

HIGHLANDER HERO

5th Edition Rules
written by Carlos Ortiz



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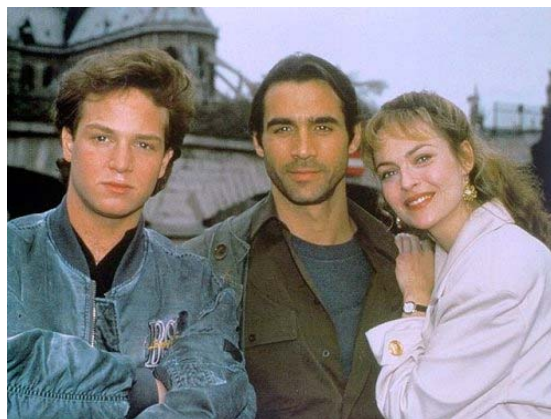
INTRODUCTION



Immortals are men and women (sometimes children) who cannot die except through decapitation. They live for centuries without aging or suffering from physical illness, although they may still be afflicted with insanity or other emotional maladies. If these people are injured or even “killed,” they regenerate quickly.

No one is sure what causes immortality, but it is believed to be a genetic mutation (GMs can choose whether or not Immortals come from the distant past or the planet Zeist.) In the movies, Immortals are born of mortal parents. In the television series, they are always foundlings of unknown origin. However, it is known that immortality is triggered by a violent death, which usually occurs when the Immortal is a young adult. Otherwise, the Immortal can live as a normal human being, aging and dying naturally.

Immortals are unable to reproduce, even before gaining immortality. While they can and do enjoy sexual intimacy with mortals or one another, they can never sire or bear children. An Immortal who carries on an extended relationship with a mortal often reveals his true nature to his lover. This may or may not result in the rejection of the Immortal. Some mortals can accept living with an Immortal; others cannot.



PRE-IMMORTALS



Immortals are unaware of their true nature until they “die” for the first time. Until then they are normal human beings and can live mortal lives unless they die violently. They begin to realize what they are upon their resurrection, but they are unsure of how they returned to life. It is only when older Immortals come to teach them the ways of their kind that full awareness comes to them.

When immortality is first reached, another Immortal is drawn to the newcomer. The younger Immortal generally becomes the student of the older Immortal, and a close bond usually develops between student and teacher. However, some unscrupulous Immortals kill their protégés before the latter can realize their true potential. People who gain immortality while they are still children often die in this manner.



THE QUICKENING



Immortals possess a trait called “the Quickening,” which is a measure of their power. It gives them a psychic bond with nature and one another. It is also the reason they fight among themselves. When one Immortal beheads another, the Quickening of the slain Immortal, as well as the Quickening of those the dead Immortal had previously defeated, are transferred to the victor. Older Immortals are thus quite powerful in general, having received the Quickening many times. Beheading an Immortal is the only way to release a Quickening.

The Quickening takes the form of blue lightning, which strikes the victorious Immortal repeatedly. This process takes time and leaves the Immortal exhausted. Not all the Quickening released is transferred to the victor. Much of it strikes the immediate vicinity, causing damage to the surrounding area. When Quickening is transferred, the victor gains a portion of his foe’s knowledge and experience.

Mortals and pre-Immortals cannot benefit from a Quickening. When an Immortal is decapitated by one of these people, his Quickening is released into the atmosphere.



THE GATHERING AND THE PRIZE



The Gathering is the Immortals' version of Armageddon. There comes a time when the few surviving Immortals feel a call to battle and are drawn to the area where the Gathering will take place. They will then fight until only one is left alive. The basic rule of the Immortals states: In the end, there can be only One.

The last surviving Immortal will gain the Prize. The Prize is the ability to know the thoughts and emotions of every human being on earth. The winner of the Prize can know any and every thought and desire simply by concentrating. He can literally become the master of the world for good or ill. The winner of the Prize also becomes mortal, receiving the ability to have children, grow old, and die.



(Note: It is not necessary to write up the Prize in game terms. Should an Immortal character gain it during the course of play, it is time to end the campaign. However, should a player wish to continue playing the character, the character would be a mortal with great psychic power. However, he will have lost all his Immortal powers by then.
– CO₂)

HOLY GROUND



Holy ground, be it a shrine or basilica, is a haven for all Immortals. All Immortals recognize and respect holy ground. Not even the most evil Immortal would dare fight on an area that has been consecrated. Duels may still be arranged on holy ground, as long as the battle does not take place there. Immortals may not stay on holy ground once a challenge has been issued. Some stay on consecrated ground for an extended period of time to rest and reflect on their lives, but they may not stay there indefinitely. That is not the way of the Immortals.

