Perhaps in some far-flung dream of glory, there was once a world in which the greatest champions were chosen by the fickle, yet eternal blessings of the celestial forces above them. Perhaps they were defined by a great struggle against world-making titans, whose dying curses doomed them to hubris.

This is not that world. Though suffused with divine life energy and wills of their own, the sun and earth are distant and inscrutable celestial bodies, not deities.

Here, miraculous perfection lives on in the heart of the fighter. There are no cosmic superweapons forged by gods, only the transcendent achievements of martial artists and their reasons for pursuing the way of the fist. In many other ways, this world is quite familiar to the mundane modern one. And while all may walk this path, only the mightiest among those who can attune to the spirit energy around them earn the title “Exalted”. It is said that when a fighter transcends the limits of mortal men, his aura erupts with spiritual flame and he sees the ki of all things permeating the world while consorting with ancient spirits. The road along the true path of battle is paved with the reasons these martial artists fights, for this world is:

SHARDS OF THE EXALTED DREAM: BURN LEGEND

You have ten years to carve the legend of your own martial splendour upon this land, and 1000 Choice Points (CP) to hone your mind and body into a weapon of beauty.

Starting Time, Age, Gender, Drop-In Option and Location

As mentioned earlier, in many regards this world echoes the modern one save for where true power lies. You may start in any country in the modern world, and you may choose any age within the human lifespan. You have 10 years to seek your fate. You may be whichever gender you were in a previous jump for free or pay 50 CP to change it. Any of the origins below can also be a Drop-In origin.

Origins

All perks under the relevant origin heading are 50% off.

Ryuujin: You were born into one of the five Ryuujin bloodlines that count themselves the living descendants of the Five Dragon Gods, who wind around the pillars which hold up Heaven and Earth. Traditionally you have been trained to hunt ghosts and other evil spirits, though at times you have fought the Shinma's champions and those of their wicked cousins the Yama Kings as well. Though once your clans crossed the world on an epic crusade, in recent times they have preferred settling down in spiritually significant places-whether to reap the benefits of their spiritual wealth, or to guard a gateway to the Thousand Hells. As a scion to such a respectable legacy, many will presume you seek to destroy Akuma wherever they may be found.

Tennin: Ah, you call on other forces to destroy the demons? You were once fortunate enough to gain the attention of the Shinma: A race of demons who came from the stars to settle on Earth. Deeming it their home and worthy of their protection, chose mortal champions in dreams with which to fuse their souls and forge them into incredible martial artists that exude martial principles surpassing the physics of the natural world. In your time your kind has masqueraded as the onmyoji of the Heian Period, wielding divination and spirit-sensing talents to influence the government while gaining great influence over the nation. Distrusted by the Dragon Aspects for fear of your potential addiction to killing from the sensation of rending souls apart, your actions will decide whether you are remembered as a divine sage or an otherworldly monster.

Okami: In every respect other than the physical, you are not human. You were once an earth spirit descended from the moon, born as human every thousand years. One of two things drew you from the untouched wilderness to the world of man: A society falling prey to a certain sin, or the appearance of those who would threaten the life of the planet. Your childhood unnerved others, being able to see and hear ghosts at school and inevitably compelled away from the lives built for you to a wild place. There you communed by starlight with the moon, and heard the spirit of the Earth calling upon you for protection. It transformed you into a great beast of legend, whether the fusion of man and animal present in werewolves or the seeming of mermen and more conventionally appealing catgirls. A being with a foot in both worlds, able to communicate with spirits and sense disturbances in the natural flow of life energy with dreams, visions and sometimes even scents of voices. Your actions will decide whether you are remembered as a predator that hunts the corrupt in the concrete jungle, a gruff isolationist or a friendly stranger.

Yamajin (200 CP): The Shinma are only one half of the tale of justice they instruct their chosen in. The other, their kin who broke away to rule as gods over men. The vices they wallowed in transformed them into demons called Yokai, and when they learned they could not rule they instead preyed on them, fattening on souls and twisting themselves into more hideous forms. Once, it was the prowess of the Legendary Masters of old that sealed them in the Thousand Hells, blasphemous spirit realms where they rule as feudal lords. And now? It is their fear and hatred of each other, each impure demiurge crowning itself by the title of Yama King before vying for power and influence over the other in a grotesque parody-or perhaps, archetype-of the power struggles in the modern world.

And you? You were once an Akuma, a martial artist who strived to recreate the Yama Kings forbidden techniques and sorcerous katas for one reason or another. Many of your kind died, their souls damned to the Thousand Hells. But in your past life you gained true power from twisted insight, transforming into avatars of demonic force. And when you died-either from a moment of perfect harmonic bliss and deep meditation that projected your soul into Hell, or from using an authentic Yama technique of such power it slew you, or simply in battle realising the physical world held no further challenge, you too died. But for your, the journey was a mere pilgrimage. Your soul fused with the essence of Hell to don the Yama Kings' power, and your strength was such that you broke death's chains to return to life. Many among your kind choose to seek a realm of spiritual significance. There you can bind the world of matter and soul together into a shrine to your own power-transforming this "Little Hell" into a reflection of your soul through tainted katas and hell-born techniques to increase your power, so the demon slayers may not fell you easily nor may the Yama Kings use or devour you. But ultimately, your powers are yours to do with as you please.

Shinigami: The world you live in is **wounded** and cries out for vengeance. Long ago, the Yama Kings tore tracts from the chakras of the planet, and you were among those who had your reason to live stolen by the mighty and violent. An offer from the world has granted you a killing art devised long before man learned to clench his fist, reforging you into a priest-champion with all the inevitability of Kali reborn. Yours is the might that slays devil and man alike, binding their souls into tattoos, extensions of your body or even new fighting techniques. Yours is the right to restore the balance of the universe by pruning it of ghosts and the mighty alike. Yours is the discretion to hunt even the other Exalted (save the Mugen) for beloved by the world or not they too are abnormalities in the span of existence your existence hungers to judge harshly. And should you meet a Shinigami that has come to relish stealing life from even the weakest mortals, be assured your own kin will eagerly join you in hunting them as well.

Mugen (200 CP): You are a mystery to this world, warrior. You stand here at the pinnacle of the martial world. The world's greatest fighting styles focus ki through martial techniques to create unique and devastating special attacks-and even among them, few reach the storied title of Mugen. Legend has it your fighting spirit channels the ki of the sun itself. That the spirit energy of the sun and the planet alike intertwine, forming a radiant field permeating all things which only you can tap through your own ki to unleash attacks surpassing even the power of the Yama Kings. You are no more good or evil than any man, but one thing is known: Your transcendent power was no gift or curse, simply true mastery of the human martial arts tempered with your own soul's discipline.

Perks

Body of a True Warrior (Free/100-300 CP): In this world the natural attributes of a trained fighter come first and foremost in the greatest conflicts it has seen. A weakling seldom reaches the heights of power and influence that the Exalted enjoy. You begin with if not an outstanding body, one fit and ready for the intense battle your kind is all too familiar with on a regular basis-but why should you settle for such? Whether through strong blood or stronger spirit and training, for 100 CP one of your natural capabilities may be bolstered to the limits of human ken-and perhaps just a tad beyond. Your strength may give even technique-enhanced clinches and grips a struggle, and fling carts like basketballs. Your dexterity may leave you the envy of knife jugglers and ballerinas alike, letting you dance through gunfire or even some supernatural projectiles. And your stamina may be such that you could fight all day and night, and not feel tired until the next evening without reaching for any particular technique.

The Will to Fight: (Free/100-200 CP): Ki, the very breath of life is almost as inseparable from your greatest techniques as the will to invoke some of them. It is fortunate then that you are well trained to wielding both in pitched battle. But for 100 CP you may prove stubborn even among the Exalted, your will rapidly replenishing during each battle and possessed of great resilience even in non-combative struggle. Or your ki could be just as virile, providing you significantly more spiritual energy than the average fighter. And of course you may pay once again to have both effects.

Back to Basics (1 free/50 CP for more): Many are the mundane martial arts that mortal and Exalt wield alike against one another, which lack the powerful supernatural effects or Overdrive special attacks their betters can unleash against each other. From the basic blocks and grapples of rough brawlers, to kyokushin karate and Brazilian jujitsu, there are many styles that all are capable of grasping. And you happen to be remarkably skilled in one, having pushed your art in battle with the Exalted themselves. You may be the equivalent of a seventh degree black belt in any martial art or other style of fighting that exists in the real world. Whether this manifests as being the second coming of Wanderlei Silva or merely being the king of pub crawl brawls is up to you.

The Inverse Exalt Law (200 CP): Many will warn you about the dangers of facing more than one trained fighter at once. But where others fear the effects of force multipliers and blindspots, you almost seem to thrive in them. Through a combination of practical experience, spiritual as well as physical awareness and specialised techniques you are unusually adroit at fending off attacks from multiple opponents. Shoves' momentum becomes redirected into shoulder checks that upset your opponents' stance, while you seem to know just how to duck out of a kick so it may strike a wall or another foe's face. You are no more immune to being overwhelmed by truly insurmountable numbers than any man but are far more prepared to deal with it than most.

Ryuujin

Dragon's Legacy Meditation (100 CP, Free): All Aspects of the Ryuujin harvest a different and singular element, which greatly shapes their temperament. With attunement to the family style that cultivates their ki, comes a special technique related to their element with an advanced form. And you are no different, boasting the legacy of your heritage.

Dragons of Flame are boisterous and aggressive, as charismatic as they are prone to hot tempers and showboating. They may draw flame from within to unveil it like a crimson battle standard, unleashing it in torrents. Their advanced technique is the Shadow Jutsu: The channeling and control of shadows, winding them around themselves like a cloak or strangling and slashing at opponents.

Dragons of Wind are energetic, feckless, bold and shameless. Though they show almost effortless bodily control their tempers can be horrific. Wind techniques are birthed from the breath and core of the body, and channelled through the curve of punches or kicks to batter opponents or even physically redirect them in a twisting cyclone. Their advanced technique is the Lightning Jutsu: A blazing sheer of wind-bound energy that can electrify attacks, stunning or crippling opponents.

Dragons of Water are patient and curious. In battle they find it easy to adapt to the unexpected, and as graceful in retreat as counterattack. Water techniques may let them dance effortlessly on water or sculpt it through katas to strike opponents with blows and torrents. Their advanced technique is the Frost Jutsu: The power to breathe ice into the world or draw it from their core. Through it they can freeze surfaces underfoot, or fix an opponent in place.

Dragons of Earth are determined and stoic. Patient and sensitive, their sensitive ki enables them to often predict future instants before they occur. Relying on their element being present around them like Water Dragons, they can draw land up with their arms, punch stone masses through the air or stomp whole sections of earth with their heels. Even local structures and fields can be ruined with their control over tearing the ground. Their advanced technique is the Iron Jutsu: The power to shape metal with their ki. Few formal techniques have been developed so far, but it remains useful for wrenching apart steel doors or disarming and restricting opponents with metal weapons or armour.

Dragons of Wood are peaceful and compassionate, often disciplining themselves not to be entangled in the passions of others. Some may appear stoic like Earths in an attempt to hide their truest feelings. Uniquely, as a tree takes in energy from the environment to grow alone among the Ryuujin Dragons of Wood may bind and move the other four elements by learning the techniques of the other Dragons, and as such count as the rarest of them. The price they pay for this unique ability is lacking an advanced technique, and being unable to use the advanced techniques of the other elements.

Wake the Sleeping Dragon (200 CP): Perhaps to the greatest extent among the other Exalted, the Ryuujin rely on their familial bonds. Through marriage and tryst, their blood has seeped across the globe throughout many generations, and must be awoken through the thrill of combat. In modern times, when some Ryuujin break away from family tradition to leave the conflicts of ghosts and demons and teach their children nothing of their true heritage, it is all the more important to the active families to discover their descendants.

Whether through training specifically to address this newfound problem or sheer talent in ki sensitivity, you have honed your senses upon those Sleeping Dragons. The first is a refinement of the Dragon Sense that lets you better detect the dormant blood of those who share your familial gift. Though still random and determined by chance, where other Ryuujin would have to humble themselves to literally stalking maternity wards you would be able to sense dormant kin from across several city blocks with the same pinpoint position and accuracy through your ki. The second extends the inherent blessing of the dragons to any other seed you may have. Any powers that can be said to be inheritable though blood can no longer be seen through something as simple as a microscope - it will take the touch of magic for your legacy to be found.

For Clan and Country (400 CP): Beyond the advent of the modern era's decadence, simple infighting and dereliction have left the great Ryuujin houses in near-universal destitution-save for a few houses in Japan. Across Europe, Brazil and North America the remnants of the old houses send itinerants to do what they can against the spiritual foes of the world, while hoarding places of power. But what if someone rose to the challenge? A patriarch or matriarch of such fortitude, charisma and warmth that with luck and pluck the Ryuujin diaspora could once more be forged into a unified force. What if that someone…was you?

You are the kind of born leader who seemingly effortlessly sits atop a totem pole in many fighting games. Whether you are officially a businessman, a dojo owner or something else, your force of personality and management skills command tremendous respect in sectors beyond your impressive field of nominal expertise. Your management skills and organizational expertise are as formidable as your intimidating presence, cowing lesser men into living up to your expectations. Moreover, a quality of your ki lends your spiritual signature a degree of charisma by itself. Where others of your family may resort to kidnapping lost dragons for their power, you will find your very spiritual energy adept at cultivating a familial warmth to put them at ease as you warmly greet them as a long-lost relative and explain the necessity of putting them in a kung fu battle-at once uplifting, and wreathing you in an aura of ancient power that demands respect.

Natural Disaster Incarnate (600 CP): Many of the greatest martial techniques in your bloodline skirt the border between elements in destructive spectacle, be it wreathing oneself in a devastating cyclone or causing a massive explosion from the earth itself. And among the Ryuujin, your proficiency with such techniques is to be feared. Not only are you a one in a million genius when it comes to advancing the martial arts of your kin, but your affinity with advanced techniques is something extraordinary. Your ki resonates well with such explosive shows of force, greatly

decreasing how much you require to initiate one and automatically granting inhuman precision with their effects; rather than explode the earth in all directions, you could send a crack in it arcing precisely through a neighbourhood's boulevards. Moreover in general you gain the power to create techniques derived from elemental powers bonded to different elements. These become drastically more powerful when both are harnessed together, though be careful when unleashing all the violent energy of a localised natural disaster. With this self-mastery, Wood Dragons may develop powerful and unique techniques related to plants that match the intensity of the other Ryuujin-be it an explosion of venomous pollen, or raising a house-wrecking tree from the ground with a stomped heel.

Tennin

Devil Judgement Style (100 CP, Free): You are trained in the otherworldly combat art designed by the Shinma to rend spirits. Through eerie dreams and waking omens, you have learned to use a highly formalised series of moves divided into Terrestrial, Celestial and Sidereal techniques. Terrestrial techniques control and manoeuvre opponents, being available at any time; even a junior practitioner may move between the space-between-spaces and strange dimensions only understood in this world by the Shinma, shattering like light through a prism and striking an opponent from seven directions almost at once to defeat other aerial attacks. Celestial Techniques may only be activated after a successful Terrestrial Technique, and often wreck havoc directly on opponents' ki; an example being gripping an opponent's head to render him only capable of defending through technique, not brute strength. Finally, Sidereal Technique exploit the ki conditions imposed by Celestial Techniques with ruinous results for the opponent; with this art it is possible to detonate an opponent through their ki.

