

LEGENDS OF THE WULIN

武俠群像





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武俠系列之
武林群俠傳

Wuxia Action Series

Legends of the Wulin

Introduction

Xiao Yu was looking through the stagecoach window, bored out of her wits. She'd seen nothing but sand and dunes for the last few days of travel through the deserts of Northern Shen Zhou.

His father was a notable official from the capital, and he'd been reassigned to a new post in the borderlands. As it was Imperial policy to expand Han culture and civilization to all the corners beyond the central plains, Officer Chen's entire family was moving with him.

The young girl yawned as more dunes passed ahead. She missed the lush green gardens of the capital, the cool breeze coming from the lakes and canals, the courtyard performances they used to watch during tea. It was the bustle of the city that she missed the most, the endless attention maids and attendants would lavish upon her.

She was excited at first—she would finally get out of her house, see the magnificence of the Land of the Gods. If all there was to see was sand and dust, she might as well have stayed home. In the rickety inns and old run-down tea houses they stayed in, she dreamed of seeing great heroes of the Jiang Hu.

Xiao Yu wished, secretly, for the caravan to be attacked by bandits. Nothing could harm her, she thought; she was well-protected, not by her father's personal guards or the security escorts that surrounded her at all times, but by the humble old man sleeping quietly in front of her.

The old man dressed in a spotless blue silk tunic, his almost-white beard perfectly groomed, hair tied in a knot held by a jade dragon pin. That was the Daoist way, and Tutor Liu was both a good Daoist and a good friend of her father. That friendship—and his status as trusted advisor—had led her father to entrust the man with Xiao Yu's well-being alongside her education. He snored softly, looking more delicate than tough. Dragon Flute Liu of the Blue Flame society was well-known across the Wulin; though he appeared a slender old calligraphy tutor, he was legendary for his intrigues, intellect, and kung fu.

Xiao Yu cleared her throat and coughed a bit, trying to wake the old man without being too rude. If she wasn't seeing any action in the desert, at least he could entertain her with his stories. She coughed louder.

—So much sand, it's getting everywhere. I cannot stop coughing.—

Old Liu smiled; even with eyes closed, he could see clearly her intent. —Might as well have a lesson right now, keep our mind off the sand and heat. Shall we?—

The girl sat straight. A satisfied grin crossed her face, followed by the bored and annoyed tone demanded of girls of her age and status. —If we must; there is nothing much to do anyway.—

Master Liu looked at her, his eyes hawk-bright. —Let's study some history, then.—

Xiao Yu's eyes brightened. She listened to his every word, hoping to hear tales of heroics and romance from the master's lips.

—Let us examine the politics of the Duke of Zhou, on land division.—

The young lady's affectation of boredom and disappointment became genuine. —Can't we study Wulin history today?— she exclaimed.

Dragon Flute Liu smiled, took his flawless jade flute out of his bag, and played a few notes to begin the story. Music faded the afternoon's boredom, as his words lulled Xiao Yu into a dream.



The Dream of the Wulin

No one really knows how the Wulin was born; its origins are lost to us in history, though some say its existence was declared by the August Jade Emperor himself as a way to let mortals reach excellence through the cultivation of Chi and the practice of kung fu, that there would always be heroes to protect Shen Zhou.

Others said that he ordered the creation of the Wulin so that powerful humans would fight among themselves, dividing themselves into countless sects and factions, always in conflict with each other for power and reputation, that they would never threaten Heaven.

As history becomes blurry by the passage of time, it becomes myth: talk of warriors heroic and corrupt becomes tales of gods and demons, fighting in Heaven as well as on Earth.

Even so, the origins of the Martial Brotherhood—the Wulin—remain unknown. Dynasties have risen and fallen, virtuous emperors and ambitious tyrants alike sat on the Dragon Throne, and the Land has been united and divided once and again. The Wulin is the constant, a path outside society for those whose passions burn as strong as the power of their chi. It is a brotherhood for those who dedicate their lives to bettering themselves through kung fu, a place for all heroes under Heaven and those who would leave their mark on the world. It is ruled by virtue and force, joined by the Chivalrous and selfish alike. It even welcomes those corrupt rebels who spit on the laws of Heaven and Earth: they are all part of the Wulin.

Everyone respects the righteous palms of the Little Forest Sect, the shining blades of the Heaven Swords, the fierce Talons of the Eagles and the swift spears of the Yun Clan. Those who travel by boat fear the Southern Dragons, while whispers of the Blood Wind Cult fill the night. Who has not heard of the defiance and arrogance of the Sword Bastard and his Blade Dogs?

It was not always so. New stars are always rising across the Wulin sky as others lose their shine. They align in new constellations, they all want to shine forever... yet, there's always an ending. The old stars and constellations that fall are remembered only in legends and Lore, and some are consigned to the oblivion of being forgotten.

Once upon a time in Shen Zhou, four great clans rose from North, South, East and West. Each took control of their respective direction, and long before our time, they fought and loved and lived and died. They formed alliances amongst themselves, but also held also terrible grudges for past misdeeds.

Back in those days, an infernal alliance shocked Heaven and Earth. One man held dominion over all societies and cults deemed unorthodox and evil, and his followers considered themselves lords over Earth and Sky. Their depredations were too much to be told. Shen Zhou suffered from a tiger within and a beast from the north. The Land was always divided, borders always under siege.



Heroes of that time thought that weapons made gods; to that end, they searched the lands far and wide for powerful weapons left from a time forgotten. Their kung fu was powerful and their Chi was strong, yet they coveted those weapons with all their might, trusting relics more than their own strength.

That was their downfall; pride and ambition and relying on weapons more than on their inner strength. These snippets are all that remains of the tale of how those great clans fell; history has forgotten their names. The gods and demons have long gone to Heaven and Hell and taken their weapons with them. The tiger has no soul, and no crystal shines in Heaven.

But new stars shine over the Rivers and Lakes; new constellations have formed, new legends are told every day. From the mountains and the palaces, all those who read omens and portents have decreed a new age begun.

A new age of heroes.

A new age of kung fu.

A new age of the Wulin.

WELCOME TO LEGENDS OF THE WULIN

Welcome to **Legends of the Wulin**, a new beginning for the Wuxia Action Series. In this game, we've strived to capture all the high-flying action, world-breaking kung fu, heaven-shaking passion and intense melodrama of Wuxia fiction as seen through novels, comics, movies and distill it into "The Dao of Wuxia Gaming".

Inside this book, you'll find the tools for chronicling your own tales of heroes Chivalrous and selfish; moved by the fire of immense passions with kung fu to shake Heaven and Earth, men and women who have stepped outside the harmonious order of Heaven to enter the Wulin, a place where only the greatness of your deeds will determine your place among the legends.

You may be familiar with the Wuxia Action Series from our previous line, **Weapons of the Gods**, or you may be completely new to this world. If you are a newcomer, fear not—this is a whole new beginning for the series. Previous familiarity is by no means necessary, and if you're a returning fan we welcome you back and hope you'll enjoy this new incarnation of the game as much as the previous one.

There are a few differences between **Weapons of the Gods** and **Legends of the Wulin**, but many similarities. Let's explore a little bit of both: first of all, **Legends** is a completely original property, developed by EOS with no ties to the comic *Weapons of the Gods* or any other existing license. All of the concepts, writing and artwork were created specifically for this project; we like to think of this as the birth of a new wuxia world, with infinite possibilities for the future.

There are many ties with our previous incarnation intertwined in the fabric of our world; the game still takes place in a land called Shen Zhou, an ancient Mythic China that never was. You'll see that many of the concepts of the setting are still present; some have been expanded upon,

others have faded into the background, but most have been reimagined into something familiar—yet—different.

There are a few hints and nods to the setting history presented in the previous line, so existing players can bridge the two games. You may treat **Weapons of the Gods** as a past of **Legends of the Wulin**, which—in some ways—it is. New players will have everything they need to know about the setting explained within this book and future supplements, with no need to reference the previous line.

The tone of the game has also changed; from its very name, **Weapons of the Gods** made reference to a more mythic world, where the conflict between deities and demons still directly and indirectly affected the mortal world. **Legends of the Wulin**, by contrast, is entirely about humans; there is no supernatural intervention. In modern Shen Zhou, men and women are masters of their own destiny. Only they can change the world and shape history by cultivating their Chi and acting on the world with their kung fu and Secret Arts.

Instead of emulating the setting and tropes of a particular franchise, we've tried to emulate the tropes of the wuxia genre as a whole. If you've ever seen a wuxia movie or series, or read a comic or novel, you'll see that the situations there are easy to emulate using the new Wuxia Action System. Traveling monks, wandering swordsmen, eccentric Daoists, and stalwart security escorts are right at home in this setting. For those unfamiliar with the genre, we hope the roleplaying experience provided in this game will serve as a fun introduction.

We welcome you, veteran warriors and new heroes alike! We hope you have many hours of fun and excitement in the world we've created for you. Inside these pages awaits Shen Zhou; what a beautiful world it is, that such heroes compete for it!

WHAT IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME?

If this book happens to be the first of its kind that you open, then this whole “role-playing” business might seem confusing. This is understandable! After all, when we think of games we usually picture something that has a board and pieces to move, or at least the decency of supplying you with a deck of cards. **Legends of the Wulin** is not that kind of game—rather, it bridges the gap between several different activities. It has elements of playacting, allowing the players to take the parts of heroes of their own imagination and assume their identities for a while. It is also shared storytelling, where the group comes together to craft a narrative about these heroes, their trials and their triumphs. It is also a game with rules, allowing the luck of the dice and the creativity of the players to both influence the success or failure of your heroes as they take on their tasks... thus influencing both characters and story.

The basic setup as follows. Just like in a play, players assume the role of one particular character whose skin and persona they’ll do their best to inhabit. With this character, the players will describe their actions, speak the character’s dialogue and visualize the character’s inner life, hopes and dreams. *Unlike* a play, you aren’t bound by a set selection of prewritten characters or the closed narrative of a script. Instead, you make up the kind of character that you would most like to play and meet their challenges via an organic series of choices. How will your vengeful swordsman react to meeting his former lover? Depending on how immersed you get in your character, the result might surprise even you.

Every hero needs a stage and every story needs a setting—this is where the final player, the *Wulin Sage*, comes in. Named after a legendary character within the setting of **Legends of the Wulin**, the Sage’s mission statement at the game table is to play the part of the world itself—setting up situations, describing places, and deciding and describing the actions of all those characters who the other players don’t control. The Sage also adjudicates the rules of the game—deciding, with the guidance of these rules, how difficult tasks should be or exactly what kind of devious kung fu styles the villains use.

If this sounds complicated, don’t worry! It can seem a bit overwhelming at first, but once the pieces click into place, the principles follow easily. Let’s see an illustrative example of a game in progress, shall we? Imagine the following:

A cold wind blew around the worn stone pillars jutting from the dusty grounds of the ruined Three Immortals Monastery—building in strength as the darkness of night approaches, it sounded like the howling of a thousand-headed choir of restless ghosts.

*Steps echoed through the night as the Wulin foursome known amongst the lowlands as the **Four Road Gallants** walked through the naked and broken stone arc that once*

*marked the entrance to the temple grounds: Ghost Li, the rings fastened in the heavy blade of his nine-ring saber rattling slightly as he advanced; **Bright Snow**, a maiden barely out of her teens but brandishing her slender sword with the fierceness of a born warrior, followed closely (never one to allow the grim-faced warrior to go ahead by himself). Following behind the rival allies were the shapes (burly, ox-shouldered) of **Doctor Wen He Bao** and (huddled, swaying) elder **Uncle Wu**.*

Let’s take a step back from the story and look what happens around the table where the players are gathered: this is merely the start of the night’s session of *Legends of the Wulin*. Five people are gathered around the table to play—Erik has the role of the Wulin Sage, so it is up to him to deliver the description of the world. Let us observe the process:

Eric: “All right, so you all step through the ruined archway of the ancient temple grounds.”

Tobias (playing the avenger Ghost Li): “Li brings his saber up carefully as he steps inside—the rings in the blade rattle and his hair flows dramatically in the sudden wind. He is definitely checking for danger.”

Jerry (playing the hotheaded swordswoman Bright Snow): “I’m also holding my sword at the ready, making sure to keep up with Li. He’s not going to get ahead!”

Sandra (playing Doctor Wen He Bao): “You’re such a cute couple.”

Eric: “Did the Doctor actually say that out loud?”

Sandra: “Surely not!”

Jerry: “Spoilsport.”

Carl (playing the old and sagely Uncle Wu): “Wu walks ahead, seemingly impassive as he looks around...except for his fingers fidgeting with his walking staff. His silk cap bobs back and forth in the gust of wind. I am also keeping a lookout for danger.”

Tobias: (rolling dice in his hand.) “Can we make any die rolls to detect danger?”

Eric: “Patience! But yes—I was about to ask you all to make Awareness rolls and tell me your results. Who knows what dangers might be lurking just out of sight, hmm?”

Tobias: “Damn! 22.”

Jerry: “... 18 is pretty bad, right?”

Sandra: “34.”

Carl: “49.”

Jerry: “How do you two do that?!”

Eric: “All right—with the two warriors walking ahead, you split up to carefully walk around a large pillar in your way. Focused on watching around the other side, you fail to notice the shape sitting on *top* of the pillar.”

Tobias: “But I... damn! Remember that I stated that Li is itching for action and ready for danger?”

Eric: “Yes, but he’s looking for it in all the wrong places. Doctor, you actually spot the shadow on top of the pillar even though you can’t make anything out. Wu, on the other hand...” (Carl raises one eyebrow and strokes his beard in the manner of sly old Uncle Wu.)

Eric: “You spy the shadowy figure and more—and you are not as surprised as our two warriors (raises his eyebrows towards Tobias and Jerry)...when the note of a plucked guqin string echoes out over the grounds.”

Tobias: “Li almost jumps out of his skin as he whirls around!” Tobias adopts a *different tone, denoting that he is talking 'in character'*. “What the hell?!”

Jerry: *Jerry mimes spinning around and waving a sword.* “Ack! I—mean—SHOW YOURSELF!”

Eric: “Let’s not get ahead of ourselves, guys. Wu—the shape is distinctly female, and familiar at that. A tangled mess of black hair spills out from the deep shadows of her wide-brimmed rice hat, her faded and torn robes flap in the wind. The guqin is placed over her crossed legs, and... you are suddenly aware of the fluttering of the carrion birds seated at the tops of the pillars.”

Sandra: “I close my fists, awaiting action. How hard would it be to leap up to the top of the pillar? I think that some applied medicine might be in order.”

Carl: “A kindness of ravens, you could say?”

Eric: “Indeed, Carl. Sandra—it isn’t too hard, but give me a second. Ghost Li and Bright Snow spin around, both clearly surprised and alarmed. You can all see her now. Another string is plucked, the noise adding to the unwholesome atmosphere of the place. Reflected in the pale moonlight, you see a grin under that hat.”

Carl: *Carl frowns deeply and speaks as Wu:* “Raven Scholar Liu!”

Eric: “A dry laugh comes from the seated girl. You can all see her tattered robes and multitudes of strange talismans and prayer strips fasted to the hem of her clothes. She speaks...” *Eric shifts his tone slightly.* “Perceptive as always, old man Wu. Fancy meeting you here.”

Tobias: *Tobias mimes threatening movements with a saber.* “Who are you? Speak, before my blade does my speaking for me!”

Carl: “What are you doing here, Scholar Liu? Don’t tell me that you’re involved with the Hungry Ghost Sect!”

Eric: “Far from it, honored Uncle Wu. Far from it! But you are, and you are seeking the children that they have stolen

from the merchant houses. I have a solution for you, if you are willing to listen. If not...I fear that you will never find the children in time!”

We’ll leave our group for now. What you have read is a short example of play. You saw the Wulin Sage set up of a scene and use the rules to create dramatic tension, and various ways players and Sages described the actions of characters. The intricacies of the rules and the details of the setting can be explained in chapters to come; for now, go on the path. Your Legend awaits!

WHAT IS WUXIA?

WUXIA (武侠) is a genre of Chinese fiction that chronicles the adventures of martial arts heroes in ancient China. Characters in wuxia fiction are usually wanderers or outsiders of some sort; the rule of states and empires are oft ineffectual or tyrannical. Wuxia heroes live by their own personal code of conduct, not the law of the land.

These codes emphasize rightful retribution, honor and loyalty above all else. They exist outside the proper order of Mythic Chinese society in a sort of underworld, the Martial Arts World—a world of conflicting factions and societies with complex histories and relationships. In this world, status is based on achievements, and deeds are valued more than material wealth.

Heroes in wuxia cultivate their *chi*, their internal energy or *life breath*, through the practice of kung fu. This allows them to perform seemingly supernatural feats, like leaping incredible distances, gliding in the air, moving at amazing speeds and projecting their attacks at great distances. As extraordinary as these abilities are to us, they are common and accepted as a normal part of wuxia reality. It is believed that anyone with the right aptitude and training can achieve them.

Characters in wuxia have grander-than-life personalities, capable of great joys and overwhelming melancholies. They are moved by immense passions and inspirations to step out of the accepted order of things, to forge their own destiny by the fire of their will and strength of their kung fu, they go into a path of adventure to right the wrongs of the world, leave their mark in history, live up to or create a legacy, to become legends.

Good and evil are not absolutes in wuxia. Protagonists and antagonists both have virtues and flaws—the hero of a story can be prideful and selfish, while the enemy can be honorable and loyal to his cause. Both are moved to defend what they care most about, to fight for their ideals, and to change the world according to their vision. Wuxia heroes are not necessarily those who do good things, or fight for a just cause, but those who will not settle for an ordinary life, those who would step out into the world to leave their mark in it, those who would challenge Heaven and Earth for their

dreams and ambitions. The tyrannical emperor who brings destruction and war to follow his dream of unifying the land under his banner, the swordswoman who would stand alone against the tyrant's armies to defend her family and homeland, and the barbarian chieftain who seeks the empire's destruction are all proper wuxia heroes in one form or another.

