowing them to holographically project data from any instrument in the Basilica of Final Victory (see p. 18) to aid in tactical planning. Servant tags guests with tongues of heatless fire upon their brows, encoding their access privileges. Guardians and traps attack all visitors lacking a halo or signet.





(Perception + Awareness) check to notice in time. Otherwise, stepping onto the nearly frictionless fluid prompts a reflexive difficulty 4 (Dexterity + Athletics) roll for the character to keep his balance and not fall prone (or worse, off some high point or over the edge of a long drop).

### GUARDIAN DEMONS

The Solars who built onto the Imperial Manse bound many thousands of First Circle demons, scores of Second Circle demons and even a pair of Third Circle demons to the eternal task of guarding and maintaining their new prison. All of these demons bear signets (see sidebar) chaining them to the manse's reincarnation engine, making sure that any non-permanent demise or forced banishment to Malfeas merely causes them to burn to ash and re-form fully healed a day later at some predetermined location in the fortress. Only unmaking offers release.

A wise security system encases the Third Circle demons in paralytic exoskeletons of indestructible amethyst whenever the manse suffers geomantic weakening, keeping the Demon Princes from taking advantage of the crisis. The crystals shatter as soon as full power returns or a halo bearer overrides the system. The Solars may well come upon the statues of these interred Third Circles in their explorations,

surrounded by First Circle thralls and a Second Circle attendant-bodyguard.

Guardians make regular patrols in accordance with their specific orders and natures, primarily staying corporeal with maximum actions banked to Principle of Motion so they can immediately attack intruders without losing the motes needed to materialize. Sentry demons are usually incorporeal, the better to set up ambushes and avoid the same.

Storytellers can find traits for erymanthoi and neomah in **Exalted**, but these two species hardly do justice to the hideous menagerie of demons within the manse. As a stopgap measure, the Storyteller can shuffle trait dots, substitute alternate attack modes and Charms or apply mutations to build new demons, giving them whatever freakish appearances suit their function. A two-headed, lizard-scaled giant that spits bone quills like arrows is not likely to be recognized for the core blood ape traits underneath. Similarly, Octavian is not one of the demons bound to the manse, but he may serve as inspiration for other peers. If this seems like too much work, Storytellers can find many demons of all three circles in **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. V—The Roll of Glorious Divinity II** and **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. V—Malfeas**.





Encounters with demon guardians tend to be straightforward fights. The spirits aren't interested in parleying. If they see an intruder who lacks a halo or signet, they attack and keep attacking until the intruder is dead. The demons are permitted to fight intelligently, at least, so they can withdraw from engagements where they are losing to gather reinforcements and/or set up new ambushes elsewhere. Patrols tend to consist of eight First Circle demons or smaller but deadlier squads of four warriors led by a Second Circle demon. Combat or other commotion attracts additional patrols within minutes, so it is important to win and leave quickly. (If needed, Arianna can harvest motes from demons using Ghost-Eating Technique and share them with her circle via Essence-Lending Method.)

### RECLAMATION DEMONS

Not all the demons in the manse were summoned in distant antiquity to protect it. The Scarlet Empress's hell-forged retrofits to the Imperial Manse must be built on the interior of the manse's walls as much as the exterior, riddling its superstructure like cancer. To that end, the demon laborers bore tirelessly into the fortress and burrow into it like maggots on meat, dragging the heavy pieces of blasphemous machinery they must install. Some of these work details are


accompanied by Terrestrial geomancers enslaved by the Empress's Charms and overseen by a Second Circle demon handler. Panther could free these Terrestrials with Thunder Breaks the Clouds (see p. 29), but he must weigh the moral obligation to help against the need for speed and silence to complete the mission and save the world.

**The Queen of Hell's demon engineers are as unwelcome as any other intruders. Traps and guardians attack them ruthlessly, and it is very likely that the Solars hear or personally encounter a chaotic mob of demons tearing one another limb from limb soon after they enter. The only way to tell the allegiance of the combatants apart is to spot the flash of signet flames upon the sentinels' brows.**

### ELEMENTAL UNLEASHING ENGINES

One of the most awe-inspiring weapons in the arsenal of the Defense Grid is a geomantic compressor that conjures legions of mayfly elementals from the manse's sacred convergence of dragon lines. The new spirits come to life aware of the task that wholly defines their existence. Although that weapon is presently locked with other primary weapons, the manse still retains the autonomous capacity to spawn warrior constructs as defenders when intruders enter specific areas. Encounters with this defense system resemble encounters





with demon patrols, but occur without warning (giving +5 to the newly spawned elementals' Join Battle rolls as they explode into existence and attack).

When the manse spawns guardian elementals, it creates one lesser elemental dragon per intruder. It does so by using each intruder's Essence as a lightning rod to attract the living fury of its dragon lines. Fakharu is one example of such a dragon (see **Exalted**, p. 302). The spirits materialize into existence with full reserves of motes, Willpower, Virtue channels and prepared Principle of Motion actions. Many resemble stylized humanoid giants or other monsters rather than dragons. Their Motivation is to destroy the intruders that brought them into existence, and they pursue that Motivation with monomaniacal zeal as though sorcerously bound to the task of doing so. Once they succeed or their quarry leaves the area they exist to protect, the elementals expire. Death disintegrates their bodies back into the dragon lines that spawned them.

In the manse's weakened state, its engines cannot remotely conjure dragons, so instead, it produces two elementals of any species with a maximum of Essence 3 per intruder. Several examples can be found on pages 303–306 of **Exalted**, with many more explained in **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I**. Previous advice on customizing demons also applies here.

Should the manse be used as it was at the conclusion of the Balorian Crusade or during the obliteration of Thorns, a legion of elementals comes into existence in the air above the manse like a spray of fireworks. The newborn elementals fly as a barrage of force moving 1,000 miles per hour toward a target anywhere in Creation. Falling like a meteor shower, the glowing figures strike the moment they crash to earth.

The manse can launch one legion per hour, each containing lesser elemental dragons in all special character slots (who count as relays in addition to other duties) with a diverse mix of Essence 3 elementals for rank and file. These units have Magnitude 9, Drill 9 and Might 4; they are also tireless and have perfect morale. Adamant Countermagic applied to an elemental legion as a whole or to its leader causes the entire legion to explode into a 9L/minute for one hour, Trauma 4 hazard of aspect-appropriate elemental energies filling a sphere one mile in diameter. The Empress only unleashed Gaian elements due to the limits of her Terrestrial Exaltation. Celestial wielders can also summon exotic-aspect legions (as can the manse's internal dragon-spawning defenses).

### **ESCHATON-SERIES WARGOLEMS (ARTIFACT ●●●)**

These bulky clockwork giants stand four yards tall and three across. Their bodies are quite primitive as Solar automata go, built very early in the First Age before relations with the Mountain Folk cooled and Autochthon placed the Great Geas upon them. The war machines feature extensive moving parts with little solid state enchantment apart from orichalcum filaments upgrading joint coordination and infusing their outer white jade carapace with righteousness. The

*Eschatons'* blown-glass thought cores hide behind exquisite drama masks of Isidoran tusk ivory carved to resemble the caricaturized features of prehistoric Jadeborn. Successful called shots into the masks' eye slits penetrate directly into their delicate brains. The arms of these giants terminate in crab-like vice pincers that open to reveal the smoldering barrels of Pyrian flamencasters with infinite ammunition.

Demons scatter and hide where the *Eschatons* walk, howling in panic when they hear the first distant boom of approaching thunderous footsteps. The machines do not acknowledge the signets of First Circle demons and choose demons over other targets. Their hard-coded imperative to destroy such spirits could not be deprogrammed at reasonable expense when the Deliberative transferred the light wing of 200 *Eschatons* from postwar pogrom duty to manse defense. They roam in patrols of two. Experienced players might require two to four patrols to challenge their Solars.

**Motivation:** Guard the Imperial Manse

**Attributes:** Strength 14 (4 to initiate grapples), Dexterity 3, Stamina 10; Charisma 3, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2; Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

**Virtues:** Automaton

**Abilities:** Archery 4, Athletics 2, Awareness 1 (Detecting Moving Objects +3), Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Rock-tongue) 1, Lore 1, Martial Arts 4 (Stomping +3), War 4

**Join Battle:** 4

**Attacks:**

*Closed Vise Wrecking Fist:* Speed 6, Accuracy 8, Damage 20B, PDV 3, Rate 2, Tags N; hit carries the effects of Heaven Thunder Hammer with a maximum knockback damage cap of 25B (see **Exalted**, p. 242)

*Crushing Vise Clinch:* Speed 7, Accuracy 7 (also adds 5 bonus successes to all grapple control checks), Damage 20L, Rate 1, Tags C,N,P

*Two-Ton Stomp:* Speed 7, Accuracy 10, Damage 30B, PDV 1, Rate 1, Tags N,P; hit automatically knocks target prone

*Pyrian Flamencaster:* Speed 7, Accuracy 8 (also triples aim dice bonus), Damage 12A levels, Range 300, Rate 1, Tags F

**Soak:** 20L/25B (Blessed jade plating, +15L/15B; Holy Hardness: 20L/20B against attacks from un-Exalted creatures of darkness, Hardness: 10L/10B against all other damage; no mobility or fatigue; called shots to eye slits made at -6 external penalty bypass armor entirely)

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

**Dodge DV:** 2     **Willpower:** 10

**Essence:** 2

**Other Notes:** Automaton Physiology. Repair 4. Target-recognition database allows *Eschatons* to infallibly identify demons as such upon perceiving them unless magically disguised. All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight reveals the sorcerous nature of the Pyrian flamencaster, successful Occult analysis of which determines that Sapphire Countermagic can stop it (but doesn't reveal that interrupting the blast causes the weapon to explosively backfire, amputating the





arm and inflicting 10 levels of unsoakable aggravated damage to the automaton). Adamant Countermagic-induced backfires destroy the automatons outright. The clockwork springs in the units' chest plates must be physically cranked to wind them up. A maximum charge of one hour's winding provides five hours of operation. The manse has repair bays where terrified demons perform this function and dash away, hopefully before the golems awaken.

### GOLEMS AREN'T PEOPLE

Automatons aren't living beings. Among other things, this means they don't eat, breathe, sleep or become fatigued. Their bodies are considered magical rather than mortal even if they lack an Essence pool, and they perfectly reject all Poison, Sickness and mutation effects (whether from Wyld exposure or transmogrifying attacks). They are considered living beings rather than inanimate objects for the purpose of soaking damage, however.

The minds of simple automatons such as those used in the Imperial Manse are not full personalities, but rather complex matrices of programmed behavioral imperatives. They pursue their Motivation and cannot think beyond it, lacking Intimacies. Constructs automatically fail all Virtue rolls and are considered to have a single dot unless acting in direct fulfillment of their Motivation, in which case they automatically succeed (and/or have effective Virtue 5). The created never make social attacks of their own, nor are they valid targets for mental influence unless they have been programmed to accept commands from that master (in which case communicated orders are sufficient and mental influence is unnecessary). All other orders are unacceptable to them. They have Willpower 10 and regain one Willpower point per hour. Characters may freely harm beings they believe are automatons without suppressing Compassion.

### ARETE-SERIES ARTIFICIAL HEROES

These extremely advanced hunter-killer automatons are not likely to be encountered until the Solars storm the Basilica of Final Victory to rescue the Roseblack (see pp. 19-20). If the Solars came down from the aboveground entrance rather than rappelling, the top quarter of the manse has hundreds of *Aretes* on guard detail along with other guardians. *Aretes* ignore demons who stay out of their way, so demons take great pains to stay out of their way. The obsidian warriors do not elicit the same panic as *Eschatons*. *Aretes* roam in squads of four, the auspicious number of excellence.

### ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Some areas of the manse are just plain inimical to life. Great cisterns the sizes of lakes hold acid or other dangerous alchemical reagents. Swimming through isn't required, but the bubbling surface adds tension to scenes spent crossing over on narrow bridges where demons could stage an ambush. Floor-mounted jets and scalding steam vents can turn hallways into ovens, while metal plates conduct arcs of lightning between them. Most hazards can be modeled by assigning them a Damage, interval and Trauma rating appropriate to the conditions (using the table on p. 131 of **Exalted** for comparisons to bonfires, acid baths and the like). Interesting examples include:

**Draconic Fury Nodes:** More than mere Essence artillery, these geomantic weapons realign the intersections of the manse's dragon lines so that deadly convergences of elemental Essence destroy everything in a particular area. Victims stand amidst a spectacular display of pyrotechnics that grows ever brighter and louder until it reaches criticality and dissolves everything in its path. Therefore, victims are never taken by surprise. The nodes seldom project a constant cataclysm inside the manse, instead reacting to a designated trigger event with a single cauterizing pulse.

Draconic Fury Node technology forms the heart of the Realm Defense Grid. Each individual war manse on the Blessed Isle can project widespread natural disasters as geomantic artillery. Use of the manse power requires a difficulty 5 (Intelligence + Lore) miscellaneous action taking six long ticks to complete. Success permits the gunner to choose an epicenter that lies up to (manse rating) miles away and a radius anywhere from 50 yards to one mile. The hazard coalesces when the gunner's DV refreshes. A botch means the weapon fires itself at the nearest concentration of Wyld Essence in range (or discharges randomly in the absence of such targets).

The Realm's war manses can also synchronize and feed power into the Sword of Creation, the focusing emitter transfixing the Imperial Mountain, which Autochthon forged from a superconductive spire found in the Wyld. Through the combined tsunami of Essence, the Defense Grid can rain unimaginable disaster upon any or all points in Creation simultaneously (minimum radius of 10 miles). The attack blasts the very Essence of the land as a one-time hazard, searing away Wyld zones, shadowlands and other such perversions. The limits of the Scarlet Empress's Terrestrial Exaltation allowed her to combine only the five Gaian elements into disasters and bore the terrible price of tearing apart random locations on the Blessed Isle with geomantic feedback whenever she fired at targets further than the Inland Sea. Celestial Exalted wielders can unleash any catastrophe they can imagine without harming the Blessed Isle.

**Scourswarms:** Sometimes demons panic and bolt in the middle of a fight, howls mingled with a peculiar clicking buzz that grows ever louder. Within a minute, thousands of tiny



golden grasshopper automatons arrive as a rapacious cloud, consuming all living and once-living material they find. Thankfully, the swarms only clean the exact paths they were programmed to follow, never exploring cracks, gaps under machines and so on. Although finding a hole or crevasse to duck out of the way is easy, taking cover might involve ejecting a cornered demon who has already claimed that lair. Such a fight isn't really a challenge for the Solars, except that they have only three to five actions to win before the swarm arrives. Physical violence against the swarm achieves nothing without area effects. Swatting a hundred bugs does not meaningfully diminish the thousands remaining.

**Unblemished Sanctity Aura:** The Panopticon Cataclysmic (see p. 14) is protected by a powerful Holy energy field projected by blessed engines. The radiance is invisible to mortal eyes but appears as a beautiful psychedelic aurora to All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight. Un-Exalted creatures of darkness swiftly burn to white ash if they cross into the consecrated space. This field in the Panopticon Cataclysmic is permanent, but a halo bearer can command it to extend throughout the rest of the manse should the demon guardians somehow rebel (at least until the corruption of the structure is complete).

**Fleshmelt Corridors:** These enchanted passages project invisible curtains of transmogrifying Shaping Essence that change the state of flesh from solid to liquid in the instant of contact. Sometimes, these corridors are obvious barriers marked with warning signs or an ominous scintillation in the air, while other zones are traps that bathe an entire chamber as soon as someone steps on a trigger-plate in the middle. Living victims who lack Integrity-Protecting Prana or comparable defenses against physical transformation instantly dissolve into gelatinous masses that suffer in burbling, blind agony

until they asphyxiate for lack of lungs (unable to take any physical actions during the process). Variants of these traps substitute other transformations, leaving victims petrified, ossified, vaporized, turned inside out, et cetera. The destructive Essence flares surging across the manse's damaged foundations are another example of this type of hazard.

**Inversion Smasher:** Invisible gravitational reversal pillars hurl the unwary up into the ceiling far above, impacting a sensor plate that deactivates the pillar for a second plummet. Damage is as per two terminal velocity falls, plus any supplemental hazards installed on the ceiling, such as razor-wire curtains or standing arcs of lightning.

## AUTOCHTHONOUS MANTLE

As the Lawgivers descend, Autochthonian design elements begin appearing alongside (and in some cases fused with) the Solar technology they have seen previously. Heavy bundles of cables and pneumatic piping join intricate clockwork assemblies and crackling crystal tubes full of white lightning, all while massive, well-oiled pistons smash and clang in the syncopated rhythms of automated industry. A thin haze of greasy smoke hangs heavy in the air at this transitional region.

No machine can harm Autochthon, so he doesn't think to place steam vents and flashing lightning arcs away from walkways or to wall off giant gears that could grind men to paste for straying too close. The universe notes the clanks and whirs of all machines as prayers to the Great Maker, so he basks in the symphony of his empowerment. Although the areas of the manse he built have fewer deliberate traps, they contain far more unintended hazards. Of notable exception are the tiered defenses he placed to separate the Panopticon Cataclysmic from the rest of the manse, forcing intruders to

### IMPERIAL MANSE HAZARDS

Name	Damage	Trauma
Moderate Hazards	1-5B/action	1-3
Serious Hazards	2-4L/action	2-4
Deadly Hazards	5-8L/action	3-6
Draconic Fury Nodes	6L/action	2L
War Manse Artillery	15L/action	4L
Defense Grid Strike	1,000A*	6L
Defense Grid Feedback	30B/minute	6
Unblemished Sanctity Aura	1A*/action	5L**
Scourswarm	4L*/action	4L
Fleshmelt Corridors	(Fatal Shaping)	—

\* Unsoakable

\*\* Holy; harms only un-Exalted creatures of darkness.



pass an enigma checkpoint and an infinite golem compiler to reach the top level of the habitable zone.

### ENIGMA CHECKPOINTS

As part of his Primordial nature, Autochthon loves puzzles and clever people who can solve puzzles. He could no more choose to build fortresses without puzzle-box flaws in their defenses than the Ebon Dragon could selflessly care about others. Accordingly, each enigma checkpoint is a room containing a challenge or trap designed to be circumvented with mastery of a particular Ability (difficulty 6 roll, most commonly using Intelligence). Once a single individual has passed the test, the room remains disarmed until it is empty, so one talented character can secure passage for others lacking that competence. Re-try penalties apply normally if a character fails and somehow survives to make another attempt.

Examples of enigmas follow, but these are intended to offer inspiration rather than provide an exhaustive listing. Not all puzzles clearly indicate the traits required to overcome them, but Storytellers should probably give some sort of hint if only to avoid player frustration at having to throw random dice pools around until they find something that works (hoping their characters survive the string of failures in the meantime). Storytellers should also make sure that the Solars encounter rooms that match one or more of their strengths, or else it should be evident that the room is not suited to their skills so they can double back and find another puzzle.

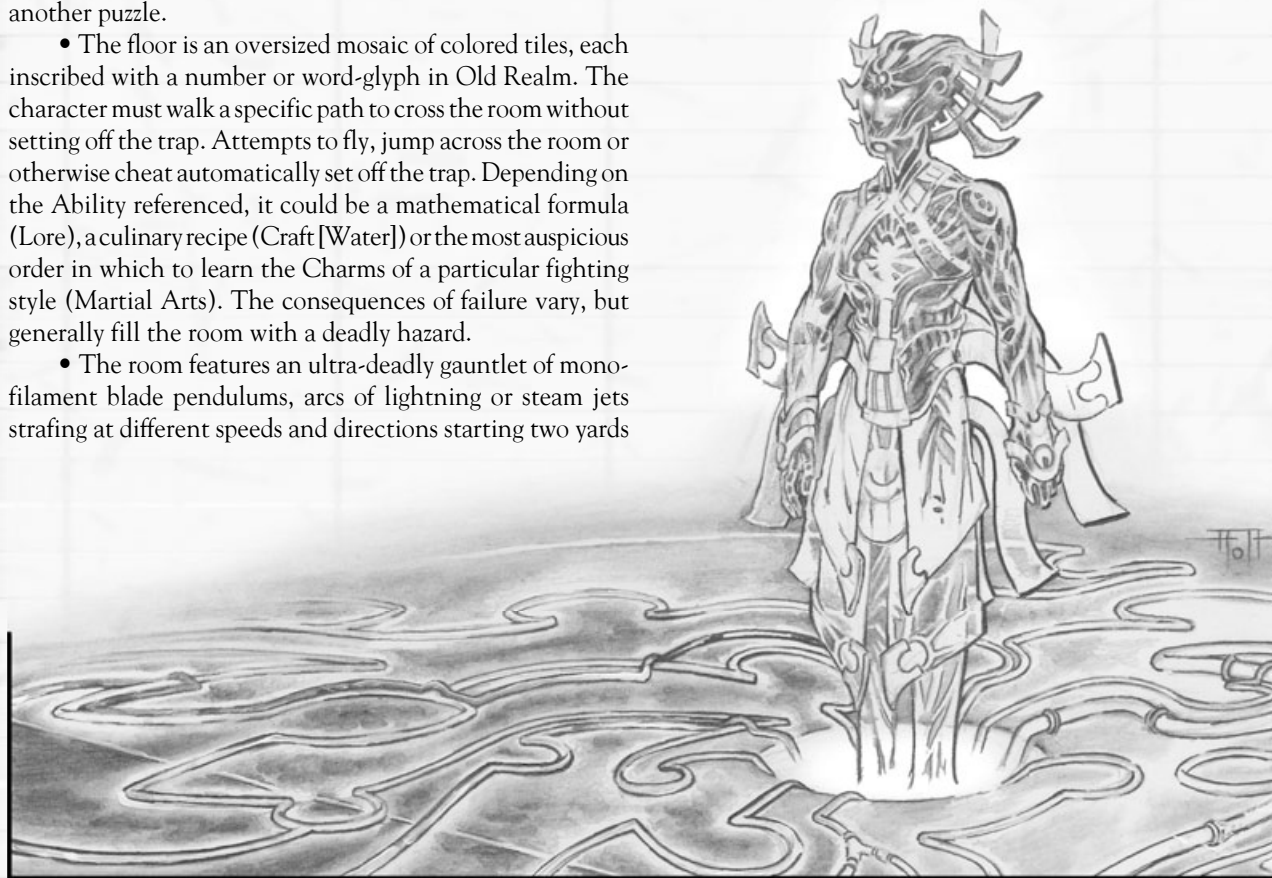
- The floor is an oversized mosaic of colored tiles, each inscribed with a number or word-glyph in Old Realm. The character must walk a specific path to cross the room without setting off the trap. Attempts to fly, jump across the room or otherwise cheat automatically set off the trap. Depending on the Ability referenced, it could be a mathematical formula (Lore), a culinary recipe (Craft [Water]) or the most auspicious order in which to learn the Charms of a particular fighting style (Martial Arts). The consequences of failure vary, but generally fill the room with a deadly hazard.

- The room features an ultra-deadly gauntlet of monofilament blade pendulums, arcs of lightning or steam jets strafing at different speeds and directions starting two yards

into the room. Anyone with a perfect defense can cross the hazard unharmed using a single activation, but this doesn't solve the puzzle to unseal the exit or stop the hazard. Discerning the correct path requires (Wits + Dodge); success means the character safely navigates the hazard and disarms it upon crossing safely.

- A hologlyphic emitter dais in the center of the room projects an image of Autochthon's humaniform *jouten*. The imposing giant's body appears chiefly composed of translucent adamant, revealing nigh-ininitely complex arrangements of clockwork and pneumatic organs made of the five magical materials moving beneath the surface. The character must persuade the illusion (or rather, the perfected calculation array running the illusion) that he has a right to pass through with [(Charisma or Manipulation) + Presence]. Failure means the image waves its hand dismissively and disintegrates the speaker like a fleshmelt corridor (see p. 12).