The GM must decide what the consequences will be should two Immortals fight on holy ground. One possible outcome is that a natural disaster such as an earthquake will occur. Another possibility is that the ground will absorb the loser's Quickening and take a significant amount of the winner's Quickening as well. Still another possibility is that while no obvious side effects occur, other Immortals will hear of the transgression and mercilessly hunt the offenders, even if they were close friends. In any case, fighting on holy ground should be discouraged, if not forbidden outright.



ROLEPLAYING IMMORTALS



Immortal player characters are quite powerful, but they are still human. Older Immortals should be Powerful Heroes or even Low-powered Superheroes. Younger Immortals should start as Standard or Powerful Heroes. Pre-Immortals should start as Skilled Normals or Competent Normals; they do not receive the package deal until they become Immortal. In any case they should be limited to normal characteristic maxima. If there is more than one Immortal character in the party, it is recommended that they begin at the same power level.

Immortals learn many skills throughout their lifetimes. Immortal player characters should therefore have many skills and professions. Some of these should have extra points allotted to them to show the character's expertise in these fields. These skills may be archaic or modern proficiencies.

Since Immortals constantly fight for their lives, they usually become adept with different forms of combat. They should learn some form of sword fighting. It is also recommended that they learn other forms of combat. Familiarity with common melee weapons is a good skill to learn, as is familiarity with firearms or other missile weapons. Unarmed combat skills are very useful. A few maneuvers can be found in the HERO rulebook, but more detail can be found in the *Ultimate Martial Artist*, *Fantasy HERO*, and *Ninja HERO* sourcebooks.

Immortals often travel and explore many different places. Some Immortals constantly travel, while others have a favorite city where they reside. The player can choose whatever lifestyle suits his character best.

Immortals have various attitudes toward mortals. Many are apathetic and do not interfere with mortal lives in any way. Evil Immortals like the Kurgan often take great pleasure in dominating or killing mortals. Noble Immortals like Connor and Duncan MacLeod help

and protect mortals. It is not unreasonable for the Game Master to restrict the players to role playing benevolent or at least neutral Immortals if the campaign is set up that way.

The age of Immortals can range from less than a century to over a millennium. The player may choose the age of his character, but it is recommended that the Immortal be less than a thousand years old. This is because an Immortal that old would most likely have more skills and powers than the average character would have, especially in a new campaign. Should the player be unsure of how old the character should be, the Immortal's age can be randomly determined using the following formula:

$$\text{Age in years} = (17 + 1d6) \times 1d6 \times 1/2d6$$

This will give an age range between 18 and 414 years, inclusive. The player must still decide how old the character appears to be. This normally ranges from young to middle-aged adult.

Immortals are not allowed to take certain disadvantages. They cannot take the Age disadvantage, as fate tends to bestow immortality early in life. They also cannot take Public Identity as they have been taught to keep their true nature secret. They should also not be Dependent on any substance unless it is taken as an addiction. They may be Vulnerable or Susceptible to certain things with the Game Master's permission, but this should be extremely rare.

IMMORTAL COMBAT



Immortals can only be killed permanently through decapitation. When they duel, they fight until one falls. One result is that the loser drops to his knees, clearly defeated (use this option when a combatant's STUN or BODY drops to zero). In this case, the winner can state the intent to take the loser's head. No roll would normally be needed in this case. The other result is that enough killing damage is dealt to kill the Immortal. The blow must be to the head, or the Immortal is merely incapacitated and may then be killed.

A victorious Immortal receives his enemy's Quickening. By doing so, he gains power from his fallen foe. Immortals who have taken many heads are thus quite powerful. See the section on Immortal Powers for details.

THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT



Immortals have certain rules of engagement. They are supposed to fight all their duels one-on-one. Bringing allies to help them fight is forbidden. They are also supposed to engage in melee combat with swords. Axes are acceptable but rarely used in modern times. Using firearms is prohibited, but a few unscrupulous Immortals have been known to cheat in that manner. Fighting with a blunt weapon is allowed, but without the ability to behead his opponent, the Immortal would be putting himself at a disadvantage. Most Immortals issue a challenge to their would-be opponents before engaging in combat; others simply attempt to strike from the shadows. Holy Ground, as has been stated, is a safe haven for all Immortals; no battles can take place there.