Wuxia is firmly rooted in ancient—but-fictionalized China (or “Mythic China”). Some stories take place during specific dynasties and feature the protagonists' involvement in real events and meeting historical figures, while others are more vague with history set in unspecified periods where the comings and goings of the Martial Arts World remain isolated from the facts of history. All stories retain details and tropes that set them firmly in ancient China.

The term wuxia is composed of two words. The first is **WU** (武), meaning Martial, as in related to the military or the martial arts. In wuxia, kung fu and the martial arts are much more than a simple means to an end. Kung fu is the way heroes cultivate their Chi and the instrument to shape the world according to their views and beliefs. In this world it doesn't matter what hand destiny dealt to a person at the start of their lives; it doesn't matter if one is noble or peasant, male or female, young or old, healthy or crippled. Through the practice of kung fu, strengths can be enhanced, weaknesses overcome. It is through this art that the characters become who they want, need or are destined to be.

The martial arts are an external manifestation of the inner world of the passions and ideals that move a character, an extension of personalities and essences. This is why, in wuxia, all important characters have distinctive kung fu styles and weapons, which—just as the heroes who utilize them—can be harmonious or destructive, angry or serene, whimsical or solemn, traditional or strange.

The words kung fu mean excellence through hard work; this excellence permeates everything the hero does, from combat to their appearances and behavior to the way they move across the world. In wuxia, great masters reflect that martial arts even in ordinary activities, such as calligraphy or painting—and can use ordinary objects brushes or blades of grass as weapons.

Kung fu styles with storied histories tie heroes to a legacy, to traditions and a long past; new styles show a desire for change and innovation. The way a hero learns kung fu and the ties that come with that style are just as important as the effects that kung fu provides or more.

The second word, **Xia** (侠), can be translated as “knight errant” or “wandering force,” and it represents both a *type* of hero and a *code of conduct*. If *Wu* is *how* the heroes affect the world around them, *Xia* is *who* they are, how they behave. Proper *Xia* should be a hero who values personal honor, loyalty and rightful retribution above all else; who disdains material wealth and worldly status; someone for whom actions speak louder than words, who does not necessarily abide by the rule of *law* but lives instead by a rule of *justice*.

Wuxia heroes place great value on face: their word is as

good as gold, their oaths as binding as Imperial edicts. They create a reputation based on their deeds and actions, and would go to great lengths to protect that reputation. Injury to a hero's sense of personal honor or reputation can be worse than physical injury. Loyalty is not easily given, and must be earned. Once a hero gives his allegiance to a person or ideal, the hero should live and die for them—going to any length and risking life and limb to defend friends, teachers, lovers, or causes. A hero would put all their skills and power at the disposal of those whom they find worthy of loyalty.

Rightful retribution means that actions should be repaid in kind, regardless of who performed them: those who act justly and respectfully deserve justice and respect in return, whether they are peasants or lords. Those who act with cruelty and tyranny earn justice as well in the form of revenge and punishment, brought to them regardless whether they are the Emperor or a bandit. Wandering heroes could be considered to be the blades of karma, bringing punishment or justice to those who truly deserve it without being swayed by the winds of the mundane world, which would deem some unworthy of justice and some above punishment.

There are more virtues followed in wuxia, but these constitute the basic principles. They are subject by—and—large to personal interpretation, as disparate heroes have different concepts of personal honor and different causes worthy of loyalty, and would have different ideas about who deserves justice and who deserves revenge.

But they are absolute in that the majority of heroes follow them, in one way or another. Even if a hero is corrupt or duplicitous, they will go to great lengths to hide that fact and at least attempt an honorable appearance of following the *Xia* code.

Wandering heroes live in a world of their own known as the **Jiang Hu** (江湖), literally meaning *Rivers and Lakes*. It was originally used to denote the great wilderness, the vast, untamed space between cities, the lawless lands outside civilization ripe with the possibility of danger and adventure.

Eventually it took on a more metaphorical meaning as a society outside society, a world of outcasts and outsiders, those existing outside the limits of proper and orderly Chinese society. It is a world of criminals and constables, saints and sinners, heroes and villains, a world ruled by its own laws and traditions where achievements and deeds do not go unsung and bring with them power and status.

It is a River, because it is ever-flowing and changing; it is a Lake, as the smallest stone can cause ripples across its surface, the most small-seeming action can have enormous consequences.

Martial arts heroes are collectively known as the **Wulin** (武林), literally meaning *Martial Forest* but translated as *The Fighting Community* or *The Martial Brotherhood*. Regardless of what they fight for, what ideals they follow, where they come from or how they behave, all heroes share a bond with each other. The Wulin is the society within the Jiang Hu, following the principles of Wu and Xia.

Wuxia has had a long history in China, going as far as the

Han Dynasty(206–220BC). There are mentions of errant knights and wandering assassins in *The Records of the Grand Historian* by Sima Qian. One can find the antecedents of wuxia in classic Chinese epics such as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*(14th Century AD), where we see sworn oaths of undying brotherhood and loyalty taken between the heroes Liu Bei, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei at the Peach Garden. This form of loyalty became common place in the genre. *Outlaws of the Marsh* chronicles the tales of the heroes of the Greenwood, a brotherhood of heroes who live outside the limits of what is considered normal society.

Both works exalt martial excellence alongside moral and Chivalrous behavior. In the 20th century, wuxia became a popular literary genre by the pens of great authors such as Jin Yong, with fiction crossing over with Chinese history in stories that exalt Chinese culture and traditional values. Gu Long wrote more poetic stories, where the Jiang Hu remains a world of its own, separated from historical events and figures, in stories full of melancholic wondering antiheroes.

Wuxia has stepped beyond literature, appearing successfully in media in Chinese-speaking countries. Television series, games, cartoons, merchandising and cinema have all had great directors and writers who have made their mark on wuxia, like the poetic and ethereal King Hu, the dynamic and fantastic Tsui Hark, the artistic Zhang Yimou and the famed Ang Lee. They've all introduced the genre to larger international audiences with their works. In the world of comics, we've seen

beautifully drawn masterpieces by authors like Tony Wong, Andy Seto and Ma Wing Chin. Many of these movies, comics, and (to a lesser extent) books have made their way to the west and have inspired works on their own—like **Weapons of the Gods** and the successor book you're now reading.

We hope this introduction can help newcomers to the genre to gain a bit more familiarity with the history and characteristics of wuxia. We welcome you to Shen Zhou, a vast and magnificent land; we welcome you to a China that never was; we await you in the following pages, along with the chance to become a hero with world-breaking kung fu and Heaven shaking passions.

Go now, and become a Legend of the Wulin.





THE BOOK OF WOOD

THE WUXIA ACTION SYSTEM

BASIC TERMINOLOGY

The Wulin Sage

Within Shen Zhou, there are whispered rumors about a Wulin Sage, sometimes also simply called the Sage (not to be confused with just any old sage – this is the Sage we’re whispering about). This mysterious figure is said to influence all conflicts, all deaths and alliances, all happy events and calamities. For what purpose? None but the Sage knows that.

The rumors are true, up to a point: the Game Master in this game is referred to as the Wulin Sage.

Round

In combat, time is tracked in rounds. Each round represents about three seconds of time within the game world. See the combat chapter for more detailed information on how to handle rounds.

Scene

A scene is a period of time devoted to a particular sequence of events or encounters. A fight is a scene. A conversation is a scene. Treating injured soldiers is a scene. Basically, whenever the characters see or do something interesting, it warrants a scene. An uneventful walk from one town to another is probably not a scene. If nothing is going on and nothing in the future will be influenced by it, feel free to skip the narration and dice! Such events are assumed to have happened even if they aren't explicitly detailed.

Chapter

Each session, each time you all meet face to face to play the game, is a chapter. It doesn't really matter how long you meet – one hour could be a short chapter or you can hold a monster marathon session of 24 hours straight. Both are still chapters. It also doesn't matter how much time passes in the game's narrative either. One chapter could be devoted entirely to a series of intense fights that all take place within an in-character hour, while another chapter could gloss over a voyage that takes a whole month.

The above rules can be a little hard to apply if you're a modern sort of gamer who plays over the Internet. If you all play together in real time, through a live chat or voice conference, then each online meeting is a chapter. If you play gradually by email or posting on a forum, then each chapter is a handful of scenes. The Sage should determine this based on when the story would allow for a convenient break in the action.

Story

A *story* is a particular plotline with a distinct beginning, middle, and end. Finding out that an ally has been murdered, the investigation, and the dispensing of justice can together be considered a single story. Most stories take at least two chapters to complete, sometimes much more.

Some Sages like to handle one story after another. Others weave their plots together into greater whole, so that it becomes trickier to tell exactly where one plot begins and another ends. Both methods are fine.

Lake

A strong cultivated inner power brings many benefits with it. Long life, strong health, acute senses, sharp memory, quick reflexes... the list goes on. There are few problems in life that a strong Chi can't help out with. Truly, excellence is universal!

To represent this benefit in game terms, *Legends of the Wulin* uses a concept known as the Lake. The Lake is your default amount of dice in your pool when called upon to roll something, unless a different amount is specifically called for. As your inner power grows, so does your talent and chances to overcome all difficulties in life.

The size of your Lake depends on your Rank, and it will automatically grow with your advancement. But in a nutshell, it's equal to 5 + your River size.

GAME MECHANICS

Legends of the Wulin is a game of sweeping passions, epic challenges, and superlative displays of skill. Heroes and villains alike will do grand deeds and face seemingly insurmountable opposition. Whenever a character attempts an action whose outcome can be reasonably doubted and an element of chance adds to the tension and fun, use a dice roll to decide whether he is successful or not. Roll to see if you can negotiate for safe passage with the Bandit King, to see if your medical skills can provide a timely cure for a minister dying of poison, or to see if you can sneak past the sentries of a grand fortress. But you don't need a roll to intimidate a small child or cook a bowl of rice.

To roll, gather an amount of ten-sided dice (also called *d10s*). For the most part this amount will be determined by your Lake but on occasion you may be asked to roll a different amount; nevertheless the more dice you've got the better. To see what result your roll provided, look for sets of dice whose numbers match. These sets translate into numbers, where the ones digit is equal to the number on the dice, and the tens digit is equal to the amount of matching dice in the set. You can pick any of the results that your roll created, but higher is generally better. Solitary dice are not in a set, but still provide a result according to the rule above: the number that came face-up will be the ones digit, and the tens digit is automatically ten.

That may sound a little complicated on paper, but in practice it's easy. Some examples to help you along:

Two fives become 25.

Three sevens become 37.

A single six becomes 16.

So, a roll of seven dice with the following results, 2, 4, 4, 4, 9, 9, 0...

... can become 12, 34, 29, or 10.

One way to quickly see how high you rolled is to look for the number on the dice that came up most often. You are free to pick whichever result from your roll you like, but remember that higher results are usually better.

Modifiers

Training, tools, or conditions can affect the outcome of your actions. These are represented by modifiers, which add to or subtract from the number you generated with your roll. Modifiers are always in multiples of five – you could have a +5 or a +10 bonus, but never a +2 or a +9.

Modifiers come in several different types: skills, equipment, internal kung fu, external kung fu, what your kung fu laughs at and fears, Lores, Chi conditions, and other techniques (e.g. the extraordinary techniques found in the Secret Arts). You use the highest bonus and penalty of each type, ignoring any

other modifiers of the same type that are equal or lower. For instance, if you use two kung fu techniques that both give you a +10 bonus to your roll, you only have +10. We'll explain these categories in more detail later in the rules.

Finally, the Sage can always decide that the situation at hand is particularly to your (dis)advantage and apply an extra modifier of +5 or -5.

Targets and Results

You know how to roll dice and create numbers out of that, so now we'll explain how you use that number to actually determine success or failure. When rolling, you are either opposed by somebody else, in competition with somebody else, or rolling against a certain difficulty.

Opposed Rolls

Opposed rolls occur when two or more people are in conflict. You may try to punch a guard, convince a stubborn judge or sneak past a sentry – all these have a human opponent with a dice pool of their own. Both sides should roll and try to get the highest result they can. The winner is whoever rolled higher. In the case of a tie, the “active” party wins.

To determine which character is the active party, try to imagine the scenario if you leave out one of the sides. You can throw a punch at empty air, but you won't defend yourself from nothing. You can hold a monologue, but you can't stubbornly refuse an argument that nobody's making. You can try to quietly tip-toe around, but you won't raise the alarm when you suddenly don't spot an intruder. The character whose action does not depend on the others' is the active party, and wins ties.

Another way to tell which party is active is to see whose situation changes most between the two outcomes. That party is the passive one, meaning the other is of course the active. To keep with our examples, the guard is the passive party because the two results change him. Either he is injured or he is not. The judge is the passive party because he will be convinced or not. The sentry is the passive party, because he will learn something new or not. The character who receives the impact of the others' action is the passive party, and loses ties.

Competing Rolls

A competing roll is also against a human opponent, and is very similar to an opposed roll, but in a competing roll you're both trying to do the same thing, though your character will try to be better, faster, or more elegant than the other. There is no active or passive party, just equals. Examples are racing across the city to see who runs faster, trying to compose the best poetry, or when you both try to convince the same person of something else. (In this last case, your roll is competing with the other arguing person, but it might also be opposed by the stubborn person who doesn't want to hear either of your cases!)

Simply determine the winner by the highest result. In the case of a tie, there is no clear winner. For all appearances, these people are equally skilled!

Rolls Against a Set Difficulty

Often there is no clear human opponent for your actions, but your success is still in doubt. You may try to climb a sheer wall of ice, decipher a coded message, or treat a life-threatening injury. In these cases, the Sage will determine the difficulty and consult the following table. If you roll equal or higher than the difficulty calls for, your task succeeds.



Task is...	Difficulty
Trivial	10
Moderate	20
Hard	30
Memorable	40
Fantastic	60
Legendary	80
Impossible	100

Trivial tasks are usually not rolled, as they are so easy that one can't fail unless there are severe penalties at play. *Examples: walking around, getting dressed, or hearing a person next to you talk.*

Moderate tasks can be done by anybody, even ordinary, untrained people. Those with actual training will find it practically impossible to fail. *Examples: jumping over a low fence, recalling a historic fact about an important event, or giving medical treatment for everyday afflictions.*

Hard tasks are still somewhat within the domain of normal human beings, but only those with the relevant skills try – and even they find themselves challenged. These tasks are better left to people who truly excel. *Examples: jumping over a wall, tracking an animal by vague clues, or designing a stone bridge.*

Memorable tasks mark the boundary of where mundane people's skills fall short and only those with cultivated inner strength will even try. Feats of this caliber and beyond can seem magical in nature. *Examples: catch a fly with chopsticks or touch a person and instantly perceive their health by sensing their Chi.*

Fantastic tasks are difficult to do even for those with a strong inner power. Excellence alone is not enough to reliably succeed on one of such tasks; you probably need to be considered an expert even within the jianghu. And even then a bit of luck wouldn't hurt. *Examples: shatter a stone wall with your bare hands or work in the dark by scent and sound.*

Legendary tasks are sure to be famous for generations to come. Flattering nicknames and reputations can be based upon accomplishing such tasks. These tasks are the purview of those of the highest level of accomplishment at their peak performance. *Examples: shatter the wall of a fortress with your bare hands or hear all the individual bird songs in a forest.*

Impossible tasks, despite the name, have been successfully performed in the past... but only a handful of times. To most heroes, they are nothing more than a fanciful dream. Accomplishing such a task may bring both glory and disbelief. *Examples: shatter a village with your bare hands or follow every conversation held within the Imperial Palace with perfect clarity.*

Critical Success

If you roll high enough to reach a higher difficulty level than required, your success is correspondingly greater. If your roll wasn't made against a set difficulty but was opposed by another roll, you achieve a critical success if your final number is at least 10 points higher.

Sometimes this is merely a nice little bonus. If cooking a simple meal is a trivial (10) task, then achieving a moderate (20) result just makes the food taste better. Other times, the benefit can be much more significant. If you intimidate some bandits thoroughly enough, they might be so frightened that they give up on crime and mend their ways!

Interesting Times

If the result of your roll is a set of zeros (not just a single zero), the Sage can offer you Interesting Times. Something can happen that was unforeseen or unintended, usually for the good of greater tension or comedic value.

If your roll succeeds, the unintended event is some side-effect or added challenge. This should never negate your success, just complicate it. If you accept Interesting Times on a successful roll you gain one point of Chivalrous Joss.

- Your mighty attack pushes away your opponent just as intended, but he smashes into a nearby house which collapses. You can hear the cries for help from those within...
- Your impressive speech has made the locals see how corrupt the magistrate is, but perhaps a little too well. The next day, shady figures follow you back to the inn...
- While searching for information, your friendly compliments towards the lady at the noodle shop have been entirely misunderstood. Her husband would like a word with you...

If your roll fails, the unintended event elevates your misery from merely being unsuccessful into something disastrous. If you accept Interesting Times on a failed roll, you gain one point of Malicious Joss.

- Your earlier diagnosis was incorrect. Your herbal preparation doesn't cure the sickness, it just makes matters worse!
- You sneak into the fortress and accidentally made a sound. Thinking quickly, you spot an open window where you can evade the incoming patrol – and leap straight into the soldiers' barracks!
- You don't have what it takes to design a dam, but nobody realizes that. Construction begins but the first storm sweeps away your hard work, your workforce, and your reputation.

