



CHAPTER FOUR: SYSTEMS

"You've the devil in you!"
-Dougal

This chapter details how immortals gain experience, and details the combat system for sword duels.

EXPERIENCE

"You've no knowledge whatsoever of your potential!"

-Ramirez

Immortals gain experience in the same way as the other characters in the Storyteller system, and so much of the chart given here is simply repetition.

Trait	Cost
New Ability	3
Willpower	current rating
Abilities	current rating x 2
Attributes	current rating x 4
Quickening	current rating x 6*

* Quickening can only be increased by an equal split of Quickening Experience and "normal" experience

HEALING

"Who wants to live forever?"

-Queen

Immortals recover from wounds much more rapidly than mortals. In Chapter Three, using Quickening to heal was discussed. Without the use of Quickening, however,

immortals still recover from crippling wounds in a short period. Examples given in the series include immolation, falling from a cliff, being shot in the head, and others. Without the use of Quickening, immortals heal using the following chart.

Health Level

Bruised
Hurt
Injured
Wounded
Mauled
Crippled
Incapacitated

Time

One Round
One Minute
Five Minutes
Thirty Minutes
One Hour
One Hour
One Hour

COMBAT

"Don't lose your head!"

-Ramirez

Combat is a fact of life for an immortal. Whether he or she likes it or not, unless they learn how to use a sword, and, more importantly, are prepared to use it, they will surely lose their head. You can't run forever, and if you try hiding, you'll eventually be found by another immortal. Only by killing your fellow immortals in combat can you hope to survive and have any chance of winning the Prize.

When two immortals meet, they sense each other through the Quickening. They don't *have* to do battle, (we have seen in both the movie and the series how two immortals may become

friends), but it is the time of the Gathering, and it is their destiny to battle until only one remains. They have no choice in the matter.

The normal Storyteller combat rules are basically pretty useless when it comes to staging detailed sword duels. It is desirable to be able to play out duels between immortals as detailed fights, with each combatant able to choose different tactics, moves, etc. For immortal player characters, these duels are often the climax of the story, and just running a simple combat sequence can be frustrating for the player involved. Remember that, in these duels, the player is fighting to increase his power, in a battle where he has a very real chance of dying... The player is fighting for his knowledge and power, pitting it against another to the death. Thus, we recommend that the following combat system be used for duels between immortals.

STAGE ONE: INITIATIVE

In normal combat, the combatants will normally try to be the first to attack, in the hope of inflicting damage first. However, in sword combat, things work a little differently. Sometimes, one combatant may elect to try and surprise the other, by ambushing them and attacking them before they have a chance to draw their weapon. In such cases, use the normal rules for Initiative and Surprise, although note that an immortal can practically never be taken completely by surprise by another immortal. The Quickening sees to that.

With sword-duels, the round takes on a new meaning - Basically, a sword combat round is the length of time it takes for one person to attack the other. This system splits sword combat up into a series of bouts. A bout is a series of





rounds, during which there is no pause in combat. At the start of a round, both players roll for Initiative. Then they announce what their actions are going to be. Because sword combat is reactive - ie. you don't know what you're going to do until your opponent has done something - the player with the higher Initiative must announce what they intend to do first.

Normally, the player with the higher Initiative will decide to attack, and, if so, his opponent must either defend or dodge. Alternatively, the character with the higher Initiative may decide to either do some other kind of action, such as leaping onto a table, or they may decide to wait and see what their opponent is going to do. If they do either of these things, combat has basically stopped, and they must begin another bout.

A bout begins with both combatants facing each other, weapons at the ready. It is up to the players themselves who actually moves first and initiates combat. Once one of the combatants announces that they are attacking, both players make a standard Initiative roll - Wits + Alertness, against a target number of four.

However, instead of deciding who acts first (as this has already been decided), the difference between the two combatants number of successes achieved is added to the dice pool of the player with the higher Initiative.

Example: Connor and the Kurgan are facing off. They circle each other for a few minutes, before Connor makes an attack. He rolls Wits (3) + Alertness (4), and gets 6 successes. The Kurgan rolls Wits (4) + Alertness (3), getting four successes. Thus, Connor gets an extra two dice to add to his Attack roll.

