







# THE WORLD OF EXALTED



*One night, Azhrarn Prince of Demons, one of the Lords of Darkness, took on him, for amusement, the shape of a great black eagle. East and west he flew, beating with his vast wings, north and south, to the four edges of the world, for in those days the earth was flat and floated on the ocean of chaos.*

—Tanith Lee, *Night's Master*

In ancient times, before the world was bent, the gods were slaves, and from the Heavenly City of Yu-Shan, the Primordials ruled Creation. In time, the gods tired of their slavery, but were oath-sworn never to move against the Primordials directly, so they granted human champions the power to oppose the masters of the world. These were the first Exalted.

The Primordial War shook Creation, and many things were lost forever, but in the end, the Exalted were triumphant. They delivered Heaven unto the gods and, in payment, were granted rulership of Creation, and thus began the First Age.

The greatest of the gods was the Unconquered Sun, and the greatest of the Exalted were his Chosen, the Solar Exalted. For more than two millennia, the Solars ruled Creation with justice and forethought, but a curse ate at their hearts, slowly driving them toward excess and depravity. In time, their advisors, the Sidereal Exalted, and their soldiers, the Terrestrial Exalted, conspired to overthrow them, and in the Solars' hour of need, their mates, the Lunar Exalted, abandoned them. The Solars were betrayed and slaughtered.

Whenever a Solar dies, his Essence finds another mortal of promise and Exalts her. It is reincarnation of a sort. The Sidereals broke this cycle, trapping perhaps 300 of the divine Essences of the betrayed Solars in a great prison sunk

beneath the Inland Sea, and a lesser Second Age fell upon the world.

For over 1,000 years, the Dragon-Blooded ruled over Creation, systematically hunting down and destroying over and over again those few Solar Essences that escaped imprisonment and remained in the cycle of reincarnation, while around them the world diminished and decayed.

But no more.

The Scarlet Empress, the ruler of the Dragon-Blooded Dynasty, has vanished, and her 11 Great Houses have fallen to infighting over her throne. Into this Time of Tumult, the Solar Exalted are at last reborn in great numbers, their prison shattered by an encroaching shadow.

Will they save Creation, or destroy it?

## HOW TO PLAY EXALTED

Welcome to the second edition of White Wolf's popular fantasy roleplaying game. **Exalted Second Edition** takes a game of savage adventure with a massive, detailed setting and implements tweaks and improvements developed over five years of play. For those readers who haven't played **Exalted** or even any roleplaying games before, it's a game where you assume the heroic persona of a champion chosen by the gods and granted power to shape the destiny of the whole world,





returned after an age of imprisonment beyond death. **Exalted** draws from a wide variety of influences, from ancient heroic epics both Eastern and Western (*The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, *Beowulf*, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, *The Ramayana*, *Journey to the West*, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Outlaws of the Water Margin*) and pulp fantasy (the works of Robert E. Howard, Fritz Leiber, Michael Moorcock and Tanith Lee) to modern wuxia action movies (*Crouching Tiger*, *Hidden Dragon*; *Hero*; *Iron Monkey*), anime and certain other cartoons (*Ninja Scroll*, *Princess Mononoke*, *Vampire Hunter D: Bloodlust*, *Vision of Escaflowne*, *Samurai Jack*, *Reign the Conqueror*), manga (*Bastard*, *Blade of the Immortal*, *InuYasha*, *Lone Wolf and Cub*) and video games (the *Dynasty Warriors* series, the *Final Fantasy* series, the *Prince of Persia* series, *Chrono Trigger*). If there's something you like in any of these stories, there's something for you in the world of **Exalted**.

To play **Return to the Tomb of Five Corners**, all you'll need is this booklet, some pencils and some 10-sided dice. You will probably want 10 dice per player, though players can always share.

**Return to the Tomb of Five Corners** is best played by five people. Four players assume the roles of returning Solar Exalts, each taking one of the sample characters included in this booklet. The fifth player assumes the position of Storyteller, reading the adventure beforehand, overseeing the rules, describing environments with which the players' characters can interact, narrating the results of actions and

playing all the secondary characters the players will meet along the way. The Storyteller and all the players should read the character sheets and the section of this booklet entitled "The World of Exalted" (the part you're reading now), but only the Storyteller should read the section entitled "The Tomb of Five Corners."