It is important to stress that Interesting Times is an optional offer by the Sage. You are not obligated to take it, nor is the Sage obligated to think of convoluted hijinks when nothing comes to mind that could add to the experience of the game.



Extended Actions

Some actions can be resolved very quickly. You could jump over a chasm, introduce yourself to a minister, or recall some obscure piece of lore. But other actions take far more time than this and are called *Extended Actions*, such as building a house, negotiating a dowry, or writing a book. These actions can still be handled with a single roll to determine how successful you are but they take a lot more time than simple actions. You can't make or work towards Extended Actions during combat or similar high-action scenes where every second counts; the time frames are just too different.

River

There will be many times your dice provide sets that you have no immediate use for. Fortunately you can store unused dice from sets into a reserve called the River, which represents the momentum and fortune that ebbs and flows during conflicts. Your River has a limited capacity to store dice depending on your Rank. At the end of every scene, your River will always wash itself empty.

Each round you can do several things with your River. These steps are always in a set order, meaning that once you float some dice into your River you can't Wash out dice anymore, although you could keep floating in more dice if you've got space for them.

1. Wash
2. Float
3. Flow/Flood

Washing dice from the River means discarding them completely. You may want to do this if you're not happy with what you've got and are about to get something better (though this general isn't the most efficient use of the River).

You can **float** dice from unused sets into the River from a roll made with the Lake, but not from other rolls. The roll needs to be opposed, meaning that it is competing with or against an appreciable difficulty.

It must be noted that you can only float dice from a set of two or more, never from a single dice result.

You can Flow dice out of your River and into a roll made with the Lake. These dice are treated as if they had been created by the roll. This allows you to create new sets from "nowhere" or increase the size of any existing rolled sets by added them together with those you flowed out.

Flooding dice works largely like flowing out dice, except that you can't combine them with dice you rolled to make a bigger set out of them. This is a special limitation and only done when specific techniques that call for it. Sometimes the dice are used to activate special abilities and the result on the dice does not matter, and sometimes you need to use them as if they were a rolled result (though again, you can't combine them with any dice you did actually roll).

Joss

Points of Joss represent luck or fortune, possibly even divine favor. They come in two types, Chivalrous Joss and Malicious Joss. Chivalrous Joss represents good thing happening to you; Malicious Joss represents bad thing happening to your enemies. Both of them are good for you, but not quite in the same way.

You start each story with 3 points of Joss, divided between Chivalrous and Malicious however you wish. You can have at most 10 points of Chivalrous Joss and 10 points of Malicious Joss stored. You decide to use Joss at the start of the round. In any given round you can only spend 1 point of Joss for every Rank you've attained; this is of both types put together. Example: if you can spend 2 Joss points per round,

you can use, at most, 2 Chivalrous, 2 Malicious, or 1 of each.

There are three uses for Joss:

First and foremost is improving your odds. Chivalrous Joss increases your Lake for the entire round by one/1 die for every point spent. When not using rounds to mark the passage of time, it simply works for one/1 roll, maybe two/2 if they're shortly after another. Malicious Joss reduces the Lakes of all people who make opposed rolls against you by one/1 die per point, for the entire round. Again, when not using rounds to mark the passage of time, it simply works for one or two/1 or 2 opposed rolls.

Secondly, you can use Joss to make minor coincidences occur, like a form of narrative currency. You can declare that an item or circumstance can be found on the scene using either type of Joss, subject to Sage approval. The question of plausibility is key here. You don't need to spend Joss to find a tree in the woods because those are obviously there. You can't spend Joss to find a tree in the middle of the emperor's throne room because there just isn't one. But you might find a conveniently tall tree near the window of that one mansion you'd like to burgle.

You can also have chance meetings with people in this way, but only with people with whom you have some sort of connection. You need an Involvement (see Loresheds, pg. 31) with either that person specifically or the organization they are part of. Again there is the restriction of plausibility. There's no need to "luckily" meet a person in his own home, nor can you summon people in prison towards your location with your amazing coincidence-powers.

Third, some Secret Arts also require the expenditure of Joss.

Besides the starting amount you gain in every story, you can get Joss through the use of **Interesting Times** or through earning Deeds. (Character Advancement Section pg. 24) The Sage may also reward you with a point of Joss if you did something particularly amusing or impressive that nevertheless doesn't quite qualify you for a **Deed**, such as a very witty out-of-character comment that added perfectly to the enjoyment of the scene.

MINOR ACTIONS, MARVELS, AND WAVES

Sometimes you roll several sets in your Lake at once. As stated in the River section, you can float excess sets to your River, but this isn't the only option. Sometimes you can turn additional sets into secondary actions of their own. They apply their own modifiers and get their own results, just like any other rolled actions. These are *Minor Actions*. There is no limit to the amount of extra actions you can take this way, but each action does require its own separate set of dice; you can't use a single die, and you can't use a set for more than one action. So, if you want to perform ten extra actions, you better have some way of obtaining ten sets of matching dice. (Don't forget that you still need a result for the primary

action that you originally rolled your Lake for.) You can use this multitasking to guess somebody's power. A person who can barely keep his mind on one task is probably not as highly Ranked as somebody who can fight, read a book, and compose poetry all at once! As with any action, Minor Actions have a target number of their own, either a static difficulty or an opposed roll of some sort.

Example:

You suspect a merchant might actually be an assassin in disguise. You want to check him for hidden weapons, but you can't just openly accuse him or lay your hands on him. You decide to walk past him and surreptitiously brush your fingertips over his clothes to feel for anything hidden. The Sage allows this, letting you roll an Awareness check to do the search and also a Stealth check as a Minor Action to prevent the merchant from feeling it.

Marvels

This is a special Minor Combat Action, and will get greater attention in that chapter. In a nutshell, Marvels make sure you get more use of out your rolls by adding extra utility to them that can help you in your struggles. Some Marvels hinder your enemies or allow you to accomplish certain goals. Unlike regular Minor Actions, Marvels don't have a static difficulty but are usually opposed by a defense roll.

Example:

Your hammer slams into a soldier and knocks him right off the city walls! The attack itself simply hurts him, but the way you forced him down was done with a Marvel.

Waves

A Wave is a variant Minor Action that changes the situation at hand in such a way that it might affect how other people will act, such as breaking something, moving objects around, or running to some other place. Your Waves begin during the initiative roll, but do not reach completion until your turn comes up in the initiative order. Like a real wave of water, they can be seen rolling along well before they actually hit the shore. Anybody with a higher initiative than you can try to prevent the action from completing, a process known as *Breaking the Wave*, but the opposite is also true: you can try to *Break the Waves* of anybody who is slower than you. Waves get a more thorough description in the combat chapter (see pg. 175).

Example:

During the initiative roll, you devote a set of dice to 'cover ground', an action that will let you move from one place to another. You don't actually complete the movement until your turn comes up, although you're already starting to move before that. If anybody has a higher initiative than you, they could try to break your Wave and stop the movement by blocking off the door you wanted to run through.

CHARACTER CREATION

CHARACTER CREATION GUIDE

Step 1: Concept

Before you begin, consider your goal. Be aware of what you want your character to excel at, and consider their history and origins. Collaborate with the other players in the game to make sure your characters are compatible co-stars.

Step 2: Rank

The starting Rank of the characters. This determines not only their standing within the game world, but several basic statistics. The default starting Rank is 4th. Starting characters begin at Rank 4, which gives them Lake 7, River 2, Chi Replenishment 2, maximum Chi Aura 2, and a maximum Skill Bonus of +10.

Step 3: Archetype

Choose your archetype to determine your Focus on Chi Skill and which Secret Art Lores you get for free.

- **Warriors** breathe with the **Hardiness** Skill and begin with the Secret Arts of the Warrior (pg. 245)
- **Priests** breathe with the **Wu Wei** Skill and begin with either *the Story of the Self* (pg. 248) or *Story of Fortune* (pg. 262), *The Secret Art of Daoist Magic* (pg. 263) plus either *Crafting Curses* (pg. 264) or *Manipulating Influences* (pg. 265).
- **Courtiers** breathe with the **Confidence** Skill and begin with *the Story of the Self* (pg. 248), *the Secret Art of Intrigue* (pg. 249) and either *Controlling Passions* (pg. 251) or *Controlling Inspirations* (pg. 251).
- **Scholars** breathe with the **Learning** Skill and begin with *Understanding the World* (pg. 255) and *the Secret Art of Prediction* (pg. 256).
- **Doctors** breathe with the **Medicine** Skill and begin with *the Secret Art of Medicine* (pg. 234), *A Doctor's Work* (pg. 236) and *Secrets of Treatment* (pg. 236).



Step 4: Skills

Spend 20 Destiny on Skills. Each +5 is 2 Destiny, with a maximum bonus of +10. Specialties are 1 Destiny each.

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| • Awareness | • Confidence |
| • Crafting | • Finesse |
| • Hardiness | • Inspire |
| • Learning | • Medicine |
| • Might | • Perform |
| • Politics | • Ride |
| • Stealth | • Survival |
| • Tactics | • Wu Wei |

The following Skills grant access to free Lore:

- Inspire +5 (*Passions and Inspirations* pg. 245, *Extraordinary Courtier Techniques* pg. 252)
- Medicine +5 (*Introduction to Medical Conditions* pg. 229, *Extraordinary Medical Techniques* pg. 238)
- Tactics +5 (*The Warrior's Art* pg. 240, *Extraordinary Warrior Techniques* pg. 243)
- Wu Wei +5 (*Curses and Influences* pg. 259, *Extraordinary Daoist Techniques* pg. 266).

Step 5: Virtues

All virtues start at 1. Divide 15 additional points to raise them to a maximum of 5.

Benevolence (Kuan)

Ferocity (Bao)

Force (Ba)

Individualism (Si)

Honor (Xin)

Obsession (Chan)

Loyalty (Zhong)

Revenge (Chou)

Righteousness (Yi)

Ruthlessness (Hen)

Step 6: Disadvantages

You may select zero to two Disadvantages. A Disadvantage is a narrative description of a problem with you, like Alcoholic, One-Eyed, or Jerk. If your Disadvantages caused you trouble in a Chapter, you earn 1 extra Destiny. There is no list; be creative.

Step 7: Kung Fu

Each character starts with one External Kung Fu Style (compatible weapons in parenthesis):

- **Blossom Harvest** (Massive, Staff, Unarmed) is strong, tough, and honest.
- **Bone-Fed Wolf Fang** (Massive, Saber) was designed by soldiers to cripple the strong and finish off the weak.
- **Destiny Cloud Fist** (Unarmed) is a flexible, adaptive style that allows for wide mobility.
- **Divine Pattern Long-Strokes** (Flexible, Spear, Staff) uses long reach to control the area around the user.
- **Eight Legends** (Saber, Spear, Staff, Sword) is an old, solid style that focuses on the use of the “Four Major Weapons.”
- **Flowing Universe** (Flexible, Unarmed) fights like water, changing and adapting to the current situation.
- **Flying Red Silk** (Flexible, Sword) is an elegant style that uses soft power to overcome its opponents.
- **Graceful Crane Style** (Sword, Unarmed) mimics the crane, side-stepping the tiger and pecking as it passes.
- **Great Ultimate Dragon Style** (Paired, Saber, Sword, Unarmed) can be ferocious or subtle as it needs.
- **Murderous Shadows** (Flexible, Ranged) is a popular assassin's style. It hides even in the middle of a fight!
- **Ravenous Wings** (Paired, Ranged, Unarmed) is merciless and cruel. It grows bolder as its prey is weakened.

- *Shadow Catching* (Saber, Sword) is swift and mobile, cutting through the battle like a flashing blade.
- *Storm God's Fury* (Massive, Paired, Saber, Spear) is like lightning, instant and destructive.
- *Subtle Force* (Ranged, Sword, Unarmed) seeks to end the fight with minimum casualties.

They also start with one Internal Kung Fu Style (elemental association in parenthesis):

- *Boundless Prosperity Manual* (Wood) promotes the growth and health of the practitioner.
- *Fire Sutra* (Fire) masters raging yang-energy. It is aggressive and powerful.
- *Fox-Spirit Song* tricks the enemy and turns their 'sixth sense' against them
- *Heaven's Lightning* (Earth) combines offense, defense, and overwhelming power.
- *Ice Sutra* (Water) freezes opponents and robs them of their power.
- *Iron Body Skill* (Metal) empowers your body with excellent strength and speed.
- *Jade Spirit Sword* combines the essence of the sword with the heart of its wielder.
- *Nine Sun Birds* teaches you overwhelming speed.
- *Removing Concepts* gives you untainted perception to allow flawlessly intuitive action.
- *Thousand Venoms* (Corrupt) transforms your Chi into deadly poison.
- *Unstained Lotus Mastery* uses insidious breaking-techniques that shatter people from the inside.

Characters start the game with one **External Kung Fu Style** of their choice that will determine their basic combat statistics (as well as what weapons they are better at to begin with) and one **Internal Kung Fu Style** of their choice that will allow them to perform special maneuvers (and adds certain effects to their attacks at the cost of Chi).

Step 8: Final Touches

You begin play with a Weapon (pg. 192) with a single tag: Flexible, Massive, Paired, Ranged, Saber, Staff, Spear, or Sword.

You may spend 3 Destiny in Step 9 to upgrade this to a Special Weapon with two tags.

You begin play with Light Armor (pg. 194). It does not impede your movements and raises your Chi Threshold by 5.

You may spend 1 or 2 Destiny in Step 9 to upgrade this to Medium or Heavy Armor, respectively.

You begin with 10 Chi, increased by Cultivation due to your Internal Style in Step 7 and anything you purchase in Step 9.

Your base Chi Threshold is equal to the sum of your maximum Chi (of all elemental types) at all times.

Step 9: Additional Destiny

You may now spend 20 Destiny on Chi, Kung Fu, Lores, Secret Arts, and Skills. In some games, especially those intended to run for a long time, the Sage may offer an additional amount of Entanglement Points to be spent exclusively on Lores in order to have characters start the game with deeper ties to the setting. This is usually 15 points.

If you spent Destiny on Chi, Kung Fu, or your Archetype Secret Art, that Destiny also applies towards increasing your Chi pools as described under Cultivation (pg. 24).are given and additional 20 Destiny points to round their characters, this can be spent on Kung Fu, Secret Arts, Skills, Chi and Lores

CONCEPT

Simply put, what sort of character do you want to play? Will you be a wise and refined swordsman? A gruff and unfriendly braggart? Or do you eschew the way of the sword altogether and play a daoist or doctor?

Consider such details as appearance, where you grew up and who trained you. If you've read the Loresheets in this book you might already have an idea about your place in the world and the fate that awaits you. But it's alright if you haven't; they're not required and you can still obtain Loresheets later on if you want.

It's also good to keep in mind what other players want to do. You don't often see a virtuous monk working together with a gang of honorless dogs. Perhaps you need a different

idea. Or perhaps you can work out a good reason with the others why you're all together. Just be sure to prevent unpleasant surprises once the game has started.

RANK

Rank is a trait that measures your importance and power within the Wulin. Most people in the world haven't cultivated their Chi and aren't a part of the world of martial arts. They are the Unranked, and don't know any kung fu or secret arts. That doesn't necessarily mean they're stupid or unworthy of respect; many Unranked people are still skilled and talented individuals, like mundane blacksmiths, sailors and soldiers.

People of **5th Rank** are the weakest members of the Wulin – that is to say, just above the ordinary Unranked masses.

Unranked: River size and Joss limit are 1, no Aura or Chi replenishment, Lake is 5, maximum skill bonus is +5.

5th Rank: River size, Joss, Chi replenishment and Chi Aura limit are 1. Lake size is 6. Maximum skill bonus is +5.

4th Rank: River size, Joss, Chi replenishment and Chi Aura limit are 2. Lake size is 7. Maximum skill bonus is +10.

3rd Rank: River size, Joss, Chi replenishment and Chi Aura limit are 3. Lake size is 8. Maximum skill bonus is +15.

2nd Rank: River size, Joss, Chi replenishment and Chi Aura limit are 4. Lake size is 9. Maximum skill bonus is +20.

1st Rank: River size, Joss, Chi replenishment and Chi Aura limit are 5. Lake size is 10. Maximum skill bonus is +25.

Most persons of this Rank are actually young students who have yet to begin making a name for themselves.

People of **4th and 3rd Rank** make up the vast bulk of the martial arts realm, heroes and villains whose kung fu lets them perform supernatural feats of skill. Characters in the game start as 4th Rank.

Relatively few people exist of **2nd Rank**, the great generals, the clan elders, and famous scholars. Their names are so widespread that almost everybody's heard of them, especially within their area of expertise or the province they live in. Finally,

The rare few of **1st Rank** are so powerful that they'll probably be remembered forever. They can – and usually do! – carry a faction to greatness all by themselves.

With great Rank also comes greater power, in the form of more available space in your River, a higher Chi Aura limit, a greater Lake size and higher maximum skill bonuses.

Legends of the Wulin assumes that characters will start at **4th Rank**, rules for starting at higher or lower Ranks are suggested on **The Scrolls of the Sage**. Since you start the game at **4th Rank** by default, you start with:

Lake: 7

River: 2

Joss: 2

Chi Aura: 2. (Chi Aura is a defensive resource that will be explained further on, Chi Aura: pg. 170)

ARCHETYPE

There are five archetypes which broadly generalize how it is you make your way in the world and what methods you use. Your archetype determines which skill you use to **Focus on Breath**, (An action used to regain extra Chi on a pinch, Focus on Breath pg. 169)

Each archetype gets free access to their native **Secret Art** (there are Secret Arts of the Warrior that offers mastery of combat approaches, Secret Art of the Priests that deals with curses, and so forth) and advancement in it counts towards their **Cultivation** (see Character Advancement, pg. 24).