Stargazer's Glimmering Gift (200 CP): Little is known about the Shinma, even by their own chosen. They are abstract spirits that cannot be approached or struck like ghosts or demons, and are only seen briefly when a Tennin uses their ki to express their divine power as an abstract quality. The Shinma could manifest as a thought, an image, a voice, a taste or even an instinct. Less still is known about how they select their champions. Perhaps in your case, you were already something of a kindred spirit?

The gift of divining the abstract and communing with the truly esoteric is yours. Where even supernaturally efficacious fortune tellers and mystics may struggle to give a truly useful prediction of the future, your unearthly insight could easily glean the weather, the position of someone you're tracking and the best place to take a stroll in the coming day. Even truly complex or abstract systems like quantum particle superposition would let you exhibit an uncanny talent for prediction. More importantly, not only do you intuitively know how best to communicate with abstract beings like the Shinma-assuming it's possible-but some intangible quality about you makes it easy to make a good first impression with such beings. As the Tennin were chosen from all men to be entrusted with the Shinma's very souls, so too may you inspire a similar level of trust in the unearthly by merit of your existence.

Bridge of Endless Redirection and Binding (400 CP): Two of the most fundamental techniques the Tennin practice are a form of redirection, and a mystical binding move. Some techniques conjure an ethereal prayer slip that stills the movements and reflexes of those it lands on, risking a seemingly inexplicable collapse once fully mastered. Others trust to destiny and the Shinma to guide a perfect blow which cannot be reversed. You have internalised these principles to quite an astounding level.

All powers you wield that bind or redirect are greatly enhanced. Where once a complex spell to reseal a great evil back in its native dimension may have taken rare artifacts, fierce concentration, and intense study, you now find guiding the flow of mystic energies as natural as breathing and your seals withstand the resistance of greater beings much more soundly. Destiny guides any force or technique you can

muster which redirects attacks too, providing minor blessings upon you that allow you to instinctively take advantage of your own foes attacks. Creating a portal to deflect an arrow, for example, may hasten your speed for the next minute or so that will not accidentally send you careening into walls. Your ki resonates particularly well with similar native techniques of your style, allowing you to learn and improve them much quicker-as if you had trained in them all your life.

Mudra of Enlightened Preparation (600 CP): To capitalise on prior efforts is the core trait of the Tennin's fighting style. But just as the Tennin of old extended beyond the remit of mere warriors to protect their nations with subtler influence, you too have internalised the principles of preparation to a degree that seems to have pleased the Shinma. When you set about taking advanced preparations to achieve any endgoal, the more effort you take to set it up the more subtle supernatural forces conspire to enhance the success of the endgoal. Subtle trends in fate or causality deflect disruption of your plans, esoteric mystic sigils speed your efforts while you aren't looking and the very flow of ki seems to be on your side. Perhaps with a sufficiently ambitious and prolonged endgoal, you might even see your Shinma manifesting as directly as possible even with minimal exertion from your ki to assist your various efforts. This can greatly enhance your Devil Judgement Style techniques to the degree of bursting the ki of small armies with relatively similar effort, but truly shines in areas such as statecraft or espionage that require the coordination of many moving parts. May your vigilance watch over the spirit world even without your presence.

Okami

Martial Beast Mien (100 CP, Free): Yours is a primal, natural power born from your own might. As mentioned before, you gain a transformation into a great beast of legend-and not through the martial techniques mastered by other Exalted, but by merit of your divine blood. Whether a noble centaur or a brutal man-bull, whether some vast insectile horror or a winged and feathered man with a radiant mien, the body of common techniques you share with your fellows dates back to the very beginning of martial arts.

Some may seem brutish and unrefined, like a viscous claw strike powerful enough to stop the rushes of other martial arts, or a charge that can deflect incoming projectiles. Others may even be inhuman, fortifying the body to instantly recover from injury or sinuously curving around an incoming attack with a devastating strike. The most advanced of all project devastating beams of unearthly moonlit ki powerful enough to overwhelm the works and techniques of many others, often coupled with inhuman ferocity-though lesser techniques may also bring to bear the cleansing moonlight.

Sacred Mooncalf Kata (200 CP): Even for an Okami, the natural strength and fury within you is a sight to behold. Not only does your bestial form inspire fighting techniques in you, but you have the capacity to innovate techniques of equivalent potency simply by studying animals in the wild. Even a wasp or jellyfish's stingers could be emulated through quick jabs of a werebear's claws; only truly physically AND metaphorically incompatible physiology prevents you from broadening the arsenal of techniques you can master in this regard. Even capabilities like shapeshifting skin or flight could be emulated with techniques that render you difficult to perceive or able to jump tall treelines in a single bound. In another world, you could well be considered the ultimate survivor.

Where The Wild Things Are (400 CP): The Okami seldom know why they're called to the wild from the outset. In many ways they can be considered the ultimate outsiders despite the duty requested of them by the earth. Nevertheless, their service can be rewarding. In each world, including this one, the wild and untamed regions you are called to protect have a cleansing effect on your ki. Your very presence seems to rebalance any present pollution or negative energy, and enhances the virility and beauty of nature once it is cleansed. The unhygienic or threatening aspects of the natural world are downplayed for you to a comfortable homey atmosphere.

Moreover, you find your ki blessed with an easygoing character that lets you befriend minds less fettered by the norms of society such as children or outcasts with uncanny ease. Mystically you are considered a part of the natural world and a favourite child of sorts for the purpose of all effects and conditions for which this would matter. The spirits of the natural world too intuitively sense you are no threat to their ways, but a trusted friend and will eagerly confide with you knowledge of the world beyond-so long as you yourself do not strike against them, of course. Beyond that, you'll find that the stars, the moon and the earth are eager to offer guidance and

emotional support through subtle portents and blessings of luck associated with their appearance. The wilderness will always be a home away from home for you.

Moonlit Laceration Onslaught (600 CP): Born from the moon to punish iniquity and imbalance, your way of being is sanctioned by the most ancient of laws. And your celestial parent has seen fit to bless you for this sacred hunt. You gather moonlight far more easily than other Okami, coating your body in a sheen of killing light with the effort it would take for others to fling it around in scything attacks, and the moon comes to you in dreams to soothe your anxieties and teach you new ways to slay with moonlight. Your regular Overdrive techniques could split rivers and carve buildings with moonlight. Such powers are particularly mighty against the spiritually unclean and those who meaningfully imperil the natural life on the planet, burning them as sunlight would burn vampires, and only moreso under the moon where your vitality and ki restore themselves rapidly. In the name of the moon, you'll punish all who stand in nature's way.

Yamajin

Death Defying Blasphemy Stance (100 CP, Free): You foul, twisted creature. Did you bargain and scheme for the unclean power in your veins, or were you born with its cursed might from some cruel caprice? Either way, of your twin sets of power the Hell Arts of the Akuma you wielded in your past life are similar in many ways to corrupted shadows of the Mugen's martial power-to the extent that some enjoy an affinity to learning them with certain mundane arts like Muay Thai already mastered. With these powers, you could inject slivers of poisoned ki into your opponents to hobble them with pain. Another Akuma may don a partly unreal demonic mask and armour that deflects all projectiles at their creators while restoring their health and ki, and be improved to absorb those projectiles for greater temporary strength or wreathe them in an ebon corona of curses. The greatest techniques among these include tearing open a portal with your firsts to conjure skinning winds and storms of scarlet-black ki straight from the Thousand Hells.

But your true prize is the Hell Arts of the Yamajin, the very corrupt and corrosive techniques created by the Yama Kings themselves before recorded history. Excessive practice can taint the ki of the world around you, transforming the landscape into a blighted wasteland and the spirit world into a nascent aspect of Yomi Wan. With this power you could transform your body into a stream of tainted ki behind your thrown rune-marked fist, or blast those within reach with a searing emerald corona. So too could you ignite your foes with a rush of tainted ki, or gouge their flesh with burning iron-hard hands. The greatest prize, however, is the potential for you to ascend and join the ranks of the Yama Kings themselves should you truly perfect these arts. A fate perhaps foreshadowed by the infamous Demon Emperor Shintai: A dissolution of emerald fire that garbs the Yamajin in a demonic form befitting their infernal majesty, empowering them far beyond human limit rather than deigning to inflict damage.

To Reign In Hell (200 CP): To be a Yamajin is no easy life. The burning blood of the Yama Kings often drives them to fits of violence even as early as childhood, or risks transforming them into vessels of wrath when their emotions run high. And yet through that agony, some are empowered. What many would view as a curse, you have come to invite as an opportunity to make the world pay for ever mistaking you for its next free lunch.

Your ki waxes in response to adversity, letting you eke out that extra bit of energy in the throes of intense battle or sustain yourself in heated battle-never quite to the point where it can actually be called nourishing, but toughening up and keeping you going through a lifetime of violence. Moreover you have that combination of guile and intimidation needed to excel in the criminal underworld. Whether you actually stain your hands in black society's affairs or maintain an aloof distance from it, making a name for yourself in the criminal underbelly or organising black market trades comes almost too naturally to you. Not only are you adept at using mundane mistrust and vice to build support networks around yourself, but you can actually absorb the fear and hatred around you to grow stronger as if through mundane

physical training. Corruptive as your ki may be, among the damned of the world it gifts you with an unnerving vitality.

Hellfire Crucible Alchemy (400 CP): It is the wildest dream of every Yamajin to breach the boundaries between matter and spirit, making a reflection of his own soul so that they may become the one and true controller of all possibility. With this quirk to your essence, you are that much closer to making that dream a reality. Your ki is unnaturally, dangerously corrosive even by the standards of your fellows. Even your blood and bodily fluids blights the world around you with your spiritual energy, though of course you may withhold this corruption should you deem part of the world worth sparing.

Normal, unenhanced attacks would leave even Exalted opponents scarred and burned from the caustic power that burns within you with whatever expression of the Thousand Hells' desecrating nature most calls to your heart-and mortals quickly dying. Your supernatural techniques are not only bolstered with spiritual pressure by this living corruption, but tend to leave temporary afterimages of the destruction they embody to continuously afflict your targets and dampen other supernatural forces brought against you. Wherever you go you spread a miasma of spiritual energy that wanes and waxes with your own ki which gradually does the work of transforming all ambient life, phenomena and matter into just the right expression of the Thousand Hells to hasten your own powers' growth. And once the world is blighted into the image of your own infernal power, you'll be able to wield its noxious environment with your techniques in ways that would leave the Ryuujin envious if they weren't likely outraged-whether creating vast, phantasmagorical maws from ambient smog or melting the ground around you into hellish magma.

Omens of the Demon Emperor (600 CP): Join the Yama Kings? Pathetic. It is not enough for a Yamajin with any self-respect to share their masters' perverse happiness, nothing short of casting down their brethren and ruling over them as Demon Emperor would be worthy of their own infernal majesty. And how would one achieve this? It is, admittedly, a fairly mysterious if not abstract goal. But whether through sheer overwhelming power or some twisted epiphany about the Thousands Hells' nature, you come far closer than most of your peers' wildest dreams to finding that answer.

The Demon Emperor Shintai is no longer something you must transform into. It is your native form, a technique which you instead replace with one that lets you transform into a more vulnerable but human-seeming form. Horns, claws, long fangs, black devil-armour and third eyes that see the spirit world-within reason, you may sculpt this glorious god-body with will like clay to grant yourself supernatural and natural endowments of a similar scale, for your form has harmonised with such spiritual iniquity that even the Yama Kings and other creatures of sin instinctively fear and respect you as an apex predator-while drowning in the greatest sin you enjoy in your presence. All sin and imbalance around you nourishes you like finest meat and drink, a slow but permanent reinforcement of your spiritual power. And through this twisted insight, you have learned to arm yourself with unique Overdrive techniques born of your nascent kingship. Greatly defined by your vision of what ruling the Thousand Hells means to you, these unique techniques rival those of the Legendary

Masters-and in time, may even eclipse them. If your would-be masters refuse to vacate your rightful throne, you'll stain all one thousand hells with their boiled blood.

Shinigami

Life Reaping Stance (100 CP, Free): Put all thoughts of self defence aside. The blending of mortal martial arts and killing techniques wielded by the Shinigami have one purpose: To avenge affronts against the balance of the Earth, and slay unruly spirits and fighters alike. These techniques evoke the darkness and void beyond the grave. A curving elbow could trail a blade of entropic ki, withering an opponent's momentum in ways beyond the mortal. They could also exhale and strike their own breath to savage the ki of their opponents with their own killing intent, seemingly slaying them with heart failure or some other catastrophic breakdown within their body. The void may be invoked to guard against other techniques while siphoning the opponents' will and vitality, or to disappear in a rush of shadows and strike from an impossible angle, but the most advanced techniques in this arsenal shine in utter annihilation. Whether by a piercing lance of black ki that ruptures the very soul or a corona of screaming shadows wrought around the clawed hand to siphon directly from an opponent's heart, death truly walks in the shadow you cast.

Howling Black Moon Heart (200 CP): It is a misconception to say your kind are charged to kill for killing's sake. The forces that empower you are furious with the war and suffering wrought by petty men who think themselves mighty, and scar the world for profit. You yourself are an (un)living monument to all of those sins. And from this insight, you have gained a measure of enlightenment into the Shinigami condition to better execute your duty.

Your ki sharpens your senses, giving you a singular insight into the hearts of mortal men around you. As wolves can track scents, you may track moral and spiritual impurity through the world more precisely than ever. The thugs of a mob boss would seem pale and wan compared to the aura of smog wreathing the man who pays their bills and ultimately shoulders the responsibility for far greater crimes across the world. Additionally, your willpower is bolstered against the temptation to steal the life of those around you. When you rebuke your peers for even suggesting such practices, the wounded portion of the world fills your anima with a display of scourging shadow and your voice roars like the arctic wind as the very law of the world rebukes them for succumbing to the very vices you were meant to curb. Last but not least you gain an uncanny insight into the truth of oaths made by those who throw upon your mercy, akin and far more reliably than the Ryuujin's sense for their own blood-kin, and may exempt yourself from the oath once you discover it's falsehood. May nothing stand in the way of your duty, not even yourself.

Unseen Vitality Extinguishment (400 CP): How precisely the world sponsors the forces you wield is unknown. Perhaps it is the nature of a scarred thing, even a thing as grand as the world's ki, to desperately hoard resources in order to restore itself? Perhaps your powers are more natural than many would care to admit, like a certain protein that forces cells into self-destruction in a healthy body to protect it from cancer. Whatever the reason you have stared into the truth of the abyss but briefly, and it too into you.

No longer must you rely on techniques and killing arts to reap life around you. When you will it your ki rises up in an ablative sheen of dark fog. Amorphous and volatile as a black flame, this covers the dimensions of a fighting ring with an entropy-accelerating miasma. Even physical barriers shall not stand in the way of your pursuit. Along with such mundane obstacles, you may wither flowers and euthanise small animals painlessly with the miasma of your life force near-effortlessly. Though tiring, you could also sap vitality, will and ki from other Exalted while dampening their blows and strange magics with the chilling cold of the end. Should you actively slay and reap from others with your native techniques you will find this smothering darkness as easy to sustain as your own breathing. Perhaps in time, you'll even find ways to solidify this darkness into weapon and beast-like emanations around your techniques-each a baneful weapon against all that draws breath or wields spiritual energy. Or to expand your cloak of living shadows should you decide entire armies are no longer deserving of life.

Karmic Void Judgement (600 CP): The Earth has suffered long enough. You will make an answer to its cries, and if you cannot you'll at least avenge it. Internalising the mission you were Exalted for, in this world you have developed a closer communion with the planet than your peers, chilling whispers and visions showing you techniques long lost to them while the dark corners of the world nourish, shelter and hide you from your enemies. And in future worlds this covenant between you and the world will persist.