## ROLLING DICE

**Exalted Second Edition** uses the Storytelling System, in which 10-sided dice are used to inject uncertainty into the unfolding drama of play. The Storytelling System is very simple: Any time you are asked to roll, you will roll as many dice as you have dots in the appropriate trait or traits on your character sheet. This is called your *dice pool*.

*Example: The Storyteller might ask you to roll (Perception + Awareness). If your character has Perception 3 and Awareness 2, you would roll five dice.*

Each die you roll that comes up 7 or greater is called a *success*. 10s usually count as 2 successes. Note that some dice are marked 0-9. In these cases, 0 counts as 10.

Rolls also have a *difficulty*, which is how many successes you need to roll to succeed. Unless otherwise specified, the difficulty is 1. If you roll fewer successes than you need, you've failed your roll, and your character does not succeed in her action, which can sometimes lead to further complications.

If you roll no successes at all, and one or more of the dice comes up showing a 1, you've *botched* your roll. A botch is a



catastrophic failure. Very often, a regular failure is a simple setback, and you'll be able to have your character try again or try another option, but with a botch, the results won't be so easy to recover from.

*Examples: When rolling the above-mentioned (Perception + Awareness) dice pool of five dice, you might get the following numbers: 1, 5, 7, 8 and 10. That's four successes, one each for the 7 and 8 and two for the 10. If you got a 1, 3, 5, 5 and 6 instead, that would be no successes and a 1, resulting in a botch. A roll of 2, 3, 5, 5 and 6 would be a simple failure.*

When figuring out the number of successes you've rolled for occasions when each success has bearing on the final effect, don't include successes insufficient to meet the difficulty or successes subtracted by outside influences.

*Example: If you've rolled 1, 5, 7, 8 and 10 on your (Perception + Awareness) roll, but the difficulty of the roll is 3, we say you've rolled two successes, because only the third and fourth successes count. The first and second successes are negated by the difficulty. If, additionally, there were some other effect in play that subtracted one success from the roll, we would say you've rolled only one success.*

Sometimes, your dice pool itself will be modified by bonuses or penalties, which will increase or reduce the number of dice in your pool. At no point can penalties reduce your dice pool to below your character's Essence trait. The two exceptions to this rule are wound penalties and penalties for performing a flurry, which can reduce a dice pool to below your character's Essence trait. (More information on wound penalties and flurries can be found below.) If wound penalties or flurry penalties reduce a dice pool to less than one die and the roll has no bonus successes, the roll and the associated action cannot be attempted.

## CHARACTER SHEETS

The **Exalted Second Edition** main rulebook provides rules for creating your own characters, but for now, the players should read through the character sheets provided with this booklet, and then, each should choose one character to play throughout the adventure. At the top of each character sheet is essential information, followed by Attributes, Abilities and Advantages, and on the other side is a character description, Intimacies, anima powers, Charms and either a Combo or sorcery.

## CONCEPT AND MOTIVATION

A character's **concept** is a one- or two-word description of her role in Creation. This is usually what the character was before her Exaltation and might be something such as mercenary, pit-fighter, explorer or courtesan. A character's **Motivation** is a summation of the character's strongest driving goals. You should keep your character's Motivation in mind when deciding how she would react to a situation.

## CASTE AND ANIMA

Every Exalt has natural affinities that are part of the power gifted to them by the gods. A **caste** is a grouping of Exalted that share common Charms and Abilities. All the Solar Exalted have castes based on the divine purpose given them by the Unconquered Sun. Your character sheet contains descriptions of your character's caste. Each Solar has a normally invisible symbol on her forehead, called a **caste mark**, which shines forth when she uses her power.

Each of the Solar Exalted also has an **anima**, which forms the heart of her supernatural might and reveals itself when the Solar invokes that power. An anima will shine forth in golden light, shimmering around the Exalt as a great beast of old, as a pillar of fire or as the fearsome mien of the Unconquered Sun.

