

In ancient times, the Architects of Reality ruled all Creation. Millennia ago, they were overthrown by the Exalted Host. These Primordial dead became the Neverborn, their great tomb-bodies suspended above the Void, and the Underworld appeared above them.

In the First Age, the Solar Deliberative ruled all Creation. Fifteen centuries ago, they were overthrown in the Usurpation. From the Solar dead came the Deathlords, who made pacts with the ancient and unknowable Neverborn.

In the Second Age, the Shogunate ruled all Creation. Seven hundred and sixty-eight years ago, the Shogunate fell to the twin cataclysms of the disease known as the Great Contagion and the Great Crusade of the Fair Folk, both orchestrated by the Deathlords.

Creation was only saved by the emergence of the Scarlet Empress, and the establishment of the Dragon-Blooded Realm in the wake of these latest apocalypses.

Four years ago, the Empress disappeared.

Now is the Time of Tumult, as the Solar Exalted return to Creation. On their heels come the Abyssal Exalted, the Deathknights, Chosen of Death and the Neverborn.

But none of that matters.

Why, you ask? Because you're dead. Well, dying to be exact. But at this point the difference doesn't really matter.

I guess that's it for your time here then? Just another corpse in a random ditch. Just one of many mortals to go before their time in this age of sorrows.

But... what if this didn't have to be the end? What if you could get another chance?

Would you sacrifice your name? To forever forsake what you were known by in your days amongst your living kin? A small sacrifice to make, as nothing but a label is lost.

Would you cast aside your mortal destiny? Whatever future you might have attained means nothing now at the point of death, so why cling to it?

Would you embrace death as its immortal champion? Would you devote yourself to plunging Creation into the Underworld and the Underworld ultimately into the Abyss?

Would you?

Then rise, Deathknight, and draw your Last Breath.

Exalted: The Abyssals

The Black Exaltation:

As one of the Abyssal Exalted, you will naturally be hardier than any mortal man. Healing in days what mortals would in weeks, able to staunch bleeding wounds with mere will, able to resist sanity-rending mental attacks, utterly immune to the negative effects of non-magical diseases or infections (although they can become carriers), and while other Exalted may have their lives extended to a greater or lesser degree, the Chosen of the Neverborn can live forever, if they are not slain. The cold stasis of death forever traps their bodies at the age of Exaltation, making deathknights the only "immortal" type of Exalted.

But that is not what truly separates you from mere Mortals. The Exaltation bonded to your soul allows you to wield essence. As an energy, Essence is life, breath, power, the essential, all-pervading animating energy of Creation. Though as an Abyssal, you shall instead draw upon the cold and sterile Essence of the Underworld, necrotic instead of living.

Still, for you it is the size of your spirit and the magical power of your soul. Should you draw upon too much of it, you will first manifest the bleeding mark of your Caste upon your brow and then your aura shall bloom into a terrible, dark majesty. When an Abyssal's aura turns fully totemic, any mortal who sees it feels both the terror and the lure of the Void. Merely mortal minds can break when subjected to such horror.

With essence, you fuel your Charms. Each is a technique for channeling Essence through the body or mind to enhance yourself to superhuman levels. As one of the Abyssal Exalted, you wield dark mirrors of Solar might and charms to invoke oblivion and the Deathlords, with which you elevate your skills to new and terrifying heights. You may wield these dread powers, create new ones within the capabilities of Abyssal charms, even learn supernatural martial arts or mighty necromancy.

Yet the Black Exaltation of the Abyss carries cost and drawbacks as well.

Firstly, deathknights must forgo their mortal names and answer only to the titles granted by the Deathlords or Neverborn. Most mortals find this cost easy to bear. No one who knew the mortals' old names forgets them or suffers ill effects from using them. The names that deathknights give up are just labels that no longer pertain to them.

Second, deathknights must give up their mortal destinies from the Loom of Fate. Most deathknights also make this sacrifice gladly, since whatever futures they might have attained mean nothing now at the point of death. Their strand in the Loom of Fate corrodes and snaps, and the murky darkness of the Underworld forever clouds the reading of their fate.

The final cost, however, is what gives most Abyssals pause, and what explains the other two. That price is nothing less than the mortal's freedom. To receive the Black Exaltation, the mortal must vow to serve the goals of the dead yet undying Neverborn. That is, they must devote their newly given power to the cause of plunging Creation into the Underworld and the Underworld ultimately into the Abyss. To do otherwise invites the wrath of the Neverborn in the form of Resonance and the Abyssal's dark fate.

Caste:

Each of the Abyssal Exalted belongs to a certain caste, determining the role they will take on as a deathknight and the primary focus of their skills. Should you desire memories of this world from before your Exaltation, they will likely match your caste.

The Dusk Caste

Known as the Forsaken and the Children of Ash. They are the unsurpassed warriors and military commanders. The Neverborn expect their Children of Ash to lead the forces of the dead into Creation through the shadowlands and crush the armies of the living. They will kill the world. If the Deathlords fail in their own duties, the Forsaken will overthrow them and cast them into Oblivion. In the fullness of time, when only the Abyssal Exalted remain, the warriors of the Dusk Caste must carry out the harvest of their Exalted peers' souls, culminating in their own self-sacrifice as they cast themselves into the all-consuming Void.

The Midnight Caste

Known as the Blasphemous and the Children of Silence. They are the holy spiritualists of the Abyss. The Neverborn expect their scions of Resplendent Darkness to prepare every sentient soul for its final dissolution in the Void. They preach the philosophy of the Abyss to the living and the dead, spreading its five Understandings far and wide. If the Deathlords fall short of their obligations, the deathknights of the Midnight Caste must either remind them or strive to punish them for it. At the end of all, when none but the Abyssal Exalted remain and the warriors of the Dusk Caste raise their blades, the voices of the Midnight Caste must assure every heart that the impending sacrifice is the only righteous course. To prove this, they must become the first to offer themselves to the slaughter.

The Daybreak Caste

Known as the Unclean and the Children of Bone. They are the savants of the Underworld's forbidden secrets. The Neverborn expect these Shadows of the Abyss to devote their Essence-empowered intellect to finding new techniques of destruction. They must wreck the Calendar of Setesh that gives time and change to the Underworld. They must design weapons powerful enough to destroy even the Deathlords when their hour comes around at last. Come the end of days, when none but the Abyssal Exalted remain, the Daybreak Caste will convert the broken Games of Divinity into the mechanism that shatters the last of the Underworld and feeds it into the Abyss. Only when that last great work is done can they surrender to the might of the Dusk Caste

The Day Caste

Known as the Wretched and the Children of Blood. They are Oblivion's sappers and assassins. The Neverborn expect their Children of Blood to weaken and sicken Creation before the armies of the dead march, ensuring Oblivion's conquest before the first overt blow is struck. When the Midnight Caste cannot shout down the fools who spread false hope, the Day Caste must silence those optimistic voices. When the Celestial or Terrestrial Exalted stand up to unbalance the conflict between the living and the dead, the Day Caste level the playing field again. If necessary, the Day Caste must harry the complacent Deathlords from their places of power, severing the bonds that allow those ancient ghosts to cling to their

existences. At the end of time, when only the Abyssal Exalted remain, their final duty will be to make sure that no deathknight defies Oblivion at the last minute. One must remain, hidden and vigilant, until even the last of the Dusk Caste gives himself to the Void. Then that one will follow, and all will be at peace.

The Moonshadow Caste

Known as the Deceivers and the Children of Dust. They are manipulators working the will of the Neverborn. The Neverborn expect their Children of Dust to bind all the dead together toward a single unity of purpose. Having done so, they make sure that when any one party thus bound commits himself to Oblivion, all parties find themselves obligated to do likewise. If the Deathlords truly break faith with the Neverborn, Moonshadow deathknights will expose them and call for the wayward ghosts' swift punishment. When nothing else is left but the Abyssal Exalted, the Moonshadows must make the Dusk Caste swear to raise up arms against each other and take the final Day Caste's oath to submit to Oblivion when his vigil ends.

Allegiance:

In this world, whom you serve is almost as important as who you are, as the loyalties of the Abyssal Exalted are divided amongst the Deathlords. Most deathknights are hand-picked for Exaltation at the moment of death, and you may decide which one approached you.

The Bishop of the Chalcedony Thurible

Through the dark evangelism of this devoted servant of the Neverborn, countless ancestor cults and death worshippers have sprung up. Lies, brainwashing, and more are his tools as he seeks to spread his dark theology and persuade all of Creation's mortals to march into the Void and experience the joy of nothingness.

The Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Water

Known also as the Silver Prince, the Bodhisattva openly rules the island nation of Skullstone. There amongst the Western isles, he seeks to convince the human race into embracing death as an alternative lifestyle. His people see death not as an end, but as a gateway to new life, for the aristocracy of Skullstone is an aristocracy of ghosts.

The Dowager of the Irreverent Vulgate in Unrent Veils

Arguably the greatest murderer Creation has ever seen, the Dowager is the one responsible for the creation of the Great Contagion. That great plague threatened to slay all that lives and Creation itself along with it. In the end, only a tenth of Creation survived. Since that time, the Dowager has meditated on the Well of Udr, seeking an occult way to annihilate Creation.

Eye and Seven Despairs

Despite eternally flitting between mad obsessions and the inexperience born from his early demise, Eye and Seven Despair may nevertheless be the the most prodigious of the Deathlords and one of the first to swear allegiance to the Neverborn. Currently, he is distracted by the tormenting of the Abyssal subjects responsible for his own faked death.

The First and Forsaken Lion

Of all the Deathlords, it is the Lion who most emphasizes military might. Forever encased in his armor as a punishment for disobedience, he has focussed on building up his might beyond any other. The scale of his armies dwarves any in the Underworld, while his great fortress spans the entire mountain range known as the Thousand and eclipses nations.

The Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears

Seen by the other Deathlords as a whore and a dilettante, inconsequential as she wallows in carnal delights. Yet this is all a carefully crafted illusion. When she bore a different name and served the Unconquered Sun, she ventured into the Labyrinth before any of the other future Deathlords even knew what it was. She knew secret spells and words of power and the price of every man's soul... and the wise should fear she remembers these things still.

The Mask of Winters

When the people of Creation think of the threat of the deathlords, foremost amongst their worries is the Conqueror of Thorns. The fall of the city announced his entrance of the world stage. He now rules this former Realm puppet-state turned shadowland from his osseous castle, set between the slumped shoulders of the great undead giant known as Juggernaut.

The Princess Magnificent with Lips of Coral and Robes of Black Feathers

The only Deathlord to meet any kind of significant defeat in Creation, brought low by metaphysical trickery rather than brute force. Three mighty deities drove her away with a tale of undoing. Upon her return to the Underworld, she was punished for her presumption in entering Creation and making the existence of the Deathlords known to the living. For this, she was bound to serve the First and Forsaken Lion, whom she has despised ever since.

The Walker in Darkness

Youngest of the Deathlords, the Walker emerged in the Underworld as a virtual amnesiac. Nephwracks found him and led him to the Labyrinth, where the Neverborn easily seduced him to their cause. Seeing himself as a true Neverborn loyalist, he has several plans for the annihilation of life and pursues them with admirable skill. He does, however, tend to spread his efforts too widely and quickly abandons plots in favor of his latest dire inspiration.

Independent

Abyssals have been abroad in Creation and the Underworld for five years. Some of them have already broken faith with the Deathlords, and sometimes these wayward deathknights perished without a Monstrance for their Exaltation to return to. Such a loose Exaltation hurries across Creation on a dogleg course, attempting to act according to its original nature, yet hampered by the modifications the Deathlords have inflicted upon it. By night it seeks a host, a hero, a character worthy of Solar Exaltation... but only at death's doorway may it bestow its dark blessing.

An Abyssal who draws the Last Breath courtesy of a free Exaltation does so without any guidance. The Deathlords are unable to sense their Exaltation; the Neverborn may howl silently in their tombs, but if they can hear them at all, it's only as whispers at the back of their mind, or in their dreams. They know only that they can feel the living Essence of the world reject them, that they sense the Essence of death and craves its trappings.

Location:

Creation is a world of great scope, and the Underworld is an equally large reflection of it. Here you may roll to see where to begin your quest or choose freely for a small fee of 50 cp.

1. Chiaroscuro

A vast shattered metropolis, rising from the ruins of First Age glory. Broken and depopulated by the Usurpation and Contagion, Chiaroscuro was a haunted, war-torn ruin until the Delzahn took the city and sealed its many shadowlands with lines of salt.

2. Thorns, the Confederation of Rivers

This fallen city was one of Creation's greatest metropolises a mere decade ago. Now a black miasma boils up around the city, its panorama dominated by the vast corpse-behemoth that lays beside it. Many of Thorns's people died or fled when the Deathlord conquered the city four years ago. But over ten thousand remain to share their city with the dead.

3. The City of Onyx

The obsidian towers of Onyx, on the isle of Darkmist in the Skullstone Archipelago, gleam dully in the weak shadowland sun. Undead labor has made the city rich in pearls, coral, black jade and other undersea riches, including the cargoes of centuries of shipwrecks.

4. The City of Dead Flowers

The former capital of An-Teng, destroyed long ago. Yet the broken buildings still stand. Stagnant, brackish water still fills the canals. And ghosts still haunt it. Shrines to the Pale Mistress ring the ruined city, in hopes that she will prevent its evil from spreading.

5. Marama's Fell

One of the largest shadowlands in Creation, the Bishop and the Lover constantly vie over who will rule Marama's Fell. Yet the Fell also has a large population of exceptionally powerful ghosts who have no intention of bowing to any Deathlord.

6. Sijan

The oldest city of the Underworld, existing even before Stygia, the city of Sijan devoted itself to the honoring of dead before the Underworld even took shape. Home of the ancient and mighty Mortician's Order that serves the East as its foremost funerists.

7. Stygia

The greatest city of the dead, built at the very center of the Underworld to serve as a capstone sealing away the horrors of the Labyrinth. It stands as a testament to humanity's ability to rise beyond its own mortality and craft something lasting, even in death. Or at least, it was thus until the coming of the Deathlords. Where Stygia once held the fury of the Neverborn at bay, it now serves as their jewel-encrusted throne.

8. Nowhere

By the favor of the unknowable Neverborn, you may choose any of the above locations to appear at or even any other place that exists, from the Labyrinth to Yu-Shan and further.

Perks:

But of course, there's a reason you were chosen as one of Death's Champions. A reason that shall be evident in what you purchase here...

Infinite Graves Born of Fingers White and Red [100, free Dusk]

All of the Abyssal Exalted are meant to slay the world itself, to plunge Creation wholly into the Underworld and see the Underworld itself sucked down into the Abyss. But of all the Deathknights, it is those of the Dusk Caste who do so most directly. Whether they be deadly warriors or murderous warlords, each of them is a killer of surpassing skill.

You possess that same lethal talent, your skill at arms allowing you to be the martial backbone of whatever circle you join, able to pick up any weapon you please and use it with both elegant skill and merciless lethality. Perhaps it is a gory sort of utility, but quite a lot of problems can be solved with murder, because the simple fact is that there is always someone who needs killing.

Caged Beast Struggles Within Chains [200, discount Dusk]

When an Abyssal's aura blooms into the terrible, dark majesty of their full totemic manifestation, any mortal who sees it feels both the terror and the lure of the Void. Merely mortal minds can break when subjected to such horror. Many of them faint, run away, grovel in worship, while an unlucky few suffer much worse fates.

But it is the Peacebringers who embody the terror of the Void more than any of their fellows, able to envelop themselves in an aura of dread such that their enemies fear even to look at them. Of course, you need neither anima nor aura, for intimidation is so intertwined with you that a mere glance could send a man running in panic and a threatening word is dreaded enough to rout an army. Your skill at scare tactics and spreading terror amongst your victims is supreme, demoralizing and horrifying your opponents with casual ease.

Ravenous Fang and Gluttonous Talon [400, discount Dusk]

While the Abyssal Exalted are still alive, they do not respire the living energy of Creation as most things do. Their Exaltations absorb the Essence that moves in the Underworld, flowing inward from the far fringes to swirl and disappear into the Mouth of the Void. In Creation, and other living realms, the Essence moves all wrong.

