



CHAPTER THREE: QUICKENING

“Hey, it’s a kind of magic!”

-Connor

Quickening is the force that makes the immortals “special”: that mystical energy within them, that makes them immortal and gives them their powers. In this chapter, we will discuss what Quickening means in the rules, and how immortals increase in power.

QUICKENING DICE

Throughout the discussion of the various powers, mention will be made of rolling Quickening to perform some feat. This behaves exactly as with Spheres of power in **Mage**: roll a number of dice equal to your Quickening, against a difficulty of six. Count successes to find how much benefit has been gained.

QUICKENING POWERS

“You can’t drown, you fool! You’re immortal!”

-Ramirez

The powers listed below are based off of various powers shown in the *Highlander* movie and TV series. They are loosely based off of various powers listed in the **Mage** book, and occasionally make mention of the power they were most similar to.

Next to each power is a mark of what level of Quickening is necessary to first exhibit this power.

- ***Sense Quickening***

Some immortals gain this ability even before they suffer their first death, since they still are considered to have a Quickening of 1. This ability is similar to the level 1 Prime spell *Sense Quintessence* (see **Mage**): using this ability, an immortal will sense another immortal nearby. No specific information on the immortal’s identity is given, nor is the location of the immortal known, merely that the immortal is near.

Sense Quickening also allows the immortal to sense a Node (“holy ground”). Likewise, an immortal can sometimes sense other beings with free quintessence in them (such as Mages and Kindred), although a perception roll may be necessary for this. Usually, no roll is needed for sensing holy ground, and sensing other immortals is usually left to Storyteller’s discretion (to pick a dramatic moment.)

- ***Breathe Water***

With this ability, immortals may survive indefinitely underwater, drawing oxygen from the water. This is not the same as not breathing: it has been shown that immortals do breathe, and that poison gas will affect them (although it cannot kill them). Total absence of air will reduce the immortal to incapacitated after a certain length of time, and he won’t recover until he can, once more, breathe.

- ***Empower Weapon***

Often in both movie and series, the clash of swords during a battle between two immortals is



accompanied by electrical discharge. Using their Quickening, immortals can enfuse their weapon with raw power, causing them to do more damage, and also causing the discharges shown. An immortal can empower any edged melee weapon in this way (axe, sword, knife). One additional damage success is scored per success rolled (see **Quickening Dice** above for details).

Note: The extra damage done by Empower Weapon is aggravated, although the normal damage done by the weapon is not.

Example: Duncan swings his trusty katana (difficulty 6, Strength + 5 damage), and hits. He rolls Str 3 + 5 = 8 dice for damage, difficulty 6 (using the **Vampire** 2nd edition rules), to determine damage. Since his katana is empowered, however, he rolls an additional 5 dice for his 5 Quickening, also against difficulty 6. Any successes scored on this roll count as aggravated damage. The defender gets one soak roll against both damages, and soaks aggravated first.

•• *Heal Self*

In Chapter Four, the “normal” healing chart for immortals is given. Using their Quickening, however, an immortal may choose to heal even faster from wounds received. By taking a round and rolling Quickening, an immortal may heal a number of wound levels equal to the successes rolled. Note that this is done once per wound only, the rest must heal normally. Note also that if an immortal is taken to incapacitated (or beyond) before he has a chance to heal, he must first heal to crippled, then roll his dice in Heal Self. Also, aggravated wounds may not be healed in this manner, and must heal according to the chart.

Example: Richie the new immortal gets in a fight with an unsuspecting group of gang toughs, and after finishing them off he begins to recover from his wounds. Three wounds (3/1/2 levels) for a total of six wound levels (crippled). He rolls his Quickening of 2, healing 1 from the first, healing the second, and getting no successes on the third wound, over a period of

three rounds. The remaining four wound levels must heal normally (which means he'll be fully healed in little over a half hour).

••• *Empower Self*

Using his Quickening, an immortal may increase his physical attributes, by one for every success rolled. The effect lasts for an entire scene, and is usually done only during challenges. After using Empower Self, an immortal will feel weak (-1 to dice pool) for an hour or more.

Example: Connor squares off with Fasil, and the battle begins. Connor rolls his Quickening of 7, gaining four successes, and puts two points into Stamina and two in Dexterity. Fasil is in trouble.

•••• *Speed of the Stag*

Like Empower Self, an immortal may use his Quickening to increase his actions in a turn (much like the vampiric discipline of Celerity). One extra action may be gained per success rolled, and the extra actions last for an entire

scene. As with Empower Self, the immortal will feel weak for some time after using this power.

••••• *Ignore Wounds*

At this level, the immortal's recuperative powers have become so potent that they no longer need spend time to heal. One wound level is healed each round, with no roll required (although an immortal may still take a round to heal more, using the level 2 power Heal Self). Also at this level, an immortal may heal aggravated wounds as if they were normal wounds, using Heal Self above.