- There is no room. Upon entry, the characters stand on a small island of crystal floating in an infinite lightless void. The character must take a literal leap of faith, stepping out into nothingness with a certainty that there is a path using (Perception + Integrity). Success means the character safely walks across the nothing to find the door opposite and thereby collapse the void back into normal space. Failure means the character falls into the dark and vanishes, then somehow plummets from above to slam into the entry platform at terminal velocity.







## INFINITE GOLEM COMPILER

Past the perimeter layer of enigma checkpoints, characters come upon Autochthon's second line of defense. The hexagonal chambers feature a far door tall and wide enough to admit a royal warstrider and a single slab of polished adamant for their floor. Strange machines with exposed cogs protrude from the walls in each of the six corners.

As soon as the characters all enter the room, the door behind them seals shut and a low electric thrum fills the air as the corner engines whir to life. The Solars feel the hairs on their bodies standing on end. Arianna's Sorcerer's Sight sees a collage of arachnid silhouettes glowing through the translucent floor. A moment later, she understands why as the surface erupts into six jagged protrusions that cleverly unfold into clockwork spiders the size of large dogs. Combat begins immediately and does not cease until the intruders die or beat the room.

The room spawns its guardians using the engine devices mounted in the corners. The golems have the traits of giant spiders (see **Exalted**, p. 347), upgraded as follows: Automaton Virtues and physiology, Willpower 10, no poison, Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Dodge 5, Martial Arts 5, War 5 (Coordinated Attacks +3), soak 10L/10B (Hardness: 5L). Derived values for attack and defense are recalculated according to these upgrades.

The golems attempt to swarm the weakest-seeming intruders and pile onto them first, systematically tearing apart pinned victims with vibrating saw mandibles. If slain, the elementals shatter into glittering fragments that reabsorb into the floor, spawning a replacement at some other point in the floor that immediately takes over where its predecessor left off by joining battle. Violence alone cannot defeat them.

Thankfully, as with all of Autochthon's traps, there is a solution. The exposed engines can be attacked as inanimate objects with soak 10L/10B, requiring 100 levels of damage to render completely non-functional, but only 10 levels to crack open their outer casing and reveal a hidden control panel meant for custodial maintenance. Disarming the Infinite Golem Compiler with these controls is an extended (Intelligence + Lore or Craft [Magitech]) roll with difficulty 3, cumulative difficulty 20 and an interval of five ticks. Accumulated successes remain even if (or rather when) a character is interrupted. Others can and probably should use Defend Other actions to protect one character while she attempts to disarm the system. Standing back to back or back to wall keeps the spiders from surrounding a character to launch surprise attacks from behind.

## THE PANOPTICON CATAclysmic

Shielded by its concentric defenses of puzzles and flesh-rending mechanical spiders, the central core of the manse's lowest levels houses its legendary hearthroom, tactical research facilities, living quarters for the manse's

### NEW COMBAT ACTION: DEFEND OTHER

Without Charms, defending another individual is a Speed 5, DV -1 miscellaneous action. It requires that the character be within (Dexterity) yards of his ward and allows him to interpose his Parry DV against attacks that target the individual he is protecting. If an attack bypasses the character's Parry DV, he has the option of either letting the attack continue on to the guardian's ward (in which case the attack will need to use its remaining successes to also beat the ward's DVs), or he may simply let the attack strike himself. Parry-based perfect defenses such as Heavenly Guardian Defense may be used to automatically guard others, but dodge-based perfect defenses such as Seven Shadow Evasion do not impede attacks against the character's ward at all. Only one Defend Other action may be placed in a flurry.

If multiple characters attempt to defend a single target, one guardian (generally the individual with the highest Parry DV) becomes the leader of the guard, who actually applies his DV against attacks. Each additional character guarding the same ward raises the leader's Parry DV by one when defending the ward. Up to five characters may simultaneously guard one human-sized ward on open ground.

owner and attendant strategoi and all the luxurious amenities a god-king could desire while planning for the end of the world. The Panopticon Cataclysmic is equal parts central command bunker and time capsule for civilization should it become necessary to wait for Creation to become habitable again following a world-searing holocaust.

The interior of the military industrial complex contains obvious signs of the Great Maker's handiwork, but these machines have been rigorously polished and upgraded to function more efficiently and appeal to High First Age aesthetics. The air is as crisp and clear as the skies over Meru. The walls are a creamy opalescent white, perfectly complementing the tiled marble floors and their inlaid brass silhouettes of defeated Primordial *jouten* for occupants to tread upon. Ornamental pillars adorn the wide hallways at irregular intervals, intricately carved to resemble the trunks of ancient trees. Every vaulted ceiling displays a real-time simulation of the sky above the manse to add a touch of natural lighting to soften the cold glow of hovering crystal chandeliers. Faint music plays constantly in the background, an achingly beautiful requiem for Creation sung by a chorus of gods frozen in the walls who have not ceased or once repeated their song since Autochthon forged them.

Movement between the Panopticon Cataclysmic's layers is achieved by gravity-suspension columns projected by ring-shaped emitter devices in the floors and ceilings. At each such juncture, a character can jump lightly into the pillar of light and rapidly ascend or descend one tier, though the columns spanning three or more layers aren't ever stacked to resemble an elevator shaft. A stone iris closes to separate the levels when the pillars aren't in use.

### SERVANT (ARTIFACT ●●●●●)

The Imperial Manse bears a controlling consciousness that was once a thought in the Great Maker's mind before he breathed it into a prepared crystal. It could have been a soul if he had given it a sense of self, but Autochthon knew the Solars wanted nothing with a complete personality connected with their greatest doomsday weapon.

The nameless Almost Soul came to be known simply as Servant by the Lawgivers who invoked it with their commands. It has no body beyond the crystal that houses its consciousness and no visual representation for communication, existing only as an omnipresence that listens, speaks only when necessary and intelligently directs the manse's systems with perfect obedience. Servant's voice is androgynous and courteous, with precise inflection that conveys no emotion save vestigial regret at the incompleteness of its thoughts. This expression was permitted as a safety measure, as any tonal shift would warn its masters of unsanctioned cognitive development.

When the manse operates at full power, Servant can sense and react to events throughout the structure, allowing it to coordinate defenses against intruders or mobilize utilitarian resources to perform maintenance repairs. With the manse running on backup power, Servant can sense and control only the Panopticon Cataclysmic. The crystal housing the consciousness is embedded in the machinery of the hearthroom (p. 22), but Servant studies the Solars as soon as they enter the Panopticon. Storytellers should remain mindful of this attention as the circle explores the levels.

Thankfully, because Servant has not been specifically ordered to notify Roseblack of intruders, it does not do so. Instead, it dutifully logs the intrusion and turns on the appropriate flashing gem in the command deck. Ejava has no idea what this signal means and has more urgent matters to tend to, so the characters can explore the Panopticon unmolested until they get to the bottom floor.

**Motivation:** Obey Authorized Commands

**Attributes:** Perception 10, Intelligence 10, Wits 10

**Virtues:** Automaton.

**Abilities:** Awareness 10, Bureaucracy 10, Craft (Air) 10, Craft (Earth) 10, Craft (Fire) 10, Craft (Magitech) 10, Craft (Water) 5, Craft (Wood) 5, Investigation 5, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm, Nameless Grays) 1, Lore 10, Medicine 10, Occult 10, Socialize 5, War 10

### Powers:

**Indestructible:** The tiny crystal that houses Servant can't be cracked with mere force. Supernatural powers specifically capable of destroying indestructible artifacts function normally, and destroying the gem irrevocably terminates the entity.

**Limited Identity:** Servant exists as a stable congeries of thoughts, not a complete mind. It is extremely intelligent and learned, capable of perfect recall and comprehensive, nuanced analysis of everything it learns. If given conflicting instructions, it compares the orders to preexisting patterns of instructions to determine the best course of action. It can offer informational suggestions, but it does so only in response to direct commands or queries.

**Manse Interface:** Servant is connected directly to the manse's controls and can operate them as effectively as an intrinsic geomantic sentience, employing algorithms equivalent to All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight to analyze everything in the Panopticon Cataclysmic (or, with full power, the whole manse). The intelligence has no independent senses or capacity for action beyond this interface.

**Join Battle:** 0

**Essence:** 6

**Other Notes:** Automaton physiology. Traits lacked are due to being a sessile construct.

### ELEMENTAL CUSTODIANS



The Solar Exalted did not wish the nuisance of Dragon-Blooded subordinates slowing down their response to an apocalyptic crisis, but neither did they wish to be troubled with tedious matters. The Panopticon Cataclysmic features a variation of the technology used to spawn guardian elementals elsewhere in the manse (see pp. 9-10), deliberately weakened to create spirits incapable of deliberate physical attacks against other animate being (commands to do so are unacceptable orders). Such creatures instantly expire with a look of astonishment if proved defective by causing inadvertent harm, such as spilling hot tea into a Lawgiver's lap. This system spawns in response to any Exalt stating a need in Old Realm (or when Servant perceives a need). Manse authorization is not required since the elementals are harmless.

### LEVEL FIVE:

### THE BLESSED LABORATORIES OF RIGHTEOUS CONQUEST

This tier contains laboratories, workshops and other amenities dedicated to military technology and strategy. Most of the chambers take liberal advantage of closed-loop metaspacial architecture to be larger on the inside than the outside, allowing inclusion of proper sorcery test facilities, battlefield re-creations, artillery ranges and other seeming impossibilities. The most significant rooms are explained here.





## THE FOUNDRY OF INFINITE GENIUS

Autochthon believed the survival of Creation depended upon unbroken continuance and advancement of technological wonders. To this end, he forged a workshop for the Exalted in the heart of his doomsday device from which they could construct whatever they needed to rebuild in the wake of Armageddon. By default, the facility appears as a vast hollow icosahedron of adamant. Users rise up on a hovering hexagonal platform from the floor to the center of the chamber and can operate its machinery using arrays of hologlyphic controls shining in concentric halos around the platform (provided they have their own halo, of course).

Beneath the workshop, a mighty unshaped raksha writhes in agony within a jade containment reactor, constantly drained of its potentiality so that the workshop's interior can supply basic raw materials and the means to combine them in any way imaginable. Tools formed of raw Essence appear as needed to accommodate any Craft-based action to build or repair anything, becoming extensions of the user's will and body for as long as they exist. The lab is equivalent to a factory-cathedral and can even aid exotic Crafts Autochthon does not practice, such as Genesis and Vitriol.

The most amazing function of the foundry is that its interior can be shaped into anything that Wyld-Shaping Technique can assemble by programming it with a difficulty 3 (Intelligence + Lore) roll, using metaspatial architecture as needed to contain impossibly large space. Each reconfiguration is temporary, fading away once the lab is no longer in active use. Things shaped into existence dissolve to nothing if removed from the chamber unless they are artifacts assembled with appropriate Craft actions. Users can shift vantage points, teleporting the control platform to any location in the simulation for one mote per jump. Nothing in the simulation can physically interact with the control platform or anyone standing on it, though anyone who deliberately jumps off interacts normally with the environment.

When the Defense Grid annihilates a region, the blast sears a brief afterimage of the sublimated Essence into the cosmic firmament, lasting just long enough for the Imperial Manse's geomantic scanners to encode the data into a physical matrix for future anthropomotic analysis. Use of the Fallen Foes Memorial setting in the foundry accesses these saved templates to reconstruct any place the Defense Grid has obliterated.

While memorial recordings capture only a specific moment in time, the workshop can also attempt to extrapolate the data forward for immersive tours. Simulated characters act true to their personalities and memories and can be interrogated to learn secrets otherwise lost to ancient cataclysm. Echoes do not continue to gain experience or memories from their simulated existence, as each

recreation comes into existence as it was recorded. The reverse is not true; echoes can serve as the beings they were to teach Exalted visitors from the real world. Although the manse's memorial function was intended for serious wargames and to aid reconstruction, modified recordings also provided First Age Exalted virtual safaris in which to continue the Aftershock War in perpetuity.