The Chosen of Death can, however, work around this limitation. Instead of respiring the sickening Essence of Creation, they may feed on their victim's very life to recuperate lost motes. Most Abyssals do so by extending their teeth into sharp fangs with which to rend motes from the flesh and blood of sentient beings, but you have unlocked deeper secrets, allowing you to drain the lifeforce from the living with but a touch or an unarmed strike.

Furthermore, while blades of Soulsteel are known to drain the essence from those they strike, you have gained the curious ability to extend this to any weapon you wield and may sup upon these drained motes as well.

Conquest of Life [600, discount Dusk]

The Neverborn expect their Children of Ash to lead the forces of the dead into Creation through the shadowlands and crush the armies of the living. They will be the ones to kill the world. But first, they will conquer it. Yours is a genius of warfare, the mind of a general and

the authority of commander. Through your military skill, the lands of the living may fall one by one. With each battle and each conquest of land, you may create a shadowland to cover these, spreading and strengthening the Underworld's grip on the land of the living. You may even turn and take the lands of the dead for yourself, creating shadowlands there as beachheads into the living realm.

And as you conquer, you may press the living into service in your legions, for beneath your banner the living and the dead march together as a single, cohesive army. Mortal, ghost, and zombie alike, each will march and fight together like a well-oiled machine on your command. Even the mindless followers and minion among them, those skeletons, zombies, and necromantic warmachines of the reanimated dead will follow your orders with such competence that it almost seems as if they could actually think for themselves.

Corpse Laughing in the Face of Jackals [100, free Midnight]

The Blasphemous are the Deathknights who spread the gospel of death and Oblivion, preaching the philosophy of the Abyss to the living and the dead, spreading its five Understandings far and wide. But, before that, it is of foremost importance that Those Who Speak Blasphemous Truths be sturdy in body and mind so as to carry out their unholy mission in full.

They, and now you, are those amongst the Deathknights who are hardiest, those who survive again and again all those things that would kill a lesser man. Those possessed of unholy zeal, in themselves or their broken faith, such that no argument or setback would dissuade them from their path. Those who can survive in any environment they should find themselves in, with nothing but their two hands. All the better for you to serve as a righteous martyr, enduring the burden of life to guide everyone else into death.

The Funereal Order of Righteous Morticians and Embalmers [200, discount Midnight]

When the Primordial War began, the town of Sijan already devoted itself to interring and honoring the dead. Even before the Underworld existed, people wanted to show respect to the dead, and a funeral gave them a means to do so. The annals of Heaven say that as each Primordial fell, the Sijanese performed funeral rites specially designed for each component soul, urging the dead cosmogon to rest in peace. The annals of Heaven do not describe these rites, however, by express command of the Maiden of Endings. If any records survive, no one knows except the most senior members of the Morticians' Order.

Before the Lawgivers of the Old Realm even thought of exploring it, the Morticians' Order had already contacted the Underworld and knew how to house and appease the dead. Sijan, therefore, rather than Stygia, claims the honor of the first city of the Underworld. The East holds hundreds of tribes and nations, with at least a thousand different ways of celebrating, venerating or mourning a loved one's passing, and almost as many for the death of an enemy. The professional funerists of Sijan serve them all. Sijan's jet-black funeral galleys ply the rivers of the Scavenger Lands unmolested by brigand, pirate or robber baron. The silver bracers of the Morticians' Order are a common sight in most cities.

Members of the Morticians' Order spend their entire lives serving the dead and training for their postmortem careers. But these days, it sometimes occurs that their best and brightest join the ranks of the Abyssal Exalted instead of their colleagues in the Underworld. As one of the foremost experts of the Morticians' Order, you have all the knowledge and skill you need

for practically all the funereal rites in Creation, being a master of ceremony and ritual, or embalming and tomb-design, and many more things besides. Such mastery could even be used to create new burial rites, so as to appease the dead and ghosts that don't fall under the existing ceremonies. And of course, you are also a trained exorcist, with the skills to deal with more troublesome ghosts.

Unhallowed Messiahs Raven-Black Tongue [400, discount Midnight]

As the holy spiritualists of the Abyss, the Scions of Resplendent Darkness are expected to spread their dark brand of piety in Creation as well as in the Underworld. They teach mortals the proper respect for and veneration of the dead, and help the living to accept the simple fact that they too must die someday. Once the living finally come to accept that, they'll realize that there's no point putting off until tomorrow what could just as well come today. While any of them in Creation could have death cults grow like tumors around them, you have a particular talent for converting people and awakening fanatic devotion. In your wake, cults of death or people's ancestors pop up with disturbing regularity, merely through a few words germinating into an unholy ideal or an example set and followed by the living. With your surpassingly eloquent speeches and preaching, even the most devout might come to doubt their faith in the face of your dark theology. Needless to say, you will find it easy to provide your circle with spies, assassins, essence, and a haven in the living lands.

Voice of the Void [600, discount Midnight]

Every Abyssal bears the stain of the Neverborn upon her soul and Essence. For some, this connection stays as distant and impersonal as the relationship between the Solar Exalted and the Unconquered Sun. Others are less fortunate. The Neverborn are not kind gods, but unknowable horrors who hate their Exalted only marginally less than they hate their enemies. Abyssals particularly blessed, or cursed, with the direct attention of their chthonic masters experience an endless torrent of blasphemies that gnaw away their sanity. You are blessed with a particular connection to the Whispers of Oblivion, allowing you to consciously tap into this connection without fear for your sanity. And yet, your attunement to the dreams of the Neverborn is agonizingly clear, each vision revealing subtle contextual details and tangentially related facts you might never have thought to consider, plus unambiguous awareness of the Neverborn's wishes related to the topic. The Whispers can substitute for skill in any endeavor, allow you to glean a wealth of information from the minds of the Neverborn, and serve as a guide to where the Neverborn believe your actions could further their goals.

Moreover, you will find that insane ghosts and spectres will heed your words, your terrible connection to their ultimate masters evident through their madness, and that maddened death cults will treat you with equally fervent respect and devotion. Perhaps more usefully, you may speak in the tongues of the Neverborn themselves, echoing the Whispers of Oblivion with your own voice to drive both ghosts and mortals to insanity and bless them with the attention of your chthonic masters. Such newly-deranged spectres and mortals will view you as the living incarnation and prophet of the will of the Neverborn, serving with eager and suicidal fanaticism.

Razor Wit Cutting through Blissful Ignorance [100, free Daybreak]

Deathknights of the Daybreak Caste are ingenious without a doubt, seeking absolute knowledge for themselves even as they twist that knowledge to send Creation toward a dark age of savage ignorance. No secret can hide from their inquisitive minds; no dark miracle evades their clutching grasp. Pitiless clarity is their tainted gift to the world, helping those blinded by passion to see the coldly calculated truths that advance some greater design. They are the learned and the inquisitors, the Unclean who see the Black Exaltation as the ultimate means to gather knowledge and practice their crafts until time itself ends. Few concern themselves with the morality of the knowledge they seek. Yours is such a genius, a mind as sharp as a Soulsteel blade and as learned as any library. In your hunger for knowledge, unraveling mysteries in your research and plundering knowledge for yourself comes as second nature.

Hammer Upon the Wailing Muse [200, discount Daybreak]

Much of the Underworld's economy rests on the production of soulsteel, one of the magical materials, which can only be produced by combining shavings from the walls of the Mouth of Oblivion with the melted corpus of a ghost. Forging soulsteel is difficult for even the best smiths. Soulforging is the process by which the souls of the dead are melted down and then shaped into useful items or are used to produce soulsteel.

First, the corpus of a ghost is carefully heated with soulfire crystals so that it can be reduced to a viscous state without damaging its integrity. Once liquified, the corpus can be smelted with other materials and then worked into any shape appropriate to conventional metalworking. Soulforged items normally have the consistency of mortal steel. However, if the liquified corpus is smelted with molten ore taken from the Labyrinth, the result is soulsteel, one of the magical materials... and the only one that screams when struck with the smith's hammer.

Proper soulforging is a highly specialized art that requires rarified equipment, access to Labyrinthine materials and a willingness on the part of the soulsmith to condemn another ghost to eternal torment. Understandably, soulforging is a heavily regulated art. But one you have mastered to extent rivaled by only a scant few amongst the dead, able to forge souls into proper soulsteel, combine soulforging with jadecrafting to forge sophisticated artifacts, and having gleaned the secrets of creating Oblivion's panoply, jealously guarded by the Deathlords. Though you would need to delve deep into necromancy to put the latter into actual practise.

Death Begets Pain Begets Creation [400, discount Daybreak]

The Essence of the Neverborn can harness the miracle of death to reactivate once-living organs with a hungry animation. A bloodless heart beats. A disembodied hand grasps and claws. Neglected corpses rise from their graves, craving the flesh of the living. Such reanimated creations are not restricted to the narrow medical patterns of life. A living being with no heart in her chest falls limp and useless, but the same creature reanimated can move and fight and kill. So made independent from the biological weaknesses of life, undead are not restricted to living or even organic parts. An iron ribcage is stronger than a bone one. In these violent times, swords are often more useful than hands to wield them.

From this understanding comes the field of building and maintaining creatures, built of dead and inorganic parts, the art and science called necrotech. Craftsmen who study and perfect

necrotech are known as necrosurgeons. Knowledge lies at the heart of necrotech. Necrosurgeons must learn through observation and experimentation. They make progress through scientific investigation and deduction. Yet necrotech is also the highest of arts. When mortals run in panic from the spiked monstrosity with a hundred screaming faces, they know the glory of the Void. For this reason, most necrosurgeons take great pride in the hideous beauty of their creations.

As an expert necrosurgeon, you have a firm grasp of the science of necrotech, and the mundane skills in medicine and crafting that underlie it. You may create meat puppets and bonestriders, yoroi ogres and exoskeletons of bone and metal, and you could just as easily practise more standard medicine or forge weaponry. But you have a possibly even greater mastery of necrotech as an art, allowing you to create things of macabre beauty and exquisite hideousness. Delicate constructs of bone-clockwork, beautiful youths perfectly preserved and turned into bladed weapon-champions, or the horrific mother of suffering. Whether you wish to evoke beauty or horror, you have the skills to do both. And the aptitude to apply this slant of the gothic and the horrific to all your other creations besides.

Brilliance of Obsidian [600, discount Daybreak]

Necromancy, that blackest of arts, which the Abyssals and Deathlords alone can master at the highest, or lowest, circle of Void. While the Ghost-Bloods are perhaps the most common necromancers, they could never reach the depths of power the Abyssals may aspire to. The deathly power a master necromancer wields in Creation inspires fear enough, but it pales in comparison to their power over the Underworld and the spirits of the dead. Some of the deathlords fear that the enlightenment of the Void would bring knowledge enough for the Abyssal Exalted to free themselves from bondage, and so they hesitate to teach Void Circle Necromancy. Instead they prefer to dole out necromantic teaching in small pieces, so they can monitor their underlings' progress and test their continued loyalty.

Taking on the mantle of a master necromancer of the Void circle, you will be able to show Creation and the Underworld alike Oblivion's grandeur. As the fifteenth person to unlock the deepest mysteries of the Void Circle, only the Deathlords themselves outstrip you in skill and depths of knowledge in the field of necromancy. Even then, you will likely know a few spells they do not, as each has invented a few they never shared with others. With these dark miracles, other necromancers might be able to animate the dead, bind ghosts into servitude, and chain the souls of the living. But you could use it to animate the greatest of necrotech siege engines, summon and bind the ghost-behemoths known as hekatonkhires, curse entire bloodlines to serve eternally in death, free your soul from your body to wander as a ghost temporarily, slay your enemies a thousand different ways, and weave even stranger spells such as those to communicate and teleport through mirrors.

And gaining more than simply vast knowledge and talent in this dark art, you can substitute the elements of Creation in any spells, rituals or working of sorcery you know with their Underworld counterparts: Air is replaced by Ash, Wood is replaced by Bone, Fire is replaced by Pyre Flame (The green-hued flames of the Underworld, which are like liquid fire and burning acid), Water is replaced by Blood, and Earth is replaced by Void. This substitution allows the magic to bypass the traditional resistances for their counterparts, as well as being gratuitously effective when wielded against the living.

Annihilation of Existence Compleat [100, free Day]

They Who Dwell Among the Wretched work alone as often as they work with their fellow deathknights, hunting their mortal prey in Creation at the behest of their Deathlord and Neverborn masters. Operating alone allows them use their full mobility and stealth without the chance of clumsier peers blowing their cover. Even when they work with other deathknights, the Children of Blood sometimes vanish without warning to take care of some problem, such as assassinating a pursuing monk or eliminating all the sentries in a fortress. Whether they work as spies, enforcers, saboteurs, or assassins in the Underworld and abroad in Creation, one thing remains constant. They amongst the deathknights are the ones who have perfected quick and covert action. And now you too will share in their swift lethality and cat-like stealth, your passage noiseless and unnoticed.

Grinning Behind A Mask Of Skin And Lies [200, discount Day]

The greatest weapon the members of the Day Caste can wield is subtlety. They nurture hidden hatreds, biding their time for the right moment to strike rather than spoiling their vengeance with rash and brutish force. Joining the ranks of those most subtle, you gain the patience and guile to hide your motives from even your fellow servants of Oblivion. Even if you stay where your erstwhile allies can see you, they'll have quite a bit of trouble figuring out you have another agenda (or twelve) hidden behind your wan smiles or demure façades. But the Daywalkers also walk easily among the living, unnoticed until they kill. As they spend more time among the living than many other Abyssals do, they learn how to pass themselves off as alive, a talent you've picked up as well. If you wish, you may look completely ordinary to observers, aside perhaps skin a little paler than the norm.

Disfigured Fate Locked in Bloodshot Pupils [400, discount Day]

Serving as the fearsome, mysterious enforcers of their masters' malignant will, it is not enough for the Daywalkers to simply stay out of sight and keep tabs on the activities of their masters' rivals. They are assassins and saboteurs, the precise scalpel of the Neverborn to cut away those hopeful voices the Midnight Caste fail to shout down, to assassinate in their own tents those optimistic generals that would oppose the Dusk Caste. And, if necessary, the Day Caste will be the ones to harry the complacent Deathlords from their places of power, severing the bonds that allow those ancient ghosts to cling to their existences. But to do so, they must first identify the flaws in that which they would tear down. A skill you are quite well-versed in, able to recognize all the weaknesses of your targets and how best to take advantage of them. Whether the flaws in your enemies' defenses, the linchpins of command keeping a legion ordered, or even the personal vices and flaws of your ghostly Liege, you will see them all. And with this knowledge and understanding of their weakness, you will know how to bring your targets ruin and death.

Understanding of Blood [600, discount Day]

Of the philosophy of the Abyss, the Day Caste resonates most with the Understanding of Blood. It states: *Mortals propel the downfall of Creation*. This Understanding is less a claim of superiority over the living and more a call to arms for the Abyssal Exalted. The downfall to which it refers is not the triumph of the Abyss, but the collapse of solid reality into formless Wyld. Sentient mortals, more than any other life form, inject chaos into the Primordials' Creation, and the Neverborn abhor that potential for chaos and the Wyld's return. Better,

then, that mortals die and prevent that possibility. Day Caste deathknights often accept the fundamental truth of the Understanding by observing the chaos of the living world firsthand as their masters' emissaries and spies.

As such, it falls to the champions of the dead to bring order to the living world, to stifle the chaos of living mortals. You are a master of scheming and conspiracy, of manipulating situations such that the outcomes you prefer will arise. Setting up plans that take place over centuries would be just as easy to you as those that take mere days, and you could run circles around your enemies' best efforts to outwit you with casual ease. What is more, your plans have the momentum of inevitability behind them. Fully immune to failing through chance or accident, it would take a concerted effort of those outside your plans to inject chaos and disrupt your schemes at all. More likely than not, your plot will simply march on without interruption.

Raiment of Death's Trappings [100, free Moonshadow]

To the Abyssals, the living essence of Creation is effervescent and cloying at the same time, making their skin crawl. Direct sunlight compounds this nauseating discomfort. To overcome these annoyances, most deathknights adopt the trappings of the dead and the Underworld when they venture into Creation.