Example: The Kurgan, after ending the pitiful Ramirez's life and taking his Quickening, stops to rest. Ramirez had one lucky swing that nearly took the Kurgan's head, doing four normal wounds and one aggravated. The four normal wound levels healed over the next four rounds, and the Kurgan takes a round to heal the aggravated wound after the battle is over. A scar is left on his throat, however, to remind him of how close Ramirez's blade came...





THE LAST

The “Sense Quickening” power is related to another power, which has been dubbed the “Last”. The massive amount of Quickening present in an immortal means that they are able to “tune in” to their surroundings, and to the life forces around them, effectively giving them a sixth sense, similar to the “Danger Sense” gift from **Vampire**. This manifests itself in many ways. In the film, the examples we saw included MacLeod and Ramirez “tuning in” to the stag’s life force on the sea shore, Kurgan’s ability to guess Connor’s name, even though he had never seen him before, Connor’s knowledge that someone (Brenda) was following him, and the way in which he knew of the gun and the tape recorder in Brenda’s apartment. This power is one that should be administered at the Storyteller’s discretion. At appropriate times - ie. when the Storyteller decides, not the player - the ST should do a Quickening roll, and, depending on the amount of successes the player gets, he should reveal a certain amount of information. Also, the player can decide that his character is going to tune in to a particular

animal, and, in this way, he can feel what the animal feels, and, at higher levels of Quickening (5+), he may be able to catch glimpses of what the animal is actually seeing and hearing. However, the animal must be nearby.

This power is an unreliable one, and manifests itself irregularly and in strange ways. This power is designed to help negate the advantage that Garou and Kindred have, through possessing Gifts and Disciplines, and is aimed at providing the immortal character with a useful, yet erratic source of information. The Storyteller should use her discretion in the dispensing of such information.

GAINING AND LOSING QUICKENING

Immortals can only increase Quickening by taking another immortal’s head. When they have successfully finished their opponent, they gain the opponent’s level in Quickening x 2 in “Quickening Experience”. Like study points in **Mage**, these are spent equally with experience to increase an immortal’s Quickening. As outlined in the Experience Chart (Chapter Four), it costs

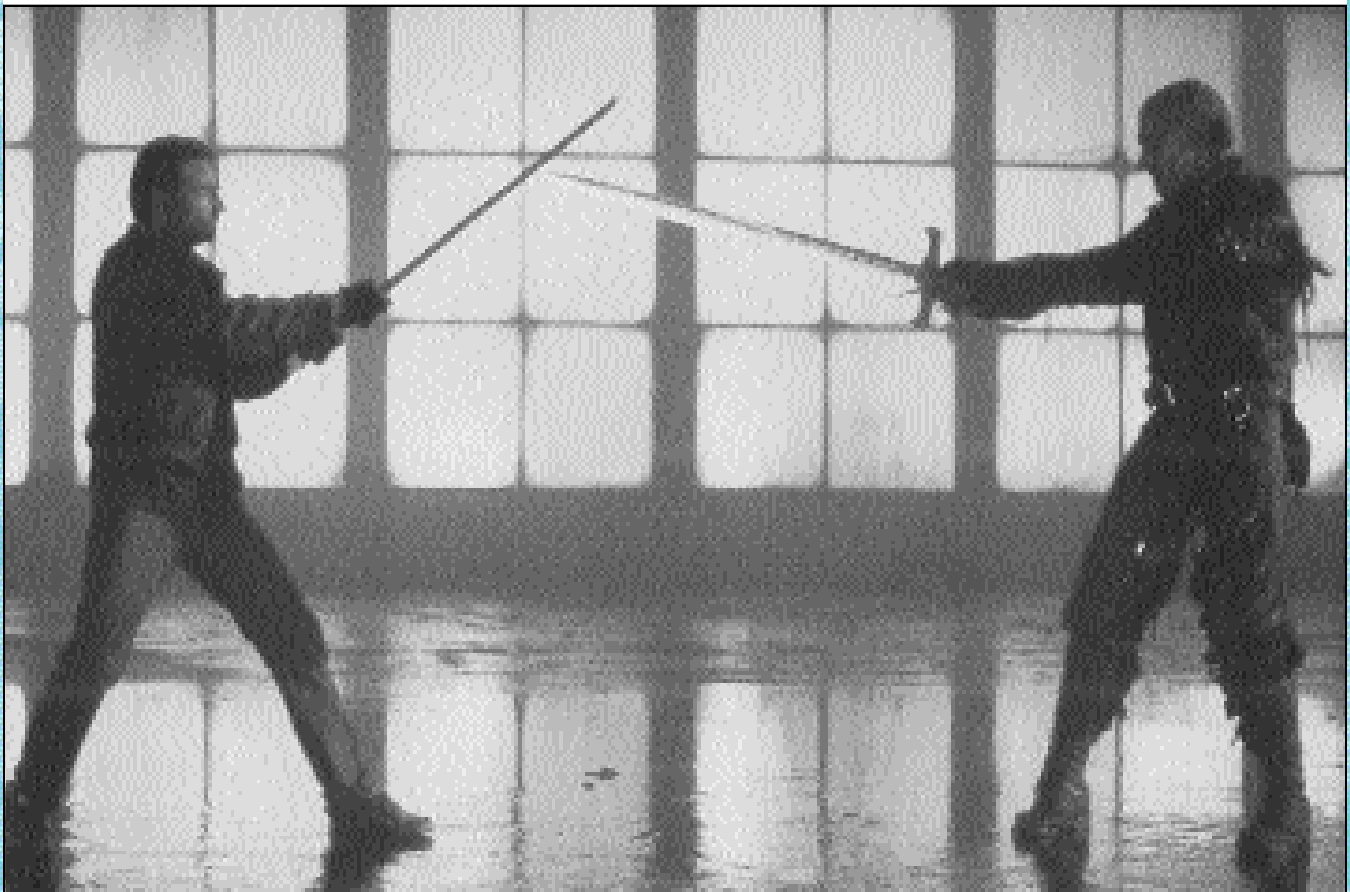
Current Level x 6 to increase Quickening. This is the only way to increase Quickening. The victor also gains one point in an ability, for each point of Quickening the loser had. These ability points come from the knowledge of the loser, and must be placed in abilities that the loser had at a higher level than the victor. If the victor has higher scores in every ability of the loser, the victor gains nothing.