But this is not the otherworldly communion of the Tennin or the joyous bonds of the Okami, oh no. Wherever there is a natural facet of the world that cries out against the wrongs committed by sentient life against it and each other, you will become as a favoured champion and treasured guardian to it. By fulfilling your role as avenger and executioner, you find that the reaping of life force benefits you far more than most when inflicted on those who have wronged the world the most-such that slaying a single cartel leader would infuse your ki with the vitality that would normally take dozens of low level soldiers to bestow on you. As you forge onward in your duty, you will find yourself bestowed with gifts to increase your lethality even as disasters both natural and horrific strike at your victims, waxing and waning in accordance with the severity of their crimes. And yet, despite your affinity for death, the world itself will acknowledge you as a natural part of it during times when others would try to use your un-life against you. Through meditation and the occasional dream, you may even have uncanny and nightmarish visions that show you wrongs perpetuated against nature and man alike-and where to strike against them.

Mugen

Sun Crowned Challenger's Stance (100 CP, Free): There is no great secret behind the way you fight. No celestial body sired you, no tainted force chose you from a vile bargain. No, you and your peers' arts are of diverse origin instinctively developed by wielding the Breath of Heaven. Whatever fighting style you practice, you were among the greatest fighters of a generation before truly coming into your power. And like the Yamajin many techniques in this style hearken back to the mundane martial arts you mastered as a mortal man.

With this power you could split the earth with your fist, shattering pavement to knock your foes prone and with greater practice even deflecting projectiles with the shockwave, or launch yourself into the heavens to deliver an impact capable of shattering nearby windows and cracking concrete. So too could you unleash a roaring projectile of spirit energy from both hands like a cannon shot, burning gold, violet and white with all the fury of the sun at its zenith. Your resilience is such that you can rebound force and projectiles against your foes-adding a corona of solar power or absorbing them for a brief surge in strength-and when you focus time seems to slow as lines of ki only you can see enable you to make impossible evasions that siphon their ki with your passing. But it is in reclaiming the lost arts of your predecessors the Legendary Masters that you can perform true miracles of violence. Send foes flying with earth-shaking blows or throw the Eye of Heaven, a miniature sun made of impossibly intense spiritual flames as large as a man, against those who cannot believe the legend would come back to life.

The Simplicity of Perfection (200 CP): So little is known about you that it is easy to misconstrue your intense discipline and exemplary fighting spirit for some higher power. To some, it may be impossibly to believe that the power they have bled for or made others bleed for could be surpassed by simply working hard. And as living proof of that humble supremacy, you have internalised this truth to the benefit of your life even beyond the fighting ring.

When you perform simple, menial physical tasks beyond the scope of fighting you may channel the Breath of Heaven into them to enhance their efficacy. Blur around the kitchen as a superhuman master chef, all the while blessing the food by stoking the stove with your spirit flames. Sweep an entire garden pristine in under a minute with several graceful katas incorporating your broom. While fishing, send a pulse of spirit energy to bounce fish out of the water and into your boat. And in doing this, you train yourself in a new arsenal of techniques to aid you in battle. You learn to wield the broom, or fishing rod, or kitchen knives as efficiently and powerfully as your normal fist technique, reinforcing them with spirit energy as you duel others with even more humble gestures than they would expect from such as you. Should you lack the tools of your trade, your experience will serve you equally well in continuously training the native techniques of your style through an activity as humble as gardening.

Inevitable Cacophonous Counter (400 CP): It can be difficult to describe the moment in your fighting style when you become a fulcrum to all forces arrayed

against you-and like a peregrine falcon diving into the eye of the storm, strike for the moment in which they are all stilled. You are not merely some brute engine for the inexorable might of earth or the thunderous power of the sun-you are the superhuman acuity and insight that guides them. And by honing your ki to this ultimate revelation, you have extended this principle to terrific effect.

You now hold within your body the potential to notionally counter and redirect any deleterious effect with a martial arts technique-and a keen sensitivity in your ki that lets your body automatically evade without consciously sensing danger. In many cases this takes the form of advanced proficiency for abilities such as the famous Thunderclap Rush Attack or Iron Raptor Combination from your native style which use surpassing speed, precise pressure points and redirection of momentum. But with the appropriate amount of study and practice, far stranger forces can be deflected. In time you'll learn to develop first the technique to see the flow of magical energies cast by a wizard, then to sweep your leg in such a way as to ground them, then the rolling movement that projects the curse he tried to inflict on you right back at him. Or you may find a building collapse on you, only to whirl through a kata that deflects the rubble aside leaving you intact and hale. Perhaps you might even fight a typhoon one day and send it careening back across the ocean, beat a maelstrom into a waterspout, stomp out an infection of hellish power in your neighbourhood or even judo flip a Shinma somehow. Just remember not to underestimate the difficulty in skill and energy of the techniques it'll take to repel increasingly mighty or complex forces.

Empty Set Assumes the Form of Infinity (600 CP): The empty set, the untainted sum underlying the conflux of the sun and planet's spirit energy is little understood-perhaps even by the Mugen themselves. The Tennin's own anima-sensing techniques determine that the Mugen's ki takes the shape of infinity itself. It matters not whether you sought power, meaning or harmony through your path. That limitless potential has an ideal vessel in your being, and through it the world opens new vistas of martial glory to you.

Yours is the gift to combine energies that you possess that may seem at odds but possess the capacity to complement each other, such as the sun and the earth, into a singular force as heightened in power as the Breath of Heaven itself is to the other defenders of the natural order in this world. Whereas the Earth's own avenging Shinigami were not wholly immune to corruption, the Legendary Masters whose powers your greatest ones hearken back to inflicted such harm to the Yama Kings that they retreated to Yomi Wan without even the need for a formal mystical seal. Accordingly, such powers you create are particularly devastating yet precise to enemies of the natural order, burning them and whelming their dark powers as sunlight would burn any creature of the night. Finally, by internalising the Breath of Heaven's formation within yourself a radiant aura of spirit energy emanates constantly from your body. Bright enough to gently illuminate a whole room in sunlight, it dims only by your effortless discipline. With it, your reserves of ki and willpower rapidly replenish themselves at rest and in battle alike long beyond the stamina of other fighters, and even physical wounds reseal themselves as if doing the healing of weeks at a time-perhaps even months and years once you have grown into your power, your life force and fighting spirit strengthening your own light. Even at rest your mind and soul naturally rediscovers the techniques of the

Legendary Masters. And though great emotional, spiritual or physical harm can dampen your light, it can be recaptured with meditation on your innate harmony once you have found a place to recuperate.

Items:

You receive a 50% discount for one item from each tier. Discounted 100 CP items are free.

100 CP:

Wheels of Karma: Oh. It's a vehicle complete with a license under your name and full tank of gas. Motorbike, family car, monster truck-if an American civilian could own it, it's yours. I suppose you have to get to all those kung fu battles somehow other than your own two legs, eh? Either way it's reliable, handles easily and comes with a free paintjob reflecting the themes and associations of your martial arts style if that's the sort of thing you'd like to advertise. Or it could be something completely different if you want your opponents to know the last thing their clan's destroyer will ever let them see as you burn down their dojo is your hideously pink Hello Kitty car.

For an extra 100 CP (undiscountable) you may purchase a ship or plane with similar qualities to get to those hard-to-reach martial arts tournaments. You may even purchase an amphibious vehicle such as a seaplane or hovercraft if the tournament happens to be taking place in truly exotic locations.

Lots of Guns: You own a lot of legally licensed and registered firearms. YOU COWARD. Anyway. Since you've committed to truly disgracing your family's honour, you gain access to a nearby storehouse, whether attached to one of your properties, sequestered in your Warehouse or simply hidden nearby, that supplies you with guns. Lots of guns. And ammunition. Virtually everything short of a rocket launcher can be found somewhere in this well-organised stock of firepower. The bad news? It cannot be overstated that guns have little standing in the martial arts world, where they signal that you are a weak excuse for a martial artist with no strength in his fists.

Not only are guns seen as the tools of thugs and lackeys, but to actually use one shows you have lost your fighting spirit and are not a true man in every way that matters. Most techniques are incompatible with wielding guns, and even the most basic attributes of supernatural martial arts moves generally defeat firearms. But if you've ever wanted to make a worthless minion slightly less so or intimidate one, these can be more efficient than deigning to treat them as a worthy opponent.

And if you truly want to prove, beyond a doubt, that <u>you are the most cowardly and weakest being that has ever existed in this world</u> for an extra undiscountable 100 CP a mysterious spirit will restock any damaged guns or used up ammunition every week. Even this being will do so only begrudgingly, furiously glaring at you and shaking your head as you reload or maintain your weapons while bound to the pact that compels it to service you. Although…if you were to regularly and consistently use your guns as throwing weapons or bludgeons, the spirit will begrudgingly warm to you and offer to teach you an array of martial techniques it happens to be a grandmaster of. From the tomahawk-throwing of the Algonquin tribes to the tonfa katas used in Okinawan Kobudō to the swift strikes of Zulu stick fighting, should you show willingness this spirit will do everything in its power to teach you how to fight the righteous way with these worthless weapons.

Where the Heart Is: You own an apartment in the neighbourhood of your choice! It's a pretty humble flat as apartments go but you've got your own bedroom, tub, cable TV and no rent to pay since the paperwork proving your ownership is held in an ancient box in your wardrobe. Unless you want to. What kind of martial arts saga would involve struggling to pay rent?

…scratch that, perhaps you'd like somewhere more substantial to rest between adventures? **For an extra 100 CP (undiscountable),** you may upgrade this flat into a penthouse that wouldn't look out of place in Beverly Hills. Perhaps your family was more affluent that some were led to believe. Perhaps you simply beat another Exalt in an honourable duel and claimed it as your prize. Either way it can have everything from your own minibar to waterbed to your own swimming pool. Not a gym though, that comes later.

Ring of Pain: No martial artist worth his salt would skimp on their training, and that's why you invested in this rather extensive home gym. Boasting a generous set of weights, muscle training machines, sandbags, a sparring ring and protective gear, and basically everything else a professional MMA fighter would hold dear, it's a great way to stay in shape (though of course, no replacement for true battle). It can come as an attachment to your warehouse or a property large enough to hold it, or simply be positioned nearby your lodgings. Sadly while this world places much less stock in resilient artifacts than some, at least the place is fully under your name so you won't have to worry too much about insurers giving you trouble if you break anything.

For an extra 100 CP (undiscountable), the gym comes with the contact number to a mysterious demon or spirit who's eager to sell you replacement gym equipment-even light fixtures, air conditioning and other such fixtures-at bargain prices so crazy they're practically giving them away. No true companion but a follower, this odd entity seems to have no real ambition but to ensure smashing up things during training has few consequences for you.

300 CP:

Worldly Desires: Luxury can take many forms. Perhaps you'd like to have a trust fund opened in your name, the kind only available to the descendent of a top CEO. Perhaps you've carefully invested your prizefighting winnings, or your life of crime has yielded great rewards from vice. Either way, you have a grandiose capacity to pay out elaborate bribes, charter private planes to carry you around the world or finance an entire village's reconstruction with little consequence for your time here, and in future jumps your windfall of wealth will be replenished. Exactly who actually manages this money is an open question that would be more relevant if you shouldn't be fighting another martial artist right now. Literally right now.

A Legend of Your Own: Luxury is one thing, but prestige another. While the purchase above will give you wealth for days, what this will provide is an occupation of significant social influence. You might not just be any old prizefighter, but a

nationally recognised boxing champ. You might be a national muay thai hero, or the special forces soldier who saved the President from being kidnapped by terrorists. You could even be an eccentric playboy millionaire with a good reputation for sponsoring charities. One thing's for sure, your job's highlight was so spectacular and your current duties so infrequent that it will never get in the way of going forth to fight other martial artists outside its remit.

Inescapable Grasp of the Open Palm: You're owed favours. Quite serious, and substantial favours. Whether through likability, political influence or networks of blackmail you have a knack for gaining a local friend with a useful skillset on relatively short notice and in locations far beyond your usual stomping grounds. Your history in the world was quite likely made more interesting by whatever means you gained this network through.

Alternatively, you could have a similar pull with an entire organization. Whether a government bureau you have on a tight leash, or a cartel that knows and fears you, or a law enforcement organization beholden to your support you could invest this purchase in a less geographically distributed body with more overall manpower and resources. Another option you have here is to have a network of informants, contacts, confidants and spies that can gather all kinds of information for you that the more brute force approach of the options above may not necessarily have easy access to.

Last but not least, if you have already paid the usual price for one of the options above you may pay an extra 100 CP (undiscounted) apiece to gain the benefits of the others.

Scrolls of Legend: It would be nice if the legacy of the Exalted martial art you practice could be passed down solely from master to student, but in these troubled times neither is always available. That's why this rich compendium of knowledge about your Exalted style's history, basic and advanced techniques, myths about your practitioners' entanglements with the Yama Kings or other major powers and other lore about the world you live in is stored in this hoary old scroll. Though knowledge doesn't always equate power, you'll find it far easier to figure out what your powers are about with this handy guide.

For an extra 100 CP (undiscountable), this scroll also contains a wealth of the mystic arts from this world. Summon, bind and banish spirits-or strike bargains with the Yama Kings and their servants. Or baffle and ward wicked spirits for those of a more righteous persuasion. The arts were developed to deal with spirits in ways other than beating them up, and miscellaneous mystic feats often less dwelled on by those who pursue martial strength such as opening an ancient portal into the spirit realms.

600 CP:

Shadow Empire of the Closed Fist: Remember what I said about wealth and influence above? This is literally the nuclear option. You have vast, yet unofficial sway over the highest authorities of an entire nation somehow. Perhaps your family yet retains great influence over this nation from when they guided it through times with more overt supernatural threats, or perhaps the authorities quietly recognise you as a strategic asset for your efforts to protect society. If you want another martial artist declared an enemy of the state, access to official records of what exactly happened when two men destroyed a stock exchange throwing fireballs at each other or even to pull down the masquerade of the supernatural world through official channels at great effort-this is the choice for you. Will you labour to keep the man on the street safe from the warriors that walk among him, or live in luxury at the expense of the average taxpayer? In future jumps you will be accorded a similar place of prestige and influence among a governing body of your choice.

Scroll of the Perfected Lotus: Oh? What's this? A gilded scroll any master would be proud to have in their library, save for the fact that it's empty within but for a reflective golden sheen. For it reflects not just light, but greatness of spirit. This frankly inexplicable artifact offers you a true miracle: The power to transmit the capacity to learn the ways of the Mugen to fighters in other worlds. The process will still be gruelling; they must train to the limits of any mundane martial art they know with the scroll unfurled before them, though supernatural arts that wield ki or similar innate energies adroitly may take less transcendent mastery. But many in this world would deem that a small price to pay to raise your students to the apex of martial splendour in this world, whether you wish to begin a new generation of Legendary Masters to protect the world with or raise thugs that even the Yama Kings should fear. Perhaps with some feat of mysticism or the ki control of the Mugen themselves, it would be possible to use this scroll as a catalyst to transmit the wisdom of the Mugen on a far greater population at once in order to uplift them.

Bounty of the Unsullied Earth: You are called to, even if you are not Okami, a magnificent valley where the moon and sun both shine brightly at dawn and dusk. This is a place of truly exceptional natural beauty by the local standard, whatever form it takes in future worlds, and merely spending time in it is a balm to any worries in your mind. The radiant ki of the sun, earth and moon comingling will cleanse and rejuvenate your spiritual energies and willpower as your breathe their ancient air. Should the Shinma follow you here somehow, even they might find its tranquillity soothing. Other nature spirits and guardians of the world will too find this location a place of great succour and shelter and be inclined to behave peacefully within its boundaries. Should you choose to grow plants and fungi or rear animals on this land, you'll find that this valley nourishes them as it nourishes you. And the practice of your martial arts here will lull you into a deep and mindful inner peace that will make self-improvement and internal balance come intuitively.