They wear funeral shrouds and adorn themselves with skulls and bones, whether actual articles of bone or skeletal images in their clothing and jewelry. When they travel as heralds for their Deathlords, they hire a train of mourners to follow and wail their misery. They dress all in black or all in white. They sleep in coffins. They wear leather plague masks with cruel beaks and staring crystal eyes. They cool themselves with folding fans made of bone and human skin. Any affectation or adornment that would remind an onlooker of death, the grave, the Great Contagion or the Abyss itself suffices. Such dreadful trappings help an Abyssal to center themselves and align his Essence in a more comfortable way. They do not allow him to respire Essence in Creation, but they do eliminate the annoying discomfort that being in Creation inflicts on him.

Of course, adorning themselves with such paraphernalia of death can come across as trying a bit too hard for some deathknights. However, this is unacceptable for the Moonshadow Caste, as they must be the envoys and representatives of the Deathlords and the Neverborn themselves. Accordingly, you have been blessed with a wraithly sense of style and morbid presentation. Knowing exactly how to wear your funereal outfits, you will be a vision in black, looking absolutely amazing when adorned with bone, funerary shroud, and other trappings. But more than owning merely the gothic look, this will also aid you in adopting a properly dark demeanor and yet still be taken serious, and even the elaborate titles of the Abyssal Exalted will be given the trepidation and weight in the minds of onlookers they deserve, no matter how long-winded or pretentious they might be.

Weaver of Cerements and Despair [200, discount Moonshadow]

When the Children of Dust are not busy leading their circles or managing the day-to-day operations of the Deathlords' empires, they frequently become poisoned ambassadors to the living and the dead. As agents in Creation, these Deceivers draw towns, tribes, nations and empires into chaos, allowing the other members of their circle to work unmolested. When the living can be convinced, coerced or tricked into serving the needs of the dead, the Winds of

the Abyss make all the necessary arrangements. In the Underworld, the deathknights of the Moonshadow Caste serve many of the same purposes. They broker agreements between warring ghost factions or kingdoms, all in the name of unifying the dead beneath the Deathlords. With them also lies the responsibility of resolving conflicts between Deathlords, even if all they actually do is observe the formalities and carry out the rituals of tradition while the Deathlords negotiate their grievances in person.

Having become an expert diplomat, you can now fulfill this role too. Whether speaking to the living or the dead, you know how to broker agreements, how to convince people, and how to trick them into going along with your wishes. You could spark wars with just only a seemingly innocent conversation at the court of the ghostly king, or broker peace between two warring nations by acting as a intermediary between them.

Serpentine Labyrinth Strider [400, discount Moonshadow]

For the Winds of the Abyss to effectively serve as diplomats and envoy, they must travel with haste. An envoy who only arrives after all decisions have been made and followed through upon might as well not have been sent at all. Luckily, you know the secret ways of the Underworld and the Labyrinth, as well as every shortcut through and between them. You know that you can reach Orak-Tau by digging down ten feet below a tree from which an innocent man has been lynched, and that the House of Succulent Tears can be reached through the spilled blood of a prostitute murdered by her handler. You can locate any existing gateway between your current realm of existence and any underworld, spiritual plane, or afterlife, as well as know the methods to create temporary gates to them, if such gates are possible to make. Just make sure you don't accidentally wander into Lethe. Furthermore, you're never completely lost, able to naturally determine your orientation relative to the five Poles. In addition to always knowing your facing and acting as a living compass, once in the Underworld, you can flawlessly navigate the treacherous landscape and travel vast distances far quicker than one should be able to.

Lawgiver of Death [600, discount Moonshadow]

The Children of Dust have a penchant for leadership and treachery. They often lead their circles, possessing the guile to hold a circle together in spite of rivalry or dislike. In Creation this tendency to leadership is often stifled by their Dark Fate. As the burden of Resonance makes direct control extremely difficult, these deathknights produce social change through proxies, conspiracy, terrorism or other indirect means. But it is in the Underworld itself that their true potential for leadership shines through, for it is there that they may act with the full authority of the murdered architects of the universe.

Necromancers and Deathlords might rule the dead through fear and spells of binding, but you have no need to force obedience through such methods. The dead know their rightful ruler when they look upon you, and most shall be eager to follow your commands and swear themselves to your service. While the mindless, reanimated dead will not gain the faculties to swear themselves into service, you may still command them as you will and they shall never raise their rotted claws against you. Even those ghost and mindless undead bound through necromancy refuse to act against you or disobey your orders. Just, don't expect such mighty rulers as the Deathlords to prostrate themselves.

But a wise king need more than obedience, and you too have gained the virtues a good ruler needs. Being an old hand at matters of court and government, at the labors of bureaucracy

and lawmaking, and at that most important of talents... delegation. Knowing whom to trust with which aspects of your realm, and whose counsel you can trust to be wise.

The Shining Path [400, discount The Bishop]

The cult of the Bishop follows a doctrine of escape from the cycle, the idea of letting go to escape the suffering of existence. His cults lie to people, tricking them into leaping into Oblivion. They argue that life is pain and suffering before dying, only to reincarnate into new beings who lived lives equally full of pain and suffering. They say the comforting embrace of Oblivion will erase all pain, end all unhappiness, scourge all regret. Sins will no longer exist, for there will be none alive to commit them. The rich man and the poor man will be as brothers, for there will be no wealth to hoard or covet. All will be at perfect, infinite peace. All will be one with Oblivion. All will be good.

And taking the core of his doctrine to heart, you may take a more proactive approach to enter all life into the Void, willingly or not. You may infuse your attacks with the all-consuming void, making it so that whatever you slay can never be brought back. Things wounded or broken by you can never be healed or mended. If you snapped a sword in half, not even a master artisan could put the sword back together from its pieces, for it is forever broken, it's wholeness consigned to the Void. You may consign the souls of your victims to Oblivion, never to leave a ghost. Only things too mighty to ever truly die are exempt from this, as they instead form tomb-bodies like those of the Neverborn, doomed forever to the agony of the dreaming dead.

The New Order Philosophy [400, discount The Bodhisattva]

The Bodhisattva has obtained wild success in fostering a successful campaign in the lands of the living, not through ritual or religious means, but through political persuasiveness and guile. In Skullstone, the dead walk side by side with the living. Liveried corpses in polished metal masks, their garments anointed with scented oils, fetch and carry for the wealthy, while even a poor shopkeeper or family matriarch commands a skeleton or two. Out in the countryside, fisherfolk walk with their ancestors across black beaches, the latter leaving no footprints in the sand. Those who pass through the gateway of death here may return as ghostly aristocrats, should the Black Judges deem them worthy to return as spectral nobles and courtiers. Those who lack the proper spirit rise only as mindless walking dead. Such soulless creatures provide the labor that has made the lords of Onyx impossibly wealthy. So too may you inspire in the living and the dead a sense of harmony, a new order that does not vilify death, and embraces it instead. And in realms where your new order holds sway, you may cause the dead to rise, as reanimated as soulless and obedient to the living, or returning as regal and aristocratic ghosts, as you deem fit. The living will incorporate these dead into their society, as obedient servants or aristocratic rulers with an ease that may seem uncanny to those from outside their border. But for the people of the new order, is such coexistence not beneficial for all involved?

Admonitions of Anguish [400, discount The Dowager]

The Dowager keeps but few Abyssal Exalted. Given the limited scope of her aims, few are required. When she does bring one forth, it is always a child and always takes the title Shoat of the Mire. She never taints the Essence of preexisting Exalted, preferring to slay all beings

of such power on sight. This practice baffles the other Deathlords, who cannot imagine why the Dowager would waste Exaltation on a mere child. In return, she considers them fools for granting Exaltation with only the most cursory thought to what their servants would do with such a gift. To the Dowager, each Shoat of the Mire is an experiment and nothing more. Everything the Dowager does, both for and to her children, she has calculated to teach them the pointlessness of existence and hatred for the cruelty of life. Her experiments in child-rearing approach their end. Having applied all that she has learned, she intends to expand her stable of Abyssal Exalts to create a full circle, one whose members call her "Mother" and the Abhorrence of Life "Father".

Like her, you will know exactly how to shape the impressional mind of a child to suit your needs. For now, this knowledge is composed primarily of the Dowager's own experiments in how to create the perfect sociopathic child, afflicted with stockholm syndrome and manipulated into killing for their "Mother". But this experience and skill could just as easily be adapted to shape a child in any direction you would wish, even allowing far more charitable outcomes for a child. As a bonus, raising a child into a healthy state of mind is unlikely to require you make everything in their life (down to the wall mural, the furniture, the toys, and the cutlery) from the soulsteel forged of their tortured parents, grandparents, and generations of ancestors.

Prodigies Breathe Their Last Breath Young [400, discount Eye and Seven Despairs]

In life, Eye and Seven Despairs was a prodigy who died before his time. In death, he is just as much of a prodigy, yet also feckless and capricious. He is the youngest of the deathlords, despite being one of the first to accept the Neverborn's bargain. He lacked the centuries of experience and power his peers have over him. Yet now and then, he produces startling innovations in necromancy and necrosurgery, usually following the lead of some other Deathlord and then leaping ahead to make discoveries of his own. He may, indeed, be the most intelligent of the Deathlords... when he puts his mind to something. Achievements such as his Cold House and the zombifying disease known as Embrace of Decay stand as testaments to how much this Deathlord could do if he truly wished.

And in this, you shall take after him. Though you will hopefully maintain a less fickle mindset, you shall find yourself leaping ahead of your peers and coming up with innovations that may disquiet the Deathlords themselves. Already they see signs that the Abyssals can grow in power more quickly than they ever thought possible, and your insights and work will stand as a testament to that.

Extermination Writ Large [400, discount The Lion]

When the First and Forsaken Lion first revealed his power, by conquering Stygia in the aftermath of the Contagion, his rival Deathlords moved against him, revealing their power to the Underworld at large. Yet, the other Deathlords found that the army occupying Stygia dwarfed all their forces combined. His army, the Legion Sanguinary, is the largest military force in the Underworld, if not in all existence. The Legion is several times larger than the army of the Mask of Winters, the only other Deathlord who could seriously challenge the Lion in direct military combat, and even Juggernaut might be no match for its sheer scale. So too will you find that bending your talents to projects of mind-boggling scale is something you do easily and naturally, quickly allowing your plans to scale upwards and letting you crush your opponents through sheer weight of numbers and scale. You might raise an army

to dwarf all but the Legion Sanguinary in both Creation and the Underworld, construct an immense fortress to cover an entire mountain range in soulsteel ramparts and hollow-out caverns in but a scant few years of time, create gigantic war machines the likes of which the world has not seen since the heights of the First Age, or manage the affairs of a nation so massive that the living would disbelievingly call it a Direction in itself.

Indolent Masquerade [400, discount The Lover]

Most Deathlords view the Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears merely as a whore and a dilettante, though one not quite as incompetent as Eye and Seven Despairs. Now and then, she trifles at destroying a petty kingdom or a legion on the march. Her critics wonder whether she will ever do anything important to further the Neverborn's goals. Only the Bodhisattva does not share that view, for he remembers the Lover from their living days. Remembers her and *fears* her. Her flirtatious and vapid exterior conceals a superb command of magic and arcane science. She is second only to the Dowager in necromancy, and she follows close behind the Walker in Darkness and the First and Forsaken Lion in her application of magitech and necrotech. Even in those areas, however, the Lover favors misdirection.

Akin to her, you will be able to obscure your own talents and competence. You could be a masterful necromancer, a mastermind behind several plots to bring ruin to metropolises, and have spies in every one of your rivals' inner circles... yet as you keep your secrets close, those rivals will never think you more than a dilettante at best if you wish. Let alone your true enemies, should they even know of your existence. As long as you make a token effort to mislead your enemies and disguise your plots, they will rarely think to question your seeming incompetence or harmlessness.

Inevitable Sovereignty Approach [400, discount The Mask]

The Mask of Winters plays a dangerous game, attempting at once to dominate the mortal realm of Thorns and at the same time play the other Deathlords who might oppose his quick rise to power off of one another. Employing a combination of courtesy and audacity, the Mask of Winters wasted no time in establishing himself as a worthy power. Already, he commands an entire network of spies throughout the Threshold and several other areas, including the Realm itself. Very little occurs politically in the Threshold without the Mask of Winters hearing of it, and he has his agents in the courts of many other Deathlords as well. Like the Mask, you've got a firm grasp of politics and espionage. You'd manage to worm yourself in the political landscape and diplomacy of a region and force nations to deal with you as a respected equal, even when you are blatantly an undead overlord bent on conquest of the living world. And of course recruiting and placing spies all around, even at the heart of your rivals' courts, should prove easy enough to a spymaster as skilled as you.

Talons Reach Through Prison Bars [400, discount The Princess]

Once banished from Creation, the Princess Magnificent was punished by her Neverborn master. She was not stripped of her power, nor dispatched to Oblivion, nor damned to suffer unspeakable agonies for an age. Instead, He Who Holds in Thrall bound her to serve the First and Forsaken Lion, whom she has despised ever since. She is not permitted to enter the Labyrinth at all without the First and Forsaken Lion's accompaniment, nor can she enter Stygia. She has not been seen in Creation for centuries and is practically forgotten there.

Yet, this has not stopped her from pursuing her own objective of freedom. She has been the Lion's prisoner for centuries, yet she still spits on any and every attempt of his to win her loyalty, and constantly schemes to undo her superior and seize his assets for herself. She has been forbidden from having Abyssal servants of her own, yet this did not stop her from acquiring a monstrance and choosing a hidden servant either.

Like her, you will be able to undergo any torment and imprisonment without giving an inch in your personal convictions. Should you hate your captor, you will hate them just as much or more after a thousand years of imprisonment at their hands. And if there is even the remotest chance of affecting things outside of your captivity, the remotest chance of gaining your freedom... you will find a way to affect things outside, even if that way has to be through recruiting new servants to serve as your eyes and do your bidding.

Claiming the Vulgar Obloquy [400, discount The Walker]

The Walker built his citadel on the ruins of the House of Bitter Reflections, formerly the home of Princess Magnificent with Lips of Coral and Robes of Black Feathers. His principal shadowland, now called Walker's Realm by all who dwell nearby, is reasonably close to Great Forks. Unfortunately for the Walker in Darkness, his domain bears a curse. When the Princess Magnificent fled this territory, she resolved that if she couldn't own this shadowland, no other Deathlord would either. Mortals approaching the domain turn to dust and blow away on the wind, leaving their cold ghosts in its wake. Those who must breathe choke and die in the lifeless miasma within the domain. And though the Exalted enjoy some immunity, that only means they die more slowly. Even the Abyssal Exalted are affected by this killing might of the curse, which means that the Walker's servants cannot remain in his domain for any significant length of time.

Taking a page out of the Princess' book, you may lay such terrible curses of death that even other Deathlords would be unable to remove them. But, perhaps more importantly, you also know how to lift these curses. Your own may be lifted by but a word, but those of others may take more doing, research, and depending on their strength, may take an awful lot of preparations and highly specific circumstances, but eventually you will find a way to break any curse you might encounter.

Exquisite Ashen Visage or Wretched Abhorrent Mien [100]

The Black Exaltation leaves its mark on the flesh of the newly Exalted, and as an Abyssal's power and essence increases, so too does their appearance change. The deathknights tend toward the very extremes of appearance. Some are beautiful, some hideous, and all have a supernatural cast to their features. The beautiful might have ghostly white or gleaming ebony faces and long silken hair of shadowy black, liquid red or metallic silver. Those with hideous features might bear unearthly scars that look like weird glyphs, or their features might have rotted away to leave mildewing muscle or exposed bone. Some hideous Abyssals hide their unpleasant features behind the shadows of a cowl, wrap them in long bandages, cover them with tight leather masks or encase themselves permanently in armor.

But even amongst the exquisite allure, and horrific hideousness, of the Abyssal Exalted, you stand apart from the others as the finest of examples of these extremes. You might be so beautiful as to shame even the most charming of your fellows and the most elegant courtesans of the Underworld. Or you might be so hideously ravaged and disfigured that

even other deathknights step back in fright at your revealed visage, amplifying the impact of your threats and intimidation.