Warriors are by far the most common of the five archetypes. Although all people within the martial arts society are good at fighting, it is the warriors who truly embrace it as their way of life. They are the swordsmen and pugilists, constables and assassins, as well as the most iconic heroes and villains.

The skill they use to Focus on Breath is **Hardiness**.

Examples from source material can be found all over the place and include Guo Jing (The Condor Trilogy), Wind and Cloud (Storm Riders), Nameless (Hero) and the monks of Shaolin.

Priests are the second most common of the archetypes. Despite the name, they are not simple religious administrators; they are the Daoists, wise men and women whose approach to fighting starts with Chi cultivation first and foremost. In a world where inner power is of utmost importance, priests are widely respected.

The skill they use to Focus on Breath is **Wu Wei**.

Examples from source material include Yan Chixia (A Chinese Ghost Story), the Quanzhen Sect and Wudang Sect.

Courtiers wield power not just over themselves but also over others. They are the rulers, merchants, envoys and entertainers that shape society and its people. In a subtle way they are the most powerful of all people; a general may win a war but it's his king who decides whether there is war at all.

The skill they use to Focus on Breath is **Confidence**.

Examples from source material include Xiao Mei (House of Flying Daggers), Liu Bei (Romance of the Three Kingdoms), Huang Rong (The Condor Trilogy) and too many gang leaders to mention.

Scholars are the educated masters, the lore keepers, inventors and advisors. With their knowledge about the workings of the world they perceive events like few others do. Scholars are often found debating how best to rule an empire, hunting for long-lost manuals written in Sanskrit or studying things from exotic foreign lands.

The skill they use to Focus on Breath is **Learning**.

Examples from source material include Zhuge Liang (Romance of the Three Kingdoms), Judge Dee (The Cases of Judge Dee), Bufon Jou (Weapons of the Gods), and those annoying old men who only speak in riddles.

Doctors are the least prominent of all five archetypes. Although the medical profession is by no means unheard of, relatively few of them involve themselves in the martial arts realm. Those that do have the potential to become greatly respected allies and feared enemies, literally masters over life and death.

The skill they use to Focus on Breath is **Medicine**.

Examples from source material include Iron Monkey (Iron Monkey), Hu Qingniu (The Heaven Sword and Dragon Saber), Earth Lord (Weapons of the Gods) and Doctor Li (Reign of Assassins).



SKILLS

Skills are the mundane abilities you acquire through education or training. They are expressed as a positive modifier to relevant checks. Each time you buy a skill rank, your bonus increases by +5. Due to the limitations of Rank, most people only have a +5 bonus. It is only due to your superior training you can achieve superhuman results.

People can also buy **Specialties** for each skill. These are more narrowly defined subsets of the skill in question. When one of these situations or uses of the skill comes up, your skill bonus counts as 5 higher, even if this would cause you to go beyond the limit of your Rank. You can have multiple specialties, even within a single skill, but their effects do not stack. If some situation would be covered by two specialties, the skill bonus is still only 5 higher, not 10 higher.

Note that certain skills are closely connected to some of the Secret Arts. Skills are used for determining what happens if two outcomes are possible; the Sage assigns a difficulty and your roll reveals which of the two scenarios, success or failure, comes true. The Arts have a more forceful and direct way of controlling the story. Skills are used to resolve an outcome that could happen; the Arts let you dictate what should happen. For example, the Inspire skill can make people like you more, but the Courtier's Arts let you directly implant certain feelings onto characters, urging them to help you.

Starting characters have 20 Destiny that can only be spent on skills. They are still limited by Skill caps by Rank; in brief, Ranked characters Skills are capped at +5 per River die.

Skills cost 2 Destiny per level. Specialties cost 1 Destiny each. If you select two skills at +10 and six skills at +5, you'll spend 20 Destiny.

Here is an alphabetical listing of the skills for easy reference, with detailed description and example specialties afterwards.

• Awareness	• Confidence
• Crafting	• Finesse
• Hardiness	• Inspire
• Learning	• Medicine
• Might	• Perform
• Politics	• Ride
• Stealth	• Survival
• Tactics	• Wu Wei

Awareness

This skill covers the senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and scent. The higher your skill level, the more obscure details you can pick up from your surroundings. Use this skill to spot hidden bandits, taste a poisonous herb in your wine just before you'd swallow, listen in on a whispered conversation, or detect the faint movement of air indicating a hidden passageway.

Specialties: Hear, See, Smell, Taste, Touch

Confidence

You are steadfast in your resolve, courageous and stoic. Use this skill to resist other's attempts to influence your thoughts and feelings, or to project an air of authority.

Specialties: Appear steadfast, Focus on Breath (for Courtiers), Recover from the Disorient Marvel, Resist Courtier's Arts.

Crafting

This is the skill of creation. Cooking meals, forging weapons, weaving cloth, brewing wine, and more are all under Crafting. You're encouraged to pick a specialty to reflect your training - most normal craftsmen in the world certainly do - but this is not strictly necessary. If you want, you can achieve excellence in all manner of earthly craft.

Creating a Quality item typically requires suitable materials and at least a Hard (30) roll. On a failed roll, the item is merely of normal quality. Like all Quality items, an expenditure of Destiny points (determined by the Sage) is required from whoever obtains the item after it's created.

Specialties: Armor, Buildings, Cloth, Cooking, Gardening, Painting, Tools, Weapons.

Finesse

This skill covers delicate and precise movement. It includes acrobatic displays, picking pockets, acts of prestidigitation, and juggling. Use this skill to slip poison into a cup of wine, free yourself from manacles, or catch a falling vase before it breaks.

Specialties: Acrobatics, Cheating, Escaping Bonds, Picking Pockets, Sleight of Hand.

Hardiness

Your stamina, endurance, vigor, and pain threshold are all represented by the Hardiness skill. Use this skill to withstand any kind of physical hardship, or to recover from certain Chi Conditions or combat effects.

Specialties: Disease, Focusing on Breath (for Warriors), Poison, Recovering From Injuries, Staying Awake, Enduring Torture.

Inspire

You can bring others around to a different point of view – yours, usually. With oratorical skill, clever choice of words, and mindfulness of the kind of audience you have, you can convince others that your words are reasonable. Use this skill to convince bandits that you're not worth the hassle, to get arguing shopkeepers to set their petty quarrels aside, or be quickly shown in to meet important people.

Specialties: Debating, Intimidation, Outright Lies, Public Speeches, Specific Courtier's Arts techniques, Spinning the Facts.

Learning

You are educated in history, math, reading and writing, philosophy, and other such studies. Use this skill to recall historic facts, quote from the classics, or otherwise set yourself apart from the ignorant masses.

Specialties: Calligraphy, Focus on Breath (for Scholars), History, Math, Other Cultures, Philosophy, Specific Scholar's Arts Techniques.

Medicine

Medical training covers anatomy as well as knowledge of the Chi meridians and the effects of the environment on the body. Use this skill to treat injuries, disease, or open up a blocked pressure point.

Specialties: Disease, Focus on Breath (for Doctors),

Injuries, Poison, Pressure Points, Specific Doctor's Arts Techniques.

Might

This skill measures raw strength, mostly from powerful muscles, though inner strength also plays a role. As the saying goes, "Chi can make paper like steel, and steel like paper." Use this skill to lift boulders, stop a rampaging bull with a single hand, or splinter a ship with a thrown tael.

Although throwing is included in this skill, Might is for throwing heavy things great distances; for accurate attacks intended to injure mobile opponents, use ranged attacks as granted by Kung Fu or weapons.

Specialties: Breaking, Lifting, Pushing, Throwing.

Perform

With this skill you can amaze onlookers with displays of art and creativity. You're encouraged to pick a specialty to reflect your specific training - most normal entertainers in the world certainly do - but it's not strictly necessary. If you want, you can achieve excellence in all forms of artistic expression.

Specialties: Acting, Ceremonial Performances, Dancing, Poetry, Singing, Music.

Politics

This skill lets you know and deduce who is in power... and who is *really* in power. You're familiar with the people in positions of authority, their oaths and allegiances and also the rumors and scandals surrounding them. Additionally, as a member of the Wulin you're likely to keep track of the various sects and forces at play, their rivalries and their humiliations.

Specialties: Specific region or faction.

Ride

Horses are the best way to quickly travel! Many a hero's best friend is a loyal mount. Use this skill to control or care for horses.

In combat, the Ride skill replaces Footwork to cover ground if you're mounted. On horseback, you may cover multiple Zones with a single action; after traveling to a new Zone, treat all adjacent Zones as one category higher in Difficulty to reach. If your result is still high enough to reach a new Zone, you may move there. Repeat this process, cumulatively increasing difficulties, until you no longer wish to move or can't. Horses may be unable (or unwilling!) to reach some areas, such as up sheer cliff walls or into burning buildings, so the Sage may rule that you're unable to reach such places while mounted.

Zones are explained in detail in the Combat Chapter (pg. 174).

Specialties: Caring for Your Horse, Coaxing Your Horse into Dangerous Terrain, Racing.

Stealth

Stealth is the skill of staying undetected and concealing the truth. Use this skill to hide, to move without sound, or to blend into a crowd. You also use this skill to hide a weapon on your person, to defend yourself while making it look like you're not as skilled as you really are, or to discreetly follow or observe somebody without making your intentions obvious.

If you're using Stealth, *you are always the active party*. Roll your skill as soon as you try to hide something (this requires a Minor Action in combat) and that sets the difficulty for others to overcome. In an ordinary, out of combat situation, all passive parties get an automatic Awareness check (or the Sage secretly makes one for them) but they suffer a -5 penalty if they have no reason to suspect anything is wrong, or a -10 if their attention is focused elsewhere.

Specialties: Camouflage, Deception, Eavesdropping, In Shadows, Silence, Smuggling.

Survival

This is a skill of critical importance to hermits, the shipwrecked, scouts, and nomads. It determines how well you can find food and shelter in bleak surroundings that would normally kill you with hunger, thirst, or exposure to the elements.

Specialties: At Sea, Cities, Deserts, Forests, Mountains, Prisons.

Tactics

You've had training and experience in the field of battle. You know a wide variety of tactics and counter-tactics to engage, defend, and retreat. Use this skill to determine where the

battlefield may work to your advantage, to properly direct minions, or to quickly regain your full ability to fight if you're ever disrupted.

Note that this is merely a mundane skill; it's useful for getting around in many day-to-day situations. For true mastery of the battlefield, you need the Secret Arts of Battle (see pg. 243).

Specialties: Battlefield Analysis, Disruption, Escorting Caravans, Sieging Fortresses, Specific Warrior's Arts Techniques.

Wu Wei

This skill is the act of 'not-doing', an important philosophical concept of tranquility and effortlessness. If you can achieve this state, then you can remain calm and reach a level of understanding of the Dao that others can't even imagine. Use this skill to pick up subtle clues from facial expressions, to sense the Chi of another, or to protect yourself from supernatural imbalances like Curses. This skill is similar to the Awareness skill, yet profoundly different. While Awareness may allow you to see, it's Wu Wei that will let you understand.

Specialties: Focusing on Breath (for Priests), Resisting Curses, Sensing Chi, Social Perception, Specific Priest's Arts Techniques.

VIRTUES

During the game, your character will do many minor things. She'll travel from one village to the next, shop for supplies, eat some rice, and maybe engage in some small talk or playing music during the evening. Those aren't the



noteworthy heroics that will shape your story and legend, however. It's your daring, inspiring, or tragic actions that make people sit up and listen!

All people have ten virtues. Five of these are the Chivalrous virtues, which appeal to a higher ideal sometimes called the Xia code. They represent the demeanor of the perfect gentleman, the true hero that all people should strive to be. The other five are selfish virtues, the darker drives that urge you to greatness. They aren't necessarily wrong in the traditional sense. A hero who terribly disfigures all bandits she defeats is still a hero, and a very impressive one at that! She's given respect grudgingly and possibly in secret, but her actions demand respect just the same.

Virtues are rated from 1 to 5. This score represents both the moral character of your hero as well as the importance of that virtue in her story. A wandering vagabond with a low Loyalty score doesn't need to be untrustworthy; it could also mean his story just won't feature authority figures who will command him, making the virtue less relevant to his particular story.

Your virtues are used for earning Deeds. These are explained in the Character Advancement section (see pg. 24).

All ten virtues start at 1, and you may then divide 15 additional points over your virtues as you see fit. Virtues can't be higher than 5.

Chivalrous Virtues

Benevolence (Kuan) is about altruism and kindness. You may earn a Deed when you heal the sick out of compassion, rescue a child trapped in a burning building, or otherwise save the meek from their misfortunes.

Force (Ba) measures your power and skill; not merely destructive power, but true mastery over yourself and your abilities. You may earn a Deed when you achieve a stunningly high skill roll, when you defeat a major opponent, or when your grand plan successfully comes to fruition.

Honor (Xin) is your proper behavior and all-as-it-should-be feeling. You may earn a Deed when you repay a great favor or kindness shown to you, when you observe a social or traditional norm at cost to yourself, when you stand by your sword brothers in their time of need, or when you insist on speaking the truth even when a lie would have been more beneficial.

Loyalty (Zhong) means placing the interests of your superiors above your own. They can be your parents, teachers, the Emperor, sect leaders, or even the people of Shen Zhou as a whole. Your leader doesn't necessarily have to be present, or even alive, for you to remain loyal: if a military coup executed your rightful leader, it's entirely possible to be a loyal person, even though you defy the current authorities. You may earn a Deed when your orders conflict with your personal wishes or you go beyond the expected duties of your station.

Righteousness (Yi) seeks justice and uprightness and abhors crime and corruption. You may earn a Deed when you expose a magistrate who took bribes, when you convince a ruler to pass a law that is fairer to his subjects, or when you track down and punish a murderer who was never caught.

Selfish Virtues

Ferocity (Bao) does not restrain its own power but indiscriminately inflicts it upon all who oppose it. All within the Martial World face violence in their lives, but those who live by this virtue revel in bloodshed. You may earn a Deed when you humiliate or maim an opponent, when you set things on fire as a tactic, or otherwise cause great destruction.

Individualism (Si) selfishly places its own desires above all others. You may earn a Deed when you defy your superiors, when you stubbornly refuse to be convinced by others, or if you allow bad things to happen to others because you can benefit from it.

Obsession (Chan) values its goals so much that it stops at nothing to achieve them, whether those goals are Chivalrous or corrupt. These goals could be shared with others; a fanatical zealot might have not just a high Loyalty towards his master, but also an Obsession towards following his orders to the absolute letter. You may earn a Deed when you execute your plans even though they might hurt innocents, when you trick or force people into aiding you, or when you forsake other duties to fulfill this one.

Revenge (Chou) pays back any wrong tenfold. No insult or injury can be left unchallenged! It's not necessarily yourself that you're avenging; a vengeful son could draw his sword when he hears anyone maligning his father. You may earn a Deed when you challenge others to a duel over an insult, or otherwise fiercely protect a reputation.

Ruthlessness (Hen) seeks to increase its own wellbeing at the expense of others. You may earn a Deed when you frame a political rival for a crime he didn't commit, when you steal a secret kung fu manual to increase your own power, or when you arrange for your followers to die in an ambush because they know too much about you. The difference between Si and Hen is this: Si is passive and selfishly fails to act better. Hen is active and chooses to commit a sin.

Other Virtues

Everyone has the ten virtues listed above, but it's possible to pick up additional Virtues with special Lores, e.g. the Buddhism Loresheet. These exotic Virtues work like normal ones; they're rated from 1 to 5 and have their own set of behaviors they promote. The exact rewards you gain for following such an extra virtue depend on the Virtue on question. Sometimes you'll grow stronger, sometimes you'll become enlightened.

DISADVANTAGES

Some people have flaws and shortcomings that plague their everyday life. You are allowed up to two disadvantages to reflect such flaws, but you aren't required to take any. Disadvantages are meant for long-term or even permanent problems, not the transient setbacks and ailments that might occur every now and then.

When a disadvantage comes up in play and actively makes trouble for you then you're compensated with extra Destiny. (See Character Advancement, pg. 24.)

These rules are intended to be a flexible method to add depth to characters. There is no finite list of disadvantages, because the purpose of all disadvantages is the same: earning Destiny in return for causing problems. You are encouraged to come up with your own flaws and challenges to overcome, but here are a few examples.

- You are **blind**. You have learned to compensate with your other senses (we recommend a high Awareness skill to reflect this), and you can get around and even well enough, like the classic trope of the blind swordsman. However, you can't read, recognize faces in a crowd, or spot some traps that are obvious to others.
- You are so **hideous** that you repulse most people you meet. Fortunately, there are still kind souls left in the world who see beyond your exterior, as well as pragmatists who care about your gold and your skill more than your appearance. Still, you should get used to daily insults, looks of fear and disgust, and a lot of scorn you don't deserve.
- You have a **bad reputation**, bad enough that it haunts your life and follows you wherever you go. You could be accused of incest, vile heresies, or oath-breaking. Some might not care of your infamy, or live in such seclusion that they haven't heard yet, but most people have heard and they don't approve!

Purely mental problems, like a bad habit, don't make for good disadvantages. You could stop acting like a jerk any time, but you can't stop being blind. A specific enemy is also a questionable disadvantage, as you'll probably kill them eventually, and then you won't get any more Destiny.

KUNG FU

Each character gets access to one **External** and one **Internal Kung Fu Styles** for free.

External Kung Fu provides the character with basic combat statistics and certain descriptors that determine how the character fights and interacts, not only with his opponents, but with his surroundings. External styles are strong or weak against specific approaches, and only work with specific types of weapons.