After this initial round, Initiative is rolled as normal, but, its role during the bout is slightly different than the one it has in normal combat. The character with the higher Initiative gets to act first, presumably attacking, and the other person must defend. Both players make their respective attack and defense rolls and that combat round ends, and the combatants roll their Initiative for the next round. The following modifiers apply:

- The use of the Quickening power, Speed of the Stag confers an extra three Initiative dice upon the immortal using it.



- The person who Attacked during the last combat round gains an extra die to add to their Initiative roll for this round.
- If a combatant successfully repelled an attack by his opponent in the last round (ie. by getting an equal or greater amount of successes on his defense roll than his opponent got on his attack roll), then he also gets an extra Initiative die.
- For every three successes by which a combatant's attack/defense roll exceeds his opponents roll, they gain an extra Initiative die.

These rules may seem very complicated right now, but will become clearer later on.

STAGE TWO: ATTACK

To reflect the complexity of sword combat, and the fact that it's not just a case of hacking at the other person until one of you dies, I have adopted the following list of standard sword-fighting maneuvers from the rules for Klaive-duelling in the **Werewolf** Players Guide. They

are split up into two types - Attack maneuvers and Defense maneuvers. Normally, the attacker will choose an Attacking maneuver, and his opponent will choose a Defense maneuver, in an attempt to counter it, but in some cases, the nature of the Attack maneuver will only allow the defender one option. For example, if an attacker decides to try and disarm his opponent, his opponent must decide to try to hang on to his weapon. He has no other choice.

- ***Normal Attack***

The attacker attempts to wound his/her opponent, rolling Dexterity + Melee, with the Difficulty specified by the weapon used.

Type: Attack *Difficulty:* Weapon Difficulty

Image: The warrior simply tries to wound his opponent by dint of speed and skill.

- ***Feint***

The attacker rolls Manipulation + Melee for his attack roll, with a difficulty modifier of +3. This attack may not be parried - it may only be dodged.

Type: Attack *Difficulty:* Weapon Difficulty + 3
Image: With a lightning-quick motion, the swordsman attacks first high, then low, slipping around his opponent's guard, and moving to hit a vulnerable spot.

- **Disarm**

The attacker rolls Dexterity + Melee, resisted by Dexterity + Melee from their opponent, both rolls difficulty six. If either combatant rolls three successes or more above their opponents successes, they disarm their opponent, and their weapon falls to the ground. If you botch this roll, you automatically drop your own weapon!

Type: Attack *Difficulty:* 6

Image: With a quick movement, you catch your opponents sword and it drops out of his nerveless hand, onto the ground.

- **Great Blow**

The attacker commits themselves completely to a devastating blow (but not a blow to decapitate their opponent). They roll a normal attack roll, with a +2 to difficulty. Although a Great Blow cannot be parried, it can be dodged. If the attack succeeds, the attack dice are doubled. However, the attacker's difficulty for their Initiative the next round is 5, not 4, and they have a +2 to all Defense difficulties during the next round also.

Type: Attack *Difficulty:* Weapon Difficulty +2

Image: You bring your sword back and fall forward, lunging at your opponent. Heedless of the danger, you throw your body forward, your sword serving as the tip of a monstrous battering ram - you.

- **Target Blow**

Roll Perception + Melee, the difficulty number is your opponents Dex + Dodge. If successful, the number of successes add to the number of damage dice done by your weapon. Optionally, you may elect to target a specific area - See the table below for details of Difficulties and effects. This blow can be parried

or dodged as normal and is often used to start off a bout.

Type: Attack *Difficulty:* Opp. Dex + Dodge

Image: You try to hit a specific part of your opponent's body. You hold your blade up, and strike, attempting to bypass your opponent's defense to strike your target.

Aimed Attack

Hands/Arms - Difficulty +3/+2, *Damage:* A Wounded result means the hand/arm is broken and any weapons in that hand cannot be used; if the hand is holding a sword, it is dropped. A Crippled result means that the limb is sheared off. To reattach, the limb must be recovered and held to the wound while the immortal regenerates to restore himself to at least Mauled level. The limb cannot be used until it fully heals (treat as if it has taken aggravated damage). The immortal will have a scar thereafter, showing where the limb was removed.