Hungry Ghost Manifestation [200]

You may allow your po, or lower soul, to ooze from your body at night and stalk the world independently as a hungry ghost. As with the more typical hungry ghosts, this is the lower, animal elements of the soul turned restless spirit, and appears as a smoky, translucent image of yourself, the arms and armor it might be adorned with merely cosmetic. These trappings of armament and mortality fade when it attacks, revealing a leathery, vulpine body with enormous talons and slaving jaws.

But while most hungry ghosts are turned vicious and feral by improper treatment of their mortal remains, yours yet remains connected to you and will follow whatever commands you give it. As the po soul of an Exalt, it is already much more powerful than a normal hungry ghost due to the Essence on which the soul can batten itself, and it shall further grow in power as you do. Aside from its wraithly savagery in battle, it can also serve as a relentless bloodhound and tracker, able to sense the presence of spilt blood and follow the scent of bloodshed from miles away.

Strong, swift, and deadly, it naturally materializes upon sensing potential prey, turning back into an immaterial presence when no prey is present, yet may still pass through solid obstacles when material in order to flee overwhelming opposition or approaching sunrise. But while it possesses a predatory cunning with which to hunt down and tear apart your foes, it does not have much ability to improvise beyond murder and thirsts for living blood.

It dematerializes at sunrise to flee back to your body, as other hungry ghosts would return to rest in their improperly-interred corpses, for the light of the sun would blast it to ash. And if it should it be slain, your lower soul will return to you ripped and torn, an event which will burn and stun your mind for a time.

Should you learn the secrets of necromancy required to bind your lower soul to your shadow, through the Links Born of Tumult, the Essence-suffused shadow it is merged with further empowers your hungry ghost. Beyond the Essence-charged might and the benefits usually granted by the spell, your hungry ghost will be a monster cast in your shadowed and smoky image. It shall wield a mighty panoply of three great powers, each an unique expression of vast and terrifying might, reminiscent of the powers of Labyrinth and Void Circle spells. And when it moves to attack, its monstrous form will resemble a chthonic abomination straight from the nightmares of the Neverborn.

Caught Between Life and Death [300]

In Creation, Abyssals grow uncomfortable and sick. Creation weakens, unless they swath themselves in paraphernalia of the grave. Abyssals feel more at home in the Underworld, where they are praised as heroes and holy champions, but they do not really fit in there either. Despite appearances, Abyssals are very much alive, which makes them stand out from their bleak Underworld surroundings. The dead step lightly around them, as wary mortals do around wild animals. Deathknights' vitality makes them seem unpredictable and potentially dangerous to the staid, conservative, unchanging dead. Abyssals fit in most in shadowlands, since they are caught between life and death in a manner similar to their surroundings. Yet the denizens of the realms on either side of a shadowland tend to look askance at their in-between neighbors, fearful of what influence the opposite realm might

exert through the shared territory. For most deathknights, this serves to instill in them a doubled sense of exiled desolation.

Yet you have found ways to make use of your state as a being with merely one foot in the grave. For all intents and purposes, you may consider yourself to be living, dead or undead, whichever state is most favourable to you at the moment, for the truth is you are none and all of these at once. Though this understanding, you can choose to be considered "alive" while in Creation, respiring essence like living creatures. But being dead means certain things (like most poisons) won't have any effect on you. And being undead means you can respire the necrotic essence of the Underworld. You can choose for spells and magic that affects the dead not to work on you, or only to work on you when beneficial. From this day forth, your stand outside the classifications of living, dead, and undead.

Items:

But it wouldn't do to send you out into the world with nothing but the clothes you wore when you took your Last Breath, now would it? Here you'll be able to purchase your own panoply of items and artifacts.

Tormented Instruments of Slaughter [100, free Dusk]

What is a knight without their weapons and armor? Here you will be able to acquire a fine collection of weaponry and sets of armor. None amongst this collection are artifacts, for the souls of the dead that make up the metal were not alloyed with Labyrinth ores, but they are strong as mortal steel and forged into martial implements of exceptional quality. Sizeable enough to fill an armory, you'll find this collection has weapons for every martial pursuit you might aspire towards, and suits of armor in whatever styles you wish, from light chain shirts and reinforced jackets, to great superheavy plates.

Blood-Thirsting Chains of the Rantai's Razors [200, discount Dusk]

Every link of this artifact fighting chain is a barbed loop of bone, each of which has been magically reinforced to possess durability comparable to the magical materials. With wicked soulsteel hooks on the ends of the chain, forged of souls tortured with the chain's barbs during its construction, it writhes and squirms with malevolent instinct in the hands of its wielder. The chains are eager to taste blood again, whether from a ghostly corpus or from the veins of the living. Accordingly, the barbs on the chain dig deep into your enemies, causing bloody and nasty wounds as it hungrily grabs onto your victims.

Should a ghost be caught on its barbs, the spirits' agony will be unending, as they are caught onto these bones hooks. One so trapped can only be released through the will of the chains' master, or the actions of another, who must tear them off the chains with agonizing violence. A ghost so leashed can be compelled to serve the wielder of the chains, forcing them into painful obedience while ensnared.

Dread Circlet of the Morbid Strategos [400, discount Dusk]

The matte-black surface of this heavy circlet is spattered with pale, colorless gleams. It is forged of Atrast, a light, hard metal composed of three parts starmetal to two parts soulsteel,

supplemented with various trace metals and metalloids. Attuned to axiomatic forces, it is intended to grant objectivity to the wearer. Attempting to deceive the wearer with falsehoods is doomed to failure, as the circlet cuts through the dross of pretty words to expose truth. However, the true purpose of this black wreath is more grand. When worn the wear may coldly assess their own strength and soldiers, as well as their enemies', neither under- nor overestimating anyone involved. With this knowledge, the wearer can strategize for battle without the distractions of emotion, only the drive and skill to replace the murky probabilities of life with the certainty of the grave. Though the objective certainty of the circlet, any who wears it is forged into a master of strategy prodigious beyond mortal measure, albeit one perhaps more cynical and heartless than most. A general who wears the circlet may pursue victory with ruthless efficiency and cold logic, able to win against overwhelming odds, though perhaps at the cost of significant casualties in the worst of scenarios.

The Void-Kissed Reaper of Forsaken Harvest [600, discount Dusk]

Standing a full sixty feet tall and towering over any battlefield, this royal Warstrider is a singularly powerful weapon of destruction. It's appearance is of a pure, featureless black and lacks the screaming faces for which Soulsteel is known.

The metal of its construction is known as Oblivion's panoply, an extremely rare type of soulsteel forged by Deathlords using a defeated hekatonkhire and Labyrinth-wrought alchemical agents. At the apex of a dark ritual, Obsidian Circle necromancy coats one side of the plate with an ultra-fine layer of Oblivion.

So it is that the Reaper is armored in the Void itself, its plating a void-frozen, deadly and invincible wall. Anyone who dares strike it in hand-to-hand combat faces the immediate retribution of frozen inevitability. Creatures lacking an Essence pool instantly age two years, while those who do wield Essence feel their motes drain away. The frozen death of Oblivion's panoply extinguishes even most magical fires. Water immediately freezes upon contact. Blows that do not penetrate beyond the plating fail to penetrate Oblivion. They make no sound. They never hit their final destination.

So it is that the Void-Kissed Reaper strides through battle, truly unbothered by the weaponry of mortal and Exalt alike, hefting a great scythe of Labyrinth-metal, with which to harvest its bounty of victims amongst the armies arrayed against it.

It does not know battle, only slaughter. It does not know enemies, only victims.

To stand before it is to meet death itself, and in its wake trail the broken and shambling corpses of all those it has slain.

Ashen Regalia of Death's Lawgivers [100, free Midnight]

It wouldn't do for the Chosen of Death to dress in mortal clothes, so instead you will receive a wardrobe more fitting to your station. An outfit for each of the four hundred and twenty days of the year, and especially ornate garb for the five days of Calibration.

Your choices of apparel include such highlights as white funerary robes, victorian era black with bone-corsets, Contagion-era plague doctor uniforms, mummy wrappings, a "outfit" composed mostly of chains to barely cover anything, as the Lady of Darkness in Bloodstained Robes wears, and whatever else you would like as long as it is properly gothic or evocative of death and the Underworld But no matter what deathly attires and Underworld accessories you choose to take from your closets, these sets of attire will always be comfortable and bespoke, and in the case of the more risque choices of "garb", they will

somehow manage to cover you in a flattering way, or expose you in captivating fashion, depending on your whims.

Requiem of Mortality [200, discount Midnight]

This guitar of soulsteel and ivory-hued wood from the Bayou of Endless Regret is a dark marvel of a musical instrument. Strung with soulsteel forged from six dead master musicians, the guitar screams in agony in the hands of the inept. But should a master strum it, those ghastly wails instead form into a vivid, though loud, symphony of guitar chords amplified by their tormented souls. Properly played, the music it produces is always as real and intense as anything a ghostly audience heard while alive, such that the dead might find such a rare sensation addictive.

But this is not merely an instrument of delight, for the edges of the guitar's body are made of sharpened soulsteel and the entire guitar could be used as a distinctive and brutally effective grimcleaver. Furthermore, a musician who takes up the guitar has another avenue of attack, as the essence-infused music it produces can prove lethal to the living. Played to the fullest by one who wishes to do so, the riffs of the guitar can melt the very flesh from the bones of those closeby. Flesh from any corpse is torn away, as is any dead flesh on a living creature. The living suffer blinding pain as the instrumental sounds wash over them and try to peel away their skin, muscle and fat from the bones beneath. Mortals are slain quickly, their flesh running like water before the deathly metal song produced by the guitar.

Five Edicts Dominion [400, discount Midnight]

Legend claims that this hulking black suit of plate armor may be the first soulsteel artifact ever created, dating back to the Divine Revolution. Whether or not it was first, it's assuredly ancient. Five Edicts Dominion was forged from the laws of the ancients themselves as they tumbled past the lips of dying titans on the winds of their final breaths. Indistinct shades of long-extinct species shift slowly across its matte-black surface. Wicked spikes protrude from its majestic pauldrons and regal crown-helm.

Over the millennia, the restless dreaming of the Old Laws trapped in the steel has woken something inside. The dying breaths of beings not meant to die are too potent to be silently tamed, and they have formed a consciousness over time. The armor is sentient and can speak to an attuned Exalt even when not worn, or anyone close by when unattuned. What it ultimately wants is anyone's guess, but canny Exalts should be wary of its promises.

"Of course, you aren't just any Exalt, are you...? We can provide you much that would be hidden from you without our help. We can tell you of the dead and the Underworld, of dead and archaic languages. We can grant you the incomprehensible word that commands beings to kneel before you. We can channel words of denial, tainting the air with its chilling timbre. And we can allow you to bargain with the ancient and unknowable dead, petitioning the void to grant your wishes at a price. So why don't you put the armor on, mighty deathknight?"

"You have nothing to fear from us."

The Ur-Dragon, Bones of the Blasphemous Immolation [600, discount Midnight]

At the beginning of days, the world's makers shaped every kind of monster, wrought from Essence in forms familiar and forgotten. In those days, the Ur-Dragon was the prototype and ancestor of all great saurian life, the original and gigantic model upon which the tyrant lizards and river dragons of today are based upon. As these super-predators roam Creation's

jungles now, so too did their ancestor roam Creation's borders and kingdoms, clad in scales of volcanic stone and with a breath as ash-clouds.

But in time, even this great terror shared the fate of its Primordial creators, eventually falling before the might of the Exalted host. Only the bones of this dead behemoth remain, the final markers of an ancient beast from a time before civilization. Yet the flames within these bones never died down, leaving the field where they fell forever a burned wasteland.

Until now. Reanimated by great works of necromancy, these monumentally massive bones have been raised from the earth to show Creation the might of the dead. Composed of earth and molten rock, its skeletal remains resemble nothing so much as black granite.

Still scorching hot to the touch after millenia of dormancy, and occasional cracks in the bones reveal the bright, yellow-hot glow of ever-burning, magmatic stone within. Bound to your command, its great steps shall rattle the foundations of civilizations and flatten cities across Creation, their ruins to be forgotten as it once was.

Yet this reanimated behemoth offers more than heat and fire, gigantic bone claws and fangs, and an earth-shaking stride that flattens all in its path. For within its fossilized rib cage has been set a fortress of soulsteel and jade, the chill of the grave that emanates from the soulsteel keeping occupants comfortable even as the air shimmers with heat around it.

Along the cervical vertebrae of its neck, a relatively flexible and slender bridge of soulsteel has been constructed, leading from the fortress up to the skull of the great beast. There, a flat crown-plateau has been set on top of its skull, with a throne of soulsteel reserved for you at the center of this great howdah-crown.

Agent of Carrion [100, free Daybreak]

Useful for the aspiring necromancer or necro-surgeon both, you have made an eternal pact with a spirit of the dead. Each day, at the moment just before dawn, it will deliver to you a fresh corpse, perfectly preserved with no discernible cause of death to mar their bodies.

You may do with these as you wish, and rest easy in the knowledge that in another day you will have a new cadaver delivered to you. Each day, you may choose to gain a random dead body, in which case it will tend towards ethnotypes common in the region, or request a custom order for special projects. Young or old, beautiful or ugly, male or female, even specific hair colors and races may be catered to. You might even ask for the remains of beastmen and wyld mutants, if you wished. But more than just a single body, should your location be near to strife or large accidents, more can be delivered, jumping up to dozens a day at the highest ends. Each will be immaculate as the first, but these additional corpses cannot be chosen and will simply be of random appearance, tending to suspiciously resemble those who perished in these accidents or battles.

Deplorable Forge of Tormented Souls [200, discount Daybreak]

Proper soulforging is a highly specialized art that requires rarified equipment, access to Labyrinthine materials and a willingness on the part of the soulsmith to condemn another ghost to eternal torment. While the willingness to do so must come from yourself, almost everything else can be bought right here, providing you with equipment and inexhaustible supplies of the raw materials ones need to forge a soul into steel.

Full usage of the craft requires artifacts to forge the metal, a hammer and anvil composed of soulsteel or jade (whichever you prefer) to hammer the molten ghost-alloys into shape,

another artifact known as an Essence-forge to melt down the unfortunate ghost's corpus and other materials, soulfire crystals replete with essence to stoke the forge, and black ores taken from the Labyrinth to grant it the ghastly, magical strength of soulsteel.

Even the alchemical agents, wrought from the Labyrinth, which are needed to create the rarefied void-coated plates of Oblivion's Panoply are in refilling supplies amongst these, should you have need of them. With this, the only thing you would still require for your dread craft is a supply of souls to feed your forge.

Library of Labyrinthia [400, discount Daybreak]

This building-spire is a piece of the Labyrinth protruding into the world, walled with black stone and metal, and echoing with the Whispers of the Neverborn. Within its warped halls, one can find a library of the lost. Welled up from the Neverborn's dreams and nightmares, it contain much of the forgotten or forbidden secrets and lore of the world, most especially those that would tear down what is, so as to hasten its fall into Oblivion.

But the library is stocked not only with black volumes that reflect the nightmares of the Neverborn, as the civilizations of the Underworld have added their our wraithly works to the collection, and much of those text that were lost in Creation were added too. The shelves are replete with scrolls from sacked libraries, ancient manuscripts lost at sea, books burned in religious censorship, and many more. Even some of the Deathlords' private manuscripts have found their way into hide-bound works to further the knowledge offered in the library. History and necromancy, medicine and necrosurgery, even the occasional sorcerous secrets are only some of the many things a student of the library could learn. For it would take lifetimes to study even a fraction of all that is on offer here, and should you bring it to other worlds, it will accumulate appropriate literature from those places as well.

The Well of Udr [600, discount Daybreak]

From this terrible wellspring was pulled the Great Contagion, and its architect still meditates on this enigmatic mouth to the Void as she seeks another way to destroy the world. Who opened this chasm to Oblivion, no one knows except perhaps the Neverborn themselves, and they have not revealed it in their death-dreams. Perhaps it is a nexus of paradox, where the annihilating force of Oblivion meets and merges with the infinitely prolific, unshaped potential of the Wyld. Perhaps it the singular point of intersection between all worlds, all states, all possibilities, a gateway that leads beyond even the Void. None can say for certain, but the Dowager of Unrent Veils now seeks within its depths the Anti-Creation, the perfect opposite of the Primordials' handiwork that cancels it out and leaves nothing behind. While she searches, however, she might settle for pulling out another plague or cataclysm like the Great Contagion.