## THE LIBRARY OF MARTIAL CONFLICT

This carefully temperature-controlled warehouse holds untold thousands of shelves and storage chests packed with books, scrolls, dreamstones, pieces of petrified bark etched with prehuman hieroglyphs and virtually every other form of media or data storage developed by the end of the High First Age. Elementals of all aspects save fire swarm this place, called into being by the necessity of venerating and appreciating the value of this collection. That many of these elementals cannot even read is irrelevant; they walk about in wide-eyed wonder, mouthing humble praise to the genius of ancient writers and the diligence of slightly less ancient archivists. These elementals gladly help visitors find anything of interest, physically carrying them—sometimes at breakneck speeds—so that no one need walk more than a few steps.

This library is devoted exclusively to the topic of warfare. Every important treatise on strategy that a military commander ever clawed or penned or noetically encoded is here, from Kan-Hur's infamous *Shrike Doctrine of Absolute Force* to the codex of Dragon-King etchings illustrating the fight between the Incarnae and the first Kukla. This place is a treasure beyond compare. Arianna practically swoons upon entry, and Dace isn't far behind once he realizes what he's seeing. Characters with sufficient time could use the library to raise their War rating to maximum. Removing or damaging any reference materials sets off an alarm, alerting the Roseblack's *Arete* bodyguards to come and kill the intruders as soon as possible.

## THE TWICE-MARTYRED HERO CLINIC

The Panopticon Cataclysmic lacks a full hospital, but has state-of-the-art emergency-care facilities to help its personnel recover from unusual magical attacks sustained repelling besiegers or unsuccessful tests of new weapons systems in the Foundry of Infinite Genius. The small hexagonal room has recovery beds against five of its walls, with the sixth taken up by the large entry door.

A sessile behemoth resembling an upside down tree roots into the ceiling, her trunk descending like a yard-wide central pillar to lightly scrape the floor with her "topmost" leaves. She is breathtakingly beautiful, undergoing constant metamorphosis to mimic dozens of species in the blink of an eye. Her supple, flexible branches whip about gracefully, stroking her patients with the gentleness of a mother's touch. Her wide emerald eyes are her only humanoid and constant feature, but they express more emotion than most people's faces. If asked, she reveals that she is Elysande,





the Tree of Benefice and daughter of Gaia. It is her nature to give healing to all wounded. She cannot choose to withhold care from anyone, Primordial or mortal. She would gladly offer her fruit to save someone who once burned her to ash.

Elysande doesn't know anything about the Scarlet Empress or the Roseblack except that a nice woman with a robe red as apples visited her once and ate her fruit not that long ago (i.e., several centuries), but no one has come to see her since. The behemoth is very lonely and very chatty with anyone who speaks Old Realm, going on about everything from herbal remedies for heartbreak to Autochthon's cancer. She knows virtually everything there is to know about health and little else.

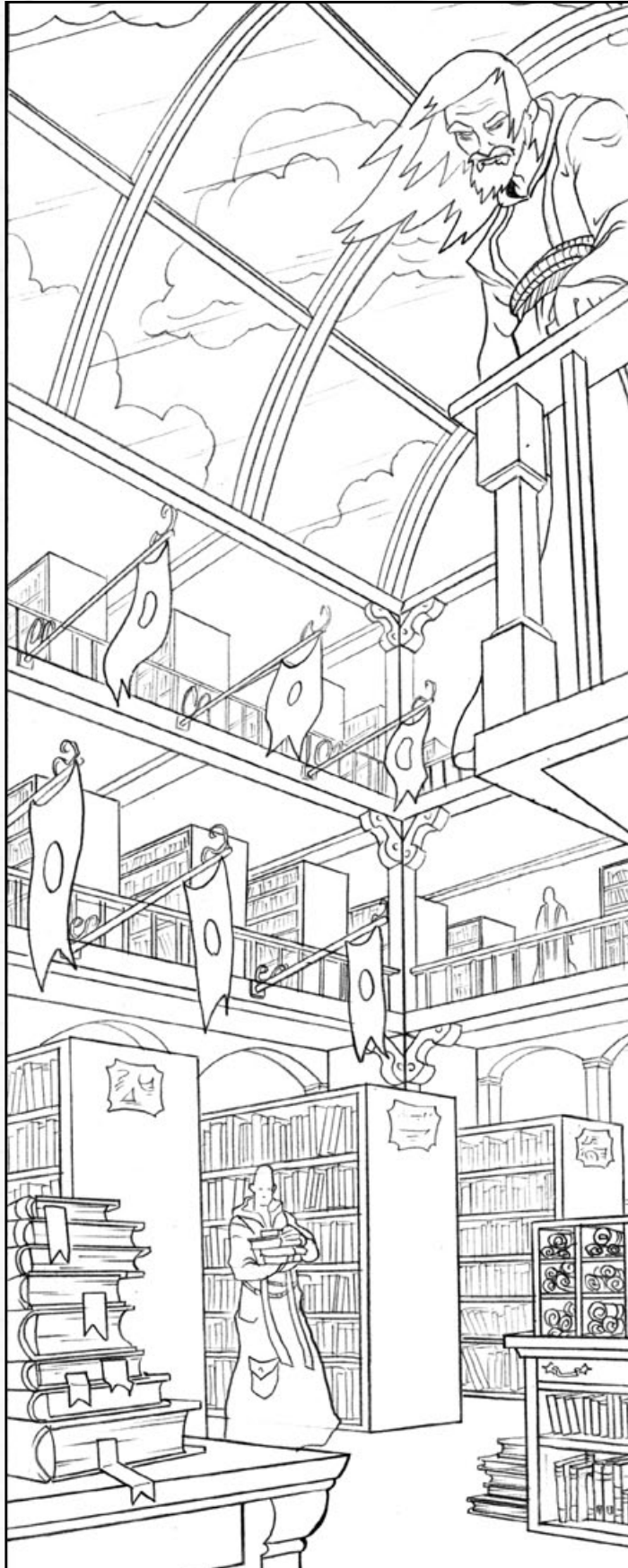
**ELYSANDE, THE TREE OF BENEFICE**  
(ALLIES ●●●●●)


**Motivation:** Heal Creation

**Traits:** Elysande has Strength 10, Dexterity 6, Stamina 30; Manipulation 1, Charisma 3, all other Social and Mental Attributes at 6, Linguistics (Native: Heartwind Cadence, Old Realm) 1, Medicine 10, Compassion 5, Conviction 2, Temperance 5 and Valor 1, Willpower 5, Essence 6, soak and Hardness 10B/10L against all attacks and 100 -0 health levels that only heal through internal digestion of her own fruit. She does not defend herself except to plead with attackers to stop hurting her. Gaia birthed her with the following powers:

*Eternal Caretaker:* The behemoth is ageless. If slain, her corpse grows an invulnerable seed from which she can grow a new body once planted. (The Solars could theoretically liberate her in this manner.) Only the death of the last tree on Creation can truly kill her. She treats all mental influence that would make her knowingly cause physical harm to another as an unacceptable order. In situations where causing harm is unavoidable, she must choose the action she believes will result in the least damage.

*Fruit of Succulent Hope:* Elysande can grow up to 23 purple fruits with soft sweetness like overripe mango and the tartness of cranberries. The fruits grow from brilliant jewel-toned flowers like roses crossed with orchids, reaching full size and ripeness an hour after the bud first appears. If consumed within a day of harvest, each fruit cures one effect with the Emotion, Crippling, Illusion, Poison, Shaping or Sickness keywords or directly heals levels of damage (all bashing or 3L or 1A). The most serious harm always heals first. Patients afflicted with none of these ailments still nourish their souls, regaining five spent motes, one spent Willpower point and one spent Compassion channel per fruit eaten. When the Solars find the behemoth, she only has 11 fruits





hanging from her boughs. They don't have time to wait for her to grow more.

*Tragic Harm Revealed:* With a glance, Elysande perfectly intuits everything wrong with a living creature's body. This knowledge is wholly comprehensive, revealing every pertinent detail about every condition it detects.

### OTHER LABS

No other room on the level is nearly as big or important as those preceding, but the floor also has many smaller labs dedicated to narrowly specific war-related projects. One has a table full of model godstriders. Another has maps hung on every available surface. Several have half-disassembled artillery pieces and the tools used to take them apart (and presumably fix them). There are wind tunnels for testing the aerodynamic contours of skyships and liquid jets to test the hull integrity of naval vessels. The characters may poke around in many such places while searching, but they don't find anything actually useful.

## LEVEL FOUR: THE HONORED ENTOURAGE BARRACKS

Unlike other levels of the Panopticon, this tier is not presently illuminated. The crystal chandeliers still float all around, helpfully lighting up whenever a character approaches within three yards. Only authorized personnel can reset the illumination of the entire floor. The halls here are very orderly, arranged into well-marked grids that are logically labeled and easy to navigate. Apart from the actual dormitories, the level has an elaborate kitchen area containing every culinary wonder of the High First Age (five bonus successes to appropriate Craft [Water] rolls); its bare pantries hold nothing to interest the Solars.

### TERRESTRIAL DORMITORIES

Most of the doors on the level are locked (which is no impediment to Harmonious Jade), but exploration generally reveals a homogenous set of humbly but tastefully decorated dormitories. Military uniforms hang in several closets showing insignias of rank and unit membership from the late High First Age. A few desks hold abandoned journals describing the banalities of life in a wondrous era. Even surrounded by luxury and technology unimaginable by Second Age standards, the Dragon-Blooded servants loved and hated, they missed their children, they complained about growing old, they yearned for something more.

## LEVEL THREE: THE APARTMENTS OF SUPERNAL APPORTIONMENT

This level resembles the one above it in that it is divided into a grid of residences, but these are multi-room luxury suites rather than shared dormitories. The welcome carpets before each front door are silky soft, woven of immortal moss that grows visibly greener and healthier when given the privilege of being walked on by a Prince of the Earth.

Colonies of colorful songbirds roost in holes along the ceiling, sometimes drowning out the ever-present divine choir with impromptu arias. The sky ceiling displays a repetition of the previous night during each day to make everything feel dim and soft and inviting.

### CELESTIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

The Celestial apartments are bedecked in minor wonders, from pillows that firm or soften themselves when bid to massaging geyser showers to beds that levitate their occupants one yard into midair to permit all manner of interesting lovemaking possibilities. It is easy to tell which rooms were intended for whom. Lunar apartments contain animal motifs in their décor, like the heads of beasts as knobs for drawers and futons made to resemble crouched clawstriders about to pounce. Sidereal residences work constellations and auspicious patterns into everything, even the placement of individual furniture pieces within the room.

The palatial quarters of the Solar Exalted boast furniture made from solid light, walls of living opal, brilliant cerulean topaz ceilings and floor mosaics depicting vanquished Primordials that writhe and show other displays of pain in the presence of a Solar anima. Strange treasures and keepsakes line sconces and shelves, protected by an aura that flares a warning whenever the objects are reached for and shrieks an ear-splitting alarm, centered on the items themselves, for as long as the thieves dare touch or carry the warded possessions.

### THE ROYAL APARTMENT

One of the Solar abodes is different than the rest. There is dust on the floor, for the elementals have stopped maintaining it. They don't want to chance running into its owner when he returns, because a great crime has been committed here. A Dragon-Blood dared eat the food of the Holy from his cupboard. She left in the closet a soft red robe that she wore when no one was around to see her drop her hard-edged majesty. She slept in his bed unbidden. Yet, even this would be forgiven but for leaving tearstains upon his pillow.

## LEVEL TWO: THE BASILICA OF FINAL VICTORY

If the hearthroom is the manse's soul, the Basilica of Final Victory is its mind, an amphitheatre-like command center built to manage simultaneous Creation-spanning warfare and coordinate the entirety of the Exalted host against the direst of foes. It is from this room that the decision could be made to destroy Creation if it faced total dominion from its enemies, preserving the world's beauty in simulators to guide Solar Wyld-Shaping reconstruction efforts.

