

## ALBICANT PURSUIT OF TRUTH

### *Once, there was...*

Once, there was a young boy who lived in a tower; and that tower belonged to a dragon, and the boy belonged to the dragon as well.

The dragon had taken the boy while he was very young, and he had raised him ever since. He would tell him wondrous stories of what he would become one day: that he was son of Heaven, heir to all the stars in the sky. That one day he would take his place in the sky and the dragon would be at his side.

The dragon would take many shapes for the boy's pleasure. He would be a friend to play with, a mother to cry to, a rival to train against. He would teach the boy the ways of the sword, and the fist, and the empty hand; and the way of the silver tongue and the eyes that would set hearts on fire.

But the boy had strange dreams at night, dreams of a woman clad in shadows that would visit him and whisper secrets he could not understand. He told of these dreams to the dragon, and the dragon smiled and told him to think of it no more; but secretly he was afraid. Around the tower and in the boy's room he engraved symbols of great occult power, which were said to ward off spirits of the night and dreams; and he went deep into the earth, where he held troves of jewels and jade ornaments and silver dishes stolen from kingdoms that were no more. There he called upon all the things that creep and crawl, upon all the things that burrow and slither; and he bid them watch over his pupil, for a reward of vast treasures.

For a while, all was peaceful again. The boy was troubled by dreams no more. And on his thirteenth birthday, as he played at riddles with his nurse (who was also the dragon), a sense of great warmth and cunning came over him; and when he looked at his own hands he saw that he was all washed in green light. The nurse melted into long sinuous dark scales, and the dragon appeared before him smiling very wide.

"Shall I go to Heaven now?" the boy asked.

"I am afraid not, my dear child. I still fear the woman who visited you in dreams; if we were to visit the palaces of the gods now, she might come from some alley, or hide as some beggar or merchant, and steal you away while I am not looking. You must grow yet more, and I must complete your training."

The boy understood, though he was sad. That night he went out on the roof of the tower, and there he looked at the stars for hours on end; and one of the stars seemed to shine brighter than any other; and as he reached out with his hand as if to pluck it from the sky, it descended towards him, and appeared to him as a woman clad in light; she put a finger to

his lip to hush him, and she whispered secrets in his ear - which long he had heard, but only now understood.

This time the boy did not tell of this visit to his guardian. But the dragon was an old and clever beast, and it had little to do but watch from the shadows and play strange games with his pupil. And so as every night the young boy found his way to the roof, and as he grew strange and distant and dreamy by day, the dragon became afraid again. Yet he could not write wards into the skies; and so he had to fly far and wide, in the empty air where he had no hidden treasures, and enlist the help of all the things that flew. Soon birds flew around the tower to warn him of all that would happen on his roof. But the boy had grown clever, and been taught many tricks by the woman clad in light; on a flute of jade he played a tune, and all the birds fell asleep, though they remembered it not; and thus he continued his secret visits. The boy grew somber and melancholy; there was a dream in his eyes and on his mind, and now his voice had the sullen tone of those who long for something they cannot have.

And there came a time when the dragon felt no longer like the child was his captive, but rather like he was the child's. The tower had become his prison, and now he could feel curious green eyes stare at him from every shadow; and the dragon, which was a beast of deceit and craven cunning, went to the boy, and took the face of the mother he had taken so many times before.

"It is time," he said. "I will now take you to Heaven, where you will claim your birthright; and together we will sit on the thrones of the god, and drink ambrosia from cups of orichalcum. Come with me, my son."

The boy stared into the eyes of the beast, and the dragon saw that his eyes were dark and green and full of stars besides. "I am not your son," the boy said calmly, "and I will not go to Heaven with you. I have watched you in the dark as you watched me so many times before; and I have seen the places where you burrow into the earth, and I have seen the foul airs on which you fly; and I now know you to be a creature of darkness and mischief, and I will not take you to the palaces of pearl and gold of which I have been told."

"All that I did, all the mischief and deceit and suffering that I caused," the dragon hissed, "I did for you: to fill these caves with treasures for you to bask in, to learn all the precious and secret lore of man for you to use. Is this how I am repaid?"

"If truly you did it all for me, then allow me to leave this tower unimpeded, and accept that this is my choice, and trust that I may come back one day to take you to the palaces of gold and pearl."

"You ungrateful child!" the beast howled and screamed and shook. "We were meant to rule in Heaven together, as father and son! But I will sooner tear your body apart and cast it to the four winds than accept to see you go without me!"