## ATTRIBUTES AND ABILITIES

**Attributes** are divided into three categories (Physical, Social and Mental) and describe the traits inherent in your character, such as Strength or Intelligence. **Abilities** describe things your character has learned or skills he has practiced.

## ADVANTAGES

### CHARMS AND BACKGROUNDS

**Charms** are supernatural powers your character has because she is Exalted. Charms are dealt with in more detail below, and the character sheets have descriptions of how the individual Charms function. **Backgrounds** are a catch-all category that refers to many aspects of a character's persona or situation that don't fit into Attributes and Abilities. Generally, Backgrounds refer to things your character has, such as artifacts, or people your character knows, such as allies.

## WILLPOWER

**Willpower** is a measure of your character's self-confidence and internal control. Willpower works different from most traits. It has a permanent rating that stays constant (the dots) and temporary points that can be spent (the boxes). Any time you spend Willpower, mark off one of the boxes. Every morning when the characters awaken, their players should roll their Conviction Virtue (see below) and regain one point of Willpower per success. Available Willpower points can never exceed Willpower dots, with one exception (see below under "Limit Break").

The most basic way to spend a point of Willpower is to help ensure success on a roll. By spending one point, you may gain one automatic success on one roll (though you can't spend more than one point at a time this way). This doesn't always ensure complete success in cases where the difficulty is greater than 1, but it does add to the total and renders a botch impossible.





## VIRTUES

*Virtues* measure how passionately your character is committed to a certain type of behavior and way of thinking. Each time you wish your character to violate the dictates of a Virtue in which he has a score of 3 or greater, roll dice equal to the Virtue in question. If the roll fails, your character may act as desired, but if it succeeds, your character must act according to the dictates of the Virtue unless you spend a temporary Willpower point to *suppress* the Virtue. A Solar Exalt who suppresses the Virtue associated with his Virtue Flaw gains a point of *Limit*. Details of Limit follow.

**Characters must fail a Compassion roll to:** allow any enemy to perish miserably, ignore the pleas of the oppressed or impoverished, abandon the diseased to their afflictions, jilt or throw over a lover or perform similar acts.

**Characters must fail a Conviction roll to:** abandon a cause they have committed themselves to, give up in the face of hardship or disease or abandon their companions in times of need.

**Characters must fail a Temperance roll to:** act dishonestly or show bias in a matter of importance, overindulge themselves, throw themselves into a situation without deliberation, or break oaths or otherwise abuse trusts.

**Characters must fail a Valor roll to:** turn down a duel of honor or a call to single combat, flee a battle, swallow an insult without seeking retribution or turn down a dare or challenge.

Virtues aren't all restrictive, though. Another way to spend Willpower is to *channel it through a Virtue*. By spending a Willpower point, you may add as many dice to a single roll as you have dots in a particular Virtue, as long as the Virtue is in question supports the action for which you're rolling.

**Compassion aids in:** protecting or aiding the sick, innocent or oppressed; fighting for justice or attempting to bring aid to the needy; fighting for or engaging in romantic love.

**Conviction aids in:** withstanding hardship, disease and oppression; exercising command and leadership in times of hardship; fighting in hopeless situations or against terrible odds.

**Temperance aids in:** withstanding temptation, taunting and other forms of baiting; keeping your tongue when intoxicated; fighting the effects of befuddlement, illusions, drugs or poisons.

**Valor aids in:** heroism in battle and single combat; withstanding magical fear and horror, feats of daring, physical or otherwise.

You may channel a given Virtue a number of times per story equal to your characters' dots in that Virtue (**Return to the Tomb of Five Corners** is one story). Every time you channel a Virtue, mark off one of the boxes below it. You can't channel more than one Virtue per roll, nor can you spend Willpower for an automatic success on the same roll you channel a Virtue to enhance.