Legs - Difficulty +1, *Damage:* A Wounded result means that the limb is broken; the penalties to the Dice Pool apply to any activities requiring running. An Incapacitated result with a sharp weapon means the limb is cut off, with the same results as severing a hand or arm.

Chest/Torso - Difficulty +1, *Damage:* The character will have the air knocked out of his lungs on a Wounded result (stunned for the turn), and his ribs broken on a Mauled result (must make a Willpower roll, difficulty 8, each turn to keep acting). If the immortal is attacked from behind, and the result is one more than needed to Incapacitate, then the spine is broken, and his lower body is paralyzed until he regenerates to the Crippled level.

- **Parry**

The combatant must roll Dexterity + Melee against their weapon's normal difficulty. Each success on this roll subtracts from one attack success made against the parrying warrior.

Type: Defense *Difficulty:* Weapon Difficulty

Image: The swordsman brings his weapon to bear, holding it steady and catches the force of his opponent's sword with his own.

- ***Riposte***

This maneuver may only be used after the one who wishes to use it has successfully parried a blow. This maneuver is a Strength + Melee roll, the weapon's difficulty serves as an attack roll. This sort of attack may not be dodged, though it may be parried, and if successfully parried, this attack may also be riposted.

Type: Attack *Difficulty:* Weapon Difficulty

Image: You parry your opponent's strike. Klang! With catlike speed and grace, you bring your sword around his arm, hoping to catch him off guard.

- ***Caught Steel***

Roll Strength + Melee versus a difficulty of your opponent's Dexterity + Melee. If successful, you lock swords with him for a short

interval, during which you struggle with him before your blade and his can be freed (he can do no damage this attack). If you receive more than three successes on your roll, you manage to put him off-balance for the following round, adding one to the difficulty of his Initiative roll.

Type: Defense *Difficulty:* Opp. Dex + Melee

Image: You lock steel with your opponent. "So, Highlander, we meet again!" You struggle for a moment, then the fight sparks again.

- ***Decapitation***

This is an Aimed Attack at the neck, requiring a Perception + Melee versus a difficulty of your opponent's Dex + Dodge. To decapitate, you must reduce your opponent to one level past Incapacitated.

Type: Attack *Difficulty:* Opp. Dex + Dodge

Image: With fluid-like agility, you swing your sword around, and, before your opponent can block you, your blade slices through his neck, and his head falls to the ground.





Note that, quite often in the duels fought in Highlander, the two immortals fight until one of the combatants is disarmed and driven to their knees, admitting defeat. It is rarely a lucky shot that chops off the head, but more often a defeat of the spirit.)

This is by no means meant to be an exhaustive list of all the possible maneuvers, but more a guide to help Storytellers decide the types of rolls and difficulties which should be applied to various maneuvers. Ideally, combat should take the form of a semi-live action roleplay combat scene, with the players describing what their character does, and demonstrating (safely, of course) if necessary. The Storyteller then decides what rolls should be made and against what difficulties.

DODGING

On some occasions, it may be necessary to dodge a blow rather than parry it. On these occasions, the target rolls his Dexterity + Dodge against a target number of six. The successes on this roll are subtracted from the successes of the

Attacker. If the attacker's successes are eliminated, the target manages to dodge the blow.

STAGE THREE: RESOLUTION

Damage is resolved as normal - The attacker rolls the Damage dice pool for that weapon, against a target number of six, each success causing the target to lose a health level. The target makes a Soak roll, rolling his Stamina (difficulty 6) and subtracting his successes from his opponent's.

EXAMPLE OF COMBAT

Connor is squaring off against the Kurgan (See the Appendix for their respective stats). They circle each other for a few moments, Kurgan makes his first move - a normal attack. Both players roll for Initiative, Connor getting

six successes, and the Kurgan gets five. Kurgan make his attack roll - Dex+Melee - getting five successes. Connor tries to parry the Kurgan's attack, and makes his Defense roll - Dex+Melee plus an extra die, as he got more one more success on his Initiative roll than Kurgan. Connor also rolls five successes, and manages to parry the Kurgan's blade.