A Little Slice of Hell: What have you done? A vast dominion of Yomi Wan equal to any of the Yama Kings' own is now bound to your will, a veritable world unto itself that naturally gathers all the impurity and sin of a certain theme to empower itself

through. Its inhabitants and nightmarish tortures bend to your will like puppets, and it has the capacity to absorb souls, cultivating iniquity and destruction to both grow in power-and enhance your own with its demonic might. Perhaps it is a nightmarish sea of boiling oil, populated by gigantic insects and shark-like horrors. Perhaps it is a wicked city populated by distorted humanoids reflecting the neurosis of consumerism. Perhaps it is simply a dark and frigid abyss where the only inhabitants are your alluring yet deadly slave-consorts, and the only shelter an ornate oriental temple stocked with every instrument of torture and many archaic luxuries…as well as the forgotten paradise barred behind a secret cave only you know the location and conditions of access into. The designs of Yomi Wan are many in nature, and though you yourself may be no closer to the Yama Kings beyond its bounds within you wield all the power over this dread realm and its inhabitants as any of them. Last but not least this property grants you a series of spells for you to fulfil the traditional bargains of Akuma-derived power with mortal souls from the world above that damn them to your realm upon death. It is within your judgement whether they join the damned, are empowered as agents for you of some sort or rise again as Yamajin.

Companions:

Brothers and Sisters in Arms (50-400 CP): It would be a shame to venture into this violent world without someone you could trust your back to. This option seeks to redress that. You may import up to 8 companions into a free background of their choice for 50 CP apiece, and may buy its perks at a discount. Each gain 800 CP to spend on perks and items, and like you may discount an item per tier. Alternatively, you may create new ones or gain a relationship with one of the natives of this world you have a great discretion to define. It's you and them against the world. While not comprehensive, the fighters you could encounter here include the following:

Sinit Kra, ring named "Devil Tiger", was forcibly retired from the Lumpinee stadium after thirty consecutive victories under his championship career. Feared for his reach, aggression and willingness to fight anyone anywhere, he simply ran out of opponents. After two years of training and twenty pounds of muscle mass, he's returned to the muay thai circuits. He has since captured the world championship and taken his titles around the globe, challenging fighters from all weight classes and promoting the dominance of muay thai. He is considered by many to be the greatest fighter in the world.

Lemur Kan is the alias of a major figure emerging in the wake of crime boss and Akuma Richter Hayes' death. He has been investigated by multiple police branches for his involvement in organized crime, all of which have failed to even confirm if he is guilty. He acts alternatively as an informant to law enforcement for major busts, and a harbinger of failure to multi-million investigations. The few who have seen him in the flesh have reported a handsome black man in his mid-thirties with a disarming smile, an ever-present set of shades, a self-professed mastery of jeet kune do-and the skills to back up his words.

Oni is a walking nightmare from southern Japan. A Korean of over 80 years of age, his crag-like face appears lit as if by fire below and his body is built like a mountain. His teeth are nails, his hair wafts of volcanic ash, and he was born in the blood and flames that swallowed the South Pacific. Such was his hatred for the Japanese that he moved to Japan to train among them, absorbing their hatred as fuel to grow stronger than them. Legend has it he emerges only to stalk any Japanese fighter who dares show his fists outside of Japan.

Total Recall of the Scarlet Throne (100 CP): One of these warriors, though benefitting from the same boons as any local here, deserves a bit more consideration given her…ominous circumstances. **Jane Doe** (redhead, mid-thirties) woke up from a coma after seven years and stopped a presidential assassination. Her vague memories of where she came from and who trained her are haunted by whispering shadows and men who think they can do something about her awakening. So far, all of them have been crushed by a mix of tae kwon do and military jujutsu. Worse, if her attacker can harness ki her adrenaline surges and she gains a burst of power. Her lightning fast kicks compensate for a relatively small stature, and set up her excellent ground game. And whatever your past, with this choice one of the few things she remembers is that you can be trusted. **She receives the same 800 CP stipend other companions receive.**

But what, you may ask, makes her unique even among the other martial legends of this world? Well to begin with, **despite being a Ryuujin she may also buy the perks of the Yamajin at a discount**-which means yes, she retains the potential to use abilities listed under **Death Defying Blasphemy Stance** from some dark bargain in her past-and as mentioned above she is still a deadly warrior by this world's standards despite having forgotten the full breadth of both skillsets. Despite her well preserved looks she also has the skills of someone used to living out on the hard streets, and letting her crash somewhere nicer than an actual alley will quickly see her stoic shyness melting into exhausted, cheerful gratitude. In your journeys together the full memory of who she was will slowly return over the years in sudden visions and dreams. And her steely but quietly uncertain military bearing will be overtaken by a cocky, street-savvy confidence belonging to one who feels most at home in the collision of fists and feet. Whether or not you accelerate her rediscovery of herself, by the end of the decade she is guaranteed to fully remember why the powers that be either fear her return-or eagerly await it.

Beckoning from Beyond The Stars (300 CP): Abstract as they are, the Shinma do possess some distinct qualia. Names, and varying appearances for one. Some appear as runes in a lost language, or disembodied anatomy with symbolic meanings: A hand that teaches the fist, an eye that teaches sight, a mouth and lungs that teach breath. Some are even ostentatious in their forms: A blue widow in silk robes with blazing eyes behind her veil, an upside down flame that drools burning venom into the mind of its host Tennin. Some Tennin even believe the Shinma exist as facets of themselves, and that their own existence and perceptions of whatever truth lies behind that self-image grants them a measure of power. Whatever the truth of the matter, you seem to have made quite a positive impression.

In each jump, you may choose to serve as a beacon to the Shinma from whatever faraway realm the Shinma hail from. They will begin to descend, often subtly, upon the world you dwell in. Even if one is an Exalt of a different stripe than their chosen, they have learned much over their existence in the ways of martial arts and mystical forces, and can offer uncanny fonts of knowledge from unseen channels in the world or whelm your foes with subtle forces-though all will be leery of repeating the mistake that resulted in the degradation of the Yama Kings…unless someone were to make a truly persuasive argument. By the terms of your pact they will never impede your effort, and respect your wishes for privacy-though should they feel it necessary with your permission would eagerly offer suitable candidates the power of the Tennin to rid the world of evil influences and keep their loved ones safe as they do in this world. The Shinma are collectively, and quite literally, followers for all intents and purposes-though forming a close bond with one somehow could qualify it as a companion with all that entails.

A Terrible Decision (300 CP): …are you quite certain? This isn't a bad joke is it? Do you even recall what the Yama Kings are? Fallen Shinma who strove to conquer the world, banished by its greatest champions since time immemorial to squabble amongst themselves. Hateful demonic lords of impurity and vice that reign over a realm of endless suffering.

Well, if you're really going to do this. With this option you'll get a shot at convincing one of the Yama Kings to join you as a companion, forsaking its chance at hegemony over the Thousand Hells by bringing along its own private hell for the ride. It is extraordinarily unlikely there could be any sensible reason why an ancient creature who once considered your kind slaves at best would do such a thing but well…you are Exalted. Perhaps you feel one would be useful as a lackey during your ascension to the Thousand Hells' true throne? Perhaps you relish employing one's power against its own kind? Also you won't have to choose which one to take along beforehand in case whichever hell lord you proposition turns you down.

Drawbacks (Take as many as you dare):

Black Society Scion (100 CP): Many here are criminals. Few of the truly great ones get caught like you did. Whether you failed to navigate the complex politics of police bribery properly or committed a crime so great a blind eye could no longer be turned, the police have issued a warrant for your arrest. So the bad news is, you should be expecting police raids within the next week and any effort to clear your name or change your identity will be fraught with the best efforts of local law enforcement set against. The good news? The fools will be bringing guns to a martial arts fight.

Wild Child's Return (100 CP): Whether or not you are one of the Okami, you do have a clearly defined past-and it has left you divorced from civilisation's norms. You grew up in the wilderness, and whether that manifested as a lack of table manners or a furiously passionate obsession with the martial arts that saved you from such a life, you struggle to adapt to civilised society. You can still be quite cunning and adaptive, just expect some startled looks and raised eyebrows when people wonder why you keep hooting at nearby birds.

Scar-Writ Saga Skin (100 CP): You've taken quite the cost to your looks in your training. The scabbed knuckles and scars covering most of your body tell some dark tale of the fights you've been through, to the extent you've been battered too thoroughly to put others at ease. While you might still exhibit a certain grizzled charm or sensuality with your athletic body, the history of violence made manifest on your flesh will unnerve all but the most experienced fighters with what you must have lived through to obtain such strength.

Vice Ridden Parasite (100 CP): While many are at fault for the spiritual imbalances pervading the world, you find yourself not just unsympathetic but in one area at least unable to care. Choose a single sin of human nature, and you are as addicted to it as an alcoholic is to his bottle or a compulsive gambler is to the roll of the dice. You are no slower of wit nor any less ambitious or dangerous, but you are uncontrollably degenerate in your actions and thoughts.

A Yearning For Peace (100 CP): You are not a violent person at heart. Even if you truly enjoy your martial art, you would much rather be doing tranquil katas in the heart of a forest or boxing for sport on the stage, not fighting for your life. Nevertheless, true violence conspires to find you again and again. The discomfort you will feel defending yourself with lives on the line will prove as real a struggle as any attempt to master your fists can be.

Blind to Spirit (200 CP): You'd expect anyone with your level of martial mastery to be keenly aware of the flow of spiritual energy but for whatever reason you just…aren't. Your fighting skills suffer in all the typical ways for your lack of awareness; you may be just as strong and able to conjure great shows of force, but good luck determining how an enemy fighter produced a seemingly impossible dodge from your attack. Equally, your talent in the mystic arts is greatly impaired by your insensitivity.

Vessel of Spite (200 CP): Your bloodline was cursed by the Yama King Xi Long for some long forgotten grudge. While martial arts can contain your volatile nature, when your emotions flare up you risk turning into a violent madman against anyone nearby the curse equates with one of the Legendary Masters. Typically, this encompasses any strong fighter. You're unlikely to make many friends among the mighty with this curse, though stranger bonds have been formed.

Boulevard of Broken Memories (200 CP): Like a certain unfortunate redhead, you find yourself missing a great many memories from you past life, including who trained you and where you were born. Though you can still fight as well as any martial artist, the loss of your past haunts you and may occasionally confront you with unknown relationships or outstanding minor duties. Perhaps your training and the catalyst of battle will restore what's lost?

Blood-Soaked Fist of Fury (200 CP): The human offspring of a Yama King often comes to a tragic end. Your blood burned in youth and became almost unbearable during puberty, a curse you must live with for the duration of your stay. This boiling feeling, like your blood might jump out of your veins, can only be sated through violence; to you a bar brawl is like a light lunch to others in terms of satiating the great need for war in your very veins. And don't think of it as a gift either, the jittery impulsiveness jumping through your limbs and muscles lessens the precision of your attacks and risks great collateral damage despite whatever advantage the pumping testosterone grants you.

Greenhorn's Worst Day Ever (200 CP): You'd expect someone of your calibre to be a hardened fighter with much experience, but actually you've just inherited a really good legacy you've never quite lived up to. If you're a Ryuujin, many have mistaken you for a Sleeping Dragon for how little you practice or show your powers. If you're a Mugen, you've rested hard on your laurels after breaking your mortal limits. Even your mundane martial arts, including those purchased here, are at such a junior level some may suspect you of having sneaked into a children's karate class. Quite simply, you are either out of practice or VERY new to your powers, and that's a dangerous thing to be in a world this defined by conflict.

Hajime no Jumper (300 CP): …who taught you to fight? It must have been some demon with a particularly cruel sense of humour for how poorly you do it. You see, while even the Exalted often see the wisdom of evasion and finesse to master the flow of battle you appear to have been taught that best and only honourable defence against incoming attacks is to bravely block them with your face. Even should your opponents throw energy attacks or leech at your spirit, you remain resolute in your determination to not even muster any supernatural defence that involves actually avoiding or even absorbing or deflecting it rather than attempting to tank it with your sheer toughness. Moreover you are possessed of a great urge to use one favourite attack over and over, regardless of how applicable it is to the conflict you're in. And as you stand there with your head ringing. As the confused demon, ghost or sorcerer you face wonders why you tried to headbutt the vile curse they used to directly attack your ki. You can't help but envision the proud face and voice of whatever monster you had for a sensei reminding you of how magnificently you let him live his dream vicariously through you.

Shinmaic Retaliation (300 CP): There's no two ways about it. The Shinma simply do not like you, and are unwilling to explain why. Ah, but perhaps you might find some refuge in the idea they are intangible spirits unwilling to sully their hands for fear of degradation like their cousins in the Thousand Hells? Well first of all, you shouldn't underestimate the damage misinformation from various portents and visions can spring upon you, nor the psychological damage caused by the eldritch visions they'll try to inflict on you in your sleep. Secondly, their loyal Tennin agents will be told you require destruction, and though not all obey them blindly many will be predisposed to judge you harshly for your actions or strike first and ask questions later if you're deemed dangerous. A great act of service against the Shinma's enemies on the level of felling or redeeming a whole corporation in thrall under a Yamajin may earn you a stay of mercy, while killing armies of their Tennin servants may cause the Shinma to redouble their efforts at first. But…if you somehow find a way to slay or corrupt several of the Shinma themselves, they will quickly withdraw for fear of a doom they had not foreseen or adding to the Yama Kings' numbers.

Astray From The Ebon Road (300 CP): This is quite dire. You find yourself stranded in one of the Thousand Hells, knowing not the conditions of the domain nor the temperament of the Yama King who rules it. You are alone, with even any companions you might have safely in the world of the living. Will you throw yourself on the local Yama King's mercy in exchange for safe passage, regardless of what pact he offers you? Or do you think yourself wily enough to escape this terrible place and its awful conditions on your own? Whichever approach you choose, act swiftly.

Strangers From The Scarlet Path (300/400/600 CP): Or perhaps not. A Yama King has somehow found its way back into the living world, and intuitively knows you're to blame somehow. Whether out of a desire for your power, a paranoid wish to hide knowledge of itself or even an extremely twisted form of affection it will now bend it's full powers and resources to dragging your soul down to its home-and you know not how many Akuma would die in its service, nor whether it has any Yamajin who still consider it an ally-only that it has at least one of the latter and many of the former. To say nothing of the mortal institutions who may be unknowingly corrupted into its service.

With the Legendary Masters gone, who knows if any remain with the power to banish this creature? For an additional 100 CP, you are hunted by another Yama King with similar resources and as is the vile creatures' natures, they will be vying against each other with you as their prize. For a further 200 CP not only does a third Yama King join the hunt, but in an unprecedented show of unity all three have agreed to pool their resources and efforts-at least until you're secured in Yomi Wan.

True Gunman (600 CP): What fresh hell have you dug yourself into? To forsake your powers is one thing, all true power is earned in this world. To take up the weapon of women and children-no I tell a lie, plenty of women and children can defend themselves adequately, the weapon of INVALIDS and SCUM in the mistaken belief it is as worthy as the way of the fist is a folly unlike any this world has ever seen. Yes, you have not only rendered yourself mortal and powerless but for your Body Mod, but you have also decided to take on this world with one. Gun. That you own.