Perhaps the Dowager will find her Anti-Creation one day, or perhaps she has merely deluded herself through too long a meditation on the Void. Whatever the case, anything that enters the Well of Udr bypasses the Underworld and the Labyrinth to enter Oblivion itself. Further, the Well exhales the power of Oblivion itself and poisons anything that might live or grow around it. Even the chamber that holds the Well is deadly. Any living creature that enters the chamber feels the call of the Void. Remaining in the same room drains their willpower, and once this is depleted... they leaps to their annihilation in the Well. And while Exalts, gods and other supernatural creatures are more resistant, even able to ignore it with

enough force of will, the only true defense against the existential horror of proximity to the Well is to be dead or to have sworn an oath to Oblivion (as all Abyssals have). Now you will have your own Well of Udr, set where you wish, and to use as you wish, along with massive tomes written in pre-human hands, found hidden in the Dowager's citadel. But should you desire to meditate on the Well Of Udr yourself, perhaps to pull forth your own great cataclysm or plague, it should be noted that it took the Dowager more than a hundred years to pull forth the Great Contagion. Though she considered the results well worth the effort, she has yet to replicate this feat in the centuries since.

Assemblage of Blight and Medicament [100, free Day]

The shadowed lands of the Underworld produce countless drugs and toxins, some deadlier than others, some more enjoyable than others. From the Bayou of Endless Regret alone come a thousand bizarre drugs and dire toxins, some of which can kill even Fair Folk, ghosts and demons. There is deadly venom harvested from plasmic arrow frogs, soporific toxins to be placed on needles or in cups of ghostly wine, and steel ant venom that burns both the living and the dead.

Most terrifying to ghosts is Lethe serpent venom, at once the most feared toxin in the Underworld, and perhaps the kindest way to "kill" a ghost. Lethe serpent venom does not damage its victims corpus or body. Instead, if they fail to resist the venom, a ghost instantly enters Lethe to be reincarnated, though on rare occasions the unluckiest of wraiths find their soul sent to Oblivion instead. The living affected by it instead suffer a month of amnesia, losing none of their skill but forgetting their identity.

These and many more toxins and drugs are at your disposal now, an eclectic collection of hundreds of different substances at your disposal. Replenishing once used, and carefully catalogued for your use, each of these drugs comes in a separate container. With this, you will never again lack an appropriate venom... nor a dose of wraithly cocaine.

Void Glory Shroud [200, discount Day]

Appearing simply as a sheet of sheer black silk, this artifact holds a power quite useful to the Daywalker. When a Void Glory Shroud is folded according to a specific occult pattern and wrapped around the forehead like a bandanna, this artifact helps to conceal their might. For a deathknight, the shroud increases the amounts of peripheral Essence that must be spent before their anima flares up into visibility and the shroud additionally cuts in half each of the expenditures of peripheral notes that feeds the wearer's anima, ensuring that the wearer need not fear revealing their dark majesty should they need to exert their might. But if the shroud is suppressing an Abyssal's anima and the bandanna is removed, that dark magnificence bursts forth in its full glory at whatever strength it would have had without the shroud's magic to suppress it.

Hum of the Assassin's Deadly Flock [400, discount Day]

This is a fine set of necrotech hummingbirds, each of the five tiny birds composed of intricate bone-clockwork. While small and deceptively fragile-looking, the minute bones of their construction have painstakingly been magically reinforced to possess durability comparable to the magical materials.

You may set these necromantic constructs loose to chase a target on their own, or take more direct control of them through mental commands, and even perceive the world through the hummingbirds' senses at will, as long as the constructs do not pass into an area magically warded against scrying. Whichever method of control you use, they weave through the air with speed and purpose to deliver quiet death to your enemies.

These flying works of art are even faster than the living creatures they are modelled on, and lose none of the birds' maneuverability in the process. Their small size, speed, and the stealth they are imbued with ensures that only the quiet hum of their wings announces their presence and your target's demise.

Their beaks are stilettos of soulsteel, specifically treated to sap a target's life force, appearing to rapidly age those stabbed with their needle-like points. Exalts and magical beings may recover from this with time, but mortals are not so fortunate, as the drain takes decades from their lifespan even if they should miraculously survive. While ghosts and the dead may be immune to this effect in particular, it should also be noted that the thin stiletto-beaks are the perfect vectors for many poisons.

Wretched Secrets Heard From Dead Lips [600, discount Day]

Information is power, secrets are sharper than knives, and none know these truths more intimately than the Daywalkers. With this purchase, you will have complete access to a spy network that spans an entire cardinal direction, in both Creation and the Underworld: thousands of casual informants and hundreds of full-time agents. These can range from ghostly spies who learned to observe events in Creation while they remain in the Underworld, to village ancestor cultists and bribed courtiers. Your eyes are everywhere, and they may tell you everything they see. All you need to do is ask.

Further, as is the way of Lethe, a ghost can speak one final message to anyone they choose, in Creation, the Underworld or Yu-Shan, before they forget themselves and are reborn. You will receive a steady trickle of such final missives, as the last whispers of those who accept their passing shall always convey important information to you.

Should you leave here for other worlds, you will find similar spy networks intertwined with the realms of the living and the dead, ready and eager to grant you insight in the secrets of society. And the last whispers of those who reach their final death will ring in your ears even in other worlds, if they contain information you would consider valuable.

Wraith-Drawn Carriage of Bleak Horses [100, discount Moonshadow]

This stately carriage has been constructed of black wood from the Underworld, decorated with gold trim, and bears a canopy created from the spine and bones of a great beast. It's lavish interior will carry you through both Creation and the Underworld in comfort and luxury, as it stands ready to ride at your command. The coachman is an finely-preserved, or perhaps skeletal if you prefer, and reanimated undead with all the skills needed to direct the carriage wherever you wish, and it is pulled by two pale Ghost-Blooded horses. These useful beasts do not panic in the presence of the dead or undead, and they thrive in the Underworld as much as in Creation. As a final benefit, the coach can draw on the ghostly ancestry of its horses to dematerialize with passengers and all. Perfect for travelling undisturbed through Creation, though once disembarked, passengers fade back into corporeality.

Cup of Flowing Blood [200, discount Moonshadow]

This cup chalice of delicately carved ebony, patterned with scenes of Solars from the First Age fighting the foes of the Old Ream, is a powerful tool of healing. But it is also a treasure much desired by the Abyssal Exalted, as it is a way for one being to give their very life's blood to another. Rumors persist that the Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears holds it in her private collection, and that she permits her Abyssal Exalted to sanctify marriages with it. When it is held by a person who truly wishes to give of themselves for another's sake, it slowly begins to fill with dark blood, and as it does, the holder loses blood and health. At any time, the holder may stop this process. If the blood in the cup is then given to a wounded person to drink, they will recover health in proportion to the blood they drink as they drink, until all the blood in the cup is consumed. It is possible for a person to drain themselves to unconsciousness and the verge of while trying to heal others with the cup, but on the flipside it also allows those on the verge of death to recover nigh-instantly as they drink of the red liquid.

Sable Psychopomp of Ominous Tides [400, discount Moonshadow]

The Psychopomp is a trireme, as the attack vessels of the Realm, but its resemblance to these vessels of the Second Age is like that of the eagle to the hen. Larger than any ship ever build by the shipyards of the Time of Tumult, this massive ship somehow still both far faster and more maneuverable than its lesser cousins, floating gracefully over the waves. Its sleek black hull is propelled forward as much by sorcerous means, as by imperishable sails of cloth-of-jade and almost a thousand skeletal oarsmen laboring below decks. The black teak of its construction is a dense hardwood originating from the Font of Mourning, valued all over the Underworld, especially for shipbuilders, for its wood is nearly flame proof, as well as resistant to rot and the Essence drain of the Sea of Shadows. Reinforced with soulsteel and magic, both in vast quantities, the hull and masts are indestructible and impenetrable to Essence besides, such that not even immaterial spirits may pass through. Armed not with the mundane catapults or ballistae common to sea-going vessels now, it instead carries the powerful First Age weapons known as lightning ballistae. When fired, each ballista releases a powerful blast of lightning that sears and scorches whatever it hits, turning flesh and wood to ash and melting steel or stone. But its greatest power is perhaps the one least expected of such a juggernaut of a ship, for at the command of its captain, the prow with its reinforced ram can pitch upwards to allow the ship to take to skies. So do oars find purchase in midair, sails catching the winds far above the surface, to allow the Psychopomp to race amongst the clouds. At night, it could even slip quietly from Creation into the bleak skies of the Underworld, and vice versa. Unlike the no-frills triremes of the realm, this ship does have proper accommodations for a crew and passengers, though not enough to house the hundreds of reanimated dead set to man the oars. Raised platforms in front and back can hold weapons and lookouts, as well as cabin for crew, passenger cabins, or even troop barracks.

Jumper's Folly [600, discount Moonshadow]

Where too many souls have passed into the lands below too quickly, or where the living world has been scarred by sufficient atrocity, the Underworld may bleed up into Creation to form shadowlands, places where no barrier exists between life and death, and the living may

treat with the dead. Chief amongst these are the oldest shadowlands, those that have been in existence since the dawn of the Underworld itself. Savants of the current Age do not need the annals of Heaven to know which shadowlands were left by the death of a Primordial or one of its component souls. These shadowlands endure. Even at the height of its power, the Solar Deliberative could not reclaim them for Creation.

The Underworld leaves its mark upon shadowlands. The trees, if there are any at all, are scrawny, the bark black as pitch or bone white and the leaves a dull, brownish green. The sun seems to dim, as if hidden behind a pale mist. Even the air seems still, hushed and less lively. There are no birds, save rations, vultures and the occasional owl. Game animals are difficult to come by, while spiders, rats, and raitons thrive. Domestic animals eventually become listless and wan, or sleek and hungry. The people of shadowlands are often pale, and may take ill easily; in a shadowland it seems easier to let go of life. Colors leech out over a span of decades, or become flush and violent in their intensity. Storms are unusually savage; those blown in from the Underworld may carry with them drops of blood, mercury, or salty tears. Strange and winding designs impress themselves upon stones as generations go by, while boards and buildings stretch high and narrow and queer. The flavors of food grown in shadowland soil are often strange and bitter, or oddly intoxicating. The crops and goods of shadowlands are disturbing and distasteful to many, but sometimes this mixing of boundaries produces some valuable prodigy that may be obtained nowhere else.

Most importantly, shadowlands permit the dead to walk among the living, to speak and touch, and do more than touch. By night, ghosts are as solid as mortals, though few could be mistaken for such. In most shadowlands, ghosts fade away with the rising of the sun, unable to be seen, heard, or touched by the living; in truly powerful shadowlands, the dead only fade away when sunlight falls directly upon them, and retire to windowless ancestor houses during the day. In either case, they return to full solidity with the coming of night. Those who leave a shadowland during the day find themselves in Creation, while those who leave its borders at night enter the Underworld.

And now, you have the opportunity to claim for yourself a shadowland for your own. Sitting comfortably at an area of ten-thousand square miles, Jumper's Folly is one of the larger shadowlands in Creation, but isn't quite on the same scale as massive shadowlands like Marama's Fell or the Bayou of Endless Regret. Depending on your wishes, it may be deserted aside from bleak nature and the occasional haunts, or it could be sparsely populated by pale mortals and their wraithly ancestors. This small population and any changes you make to the area will follow you, as long as they remain within the bounds of the shadowland. Perhaps these small communities of mortals and ghosts might even grow into more than disparate villages under your guidance.

Bishop's Crosier [400, discount The Bishop]

The most notable artifact of the Bishop is his Crosier, a tall black-jade shepherd's staff with a curved hook at the top. The hook circles back into itself, and contains several hearthstone sockets. It has curious powers, which work only for the Bishop himself... and for you, if you should purchase the staff here. Firstly, it can be use as a melee weapon, essentially an artifact staff of exceptional power.

Secondly, the Crosier can be transformed into a black-jade automaton in the shape of a clockwork bat. You can see through the bat's eyes and direct its actions as long as you

supply essence to its function. In a shadowland or the Underworld, the bat can easily fly through walls and other solid objects. And lastly, one can use the Crosier to transform a living mortal into a ghost for one day. Transformed mortals are touched with death, and fall under your complete mental command. Sufficiently willful mortals can attempt to resist these commands, but they cannot ignore them.

Howler in Darkness [400, discount The Bodhisattva]

Usually carried belted at his side, the Silver Prince's personal appears to be a ceremonial short sword while. Only when it is drawn is it that revealed that this short sword is in actuality a grand daiklave forged of soulsteel, with the unusual property of disguising its nature while sheath, and expanding to its full size as it is drawn.

Should a being struck by Howler in Darkness not instantly have been slain with that blow, then the wound inflict may overwhelm their will, compelling the target to obey any commands given by the Silver Prince for the next 100 days... no matter who struck the blow. Though if you purchase it here, you may usurp that control to bind others to your commands, instead of the Deathlord's orders.

Root of Scorn [400, discount The Dowager]

The Dowager's principle weapon is her unique soulsteel long powerbow, Root of Scorn. With but the expense of a single mote, it may be called to hand instantly or banished Elsewhere. But more importantly, arrows fired from this weapon transform into soulsteel harpoons: Upon striking a victim, the arrowheads clasp onto the victims bones like tiny clawed soulsteel hands and cannot be removed without cutting the soulsteel-weave cord attached to Root of Scorn. Those slain in a shadowland while so attached to Root of Scorn's cord instantly become the ghost-slaves to the bow's owner, as their bodies falls away and the soulsteel cord remains attached to their higher souls.

Embrace of Decay [400, discount Eye and Seven Despairs]

After centuries of experimentation, Eye and Seven Despairs figured out how to integrate disease and reanimation. His efforts culminated in the creation of the disease called the Embrace of Decay. Unfortunately, an escaping ghost named Voice in the Grass stole his only sample of the disease. Well, maybe not the only sample. This strange soulsteel cylinder contains a green soup that reanimates any dead who touch its putrid vapors, and unlike its counterpart, does not have a small crack.

Anyone who suffers a wound from a zombie infected with this plague is exposed, whereupon victims first feel the disease's effects after a mere handful of hours. The victim's skin grays. Necrosis of thin tissues occurs, and the skin starts to peel away. The victim grows hungry but cannot be satisfied. She grows frail and is increasingly easily fatigued. Eventually, the victim drops dead. No more than a minute later, she rises again as a zombie, hungrily attacking and consuming any living creatures it can find. Anyone whom such a zombie kills or who dies from the disease rises again, carrying the zombie plague themselves.

Worst of all, there simply is no mundane way to treat this disease. Filling a victim's body with the cleansing Essence of the Unconquered Sun, through magic, prayer or Solar anima, supplies an effective counter-agent; magical treatment usually revolves around that principle. Most of the time, the only way to stop this plague is to kill its victims quickly and burn the

bodies before they can rise again to spread the disease.

Varan's Ruin [400, discount The Lion]

The First and Forsaken Lion wields Varan's Ruin, a massive grand daiklave over six feet in length, once the legendary blade of Varan Pen, an Exalted hero of the First Age who claimed descent from the gods. Noble and steadfast, Varan fell heroically during the Usurpation, boldly taking the offensive against an army of Dragon-Blooded. For an age, he wandered the Underworld's barren wastes and became a champion once more, resisting the temptations of the Neverborn and helping many ghosts find peace and Lethe. Then, the Lion found him, captured him, hollowed out his soul, and alloyed it with Varan's blade into a massive daiklave that howls with an ancient pain and oddly gleeful depravity.

Varan, now utterly corrupted by the agony of being forged into soulsteel and the base pleasure he receives when devouring Essence, cries out in mad hunger for his victims' blood and souls. When one gazes carefully at Varan's Ruin, one can see that hero's face, now mad with rage and hunger. Each blow dealt with Varan's Ruin drains essence from its targets, half of which go directly to the wielder, half of which are devoured by Varan. A killing blow from Varan's Ruin absorbs the victim's soul into the blade, where it is quickly consumed by Varan. Ghosts who merely touch the sword must also resist Varan's hunger, lest they are drawn in as well. The approach of any beings, living or dead, elicits yearning moans and tormented wails from the blade.