### LAYOUT

Colossal instrument displays sized for Autochthon's giant *jouten* as he stood in the central viewing pit encircle the stadium complex, relaying data on every parameter of



Creation deemed relevant for warfare. Maps of all landmasses overlaid with shining webs of mapped geomancy blink with color-coded threat indicators tagging known sources of hostile Essence (shadowlands, Wyld zones, etc.). The Blessed Isle itself is covered in black wriggling tangles keyed as code-green threats, the direst classification. On one panel, a ticker follows the temperature in Chaya next to cloud viscosity data for the skies over Lookshy and arrows tracing the vectors of migratory bird patterns along the Blessed Isle's southern coastline. The lights and ever-changing symbols are at once vertiginous and hypnotic, for the millions of facts constantly update. Human minds cannot remotely process this much information all at once. The First Age strategoi who worked here developed special sensory and mental acceleration Charms just to keep up.

### RESCUE FIGHT

Tepet Ejava and four glowing black humanoid figures stand in the central pit, looking out at the sea of data as they do their best to coordinate the Realm's response to the Night of Ten-Thousand Flames. If the circle checks Bijar's journal before the attack, the Solars can figure out which gravity-suspension column brings them directly to the center of the viewing pit, presenting some opportunity to take the enemy by surprise. Even if Ejava and her guards notice the ambush, the blitzkrieg rush imposes a -3 external penalty to their Join Battle rolls. Other columns bring the characters to the edge of the stadium midway down its sloping walls, giving the Roseblack and her bodyguards ample time to react and initiate combat.

The final fight is hard and brutal. It is immediately evident that the automatons are highly advanced supersoldiers that must be fought aggressively and intelligently. The Roseblack herself is no slouch, but she's not really a match for the Solars. More importantly, she seems to be holding back, as though she hated what she was fighting for. A look of pain flashes over her every time she swings her blade. Such clues should give Panther reason to smack the Shogun with Thunder Breaks the Clouds (see p. 29), the sooner the better. Once knocked to her senses, the Roseblack changes sides and fights beside the Solars.

The Roseblack's mid-fight banter in Riverspeak makes it clear she is helping them because they freed her from terrible slavery and she owes them for that. She is obviously uncomfortable fighting alongside Anathema and trying to justify it to herself. Because the automatons were ordered to protect her, they can defend against her normally but won't attack Ejava, even in self-defense. Solars who realize this can use the general as unconventional but highly effective cover against ranged attacks. If it looks like the fight is going against the Solars for whatever reason and Ejava has joined them, she hits a control that opens the iris spanning the middle third of the floor. This act allows the Exalted to leap down the chute to the hearthroom with the automatons in hot pursuit.

### TEPET EJAVA, THE ROSEBLACK

Former commander of the Red-Piss Legion, former Five Day Shogun, and now the Queen of Hell's Minister of Reconstruction, Ejava is possessed of a drive not unlike that of the Scarlet Empress in her younger days. She is now brainwashed by the returned Empress and stands at the crossroads of destiny. If the circle does not free her from her bondage, then all portents indicate dark days ahead for Creation as a whole.

Storytellers who wish for detailed information on Ejava's history and traits should consult **Scroll of Exalts**, pages 110–111. For those with only the **Exalted** core rulebook, it is suggested that Ejava use a base model of Tepet Lisara's traits (see **Exalted**, p. 326), with the following powers added:

- For three motes, Ejava may fire a flurry of four arrows at her full dice pool. This flurry has a Speed of 6, and suffers a DV penalty of only -1.
- For 4 motes, Ejava may hurl a wooden javelin from her hand (8 dice to hit, damage 6L, treat as though coated with coral snake venom).
- For 3 motes, 1 willpower Ejava may force a member of the circle to direct his next attack at her, or pay 1 Willpower.

### ARETE-SERIES ARTIFICIAL HEROES (ARTIFACT ●●●●●)

The bodies of these advanced automatons are grown from obsidian in the stylized likeness of perfect human physiques, devoid of distinguishing features and yet perfectly proportioned blank-masked mannequins. When they move, their stone bends to its new position as though sheared by volcanic force. At the heart of each burns a blessed effigy of the Unconquered Sun so bright that it shines like an 8–10 mote Solar anima through their nigh-opaque exterior. A molten mantle of orichalcum flows like blood through their bodies. In battle, their stone cracks and an eruption of superheated liquid alloy forms into the desired weapon until reabsorbed. The synthetic warriors are largely silent combatants, designed to let the poetry and brilliance of their prowess speak for them. They know only Old Realm. Although they failed to provide a viable alternative to the Terrestrial Exalted as originally envisioned, they remain among the most advanced models of battle automaton ever designed: fast, strong, fierce and adaptive.

**Motivation:** Obey the Exalted

**Attributes:** Strength 6, Dexterity 6, Stamina 6; Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 3; Perception 6, Intelligence 3, Wits 6

**Virtues:** Automaton

**Abilities:** Archery 6, Athletics 6, Awareness 6, Craft (Air) 3, Craft (Earth) 3, Craft (Fire) 3, Craft (Magitech) 3 (Automata +1), Dodge 6, Integrity 6, Lore 3 (Operate Artifacts +3), Martial Arts 6, Melee 6, Occult 3, Ride 1 (Artifact Vehicles +5), Sail 1 (Artifact Vehicles +5), Survival 1 (Tracking +5), Thrown 6, War 6 (Coordinating Attacks +3)



### Powers:

*Art in Motion:* As a permanent enhancement of their capabilities, *Arete* automatons do not accrue normal multiple action penalties. Instead, each action suffers a penalty equal to the cumulative number of actions previously taken with the flurry, but their flurries cannot contain more than five actions and the total DV penalty is the highest penalty among component actions. *Aretes* have permanent enchantments duplicating the effects of the following Solar Charms from pages 222-225 of **Exalted**: Graceful Crane Stance, Soaring Crane Leap, Lightning Speed, Spider-Foot Style and Feather-Foot Style.

*Beauty-Appreciating Eye:* The automatons benefit from permanent enchantments upgrading their senses, duplicating the effects of the following Solar Charms from pages 211, 222 and 225-226 of **Exalted**: Unshakeable Bloodhound Technique (enhances all tracking efforts, but with no Charm roll-off bonus), All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight (automatically identifies magic without Occult roll), Keen Sense Technique and Unsurpassed Sense Discipline (Vision, Hearing/Touch).

*Dynamic Crystal Design:* The automatons can melt and internally re-forged damaged or worn-out components, allowing them to heal two bashing or one lethal level each time their DV refreshes (or every five seconds out of combat). Aggravated damage heals one level per day. These systems also obviate the need for the periodic maintenance common to less advanced models. Once "killed" with injury, one can be hacked apart to stop regeneration. Amputated body parts fuse back into place the moment they are reconnected and heal proportionally to their state (half intact means half health at max, plus pertinent Crippling from remaining amputation). At least half the body must be restored for severely damaged *Aretes* to regain "consciousness" and begin gathering missing pieces. The constructs know nothing of pain (immune to wound penalties and other pain-based Crippling effects).

*Masterwork Aureate Arsenal:* The automatons can reflexively grow any basic orichalcum Artifact •• weapon in Step One to make an attack (or Step Two to block a perceived attack), provided it has the requisite free hands to wield it. Once made, the weapon can't be changed out for another until the unit's DV refreshes. Grown weapons aren't a valid target for non-amputating disarming attempts, add an extra +2 damage from their superheated state and generate infinite mundane ammunition as needed from the automaton's own Essence-charged radiance.

*Tactical Analysis Protocols:* *Aretes* adapt to their attackers, applying onslaught as a DV bonus rather than penalty. Units composed entirely of *Arete* rank-and-file have Might 4, Drill 6.

**Join Battle:** 12

### Example Attacks:

*Bloodspike Harness:* Speed 6, Accuracy 16, Damage 17L, Parry DV —, Rate 2, Tags N

*Daiklave:* Speed 5, Accuracy 16, Damage 14L, Parry DV 8, Rate 4, Tags N

*Goremaul:* Speed 5, Accuracy 14, Damage 24B, Parry DV 7, Rate 3, Tags N

*Razor Claws:* Speed 5, Accuracy 17, Damage 13L, Parry DV 8, Rate 4, Tags N

*Short Powerbow:* Speed 6, Accuracy 15, Damage 10L, Rate 3, Range 400, Tags N

**Soak:** 16L/16B (Obsidian shell, +8L/8B, Hardness: 8L/8B, no fatigue or mobility penalty)

**Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/Incap

**Dodge DV:** 8     **Willpower:** 10

**Essence:** 3

**Other Notes:** None

### AFTERMATH

With the automatons defeated, the Roseblack wipes sweat and blood from her brow and regards her rescuers warily. She thanks them and tells them that there is no time to waste, dropping the earthshaking revelation that the Empress has been corrupted or possibly enslaved by the forces of Hell and is actively working toward the total enslavement of the Realm and the conquest of Creation. Ejava seethes as she tells of how the Queen of Hell chained her mind and made her betray everything the Dynasty was founded upon. Only Mnemon knew, somehow, which the Roseblack learned from one of the Empress's furious tirades.

Even as the Shogun's former rival heroically rallied her rebellion to make war upon the secret tyrant this very night, the Empress ordered the Roseblack to command the Realm's oppressive counterattacks. Thankfully, Mnemon's guerrillas used sorcery and stockpiled artifact weapons leftover from the Civil War to make a simultaneous coordinated strike against most of the war manses networked into the Defense Grid, thereby crippling many of the fortress's command and control systems. That this unlikely sequence of unlikely events incidentally gave the Solars a chance to pierce the weakened manse at the exact right moment lends credence to Master Heron's claim that his instructions came straight from the Maiden of Secrets.

The Shogun gives the Solars only a moment to process these revelations before continuing. She points out that the demons working on the sides of the manse aren't the bound slaves of a proud sorceress, but the vanguard of an infernal horde. Whatever they are doing is changing the manse, upgrading it to do something terrible. Ejava doesn't know what. The Empress never gloated about that plan in detail in front of her. What she does know is that the damaged manse's poison has already spread throughout the Blessed Isle, infecting every manse and dragon line. If the Solars doubt this, she gestures to the code-green web of jagged black lines on the geomantic map of the Blessed Isle. She ends her speech by pointing out the obvious: The Empress could return at any minute with her akuma bodyguards, and



neither the Solars nor Ejava are in any shape to fight her. The Defense Grid must be disabled *now*.

### THE ROSEBLACK'S WARNING

While the Solars process Ejava's explanation and discuss what to do about the crisis at hand, the Roseblack begins doing something at one of the control stations where she was standing when the circle arrived. A difficulty 3 (Intelligence + Occult) roll reveals she is encoding a new message into the Defense Grid's hologlyphic communications array. If asked what she is doing, she distractedly asks to be given a moment and takes several minutes pushing buttons and moving floating icons around with graceful command gestures. Physical interruption draws her ire and a demand that she be released, though she'll explain her intentions if she absolutely must.

Once the Roseblack finishes inputting parameters, she presses two fingers onto a fist-sized clear glowstone and closes her eyes. The jewel flashes red in time with the fluctuations of her voice as she addresses the Blessed Isle through the machinery. A random third of all cities, villages and estates do not receive the transmission due to geomantic disruption, but all other settlements on the continent bear witness to Ejava's image blooming overhead as she delivers her speech. Suggested cut-scenes given in parentheses interrupt the speech, allowing the Storyteller to use the climactic oratory as a chance to show the players the earthshaking events that transpired concurrently with their break-in:

"My brothers and sisters, we have been deceived. The Scarlet Empress, our honored and beloved ancestor, is no more. Grieve for her. The Hell-spawned abomination who wears her face and mocks her legacy is a wicked lie sent to conquer the Realm before we knew we were at war."


(The Roseblack writhes at the feet of the Empress in agony, flesh bound and torn by tendrils pulled from the Shogun's own shadow. Unbidden tears stream down her cheeks as she resolves not to let her tormentor hear her scream. She fails.)