And as he said these words, the dragon bloated to tremendous size, as all the shadows of the tower seemed to become part of him; and at the same time this terrible mass of roiling shadows and gnashing fangs put forward the face of the child's mother, as if to cause him doubt while it braced for the killing stroke.

But the boy paid it no mind; he drew the sword that hung at his waist, and in the same motion cut through his mother's figure, and the roiling shadows, and the gnashing fangs; and all the masks and disguises of the dragon were shattered. The beast snarled and hissed and roared, and his coils grew like the trunk of a great redwood, and his scales became like tight-bound shields of steel. But the boy drew his sword, and in the same motion he cut through the scales and the coils and all the shadowy substance of the dragon, which became naught. Then there came a great and terrible scream; and the tower entire twisted and writhed, and all its corridors of stone pulsed like the arteries of a great being, and all its doors were filled with fangs and claws, and the whole thing twisted in the form of a dragon more terrible than both that had come before. But the boy drew his sword, and in the same motion he cut through the walls, and the doors, and the fangs, and the tower entire; and all of it crumbled to dust and shadow, and there came no more sound.

The boy searched for a moment in the dust of the tower, and he found a small, wriggling thing, a little black lizard with stubby wings, which did not speak but stared at him with wide, confused eyes. He put it in his pocket, inside his coat, and he walked away; and as he did a great road of starlight appeared beneath his feet, and a woman clad in shadow and a woman clad in light were walking by his side and smiling softly; and the road went up, and up, and up, and soon they disappeared into the sky.

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The Albicant Pursuit of Truth Style is a Sidereal Martial Art designed for the purposes of evading deceit, doggedly pursuing a goal, and achieving enlightenment by destroying all obstacles on the path to true revelation. Though its ability to ward off trickery is prized by many, few Sidereals bother to master the style, as the overt and destructive effects of some of its techniques make it ill-suited to the subtle defenders of the integrity of the world.

**Form Weapons:** The Albicant Pursuit of Truth Style is at its heart a sword-based style. Though use of unarmed attacks are possible with certain Charms, those which explicitly call out the use of a sword in their description require the use of its form weapon: the slashing sword. This style is incompatible with armor.

#### EMPTY-MIND WALKING STANCE

**Cost:** 3m, 1lh; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

**Keywords:** Combo-OK

**Duration:** Indefinite

**Prerequisite Charms:** None

*who met a Prophet on the Road.*

The truth may not be found without first being sought. Accepting this principle, the disciple takes his first step on the path, unshod. Soon his feet will bleed and the sun will beat on his shoulder - but he will carry on.

Though reflexive, this Charm may only be activated after the user has travelled a distance of (Essence x 10) yards without stopping. The health level lost to this Charm is committed, and may not be healed without ending the Charm. This Charm adds (Martial Arts) to the user's Move speed, and (Essence + Martial Arts) to his Dashing speed. Furthermore, he is immune to fatigue and exhaustion.

When involved in a chase (as per *Shards of the Exalted Dream* rules), the martial artist may add two successes to every interval roll.

*Sutra:* a Sidereal has the option of discharging this Charm in step 5 of attack resolution, ending it and adding his (Martial Arts + Essence) to the raw damage of a successful attack; he must then pursue his movement past his opponent for as far as required to consume the rest of his movement speed on that tick.

#### EMPTY-HEART DEDICATION STANCE

**Cost:** 4m, 1lh; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

**Keywords:** Combo-OK

**Duration:** Indefinite

**Prerequisite Charms:** None

*"Halt," he said: "your journey is at an end."*

Eyes closed, the seeker meditates until he has found clarity of the heart and mind, and opens his eyes towards the sun. Burned by its blaze, all that they fall upon is cast in the sharp, merciless light of truth. His heart has no place for delusion, no place for deceit. He will stare down the mirages of the desert and the alluring shadows of the night alike.

Though reflexive, this Charm requires the user to spend at least (Essence) ticks in a row deliberately blind prior to its activation, suffering the normal penalties. Characters with Charms or other assets allowing them to ignore blindness penalties may use a meditation exercise to shut off their enhanced senses. The health level cost of this Charm is committed, and may not be healed without ending the Charm. As long as it is active, the user is immune to Illusion and Emotion effects, and may see normally in mundane or magical darkness.

*Sutra:* a Sidereal has the option of discharging this Charm upon being targeted by an unnatural mental influence, perfectly parrying it and ending the Charm.

#### EMPTY-HAND REBUKING STANCE

**Cost:** 4m, 1wp, 1lh; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

**Keywords:** Combo-OK

**Duration:** Indefinite

**Prerequisite Charms:** None

*"I am the Truth you seek."*

Digging his nails deep into the palm of his hand, the seeker draws blood, so that pain may remind him of the inherent suffering of material life. Blood runs up his arm, and esoteric symbols of enlightenment are painted on his skin. His empty hand - the one which does not serve to draw his sword - now serves as a beacon and a bulwark against the lures of this world.