Siren in Avern [400, discount The Lover]

The Lover carries a soulsteel blade called the Siren in Avern. Not even a daiklave, but a thin, translucent rapier, it is only superficially a combat weapon. Successful strikes do not wound a target's body, but instead strike at the victim's willpower. Furthermore, anytime the wielder parries an attack with the Siren in Avern, their attacker must break off the fight and cannot initiate any further attacks against the wielder for some time. This compulsion ends automatically if the wielder of the blade attacks their bound foe again, but otherwise can only be resisted through a great exertion of willpower. Worse yet, it can only be avoided by being utterly heartless, while the most empathic and all-loving of foes even risk falling instantly in love with the wielder of the Siren for a year and a day.

Mask of Winters [400, discount The Mask]

The conqueror of Thorns is never seen without his eponymous two-faced helmet-mask of unmelting ice. It bears one face of sublime, hypnotic beauty; the other of such horror that many who see it flee in terror. Once one has learned how to use these visages, they can be applied to disturbing effect, enhancing the wearer's diplomacy and intimidation greatly. Additionally, one who wears this helmet can see out of both masks, so no one can surprise them from behind. Bought here, the mask also seems to have been infused with some of the Mask of Winters' own essence, allowing any wearer to reverse their joints and turn their entire body back to front and vice versa at a cost of a single mote. Alternatively, if the wearer wishes to discomfit others, they could turn their neck 180 degrees to look at them with their other face.

Umbrella of Discord [400, discount The Princess]

Princess Magnificent principally wields this deadly five-foot-tall, nine-foot-wide parasol made of the bones and skin of five fallen Solar Exalted, one from each caste, and hung with 13 tiny bells. The umbrella's point is of razor-sharp soulsteel and consigns the souls of the lives it takes immediately to the Void. The bells attached to the umbrella's 13 tines cause madness in mortals and ghosts alike, as those who hear the eerie chimes turn on their compatriots and attack them until the bells cease ringing. The Umbrella of Discord can cause violent storms to erupt for one scene, even on clear days (though the effect is not instantaneous), and when essence is channelled through the parasol it may darken the sky into a starless, lightless tarp.

Arm of Shades Below [400, discount The Walker]

The Walker in Darkness' principal weapon is a grand grimcleaver called Arm of Shades Below. No mortal can lift this mighty soulsteel greataxe. Those who try are sapped of their strength for some time, rendered as helpless as a small child. Anyone struck with its blade is also stricken with a rotting pox that slowly putrefies their bodies. One week after infection, no weapons can be wielded. If a victim finds no cure after one month, they die and become a walking corpse completely under the control of Walker in Darkness, or under your control if you purchase the grimcleaver here. The disease carried by the blade cannot be treated without magic, and even then it is a difficult thing to cure before the black destiny of the Deathlords will have completely poisoned the victim, tainting even their very name.

Pumpkin Pile [50]

Some of Creation's cultures have associated the carving of effigy-faces into pumpkins and gourds as a part of their traditional celebrations of the dead. Appropriately, you'll be able to get into that too with this. Whether for celebrations, simply having them as food, or more sinister reasons, this supply of either pumpkins or gourds will last you at least until the Void swallows Creation. Perfectly sized and formed to be carved into a head-sized effigy, they are readily carved with just a bit more ease than other examples of their kind would be.

Grave Goods of the Underworld [100]

The first and usually most important form of memoriam a ghost receives. When a ghost manifests in the Underworld for any length of time, even if they enter Lethe just hours later, any goods sacrificed in their memory as part of their burial rites also manifest as grave goods. To the benefit of ghosts, this manifestation is idealized rather than literal. Items of paper or cheap wood translate into gifts of exceptional quality. Objects covered in gold paint become real gold. Even sacrifices of food have value. A jug of wine buried with a dead body provides the ghost with a magical jug that never runs dry, while a simple basket of bread might become an Underworld artifact that is perpetually full of nourishing loaves. All grave goods have unusual properties. Such goods are almost always of exceptional quality, and all such goods are generally self-repairing so long as they remain in the possession of their rightful owner. However, like so much of the Underworld, grave goods are tied to the realm of the dead and disintegrate instantly and permanently if exposed to the light of Creation's sun. Grave goods can endure sunlight while in the safety of a shadowland, however, or even in Creation during Calibration.

These grave goods can also be given away or sold, and continue to grant their magical benefits to the new owner, provided they were given willingly. As such, you may purchase some of these grave goods for yourself here, at 100 cp for one of these humble offerings made into a significant items in the Underworld. While they are not truly artifacts, their fine make, unusual properties, and self-repair should still prove useful to one such as you. And just to sweeten this deal, should they be disintegrated by the light of the sunlit lands, they will be restored in your warehouse at dusk.

Jade Effigies of the Underworld [100 to 350]

Effigies represent a particular subset of grave goods distinct from the more usual variety. Generally offered by descendants and worshipers too poor to sacrifice real food (or too squeamish to sacrifice real people), effigies are small representations of people or animals typically buried with the dead or else offered to them as part of a burial rite. In the Underworld, such effigies manifest as golems in either humanoid or animal form. Thus, a small wooden horse carved by a boy to sacrifice to his dead father might manifest in the Underworld as a great ebony stallion to serve as the ghost's loyal steed, while a queen buried with a dozen jade cartouches depicting her ladies-in-waiting might awaken in the Underworld surrounded by 12 human-sized automata of pure jade.

Typically, effigy servants and animals are intelligent but lacking in both imagination and initiative. A golem will obey any instructions from its ghost master to the letter, but it will function poorly without oversight and direction. A golem will also tend to lapse into quiescence if separated from its master for too long. Nevertheless, effigies are highly durable and unswervingly loyal to their masters, possessing all the benefits and drawbacks of more standard grave goods. Your first purchase of this will provide you with a single, finely crafted, and nearly indestructible effigy of jade. You may upgrade this further for 50 cp, quintupling the amount of effigies you will receive, to a maximum of five upgrades for an army of effigies that rivals the private army of the Dual Monarchy at more than three-thousand strong.

Loathsome Osseous Shell [200]

The Mask of Winters regards the Seventh Legion of Lookshy as the only force nearby that can seriously hinder his plans, so he develops necromantic analogues to their magitech arsenal. His most successful experiment is the loathsome osseous shell, a bone and metal carapace that he believes can duplicate every capability of the Seventh Legion's mighty gunzosha power armor. Like that armor, a loathsome osseous shell needs a mortal wearer, who interfaces with the armor with the help of certain mystical and surgical alterations.

The bone and soulsteel implants in the body of an ivory hoplite are more than slightly conspicuous. The warrior also has necromantic runes of binding surgically engraved on various important bones of his body, making them a living prison for the hungry ghost that powers the armor. While these armors are a relatively recent development, the loathsome osseous shells are expected to shorten their mortal wearer's life span the same way gunzosha armor does, but this is a small price to pay for the ability to contend with Lookshy and Exalted foes.

You may already have these implants inserted into the body of a member of your retinue with this purchase, as long as the intended recipient is a living human, or you may simply receive the implants and instructions on how to insert them. For an extra 100 cp, you may

upgrade this purchase to receive instead a dozen of these suits of armor to armor your troops with. Further, you may continue to purchase additional sets of these suits as many times as you want, each time paying another 100 cp to receive a dozen more.

Deplorable Appendage of the Colossal Pitch [200]

Attached to a wooden, wheeled platform for transports and leverage, and pulled by large undead oxen, this oversized catapult is made from the skeletal arm and preserved tendons of a giant. When one pulls the lever, this monstrous necrotic arm will lob whatever has been put into its palm far into the distance, yet the necromantic design is more accurate than the more standard mechanisms of Creation.

As a bonus, purchasing this catapult will also come with a half a dozen blocks of ammunition. Large blocks of human bones packed together between two brittle pieces of wood and secured by chains, each of these skeletons contains a hungry ghost that has been bound to that particular piece and induced into slumber. Once it is thrown at your enemies, the impact will shatter most of the brittle bones, unleash a horde of hungry ghosts onto your unfortunate victims. After use, you will find replacement armaments to hurl more feral ghosts into your enemies' cities after a month. In the meantime, one might simply use boulders and other more standard ammunition.

If you would like, you may upgrade this purchase with a further 200 cp, for a total of 400, which will instead gain you a full dozen of these catapults, each with their own supply of ammunition to slaughter your enemies with.

Seer-Spiders of the Calendar's Patterns [200]

Five seers of heaven, five spiders of bone. These hand-sized spiders of bone and sinew, held together by soulsteel and starmetal wires, were fashioned from the remains of five agents of heaven, each a prodigal astrologist. Their preserved bones and tendons form the body of these spiders, while their soulforged ghosts and slain divine familiars form the wires of soulsteel and starmetal that reinforce these mockeries of the pattern spiders that tend to the loom of fate.

More intelligent than most necrotic designs, these blasphemous creations can serve you as scouts, spotters, and most especially spies. They can speak and play back what they overheard by vibrating their tendons, and are rather adept at sneaking around with their many legs of skittering bone. But perhaps their most useful aspect lies in something retained from their former lives, as each of these spiders have a single star-spangled eye set into their abdomen. While all of them have a different color of eye, their uses are the same, as with it they can divine the future using the stars. Whether the stars of Creation, or the bleak stars of the Underworld, it ill matters to these dead arachnoid and experts of astrology. Use these mockeries of the pattern spiders to plot out the fates of your enemies.

Cartilage Palissade Serpent [300]

A working of necrotech created from an enormous serpentine creature, this long ribcage slithers and scuttles along with an army on the march, laden with supplies and other support. The movement of a skeletal snake resembles a cross between the glide of a snake and the coordinated walk of a millipede. It's as effective on snow and ice as on rock or dirt. Though slowed, the serpent may traverse even sandy dunes.

It is when that army halts that the bone-serpent shows its true worth; however, far more than a simple reanimated beast of burden, it will encircle the army's encampment and bite its own tailbone. In so doing, the excessively long construct will form a palissade around the location of the encampment, its massive ribs and the soulsteel reinforcement an impenetrable wall. Further, the serpent's sides are studded with human arms ending in blade and hook, bow and spear, with which it can defend itself should it come under attack. In this way, it defends and buys time for its charges within to properly prepare to annihilate the foe without interruption. The snake sees and hears by means of one-yard-long stalks that extend from one side of the spine every few yards.

Spider-Organ of Undeath's Threnody [300]

This great creation of necrotech is carried up into the air by its eight limbs of bone, sinew, and soulsteel, each taller than a house and as prehensile as an arm. The construct can move important people and objects quickly and securely, moving tirelessly and with grace that disturbs the living. An ivory and soulsteel palanquin is carried upon its back for the comfort of its passengers, but more importantly, a great pipe organ of soulsteel is integrated into this necromantic machine, allowing one of the riders to play the grand instrument's keys of polished bone and pedalboards of underworld ebony.

Once someone starts to play the Spider-Organ, a haunting lament will invariably make itself heard. This brooding melody, laden with necromantic essence, is sufficient to animate every corpse close enough to be affected by the music. From those who only just passed, to those who had been longer buried, the threnody fills them all. The unstoppable power of this song of mourning enables corpses to burst up from the earth or smash out of tombs to reach the spider-organ's side. Each and every zombie animated in this way shall obey the will of whomever plays the great pipe organ, their every command subconsciously relayed through the notes they play. In daylight, this horde is reanimated only until the music ceases, but otherwise, they'll persist until dawn strikes them.

Asphodel [300]

Before the First Age reached its height, Kesuth Amaldui of the Copper Spiders bound the soul of the mortal sorcerer Shou Ren into a jewel. In exchange for the sorcerer's wisdom, Amaldui crafted a hidden world inside the stone for Shou Ren to rule. The Twilight set this jewel at the heart of a mighty mace. He became an enigma to his peers, seeming to converse with the mace he bore, and vanishing into its hidden world for months at a time. From the stone's depths he called forth ghostly soldiers to garrison Hollow against the Forty-Fourth Immortal; into the stone's depths he bound dark powers as he plumbed the Underworld for fell secrets.

Asphodel is a seven-flanged artifact mace of soulsteel. Its construction is airy and light, every surface inlaid with delicate white jade scrollwork. Where the flanges meet the shaft, they cage a fist-sized smoky gemstone of irregular, wavy facets. Whenever the wielder is touching Asphodel, they can converse with Shou Ren.

They may call upon him for counsel regarding whatever lore he can share on a specific topic and may petition Shou Ren for more tangible aid through bargaining, asking to loan some of his retainers, such as war ghosts, spectral steeds, mortwights, or jade effigies. Shou Ren is always happy to speak to the Exalted; despite absolute mastery of his hidden world, he is

deprived of stimulation, craving both new lore from Creation and opportunities to converse with the living. In exchange, he freely shares his erudition and wisdom.

A powerful wielder might learn to banish the undead to the hidden world within, adding them to the undead prince's menagerie, and could even master the secret to entering the lifeless realm within. Lovely and cold, it is a place of nacreous mists and quicksilver pools, of vertiginous promontories and crystalline spires. At its heart rises Shou Ren's onyx and silver palace, where he rules in ennui over hundreds of ghosts drawn into his realm over the millennia.

The Underhaus [200/600]

Your very own Underworld. Or at least, a slice of Underworld for yourself. For 200 cp, this adds an Underworld layer to your cosmic warehouse, taking on the appearance of a dark reflection of your existing warehouse, seen through the lens of death. Located "below" your warehouse in the same way that the greater Underworld is below the living world of Creation, you may designate parts of your warehouse to be small, enduring shadowlands to access this Underhaus more easily. Here you may respire necrotic essence, interact with ghosts and immaterial spirits, and store things that cannot bear the light of the sun.

Alternatively, if that isn't enough, you may pay a full 600 cp and get something much more expansive. Instead of merely receiving a dark mirror of your warehouse, each of the various attachments, properties, and lands that follow you will have underworld reflections of their own. These properties shall sit as anchors within the world and each of your properties, in whole or in part, may be made into shadowlands to lead down into this greater Underhaus. Connecting all of these disjointed underworld landmarks will be an underworld appropriate to the world they stand in, a dark world that gains solidity and detail from the memories of the dead. Where none have lived or died, the terrain is grey and nearly featureless phantasms. But where many people have lived their lives and breathed their last, this underworld is filled with dark reflections and remnants of what has been lost. Primeval forests that have since been cut down and burnt for farmland, the remnants of cities lost to war and villages lost to plague, and whatever else has been lost to the sands of time in the world you find yourself in. The population of this underworld, aside from any followers you bring with you, would be composed merely of plasmic creatures and echoes of the dead, not true ghosts of the natives. However, once established below a world, the dead of that place may choose to resist the call of whatever fate would normally remain for them past death, to linger within the Underhaus as ghosts.

Companions:

There's no reason a deathknight should stand alone. They gather peers, servants, and slaves around them as a matter of course with their own magnetism, or simply through having them granted by the Deathlords' largesse.

Circle of Death [100/300/400]

Abyssals are usually taught how to work with the Deathlords' other deathknights as a functional Exalted circle. They figure out how each others' strengths can shore up their own

deficiencies, and work together as an unit from then on. As such you may spend 100 cp here to add an Abyssal Exalted companion to your circle with a stipend of 600 cp to spend above, whether you bring in one of your existing companions or wish to recruit a new one, though you may also take one of the known deathknights already loose in Creation if you'd prefer. If you wish to create a full circle, this option discounts to 300 cp for four additional Abyssals, and discounts further to 400 cp for a full set of eight companions of death.