"Our false liege is not an Exalted Empress, but a Queen of Demons. Her unholy power enslaved me to betray my blood and nation, but no more. My soul answers this darkness with the roar of ten-thousand voices. We will not be oppressed. We will not be deceived."

(Across the Blessed Isle, cities burn as rebel mobs clash with Realm soldiers in bloody skirmishes in the streets. Both sides lower their weapons as the Roseblack's image appears among them, stunned by her message.)

"Fight. If you have but one breath, spend it howling in defiance of evil, and may the Dragons bless your virtue. If you have two breaths, join your roar to mine, and let our battle cry shake the heavens."

(Chejop Kejak cries out and falls to his knees as blackened barbs rip his eyes from their sockets. The Queen of Hell looms over the ancient Sidereal, leaning close to whisper a secret taunt in his ear before she slits his throat.



The Bureau of Destiny lies strewn with the corpses of the Fivescore Fellowship.)

“As Minister of Reconstruction, I reconcile with Mne-mon and declare her cause just. My name is Tepet Ejava, Shogun of the Realm. I am a Righteous Orphan.”

(Deep in the Demon Realm, the Ebon Dragon laughs. The Third Age has begun.)

### LEVEL ONE: HEARTHROOM

The true command core of the fortress lies beneath all else in the manse, easily its largest chamber. Great machines thrum in the walls like the spires of a First Age city, turning cogs the size of warships that drive hundreds of pistons at varying speeds to thud far below like distant thunder. This place feels like the work of a Primordial’s hands, a lifeless doomsday metropolis dwarfing all visitors into irrelevance.

Jumping down the chute in the viewing pit brings the circle to a sudden landing on a three-yard-diameter disk of jade with a one-foot-wide hole in its center. Six seconds after the last person in the chute lands, the disk detaches and falls away, keeping its passengers safely adhered to it. It plummets down the dark tunnel for several hundred yards, dim glowstones flashing past and up like comets, before dropping out of the center of a domed ceiling to survey the titanic machinery in dizzying freefall. Only when it seems crashing is inevitable does the disk slow its descent and come to gentle halt impaled upon the point of a glittering black spire.

Tangled canyons and towers of metal and glass extend as far as the eye can see above and below. The view is breathtaking. All-Encompassing Sorcerer’s Sight reveals it to be more so, a city without citizens, but not truly without life. The very air seethes and roils with unimaginable power, enough motes to shatter the foundations of Creation and set the sky aflame.

The moment Arianna turns away from the dizzying panorama of her surroundings, she feels a mental murmur calling her to place her palm onto the sharp point of the spire at the same level as her waist. The beckoning carries a nonverbal assurance of safety as part of its message, which tests true if Arianna thinks to use Judge’s Ear Technique.

Once the sorceress or another Solar touches flesh to the point, it sucks out a lethal health level of blood as unsoakable damage, verifying that the character is Exalted. The machine needs more blood to awaken if fed by non-Solar tier Exalted: six levels from Celestials or 14 from one or more Dragon-Blooded. As soon as it awakens, the spire shakes and begins to slowly rotate clockwise. No one falls, but the sudden lurch is terrifying. The spire’s tip splits apart into a five-pronged claw pointing up, bright blood dripping along each of its sharp fingers. The center of the palm holds a socket for a hearthstone, while the spaces between the fingers come aflame with incomprehensible numbers and geometric patterns. The disembodied voice of Servant speaks, softly repeating the same message over and over like a chant:

“Warning. Primordial Seal Engaged. Sword of Creation disabled. Pan-Deliberative override code required.”

### THE HEART OF THE REALM (MANSE N/A)

This smoky quartz oval glows with an inner golden light. It is omni-aspected, simultaneously and equally embodying all possible geomantic aspects, but magic used to assess this returns an “indeterminate” aspect. In addition to functioning as a level-5 hearthstone for the purposes of Essence recovery, the Heart of the Realm protects the sanctity of its attuned bearer’s judgment, revealing all unnatural mental influence effects targeting her as Obvious to her senses. She may reflexively ignore any unwanted influence detected this way as an unacceptable order.

The Solars collectively flash to another time and see themselves standing on this platform wearing different faces, different bodies—prior lives. The superimposition ends as quickly as it begins, and the Lawgivers return to the crisis at hand. Although the repeated warning is good news, it leaves them no closer to a lasting solution or safety. Inevitably, this is the moment at which Servant briefly interrupts its chant with the announcement, “Halo detected. Blessed is the Heart-Bearer.” A second platform, this one empty, rises from the depths and zooms past the characters on an arcing path to the top of the dome. They have five minutes, maybe less.

Ejava draws her daiklave and slashes the claw without warning, spraying everyone with a blinding cloud of sparks that fade to reveal... nothing has happened. The claw isn’t even scratched. She swings again and again with frenzied fury until one of the Solars reaches out to stop her. She doesn’t resist, but holds tightly onto her weapon, eyes squinted and darting about as she racks her brain for a solution.

Arianna, meanwhile, feels the urge emanating from the claw intensifying. It doesn’t just want to be touched. It wants to be used. It needs to be used. She sees its past, a bodiless shadow of the bodiless King of the Primordials, spirited away by the Ebon Dragon at the beginning of time and hidden among his dark pantheon of souls as a demon. It knew the taste of blood and couldn’t be fooled, so Autochthon made it the Defense Grid’s security lock to make sure the weapon could be wielded only by the Exalted. She sees the Great Maker’s hammer fall again and again upon a writhing dark thing and the shard of black stone pulled from a quenching sea. The stream of images is confusing and abstract, guided by emotions rather than thoughts. Sorcery. Arianna sees the smile of the demon Mara and understands. Once again, Autochthon built something beyond even his imagination to conceive. The claw is a resonator, an amplifier. It exists to empower spells.

The tableau of images and feelings subsides as its presence bores deeper into the sorceress, forcing her to think





its thoughts within her inner monologue. *The resonator isn't completely part of the manse. Anyone can use it to fuel their spells and make their desires manifest. A price always follows.* Try as she might, Arianna's thoughts do not reveal any more information about the devil's bargain before her. She knows only that the machine stands ready to pay all the costs of her upgraded spells if bidden, even as certain death approaches.

Boosted by the metasorcerous resonator, Travel Without Distance can take the circle and Ejava many thousands of miles, far enough to reach almost any nation in the Threshold that Arianna has visited previously (limiting her primarily to the Scavenger Lands). She knows the machine can do this the moment she considers the spell. If she suggests this plan aloud, Roseblack asks that they go to Lookshy to address the Seventh Legion. "I am the Five Day Shogun," she says. If the Solars suggest a better destination, Ejava concedes and urges Arianna to hurry.

Teleporting out removes the circle from immediate danger but doesn't do anything to prevent the Empress from somehow unlocking the manse's controls. There's nothing Arianna can do to damage the manse itself, but the same cannot be said of its latest renovations. With a boosted Rain of Doom, Arianna can open the skies directly above the whole of the Imperial City or just the manse itself. The former removes considerable assets from the Queen of Hell, at the price of a death toll so high that the Dragon-Blooded will never forgive the Solars or join with them against the forces of Hell. Such a reaction is easy enough to anticipate. Limiting the storm to the manse fills its moat with a torrential monsoon of acid, drowning the demons and their unholy relic grafts alike in hungry, sizzling depths. As parting shots go, the flood is among the most memorable setbacks in the Ebon Dragon's existence. He is not amused.

## EPILOGUE

Outside the Imperial Manse, Creation is in turmoil. Cities across the Blessed Isles are in flames, the halls of the Bureau of Destiny run thick with Sidereal blood, and Chejop Kejak lies dead by the Empress's hand. But though Creation reels, the circle is successful. It has escaped from the most heavily fortified manse ever built, with the Roseblack in tow. And yet, this dramatic feat is only the precursor to much greater challenges. It is now up to the

circle to decide how to capitalize on this accomplishment and meet the coming darkness.

Having just been brainwashed by the Scarlet Empress as a slave of the Yozis and then rescued by supposed "Anathema," Ejava accepts that her saviors aren't the demonic monsters of Immaculate dogma. How far she takes this open-mindedness depends entirely on the circle's actions during the story and beyond.

The Realm immediately dissolves into another civil war in the face of Roseblack's proclamation. The Empress immediately declares her a traitor, but the damage has been done. The ranks of the Righteous Orphan Rebellion swell with converts won to their cause, and the Empress is soon forced to prove Ejava right with overt displays of unholy power to keep her people cowed. With the ruse of benevolence over, the Blessed Isle quickly becomes a second Hell.

The greatest opportunity presented by the Roseblack's rescue is the prospect of reuniting the Solar and Terrestrial Exalted under one banner. While it is only the first step toward mending centuries of systematic lies and murder, it is a necessary one. If the Exalted do not stand together, the Yozis will seize Creation and rule over it as in the days of prehistory.

## VARIATIONS

As the Scarlet Empress proved, Solars aren't the only Exalted who could brave the perils of the Imperial Manse and survive. Abyssals and Infernals have roughly the same chance of success but likely very different reasons for breaking in. Generally speaking, deathknights don't do rescues, but they could be led by prophetic Whispers to murder the Roseblack and destroy or seize the Defense Grid. Green Sun Princes grown weary of the Ebon Dragon's scheming and the arrogance of the Scarlet Empress might dare the fortress for purely selfish reasons. If present in Creation, Alchemicals certainly covet the doomsday weapon their Great Maker built, as much for its religious significance as actual strategic value.

Lunars have many of the same reasons and overall tools for breaking in as Solars, shielded from instant-death Shaping traps by their tattoos. Although Dragon-Blooded might wish to save their Shogun, they need a miracle on the order of the Empress's fortune to succeed. As for the Fivescore Fellowship, the break-in directly coincides with the Lotus Massacre (see **Return of the Scarlet Empress**, p. 40), so a circle of Viziers might emerge victorious from the secret mission only to discover they are the last Siderals...

## THE PRICE

**Under the Rose** leaves the metasorcerous resonator's ominous price for Storytellers to devise. Whenever that price comes due, Arianna understands what is expected of her and must obey, lest she suffer terrible automatic botches as though an Essence 10 Eclipse sanctified the broken pact. She *will* pay, one way or another.



# THE SOLAR CIRCLE

The following characters make suitable protagonists for **Under the Rose**, possessing not only ample motivation, but also sufficient power to attempt to rescue Tepet Ejava from the clutches of the Queen of Hell. The traits here add 230 experience points to the newly Exalted versions of these characters depicted in **Scroll of Exalts**. Players who wish to make their own characters to act as protagonists for this story should feel free to disregard the following circle, replacing or substituting its members to taste.

## DACE, THE REJUVENATED CAVALIER

Dace was the middle-aged commander of a Scavenger Lands mercenary company who Exalted during a battle with Lookshy mercenaries. Now he attempts to wield his sword for the good of Creation. In his own words, he might not be a wise man, but he is a strong one, and he knows right from wrong.