Though Simple, this Charm may be reflexively activated if the user fails to parry a lethal attack with his bare hand and suffers damage as a result. The health level cost of this Charm is committed, and healing it ends the Charm. This Charm grants the user's empty hand the statistics of a Thunderbolt Shield of the magical material of his choice. If another Charm grants the user altered unarmed stats, he may choose whichever is most advantageous at any moment. Furthermore, gods and beings outside of fate suffer a -2 external penalty to attacks against the user.

*Sutra:* a Sidereal has the option of discharging this Charm in step 9 of an attack by a god or a being outside of fate as a Counterattack; this Charm ends in a blinding flash of light, and all gods or beings outside of fate, as well as all currently immaterial beings, are knocked back (Essence x 10) yards as undodgeable, unblockable effect. As an exception to normal knockback rules, this inflicts no damage, but targets pass through obstacles and reach the maximum distance.

### DECEIT-SHATTERING STRIKE

**Cost:** 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple (Speed 4, DV -1)

**Keywords:** Combo-OK

**Duration:** Instant

**Prerequisite Charms:** Empty-Mind Walking Stance, Empty-Heart Dedication Stance, Empty-Hand Rebuking Stance

*The maiden cut him down without a thought,*

Having mastered the Three Noble Paths to Truth, the seeker is now finally allowed to draw his sword in the pursuit of his quest. Though the base purpose of a blade is to shed blood, the seeker sees in his own sword something more - a tool to seek enlightenment by cutting down all obstructions to his understanding of Truth.

This Charm is an unarmed attack at the user's full dice pool against a target. If successful, it inflicts no damage; rather, the user gains knowledge of all Charms, shapeshifting or other effects currently disguising, concealing, or otherwise misleading others as to the nature of the target or their location, and may choose to end any single one of them which has a minimum Essence lower than the threshold successes on their attack roll. In the case of powers which enhance the user in other ways - such as Infernal Shintai or Lunar shapeshifting - additional benefits are not lost; only deceit is revealed, as the Lunar or Infernal sees spectral outline of their true form overlaid with her current shape, revealing them. This effect does end any external penalty or mental influence arising from the effect, and reveals invisible characters.

*Sutra:* a Sidereal may use this Charm to destroy an astrological destiny, rolling his raw damage against the destiny's Endurance and unravelling one Endurance per damage.

### ALBICANT PURSUIT OF TRUTH FORM

**Cost:** 8m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Simple

**Keywords:** Form-type, Overdrive

**Duration:** One scene

**Prerequisite Charms:** Deceit-Shattering Strike  
*and continued on her way.*

One hand over the hilt of his sword, the martial artist aligns his soul and Essence into a weapon of perfect purpose. His sword grows to the dim gold-white of heated metal from its sheer speed. While under the effects of this Charm, the user adds 2 dice to the minimum

damage of his unarmed attacks, and rolls 10s twice on damage rolls. Furthermore, while using this Form, the user may Dash reflexively with a DV -0 penalty. Finally, the user may not be disarmed of his sword, nor forcibly deattuned from it.

*Dynamic Form Transition:* this Charm may be assumed reflexively without a Charm activation under any of the following circumstances:

- If the practitioner wins Join Battle (achieves a Join Battle score higher than that of all his opponents).
- If the practitioner successfully incapacitates a non-extra enemy with the first attack directed towards them in the fight.

*Sutra:* a Sidereal knowing the Albicant Pursuit of Truth Form acquires a ten mote overdrive pool. If he wins Join Battle, he gains a number of offensive motes equal to the number of ticks of action between him and the opponent closest to him in the tick order upon activating this Charm. Every time his DV refreshes while this Charm is active, he gains one offensive mote.

#### INFINITE DISTRACTIONS REMOVAL ATEMU

**Cost:** 10m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5, DV -1)

**Keywords:** Combo-OK

**Duration:** Instant

**Prerequisite Charms:** Albicant Pursuit of Truth Form

*The Elder Sutra of Seeking: The maiden cut down many things in her quest.*

Setting his mind on his one target, the seeker comes into perfect focus. He draws his sword but once and flashes before everyone's eyes, appearing a foot behind his target sheathing his weapon - followed a moment later by the blast of his devastating rush, which lays waste to all which stood in his way.