A Tiny Sliver of Hope [200, discount Independent]

In ancient times, when the Exaltations were first created, each of the Lunar Exaltations would be emotionally linked to a specific Solar Exaltation, mated to it in fact. The possessors of each would inevitably be drawn to one another; the Lunars would serve the Solars as shield mates, seconds, bodyguards and even lovers as the case might be. Of course this bond could manifest in a lot of ways, depending on the personalities in question. Some may become lovers, while others may become close friends, rivals, or even hated enemies. The mystical ties that once bound the Lunar Exalted to their Solar mates now offer Abyssal Exalted a tiny sliver of hope. Resonance is never gained from sins of life directly associated with the appropriate Lunar. If the deathknight's mate calls her by her forsaken name, she may answer to it. She can protect her mate from harm and love her with a positive Intimacy. The two can even have children together safely, for all that the Neverborn impotently roar in fury. If the Abyssal actually does hold positive feelings for their mate, the protection goes even further, shielding them from sins of death so long as their actions are in direct support or defense of the Lunar, such that a deathknight could safely ignore their Liege's command to murder their mate and could even fight the Deathlord in defense of that one precious life. With the small payment given here, you will be guaranteed to be drawn close to them early in your stay, and further you shall be allowed to take them with you when you leave this world again. Or you could simply import someone into this role if you prefer, granting them the benefits of Lunar Exaltation as your mate. You can only take this option once, but your fellow deathknights may spend their own points for the company of their own Mates.

The Once-Living [50]

Not all allies of the Chosen of Death are Exalted themselves, as some amongst their number deign to cultivate powerful allies amongst the ghosts of the Underworld. And for a small sum of 50 cp, you may take one of the Underworld's restless dead with you as well.

To be a ghost is to be a memory given form, a reflection of who and what the ghost was in his former life. The majority of ghosts appear exactly as they did either at death or moments before it, and most ghosts bear markings of some kind identifying the cause of death.

Their emotions and agendas are exaggerated passion-plays to stave off Lethe, not the organic motivations of the living. Exactly what gives a particular ghost the strength of will to resist Lethe varies from person to person, but the vast majority of the dead lead lives of quiet futility. Such ghosts spurn Lethe because of their inability to let go of their past lives, and so most ghosts feel compelled to continue the same rote tasks that filled their living days.

Ghostly farmers still arise with the sun and tend to their farms, growing food that no one actually needs to eat. Ghostly beggars still sit in street corners, begging for change, even though they no longer have any material needs and no longer suffer from any of the afflictions that had left them destitute in life. Not all ghosts fall into the trap of repetition,

however. Some manage to free themselves from the lure of living memories and forge new destinies for themselves in the Underworld.

Plasmic Familiar [50]

Abyssals cannot bond with living animals as the living can. Instead, they may attune their withered souls to the ghosts of predatory or scavenger animals, or the plasmic animals (well, *creatures*) native to the Underworld. Such familiars cannot provide additional Essence reserves for their masters and they are immaterial in all the same circumstances as human ghosts, limiting their usefulness outside the Underworld except as spies.

On the other hand, ghostly familiars can return from death. Unless it is slain with magic that annihilates spirits, the familiar re-forms after a number of days. The familiar emerges from its master's shadow fully healed at the next sunset after the appointed time without taking any lasting harm from the experience. Consequently, many Abyssals think nothing of ordering their familiars to perform "suicidal" tasks.

Death Cult [50 to 250]

The jealous Deathlords do not permit their servants to live as gods or bask in the adulation of worshipers. Regardless, Abyssals cannot help but awe and terrify people around them, so some amongst their number develop cults of their own. For 50 cp, you will have a group of eight full-time priests or nuns to worship you with suicidal fervor. For each additional 50 cp you spend, your cult may grow by a factor of five, to a maximum of five-thousand death cultists ready to worship and pray at your feet.

While a small fraction amongst them might be trained exorcists or even the occasional ghost-blooded or mortal necromancer, most of these cultists aren't useful for much beyond worship. That's not to say they're useless though, because they've memorised a startling number of rituals with which to venerate death and would happily slit their own throats at your request. Some of the most... *devout* amongst their number might even want to show their devotion by begging to taste the ecstasy of death at your hand. And when one amongst their number does perish, you may choose whether to have them be replaced with a new cultist in your following jump or to have their ghost continue to worship you in death.

Abyssal Command [50 to 250]

With necromancy capable of animating the dead, binding ghosts into servitude and chaining the souls of the living, the Deathlords have little trouble amassing large military forces.

Although the Abyssal Exalted are not yet as potent as their masters in this regard, some have begun raising their own armies of the dead.

Zombies and hungry ghosts have some advantages as troops compared to mortals, but their mindless state imposes severe limitations as well. For 50 cp, you will have a group of sixteen zombies, skeletons, or hungry ghosts to fight for you. For each additional 50 cp you spend, your ravenous army may grow by a factor of five, to a maximum of ten-thousand of the mindless dead ready to swarm your enemies at your command.

War ghosts and nemissaries have greater value than the mindless undead do, so they cost more. So for 50 cp, you will have a group of eight war ghosts or nemissaries to fight at your command. For each additional 50 cp you spend, your ghostly army may grow by a factor of five, to a maximum of five-thousand ghosts ready to fight under your banner.

Liege [600]

This is probably a bad idea. The Deathlords have made their pacts with the Neverborn. Each of them accepted their bargain, swearing themselves to Oblivion and the death of Creation, in exchange for the power to exact their revenge on the living.

Yet, did not the deathknights accept a similar bargain to take their Last Breath? Each of the Deathlords has their own ways and perspectives on both their place in the world and the power granted them. Some have become lunatic in their pursuit of Creation's doom, while others have all but abandoned that cause in lieu of their own individual schemes. Some of them dream of being free of the Neverborn and their taint, the oaths they've sworn so long ago little more than the chains of slavery. Some might betray the Neverborn cause if they thought they could accomplish their own goals in doing so.

And perhaps one should consider that each of the Deathlords was once a Solar Exalt, found worthy by the Unconquered Sun to smite the unholy and bring justice and peace to Creation. The Deathlords chose to reject that destiny and become unholy, but their original natures just might still be in there somewhere, buried deep inside a soul steeped in misery, revenge and despair. It's unlikely that anything could fan that tiny, guttering spark of humanity into a fire strong enough to awaken a Deathlord's long-forgotten self. But if anyone could...

With this option, you'll get the chance to convince one of the Deathlords to join you as a companion, freeing them from the shackles of the Neverborn. You don't have to choose which of them you want to take along beforehand, in case your attempts at negotiating with one of these ancient ghost does not work out, but you will have to do the convincing yourself. Some might be convinced more easily than others.

Manses:

Besides a panoply of artifacts and a coterie of allies and servants, there is one more thing an enterprising deathknight might gain here. Appropriately, you may choose from a selection of manses and hearthstones of ominous geomancy in this section.

Inverted Citadel of Restless Dead [400, discount Dusk]

Appearing like a haunted woodlands and dark meadows, with set of five tombs scattered around, this land seems peaceful. Yet in actuality, it has been poisoned by a lasting curse of undeath, just below the surface. Any time a living creature dies within its boundary, the ground softens and crumbles to absorb it. The corpse might rise again a few minutes later, its skin years rotted but its bones strong and claws sharp.

Yet, the majority of these ravenous zombies do not surface again immediately. Instead they burrow into the ground, which accepts them easily. Deep below the earth, they surface once again, within the bowels of a great fortress. There they join the existing crew of skeletons and nephwracks in guarding the halls and battlements of this great upside-down castle, lit by eternal lanterns of pyre flame, and set upon the ceiling of a truly gigantic cavern like a man-made crown of stalactites.

The zombies exist under the control of the hearthstone bearer, and with a command, they may burrow back towards the surface within minutes to wage a surprise war on anyone

foolish enough to encroach on your day. Should you wish, they may also drag the living into the ground to serve take as captives, instead of tearing them apart.

Besides this, your citadel can only be accessed by a long journey into the bowels of the surface tombs, their spiralling staircases eventually leading down to the treacherous floor of the cavern. High above, the impregnable fortress-manse glitters in the light of pyre flames. From this floor, the only way to approach the cavern's ceiling and the gates of the castle lies in well-guarded passages, as gravity reverses halfway along these paths.

Lamenting Temple of Oblivion's Mercy [400, discount Midnight]

This massive step pyramid is a temple dedicated to the Void, every inch of the black ziggurat and the grounds surrounding it consecrated to Oblivion. Any being, mortal or god alike, that would approach within five miles of the temple's structure is drained of their life in minutes, thus leaving only the dead and the temple's hereditary priesthood to walk its halls. Any Abyssal Exalted would instead be bolstered by the manse's aspect, while the priest are likewise blessed by the grace of the Void as they sing mourning hymns to the ancient dead, and record the whispers of the Void in black glossolalia.

The temple walls are made from a staggering amount of soulsteel bricks. Each year the priests remove one of these bricks, sanctify it with prayer, and then cast it into the pit to the Void at the center of the temple. Once they have done so, they retreat from the pit, before ritually slaying one of their own and smelting them into a fresh brick of soulsteel to replace the one cast into the Abyss. In this way, the temple shows the mercy of Oblivion. All will be released from suffering. Eventually.

In the meantime, the temple will serve you alongside the Void. The priest will obey your commands, as long as they do not interfere with their duties and the maintenance of the temple. While the outside is filled with the pained sounds of the soul trapped within its soulsteel walls, the Void stills these sounds within, leaving only the voices of its occupants and a near-inaudible whisper to fill the silence. You may take your residence here, or sit by the edge of Oblivion's whispering maw to contemplate the glory of the Void.

Bleak Atelier of Necro-Engineers [400, discount Daybreak]

Faith, magic and technology cpme together in the factory-cathedral. Within its walls were produced glorious wonders reserved for the greatest gods and Chosen. Almost none of these wonderous factory-cathedrals endure today, and those that remain are terribly damaged or lost to the impassable wilderness. But while practically no one alive could build a factory-cathedral today, the Deathlords are some of the few beings that could. Still, only one amongst the deathlords is *officially* known to possess an equivalent...

And now, you may acquire one of these wonders of dark design. Build as a great tower, this imposing manse has been designed to serve both as a factory-cathedral reminiscent of those built in the First Age and as an equally effective necrosurgery laboratory using more recent designs pioneered by the Deathlords. Unlike the hallowed cathedrals built by the Solars of old, these halls have not been sanctified or constructed as a temple-manse. Instead, special precautions have been taken to ensure the cold, sterile perfection of the Abyssal Essence that powers the horrible machines within.

Within these workshops, long forgotten First Age tools are set side by side with just as sophisticated new innovations. Here, eldritch suspension vats preserve the dead.

Essence-fueled welding tools fuse bone to bone. Flasks of reagents bubble and strange

devices whirl, spark and glow. The place carries about it a dark majesty that scares away most natural animals and invites bad weather, yet the environment stays oddly dry and cool. Black ornaments inset with iron, onyx, and obsidian further channel the manse's Essence into necromantic power, such that the costs of necromantic spells cast within the manse's walls are significantly reduced. Furthermore, the manse bolsters the strength of such spells beyond the capabilities of the necromancer's own Essence. All the better to animated the necrotic warmachines one might create within.

Hidden Estate of Undying Breath [400, discount Day]

True to its name, the Hidden Estate is hard to find. As far as outsiders can tell, the manse isn't there. Its geomancy redirects the eye of those not attuned to it so subtly that one must literally stumble over it to notice it. It gives no non-tactile sensory impressions, and the land where it should be seems normal (though its Essence flows may be felt by sensitive characters or geomancers). It exploits a gap in Fate's pattern to disguise its existence from the Loom of Fate. Even battles fought within the manse won't be obvious.

Worse, even if someone manages to stumble upon it, the Estate may have vanished again the next day. Powerful magic has shaped five other locations to be geomantically identical to the site of the manse, enabling the manse to vanish from its current location and appear in one of them, while still drawing Essence from its demesne. This process takes one hour, cannot happen more than once a day, and transports everything within the manse's walls. Once someone enters the manse though, it appears to be a large and extravagant manor house decorated in gothic style. Lavish furniture and decorations are scattered throughout the manse, while several magical conveniences boosts the comfort of occupants. Scarlet candles light whenever anyone enters a room, doors open when approached, the kitchens provide feasts for every dinner, the cellar is always stocked with fine wines, the temperature within is always pleasant, and a self-updating moonsilver plaque in the library keeps a cross-referenced catalog of every book on its shelves.

But what is arguably its greatest boon is much less obvious to a casual glance. A potent enchantment suffuses the environment with an overabundance of living Essence, though twisted to an Abyssal aspect, this still increasing the vitality of those within it. Those within heal from most any wound within hours, they recover easily from the most terrible diseases and poisons with ease. And provided that individuals do not spend more than one day away from the manse each week, they do not measurably age.

Forbidden Necropoli of Wraithly Chains [400, discount Moonshadow]

This large, walled complex can serve as a palace for emperors and princes to hold court as well as the jeweled heart of a city. Build primarily of precious wood, marble, and jade in lavish fashion reminiscent of the Realm at its peak, the necropoli consists of nine hundred ninety-nine buildings with nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine bays of rooms.

At each of the four corners of the wall sit guard towers with intricate roofs, while a total of five gates may grant access to the artfully-designed roads and terraces within. Four of these gates are grand and decorated, each piercing the walls in line with the cardinal directions, while one hidden gate can only be accessed by those who know of its secret.

The fifth gate is not a physical one, but one of ritual and blood. When one slays three living creatures on three consecutive nights, the pooling blood of the latest victim may be used as a gateway to the necropoli. For an instant, the traveller passes through the Labyrinth, before

stepping foot onto one of the terraces in the necropoli's garden, where delicate bones have been carefully sculpted into facsimiles of trees and fields of flowers.

Those who die within the necropoli, or within five miles of its walls, always leave ghosts. Moreover, these wraiths are bound to serve the master of the manse, unable to leave the grounds unless released from their servitude. A maximum of nine hundred and ninety-nine ghosts may be bound thusly, and while only the most powerful of ghosts could break free of this control on their own, the hearthstone bearer may release any ghosts at any time. Starting off, the necropoli has a full complement of ghostly retainers bound to it. Though most are simply ghostly servants and guards, a relative few of these ghosts are old and powerful enough to be considered beyond the might of ordinary wraiths. These few ancient courtiers of the dead may advise their master in many things, aid them with their mastery of ghostly arcanoi, and will guard the palace with the obsessive fury common to ghosts. Inside the necropoli-palace's walls, these and any other ghosts are always material, even when the sun of Creation reaches its zenith in the skies above. Nevertheless, those ghosts bound to serve may pass through the walls of the city as easily as they could when immaterial, to better serve their lord and court.

Cold Stones of a Dead Hearth [200, discount Deathlord Affiliation]

Although each Deathlord controls several manses in Creation, few of them own enough of these geomantic power stations to provide hearthstones for all their deathknights. On the other hand, most Deathlords control dozens or hundreds of manses in the Underworld, more than enough to supply their Abyssals with hearthstones. Yet the hearthstones from these Underworld manses work only in the Underworld itself. In Creation, these hearthstones become hard pebbles that grant neither Essence nor magical powers.

You have been granted the privilege of carrying and using some of these Underworld hearthstones, further magnifying your puissance in the Underworld. For each purchase of this, you may choose between receiving one of the mightier hearthstones of the Underworld or a small set of lesser ones.

Drawbacks:

Should you wish to draw upon more than your fair share of offerings, here you shall gain the opportunity to magnify your suffering in return for additional boons.

Endless Cycle of Forgotten Days and Dreamless Nights [+0]

You've been to this world before. The stench of life can be tasted on your fetid breath, it can be seen in the way you walk. You've made changes, haven't you? Pick this option, and you can return you to the moment when you last left Creation, though with your new background and new abilities. You've spent so much energy changing the world. It'll be all the sweeter when you're forced to tear it down, won't it?

First Dark Mutilation of the Willing [+100]

Deathknights are reshaped through their Exaltation, either becoming horribly beautiful monsters or beautifully monstrous horrors. Your body should have died when you took your Last Breath, and it acts like it. You will become as much like a shambling zombie as any

other reanimated corpse in the legions of the Deathlords. Your flesh will wither and rot, your extremities will be stripped to the bone. You will feel the maggots burrowing through your chest, the bot flies nesting in your empty eye-sockets. You will not be beautiful. You will never be beautiful again. Your repulsive visage won't even cause the fear it should, as you take on the look of a badly maintained zombie, though it will certainly evoke disgust. And don't even get me started on the smell. You might want to wear something to cover yourself up, and a lot of perfume, if you want any company here at all.