Internal Kung Fu allows you to spend Chi to perform special maneuvers or add special effects to your attacks. You automatically get the first technique of your free style.

Both types of styles offer a great gamut of techniques, but those have to be bought separately with Destiny.

In Wuxia, the kung fu styles a fighter uses are more than simple means of attack and defense, but a reflection of his or her personality, history, and philosophy. Ideally, your styles should compliment your character concept.

Before you buy kung fu, we recommend you check out and buy some Loreshets (pg. 31), primarily those pertaining to the Factions, as they offer special perks and secrets related to kung fu styles. You should also check out the Combat chapter (pg. 174) to get an idea of how kung fu is used.

FINAL TOUCHES

- All starting characters get one **Weapon** for free. If you select one of the weapons compatible with your External Style, you may add the weapon stats to your basic combat statistics provided by your style and access the special properties of the weapon while using that style. You may spend Destiny to make your weapon **Special**, granting it the characteristics of other types of weapon in addition to



its own and making it compatible with a greater range of styles. (Weapons, pg. 192.)

- All characters get **Light Armor** for free, granting them a +5 to their **Chi Threshold** in order to resist physical injury. You may spend 1 or 2 Destiny to begin with Medium or Heavy Armor, respectively. (Armor pg. 194)
- All 4th Rank characters begin the game with a **Chi Pool** of 10, which will be increased by Cultivation from their free Internal Style and anything they purchase with their starting Destiny.
- All characters have a **Chi Threshold** equal to the sum of their Chi pool maximums, so if Chi rises one point during character creation or the game, so does the Chi Threshold. This statistic represents the general wellbeing of the character and is used to resist damage. (Ripples, pg. 183.)

ADDITIONAL DESTINY

You may spend 20 additional points of Destiny on kung fu, skills, secret arts, Loresheets, or anything else. You may save some or all of them. At character creation and only at character creation, you may spend Destiny directly on purchasing special Chi. It isn't efficient, because you can still gain it through Cultivation, but perhaps you really want a certain type of Chi without learning the corresponding kung fu. After character creation, this option is no longer available and you *must* use the regular methods for cultivation.

We recommend that you spend some destiny in **Loresheets**. Some of them grant you access to certain **Secrets** that will benefit your Kung Fu or Secret Arts, and investment in them can grant you free **Skill Specialties** or **Chi Conditions**. Further, besides mechanical boons, Lores represent your involvement with the setting and give you a richer background!

Because of this, in some campaigns, especially those intended to go on for a long time, the Sage may grant 15 additional Entanglement which may only be spent on Loresheets appropriate to the Sage's game. If there are no suitable Lores in this book, the Sage and players are encouraged to produce their own Lores specifically tailored to their game and characters, and use the Destiny to invest in those Lores!

These Entanglement points count towards the total requirement for Rank advancement, so if you need 50 points of Entanglement to advance a Rank and you spend 15 at character creation, you would only need 35 to go up in Rank (see **Character Advancement** below)

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

Destiny

Characters in this game acquire points of Destiny. This resource represents their opportunities to learn and grow and the greatness they will inevitably attain. They spend these points to purchase new abilities or improve existing abilities.

Spending Destiny

At character creation and throughout your life, you will earn points of Destiny. You use these to purchase new skills and abilities and also recognition and plot elements. Anything that really matters to the core idea of your character can be expressed with a Destiny cost.

At the end of each chapter, the Wulin Sage awards Destiny to the players based on the events of the Chapter:

- 1 point standard.
- 1 additional point if significant achievements were made in advancing (or creating) the story.
- 1 additional point if the session was particularly entertaining or memorable.
- If a character was particularly hindered by one or more of his disadvantages, they earn 1 extra Destiny.

Most chapters should earn the players 2 or 3 Destiny. (If you have a string of sessions only worth 1 Destiny, you should re-examine your current approach. Games are meant to be fun!)

A note on Special Chi

If you possess a type of Chi that opposes another, then the cost of increasing that other Chi doubles. If you possess two types that oppose the same element then the cost triples, and so on. The elements oppose each other according to the elemental wheel. **Corrupt Chi** and **Enlightened Chi** oppose each other, but they don't oppose the five elements. For example, if you already have Fire and Earth Chi, then the cost to develop Water Chi is tripled, because water controls fire and is controlled by earth.

Please look at the chapters on **Chi** (pg. 169) and **The Five Phase Wheel** (pg. 223) for more on these concepts.

Cultivation

Your internal power can be nurtured by special exercises, herbs and meditations, which are represented by paying the Destiny cost to increase your score by another point. Increasing your Chi score costs an amount of Destiny equal to your current score.

However, the most common and efficient way to increase your Chi is through *Cultivation*. As your mastery increases, your energy becomes more trained and focuses, strengthened by practical applications. **Every point of Destiny spent to learn kung fu, your Archetype's Secret Arts, and Loresheet Secrets that improve your kung fu also counts towards increasing your Chi.** In effect those points are spent twice; once for purchasing the applicable techniques, and once again for improving your Chi. For example, if you have 10 Chi and spend 15 Destiny on kung fu techniques, you receive 15 Cultivation - enough to increase your Chi to 11 with 5 points of Cultivation left over for later.

Some Chi Conditions can also directly generate points of Destiny towards your Cultivation.

Destiny can be spent on the following;

New skill level:	2 Destiny
New skill specialty:	1 Destiny
New kung fu style:	10 Destiny
New kung fu technique:	Destiny equal to the technique's level
Remove or add a Disadvantage (max 2):	5 Destiny
Increase a virtue by 1 point:	5 Destiny
Increase normal Chi by 1 point:	Destiny equal to your current score
Gain a point of Elemental Chi:	5 Destiny*
Increase Elemental Chi by 1 point:	Destiny equal to 5 times your current score*
Gain a point of Corrupt or Enlightened Chi:	10 Destiny*
Increase Corrupt or Enlightened Chi by 1 point:	Destiny equal to 10 times your current score*

(* You can't actually purchase these types of Chi directly with Destiny. You can only Cultivate them with the process described below.)

Specialized Chi (Special Chi pg. 169) can only be cultivated with training methods or techniques that are explicitly associated with a special type of Chi - i.e., you need to learn an elementally associated kung fu style or acquire a Chi Condition that provides a specialized Cultivation. These are the *only* ways to acquire such Chi, and their Cultivation can *only* go towards such Chi. If you learn Fire Sutra kung fu, you're guaranteed to develop specialized Fire Chi.

The free access to your archetype's Secret Arts and External kung fu style at character creation don't count towards cultivation; instead you just start with 10 Chi. However, you do start the game with 10 Cultivation provided by your Internal kung fu style. This will either raise your normal Chi Pool to 11 or give you an additional specialized Chi Pool of 2.

If you use the extra Destiny at character creation to purchase more kung fu, Loreshoot Secrets that improve your kung fu, or Archetypal Art techniques, then those points also count for your Cultivation and can raise your Chi.

You can learn Secret Arts associated with other Archetypes, but they never count towards your Cultivation. Even so, many people learn new Arts later in their careers; the possibilities they open are often too good to pass up!

Deeds

Whenever a character performs a suitably impressive action that corresponds to one of the virtues, she may earn a Deed of that virtue - e.g., a Deed of Justice, or a Deed of Revenge. An action is suitably impressive if you (the players) or people (within the game world) are likely to talk about it afterwards. A warrior who defeats a feeble old man is a pathetic bully, but a warrior who defeats an entire gang by herself is a legend! The Wulin Sage may award a Deed for any action he deems appropriate. **In addition, each player may hand out one Deed each session to any character other than his own!**

When you earn a Deed, you reap some benefits. First, you immediately get an amount of Joss points equal to your score in the corresponding virtue. If it's a Chivalrous virtue then the Joss will also be Chivalrous, and if it's a selfish virtue, you get Malicious Joss.

Entanglement

Secondly, your Deeds shape your storyline. They define the path of heroism you have walked on and they foreshadow the things yet to come.

You gain an amount of *Entanglement* equal to your score in the corresponding virtue. These points are similar to Destiny, with one very important difference: you don't get to spend them. Instead, the person who granted you the Deed immediately spends them for your character, on Loreshoots related to your Deed and its circumstances. If your heroics affect a certain clan, then you will swiftly earn the Loreshoot of that clan and entangle them with your own storyline. Beware of what you reap! Act kindly towards a clan and you will earn their friendship and riches. Afflict atrocities upon them, and you will earn their sworn oaths of revenge!

Note: it's easy to land in situations where multiple virtues are at play, and you're stuck making a hard choice where following one virtue means betraying another. This is one of the cornerstones of wuxia fiction. There is no penalty for failing to adhere to a virtue, only bonuses for performing Deeds; it is entirely up to you to determine which virtue wins out, and how your story further develops.

Example:

Bright Snow is responsible for defeating and killing the dread assassin Centipede. For this she receives a Deed of Force. Her virtue of Force is 4, so she immediately gets four Chivalrous Joss and four points of Entanglement. The Sage (who awarded the Deed) spends it towards the Loreshoot of the vicious assassin cult that Centipede belonged to. Although four points of Destiny won't buy much yet, she's starting to get noticed. A few more problems for them and they might decide that she's got to go... or she might become Entangled with a handsome young assassin in a doomed romance. Sometimes things work out that way.

Rank

Your Rank increases according to your accomplishments and standing within the Wulin. Once you have earned 50 points of Cultivation as well as 50 points of Entanglement, your Rank



improves by one step. You're expected to average 3 Destiny and one Deed per chapter, so you should see an increase in Rank every 15 to 20 chapters.

There are three advancement schemes available for the Sage to select for their game. These schemes are a pacing tool; if you advance through Ranks too quickly during a long game, you'll quickly hit the maximum and you'll have less to look forward to for most of the game.

The Trilogy is the classic model of gaming: a long-running campaign intended to go on for at least a year, possibly much longer, where stories and villains come and go. Under this scheme, use the advancement rules without adjustment.

The Novel is a shorter game, intended to last no more than a year. It probably has a single unifying arc serving as the narrative backbone, but there's space for sub-plots and side quests. Under this scheme, double the Destiny you earn at the end of each session and the entangled Destiny you earn through Deeds. Power, trust and enmity come quickly this way.

The Movie is a short game that will last for six months at most. The Sage probably has a single plotline worked out that will be the center of the game. Triple the Destiny earned and the entangled Destiny you earn through Deeds. People will grow in power very quickly, starting as talented young heroes and overthrowing corrupt regimes within just a few months!

Training Times

The choice of advancement scheme also matters for training times. Some Sages prefer to require downtime to learn new techniques, representing the studies and meditations a character goes through in order to master them. It also gives a good opportunity to play out scenes between master and student. However, other Sages prefer a more action-packed game, where the pace doesn't slow down just because the awesome hero wants to become even more awesome!

Below are some guidelines for training times for each of the three pace options. These are advice, not ironclad rules, and it's fine if the Sage wants to lengthen, shorten, or even get rid of training times altogether. Be sure to discuss the matter with your players, so that everybody knows with what rules they're playing with!

If your game uses **Transcendent Techniques**, note that they are intended to be powerful plot elements, so any training time for them should be decided on separately. One such technique might be obtained after drinking the blood straight out of a dragon's heart - you can learn it as fast as you can swallow! Even in the same game, another technique might be hidden within a manuscript so encoded that learning it takes years, even generations!

The Trilogy usually lends itself well for longer training times because the game is intended to last for a very long time, from the points of view of both the players and their characters. People can go into retreat for months or even years at a time in the relevant source material. A decent pace is one week of training per point of Destiny spent, so learning a fourth level technique takes about a month. The Sage can still cut this time short if the story warrants it, such as allowing a player to immediately purchase more points of Chi after an old master transfers some of his power into the young prodigy.

The Novel involves shorter games with a more focused plot. Training times can afford to be much shorter, just two or three days per point of Destiny spent.

The Movie might not need any training times at all. Characters can be unbelievable fighters who flawlessly execute martial arts maneuvers after seeing them performed only once. Or maybe they simply consider their opponent's skills for a few seconds and then spontaneously come up with the perfect maneuver to defeat them, training up a new technique in the middle of a fight! If you do choose to use training times, one day should be enough regardless of how many points are spent.



THE BOOK OF FIRE

BATTLE AT THE CELESTIAL GARDEN MONASTERY

The Heavens themselves seemed to split when the hero-saint from a distant soil planted a foot on the Land of the Gods. Once, he had been a prince; he could have lorded over a vast kingdom, yet for him, conquering the self was a higher purpose than conquering the world.

He was a wise and enlightened man, with unparalleled inner power and profound kung fu. He had the character of a humble and patient monk, yet his bearing was that of a barbarian king from a distant land - giant in stature and broad-shouldered, with an unruly black mane and thick beard.

Those who met him would never forget his eyes. Deep and blue as the ocean unbound; much of the time they were tranquil and inspiring, but other times wrathful and punishing. The hero-saint had a quick temper, and he would not let his eyes fall on tyranny and inequity without retribution. That was why he had come to be known as **the Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon!**

When he stepped onto the Land for the first time, it was a humid and misty day in the southern shores. When his foot touched the ground, such was the power of his enlightened Chi that the mist dispersed and a soft cool breeze blew to welcome him. It was as if Heaven and Earth had recognized the arrival of a magnificent hero and were acknowledging him. Yet as he walked into our land, the soft breeze turned into a strong wind, the clouds in the sky exploded with rain. He heralded the storm, as magnificent heroes usually do.

Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon had heard that the Emperor of Shen Zhou embraced Buddhism, and that under his patronage the dharma flourished: monasteries were built, monks ordained, and sutras translated. Thus, the hero-saint had hoped to find a land on the way to enlightenment and liberation, yet he found the Land of the Gods in the thrall of decadence and darkness.

The wandering monk arrived to the Heavenly Garden Monastery, the greatest and most important of its time. He found not a cloister of retreat and harmony but a den of sin and inequity. The monks there lived like kings, feasting on meat and wine, lusting over women and boys, hoarding treasure and wealth while the peasants of the surrounding lands suffered and strove to keep their living gods pleased.

When he kindly asked for an audience with the head abbot to discuss the poor state of the monastery, he was laughed at and spat upon, as if he were nothing but a simple mountain hermit with no standing in that noblest and holiest of places. So, he stopped asking and *demand*ed the presence of the abbot, his voice carrying the power of a thunderstorm and the authority of Heaven.

He was attacked by the reveling monks. They carried rudimentary weapons, meat cleavers and sticks, and their kung fu was as shallow as their wisdom. He took the stick from the one who had instigated the attack and spanked him like a child over his knee, swatting the others like flies.

-Heaven treats the world as a stray dog, and as a stray dog must the sage treat his disciples! Now be a good pup and go fetch the abbot for me.-

The humiliated monk crawled to the head abbot's chamber to deliver the message. The abbot lay amongst silk cushions, frolicking with courtesans. He was so angry at being interrupted from his pleasures that he struck at the man without even thinking; the young monk fell dead instantly, spitting up black blood, the mark of a black palm across a crushed chest.

As the abbot realized there was a powerful hero outside demanding his presence, he called upon his three most powerful and trusted disciples. Together they were known as **The Four Lotus Kings!** And they were the foremost Buddhist heroes of their time. Such was their level of cultivation and the power of their kung fu that they were considered close to the gods.

Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon stood in the center of the courtyard at the foot of gigantic Buddha statue made of solid gold; he was surrounded by the Four Lotus Kings. The head abbot spoke with a deep, cavernous voice.

-How dare you criticize our temple? It is the holiest and most magnificent in all the land. You are nothing but a wandering monk! You should kowtow to us and beg us to be your masters, as we are clearly your superior.-

The saint smiled, but did not look at them. Such pride, such foolishness! What had gone wrong in this land? -Magnificence does not equal holiness; many times they stand at odds. The Buddha himself was a wandering monk, and he is master to us all.-

His words clearly infuriated the monks. The stranger had compared himself to the Buddha! Never had anyone dared to treat them with such disrespect; they did as they wanted and no one stood in their way. Insulting them in their temple was like insulting the Buddha in Heaven, and they would not tolerate such offense.

One of the Four Kings, a short and rotund man with a belly as big as a cauldron, seemed to vanish from his spot only to reappear next to the wandering monk. He had used a supreme lightfoot technique called *Fire Spirit Step* that would allow even a man as heavy as he was to move great distances in the blink of an eye.

-Buddhism is powerful in Shen Zhou, even the Emperor brings great gifts and treasures to our temple. You come from a far away land, yet you bring nothing. You do not even burn incense at our altar! Such contempt, no matter if you are Emperor or beggar, you cannot enter without the proper offerings.-

-I am **The Minister of Offerings Fourth Lotus King, Fire Lotus!** and I will not abide by your disrespect. If you bring no gifts of incense, then your burning ashes shall suffice!-

"Heavenly Furnace Fist!"

His fists blazed with internal fire, and he lashed with terrible fury. His movements left behind trails of burning chi. The wandering monk calmly stepped aside, and such was his mastery of lightfoot that the terrible fire didn't even burn his whiskers.

-Bah, burning offerings is a useless gesture if you don't burn out your attachment to the material world! The respect of kings and emperors is meaningless. If your temple is filled with gold, there is no room left for enlightenment. You want to make a worthy offering? Extinguish the furnace of your desire, then!-

In one swift motion he swirled his sleeves to generate a strong wind, putting away the flames and throwing the Lotus King against the temple urn where offerings are burned. As the fat monk recovered from the impact, he realized he could no longer ignite his chi.

"Heavenly Dragons Escort the Buddha!"

Another monk leapt, attacking with a heavily-decorated golden spear. As he twirled the spear in the air, it formed patterns of roaring dragons of radiant chi. The Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon jumped gracefully to the lap of the gigantic Buddha statue, his enemy floating behind him, attacking unrelentingly.