And the world shall know of your brazen challenge. Not only will your arrogance and belief in the gun's supremacy be raised to unrealistic, irrational heights as obsessive and showboating as any martial master but your words and actions will instinctively repulse the natives of this world with your callous disregard for honourable combat. The Ryuujin will hone in on you in their numbers. The Tennin and Okami will befuddle you. Mortal authorities will turn a blind eye, instinctively repulsed by your way of being despite using guns themselves. Even the Yamajin and Shinigami will set aside their differences punish you, the Yama Kings generously showering them with blessings to get the job done, and heaven help you if the Mugen get there first. Your one mercy is that your craven braggadocio makes you so pathetic, even the most sadistic Yamajin will not deem you worth killing (so long as you cease fighting back once you are unable to, at least) once you have been beaten hard enough to be unable to stand, going out of their way to call an ambulance for you or even healing you, excruciatingly, with their own fell powers. And perhaps you could survive this jump in an emergency ward. **But you won't want to**. Oh, no matter what revelations nor eldritch revelations this world shows you, no matter how many times you're beaten into the dirt and even if your weapon is broken upon your back before being disassembled before your very eyes, **you will never. Ever. Cease regaining your insane confidence in the supremacy of the gun once you've had time to recover.**

Scenario: *Murder One Thousand Hells And Topple Their Thrones*

Long ago, the Yama Kings abandoned the purity of spirit they once bore as spirits of the stars-their own vices twisting them into gods and demons over men. They tore tracts in the world that cry out for vengeance to this day. They spitefully devoured the souls they failed to rule, twisted into increasingly hideous forms that bore as much resemblance to the graceful spirits they once were as a hulking ape bears to a learned man. And in their arrogance, they thought themselves the mightiest beings to walk the Earth in truth.

The Legendary Masters disproved them so thoroughly, that *through sheer quantity and agony of beatings* the Yama Kings were forced to flee the world back to the comparative safety of Yomi Wan. Where they feared only one another. And for eons that was the end of it: As much as they seethed at losing to the way of the fist, the very vices that warped them into beings of such infernal majesty set them at each other's throats. And thus, the world was spared the brunt of their wrath.

But now, one among the Yama Kings has made promises and cashed in favours to force some measure of cooperation on them. All for one ultimate chance to avenge that humiliation, right as the turning of the ages favours them. For *the Sixth Age is dawning in truth*, and the signs are undisputable to any in this world sensitive to ki. A prophetic dream comes to you on your first night.

You see an eclipse that pours black flames onto a ruined world. The ki of the sun grows sickly in the sun's time of weakness, no less nourishing yet festering and mutagenic where once it purified. Buildings from all walks of civilisation stained with bloody rust wedge impossibly into each other, mountains of ruin and great gouges in the Earth full of thick smog. The ki of the earth bleeds out in great torrents, a rich fertiliser for malefic forces. The moon is seen at all hours of the day, glowing a sickly green. The ki of the moon festers through its bond with the world. And wreathed in black thunder within the eye of an ashen storm, heralded by a rain of burning embers, descends the **Throne of the Demon Emperor.** Like an old clot of blood scabbed over the world's heart.

And you realise, THIS is the world that will come. If one of the Yama Kings stand triumphant over their peers and sit upon this throne, it will anoint them with all the corrupt spiritual energy of the world. They would rise from it a supreme lord of darkness and horror-

-unless you stop them, first.

For the dream provides you with one last vision: The Earth, Moon and Sun overlapping, the last of their healthy ki shining one last time, and choosing YOU as their champion. The rules of this challenge are made know to you at last.

<u>You have a year to train yourself, or perhaps train others you hold true confidence in, during which the Yama Kings will use terrible rites to infest the already corrupted energies of this world with their own hellish power.</u>

And this is no mere title, oh no. You will be empowered for your coming trials, in the image of your corresponding celestial body-a powerful gift to be sure, though one you are inexperienced with, that may derive further powers with more practice. Thus, will the threat of the Yama Kings be ended once and for all. Though it does grant one significant privilege: In recognising the world staking its fate on a singular champion, the Yama Kings will agree to challenge you as if you were a peer. Regardless, after awakening a profound movement of ki in the world bestows on you a new technique depending on your origin:

Ryuujin: *Like arrows from the forest/The bowman strips you, boils you and straightens you/Bowman and arrow and target are me/The rain watches, but does not answer.* A great tremor rushes through all the ancient elements at once, as somewhere you know in your heart that great dragons 'round the world's pillar smile on you. You are enlightened to the need to make the earth more like Heaven's divine glory. **The Empty Gate** is opened within your soul, letting you channel the raging elements around and within you in the image of your draconic forebearers. Erupting from your soul in a torrent of all elements, the massive dragon can strike as swiftly as a serpent and breathe torrents of all the elements united in cataclysmic fury. And while it is primarily a fierce guardian of the natural order, it can also cloak you in armour of any one element and manipulate the weather for many miles. With its coils it can wrestle the Yama Kings to the ground, with its fangs and claws it can chew apart their sorceries and rend their armour-and by devouring their substance, the alchemical crucible of its innards can sunder the Yama Kings or their corrupt energies beyond hope of restoration. Similar powers await your discovery, but beware your emotions or unfamiliarity causing this torrent of elemental power from causing collateral damage or unravelling through lack of focus. Unique to your elemental blood, this technique can be strengthened by an abundance of your bloodline's element near you.

Tennin: *With a nose-ring, I guided the wind/With a whip I made it smile/The dust it stirred smelled of lotus-flowers/I wept and made it burn.* Your Shinma smiles without a face if it has one, and suddenly you look on the spirit world with new eyes. You see a glittering web upon which the living world is as dew on its strands. **The Midnight Jewel** represents an evolution of your relationship with your Shinma, your combined form subliming to be more esoteric spirit than flesh. With some effort, you may evade physical and mystical barriers alike by abstracting yourself into symbolic representations of yourself like the Shinma. Already you know how to "store" martial arts moves into artistic representations combining its form with yours that can strike passing opponents. The ineffable manner in which the Shinma intuit normally unseen information or knowledge from the future is bestowed upon you; already you have a perfect memory. Your perception of the flow of life also lets you wrest life from spirits unwillingly and bind it to the needful, walk through the unseen space between spaces and intuit information on the shape of things to come. And what you weave the strands of life around, you can just as easily detonate at will-with the threat of permanent death to even the Yama Kings. Even among the other boons of the Exalted fighters, the abilities of your spirit-nature require great technical skill and insight. But once you come into your own, in battle you will be more esoteric force of nature than man.

Okami: *The breathing cage set one bird free/It nestled in the bars and shat in the straw/The bird's wings were mountains/And forests covered them.* The moon sings to you, praising her loyal child. You look on Creation's symmetries and unities with new eyes. **The Laughing Rainbow** is both epiphany and atavistic evolution, transfiguring you into a spirit of both moon and earth. One key aspect of being the bridge to two worlds is that all your children shall have the potential to become true Okami, should the moon and the wild call to their hearts strongly enough to seem a second home. Another, the ability to fly with surreal grace and precision. A third, your flesh and spirit have taken on some of the qualities of moonlight too. You're fluid enough to easily crawl backwards up six stories and squeeze through a half-shut window. You are not just supernaturally swift in short bursts without even using ki-your very being blurs into amorphous silver before reorienting yourself in whatever pose you wish. And when you set yourself to hunting other beings, you can lucidly dream to hunt them in the realm of sleep. Such a successful hunt sees them wracked with primal terror, and rewards you with a powerful weapon of the natural world carved from moonlight symbolically aligned with your dream. A chase could grant you a bull's moonlit horns, a struggle in confined spaces an octopus' tendrils-each gradually sunders flesh and spirit into the realm of dream to sustain your ki, with what would be a lethal blow on a human doing grievous harm to even a Yama King. Striking to kill, these weapons reduce what they sunder into the stuff of dreams itself-bypassing nearly all conventional protections, and doing much greater harm to the vital areas of living beings-though the gentler touch of these weapons can also restore spiritual and tangible pollution in the world with the cleansing fury of the elements. Each natural weapon so gained is forever stored as a mutation you can manifest on your form or dismissed at will; gather enough and you may even create a great phantasmal chimera of pure moonlight around your body with an effort of ki. No sifu can guide you to master these powers, nor will discipline reveal their incomprehensible ways-you must trust in your natural instincts, your heart and the whispers of the world to discover what more you are becoming.

Shinigami: *Ten men came forth from the hills/Ten men were one, yet ten men were ten/One man left, the others fell/Was this the fault of any?* A sudden chill sweeps for miles, as the ground before you cracks open into a dark, frigid crevice. From it comes a bleak enlightenment that speaks of hollowness given form. **The Hollow Reed** permits you to walk in the literal shadow of death. For your own shadow fights beside you in battle as an intuitive extension of the self against what you intend to destroy, it's touch like years of winter and famine. Men and spirits slain by it die beyond the Thousand Hells' ability to catch their torn spirits. Bending and twisting to your will, with your flesh coated in the stuff it is strengthened such that even harm dealt to you is blunted by the wear of entropy upon it, and the Yama Kings would wisely fear your touch. Your shadow can even be transfigured into flying archaic weapons, strangling chains or a shield of sorts-each baneful to all you intend to punish. Perhaps you'll discover more complex tools to create from it in time? And while light strong as the suns can still diminish it to a pool cowering at your feet, with an effort of ki you can reinforce your shadow against strong light, stretch it large and wide enough to cover much of the ground around you-or both. It is a powerful conduit to all the world's pain, and in time you may learn how to sacrifice sinners' blood upon weapons or talismans you forge with your shadow falling on them to imbue them permanently with the power to bring an end to the immortal, or perhaps bestow terrible plagues and curses upon it.

Much of what you must learn to master the darkness beneath your feet can only be intuited by firsthand exposure to death, be that on the battlefield or long meditation near a grave.

Mugen: Sutra? To hell with sutras! You need no esoteric things to rock the world back on your fists! And like a kindly emperor, for a moment the sun shines down hard on you as if agreeing. The power of **The Untainted Sum** was inside you all along. Unlike the other Exalted, your gift is both comprehensible and intuitive: You are given the enlightenment to immediately become a Legendary Master. So complete is your mastery of the ki in your body, you can deliver your considerable full bodily strength through a finger flick. While reclining. Even your mass and inertia seem quelled by your will, letting you balance effortlessly on your fingertips, crack the streets around you by doing a backflip and leap ten stories yet fall safely. To say your strength, speed, endurance and skill are beyond mortal reckoning is to do you an injustice. Your earth-shaking strength and storm-weathering endurance are such that your predecessors bested and overthrew the Yama Kings where entire nations fell. You're so fast that you can dodge even mystical effects cast upon you, and by simply moving around rapidly function as a small army. And added to all that, you can develop variants of your ki projection techniques that condenses them into a killing blow that burns a living being from the inside out, purifying them from the cycle of life and death. There is still much to learn even for a being of your gifts, but swiftly training yourself to mastery is also a skill of the Legendary Masters.

Yamajin: …well. This is awkward. The world can't bring itself to bless one like it's defilers like yourself, or perhaps it simply can't connect to anything so divorced from its natural order. Though as you stand there, you can't help but feel the ongoing desecration of the world seems…right. Almost comforting, like a parent's embrace or a child's whisper. Interesting how the worst of the weather tends to inconvenience you as little as possible-or even feel refreshing, despite how vile it is. When you rest, the **Throne** reappears before you, nearer with each night. You always wake up refreshed and *motivated*, an abject certainty burned into your very soul that a great power intends to reward you for your determination.

How your other allies from this world react to this event will likely vary greatly, depending on their disposition. It should go without saying that with what is at stake, this is probably a very bad time to recruit a Yama King.

However **Jane Doe** in particular seems to have quite the reaction to it. Her memory will return in leaps and bounds faster with every sight of the corruption, the Yama Kings' minions and the battles at hand. Her confidence and ruthlessness alike skyrocketing, she remains a steadfast ally-though much more aggressive than you may remember. Indeed, though she has little yet to say about her past expect her to grow ever fonder of you as she enjoys the thrill of taking on the world at your side. It's nice to have a comrade she could trust in battle, she'll say. Expect her to regularly taunt any pursuers you gain in these troubled times, and to yell challenges at the stormy skies. And if you can get her to go easy on the minions of the Yama Kings sent your way, you'll find she remembers things. Things like the strategies and lesser known weaknesses of the Yama Kings, and their resources. Things like the grains of truth hidden in ancient legends about the blood of dragons and demonic pacts. Things like alchemy and geomancy. Oh dear.

One of the things it seems she's remembered an elixir that requires the slaying, butchering and distillation of a demonic spirit's essence. To taste this foul brew is to taste the corruption of Hell itself: A blisteringly spicy, invigorating drink that energises the body and soul like the spirit of a born warrior. Even as you sweat buckets and your veins burn, even as your heart races a mile a minute, you feel your ki and will bolstered BY the presence of Hell around you-going that extra mile without running out. You can somehow sense corruption within others with incredible range and precision, sensing riots from a mile away or knowing which man next to you intends to rob your wallet. Battle quickly becomes as enjoyable as good food, wine and company-and just as refreshing. Perhaps the most disturbing thing about this elixir is that…there is no hangover. No addiction, nor any risk of relapse. Why would there be, she would tell you, laughing off your concerns, if asked, when the suffering of the world around you is as natural as the turning seasons or the dance of predator and prey? A big gulp of the stuff provides such benefits for a good half an hour, but **Yamajin** enjoy a special affinity with it. Not only does such a dose last for hours for them, but innovating and honing their Hell-given arts becomes as natural. As if the pounding of your veins was a shadowy sifu giving you automatic pointers.

It begins with unnatural portents. Rains of gruel, and fish, and foul slime. Patches of the sea transforming into frothing blood, rising up in violent rains before stilling just as quickly. Goats bleat eldritch koans, and at night shadows seem to writhe out of the corner of your eye. Unearthly presences lurk behind closed doors, never quite seen. Shrieks in the night, sightings of spirits in the fogs. And fortune tends to favour those who succumb to worldly temptation. These shall only get worse and worse as the year progresses.

By the year's end storms charges with demonic energy will strike many coastlines at least once a week, vast howling faces roaring obscene demands while smaller ones lament the tortures of the Thousands Hells. Every nation shall be plagued with outbreaks of bubbling corruption, that remake their land into the image of the Hells while driving civilians into a fugue of sin. The nights shall come quicker and last longer, and even noon shall seem overcast. And with the barriers of the spirit world torn down entirely, those nights will be filled with many horrors most of mankind have forgotten. If nothing is done, in a little under another year one of the Yama Kings will sit upon **The Throne of the Demon Emperor.** But defeating even one sets back the ritual's speed by months.

Such is the might of the Thousand Hells' sorceries cast as one great storm of corruption, that no mystic art can halt it. At least, from this world-it would take a truly mighty power of salvation to banish the corruption. Still, the Yama Kings will strive mightily to restore it unless they too are dealt with. If there's any solace in this, the Yama Kings are fearful enough of their first defeat that even now, they dare not set foot on earth directly.

After all, they must save their energy for the death battle against each other.

The rite that beckons **The Demon Emperor's Throne** can only be invoked by bloodshed, called as the moon is to the earth itself, and demanding many restrictions upon the participants to know it's victor is truly worthy. In accord with their mutual pact, each lord of hell shouts out their name and nature in a great banner of hellish energy that can be seen for miles-and a formal challenge to any who dare battle them. They shall stride forth into this world, claim a place of great spiritual power and set about fortifying it in accord with their nature. Their worldly servants will conspire to make this knowledge well-known.