Both roll Initiative for the next round, and both have an extra die to add to their Initiative pool - The Kurgan because he attacked last round, and Connor because he managed to successfully parry Kurgan's attack. Kurgan gets four successes, and Connor gets six, winning the Initiative, and getting two dice to add to his dice pool. Connor decides to try a Feint, and makes his roll - Manipulation + Melee plus his two Initiative dice against a target number of nine - his weapon's normal difficulty plus three. He gets two successes. Because a feint can't be

parried, Kurgan is left with no option but to try and dodge. Rolling Dexterity + Dodge against a difficulty of six, he gets five successes - Connor's blade slices through thin air.

The third round of combat starts, and both players roll for Initiative. The Storyteller decides that, seeing as Kurgan's Dodge successes exceeded Connor's Attack successes by three, Connor will be slightly off-balance at the start of this round, due to having swung his sword through thin air. Thus, Connor's difficulty is five instead of four, to reflect this. Connor decides that he needs get working and thus uses his Quickening to get the Speed of the Stag, which gives him an extra three Initiative dice, in addition to the die he receives for having attacked last round. The Kurgan rolls his Wits + Alertness and gets five successes. Connor follows suit and gets seven successes, which means he has two dice to add to his dice pool.



He decides to try to disarm the Kurgan, and rolls Dexterity + Melee against a difficulty of six, not forgetting his extra two dice, and gets a massive seven successes. Kurgan rolls Dex + Melee but gets several botches, and can only manage three successes. Connor manages to flick the Kurgan's sword from his hand.

Kurgan's in trouble.

This is primarily an arbitrary combat system, designed to aid the Storyteller and players in Storytelling the duels which occur, rather than restricting them to a framework of rules. As ever, if you don't like part of these rules, don't use them. We don't come around and inspect how you play these games. Well, not too often, anyway...

WEAPONS

The sword is the traditional weapon of an immortal. The reasons for this are fairly simple - the sword is the oldest weapon with which you could efficiently decapitate someone, and the first immortals would have used them. They would have passed the tradition on to the immortals who followed them. Until relatively recently, the sword was the main personal weapon. It's only within the last few hundred years that we have begun using guns, and you can't chop a man's head off with a gun. In fact, not counting the battle axe, there still is no practical weapon which can be used to decapitate someone in a duel, and because immortals always learn their ways from other immortals, it is only natural that the sword has become the traditional weapon for immortals.

An immortal will often have a weapon which he has used for many centuries. Ramirez, for example had his katana for over two millennia by the time he met Connor. To an immortal, a sword is more than just a piece of steel. It becomes an extension of their body - they keep it with them most of the time, and it becomes an old friend, in effect. There are no

hard and fast rules for weapons as regards weapons difficulties and damage, etc. A rough guide is that the bigger and heavier sword is, the harder it is to use, but the more damage is inflicted. The Katanas used by Connor, Duncan and Ramirez are all Difficulty 6, Damage: Strength + 5. But the Kurgan's two-handed sword is Difficulty 7, Damage: Strength + 6, being, as it is, both heavier and more difficult to use. Kastagir's Saber is Difficulty 6 and Damage: Strength + 4, reflecting that it is normally used with only one hand.

It's a good idea to describe your weapon in detail, as part of fleshing out your character. If possible, get hold of a weapons catalog, from a company like Noble Collection, for example, which sells a wide variety of swords and axes, and pick a weapon (Noble Collection is one of many distributors for Marto USA, the suppliers for the *Highlander* movies and TV show). An immortal's choice of weapon helps define who they are. Connor's Katana reflects his honor and values, and the way in which he uses skill, more than brute strength to win duels, while the Kurgan's two-handed sword reflects his harshness and brutality. Also, how do you carry your weapon? In a long coat, like Connor, or have some other method, perhaps? All these details help to flesh out your character, and enrich the role playing experience.