The martial artist selects one point or target within (Essence x 10) yards, and instantly appears at that point - or in the case of the target, just beneath them. He makes a single unarmed attack roll, which is applied to all characters within (Essence x 2) yards of his line of movement. This roll is then separately applied to the final target, if applicable; for each point of Magnitude of extras defeated and each non-extra opponent incapacitated in the first phase of that attack, the user adds one die to his post-soak damage roll.

*Sutra:* a Sidereal using this Charm bypasses all Blockade Movement actions, and all Defend. Other actions that are not enhanced by the use of a perfect parry.

#### ALL CHAFF BEFORE THE BLAST

**Cost:** 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Supplemental

**Keywords:** Combo-OK

**Duration:** Instant

**Prerequisite Charms:** Infinite Distractions Removal Strike

*She cut down warriors and kings and gods,*

Princes and paupers, gods and men, ghosts and demons, none are more than figments of their own imagination, fantasies which dreamed themselves awake. They are delusions and obstacles on the path to revelation, and the seeker cuts them down all alike.

A corona of red-gold air shrouds the blade as it waves through the air at tremendous speed. This Charm enhances an unarmed attack, allowing it to ignore external penalties, strike through cover, and hit dematerialized targets.

*Sutra:* Immortal beings slain by a Sidereal using this attack are destroyed forever, as per Ghost-Eating Technique.

#### WORLD-GRINDING WHEEL OF FATE

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Simple (Speed 4, DV -1)

**Keywords:** Combo-OK

**Duration:** Instant

**Prerequisite Charms:** Infinite Distractions Removal Strike

*she cut down rivers and forests and mountains,*

In time the world itself appears to become an obstacle on the path to enlightenment. The true road winds through the heart of man and the contours of his soul, not the incidental shape of the base earth. Understanding this, the seeker strikes at the world, and his single blow cuts a path through the sea, quells the raging fire, and lays flat the mountains.

This Charm is a single unarmed attack directed against an environmental hazard, impediment, or a structure that is not a man-made building or vehicle. If an environmental hazard, it is made against a DV of the hazard's (Damage + Trauma), plus the Essence of its creator if it is magical. Against environmental impediments, it is automatically successful, and against structures it must roll against soak as normal.

If successful, the user's sword strike opens a path through his obstacle. An area (Essence) yards in radius and reaching (Essence x 10) yards ahead of him is made safe for travel for the rest of the scene. Fire falls to embers, a path is cut through the sea, thorns and brambles are cut down, and even mountains are pierced through.

*Sutra:* If the path opened is not enough, a Sidereal user may maintain this Charm active and continue to cut a path as he walks. This requires him to continuously dedicate his actions to doing so, which may not be flurried. The Charm only ends once he stops.

#### DESIRE-ENDING SATORI STRIKE

**Cost:** 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Simple

**Keywords:** Combo-OK

**Duration:** Instant

**Prerequisite Charms:** Infinite Distractions Removal Strike

*she cut down love and hate and anger and fear.*

Desire is the root of suffering. Passions are the root of evil. All the things of this world are like shadows cast upon a wall, acting out a silent play. The enlightened knows their true worth - which is none. With cruel kindness, he may bring this enlightenment to others. The seeker's sword sublimates into translucent energy, and he strikes a bloodless blow.

The martial artist may make one unarmed attack against another. On a successful strike, he inflicts no damage. Instead, his blade cuts through mental bindings, ending any and every unnatural mental influence affecting the target and restoring them to painful clarity. Only the bindings of demons and the Great Curse escape this Charm. If applicable, the target gains one point of Limit.

*Sutra:* a Sidereal may choose to turn their blade against themselves in an automatically successful attack. This removes influences affecting the user, but does not inflict Limit on them.

#### ESSENCE-UNRAVELLING RIPOSTE

**Cost:** 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Reflexive (step 2)

**Keywords:** Combo-OK

**Duration:** Instant

**Prerequisite Charms:** All Chaff Before the Blast, World-Grinding Wheel of Fate, Desire-Ending Satori Strike

*she cut down the walls of reality itself.*

Even the flows of Essence which make up reality itself cannot be the form of the Truth. True enlightenment must transcend them, exist as something beyond Essence itself, an idea, a conceptual underlay to the universe - a cosmic truth. Embracing this notion, the seeker draws his sword and parts the Essence shaped by the hostile world against him.

This Charm allows its user to enhance a parry against a hostile attack, cancelling one reflexive or supplemental Charm used to enhance the attack. This Charm may not be an Excellency.