IMMORTAL POWERS



All Immortals have the following powers:

Eternal Youth

Immortals stop physically aging after their first death. Pre-Immortals do not get this power until they die for the first time. The death must be violent and sudden in order for the power to activate. Thus, dying in a car accident would trigger the power, but death from a slow, wasting sickness would not.

Eternal Youth: Life Support -- Longevity (does not age) (5 Active points). Total cost: 5 points.

Perfect Health

Immortals are immune to diseases and plagues, and they cannot be carriers. This power is also triggered after the first death. Immortals are not immune to poison, but they may regenerate all damage they take from it. Note that this only covers physical damage; Immortals can still suffer from mental and psychological illnesses.

Perfect Health: Life Support -- Immunity to all terrestrial diseases and biowarfare agents (10 Active points). Total cost: 10 points.

Regeneration

Immortals are capable of regenerating all physical damage they sustain. If they are killed but not beheaded, they will return to life after recovering enough BODY (at least one point) and will regain consciousness recovering enough STUN (at least one point). However, there are a few limitations. Immortals cannot re-grow lost limbs. Likewise, they have difficulty healing damage occurring in the head or neck. They will eventually heal the damage, but they will acquire a Distinctive Feature, such as a scar or a raspy voice.

Regeneration: Healing 1 BODY per Turn. Resurrection (may be stopped by beheading); Persistent (+1/2), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2) (60 Active Points); Self only (-1/2). Total cost: 40 points.

Sense Immortal

An Immortal can sense one of his own kind when the two come into proximity of each other. This skill allows an Immortal to identify a potential foe before being noticed himself. Pre-Immortals do not normally receive this power; Connor MacLeod was an exception.

Sense Immortal: Danger Sense, functions as a sense, out of combat (12 Active points); only works against Immortals and pre-Immortals (-2). Total cost: 7 points.

The Quickening

When an Immortal beheads another, he receives his enemy's Quickening. In game terms, the winner receives 1d6 Aid that can be applied to any Characteristic, Power, or Skill. The Immortal can only receive this power by beheading his opponent. The Quickening lasts a full Turn. The power will fade after a century. Methos, having avoided combat for centuries, had lost much of his power. Thus, he was unable to defeat Kalas and barely escaped with his life. (Note: This is not exactly consistent with the Highlander Universe, but it is in accordance with the HERO 5th Edition Rules – CO₂)

The Quickening: 1d6 Aid; Can be applied to any Characteristic or power (+2), Fade rate 1 century (+3 1/4) (63 Active Points); Takes 1 Turn (-1 1/4), Self only (-1/2), Only by beheading another Immortal (-2). Total cost: 13 points.

No Blood Loss

Even Immortals bleed when they are cut. However, their bodies can apparently stop the bleeding process before the Immortal weakens from loss of blood.

No Blood Loss: Does not bleed (15 Active Points). Total cost: 15 points.

The following powers are not automatically known. Immortals must learn these skills, either from their mentor or on their own.

The Last

Immortals can learn to feel what another living being is feeling at the time. They can use this power to know another person's true intentions. This power is not received automatically; an Immortal must teach it to his student. The Immortal must spend an entire Phase activating this power.

The Last: 3d6 Telepathy (15 Active Points); Takes full phase (-1/2). Total cost: 10 points.

Empower Weapon

Immortals can charge their weapons with Quickening, doing greater damage than normal. It is often visible as lightning running down the Immortal's sword.

Empower Weapon: 1d6 RKA (15 Active Points); No range (-1/2), OAF sword (-1), linked to sword attack (-1/2). Total cost: 5 points.

Breathe Water

When dumped unceremoniously into a lake by his mentor Ramirez, Connor MacLeod discovered he had the ability to survive underwater. (Note: In the original movie, Connor

inherently had this ability, but Duncan drowned on at least two occasions in the television series. This write-up is a middle ground between the two. – CO₂)

Breathe Water: Life Support – Expanded Breathing: underwater (5 Active points); Costs END every Phase (-1/2). Total cost: 3.