And in a stroke of fortune, it seems that the infighting has already begun. Only the *mightiest* of the Yama Kings stand triumphant and await the challenge among the Thousand Hells-their rivals torn apart for sustenance, made nearly powerless and slaved to their will for a promise of survival or simply shut away howling. Each is described below, and as the earth's chosen champion you may freely decide which order to challenge these elder gods in. While nothing stops any other fighter of the world from facing the Yama Kings themselves, the Akuma and evil spirits set loose by the Yama Kings' touch may freely strike at them, and many may be preoccupied trying to save civilisation anyway. While nothing compels the Yama Kings to go any easier on you, the anticipation of personally dealing with the world's champion accords you a certain degree of…*restraint* from the ego rush of dealing with such a legendary champion, if nothing else. Once you enter it, your conduct determines how you're received.

Swollen on new might, even the most cunning have gone drunk and exultant on certain victory. It would be wise to review the remaining rules of the challenge imprinted on you by the world, before you set out on your quest:

1. While travel into the centre of their place of power has no guarantee of complete safety, once you reach the fighting ring set up within each Yama King will gladly accept an honourable duel to the death, should you challenge them in good faith. They retain all their strength and spiritual might, but may not call on minions, use artifacts or warp their realm against you. You are NOT bound by this challenge however, and should you wish to rally armies or bring weapons against them it is your prerogative. Just be warned once your first unfair attack is witnessed in their realm, this will permit that specific Yama King to stop playing fair for good. Even an echo of the world-warping, soul-commanding power they hold in their portion of Yomi Wan can devastate armies of common men.
2. Each time a Yama King falls, **The Throne of the Demon Emperor** divides up its spiritual power equitably among the others, strengthening them. The small portion of ki and vitality eked from their fellow is sweetened by the handful of techniques inspired by their nature now passed on. Their realm shall collapse as a kind of spiritual collateral, the souls of their victims freed to the world and their willing servants left desolate and nearly powerless to await whatever afterlife awaits all right-thinking men-prisoned in mortal flesh.
3. A challenge may not be stopped without waiving the law of hospitality withholding the Yama Kings' world-warping powers over their realm and what others would call their "unfair" tactics.

4. Thrice during a challenge, the Yama Kings' current challenger may cry out for mercy, long enough to quickly swap with one of eight designated comrades should they prove more resourceful.

But should you be a **Yamajin**, may the stars have mercy on you-because the Yama Kings certainly won't. In resentment for one bearing their gifts taking up arms against their first ever show of such unity, in spite against an upstart would-be rival or perhaps simply out of petty sadism the normal rules are waived for you, and the Yama Kings will prioritise your destruction and damnation over honourable conduct and duelling. They will plot, they will plan, they will *hold nothing back* in their arsenals or sorceries. Even Mikaboshi's…*shameful display* will be very grudgingly tolerated should he, a devious schemer by his own kind's standards, somehow be discovered, though it shall prove *highly controversial and perhaps the truest crack in their alliance-potentially lethal to it*. And in the heat of the moment fracturing their unity may prove difficult-with one notable exception, for a truly virtuous soul-from the outset. Their banners are no longer guarantees of where they may be found and fought; should the Yama Kings feel confident no place on Earth will be safe forever from their wicked grasp, yet should they grow fearful you may have to chase them from hell to hell in Yomi Wan to put an end to their scheming. Such is their derision for you, that even a few dozen surviving Yama Kings-lesser than those listed, but still formidable spirits in their own right-have been "let off the leash" so to speak with their surviving courts and followers to hunt you down-their promised prize, a seat at the table of the true **Demon Emperor**.

Here, **Jane** senses opportunity. Despite the challenge ahead, she'll support your boldness to challenge the Yama Kings-or even fight them on your behalf, if you'd prefer. But once beaten, she knows a practice that resembles a mix of feng shui and something out of Aleister Crowley's writings. Rearranging the wreckage and materials of the places claimed by the Yama Kings into powerful configurations will direct their corrupt chi into you and her. Not just Hell's power, but the local torment of the modern world. With this you'll be able to brew much of her potion as mentioned earlier, and by meditating for an hour or two within accumulate great amounts of ki beyond your natural reach; **Yamajin** will find that this takes mere minutes, that even wounds mental and physical heal as if treated professionally, and sibilant voices will shower them with praise. Here some dark undercurrent to all the world will motivate them, whisper secrets from Hell's depths and provide twisted insight on how to continue improving their powers while overcoming their weaknesses.

Make no mistake, even before they remain powerful fighters with greater reserves of ki and vitality than all but the greatest Exalted-and have been training hard for this day too. Each Yama King will be briefly described below. Take heart, for as the Kings are the strength of this oncoming storm defeating each one shall greatly revitalise the world's ki in some way:

Rangda: The Pestilential Queen

- They say her touch is felt wherever plagues and cancers ravage the world. They say that her fall was premediated by an obsession for biological life warped into a belief in its superiority to life as a spirit. Least arrogant and most egalitarian of the Yama Kings, Rangda despises the healthy and loves the sick with an intensity that disturbs even her peers. Simplistic in her ambition and nature, she beckons her worldly servants to sow pestilences biological, chemical and even nuclear throughout the world. Sharing with it her disturbing standard of beauty. And not limited to mere demonic spirits or akuma, demonic maggots shall creep from her realm to infest the world with her hell's rot as she pleases. Ruler of the Hell of Burrowing Maggots, she sees the title of **Demon Emperor** as a way to spread the embrace of her filth to nature as a whole once and for all.
- She pours herself into the festering flesh she adores, taking the form of a beautiful woman wearing naught but a tattered loincloth whose long, black hair fails to hide the ravages of disease upon her. Rangda's unique moves naturally involve rotting flesh and inflicting disease-unless successfully defended against by the supernatural martial arts of this world. Her greatest strength is her putrid resilience, her greatest weakness an instinctive revulsion to the healthy as intense as theirs to a leper
- By defeating her, disease will vanish overnight. Dreams providing revolutionary advances in medicine will come to mankind, and much of nature's bounty will return as lush growth. Many new herbs and fruit will have medicinal properties beyond the grasp of science. The earth will be a veritable Eden.

Yen-Lo: First of the Fallen

- The Shinma that Yen-Lo once was embodied balance, equal parts birth and demise. So just was his proclamations that for a time the other Shinma trusted him to investigate Yomi-Wan, and set about laws regulating it's nature before any damned soul was condemned to it. So great was his dedication that even as the foul ki of that realm poisoned his nature, he remained a Shinma in truth to the balance with the planet they all respected. It fell to other, more ambitious Yama Kings to tear down the walls of his realm, slay him-and realise to their horror that even while being reborn as a Yama King, he remained devoted to his duty, reigning over the "anti-Hell" of Ama Odashu equitably even as he regards taking up the mantle of **Demon Emperor** as a distasteful necessity lest his peers receive it instead.
- Yen-Lo comes before you as an elderly jade-skinned Chinese magistrate. Though his eyes blaze with the fires of his realm, he expresses honest contempt for his so-called peers, and shows a guarded respect to the truly righteous. Yen-Lo knows many techniques permitting an unexpected recovery or that karmically punish attackers with their own powers, and sees through all illusion and deception. <u>Unique among Yama Kings</u>, his greatest "strength" can be said to be his unbreakable faith in his duty-even though defeating him shall likely earn his sincere praise for proving your dedication towards defending the world. His greatest "weakness" is that Yen-Lo has no interest in worsening the world, and stoops beyond the remit of martial honour only to safeguard the souls cared for in his realm.

- If there is any caveat beyond his ancient discipline and skill, it is that defeating him has comparatively little impact on the world's suffering. Though a wave of goodwill and determination will sweep over mankind, as the most compassionate of Hell return to their true resting place.
- The Shinma are on familiar enough terms with Yen-Lo, that with them at your side a chance remains to persuade him to stand down and forfeit willingly. It will not be effortless; Yen-Lo has studied the emergent situation long enough to make what he feels is an informed decision, and will debate both you and the Shinma about the worthiness of your cause. Yet if he is so convinced, he will willingly help you take his life without resistance.

Ravana: Rajah of Demons

- Once, Ravana was feared and powerful even among the Yama Kings. His unique demonic spirits, the shapeshifting rakshas, terrorized man and demon alike. Then a cunning Okami called Hanuman used forbidden sorceries to punish his realm, the incendiary Lanka where the violent are punished, by igniting a cleansing fire in it, and tricking the hell into *wanting* to burn. Ravana's arrogance and selfishness imploded into brooding self-destruction, a sulking shadow of himself never seen beyond his palace halls while his servants skulk in the desolation of his realm. Predictable though he grew in his madness, he concocted many schemes he once believed would raise him back to power. Whether truth or bluff, he now claims the Sixth Age as the culmination of those schemes-and will stop at nothing to claim the title of **Demon Emperor** to humble all who dared mock him.
- Unlike his peers, Ravana shapeshifts constantly even in battle. The only constants are his monstrousness and terrible power. Naturally, his unique techniques incorporate this shifting to terrible effect. His greatest strength is his mastery of shapeshifting, which he can bestow to his Akuma, and which his Raksha servants share along with command of fire and storms. His greatest weakness is the nearness of victory making him even more brutishly predictable than usual.
- Defeating Ravana blunts the destructive power of all that burns or crumbles. Fires started by other disasters burn out quicker or tend to miss civilisation, while crumbling buildings or natural disasters uncannily tend to avoid civilian casualties. Combustion and demolition become much safer and energy efficient for all mortals, speeding the world's recovery-and fuelling it's advances instead of destruction for its own sake.

Haha no Fukami: The Empress of Pearls

- Like Yen-Lo, Haha no Fukami is sometimes accused of her peers of not being corrupt enough to stand among them. It is said that as a Shinma, she revelled in the ocean's untamed power and it was the Sun itself who requested she turned her take vengeance against all that offended the before her beastly form corrupted her nature irrevocably. Even now she acknowledges a kind of subservience to the celestial bodies that regulate ki over the world-though while she does not seek innocents, her animalistic nature will accept the tribute of their pain. So close is her affinity with water that her Hell of the Seven Burning Seas has no land in it, though her honour demands she meet you somewhere with at least enough land to fight on. None know why she

seeks to be **Demon Emperor**, perhaps it is simply her nature to torment others.

- Haha no Fukami takes the form of a salamander with a woman's arms, legs and breasts. Her unique moves evoke the ocean's fury, volcanic fires and the ocean's fury. Her greatest strength is her animalistic speed and instinct for battle, almost unkillable until thoroughly dismembered-perhaps even butchered or burned away. Her greatest weakness, ironically, is her love of changing form to more aquatic shapes even when it serves her poorly on land.
- Haha no Fukami's death pacifies the sea. Much of the corruption plaguing it disappears overnight, many aquatic species make a miraculous recovery and all the bounties of the ocean may reveal new medicinal or mystical properties when prepared by human hands. If this world survives, the oceans' biodiversity will be preserved and their waters will be made spiritually pure.

Emma-o: The Daimyo of the Dark

- Not every Yama King fell from ambition alone, and those with attachments to the world can be some of the most monstrous. In his life as a Shinma, Emma-o was revered by an ancient people for his graciousness and kindness, a guardian against the wicked who protected their dead. The decimation of them filled him with such a lust for revenge it outlived his terrible deeds against the ancestors of what became the modern Japanese, drove him to take the onslaught of the Legendary Masters head on and made his cruelty legendary once he ruled the despised and dishonourable in Kakuri, the Night Realm. Cold, calculating and utterly devoid of mercy, Emma-o is served primarily by masked female Akuma named the shikome, who are trained by his hand in many cruelties and empowered to break the wills of men in many ways. It is moral superiority that convinces him only he is worthy to be **Demon Emperor**, a belief he affirms to himself by having the shikome practice their torture on his flesh as a warped penance for his own evil.
- From a dozen rushing shadows, Emma-o manifests as an extremely tall man with a black beard and the clothing of a lost civilisation. His skin is obsidian, and his eyes cold windows into the purest of malice. His unique techniques invoke freezing cold and rend the soul directly. His greatest strength is his absolute mercilessness and experience with battle, seeking to learn all there is about you and sending his servants to whittle you down beyond the ring. His greatest weakness is a genuine astonishment for mortals to overcome their fallibility and embrace lives of honour, that can throw him off-guard. And while this may seem difficult to exploit, perceptive fighters with great occult insight may discover his own realm may not be as in order as he thinks-in ways that remind him uncomfortably of the righteous guardian he once was.
- Defeating Emma-o brings harmony to the spiritual world of darkness. Shadows hide the malicious less, yet keep the innocent safe. Even spirits that call places of darkness home are more polite to trespassers, letting them off with a stern warning or even helping them for some minor offerings. All the worries of the world are soothed and given clarity rather than horror by nightfall.

Tou Mu: The Iron Empress

- Tou Mou hates the Legendary Masters more than any Yama King. She hates the arrogance of those who humiliated her with foot and fist alone. She hates any rumour of an august scarlet personage who spared her life in exchange for the oath that she would repent for her own sins by hunt hoarders and abusers of power. She hates how despite surpassing all her victims in pride and cruelty, she suffered greatly herself at the hands of the Legendary Masters before her desecrated and broken body was cast screaming into the Hell of Being Skinned Alive. Since then her butchery and oppression have been honed a thousandfold in spats against her brethren and subjects. She remains so wise in the ways of the temptress; it sometimes seems there are none on earth who will not do her bidding for the right price. Emma-o is sometimes called the greatest general of the Yama Kings while as you will soon learn Mikaboshi is pure evil even among his own kind, but through sheer brutality and raw martial power Tou Mu is deemed one of the two closest Yama Kings to the title of the **Demon Emperor.**
- In her known existence, Tou Mou obstinately refuses to use any form other than the one she will confront you in: A woman with long, black hair in elaborate iron armor with a horned mask and talonlike gauntlets upon each of her 18 hands. Three serpentine eyes glare unblinkingly at you, while each hand holds an artifact foul, deadly or wondrous-each capable of doing harm as grievous as any supernatural technique. And while her skills of manipulation remain formidable, her greatest strength is the might of this deceptively coordinated battle regalia-it's might feared even among the other Yama Kings. Her greatest weakness is her revulsion to the Exalted as a whole making her reject Akuma as servants point black, relying instead on four-story building sized chimeric beasts with little subtlety when her cheap mortal pawns can't get the job done.

- Defeating Tou Mou purifies the world's air. A single breath shall do the work of dozens, keeping mankind vigilant and refreshed despite these dreary times. Moreover, air currents will tend to redirect foul smogs and wind-born ailments. Even deadly storms of all sorts will diminish, and travel by air will be made easier.
- Should **Jane Doe** be present at her duel, Tou Mou will completely lose her composure, abandoning much of her skill to fury as she fights to slay you within the bounds of honour. **Jane** remains unimpressed. She will contemptuously reveal she knows Tou Mou's fighting style off by heart, including all its weaknesses, and mercilessly mock her every failing.

Mikaboshi: Lord of the Wicked City, Architect of the Sixth Age, and Unironic Gun Enthusiast

- The master of the Wicked City's evil is a blasphemous abomination even by his kind's reckoning. For one thing, whatever Ravana and others would like to boast he was the true architect of the ongoing events insofar as he spearheaded the unity and shared many of the rites permitting the Yama Kings to bring about this opportunity. For another, his evil has always been unusually…*human* in ambition, even before his true descent. As a Shinma, he shared many principles of mysticism governing alchemy and geomancy with mankind to the point of being a celebrated advisor-yet even then he craved

power, assuming a human form to shape dynasties and nations to his whims. Once his monstrosity became clear, he proved himself more far-seeing than others of his kind by quickly incorporating technology into his Hell and in himself. So bloated is he from the souls of the corrupted, isolated and anonymous sinners, that he now counts as the other strongest contender for **Demon Emperor** along with Tou Mou-and he has been far more proactive about seizing the role. His preference is to build a monolithic power base over simply thwarting his competitors, though his obsession with becoming **Demon Emperor** knows no bounds.