**Motivation:** To unify the armies of the Scavenger Lands under his command

**Caste:** Dawn

**Anima Banner:** A luminous wolf howls and bares its flashing fangs.

**Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4; Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2; Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

**Virtues:** Compassion 2, Conviction 2, Temperance 2, Valor 3 (Foolhardy Contempt)

**Abilities:** Archery 2, Athletics 1, Awareness 3\*, Bureaucracy 1, Dodge 2, Integrity 1, Linguistics (Native: Riverspeak; Others: Forest-tongue, Old Realm) 2, Lore 1, Martial Arts 2, Medicine 1, Melee 5 (Dawnlight +3), Performance 3\*, Presence 2\*, Resistance 1, Ride 5\*, Socialize 1, Survival 1\*, War 5

**Backgrounds:** Allies 1, Artifact 2, Contacts 2, Followers 3, Resources 4

### Charms:

Excellencies: Melee (First, Infinite Mastery), Presence (First), Ride (Second), War (Second)

Integrity: Integrity-Protecting Prana

Melee: Bulwark Stance; Dipping Swallow Defense; Fivefold Bulwark Stance; Fire and Stones Strike; Heavenly Guardian Defense (Conviction); Hungry Tiger Technique; Invincible Fury of the Dawn; Iron Whirlwind Attack; One Weapon, Two Blows; Peony Blossom Attack; Solar Counterattack

Performance: Respect Commanding Attitude

Presence: Enemy-Castigating Solar Judgment

Resistance: Body-Mending Meditation, Ox-Body Technique

Ride: Flashing Thunderbolt Steed, Master Horseman's Techniques (Master Horseman's Eye, Spirit-Steadying Assurances), Single Spirit Method, Worthy Mount Technique

War: Rout-Stemming Gesture

### Combos:

Burning Rage of the Dawn (First Melee Excellency, Enemy-Castigating Solar Judgment, Fire and Stones Strike, Heavenly Guardian Defense, Hungry Tiger Technique)

Thousand Rays of Light (First Melee Excellency, Heavenly Guardian Defense, Iron Whirlwind Attack, Solar Counterattack)

**Join Battle:** 6

### Attacks:

**Punch:** Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 4B, PDV 4, Rate 3, Tags N

**Kick:** Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 7B, PDV 2, Rate 2, Tags N

**Clinch:** Speed 6, Accuracy 7, Damage 4B, PDV —, Rate 1, Tags C,N,P

**Orichalcum Reaver Daiklave (Dawnlight):** Speed 5, Accuracy 15, Damage 13L/3, PDV 6, Rate 3

**Soak:** 10L/13B (Fine lamellar armor, +7L/9B, -2 mobility, fatigue value 1)

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

**Dodge DV:** 5    **Willpower:** 5

**Essence:** 4

**Personal Essence:** 17    **Peripheral Essence:** 42 (5 committed)

**Other Notes:** Favored Abilities marked with \*. Dace's Followers rating represents the Bronze Tigers, his burgeoning mercenary army based in Nexus, with his ally Risa acting as its lieutenant. His Artifact rating refers to his orichalcum reaver daiklave, Dawnlight, which he found in a tomb among the ruins of a collapsed city north of Nexus.





## PANTHER, THE CHAMPION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Panther was once a vicious, callous and uncaring gladiator. The blessing of the Unconquered Sun awoke him to the emptiness and abhorrence of the life he led, and now he tries to practice righteousness as best he is able... and to force such upright behavior upon those who behave as he once did, by force if necessary.

**Motivation:** To guide those who should be Creation's heroes onto the path of righteousness

**Caste:** Zenith

**Anima Banner:** A golden-clawed panther snarls and slashes at the air.

**Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4; Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3; Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

**Virtues:** Compassion 3 (Red Rage of Compassion), Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 3

**Abilities:** Athletics 2\*, Awareness 2\*, Dodge 4\*, Integrity 3, Linguistics (Native: Riverspeak; Others: Forest-tongue, Low Realm) 2, Lore 1, Martial Arts 5\*, Medicine 1\*, Melee 2, Occult 1, Performance 2, Presence 2, Resistance 5, Socialize 1, Survival 1

**Backgrounds:** Artifact 2, Artifact 2, Resources 3

### Charms:

Excellencies: Integrity (First), Martial Arts (First, Essence Flow, Infinite Mastery), Performance (First), Resistance (Second, Essence Flow)

Dodge: Seven Shadow Evasion (Conviction), Shadow Over Water

Integrity: Integrity-Protecting Prana

Martial Arts: Solar Hero Style (All Charms), Thunder Breaks the Clouds, Thunderclap Rush Attack

Resistance: Adamant Skin Technique (Temperance), Body-Mending Meditation, Durability of Oak Meditation, Immunity to Everything Technique, Iron Skin Concentration, Ox-Body Technique (x2), Spirit Strengthens the Skin

### Combos:

Hammer of Heaven (First Martial Arts Excellency, Adamant Skin Technique, Fists of Iron Technique, Heaven Thunder Hammer)

Invincible Shattering Blur (First Martial Arts Excellency, Adamant Skin Technique, Hammer on Iron Technique)

### Join Battle: 5

### Attacks:

**Punch:** Speed 5, Accuracy 9, Damage 4B, PDV 5, Rate 3, Tags N

**Kick:** Speed 5, Accuracy 8, Damage 7B, PDV 3, Rate 2, Tags N

**Clinch:** Speed 6, Accuracy 8, Damage 4B, PDV —, Rate 1, Tags C,N,P

**Slayer Khatars:** Speed 5, Accuracy 9, Damage 6L (raw damage x2 against inanimate objects), PDV 6, Rate 3, Tags M

**Soak:** 2L/4B

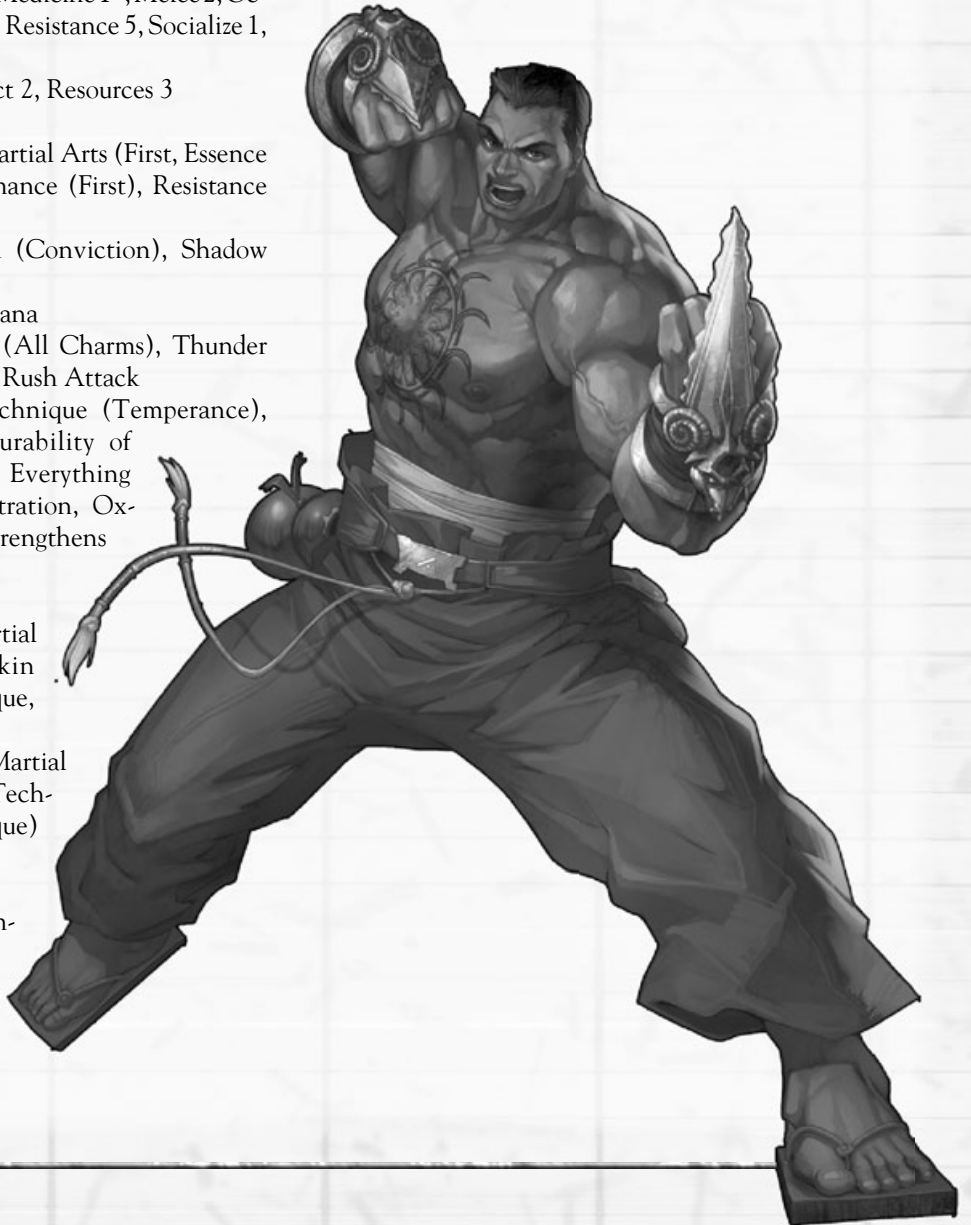
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

**Dodge DV:** 6     **Willpower:** 6

**Essence:** 4

**Personal Essence:** 18     **Peripheral Essence:** 45

**Other Notes:** Favored Abilities marked with \*. Unlike the standard punch-dagger style of khatar and slayer khatar, Panther's weapons are designed to be worn over the backs of the hands. This unusual design does not, however, enable him to hold close combat or ranged weapons while he is using the slayer khatars.



## ARIANNA, THE IMPLACABLE SORCERESS

Arianna is a brilliant woman whose potential was once constrained and ignored by the chauvinist society in which she lived. Since her Exaltation, she has allowed no authority to place boundaries on her quest for knowledge, and she tends to try to dominate any situation in which she finds herself.

**Motivation:** To restore the Solar Exalted to their rightful station as the rulers of Creation

**Caste:** Twilight

**Anima Banner:** Tall, broad lapis-lazuli wings of Essence with golden tips unfurl behind her, seeming to transform Arianna into a terrible angelic figure.

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2; Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

**Virtues:** Compassion 1, Conviction 3 (Deliberate Cruelty), Temperance 3, Valor 2

**Abilities:** Athletics 2\*, Awareness 2, Bureaucracy 2\*, Dodge 4\*, Integrity 1, Investigation 2, Linguistics (Native: Riverspeak; Others: Old Realm, Skytongue) 2, Lore 4, Martial Arts 2, Medicine 1, Occult 5, Resistance 1, Ride 3\*, Stealth 1, Survival 1, Thrown 3\*

**Backgrounds:** Contacts 3, Influence 2, Resources 2

### Charms:

Excellencies: Investigation (First), Thrown (First)

Athletics: Graceful Crane Stance

Dodge: Seven Shadow Evasion (Conviction), Shadow Over Water

Integrity: Integrity-Protecting Prana

Investigation: Judge's Ear Technique

Lore: Essence-Lending Method

Occult: All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight, Celestial Circle Sorcery, Ghost-Eating Technique, Terrestrial Circle Sorcery, Solar Circle Sorcery, Sorcerer's Burning Chakra Charm, Spirit-Cutting Attack, Spirit-Detecting Glance

Resistance: Body-Mending Meditation

Ride: Master Horseman's Techniques (Horse-Summoning Whistle, Master Horseman's Eye)

Thrown: Cascade of Cutting Terror, Triple-Distance Attack Technique

### Spells:

Emerald Circle: Death of Obsidian Butterflies, Demon of the First Circle, Emerald Countermagic, Invulnerable Skin of Bronze, Wood Dragon's Claw

Sapphire Circle: Sapphire Countermagic, Travel Without Distance

Adamant Circle: Adamant Countermagic, Rain of Doom

**Join Battle:** 6

### Attacks:

**Punch:** Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 2B, PDV 4, Rate 3, Tags N

**Kick:** Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 5B, PDV 2, Rate 2, Tags N

**Clinch:** Speed 6, Accuracy 5, Damage 2B, PDV —, Rate 1, Tags C,N,P

**Knife:** Speed 5, Accuracy 4, Damage 4L, PDV 2, Rate 3, Tags T

**Thrown Knife:** Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 4L, Rate 3, Range 15

**Soak:** 1L/2B

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

**Dodge DV:** 6     **Willpower:** 6

**Essence:** 5

**Personal Essence:** 21     **Peripheral Essence:** 50

**Other Notes:** Favored Abilities marked with \*.



## HARMONIOUS JADE

Harmonious Jade was raised to be an assassin by the Salmalin Yozi-cult. She Exalted during a botched job and was forced to flee when the cult attempted to kill her. She is unsure of her purpose in the world, and continues to ply her trade as a killer for hire while she attempts to sort out what to do with her new life. For now, she is content to support the larger goals of her circle.

