

Sacred Bull of Heaven trampled Benu under its mighty hooves, destroying the spirit and casting it into Darkness. The Sun, however, took pity on Benu and returned it to the World: she gave Benu the form of a heron so that Myceras would not see its true face, and the gift of eternity so that for as long as she blazes in heaven so shall it live, die, and be reborn just as she lives, dies, and is reborn every dawn, midday, and evening. This spirit we call the Benu, or Phoenix, is a spirit of Fire, Air, and Motion sacred to the Sun, hated by Darkness, and denied the restful embrace of Death for as long as the heavens shall exist.”

Although its life spans immeasurable gulfs of time the Phoenix must die and be reborn every one hundred years. This cycle is called *Waning* and the Phoenix senses its approach from the first day of its rebirth; always, Death is waiting for it at the end of its allotted century of life. When the time draws near, the Phoenix abandons its nest and goes deep into the lost, forgotten places of the world. There it rises into the heavens and flies directly towards the Sun, always seeking her face once more in its last moments. Then, in a blazing eruption of fire, light, and thunder, the creature self-immolates and its ashes scatter on the four winds; even after a thousand such deaths the experience is still filled with terror, agony, and despair for the Benu.

The ashes of the Phoenix float across the world for many hundreds of leagues, each speck settling in a different place. When next the Sun is fully eclipsed by the Moon, an egg of fire bursts forms from one of those specks, wherever it has fallen; as the eclipse ends, the fire egg flares open and the Phoenix is reborn, fully grown and returned to vitality.

During the time between its death and rebirth, Benu is trapped in the Fire Rune where some of its memories are scorched away. This is how Benu exists in the world: living, dying, and being reborn over and over across vast epochs of time.

Although its natural form is that of a large heron, the Phoenix can choose to incarnate during one of its rebirths as a human. When a fleck of ash falls near a place inhabited by



people, the creature sometimes chooses to become one of them so that it can experience life in a new form. During these times, when the fiery egg hatches, a fully-grown man or woman emerges: strong, naked, and strikingly beautiful. The Benu has learned that humans fear and worship beauty, and that only the strong survive in their violent world.

INCARNATION

When incarnated, the Phoenix seeks to learn, behold, and experience all that it can within the short time it is human, just three years. Often, its first action is to integrate itself into a nearby community where it quickly assimilates

the language, customs, and culture of its chosen folk; although not intentionally evil, the Benu will not hesitate to kill and rob travellers to acquire the things its needs so that it can better pass among other humans.

Once securely rooted in its community, the Phoenix goes about the business of being human: loving, adventuring, working, fighting, and creating a legacy that will last through the ages. The Phoenix is sterile and unable to create children as either a male or female. It is this incarnating of the Phoenix that has given rise to many legends about strange, godlike men and women who wandered into remote villages or untamed tribal lands only to immediately become the most powerful, beloved (or hated) member of their new community.

Other than its otherworldly power and profound wisdom — which many attribute to magic or the blessings of gods — there are very few clues leading to the true nature of an incarnated Phoenix; it is not, however, without its weaknesses. First, the Phoenix is allergic and vulnerable to darkness and so always tries to remain within 10 metres of a fire when natural light is unavailable. The fire can be as small as a lantern or torch, or as large as the hearthfire in a Thane's longhouse. Secondly, if a part of an incarnated Phoenix (arm, leg, or finger, for example) is ever exposed to open flames, it briefly flares with radiant scarlet feathers.



frozen shadows could trap it for a short time. If slain in combat, the Phoenix self-immolates with all the effects discussed previously.

If somehow collected, the ashes of a Phoenix can be used in a number of magical formulae and artefacts; at least a vial of ash must be obtained to be of any use. Among these uses is the creation of a charm that grants the wearer regenerative powers when standing in direct sunlight, and restoration of life if the ashes are used to craft a sarcophagus in which a dead body is laid to rest. It is left to the Games Master to design new, exciting magic items that can be forged using the ashes of the Phoenix but they should always involve the Fire, Air, and Motion Runes with regards to powers and effects.

CULTS SURROUNDING THE PHOENIX

Two small, obscure cults have formed around the Phoenix and its legends; both are poorly outfitted, disorganized, and barely recognized by anyone but the local primitives in the far lands where they build temples. The first, known as the *Kalatligoun na Erthei*, seek nothing more than to find, imprison, and slay the creature so that they can die in the resulting conflagration — and hopefully take a few thousand innocent people with them into heaven. These doomsday zealots believe that, at the moment of their immolation, they will become divine and rise into the sky to become one with the Sun and Sky. What they lack in power and influence, the Kalatligoun make up for in pure, insane savagery: many of the cultists are sorcerers that have created deadly artefacts — called Fire Blossoms — able to manifest the Fire and Air Runes in violent, devastating tempests. In an effort to effect their own rise to divinity, some of these sorcerers consider it a holy endeavour to enter a city carrying a Fire Blossom and detonate it in a crowded market or temple.

The second cult, called the *Athanati*, has spent their lives seeking the Phoenix to harness its powers of immortality and rebirth. These scholars and hedonists have no desire to kill the Bennu, but instead plan to offer it vast kingdoms of wealth and power in exchange for eternity. It is suspected that at least one senator in the grand city of Meeros is an Athanati initiate and Myceran agents are watching him closely.

Below is an example of the Phoenix incarnated as a Meerish soldier. In addition to his formidable physical characteristics and magical ability, the incarnate also has a large number of powerful capabilities that make him almost unstoppable in most combat and adventuring situations. This incarnate would very quickly rise in the ranks of his military community to become a great leader of renown.

Phoenix (Incarnated Form)	Attributes
STR: 3d6+4 (15)	Action Points: 3
CON: 3d6+6 (17)	Damage Modifier: +1d2
SIZ: 2d6+6 (13)	Magic Points: 20
DEX: 3d6+5 (16)	Movement: 6m
INT: 4d6+6 (20)	Strike Rank: 18
POW: 4d6+6 (20)	Armour: Hoplite Cuirass & Shield
CHA: 3d6+6 (17)	Abilities: Allergy (Darkness), Death Sense, Disease Immunity, Immunity (Cold, Fire, Mundane Weapons, Electricity), Life Sense, Magic Sense, Poison Immunity, Regeneration, Vulnerable (Darkness)

1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1 – 3	Right Leg	5/6
4 – 6	Left Leg	5/6
7 – 9	Abdomen	5/7
10 – 12	Chest	5/8
13 – 15	Right Arm	5/5
16 – 18	Left Arm	5/5
19 – 20	Head	5/6

Skills	Magic
Athletics 78%, Brawn 75%, Courtesy 49%, Craft Longspear 70%, Culture 79%, Dance 83%, Endurance 91%, Evade 56%, First Aid 32%, Healing 86%, Influence 88%, Insight 88%, Literacy 92%, Oratory 88%, Perception 72%, Sing 76%, Stealth 85%, Survival 80%, Tracking 89%, Unarmed 66%, Willpower 80%	Folk Magic 82% (Fireblade, Firearrow, Pierce)

Combat Style & Weapons	Traits & Notes
Phoenix Incarnate 99%	

Weapon	Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
Shortsword	M	M	1d6+1d6	6/8
Longspear	L	VL	1d10+1+1d6	4/10
Javelin	H	10/20/50	1d8+1+1d6	3/8