The Voice

Cassandra had the power to influence people with verbal commands. She taught this gift to her student, Roland Kantos, who nearly defeated Duncan MacLeod with this power.

Duncan defeated Kantos by plugging his ears with candle wax.

The Voice: 8d6 Mind Control (40 Active Points). No range (-1/2), Concentrate ½ DCV, constant (-1/2), eye contact required (-1/2). Total cost: 16.

Taking of the Darkness

Coltec was a hayoka, a holy man. His mission in life was to remove evil from people, drawing it upon himself. Unfortunately, his actions left him vulnerable to the power of the Dark Quickening, becoming evil himself.

Taking of the Darkness: Minor Transform 8d6 (removes evil or negative impulses, heals back normally), Based on ECV (+1), Works against EGO, not BODY (+1/4) (180 Active Points); Activation Roll 14- (-1/2), OAF Medicine Pouch, arrangement (-1 1/4), Limited Target (evil or negative impulses only, -1), Extra Time (5 minutes, -2), Side Effects (Succumb to the Dark Quickening after the next battle with an evil Immortal, -1). Total cost: 27 points.

The Art of Illusion

Nakano was an Immortal who could deceive others with illusions. The Immortal Kane took his head and gained the power, using it for evil until losing his head to Connor MacLeod.

The Power of Illusion: Sight and hearing group Images, -5 to observers' PER rolls (35 Active Points). Total cost: 35 points.

Shadows

John Garrick was an Immortal gifted with second sight. He went insane after losing his family in a fire and being burned alive as a witch. He studied psychology for centuries, eventually learning to project his thoughts into other people's minds. He attempted to distract Duncan MacLeod into believing the latter was losing his mind. He was unsuccessful, and the Highlander took his head.

Shadows: 7d6 Mental Illusions (35 Active Points). Total cost; 35 points.



DARK AND LIGHT QUICKENING



Darius was an Immortal warlord who ravaged Europe during the Dark Ages. After helping Alaric sack Rome, he rode to Paris. There he confronted an ancient Immortal and defeated him. As the power of the slain Immortal surged through Darius, the warlord's demeanor changed. He laid down his sword and pursued the ways of peace until his death centuries later.

Coltec was a holy man who removed evil emotions and urges from others, drawing them unto himself. He thought he was strong enough to contain it, but after taking the head of an evil Immortal, the evil within him overwhelmed his good nature. He had become the monster he had fought against all his life.

The changes Darius and Coltec experienced are examples of two extreme forms of Quickening: Light Quickening and Dark Quickening. A Light Quickening can turn the most diabolic villain into a living saint; a Dark Quickening has the opposite effect.

These types of Quickening are actually contagious. An Immortal taking the head of a foe under the effect of a Dark Quickening will in turn suffer from it himself. This works as a Major Transform to the character's spirit. It works against the target's EGO rather than the BODY. When Duncan MacLeod took Coltec's head, he received the Dark Quickening.

Should an Immortal wish to be rid of this type of Quickening, he must fight a spiritual battle within himself. Ideally, this would take place in holy ground, but it is not required. In game terms, the character will fight his evil (or good) self in order to regain control of his personality. Should the character win, he will regain his old personality. Should he lose, the new personality will become permanent. Duncan MacLeod fought his evil self (mentally) to dispel the Dark Quickening and regain his true personality.

The GM should decide when a Light or Dark Quickening would come into play. However, it should only be used sparingly. It is mainly a plot device and can be altogether ignored.

Light/Dark Quickening: Major Transform 8d6 (Turns Immortals extremely good/evil, heals back if target defeats his transformed self in battle); Based on ECV (+1), Works against EGO, not BODY (+1/4), Trigger (beheading an Immortal under the influence of this type of Quickening, +1/4), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2), Difficult to Dispel (+1/4) (390 Active Points); All or Nothing (-1/2), Limited Target (Immortals only, -1), Extra Time (1 Turn, -1 ¼), No Conscious Control (-2), Charges (one charge, -2). Real Cost: 50 points.

(Note: The character does not actually pay for this ability or receive points for this power, since it is inflicted on him. He should get the Quickening ability as normal, however. – CO₂)

THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE



In the Bronze Age, four Immortals spread terror throughout Europe and Asia. Their names were Kronos, Methos, Silas, and Caspian. They called themselves the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, and they became symbols of doom. To meet them was to die by their hands.