**Motivation:** Destroy the agents of the Yoziis

**Caste:** Night

**Anima Banner:**

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3; Perception 5, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

**Virtues:** Compassion 1, Conviction 3 (Heart of Flint), Temperance 3, Valor 2

**Abilities:** Archery 5 (From Surprise +3)\*, Athletics 5\*, Awareness 3\*, Dodge 4\*, Integrity 1\*, Investigation 2\*, Larceny 5\*, Linguistics (Native: Flametongue; Others: Riverspeak) 1, Lore 1 (Prehistory +1), Martial Arts 2, Melee 3\*, Occult 1\*, Resistance 2, Stealth 5\*, Survival 1

**Backgrounds:** Artifact 3, Manse 2, Resources 2

**Charms:**

Excellencies: Archery (First, Third), Awareness (First), Dodge (First)

Archery: Accuracy Without Distance, Arrow Storm Technique, Essence Arrow Attack (Dazzling Flare, Fiery Arrow Attack, Righteous Judgment Arrow), Phantom Arrow Technique, Rain of Feathered Death, There Is No Wind, Trance of Unhesitating Speed

Athletics: Feather-Foot Style, Graceful Crane Stance, Monkey Leap Technique, Spider-Foot Style

Awareness: Keen Sight Technique

Dodge: Leaping Dodge Method, Seven Shadow Evasion (Conviction), Shadow Over Water

Integrity: Integrity-Protecting Prana

Larceny: Door-Evading Technique, Lock-Opening Touch

Stealth: Easily Overlooked Presence Method, Invisible Statue Spirit, Mental Invisibility Technique, Spreading Night's Shroud, Vanishing From Mind's Eye Method

**Combos:**

Empty Gold-Shadowed Quiver (First Archery Excellency, Essence Arrow Attack, Seven Shadow Evasion, Trance of Unhesitating Speed)

Untouched Sniper Elegance (First Archery Excellency, Graceful Crane Stance, Leaping Dodge Method, Reflex Sidestep Technique, Seven Shadow Evasion, Spider-Foot Style)

**Join Battle:** 6

**Attacks:**

*Punch:* Speed 5, Accuracy 8, Damage 3B, PDV 5, Rate 3, Tags N

*Kick:* Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 6B, PDV 3, Rate 2, Tags N

*Clinch:* Speed 6, Accuracy 7, Damage 3B, PDV —, Rate 1, Tags C,N,P

*Exceptional Knife:* Speed 5, Accuracy 10, Damage 6L, PDV 4, Rate 4, Tags T

*Orichalcum Short Powerbow (Eagle's Rain):* Speed 6, Accuracy 13, Damage 8L, Rate 2, Range 300

**Soak:** 7L/7B (Orichalcum breastplate, 6L/4B, Hardness: 2L/2B)

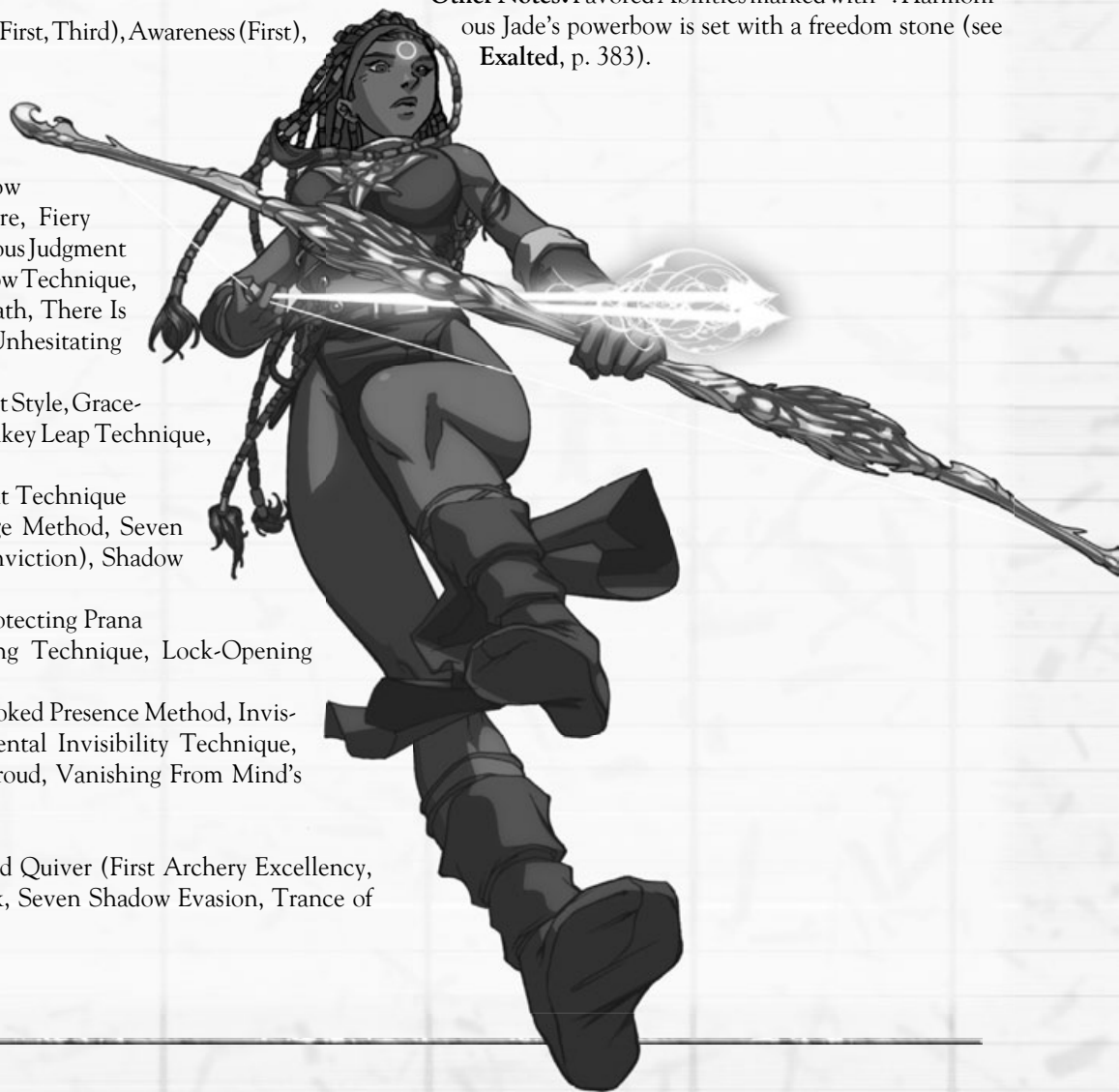
**Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

**Dodge DV:** 6      **Willpower:** 6

**Essence:** 4

**Personal Essence:** 18    **Peripheral Essence:** 43 (6 committed)

**Other Notes:** Favored Abilities marked with \*. Harmonious Jade's powerbow is set with a freedom stone (see *Exalted*, p. 383).





## SWAN, THE DASHING DIPLOMAT

Swan trained as a state diplomat in the Coral Archipelago in order to gain respect and glory for himself without necessarily having to kill his way across the face of Creation in the process. Though he prefers peaceful solutions when possible, he is a trained martial artist and more than capable of fighting in defense of himself or his circlemates.

**Motivation:** To bind Creation into a peaceful, cohesive whole through treaties, alliances and pacts

**Caste:** Eclipse

**Anima Banner:** A filmy white swan spreads its wings against the sun.

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4; Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

**Virtues:** Compassion 3, Conviction 3 (Heart of Flint), Temperance 2, Valor 2

**Abilities:** Athletics 2\*, Awareness 2\*, Bureaucracy 3 (Making Deals +2), Dodge 4\* (Thrown Attacks +2), Integrity 1, Investigation 2, Linguistics (Native: Seatongue; Others: High Realm, Low Realm, Old Realm, Riverspeak) 4, Lore 2, Martial Arts 5\* (Multiple Opponents +2), Occult 1, Performance 5, Presence 5\*, Resistance 1, Ride 1, Sail 2, Socialize 3, Survival 1, Thrown 1

**Backgrounds:** Contacts 3, Influence 2, Resources 2

### Charms:

Excellencies: Bureaucracy (Second), Martial Artist (First, Infinite Mastery), Performance (First), Presence (First)

Athletics: Graceful Crane Stance

Bureaucracy: Speed the Wheels

Dodge: Seven Shadow Evasion (Compassion), Shadow Over Water

Integrity: Integrity-Protecting Prana

Linguistics: Sagacious Reading of Intent

Martial Arts: Snake Style (All Charms)

Performance: Heart-Compelling Method, Memory-Reweaving Discipline

Presence: Hypnotic Tongue Technique, Irresistible Salesman Spirit

Resistance: Ox-Body Technique

Socialize: Gathering the Congregation, Mastery of Small Manners, Taboo Inflicting Diatribe, Wise-Eyed Courtier Method

### Combos:

Heart-Bursting Fangs (First Martial Arts Excellency, Armor-Penetrating Fang Strike, Essence Venom Strike, Seven Shadow Evasion)

**Join Battle:** 5

### Attacks:

**Punch:** Speed 5, Accuracy 9/11\*\*, Damage 3B, PDV 6/7\*\*, Rate 3, Tags N

**Kick:** Speed 5, Accuracy 8/10\*\*, Damage 6B, PDV 4/5\*\*, Rate 2, Tags N

**Clinch:** Speed 6, Accuracy 8/10\*\*, Damage 3B, PDV —, Rate 1, Tags C,N,P

**Perfect Hook Swords:** Speed 5, Accuracy 9/11\*\*, Damage 8L, PDV 7/8\*\*, Rate 3, Tags D,M

\*\* Value after slash when applying "Multiple Opponents" specialty.

**Soak:** 5L/4B (Chain shirt, +3L/1B, fatigue value 1)

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

**Dodge DV:** 6 (7 versus Thrown attacks) **Willpower:** 6

**Essence:** 3

**Personal Essence:** 12 **Peripheral Essence:** 30

**Other Notes:** Favored Abilities marked with \*.





# NEW SOLAR CHARMS

What follow are two unique Charms developed by the Solars Panther and Harmonious Jade, respectively.

## MARTIAL ARTS

### THUNDER BREAKS THE CLOUDS

**Cost:** 10m, 2wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 10)

**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious

**Duration:** Instant

**Prerequisite Charms:** Solar Hero Form

The character's fists blaze with the revelatory truth of the Unconquered Sun. This Charm may be activated whenever the Solar successfully strikes a being with an unarmed attack. Tongues of cleansing golden flames erupt from the target's eyes and mouth and she screams in pain as every instance of unnatural mental influence affecting her abruptly terminates regardless of source or potency. Only the fealty of akuma, the bindings of demons, the Great Curse and similarly inviolable effects chosen by the Storyteller ignore this Charm.

## STEALTH

### SPREADING NIGHT'S SHROUD

**Cost:** 2m; **Mins:** Stealth 5, Essence 3;

**Type:** Reflexive

**Keywords:** Stackable, Touch

**Duration:** One scene

**Prerequisite Charms:** None

The Lawgivers were meant to work together to bring order to Creation, but the Night Caste has always found fulfilling this mandate difficult. This Charm helps the Iron Wolves stand side by side with their less subtle brethren. The Lawgiver need only touch a consenting ally and commit two motes to tag him as a beneficiary. Up to maximum of (Stealth rating) beneficiaries may be tagged simultaneously.

Beneficiaries use the Solar's traits (if higher) for all rolls to remain undetected. Additionally, whenever the Solar activates another Stealth Charm or Stealth-related anima power while using Spreading Night's Shroud, she must pay two extra motes per beneficiary. This surcharge extends the effect through the tag, hiding the beneficiary just as it hides the Solar. Should the Lawgiver or any beneficiary do anything that qualifies as an attack, however, all the Lawgiver's shared effects instantly terminate, preventing an unexpected attack.



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