- Mikaboshi comes to you as a Japanese man with mechanical hands, dressed in a finely tailored suit. Do not be deceived. For Mikaboshi is so fundamentally evil, so base and horrific at a spiritual level, that ***the bastard has incorporated ARTIFACT GUNS as hidden weapons*** into his cybernetic body, which he will actually try to ***SHOOT YOU*** with in lieu of the martial arts**.** As you can see, Mikaboshi's greatest strength AND weakness is that he is not merely pure evil incarnate, but he is shameless craven scum with no dignity. Despite his organisational efficiency and masterful melding of Hell's power with modern technology, even the other Yama Kings will cheer for his death.
- Defeating Mikaboshi will be a great exorcism upon city life. The soul-crushing grind of the office will weigh far less heavily on secretaries and clerks alike, while middle management and executives will be moved to generosity. Systems of all kinds will work with such clarity and efficiency, that advancement and equitable opportunity will become plentiful in the modern world. And as the modern world is defanged of dangers, guns become a thousand times more useless than they already are.
- Once **Jane** Doe remembers Mikaboshi, the sheer dishonour of how he went out of his way to use demonically bolstered guns to put her in that coma will fill her with an icy cold hatred. She will demand to destroy him personally. **She. Will. End. Him.**
-

Whether you challenge the Yama Kings yourself or declare total war on them one by one, **you must ensure the world is safe from their grasp by the end of your ten year stay.** After that? The corruption spread by the Yama Kings will dissipate as the celestial bodies return to power, and the world will seem brighter and yet more hopeful than before as it heals. Lead your crusade into Yomi Wan if you wish, more Yama Kings await but greatly weakened by their peers' depredations and likely already blaming each other and severely demoralised.

The world's blessing of enlightenment would fade away if you failed, as the Yama Kings' triumph drives the celestial bodies to sickly torpor or despair. But should you win, **your reward for succeeding is the privilege to keep what you have earned. Whichever Exalted martial art you master, you gain three blessings: A unique rite that allows you to replicate your Exalted fighting powers in others while personally sculpting their style, a profound connection with the aspect of the world that enhances your fighting prowess and a means to purify the world with that aspect's ki-making it baneful to demonic powers and a bounty to those born of the natural order. With great study into this world's mystic arts, it may be possible to share these blessings with others.**

Ryuujin may learn to ritually baptise others in a little of their blood. Their disciple must first embark on a journey with them resembling “going walkabout”, though shorter and within an extreme example of their element such as a path near an active volcano or a swim in the open ocean. Success inducts a new Ryuujin into the world, with the elemental affinity best matching their personality. Simply exercising near such a powerful example of your caste element can provide supernatural breakthroughs in your native martial arts as the thunderous elements around you briefly take on the semblance and voice of the dragons themselves. Finally by performing intense katas that cover a few miles around you for each hour continuously practiced, you can furnish the local area with powerful ki related to one such element. Within it your element becomes all-pervading yet nurturing to life-and protective of it. The earth may become richer than any worldly fertiliser while swallowing up curses, and even fires will burn brightly yet quickly to promote new growth while avoiding living flesh-and feasting greedily on flesh tainted by a demon.

Tennin may cast an esoteric illusion involving martial arts and metaphors of celestial balance that requiring great wisdom, intellect and insight to solve. If successful, a Shinma is summoned specifically to bind with the acolyte. Furthermore, training under the stars on a night clear enough to see them can provide great insight into your strengths and weaknesses of a fighter-as well as those of your opponents in the future, both known and unknown. Replicate these constellations using bronze lamps to cover the land, transmit a pulse of your own stellar ki strong enough to harmonise between them all, and the ki of the Shinma so invoked will grant minor wishes on the level of foresight to the future, solving complex mathematical problems or opening a locked safe so long as an offering and well-prepared prayer strip are provided. Your own reserves and those of other Tennin, of course, enjoy a much heftier temporary surplus of ki-and of course you could simply stay within the area to enjoy these boons in perpetuity. Pity the evil spirits who find themselves locked in one place contemplating esoteric koans, distracted by phantasmal prayer strips just outside their vision, lost in haunting lights and otherwise discombobulated or bewitched by esoteric wards evoking the Shinma’s powers. Should actual Shinma have accompanied you, they can teach you unique sorceries drawing on the powers of these formations.

Okami may know a brew of their own that sends drinkers on a vision quest, which drives said drinker to escape into the woods. If successful, this culminates with a vision of the moon that claims the drinker as kin. And when the moon is visible, you’ll find it’s light gives you a supernatural awareness of everything for miles-especially any being you would consider a personal threat, or desirable prey. Every sense, even touch is sharpened such that you naturally move and hide wherever is most advantageous. You need not seek them of course; train in your fighting style, and unheard yet deeply felt guidance from the moon will guide you to harness your primal instincts to excel beyond the other Okami of this world. Though these effects grow stronger with the available moonlight, even with a crescent moon on a cloudy night you could successfully hunt a nearby owl with your bare hands, and eyes shut. Symbolically marking a radius with a potion of animal bone and a moonflowers will suffuse it with the moon’s ki to make it illusory and dreamlike even in day. The bounds between truth and phantasm blur slightly, always to your advantage: You might walk through bushes seamlessly, or entangle pursuers with the shadows of vines, or misty paths may open to you leading right behind others when they think

they know your location. It is worse for demons and the hell-touched: All life within turns against them. Even small birds have their claws and beaks blessed with argent ki to be deadly while vines contrives to trip them when not looking, and the roused life will halt only on your command.

Shinigami may fast and meditate together with someone with a true and honest commitment to avenging the wrongs dealt to spiritual balance and the world. By sharing with your disciple a vision of your own offer, you may induct them as a new avenger of the world. Conversely wherever there has been great death, or wherever the world has been quite physically ripped wide by human hands you need only close your eyes and still your heart to witness horrific visions that teach you how to kill what has harmed them as if you had practiced for weeks on end. It is not given unto you, of course, to spread the world's wounds you are meant to avenge. However when you mark an area in the torn corpse-parts of your victims then transmit a pulse of deathly ki across them, the ki of death shall shroud it in the cold mist of graves while sapping at the life energy and will of all who walk in-if they can breach the primal terror of the grave around those boundaries. The demonic forces suffer even more keenly in this area, the call of the grave tenfold on them where most sensible men would have time to escape merely winded and exhausted, as if having tried to climb a freezing mountain in the dark-even the undead and undying in danger of reduction to being among the unmoving. Your unique duty grants two more gifts: The power to exempt trusted individuals with a sworn oath to you, and the power to annul the deathly qualities of such areas when you wish-leaving them still and eerie, but no longer life-threatening.

Lastly, **Mugen** need only train with someone to the brink of mortal limit-and then just a bit further beyond. A gentle infusion of their own ki is all that's then needed to induct a new legend into the world. Sunlight only energises you, never fatiguing, blinding or otherwise exhausting, and keeps you going as well as a constant supply of fresh water where other men risk dying of exhaustion. To you the sun is than a ball of burning gas-it is a sensei, constantly sending you subtle intuitions that inspire even Legendary Masters to achieve breakthroughs and epiphanies under the gross incandescence of their symbol. The stronger the sunlight, the more your ki resonates and keeps you going-and a few months in the Sahara would make you a master among masters. A Legendary Grandmaster, one could say. And where you have smitten the ground with your techniques of energy projection, where you have bombarded them thoroughly enough to be comparable to acupuncture upon a living human body, the Breath of Heaven will erupt in torrents for all to grasp-letting even mortals replicate your techniques in lesser aspect for hours after leaving, while you and other Mugen will enjoy an even greater plethora of ki and see your techniques amplified tenfold in power, precision and speed. Demonic forces foolish enough to enter the glowing land you have tempered are simply burned where they stand by the sunlight, curse and flesh alike strewn from them like dry kindling.

In all cases, when you purify the world with your unique ki it is made Edenic and harmonious in similar ways to the abundancies left by the downfall of the Yama Kings. Even the chill of the Shinigami cleanses, especially after its duty to bring death is relinquished. Each patch of land you bless shall expand rapidly once so endowed, given new life by your own.

In a decade's time, a suburb's area so protected could expand to protect a region the size of Alaska provided there is no significant interference capable of disrupting the subtle yet profound spiritual forces at work, and you could certainly repeat the rite that originally blessed the land to grow it quicker. And last but not least, **with great spiritual effort you may invoke a natural disaster resonant with your style's patron and blessed like the territory you have claimed**. The Ryuujin may summon vast tidal waves inland, tornados or a rash of violent plantlife, the Tennin may cast localised meteor showers, the Okami may incite madness and illusion amidst a blizzard, the Yamajin may unleash and earthquake and the Mugen simply scorch the land around them as if it had been exposed to years against the desert sun.

And that is not all you can do with this blessed land. The Sixth Age lies slain at your hand, but in your struggles an echo of its spirit lives on in all you are. **You may exert subtle, but profound control over the physical and spiritual phenomena of your land** through a combination of intense meditation and ritualised practice of your combat moves, the process intuitive to your stilled mind as you muster the forces needed to align the world with your spirit. Subtle as the changes are, they shall always be considered part of the natural order for all mystical purposes and circumstances-and shall ever be a boon for all living things within. In a month or two you could tame nearby wolves and bears like sleigh dogs for the local humans, sculpt snowfall into crude fortress walls hard as glacial ice, raise a new spring to create a grand lake or river and converge the growth of many grown to raise a great tree bigger than some buildings. Depending on your style, auxiliary blessings may shape these changes such as rivers glowing with moonlight at night that provides great insight into the spirit world when drunk, or sunlight blessing peppercorns to fill the bellies of the righteous with heroic strength-and changes literally or metaphorically associated with them shall come more naturally. Practice and self-discovery shall strengthen your power to shape the world as those your style derives from did.

Where you go from here, is up to you. The world rebounds with such vitality you're your remaining years in this world shall seem blessed by some loving god. The air tastes crisper, fortunes for mortal men seem greater, a pervasive sense of empathy and community seems to have been provided to all here-and of course, there has been an even greater awakening of interest in the martial arts. Should you wish you could take advantage of humanity's outcry for vengeance to gather more Exalted fighters to storm Yomi Wan and slay the Yama Kings once and for all.

The Thousand Hells have never been weaker, many of their lords chastened by sensing those who overwhelmed them defeated or sapped of much of their strength-if not outright chained to their thrones by treachery. It is no exaggeration to say *all* of them have been weakened at least as badly as the mortal world was during its invasion, and like a wounded animal bleeding from a thousand cuts each has been so bled of noxious power that even if never sealed again, their lords and minions can never be the danger to mankind they once were. Total spiritual dissolution is a possibility, however slim, if the surviving powers cannot muster something drastic-and with Mikaboshi's folly in tatters, old grudges leave the Yama Kings far less able to cooperate with one another than Earth in its darkest hours. If there was ever an opportunity to harrow them and free the souls within, it is now for even mortal armies

could hold their own in battle against Yomi Wan's dying gasps. Hell's fires dim to guttering embers, it's boiling oils cool to treacle-even the flaying winds die to spiteful, infrequent gusts. Already many lesser Hells crumble to dust, while even greater ones' borders merge-hastening the paranoia, mutual blame and mistrust such that the bedraggled Yama Kings will be incapable of a unified response to invasion. As each one tasted victory, now each feels a numbing coldness in what passes for its heart they know to be the borrowed time of their rule-and already in several Hells, damned mortal souls have overthrown their demonic captors.

Jane Doe seems oddly melancholy about the end of the invasion. Laughing it off as a "post-fight clarity" moment the two of you should forget over a beer, if pressed she'll confess that she once chose to make a dark pact with the Yama Kings for what she thought were good reasons at the time. She saved the clans of the Ryuujin. But while she was hailed a hero, that power inspired great fear in those around her, knowing she could crush them with her newfound might and fearing what she had lost to accomplish this. Despite her efforts, some turned against her and she was forced to rise beyond a dutiful warrior to a vigilant queen. And when she felt her presence did more harm than good, she quietly abdicated to walk the world righting wrongs with street justice. But there too, hatred and fear followed from those who recognised some of her powers. In time, it became easier to deal with the loneliness of suspicion and the gulf of power between her kin by losing herself to battle…and it has, she concluded, ultimately served her well by making her the fighter she is today. And of course to meet a fellow warrior in you. She does realise now, however, that the dutiful soldier she thought herself when coming out of that coma was no idle fantasy. It was a recollection of the woman she was long ago: Earnest, dedicated and keen to do the right thing. A time now long past her of course, but…a beautiful dream to relive. A dream that your support helped preserve until she had to remember who she was.

She's cheered up not long after, though. While you would receive **the mysterious package containing the Capcom fighting game Mortal Streets of the Double Dragon Jumper's Kombat™, all 11 seasons of the series Mortal Streets: Action-Packed Roundhouse Kick Hour and Mortal Streets: This Time, It's Personal the feature length film series climax** anyway via a package on your doorstep when you least expect it near the end of your time here, should **Jane Doe** be in your company fate will arrange for her to be the first to find these hilariously over the top (yet surprisingly high production value) adaptations of your adventures in this world. She will need help getting up after laughing at them.

…there is at least one reason to return to the wastes of Yomi Wan. As the Thousand Hells crumble the question occurs to you: If the damned cry out for salvation, can a Hell? If a bad man can earn redemption in the heat of combat, can a realm? Fate intercedes so if you do resolve to explore your conquest, you shall come across at least one particularly crumbled, fragile Hell that seems…almost benign. It's nature will vary, but it is of a form that you will find pleasing somehow. Perhaps you see hints of a happier world it once was before it's Yama King's depredations? Perhaps what was once wretched and damned in it is trying to become something more comforting in its final moments? Perhaps the damned souls in it simply cry out to you as their hero? Regardless, should you wish to **you may perform the rite to bless land in order to not just cleanse this Hell, but claim it as a personal spiritual**

realm you may visit. From the moment the rite concludes, it seems to crumble even faster, clouds rising up around you-until you find yourself somewhere beyond the Thousand Hells in it, and the world around you gradually reforming as a haven instead of a place where souls are victimised and beaten.

You may lack the natural gifts of world-warping and raw power the Yama Kings boast, the Hell may be too damaged to supply you with spiritual power. It's boundaries are misty and incoherent; journeying past a territory perhaps a third as large as Australia's borders sees you turned around with your back to the mist. A far cry from the fathomless dimensions of true Hells, but your touch has given it one thing no other has: The gift to truly offer succour and comfort to it's residents. Healing springs of refreshing, drinkable water may dot its hills. Peach trees that halt aging may hang grow within it. Ancient temples may be stocked with herbal remedies or medicines. There may simply be a landscape that while modest in scope, fills the viewer with true wonder. Though much diminished in its glory, you will find two spells (or perhaps, it will generate them): One to easily open a portal to and from it, another to ignite a spiritual beacon to any lost, restless spirits out in the world. This realm no longer takes the damned by force, but if they wish they may come to your realm to find solace-and leave through the portal by will.

Cared for like a patch of farmland or simply explored by its denizens, nurtured with love and care and simple kindness, it may take a century or two of continuous care for this realm to grow back to a brighter shade of its vaunted glory; your blessings will, of course, aid it as much as a thriving community. But at least you'll have time to study what secrets of its old life have survived, master the mystic arts-and who knows? Perhaps one fine day you'll figure out how to shape this blessed world in more elaborate ways, and though having sacrificed much of its diabolical vitality for good even crumble off fragments of it to sow the seeds for a thousand bonsai Havens? And for some reason, whenever you come here **good fortune dogs your steps, and persists for time proportionate to your stay beyond this realm**. Within, it's gentle nature means you may find buried treasures of Yomi Wan on a long walk into the wilderness, win the friendship of nervous once-damned spirits quickly or simply skip stones with uncanny accuracy. Without you throw darts with uncanny accuracy, impress at games of chance and get some generous favours from strangers. Can…can a former Hell feel gratitude?