## LIMIT BREAK

Each of the Exalted bears a terrible curse within her heart, spit out by the Primordials they slew in the name of the gods. No matter how filled with Compassion, Conviction, Temperance or Valor an Exalt may be, the curse will manage to *break her Virtue*, causing her to forsake it for a time, take it to dangerous extremes or even act contrary to its ways. Each Solar has a Flaw detailed on your character sheet. Every Flaw has a Limit Break condition attached to it — essentially, a situation that tends to cause the Exalt to lose control of herself and act out her Flaw. Every time this condition is met, the Exalt's player must roll the Virtue associated with the Flaw. For every success she rolls, the character gains a point of Limit. When a character's total Limit reaches 10, whether due to her Flaw or suppressing a Virtue, she suffers *Limit Break*, falling under the influence of her Virtue Flaw, immediately reducing her Limit to 0 and gaining a number of Willpower points equal to the Virtue associated with her Flaw (which can cause her total available Willpower points to exceed her Willpower dots). A player can have her character act out a reduced version of the Flaw, in which case she does not gain any temporary Willpower points.

## ESSENCE

Exalted flow with the Essence of Creation, and it is this energy that grants them their might. Essence fuels their Charms and their anima powers. Essence refers to the permanent rating your character possesses. Each Exalt also has three *mote pools*. A mote is the smallest unit of Essence, recognized by savants & sorcerers throughout Creation, and is spent to power the supernatural abilities of the Exalted. *Personal motes* are those which are easily spent without inviting unwanted attention. *Peripheral motes* are those the use of which flares the Exalted anima, causing it to shine brightly. Finally, there are *committed motes*. Whenever a mote is spent on an ongoing effect (whether to power a Charm with duration longer than instant or to attune an artifact), move motes from one of the other two pools to the Committed pool. Motes cannot be regained as long as they're committed, but they pass out of the Committed pool when the effect they power ends.

When committing motes out of the Peripheral pool, the anima flares as normal (see "Anima Banner," below), but then dies down as if the motes had just been spent. It doesn't stay flared as long as the motes are committed. (This is a common misreading of the **Exalted** rules.)

When engaged in strenuous activity such as combat, Exalts don't recover motes. When engaged in normal activity such as leisurely travel, they recover four motes per hour. When resting completely, they recover eight motes per hour. Recovered motes always refill the Personal pool first, refilling the Peripheral pool only if the Personal pool is full.

## HEALTH CHART

This trait measures the degree to which a character is wounded or injured. Health is explained in a later section called "Health."





This section of the sheet also lists three values called *soak*. The first represents a character's bashing soak, the second a character's lethal soak and the third a character's aggravated soak. Soak is explained in a later section called "Damage and Soaking."

### ANIMA

All castes of the Solar Exalted can channel Essence directly through their animas to generate magical effects. In addition to those anima powers listed on your character sheet, each Solar Exalted can spend a single mote to:

- Cause his caste mark to glow brightly (as if the character had spent 4-6 Peripheral motes; see "Anima Banner," below).
- Cause his anima to glow brightly enough to read by (as if the character had spent 8-10 Peripheral motes; see "Anima Banner," below).
- Know the precise time of day.

### ANIMA BANNER

All Exalted have an "anima," an aura of power that surrounds them. Normally, this aura is so faint that it is imperceptible to normal human senses, but when a Solar spends Peripheral motes, the anima intensifies to form an "anima banner." Every 15 minutes that the Exalt does not spend Peripheral motes, the anima falls one level (with two exceptions: see chart).

#### Peripheral Motes Spent

#### Effect

1-3	The character's caste mark glitters for an hour after the Exalted has ceased to burn motes.
4-7	The character's caste mark burns and will shine through anything placed over it. Stealth Charms and other concealing magic fails, and the difficulty of all Stealth rolls increases by 2.
8-10	The character is surrounded by a shining aura bright enough to read by, and his caste mark is a burning golden brand. Stealth is impossible.
11-15	The character is engulfed by a brilliant bonfire of Essence, which burns from his feet to above his head and is visible for miles.
16+	The character is surrounded by a burning image totemic to his person — a warrior might be surrounded by a great golden bull, a sorcerer might be surrounded by an elaborate mandala, and so on. This fades to the 11-15 mote level during any action the character doesn't actively spend motes.