Nobody knows how long their reign of terror lasted, but they eventually disbanded. They did not meet again until late in the twentieth century. Kronos had developed a virus that would eradicate humanity.

But Methos had changed over the centuries. He enlisted the aid of his friend Duncan MacLeod. Together, the two Immortals put an end to the Horsemen forever.

THE METHUSELAH CRYSTAL



There is a legend about a magical crystal that heals all wounds, grants long life, and renders one invincible in battle. It is said that Methuselah possessed it and lived for over nine centuries. He gave it to his grandson Noah, who survived the Great Flood.

Whatever the truth may be, it is known that the Immortal Rebecca somehow gained control of the crystal. She gave pieces of it away to her students once they completed their training. One of her students, Luther, believed the legend of the crystal making a warrior invincible and decided to obtain all the pieces. He killed Rebecca and most of her students before losing his head to Duncan MacLeod. The crystal was presumed to be lost, except for one fragment carried by Amanda, Rebecca's only surviving student.

The Watchers found the missing pieces and kept them in their headquarters in Paris. The Immortal Methos attempted to gain the crystal in order to save his dying lover, Alexa Bond. But an unscrupulous Watcher named Daniel Geiger foiled the attempt. In the resulting battle, the pieces of crystal fell into a river and were lost. Only one was retrieved.

The crystal is built with the Elemental Control framework. The power is available only when all the fragments are recombined. Individual fragments have no power.

The Methuselah Crystal: Elemental Control, IAF Crystal (-1/2)

EC Crystal: Active Cost: 10; EC Bonus: 0; Remaining Cost: 0; Real Cost: 7.

+3 on all Combat: Active Cost: 24; EC Bonus: 10; Remaining Cost: 14; Real Cost: 9.

2d6 Healing: Active Cost: 20; EC Bonus: 10; Remaining Cost: 10; Real Cost: 7.

50% Resistant Damage Reduction: Active Cost: 30; EC Bonus: 10; Remaining Cost: 20; Real Cost: 13.

Immunity to Aging and Disease: Active Cost: 15; EC Bonus: 10; Remaining Cost: 5; Real Cost: 3.

Total Cost: 39 points.

IMMORTAL PACKAGE DEAL



<u>Cost</u>	<u>Ability</u>
5	Eternal Youth
10	Perfect Health
40	Regeneration
15	No Blood Loss
7	Sense Immortal
13	The Quickening
2	KS: Other Immortals 11-
1	WF: Blades
2	+1 OCV with favorite type of sword (choose)
10	Martial arts maneuvers (choose)
3	Linguist
3	Traveler
15	15 points of area knowledge skills and/or languages
3	Fast Draw
3	Concealment
3	PS: Current occupation 12-
<u>Value</u>	<u>Disadvantage</u>
-10	Distinctive Feature: Immortal (not concealable, noticed only by Immortals)
-20	Hunted 14- by other Immortals (as powerful, harshly punish)
-10	Monitored 14- by the Watcher Society (less powerful, NCI, harshly punish)
-10	Hunted 8- by renegade Watchers (less powerful, NCI, only watching)
-20	Normal Characteristic Maxima
-0	Physical Limitation: Sterile (does not actually limit the character)
-15	Psychological Limitation: Will not fight on holy ground (uncommon, total)
-15	Psychological Limitation: The Rules of Engagement (uncommon, total)
-15	Secret Identity: Normal human being, may have an alias
20	Total package cost

This package deal assumes the Immortal has found a mentor to train him and has acquired some experience on his own. The following options will allow a player to customize his Immortal character.

Options

<u>Cost</u>	<u>Description</u>
+10	The Last
+5	Empower Weapon
+3	Breathe Water
+16	The Voice
+27	Taking of the Darkness
+35	The Art of Illusion
-21	Untrained: No combat skills, Fast Draw, Concealment, KS: Immortals
-21	Not Worldly: Remove Linguist, Traveler, 15 points for languages and AK skills
+15	Ignores the Rules of Engagement: Remove that Psych Lim (not recommended)
+10	Martial Arts Master: Add 10 points of martial arts maneuvers, including the KS.
+2	Watcher Contact: Add Contact 11-



WATCHERS



The existence and deeds of Immortals remain hidden from the majority of mankind. However, a special group of mortals secretly observes and records Immortal lives and activities. These men and women are collectively known as the Watchers.