Will you lead to crusade to end the torment after death, once and for all? Seal away the Thousand Hells from this world? Offer them one final insult by simply ignoring their inevitable collapse?

…but aha, that's not the only option for a certain bent of Exalted, is it?

If you are **Yamajin** then the corruption doesn't immediately fade. Instead, **the Throne** will descend from stormy skies like so many times in your dreams. An impossibly smooth block of carved basalt and ebony furnishing, that drinks at the light around it.

The Throne does not cajole.
It does not coerce.
No insidious whisper trickles into your ear.
All you feel looking at it, is stark clarity at the magnitude of what awaits.
It merely awaits your decision.

Dismiss it, if you like.

Speak your intentions with honesty and what semblance of will within **the Throne** shall unravel itself rather than disobey its chosen master, restoring the world.

But **sit upon your throne**, and all Hell shall hear the sutra your presence as the true **Demon Emperor** completes. Spoken like a millions serpents from the hissing vapours arising from the world's corruption-

With rods do the farmers drive the bullocks
You are the rod and the farmer and the axe and the fire
Fine skin-lanterns shall be your sunlight
And corpse-dust shall be your perfume

-**as the Sixth Age itself, kingship over the Thousand Hells and the title of Demon Emperor becomes your reward.**

To call you a martial artist is no longer adequate. You are the hell-forged ideal of every infernal art, your skill more a force of nature in action than anything. The intensity of your ki is like a neverending vortex, restoring itself like an ocean with no end as it repairs your flesh and bone from all but the mightiest martial techniques or sorceries of this world in mere seconds. Mundane efforts are far blunted by your immense spiritual pressure, to the extent firing on you with a gun usually kills the gunman without your deliberate effort. You are agile and swift as striking lightning, impervious and enduring as the oldest mountains, and inexorably strong as the oncoming storm. You would have been a far greater threat to the Legendary Masters of old than all the Yama Kings they overthrew, but be cautious-even one Mugen having reclaimed the techniques of the Legendary Masters has the potential to deal you a blow mighty enough to take significant effort to fully heal, small and costly though it may be. This is to say nothing of your world-warping powers more fitting a spirit than a mortal: Creating maelstroms that sunder land, sea and sky alike into Hell's reach. Wresting great limbs of molten earth that can sunder skyscrapers. Bolts of killing light that can leave entire continents blighted with supernatural plagues. This immense power is yours and yours alone, sovereign from the desperate clawing for souls and any pretence of need from Hell's industries.

And that is not all you gain. For your victory, all one thousand hells of Yomi Wan fall under your governance and shall follow you into future worlds.

They shall have a great pull upon the sinful and those shackled to their base natures in future worlds-and with worlds with no afterlives at all, they shall take all who die upon them. Even if you yourself should somehow die or be destroyed, you are as immortal as they-restoring yourself from any of them magnificently and in total comfort, within mere moments. The forces it would take to even harm you would be mighty indeed. The forces it would take to actually end you would have to contend with your ki now being an integral principle of the Thousand Hells themselves, able to draw on their power as keenly as your lungs gulp air, and as such would require the destruction of all these mighty realms first or possibly commensurate power focused keenly onto you. And where all their terrible, grinding power is an engine of woe to all that lives-to you, it is nothing less than the thunderous palpitations of what you are becoming. Your power shall grow slowly but steadily over the years. Should the world continue to turn with you at it's helm, in a thousand years your power would rival that of the sun.

Should you deign to visit a Hell, the heart of its power shall contain the enlightenment for new Shintai techniques: Unique transformations you can merge into your **Demon Emperor Shintai** seamlessly to empower it. The Hell of Boiling Oil might grant you amorphous tendrils made of its substance, while the Hell of Burrowing Maggots morph your nervous system into an ever-respawning tide of symbiotic demon vermin. The Pit of Salt and Iron might let you merge with stone and metal, while the Seven Burning Seas permit you exude incendiary liquids that are part of your body. Already you stand as a demonic giant taller than any man alive who can reflexively mould your flesh to adapt or incorporate these offerings, though as your power grows so too shall the stature you may shape for yourself and capacity to represent the celestial force you are becoming. With regular experimentation, by the end of the decade you could be a living natural disaster that can touch upon men and spirits alike-and should you have already attained the Omens of the **Demon Emperor** you may find yourself so gifted with wielding even this magnificent form, that it's eldritch facets boast all the sublime skill and precision of a Legendary Master raised to your newly inhuman scope. Many already fear what more you will become, in time.

You may reshape or even merge the Hells and direct the souls within as if ten thousand giants were moulding them like clay, the very stratum of them responding to your will like whipped dogs. You could even enact great metaphysical changes on their natures, to gain other blessings from them. It is well within your power to demolish the Feverish Hell and build an arcane factory for demonic weapons over its sickly acres. To scupper the place where the souls of those who commit suicide go, and reorient the mystic energies into rituals that will eventually generate new Hells more to your liking. And to change the Hell of Burrowing Maggots into the Hell of Cuddly Kitsunes, where victims are mercilessly nuzzled against, pampered and hugged by beautiful women with the tails of foxes which constrict around their helpless prey like friendly boa constrictors. It goes without saying that your will alone determines who would be raised from them as new Yamajin, for Yomi Wan is as compliant with your will as your actual flesh and blood. You are not merely immured to the Hell's various forces-they empower you, focus your mind, are your lifeblood in motion. To strike you with them would be like challenging a volcano with a flamethrower.

Harnessing the Hells' power to work great feats of sorcery or geomancy beyond their reach is somewhat more challenging, but it shall come naturally and the Hells will readily open themselves to investigation of such knowledge. Certainly, with the original conspirators' essences subsumed into the **Throne** you could simply revive them, interrogate the secrets, figure out how to recreate the gradual invasion that threatened to subsume Earth into Hell so recently, and dispose of them when you're done. Certainly with you in control, it is within your power to easily finish the *current* invasion or cancel it, healing the world (though aha, perhaps leaving traces of your power should you be an insidious sort to gradually corrupt it from the inside! Such is your precision) should you feel…nostalgic about the world that was. Perhaps a quicker, and more cost effective approach would be to ritualistically invoke the principles of a specific Hell with locations resonant with it, to sow the seeds for a new infernal paradise on a small subset of Earth or pull mere cities' worth of the world above into your domain? Mikaboshi certainly intended something similar with his Wicked City and the urbane discontent of the world above, though it would have been quite the feat for him. Whatever your intent with this, *the power of martial combat* will always greatly speed and empower such rituals-the bigger and bloodier, the better. Should you own A Little Slice of Hell, that world may be made the 1001st capital of your kingdoms: A nexus where all their energy pools so powerful, it would put all of them to shame as a veritable microcosm of all that makes Yomi Wan great. This kingdom shall be easier by far than any other to have it's principles brought to bear in the world above, and it shall swell in magnificence and scope as you do in power.

Any surviving Yama Kings will bend the knee to you-whether in sincere awe or unnatural terror that their prophesised ruler stands before them, knowing you hold their ultimate fate in your hands. The Thousand Hells are a constellation compared to yourself: Dim compared when set against your majesty, but nonetheless a furnace that burns brightly for your sake. With them at your side, your might and will shall define the Sixth Age wherever you go.

And as a coda of sorts, once this is made known to **Jane Doe** she will respond with an astounded, impressed grin. Dominion was a mere side effect of the same fiercely independent nature which let her survive an ancient spirit war that left the Ryuujin clans ravaged-and win by making her infernal pact. Since then, she has grown mighty. In time she was recognised as **the Wandering Overlord**, a power so fearsome she was a mighty peer to the Yama Kings who walked freely through their realms by sheer might while holding neither domain nor servitors. Neither truly cruel nor exactly a paragon of justice, she lived for battle against worthy opponents; it took great guile, misfortune, the ill will of many Yama Kings she had crushed beneath her feet for the challenge and quite a lot of sake for Mikaboshi to take his shot. Her countless salves, pills, powders and other dark rites gave her many ways to gain strength from the world's suffering and the flow of Hell's energies without adding to it.

Such was her power that she could have been anointed as **Demon Emperor** if she so chose.

Such was her brazen independence, that once before she saved the world by simply denying the **Throne** when it presented itself to her.

Such is her admiration of your own strength, and joy to have a peer to both conquer the world with as well as test herself against that she too will reclaim a similar title. Not that you will have to battle for it, oh no. With a stomp of her foot, bloody cracks in the ground birth **the Throne of the Yang World** that she once rejected, preserved by her might and shaped by her connection to the natural world. And once she sits upon it, she will arise as **The Vermillion Phoenix**, a complementary suzerain whose rule supports your own.

To begin with, she has become a being comparable in power and nature to yourself. While her ki is similarly inexhaustible and ever-growing, she has a less raw power to bring to bear-think of her as the moon and earth to your sun. Though she lacks your full communion and authority over the Thousand Hells as well as your dominion over the Sixth Age, she has other skills that let her benefit from them. Rich blood-hued ki emanates around her in living, billowing fog thick enough to serve as elegant, yet risqué, robes. Frequently doing little more than drape around her shapely flanks, all that clads her beneath it are skin-thin streaks of black leather that accentuate her waist more than they cover her, a thong-like fundoshi and a few meagre, tightly bound strips of cloth offering a pretence at modesty. Red jade trinkets adorn her neck, wrists, shoulders and hips equally as symbols of regency-and fealty to her fellow ruler. Though her eyes may burn with Hell's fire as her form is made malleable by Yomi Wan's ascendant power, in all shapes her commanding beauty and allure is a thing out of myth-imposing enough to leave a man tortured at her feet in mesmerised awe.

Where your presence imposes itself on nature, hers beautifies it in the image of demonic power. Where your existence dominates the spirit world, hers creates a shared one in your combined image. It is within her power to turn rivers into streams of boiling blood, create cloudscapes ablaze with living lightning, transform forests into mobile demonic servitors, poison spirits to Hell's cause and warp populations of dogs into hellhounds. Formidable in the natural world, her sculpting of life is a hundred times mightier in the Thousand Hells proper. Her divine power doesn't just corrupt and command nature-it remakes it to thrive amongst the conditions of Hell, even reconciling their spiritual energy to harmonise rather than repel or corrupt each other.

But her supernatural powers of fertility surpass all her others, with every aspect of her being creating new life fit for the Thousand Hells. When you share your unique life energy with her, a drop of her blood can spawn hundreds of spirits akin to the common ones of this world while her spit can turn fallow ground into a seedbed for demonic beasts. To say nothing if she tries harder. Many dozens of spirits approaching the Yama Kings themselves in stature can be spawned from her squatting strain, sweat and tears. She can even create a dozen or so Hells shaped to your desires in one go, emanating their spiritual substance from deep within her body as noxious vapours or bubbling ichors-as sore as this feat might leave her, at first.

Don’t think her demeaned by this role however you see fit for her to serve. She has always found pleasure in adversity, and drunk on the ascendant power of Yomi Wan pain and pleasure aren’t so different when done in service to it. Her devotion is ensured by how intoxicating she finds your very being, which sets her blood racing and body shivering like no other vice since in many ways you literally embody the powers that elevated her from a battlefield survivor to a queen of the Thousand Hells-especially when you duel one another. The time for restraint, and the loneliness of power has passed for her-with the corrupt energy she can create and your catalytic spirit, she has all she needs to continue rising in power as a perversely celestial divinity. Power, she fondly muses, to surpass the very planet she was born on and it’s natural order

Ending options

Go Home

Stay

Move On

Notes:

Just to be clear, the Shinma are *probably* not intended to be as existentially integral as the Shinma of Exalted proper. Their corrupted counterparts the Yama Kings weren't even properly bound just driven off with swift beatings, also the Yama Kings and Yomi Wan/The Thousand Hells are nearly directly lifted from the same antagonists of the Old World of Darkness game Kindred of the East. Though this is not confirmed, they are likely somewhat more abstract than their counterparts from that game given the esoteric nature of the Shinma.

Unlike Exalted proper, little is said about the mechanics of sorcery, ghosts and spirits-save that the Exalted are capable of defeating all of them. Spirits at least are known to wield 2-6 techniques on par with those of the Exalted unique to their nature, and have comparable vitality, willpower and ki to the Exalted. Especially mighty spirits such as gods or demon kings may have even more ki or vitality.

Under normal circumstances, if a mortal or Mugen defeats a Shinigami in combat he may stay the hand of death itself by swearing to uphold a virtuous ideal-to be true to one he loves, or to hew to a strongly-held martial belief despite all resistance. If he keeps his promise the Shinigami cannot again attack him unless he breaks that vow. However, your interdimensional nature and your existence's placement into worlds beyond will ensure this restriction will have no hold on you after this jump.

Many of the Exalted's powers call on energies related to the sun or earth. In future jumps you may draw energy from them in a similar fashion to use your powers as described above, their tectonic or solar forces resonating with your martial arts.

What happens if you take perks from other backgrounds, particularly egregious ones like being The Mugen Demon Emperor or multiple 100 CP ones? Well, to a large extent that's up to you as the writer. The distinctions laid down in certain 100 CP perks are purely a formality reflecting the degree to which Burn Legend's game system assumes fighters don't really "multiclass" and has absolutely nothing to say about what happens if for example, a Tennin tries to train into becoming a Mugen or allies with the Yama Kings. Should you have other means from beyond this world to strive for gaining their full capability, feel free to seek their full power on your own terms. As for how exactly a Tennin becomes the world's championed executioner or a Ryuujin gets on friendly terms with the Shinma, well…the nominal explanation is through some bizarre feat of sorcery, dread bargaining or martial arts, you have somehow emulated the stated effects of the perk through your own style, or have obtained a similar mastery of another style. The deeper implications are yours to reconcile.

The setting's unmitigated disgust for gunplay is primarily targeted at mundane firearms, not magically or divinely enhanced guns or technologically advanced energy weapons, nor those made lethal by jump imports. Feel free to fanwank the relative lethality of such weapons from outside this setting.

Jane Doe is this world's version of the Scarlet Empress. Used to hard living and uncertain of her place in the world, she looks to you and her skills for support. Her

confidence and love of battle will return with her memories. Her past is mysterious and open-ended; feel free to fanwank the specifics of her character to suit your story.

You may be wondering what, if any, corruptive effects **Jane Doe's** mystic arts may have on you. Nominally, the answer is…there are none. You don't become an old and clever fighter with a big rep if you rely on a technique that's a glorified steroid which burns you out, and she's canny enough the worst you can dream of is a nasty case of the runs if you can't handle your spicy sin energy. No, they exist to pose a question to you: When posed with a true challenge, do you fight with honour or every resource at your disposal (except guns)? Are you, as a fighter, willing to supplement your martial tradition with power directly taken from the suffering of Hell?

The Sixth Age represents many things. It's like Vegas on a busy night, and a frat party gone off the hook. It's all about the lizard brain, and materialism, and endless consumption. However as Exalted tends to take a neutral stance on moral absolutes, technically the Sixth Age isn't *strictly* evil for evil's sake-more vice, enlightened self-interest and indulgence for vice, enlightened self-interest and indulgence's sake; think the Black alignment of Magic: The Gathering in its most fundamental framework, or the Winnower's approach in Destiny. It's still quite liable to be quite a nasty shock for many societies without extreme finesse, it is about ambition and selfishness after all. The point is you don't have to go full Aku or grimdark with it as the Demon Emperor. You just motivate and disincentivise people a bit like training animals when you bring it to bear.