Example: Frank Colt beheads Butra the assassin, and takes his Quickening. Frank has a Quickening of 2, and Butra had a Quickening of 3. Frank gets $3 \times 2 = 6$ Quickening Experience, which he uses with 6 “normal” experience to raise his Quickening to 3 (which costs 12 points). He also gains three points in abilities, one each in three areas where Butra had more skill than him.

There are two conditions under which an immortal may lose Quickening: two on one, and holy ground, as discussed in Chapter One. These are handled in a very similar manner to the normal transfer of Quickening, but will result in more than one “loser”.

If two immortals fight a third and take his head, then one of the immortals who has emerged victorious will absorb all of the Quickening from the experience: all of the loser’s and *one of his partner’s*. Thus, he gains $(\text{loser}+1) \times 2$ in Quickening Experience, and his partner loses one point in Quickening (if he only has one, he dies from the experience). The partner also loses one point in an ability, which also goes to the victor (the storyteller picks which ability, but it has to be one that the victor is inferior to his partner in). This loss of power and knowledge keeps even the friendliest of immortals from agreeing to be a partner..

Holy ground is a similar situation, and in fact counts as the “victor” in any contest. The Node gains $(\text{loser}+1) \times 2$ in Quickening Experience toward increasing the power of the Node, and the winner of the battle loses one point of Quickening, and also loses one point in an ability (again, the ability lost is chosen by the storyteller). Since there is never a victor in a battle on holy ground, no immortal will fight there.





Example: If Frank had beheaded Butra the assassin on holy ground (in this instance, a Node with strength 2) the Node would gain $(3+1) \times 2 = 8$ Quickening experience (almost enough to turn it into a Node of 3), and Frank would lose 1 Quickening (taking him to 1) and 1 point in some ability. Bad move for Frank.

THE SIDE EFFECTS OF QUICKENING

Quickening is the lifeforce of an immortal, and can only be taken by removing his head. In the World of Darkness, there are many other ways to remove someone's power, none of which will easily succeed against an immortal. Some examples include:

- Vampires gain no sustenance from drinking the blood of an immortal, and cannot kill him by doing so (although they can drive the immortal

to incapacitated). The blood is worthless to them.

- Mages cannot use Prime effects to remove Quintessence from an immortal, or to destroy it (a la Flames of Purification, Prime 4). An immortal's pattern is immutable. The immortal gains his Quickening in automatic countemagick successes to resist any Prime effect directed against him. The one exception is when an immortal loses his head: if a Mage with talent in Prime is present, he can in fact potentially become the "victor", stealing the loser's Quickening as Quintessence (one point of Quintessence per point of Quickening), and gaining a point of the winner's as well. The Mage rolls his Prime versus the winner's Quickening in a contested roll. The Mage gains no ability from the experience, but the 'winner' still loses one point in some ability.

Example: If Frank had beheaded Butra the assassin in the presence of a Mage with a score of 3 in his Prime sphere, Frank and she would

contest to see who actually absorbed Butra's Quickening. If Frank lost, the Mage would gain four points of Quintessence (three for Butra and one from Frank), while Frank would lose 1 Quickening (taking him to 1) and 1 point in some ability.

- Likewise, Immortals are practically immune to any effects of the Life sphere, or the healing discipline of Obeah (see **Mage** and the **Vampire Player's Guide**, respectively), whether the effect is beneficial or not. Assume their

Quickening in automatic successes, to resist any effect or counter any successes rolled against them.

- An immortal's mind, spirit, and body are tightly held by their Quickening. Although mind effects (the Mind sphere, Dominate, or Presence) may affect the immortal, his mind cannot be pulled from his body, nor may his spirit be removed without his head being removed first. This is not a contested roll, this is automatic.