This Lotus King was lean and strong, his movements sharp and precise. He stood proud as a peacock, and laughed at every strike. He was too fast, and not even the wandering saint could evade his attacks. Yet the hero-saint could parry them using his arms and hands without being harmed.

-You have traveled thousands of miles, is understandable that you bring no gifts. Yet when you see this magnificent Buddha statue you do not kowtow to it, not even once! You demand the presence of our abbot as if he was a peasant and you give us no face.-

-I am **Third Lotus King Golden Lotus; I am the Minister of Ceremonies!** and everywhere I go noble and peasant kowtow to me. Even the Emperor treats me with respect, yet you do not kneel down to me. I will make you bow down in death.-

"Even Kings bow down to Heaven!"

The spear shot straight to his stomach, like fierce tiger hungry for his innards, such was the speed of his attack that he could not have evaded it, and he didn't even try to, the holy man from afar, stood on his spot, firm and unwavering.

"Bronze Arahāt Body!"

The wandering monk's Chi aura infused his entire body, casting his features with a reddish-golden hue as if his skin were made of bronze. The tip of the spear bent, and the force of the recoil sent the spear flying and forced the Lotus King to his knees. It was he that ended up bowing down to the stranger.

Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon sighed. -The praise of men, whether they are peasants or emperors or even gods themselves, is hollow and empty! Gold is a shining metal, yet it bends easily, just as a mind that relies on the admiration of others for strength.-

One of the remaining Kings leapt from the ground to the lap of the statue with no effort. He was thin as a needle and taller than the foreigner. The monk attacked with an enormous rosary that hung from his neck it was heavy as an iron chain. He chased the wandering saint all the way to the Buddha's shoulders.

-Offerings and statues may be empty, but the piety of our order cannot be denied. No one in the Land of the Gods has translated more sutras than us. I am **Second Lotus King, Diamond Lotus Minister of Sutras!** and I know the Buddhist canon by heart. Even the Emperor heeds my knowledge.-

"Thousand Prayers Echo across Mount Meru!"

He struck the Buddha statue with his giant rosary, and a wave of sound filled the forest. Even the tops of the trees bent with



the power of the attack, as though the echo of Heaven's bell. The sound vibrated through the wandering saint's very bones. Only the abbot remained unaffected.

Second King continued praying, his words mixed with the reverberating sound. The very world seemed to vanish around the hero, replaced by ephemeral images of the wheel of life. The lands of gods, azura, human beings, animals, hungry ghost and demons, came alive and filled his senses.

-I can trap you in any of the stages of reincarnation! Keep practicing your Buddhism for a hundred lifetimes, and maybe we will meet again. Hopefully you will be more respectful then!-

"Samsara Fist!"

He lashed at the saint, fist aimed at the center of the hero's forehead. This technique was capable of altering the Chi flow in the body, trapping the brain in a state of illusion. Believed to have divine power, it was one of the most feared techniques in existence.

"Vajra Blade Pierces the Veil of Maya!"

The wandering monk stood strong. He opened his eyes, ablaze with enlightened chi. His wisdom and inner calm focused his mind into a sharp blade to cut across all illusions, the unique power of a transcendent technique.

He struck with his open palm as if it were a sword, his Chi sharp as a blade of light, cutting through the curtain of lies around them. The curtain vanished like sheets of fabric used for shadow puppet play. The second Lotus King fell to the ground, his eyes empty, mouth foaming.

-The sutras are just a vessel, a means to obtain wisdom, not wisdom itself. If you keep the jars but do not fill them with water, they are a useless vessel indeed.-

The abbot leaped to the top of the Buddha's head. The wandering saint followed behind, both of them displaying outstanding lightfoot skills.

The wind blew strong, fluttering the tunics of the two standing monks, one a vagabond from a far away country, with no name or standing in Shen Zhou, the other, the highest ranking abbot in the land of the gods, considered a man of infinite holiness and wisdom.

-So finally, you have my attention. What are the matters you wish to discuss with me?-

Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon smiled, -Thank you for graciously receiving me, respected abbot. I come to talk about the state of your temple and the state of the dharma in this land. It is clear that both have been corrupted; the wheel stands close to being broken, but is not too late. You can turn a new leaf, change this path of destruction and lies that you are on.-

The abbot laughed like a baneful devil; it was clear that he held the world in contempt. As he stood at the top of the statue, the sky around them grew dark, angered with lightning and thunder as if shocked at the monk who thought himself a god.

-Surely those three are worried only about vain and empty things, mere shiny distractions at the path of true enlightenment. I invite you to study under me! I can see you have potential. If you become my disciple you will see that I have mastered internal disciplines and that I am at the brink of Nirvana!-

-I am **First Lotus King Sidhi Lotus, the Master of Internal Disciplines!** and I have walked many paths of cultivation. I have practiced hundreds of styles and performed thousand of deeds. Now even the Emperor fears my transcendent power. Let me show you!-

"Thousand Blossom Lotus!"

The abbot's upper tunic was shredded by his inner power. He was thin as a skeleton, his skin chalk-white as a corpse. All across his body, streams of dark Chi flowed as an oily-black cloud of dust gathered around him. A thousand black palms filled the air around them!

"Buddha Palm!"

Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon was filled with a golden light; his Chi coalesced around him, forming the vanishing image of a golden Buddha. He extended his hand, and in an instant his Chi formed a giant palm to counter the attack.

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The wandering saint landed softly in the ground. The gigantic Buddha statue collapsed around him, crushing the magnificent temple as the saint cradled the abbot's frail body in his arms. The old man slowly opened his eyes as the hero spoke.

-Transcendent powers are steps on the way to enlightenment, but they are not enlightenment itself. Attachment to those powers can only lead to corruption and suffering, become trapping instead of liberating. That is why they must be used to benefit the whole world, not hoarded for one's ambitions.-

-You became enthralled by your own power, by your achievements, just as your disciples became enthralled by wealth, praise and knowledge. In your path to enlightenment you all got distracted by various shiny things, and lost the way.-

The old abbot closed his eyes. -Now, let us go see the Emperor,- Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon exclaimed.

LORESHEETS: AN INTRODUCTION

A Loresheet, also called a Lore, is a focused description of one setting element including specific purchasable ways a character can be tied to it. Characters can spend Destiny to buy a Loresheet. This means they have knowledge and insight in to the setting element it describes, whether through study or personal experience, and that the setting element is somehow tied into her history. As the Sage and players award you Deeds, and use the resulting Entanglement to purchase Loresheet options, your legend grows!

Each Loresheet has some basic knowledge – setting information – that fills you in on the important aspects of whatever it concerns. Your character has knowledge of its contents, and it is likely to matter to their story. (Otherwise, why spend Destiny on it?) It might come with a free bonus, but the major thing is that it unlocks the ability to spend Destiny on story or character options that tie you to that setting aspect. You might find yourself suddenly (and retroactively) revealed as the last scion of a dying bloodline, marry into a war between families, and get the chance to forge a new and lasting peace. In essence, these options both tie you to the setting and allow you to exercise an amount of influence over the story.

ENTANGLED DESTINY

The difference between Entanglement and Destiny is that the former is meant to be spent on Loresheets only, while the latter can be spent in anything the player may want, such as Kung Fu, Skills, Weapons and Loresheets too.

Another important difference is that while Destiny is exclusively spent by the player, Entanglement will normally be spent for the player by the Sage and fellow players as they award deeds, with few exceptions such as character creations where players will get to spend these points themselves

A Note on Rumors

Much of the Lores described below are couched in terms of rumors; “Some say,” “Many believe,” “Savants claim,” etc. This is not an attempt to dodge setting definition, but rather, an attempt to preserve setting ambiguity. The Jiang Hu is a place of insane tales and wild rumors with the barest shred of truth behind them. As legends grow, they warp in the telling, until the epic little resembles the deed. While **Legends of the Wulin** is indeed a place to show these epic deeds in a straightforward and entirely serious manner, don't fight this tendency to telephone – work it into your game. Have the characters interact with crazy-eyed old men and noble heroes telling radically different tales of the same topic. Have silk-skinned courtesans whisper false truths based on pillow talk from a hundred different men. Encourage your players to join in on the rumormongering, and play up their (futile) attempts to tell their own legend in a straight manner. This leaves you free to alter the details of the setting for your own game, and play up the gossiping nature of the Jiang Hu.

The default way to acquire these options is through Entanglement, but if you have something very specific in mind for your character you may also spend regular Destiny on them; these are counted against your spent Entanglement for the purposes of gaining Rank.

Types of Destiny options:

Options marked with an asterisk (*) are assumed to be a part of all relevant Lores – including assumed ones that you make up on the spot for the purposes of Entanglements! This means, for example, that you can always justify a purchase of Status (“You are now known as the Righteous Defender of the Three Gorges!”), Involvement (“That barbarian prince eyes you with hatred in his eyes, and you realize that you will not have seen the last of him.”) and so on. Other types of Lore options can be added according to the Sage's discretion, but really exotic ones (Discovering that you descend by direct lineage from the Handsome Monkey King, acquiring the Asura Blade) are assumed to be part of specific Loresheets for places and organizations – they require powerful story involvement to be accessed (meaning that they can't be assumed to be part of newly created Lores unless the Sage agrees to it).

Some Loresheets explicitly list these options, but this is merely intended to provide ideas and colorful examples, not to indicate that they aren't available for others.

Bonus – You gain a bonus, such as a +5 to all Survival rolls made to forage or find your way on your family's lands.

Bonuses and compatibilities

Specific Secrets, Bonuses, Techniques, and other Lore options may list their effects as counting as being derived from a specific source, such as weapons, kung fu, etc.. for purposes of compatibility. If they do not, assume that the Lore-derived bonuses count as coming from Secret Arts.

Destiny – These change the story to give you a chance to do something that would otherwise prove hard or unlikely. Because this affects the story at large, you should discuss the purchase with your Sage beforehand so that they will have time to incorporate it smoothly into your game. These are often special circumstances concerning your character, like you being a lost prince of a fallen house, or a prophecy that you're the one who will eventually face down the Three-Powers Sage.

***Involvement** – This ties a person, an object or a place to you. You will matter to it, and it to you. This does not ensure what type of relationship that you will have, but it does ensure that it will come up again. This is often good to use when you come upon a setting element that you enjoy and want to see more of, such as an interesting location or NPC.

If you pay Destiny, that element can become a permanent part of your story, even if the Sage intended it to be a one-time appearance. Note, this doesn't mean it will have an intimate relationship with your character. It just ensures it'll be part of their story. If you want to have a deeper relationship, buy a Destiny option.

***Fortune** – You luck into something! These grant lucky coincidences, or reveal circumstances to be more auspicious than you had previously thought - e.g., you find out that you have a secret ally in the Clan that is pursuing you, or you get the chance to join a Secret Society.

Secret – You'll soon learn a secret technique - not a kung fu technique, but either Secret Arts or something more esoteric.

Victory – These purchases ensure success in some specific achievement. However, there are conditions you must meet to purchase them, as defined in the Loreshheet and adjudicated by the Sage. It is not enough to spend the Destiny. At minimum, you must have made every reasonable effort to accomplish your goal before you're even eligible to purchase the Victory!

***Treasure** – These are acquisitions of material things, like an ancestral sword, a few coffers of silver, or a collection of ancient Sanskrit scrolls.

Technique – You get an opportunity to learn secret kung fu! This is most often related to the guarded secrets of special Sect Styles, such as the Heart Sword Skill of the Heaven Sword Alliance (p. 55). It also might involve the opportunity to learn entirely new Styles, maybe even ones previously thought to be lost to history!

Note: many martial organizations have several techniques that modify how their kung fu works, usually listed under “Secrets of Destiny: Kung Fu”; barring specific Secrets and the like, you can only use the martial secrets of one organization at a time. Even if the rules treat them as upgrades to an existing Style, it is helpful to view them as a variant Style embodying the ideals and philosophies of the organization.

***Status** – Your deeds or (mis-?)fortunes serve to grant you status with an organization, sect, or other social structure. This can be highly official (“First lieutenant of interrogations in Abyssal Sect”), highly unofficial (revered by the peasants of the land and known as the “Saving Thousand Lives Gentleman”), or anything in between.

Costs for Destiny Options:

0-1: Trivial Bonuses/Story Opportunities – These are small and temporary advantages, cosmetic changes, and entanglements of personal interest but questionable utility - e.g., you get the opportunity to enter a barred Wulin contest in a city you are passing through, you unexpectedly run into old friends of yours, or that round-faced merchant that everyone thought was so funny is sure to show up again. As a bonus, they are equivalent to a +5 bonus to a highly situational Skill use.

2-3: Minor Bonuses/Story Opportunities – As story opportunities, these can substantially change a single story,

but are unlikely to permanently change a character, the setting, or the campaign at large. You not only gain access to the tournament, but discover that the prize carries a solution to your current troubles. Your friends bring a valuable secret. The funny merchant is eyeing you for a membership in the Falling Leaves Society! As a bonus, they are equivalent to +5 to a Skill.

4-5: Major Bonuses/Story Opportunities – These offer large, sweeping changes to the current situation, or minor changes to the campaign as a whole. The tournament decides the outcome of the war between your sect and the Black Lotus Society... and furthermore, your greatest enemy is attending, along with one or two other NPCs of your choice! As a bonus, they are equivalent to a +5 to a combat stat. (The Destiny cost might be lowered by 1 or 2 points by making a proper and potent sacrifice, or by accepting a substantial complication!)

6+: Profound Bonuses/Story Opportunities – As story options, these cause massive changes to Shen Zhou and the campaign. The prize for the tournament is the long-lost Jade Seals, said to confer the Mandate of Heaven! You are destined to be the only student whom the Three Powers Sage will ever take under his wing and teach his most powerful secrets – and, possibly, the one to be able to mend his broken heart. The funny merchant is a Daoist Immortal, who has chosen to teach you great magical secrets.

Adventure / Campaign Loreshets

Campaigns revolve around the deeds of the PC's, their fortunes, and their misfortunes. Their newly acquired reputations, allies, enemies, and knowledge become the basis of their personal legends. This is reflected by the Entanglement rewards earned through Deeds, acknowledged by the Sage as well as their fellow players.

New characters usually have only a small selection of Lores. However, they aren't obliged to put all their Entanglement in to whatever few Lores are attached to their character. Players and Sages can (and should!) make Lores for each adventure and for the Campaign.

Each adventure should have a Loreshet of its own. If the characters arrive at the remote outpost of Five Dead Trees, then their reputation and discoveries will be focused on that place, and on the organizations and individuals who inhabit it. Assume that the Five Dead Trees Lore is in play without cost, and that anyone can spend Entanglement to discover allies, gain reputations, and stumble across remarkably unlikely circumstances relevant to it. These 'Adventure Lores' generally only give you access to the basic Lore options, i.e., Involvement, Fortune, Treasure, and Status. If you want to get access to deeper story possibilities, you'd have to pay a Destiny cost to unlock a more advanced Lore.

Note: Loreshets that players have purchased for themselves usually signify what they consider important to the stories of their characters! This should be reflected by having them be relevant to the adventures at hand, and therefore viable for various Entanglement purchases.

RIVERS AND LAKES

Xiao Yu walked next to Master Liu, with a small contingent of guards following behind. Though they were all appointed by the Empire and carried letters of passage for all of the official checking posts, they knew their documents and seals had no value here. They had not only left their weapons behind as they entered the tea house, but all claims of authority to the old teacher. Though Xiao Yu did not grasp why, they understood: they walked deep within the Jiang Hu.

The girl could not believe that the stalwart, highly-opinionated Officer Jin would walk behind Master Liu. She could clearly see he was not happy about it, but she smiled at him having to swallow his pride for a change. At least he would let Master be for a while.

Besides, there were more interesting things to see around her than the humbled guardian. The Silver Eel was supposed to be a tea house, yet it was more of a tavern, or even a house of ill repute! She had never seen a place like this before, with so many people all laughing and singing and drinking and gambling. The raucous music became one with the rattling of dice. Servants carried hundreds of aromatic dishes across the place, the scent mixing with the penetrating smoke from opium pipes. This was certainly not where a young lady of her upbringing should be! It was only after an hour of begging and whining to Master that she was allowed to come along, and only then if she dressed as a young man to avoid unnecessary attention.

Xiao Yu didn't understand the reason for a disguise. There were many women around, carousing the same way as the men did, yet no one batted an eyelash. Never in her life had she seen such casual relationships between the genders. Was this really what life was like in the Jiang Hu?

The maid led them on to the second floor, parting a thick red curtain to a private room full of cushions and expensive fabrics. There were nine or ten people in the room; it was a banquet, featuring all sorts of delicacies. The people were drinking wine and toasting to the seat of honor, toasting to a beautiful young woman wearing loose silk garments, toasting to her glory and long life.

Even if she weren't seated at the head of the table, Xiao Yu would have known she was the most important person in the room. She was more beautiful than anyone Xiao Yu had ever seen.

Master Liu saluted her with his right fist held in his left palm, and she returned the gesture. The beautiful lady smiled, and Xiao Yu could tell by the light in her eyes that she had affection for Master, but she could not glimpse more about their relationship. The lady seemed to be in her early twenties; how could a woman so young have such an air of power and authority, Xiao Yu wondered, and what could her relationship be with Master?

-Third Dragon Princess, it is a pleasure to see you again! You are radiant as ever.-

-Dragon Flute Liu, it has been too long. To what do I owe the pleasure of your visit?-

Master Liu sat opposite the Dragon Princess at the table, keeping Xiao Yu next to him and the guards behind. Despite the many servants around, the Princess poured Master a cup of tea. A meeting between two dragons, how interesting! Xiao Yu thought, and Master spoke again.