*Sutra:* a Sidereal may use Essence-Unravelling Riposte to counter Simple Charms targeted at him or an area in which he stands, even those which do not have activation rolls. This levies a +4m cost, and is considered a perfect defense; its limitation to Simple Charms is its flaw of invulnerability. This is an Instant effect; continuous large-scale effects such as Dragon Vortex Attack are not dispelled, though non-instant effect which must specifically affect the target are, such as Blinding the Boar.

#### WHERE ALL ROADS END

**Cost:** 6m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Simple

**Keywords:** Combo-OK

**Duration:** Indefinite

**Prerequisite Charms:** Essence-Unraveling Riposte

*Standing in the void, she saw herself at the end of her road,*

One by one, all the restraints of the world have fallen off the seeker's body and soul. Only the road in his heart remains. As he closes his eyes, all the colors of the world seem to pale before him, and all things to take on a ghostly translucence. His path is sure, and the world may not impede it.

This Charm makes its user invisible, though appropriate magic may still notice him and he is vulnerable to attacks from material opponents. Not truly immaterial, the martial artist exists in a state of unreality; no obstacle, whether material or dematerialized, may block his path. He may move through walls and other obstacles and ignore Blockade Movement actions. Attacks are still possible, but the user may not take any object he did not wear at the moment of activation. This Charm may not pass into any area warded against teleportation. When used during a Chase, this Charm reduces the Difficulty of the interval rolls by (Essence /2).

*Sutra:* a Sidereal may attempt an Essence roll-off to enter warded places, adding Essence successes to the roll, but suffers one aggravated damage per attempt regardless of success.

#### ASSUMING THE MAIDEN'S MANTLE

**Cost:** 1ahl; **Mins:** Martial Arts 6, Essence 6; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5, DV -0)

**Keywords:** Combo-OK, Obvious

**Duration:** Instant

**Prerequisite Charms:** Where All Roads End



*One hand on her sword and about to strike.*

The barest branch is beautiful, one moment - while it breaks. At the end of his journey, in the place beyond worlds, the seeker finds that the universe as only one shape - that of his own reflection. This is not the last step on the path of revelation; first he must embrace this image and accepts what he has become - the maiden who waits at the end of all men's roads, and at the end of the world also.

The cost of this Charm must be paid upon rolling Join Battle, inflicting one point of aggravated damage on the user as his very Essence rebels under the strain of channeling it with such speed and power. If the martial artist wins Join Battle, he may then incur one point of Limit and use this Charm's action to activate as many Simple Charms as he desires as if they were reflexive and Combo-OK. Their cost must be paid as normal. The user's own anima is swallowed into his body, and his skin burns from within with a glow of burning Essence; his figure is warped into a grander, more terrible vision of himself.

*Sutra:* a Sidereal using this Charm may choose to take one point of Paradox rather than Limit.

#### BEFORE THE NAME OF HEAVEN

**Cost:** 20m, 2wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 6, Essence 6; **Type:** Simple

**Keywords:** Combo-OK

**Duration:** Special

**Prerequisite Charms:** Assuming the Maiden's Mantle

*"Now I know," she said. "I am the Truth I sought."*

In the place without place, in the time before time, the seeker and the Truth join as one. The master of the Albicant Pursuit lets shine his terrible form as the embodiment of a final Truth which transcends existence and the world - an image of the universe as it was before the notion of "being" crystallized, the non-being to which all things in time shall return. His sword burns a bright white, and the world arounds it dissolves into a shining white void in an ever widening radius.

Upon activation of this Charm, the martial artist creates an environmental hazard with the following statistics: Damage 3A/action, Trauma 4. This hazard first occurs in a radius of one yard around the user's sword. However, with every turn, the user may choose to spend 4m to feed it. As long as it is fed on every action, the hazard continues to grow: to (Essence) yards on the second action, (Essence x 2) on the third action, (Essence x 5) on the fourth, (Essence x 10) on the fifth, (Essence x 20) on the sixth, (Essence x 50) on the seventh, (Essence x 100) on the eighth, and finally to its maximum radius of half a mile mile after nine action. At this point, spending further motes only serves to sustain it. If at any point the user ceases to feed the hazard, this Charm ends abruptly. The hazard's damage bypasses soak against inanimate objects and structures, and is sure to cause total destruction given sufficient time, leaving only a crater.

*Sutra:* a Sidereal user may cause the hazard to cease growing at any stage rather than only at its maximum radius. Furthermore, by using a prayer strip inscribed with the Sutra of Seeking and suffering one point of lethal damage, a Sidereal who allowed the destruction radius to reach its maximum size may cause the Charm to become self-sustaining and to last for the rest of the scene or until the user is incapacitated.