Rebuking Gaze of the Daystar [+100]

While the cloying essence of Creation is never truly pleasant for Abyssals, some have it worse than others. Too much sun can wrack some Abyssals with thundering headaches, while other deathknights even claim they can sense an ancient voice rebuking them just beneath the threshold of their perception. Even less fortunate deathknights don't feel that sense of condemnation when exposed to direct sunlight, but instead feel lost and disconnected, as if they were wandering in a fog with only a faint voice trying in vain to direct them to an unknown destination.

Your experience with living essence and sunlight is particularly bad, to the point that you need to go far further into adorning yourself and your surroundings with Underworld paraphernalia to feel somewhat comfortable at night. And no amount of trappings of the dead would help you deal with this discomfort when exposed to actual sunlight. Perhaps it would be best to stay within the Underworld as much as possible?

Moon Eclipses the Black Sun [+100]

While some Lunars offer their mates companionship and a tiny ray of hope, others are horrified to discover their mates as deathknights. Far from the glorious heroes of old they remember, Abyssals have become monstrous creatures of death. In them, the Lunars see the consequences of their failure to protect their mates. Some would try to redeem them, others would destroy them, and yet others would ponder alliances of convenience.

As the Solars returned to the world, one Lunar cast auguries for their mate and found the stars silent. But they did not give up. They searched for long days and nights, and finally found you. But you were not as their mate should be, and they were filled with horror at the creature of death you have become. Filled with horror, and determination.

Your Lunar mate will do their absolute best to try and redeem you. Through subtlety and guile, in a myriad of shapes. Through romance turned maddening and dangerous. And through force, if need be to take warforms. After all, it's for your own good. There will be no end to their efforts to push you, even should they be misguided.

Fascination of the Grotesque [+100]

Necrotech is an art as much as it is a science. A short man with three extra pairs of normal arms stitched to his sides and four more short arms stitched to his torso, running on its 12 arms to tear the living apart with its blade-fingers. Graft the muscle from four men directly onto a fifth and larger cadaver, whose bones are disjointed and flesh shredded to add height and reach, bolt the axe into one extra-long arm, and *voila*, destruction. Chains of human upper bodies with the torso hollowed out to insert the head of the next segment, a design meant to disgust as much as serve as cavalry, especially effective when a damaged section drops out and the head, slimed with rot and clotted gore, slides out of its "socket" in the

preceding segment's ribcage. Or even a design that appears as a morbidly obese dead woman, with her belly constantly writhing and a leathery flap of skin replacing her lower jaw, moving pretty quickly for something crawling on its hands and knees, and destroying life with its explosive stillborn children.

You'll find yourself fascinated by the art of necrosurgery, enraptured with twisting corpses into the most twisted and vile shapes, eager to cause horror through this defilement of cadavers. Perhaps they're not the most hygienic, or most effective, or even the most appreciated by others, but you will know them to be the works of art they are...

Assisted by the Green Lady [+100]

As luck would have it, you have gained a powerful and fiercely loyal ally. One whom you can and will trust completely. The Sidereal Exalt known as the Green Lady (or Ten Thousand Virtues, if you believe the Bishop was right about him being a man) has become your loyal servant, even as she still spies on heaven itself and four of the Deathlords, each of them convinced they are her true master. Preposterous, of course, since her loyalty is only to you. She certainly wouldn't betray *you*. Not like she did with the Deathlords, the Neverborn, the Bureau of Heaven, the Bronze Faction, and more besides. I'm sure that their unusually good intelligence on you must be because of some other spy. Certainly she wouldn't just be using you to learn how to destroy the Deathlords utterly.

Jumper of the Mirthless Smile [+200]

Even as a child, there was something *wrong* with you. You would stare at your nanny like you stared at your toys. As soon as you could walk, your parents began to find small animals you had captured and toyed with, often still alive with various organs half removed. First it was mice and cats. Then your brother went missing, only six at the time and scarcely a year older than you. He was never found. Your nanny was the next to disappear when you were strong enough by age 12 to carry out the murder. All the while, your parents never suspected. They underestimated you and bought you pretty garments and accessories that you dutifully wore and learned to clean the bloodstains from. Fooling them became a game, and you planned a thousand different murders for them that you managed to avoid only by venting your growing resentment on other prey. In adolescence, you finally decided it was time and butchered your family. Your mother was the last to die with a look of astonished horror on her face that makes you giggle to this day.

The Neverborn touched upon your mind, even before you took your Last Breath, their taint pressed deeply into your mind. For your time here you'll be fascinated by pain and causing it, unburdened by conscience, and with an utter lack of empathy for other people.

I'm sure you'll make for a marvellous deathknight.

Monstrance of Celestial Portion [+200]

Magical receptacles for Abyssal Exaltations between mortal incarnations, the Monstrances of Celestial Portion have another purpose. They serve as reliable and thorough methods of control for the Deathlords, allowing them to keep their Abyssal Exalted in line. Both certain Charms and all necromancy may treat a deathknight's Monstrance as if it were a physical extension of their body, transmitting the effects of the magic directly to them regardless of distance. Deathlords use this dread mystical correspondence to communicate with and punish their deathknights at their leisure. Deathlords may punish deathknights in creatively

gruesome ways that redefine a soul's threshold of terror, but the worst thing they can do is cast a deathknight's Monstrance of Celestial Portion into the Abyss. It is said that as the Monstrance dissolves into the Abyss, so too will the deathknight suffer dissolution. Normally this would be an idle threat, hollow lies perpetrated by the Deathlords to strengthen their control, as the destruction of a Monstrance leaves a deathknight unharmed. But it is not so for you, as your Monstrance of Celestial Portion works exactly as advertised against you. Through it, your Deathlord will be able to communicate and punish you as they like, and if it is hurled into the Abyss, then you will be consumed by the Void as well. Should you decide to be an Independent, you will still have a Monstrance, but it shall be held by the Neverborn themselves instead of one of the Deathlords. Only occasionally rousing from their slumber, they will make demands much less frequently, yet the punishments for failure or defiance would make one consider simple dissolution as a blessing.

Dimming of the Light [+200]

Another function of the Monstrances of Celestial Portion is their ability to transform a Solar Exalt into an Abyssal through a complex necromantic rite. The Solar must be inside the Monstrance and agree to the transformation, either deliberately or because their will is broken. Not one Solar has agreed willingly. But torture of body and mind, particular of the sort the Deathlord can concoct to lavish upon their victims, may break even the iron will of the Chosen. In doing so, their Exaltation breaks and twists from Solar to Abyssal. Lawgivers trapped in a Monstrance who succumb to the despair of Oblivion can choose death, catatonia or defilement into an Abyssal. You chose defilement, and servitude. Once, you had a hero's destiny laid out before you. In fact, you fulfilled that destiny by becoming one of the Solar Exalted. Yet this was quickly cut short, outmaneuvered and captured by one of the Deathlords, who vowed to make you their own. Days passed. Days of horrible visions, treacherous whispers, of dark gospel, of pain unimaginable. In the end, you surrendered to the Black Exaltation and gave you soul to the Abyss. Now you are haunted both by the memories of that torment and the memories of your time as a sun-kissed champion. Distrusted by your liege and fellow deathknights, your torture nevertheless succeeded admirably. Guilt and the despair of Oblivion fills your heart at the best of times, while even the idea of more than a token disobedience fills you with terror.

Resonant with Dark Fate [+200]

The Neverborn appear to have developed a dislike for you. You will accumulate necrotic essence and the ire of the Neverborn much faster than your peers seem to. The Resonance will keep building Resonance until unleashed as black miracles of the Neverborn that do their killing for them. You will be haunted much more than others by the displeasure of your malign masters and the accumulating force of death and destruction in your anima. Your loved ones will die, shadowlands will form around you, animals flee and mortals will find your presence unbearable, pain and injury, crippling wounds, and even outright possession by the Neverborn are but some of the possible form your Resonance eruptions might take. Even if you are truly loyal to the cause of Oblivion, you shall find that you will often have to seek atonement for your "sins", or suffer the consequences. Should you decide to become a renegade and turn your back on the Neverborn? Your suffering will be legendary.

Slain by the Forgotten Blade [+200]

The Walker in Darkness emerged in the Underworld as a virtual amnesiac, murdered by a powerful artifact that slew the memories of its victims as well as their bodies. Nephwracks found him and led him to the Labyrinth, where the Neverborn easily seduced him to their cause. Perhaps out of malicious humor, the Neverborn later sent the Walker in Darkness to recruit his murderer after the latter's demise. Yet while the Walker in Darkness does not remember his killer, he did soon develop a palpable dislike of the Mask of Winters. Struck with a similar weapon, or perhaps the very same one, before accepting your Exaltation, you enter this world a virtual amnesiac too. However, while the knowledge of yourself and your life before entering this world and Exaltation are gone, your skills and power remain, even if you might not know you have them. Likewise, attachments and convictions are left, though you may not recognize them until you meet their subject again, for even if you don't remember why you feel a certain way, the emotion remains.

Shoat of the Mire [+300]

Congratulations, you're the newest Shoat of the Mire. Which means you're an inexperienced child, less than 10 years old, and just around three feet tall. Keep in mind that Abyssals don't age past Exaltation. In addition to being smaller and physically weaker than other Exalts, you'll also have some trouble controlling your anima, occasionally appearing as a tiny radiant spirit of darkness, and you come with a huge helping of trauma and stockholm syndrome. Last but not least, the Dowager is likely to kill you when you outlive your usefulness, so getting away from her before your first year is up might be a wise decision. Should you choose another affiliation than the Dowager's, you'll already have escaped, either joining another Deathlord or going renegade. Do not expect the Dowager to be pleased, and do watch out for your successor when she comes for you.

Alternatively, should you not wish to be a Dusk Caste taking on the role of the Shoat, the Dowager might also have started to experiment in creating a full circle. A full circle of traumatised child-Exalts will be created, with both you and the current Shoat of the Mire as founding members.

Whispers of Oblivion [+300]

From their moment of choice until the end of days, the voices of the Neverborn whisper in their souls. Every Abyssal mind receives these signals, but not everyone can translate them into meaningful information or even notice them. Some deathknights experience these whispers as an incoherent river-rush they must dam up and release only under specific conditions, such as during meditation, in the throes of ecstatic climax or at the red peak of battlefield frenzy. To others, the whispers become an open connection to a single Neverborn lord. A lucky few deathknights hear the whispers only periodically, and only when their masters need something important done immediately.

You are not one of the lucky ones. From the moment you took your last breath, you were immersed in the Whispers of the Neverborn and Oblivion itself, drowning in the omnipresent nightmares of the Neverborn. You have all-but transcended sanity and all vestiges of your humanity in obeisance to Oblivion. Your visions are agonizingly clear when they come, granting both unambiguous awareness of the Neverborn's wishes and much dread wisdom besides. But while looking into the thoughts of the Neverborn brings both madness and

wisdom, the ever-insistent Whispers of Oblivion bring only further madness, and the difference between the will of the Neverborn and false visions is hard to discern.

Ennui Clad in a Raiment of Tears [+300]

When she lived, the Lover pursued every form of pleasure the decadent Solar Exalted could devise. Eventually, she realized that pleasure bore diminishing returns. Every pleasure palls in time, and the hedonist becomes so jaded that the continued pursuit of pleasure becomes pointless. With this epiphany, the Solar realized the futility of her own millennia-long existence. She contemplated suicide before the Dragon-Blooded did her the favor of ending her life for her.

Convinced of the utter pointlessness of human existence, the Lover now spreads ultimate pleasure among her followers because she knows from bitter experience that when pleasure ends, nothing of any value remains. Luckily, you have already attained enlightenment through a surfeit of pleasure just as she did. Nothing you do or experience here will bring you any pleasure or joy, your ennui running too deep to find any meaning or satisfaction in the world around you, saving perhaps in fading memories.

First and Forsaken Jumper [+300]

For his defiance, the First of Forsaken Lion, was spirited deep inside one of the tombs of the Neverborn, where his tormenter subjected him to torture and curses the likes of which none can imagine and which cannot be described. As a constant reminder of his insubordination, his master caused hundreds of soulsteel rivets to pierce the substance of his body. With sorcerous tools, the servant of his master attached the components of his soulsteel armor to his torso and limbs, a black carapace that has become his prison. This is his curse for defying his master: endless agony and the immutability of his ethereal body.

While you will not taste the torture beyond torture of the personal attention of the Neverborn, you will suffer the same effects that still linger with the Lion. Hundreds of soulsteel rivets have been set into your flesh, to which has been attached armor that covers you from head to toe. Now permanently riveted into your armor and in constant agony, you will find that whatever abilities you might have had to change your shape are inert, unable to change you within your metal prison.

If you wish, you may be riveted into an armor you already possess instead of one supplied by this drawback, as long as it covers you from head to toe.

"I Refuse" [+300]

So you actually had the strength of will to refuse the Black Exaltation, even in the face of imminent death? Good on you.

You still died.

Yet, death is not quite the end for you. Not today. No, you fell down into the Underworld as a ghost instead. At the moment of death, the connection between body and soul snaps, and the soul is set adrift. Confused and bewildered, the newly dead immediately feel the subtle pull of Lethe. Most souls enter it almost instantly and are carried away to their next lives. Relatively few resist, fighting off both Lethe's insistent tugging and their own malaise.

Now you are one of them, deprived both of life and the power of Exaltation, but still able to cling to your former identity. And cling you must, for as a ghost you will always feel the relentless pull of Lethe as it seeks to draw you back into the wheel of life.

To be a ghost is to be a memory given form, a reflection of who and what the ghost was in his former life, and you will likely spend your time here in the bleak realm of the Underworld, as merely one of the many ghosts produced by the Age of Sorrows.

For your time here you'll be subject to all the limitations and foibles of your new undead condition, which includes (but is not limited to) being immaterial in Creation, susceptibility to necromancy and certain Abyssal tricks, and an inability to heal from injuries without entering Slumber. Should you experience Second Death, passing into Lethe or Oblivion, you will fail the jump as you normally would for dying. Likewise, being forged into soulsteel will also permanently end your days of jumping.

Ending:

So you survived your time here, at least in a manner of speaking? Well then, it's time to make one, final choice.

Oblivion: Perhaps laboring under the curse of Abyssal Exaltation in this bleak realm finally broke your resolve. Perhaps you simply wish to rest. Whatever the case, you may return home now.

Underworld: Perhaps you've decided that to rule the dead for eternity as their lawgiver doesn't sound so bad. Perhaps you want to finish the job of slaying Creation. Whatever the case, you may take your leave of the chain and stay in this world.

Lethe: Or you could pass from this world to the next, carrying the dark glory of the Void upon your brow. There are still fresh worlds to kill, after all.

Notes:

Perfect effect charms are not literally omnipotent and powerful magic/conceptual abilities from other settings could plausibly overpower or match it. (Thank you Anon)

After the jump, you and your companions will be able to respire essence outside the underworld and shadowlands, and will no longer have a problem with living essence.

Similarly, you will be free from Resonance and your dark fate, no longer suffering the wrath of the Neverborn. Should you still have a Monstrance of Celestial Portion, you may decide to have it harmlessly shattered.

If you wish, you may also start aging again, though your body will never deteriorate past its physical prime.

You still get your Exaltation proper after the jump, if you took a drawback that made you something else (ghost). Unless you don't want it for some reason.

Modern abyssal charms may be learned/developed as normal.

You may pick any Hearthstone power appropriate your Manse (Abyssal-aspected).

The Exaltation gained by you will not count being killed as death if you have extra life perks to resurrect without loss of the chain, nor will they immediately separate from you if you lose and are sent home. Only final death counts. Any Companions with Exaltations will similarly not lose them if they respawn normally, only on final death.

Likewise, out-of-jump modifications to your nature, your body, your mind, your soul, or anything else will not cause your Exaltation to stop recognizing you as human and fly off. In-jump means with that effect (such as learning Cosmic Principle of [Yozi]) may still cause it to leave you.

After the jump, you may use Shadowlands and other ways to travel to the Underworld to access local afterlives/underworlds.