-My companions and I have need to travel across the Lazy River Path, and since it is your family territory, we came to request your blessing on our trip.-

THE JIANG HU (江湖)

Within Shen Zhou, there is another parallel world. It exists like a reflection on a lake. Some times, it is a clearer, cleaner reflection of the outside world, the way reality should aspire to be. Other times, it is a distorted mirror of the worst aspects of Shen Zhou. It is a world of outsiders and outcasts, of thieves and beggars, heroes and villains. Some are born into it, some are forced into it by circumstance, and many more choose to live there to escape the boundaries and limitations imposed by regular society.

It is the Jiang Hu: the Rivers and Lakes. In turn, it calls the ordinary society the Shan Li: the Mountains and Forests.

In the Shan Li, power and status are based social position, age, gender, and wealth, but in the Jiang Hu, power and status derive from deeds and experience. Actions speak louder

than words, and honor is more binding than Imperial laws and decrees. Life for the common farmers and merchants is about tending the land and selling goods, but life in the Jiang Hu is about adventure and danger, where ancient temples hide eternal secrets and misty mountains are the abodes of legendary masters. The extraordinary is possible: heroes become legends by the strength of their kung fu and the fire of their passions, and even a beggar can be a king.

Rivers and Lakes, Mountains and Forests

The Jiang Hu is not completely separate from ordinary society. They share the same lands and eat from the same farms. The distance between the two is a trick of societal perception. A Wulin legend and a dutiful farmer might eat lunch at the same table, but as far as social expectation is concerned, they live in different worlds.

Some groups provide protection and services to normal people, while others are criminals who prey on the innocent. Some groups are part of the nobility and rule over the commoners, while others are outsiders with no place in society. There are those who try to embody the transcendent principles of religions and the legacies of a glorious past, while others have beliefs that are considered dangerous and heretical, who seek to change the world or break it. The Little Forest Sect and Jade Dragon Well Sect are representatives of the Buddhist and Daoist clergy, respectively; besides being martial arts heroes, they seek to be living examples of the tenants of their faiths. Members of both the Haven Sword Alliance and the Falling Leaves Society can often be found serving noble or other important families, as martial arts masters, advisors, bodyguards and tutors.

In the west, the royalty of the Yun Clan have ruled over their land and their people as beloved and respected masters for generations, while the members of the Beggar Association are considered the lowest of the low in Shen Zhou – at least, by those who deign to look upon them. The Eagle Talons guard and protect goods and people across all roads and paths of Shen Zhou, and their leader is considered an exemplary businessman and peerless warrior. The Resplendent Phoenix Society tirelessly seeks to improve the lot of women across all of Shen Zhou; not only are many great heroines trained by them, but wives, concubines and governesses educated in their precepts find their way to the highest strata of society.

While most Orthodox Factions seek to protect the common people and even improve society as a whole to one degree or another, many of the Unorthodox Factions seek to become lords and masters of the people around them. Many of these unorthodox factions seek to eventually bend all under Heaven and Earth to their will. The Flame Doctrine and the Black Lotus Society both wield absolute control over the lives and deaths of not only their followers, but of all the people that live in the territories they control. The former oppresses its followers through religion, while the latter uses drugs and intimidation.

The feared Blood Wind Cult protects the nomadic settlements from outsiders on occasion, but is known to demand steep payment –including female children to swell the ranks of the cult. The Southern Dragon Pirate Clan sees themselves as a noble family with the right to demand tribute from those crossing the waterways they control, and sometimes even see the people of the shore-side villages and towns as their subjects. Others, like the Blade Dogs and the Hundred Ghost Faction, want nothing to do with normal society and just want to be left to their own devices; depending on the situation and the mood of the particular member encountered, a common person who gets in their way can expect to either be helped graciously or killed on the spot. In other words, no expectations may apply – heroes of those factions have been known to help someone in trouble along the path they too happen to be traveling, only to kill them later as the mewling peasant's gratitude turns out to be annoying.

For the most part, what happens in the Jiang Hu has little or no influence on ordinary society, and common people are

not aware of the comings and goings of the Rivers and Lakes. These common folk are not bound by the rules and codes of the factions predominant in the area, and remain ignorant of anything besides basic information, like whether a local faction is graciously protective, dangerous, or both, or how to identify a typical member by distinctive clothes, colors and weapons. Not only are the average peasant, merchant, bureaucrat, or noble oblivious to the affairs of the Jiang Hu, they wish above all else to remain so, as most people in the Land of the Gods believe in the proper order of things as dictated by Heaven itself. The Jiang Hu exists apart from them, and they wish to go on with their daily life undisturbed by the world that co-exists alongside them.

As such, while some people respect and adore heroes, most of them fear even the most altruistic wanderer. The majority of normal people even resent heroes for breaking the rules of their world and rubbing their mundane existence in their faces. They know the Jiang Hu is a chaotic and dangerous world that holds criminals and tyrants just as it holds knights and saviors, and prefer to keep themselves as distanced as possible from the affairs of the Rivers and Lakes!

Only those who make their livelihood in the borders of the Rivers and Lakes – innkeepers, wine shop owners, ferry and coach drivers, courtesans, servants and attendants – form the reluctant exception. As their lives often end up tied to the happenings of the hidden world, their mundane nature provides little buffer from the wuxia. They are usually in the know of the comings and goings and the who is who. In many cases, they are considered part of the Jiang Hu themselves!

The Jiang Hu Destiny Cost: 0

Within **Shen Zhou**, there is a parallel world of outsiders and outcasts. Some are born into this world, others are forced into it, and many more choose to live in it to escape the boundaries and limitations imposed on them by regular society. The heroes and rogues within this world are abjured by the common people as threats to an orderly life, but for many they represent a hope of escape, or advancement, from a life controlled by tradition.

2 Bonus: You know how to navigate the Rivers and Lakes outside the Wulin organizations, in other Jiang Hu communities like the criminal underground, the ferrymen guilds, or the pleasure trade. Pick one such group; you get a +5 bonus to social rolls where familiarity with that subculture matters.

2+ Fortune: Once per session, upon arriving in a new location, you may declare to have basic knowledge of the local Jiang Hu underground, including important organizations and who's in charge. This includes Wulin factions.

+1-5 Status: You are already known within one or more of the aforementioned organizations, and have some Status with them.



Despite all of this, it is a common rule for members of the Jiang Hu to interfere as little as possible with normal society. As the saying goes, “Don’t let the river waters disturb the well” – meaning, don’t let the chaotic waters of the Jiang Hu spill over the still waters of the Shan Li.

Traveling Across Rivers and Lakes

The Jiang Hu is a parallel world, with its own history, politics, and geography. That old monastery in the mountain may just be haunted to the locals, but for those who live in the Rivers and Lakes, it is the site of a legendary battle, a place of pilgrimage and reverence. The north and the south may be at peace in Shen Zhou, but there is war in the Jiang Hu if a conflict erupts between the Little Forest Sect and Heaven Sword Alliance.

Every hero knows that when they travel the Rivers and Lakes they must be mindful of the laws and customs of the locals in that part of Shen Zhou, as well as those of the Jiang Hu factions dominant in that area. It doesn’t matter if a faction is orthodox or unorthodox: in their territory, they are sovereign. Any action against that faction’s members, or breach of their rules, is an insult delivered within their own home. Depending on circumstances, it could be a breach of etiquette, a crime, or an act of war. Each faction has rules they impose on members, as well as codes for those who enter their land. Most sects and clans don’t have special regulations for visitors beyond the common rules of courtesy and respect among warriors; others may have very specific demands and limitations that have to be followed even by legends who are just passing by.

For example, women are not allowed to enter Little Forest Sect monasteries; heroes who wish to enter Hundred Ghost Faction territory, in the rare occasions when they are allowed, must dress in funerary white clothes and make offerings to the Faction members as if they were the hero’s deceased ancestors; and those who wish to travel safely across waterways controlled by the Southern Dragons must pay tribute and formally ask permission.

Despite their many differences and conflicts, those of the Jiang Hu consider themselves brothers and comrades. All who follow proper form while visiting another faction’s territory must be treated with courtesy and hospitality. Nevertheless, the Jiang Hu is full of willful and passionate heroes, so etiquette and rules are bound to be broken along with the bones of hosts and guests alike.

It must be noted that while a faction’s territory is normally the land where they have their headquarters, the extent of that territory varies among factions. The Little Forest Sect considers their territory to be only what lies within the gates of their monasteries, but Yun Clan is the size of a small nation. The Beggar Fraternity are present all across the Jiang Hu, but claim no territory; visitors are bound by their rules only within their lodges. The Southern Dragon Clan and Black Lotus Society deem themselves lords over whatever stretch of water or land they can claim.

For the most part, outside of the headquarters and immediate area, the Jiang Hu is considered free territory where different factions and individuals contest in the struggle to expand the reach and influence of their goals and ideals.

A soft breeze cooled the warm afternoon; it fell upon Xiao Yu's face like a gentle kiss. For some reason her mind wandered back a few days ago, to the Silver Eel Tea House. She remembered the beautiful and strong Third Dragon Princess, and how she complimented Master Liu on having such a dashing and handsome student.

Her cheeks suddenly turned red as she recalled the way the Princess looked at her, thinking Xiao Yu was a young man with clean and elegant features. How she flirted with her across the table! Such behavior would be considered rude coming from a man to a woman, in Xiao Yu's world; a woman acting like that towards a man would be simply unthinkable. She smiled and giggled.

Such thoughts distracted her eyes from the path ahead. She bumped right into a wall! As she rubbed her nose to check that it hadn't broken, she heard a loud grunt, like that of an angry pig, and a cracking noise. Her nose? No. As she looked up, Xiao Yu found that she hadn't bumped against a wall, but against a man, a giant of a man. Fat and hairy like a boar he was, with great arms as thick as logs.

The bump didn't cause him much damage – he wouldn't even have noticed it, save that she made him drop his jar of wine, and it had broken as it crashed to the floor. The grunt came again, from a face so red, so angry, that Xiao Yu giggled at the idea of steam coming out of his nose. Her giggling faded when she realized it would be useless to attempt to reason with him – Master Liu always said some drunkards became beasts when their wine gets taken away.

This beast lashed at the young girl, still disguised as a man. (Even if she did not know it at the time, no matter how drunk or furious he was, the feared bandit Red Tusk would never knowingly strike a woman.) His enormous fist flew towards her as if someone had launched a mighty oak, such was the power of his technique!

Stone Splitting Roots!

If the fist had struck her, she would have been crushed, her bones broken like the wine jar. She reacted by instinct, without thought, all of Master Liu's training put to the test in a real situation.

The fist of the brute crashed into the stone tiles, breaking a hole in the ground. In an instant, she vanished into thin air, her movements too fast for the intoxicated giant to follow. She glided away from the attack gracefully, a crane in flight.

Soaring Crane!

Red Tusk was amazed. The clumsy young man was incredibly fast. In his anger, he didn't stop to think that the flimsy-looking young noble might know some kung fu, but it was too late – the girl knew she could not afford to give such a strong opponent a chance to realize.

Two fingers flew towards the pressure points of his arm like a furious crane gouging the eyes of a tiger; this movement, Master Liu had said, was specifically designed to incapacitate stronger opponents by maiming their attacking limbs.

White Crane!

His chakra points were sealed off by the attack; the surprised bandit would be paralyzed for a few seconds, enough for the girl to walk away.

Yet Xiao Yu couldn't help but smile and taunt the big fellow! She was so proud of herself: her skills had passed the test of a real encounter; she'd acted swiftly and without doubt. Had she stopped to think for even a second, she would have been crushed.

Master Liu was also proud, as he had witnessed the encounter. He walked over to congratulate her – and, of course, reprimand her for wandering off like that – when he felt a killer intent that hadn't been there before.

The air filled with a bone-chilling cackle as the legless deformed beggar in the corner pushed off his hands, soaring into the air and filling the space between them with black daggers.

Death brings crows, Crows bring death!

The daggers flew like carrion birds, seeking the death of Master and student. Dragon Flute Liu slid in front of the girl, yet he remained calm. Xiao Yu tried to shout for him to dodge, as he pulled a jade flute from his long sleeve and took it to his lips.

CROUCHING TIGERS AND HIDDEN DRAGONS

In the world of Rivers and Lakes, things are not always what they seem; hence the saying, "the Jiang Hu is full of Crouching Tigers and Hidden Dragons." The phrase means that dangers are all around, even in situations that seem peaceful, like fierce tigers crouching under high grass waiting to pounce on an unsuspecting prey. Those of great power do not always give that appearance; a seemingly defenseless individual may be a powerful dragon.

The most dangerous assassin is not the one who hides

in the darkness and sneaks into the palace under cover of the night. The most dangerous assassin is the one who hides under plain sight, the one who sneaks into the heart of his prey under the guise of friendly innocence. The tyrannical King Liao of Wu (during the Spring and Autumn periods) fell not against the mighty warriors who attacked him directly, but to a swift swordsman who hid a dagger inside the king's favorite dish, and struck as the meal was delivered.

Ancient legends say that the first heroes of the Wulin were known as Cike, or “Stabbing Guests”, and that they would make their way to the throne rooms of unrighteous kings under clever pretexts, assassinating them in a clever ruse.

Modern Wulin members eschew such practices, calling them dishonorable; nevertheless, those ancient heroes risked life and limb on their plots, and most of them sacrificed their lives bringing down terrible tyrants. The lesson remains: those who wish to survive in the Jiang Hu must always be aware of everything around them, and develop an intuition that would keep them safe even when senses would fail them. Besides the clear advantages that come with disguising one’s true nature and intentions, there are other reasons for why things are not always what they seem in the Jiang Hu.

The world of Rivers and Lakes is a place for the displaced, a home for those who wish to run away from the world. Some hide from some force chasing them, others from their own past and who they were. It is also a world that allows those who are not satisfied by what Heaven made them to reform themselves under a new identity.

For some, this can be achieved with a simple change of clothes; for others, it requires practicing a form of kung fu or method of Chi cultivation, so that their entire nature shifts completely into something else. This goes from something as simple as a rich nobleman renouncing all his wealth to become a beggar, to women disguising themselves as men to roam the Jiang Hu, to males cultivating Yin so they become more feminine, to elders who appear a in the prime of their youth and youngsters who disguise themselves as feeble and old.

As heroes become more and more experienced, many – but not all – become humble. While young heroes may brag about their every deed and display their weapons like a peacock strutting his feathers, the accomplished warrior often appears simple and almost ordinary.

This is due not only to humbleness, but out of sheer practicality; experienced heroes have many conflicting ties to the Jiang Hu. With those seeking revenge from them, those seeking favors, and those who merely want to challenge them to prove their mettle and make a name, it’s more than enough to desire a bit of peace and quiet. The truly powerful dragons would rather remain hidden most of the time, mostly to not be bothered until the moment they decide to reveal themselves.

Because of the atmosphere of constant hidden danger

Crouching Tigers and Hidden Dragons

Destiny Cost: 1

The saying goes, “The Jiang Hu is full of Crouching Tigers and Hidden Dragons”. So many in the martial community have every reason to hide their true face, and their true power. Who knows who might prove to be a powerful fighter in seclusion?

0-5 : You are hiding your true identity behind a disguise. Are you a noble passing as a beggar? Are you masquerading as someone of the opposite gender? Do you pretend to be a member of a certain organization while in reality serving another?

This is a **Disadvantage** (see **Character Creation** pg. 22). Once a session, whenever the veil of your disguise seems to be pierced and protecting your fake identity gets you in trouble, earn 1 additional Destiny. If this is your first or second disadvantage you can get it for free, otherwise it costs 5 Destiny.

3 Secret: Following in the traditions of the Cike of the past, you learn or develop the **Stabbing Guest**

Technique. This helps you when you seek to gain the trust of someone that you seek to hurt, damage, or destroy! As long as you have this stated purpose and make sure to describe your actions as fitting with your devious plans, you get a +5 Action Bonus to all appropriate social rolls to gain their trust, appear friendly and harmless, and enter into their confidence. This bonus is lost if you stop harboring bad intentions.

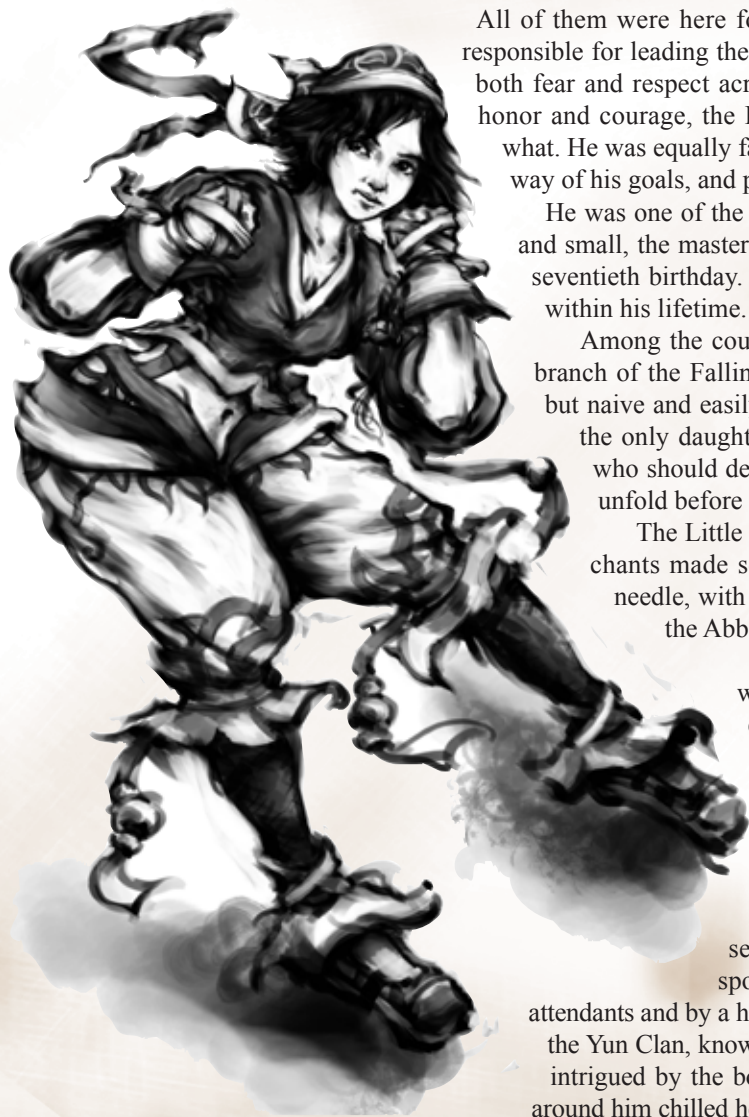
0 Bonus: get the **Wu Wei Specialty: Sense Chi** or the **Stealth Specialty: Hide Killer Intent** for free

and misleading appearances, those who roam the Jiang Hu endeavor to develop keen minds and highly developed senses, with an awareness that borders on the preternatural. Such awareness can be used to deduct martial arts expertise from watching mundane actions, or sensing the approximate strength of a person’s Chi from a simple display of kung fu. Even most novices can perceive a strong killer intent in the area.