Watchers operate through stealth. They are trained to blend in a crowd rather than stand out. They have only one distinguishing feature: a tattoo of their symbol on their left wrists. It allows them to recognize one another and reminds them of their mission.

Virtually every Immortal has a Watcher assigned to observe him. In fact, unless the Immortal is killed early in life, many Watchers have meticulously recorded his deeds over the centuries. Most Immortals are unaware of the Watchers' existence; some would not be pleased to learn that they are being observed.

Not all Watchers are field agents. Many more are researchers, trying to find clues about new Immortals or previously unknown lore about Immortals. One such Watcher is Adam Pierson, who is researching the legend of Methos, the oldest living Immortal who has been alive for 5000 years. Ironically, Pierson is actually Methos himself. Few people are aware of his double identity.

The duty of the Watchers is to observe and record. They are forbidden to reveal their existence to Immortals or to interfere with their lives. The penalty for breaking these rules is dismissal, or in extreme cases, death. However, a Watcher named Joe Dawson revealed his identity to his subject, Duncan MacLeod. The two have become friends. This friendship nearly cost Dawson his life at one point, but the friendship endures.

Watchers are at least Skilled Normals. They may even be Competent Normals or even Standard Heroes. Watchers are usually non-player characters, as their function is to observe their assigned Immortals without interacting with them. However, it is possible

for a player to have a Watcher character allied with an Immortal. This situation could spell trouble for the characters, as the Watchers do not take kindly to those who betray their oath.

THE HUNTERS



A splinter group of Watchers has formed in recent years. Driven by paranoia, they view Immortals as abominations who will take over the world and enslave humanity. Known as the Hunters, they actively seek out and kill Immortals. The Hunters were led by a man named James Horton until he was killed. It is not known who leads the Hunters today.

The Watchers will hunt down and kill any known Hunter. They prefer to solve the Hunter problem internally, rather than get the Immortals involved.

All Hunters start out as Watchers, so they begin with the Watcher package deal. However, as they have betrayed their oath, they should replace the noninterference psychological limitation with a 10-point Hunted by the Watchers 11- (as powerful, harshly punish). It is highly recommended that Hunters remain NPCs.

Only one Immortal, Xavier St. Cloud, is known to have worked with the Hunters. Horton had promised to help him become the last Immortal. Since they shared a common enemy in Duncan MacLeod, the two worked together. St. Cloud broke the rules of combat, sending the Hunters to slow down his opponents, then beheading the fallen Immortals. Duncan MacLeod found his enemies in Paris. He killed Xavier St. Cloud, and Joe Dawson shot Horton as the latter attempted to flee by boat. Horton fell into the water and was presumed dead. However, he would not meet his demise until later, after a final attempt to kill the Highlander.

WATCHER PACKAGE DEAL

<u>Cost</u>	<u>Ability</u>
9	Stealth +3
9	Concealment +3
9	Shadowing 14-
3	Conversation
3	High Society
5	KS: Immortals 14-
5	KS: Assigned Immortal 14-
2	KS: Research Procedures 11-
2	CK: City of Operation 11-
2	PS: Current Occupation 11-
10	Language skills (choose)
2	WF: Firearms
1	WF: Blades
10	Unarmed combat maneuvers (choose)
3	Add one of the following skills: Acting, Breakfall, Bugging, Computer Programming, Deduction, Disguise, Electronics, Lipreading, Lockpicking, Seduction, Survival, Tactics
<u>Value</u>	<u>Disadvantage</u>
-15	Secret Identity
-15	Psych Lim: Must not reveal the Watchers' existence (uncommon, total)
-10	Psych Lim: Must not interfere with the Game (uncommon, strong)
-10	Psych Lim: Dedication to completing assignment (common, moderate)
-10	Watched 8- by superiors (NCI)
-5	Distinctive Feature: tattoo (easily concealable)
10	Total Cost

Options

<u>Cost</u>	<u>Description</u>
+9	Administrator: Add Bureaucratics, Interrogation, and Persuasion
+3	Researcher: Add Scholar Perk and add +1 to KS rolls in Package Deal
+0	Hunter: Replace the noninterference oath with Hunted by the Watchers
+2	Immortal Contact: Add Contact 11-

(Note: The Watcher does not necessarily expose the Watcher Organization to other Immortals or even to the Immortal in question if he has an Immortal contact. – CO₂)