The fighter that can hide the tell-tale signs of mastery – the power of their chi, skill at kung fu, and most importantly, the true intentions of their soul – are either opponents to be feared or masters to be respected.

Deep within the northeast deserts, amidst treacherous mountains and peaks, lies the impenetrable fortress of the Eagle Talons, the foremost security escort agency in Shen Zhou. Known across the Jiang Hu as the Eagle Nest, the fortress is a magnificent haven carved into one of the most deadly and treacherous territories in the Land of the Gods. The Talons – also known as the Eastern Condors – have carved themselves a similar niche in the deadly and treacherous world of the martial arts; a few years ago they were but another security agency among many, but today they perch at a lofty peak as one of the Four Pillars of the Wulin.

This day was an important one for the Eagle Talons. This day, their headquarters was filled with heroes from all corners of Shen Zhou. There were the venerable elders of clans, notable and respected personages whose deeds and adventures are known by all, and many amongst the newer generation: those whose names were still unrecognized but held great promise for the future.



All of them were here for one reason: to pay their respect to the Eagle Head, the man responsible for leading the Talons to glory and renown, the one whose name is spoken with both fear and respect across the Rivers and Lakes. Famous for his unwavering sense of honor and courage, the Head was one who would always stand by his word, no matter what. He was equally famous for his ruthlessness and pride, as he let nothing stand in the way of his goals, and put his name and the organization above all else.

He was one of the current Top Ten Heroes. The Gallant Eagle gazed upon the great and small, the masters and the disciples of the Wulin, all reunited to honor him on his seventieth birthday. He smiled, as he knew that he had reached the glory he desired within his lifetime.

Among the countless guests stood Master Dragon Flute Liu of the Blue Flame branch of the Falling Leaves Society; at his side was his sole disciple, a handsome but naive and easily amazed young man of unimportant origins. (In reality, she was the only daughter of a very important official from the capital.) Chen Xiao Yu, who should definitely not be here now, was amazed as she witnessed the Wulin unfold before her eyes.

The Little Forest Sect delegation seemed to float atop clouds of incense and chants made solid, headed by Abbot White Cloud. Thin and strong as a pine needle, with a long sleeve flapping at his right side in place of a missing arm, the Abbot's long eyebrows and beard fluttered like dragon whiskers.

The Seven Stars of the Heaven Sword Alliance! Some were old with thick dark hair and bushy beards, their faces frozen in angry expressions; some were young and clean-looking with a serene and peaceful air about them. One appeared as nothing more than a child, and two of them were women of amazing beauty, though one dressed in manly clothes. Each of them held a precious and unique sword by their side; no wonder members of the Heaven Sword Clan were also called the Blade Eccentrics.

An old man dressed in black with hair, eyebrows and beard seemingly made of ice! His stare was cold and piercing, and he sported a cruel grin on his face. He was followed by a retinue of attendants and by a handsome young man with a melancholic face. He was the master of the Yun Clan, known as Snow Leopard and accompanied by his second son. Although intrigued by the boy, Xiao Yu could not stand to be close to that man; the very air around him chilled her to the bone.

Xiao Yu looked up in amazement, her senses overwhelmed by heavenly music and the scent of fresh flowers filling the room. A woman of unearthly beauty dressed in a gown of flowing silk, decorated with patterns that came alive as she moved, descended from the sky as she stepped lightly across flower petals, followed by five lovely and unique maids.

This was the Second Celestial Maiden of the Resplendent Phoenix Society, and Master had remarked that she always liked to make an entrance. For Xiao Yu, it was as if one of the daughters of the Jade Emperor herself had descended to Earth to join in the celebration.

It was as if she had entered a painting of Heaven, or a fairy tale. Xiao Yu felt dizzy as she looked around – there were beggars and Daoists, those who looked impossibly old and those who possessed flawless beauty and youth; those who had an air of nobility and a regal bearing, and those who looked bizarre and strange like demons and ghouls.

All around her, the heroes of the Wulin drank and ate, laughed and cried; some renewed oaths of friendship and brotherhood, while others barely contained their hatred and spite. The heroes issued challenges out of long-standing grudges and respectful rivalries, but none would dare fight in such a gathering. Xiao Yu was surprised when her old Master bowed to an elegant-looking man of half his age, and called him elder.

When it came time, everyone gathered and rose their cups to Gallant Eagle, a giant of a man with a firm and stern look about him. He emanated strength and confidence, and his presence clearly dominated the room, as fierce and proud as his namesake. Xiao Yu could not believe he was seventy years old; this legend of the Wulin barely looked a day over fifty.

He was such a strong and powerful man, one who had earned the envy and respect of the heroes of the land. Many of them were here today, other legends raising their cup on his behalf. According to the rumors this had been his life-long dream.

Because of this, no one could contain their surprise when he formally announced that, one year from this day, all of those present would be invited to his *“Washing Hands on the Golden Basin Ceremony”*. Xiao Yu didn't understand what this meant, and why a shocked gasp went up from those assembled.

Dragon Flute Liu whispered that it meant, one year from now, he would “wash his hands” from the affairs of the Jiang Hu. He would retire from the Wulin.

Such news would throw the Wulin into disarray. No doubt this would be an interesting year.

THE WULIN (武林)

It is said that Heaven has a place assigned for everybody. It is said that, for the world to function in an orderly fashion, some must lie below while others rise above, that there should be commoners and nobles, weak and strong, and that a few should rule above the many.

The path of kung fu is for those who reject this idea, those who believe that destiny should be in their hands, and those who believe their fortunes should be decided by the strength of their hands and the fires of their passions.

No matter the circumstances of a person's birth — common or noble, man or woman, healthy or weak, rich or poor — anyone can overcome weakness and cultivate strength through kung fu. Anyone can stand proud knowing they earned the power inside them, and no one can take that away. Those who leave behind normal society to forge a destiny by their own hand, change the world for better or worse, carve their names in legend and history, and become masters of themselves through kung fu, or the Secret Arts...

They are known as the **Wulin**, the Martial Brotherhood, the Fighting Community.

Not everyone who lives in the Jiang Hu belongs to the Wulin. While there are heroes hailing from all paths of life rushing to meet destiny, there are many others who just want to go about their lives, even though they live outside normal society. They do not wish to challenge the world or improve themselves through conflict and martial arts.

Besides the Wulin, there are many other sub-groups in the Rivers and Lakes; those who live the life of crime are known as the **Lulin**, and those in the pleasure business refer to their profession as the **Water Trade**. Though some of them may be heroes and martial artists, they don't need to be so.

The Jiang Hu is the social space, an alternate world within Shen Zhou where heroes live, and the Wulin is who they are. Even though all the Wulin live within Jiang Hu, not everyone in Jiang Hu belongs to the Wulin.

The Wulin Legend

The true history of the Wulin is uncertain, but there are legends amongst the elders of the Martial Brotherhood that claim their origins date back to mythic times. The legends say that, long ago, men could learn the secrets of *Godly Kung Fu*, a power that allowed them to defy Heaven itself. The stories speak of a man named *Kuafu*, who attained terrible and magnificent power through cultivation of chi; after achieving a tyrannical enlightenment, he decided to storm Heaven and challenge the Gods themselves.

His companion, *Thoughtless Wen*, followed him and tried to restrain him, but to no avail. Kuafu was powerful, but he was not wise, and this proved his downfall. The *Jade Emperor* assigned Thoughtless Wen to create a system so that man could still improve himself without threatening the Heavenly Order.

So, the Wulin was created! It is a complex social net of duties and obligations, where heroes would challenge each

The Wulin Destiny Cost: 0

The Wulin is considered a greater family for those who dedicate their lives to the martial arts, regardless of their origins and goals, for only a warrior can truly understand another warrior, even if they stand on opposite sides of the battlefield.

It is said that Heaven has a place assigned for everyone.

The path of Kung Fu is for those who reject this idea, who believe that fate is in their hands, and that their fortunes are forged by the strength of their spirit and the fire of their passion.

1+ Involvement: The World of Martial Arts is full of heroes. Some heroes become teachers, friends closer than brothers, lovers, or soul mates, while others become sworn rivals or hated enemies. Spend destiny to tie your fate to that of any other character that may appeal to you. In order to declare an existing relationship between the two of you, make a current action (such as defeating them in battle or showing up to assist them), or make sure that you will develop such a relationship shortly. As usual, refer to *Introduction to Loresheets* for costs.

3+ Fortune: The history of the Wulin is shrouded in the mists of legends and myths, but you manage to shine a light on one particular facet! Introduce a historical fact of your own design that pertains to your current situation and which gives you an advantage of some sort, such as an alternative solution to a problem. This might concern a person, an organization, or even the Wulin as a whole. Needless to say, the Sage is the final arbitrator of cost.

other and strive to complete great deeds; those who followed the Chivalrous path would be rewarded by Heaven, while those who followed the Selfish path would be rewarded by Hell. There would always be those like Kuafu, who would not follow God or Demon, and would only seek their own power; those few Corrupt warriors would stand outside the structure of The Wulin, and be hunted and persecuted as a menace to Heaven and Earth.

These old legends speak of the Wulin Sage, the supreme judge of the Martial Arts World, who would be the final arbiter in deciding who was Chivalrous and who was Selfish, who deserved advancement, and who would stay behind. In the case of a powerful Corrupt warrior like Kuafu, the Sage would gather the heroes of the world to defeat him.

The ravages of time have fallen upon the world since the Mythic Era, and now all of those stories live only through ancient lore. Gods and Demons are far from the world, and their voices are no longer heard; the power of Godly Kung Fu remains well-hidden, if it ever existed; no mortal in thousands of years has risen to a level where they could challenge Heaven.

Now, only clan elders light incense and place offerings at the altar of the Wulin Sage, and then only on special occasions and ceremonies. Do they truly believe in a Sage arbitrating their conflicts and reporting their doings to Heaven, or they do so only out of tradition?

The Wulin Sage

Destiny Cost: 5

Legends speak of a mythical figure that oversees the Wulin on behalf of Heaven. The Sage records all of the history and affairs of the martial world; he decides who is worthy of advancement and reports to the Celestial Order on the advancement and deeds of Chivalrous heroes, and to the Hellish Courts on those of the selfish. He sees that those who seek greater challenges reap greater glory and attain higher power.

5+ Fortune: With Sage approval, you may introduce a fact about the truth behind the Wulin Sage that would influence the current story.

5+ Involvement: Your destiny will be tied to the figure of the Wulin Sage.

3+ Involvement: The Destiny of an NPC of your choice will be or is tied to the figure of the Wulin Sage.

Yet, the other old ways remain. Following Chivalrous or Selfish Virtues remains a valid way to power. Corrupt warriors, when they appear, are still reviled and persecuted; heroes challenge each other and the world itself in search of excellence, and those who achieve great deeds advance in rank within the Wulin.

The waves crashed against the shore like clashing blades. The night sky crackled with anticipation. A storm was coming! Just as the air seemed to be filled with tension and dread, so was Xiao Yu filled with anxiety and apprehension. Her stomach churned like the furious ocean, her heart thundered like the raging sky.

Leaning against a rock, strong and serene, was Dragon Flute Liu, her guardian and Master. The wind blew hard against his face, messing his normally well-kempt hair. Tiny droplets of chilling rain fell upon the old man like shining needles, yet his breath remained slow, his eyes closed.

However, deep inside, there was uncertainty in Dragon Flute Liu's soul. Tonight he faced a strong opponent, a devil-warrior with a matchless reputation.

Xiao Yu felt a chill down her spine as she remembered that renowned swordsman, Moon Devil. They met him at the Eagle Talon banquet – despite the heroes all around, this man ignored all but The Dragon Flute Master Liu remembered how the mysterious man accelerated his pace as he approached, how the man had trouble keeping a measured step. He'd held his sword firmly by the pommel with a strong grip, suggesting that he was ready to unsheathe; not only ready, really, he'd seemed to be *aching* to release his sword.

This man was an animal struggling to contain his power and fury in a restricting social situation.

Xiao Yu saw this man again with her mind's eye. He had a slender and elegant frame that seemed at odds with the air of menace that he emanated. Even within his predatory walk, there was a certain soft cadence that she was somehow familiar with...

The mysterious swordsman bowed respectfully to Master Liu and handed him a letter with both hands, then turned his back and walked away, letting loose with a coarse, chilling laughter.

The letter was a Hero Invitation challenging Liu to a duel this very night, at this very place.

Dragon Flute Liu would never lie to himself, so he acknowledged the touch of fear in his heart. He would not admit that fear to anyone, much less his young ward, but there was something else in his heart – something greater than fear: the overwhelming sense of excitement all true Wulin felt when facing a challenge. The fire of their souls would burn brighter than a falling star.

The night sky exploded into a storm, as if Heaven could no longer hold the anticipation for the upcoming duel. Thunder raged across the sky, and above the thunder and the fluttering of the wind, there was laughter, terrible and menacing and devoid of joy. As lightning shattered the darkness, a white shade leaped across the raging sea; it soared above the foaming waves like a dragon dancing across the clouds.

The ominous figure landed softly across from Dragon Flute Liu. He wore simple but delicate silk clothes that fluttered with the wind. The brim of a straw hat fell over his face; in his hands, he held a sheathed blade.

Xiao Yu's heart rushed to her throat. If he really was a Devil, and not a man, what manner of people was the Wulin comprised of?

"I am Ouyang Yang, the only son of the Ouyang family. I belong to the Heaven Sword Alliance, and trained under Master Moon Saint, I am known across the Fighting Community as Moon Devil."

As he said that, he unsheathed his sword. The blade cut across the darkness of the night, a lightning bolt across the darkness.

"This is my sword: Hell's Lightning."

Master Liu saluted the swordsman in Wulin tradition.

"My surname is Liu, and my given name, Zhangfeng. I belong to the Blue Flame Branch of the Falling Leaves Society; my master was known as Blue Sky Scholar, and I am called Dragon Flute Liu by the Martial Brotherhood."

Dragon Flute extended his hand, and Xiao Yu passed him the spear. They were separated by four steps, yet she did not have to come near him; it was as if the spear itself flew towards its master. He took the sheath from the blade gingerly, as if releasing a hunting hawk from his hood.

"This is my spear: Huangdi's Brush."

Lighting crackled across the clouds, and thunder roared above the raging sea, as a heavy rain fell upon them.

THE WAY OF THE WULIN

Everyone who enters the Wulin does so under one of The Five Paths, followed and honored since time immemorial, which determine the focus of their martial life. Correspondingly, all strive to advance within The Five Ranks to attain greater power and influence within the Fighting Community, and, some say enlightenment... or corruption.

The Five Paths are:

Warriors see life as a constant struggle. They seek to test themselves against all odds and to forge themselves into amazing weapons by the fire of the battlefield. Warriors have an unquenchable thirst for adventure: to see what lies behind the mountain, to seek the strongest rival. They trust in their own strength and seek to overcome all the obstacles in the world.

Courtiers find challenge in influence; for them, the world is built upon social relationships. They cultivate their kung fu, but they know that while a strong fist may topple a castle wall, the right words in the right ear can topple a kingdom or raise it to glory. They also cultivate their wit and intellect, and see the arts of intrigue and manipulation as vital components of the martial arts.

Scholars believe knowledge is the ultimate power; their challenge is to understand the workings of the world and the intrinsic nature of Heaven and Earth. As such, they seek to master kung fu and practice their arts, and they seek to unravel the movements of the stars or the flowing river of battle with the same zeal.

Priests see the world as a mystical tapestry where everything is related, and moving the right piece can be alter the balance of Earth towards chaos or harmony. They

seek not only to strengthen their bodies and defeat external challenges, but see cultivation and breaking the limits of self as the truest motivation.

Doctors see the microcosm in the human body, while the priests and scholars see the macrocosm of the world. There is infinite potential in humanity, and much can be achieved with the right practices in conjunction with powerful kung fu. Their art goes beyond healing, into harming and even modifying.

Gender, age, wealth and social standing are – for the most part – irrelevant to the Martial Brotherhood. It is said that all are equal in the Wulin. Those who achieve greater deeds reach a higher status and earn the respect and admiration of their peers, but also the envy and hatred of those around them.

Students, beginners and accomplished henchmen are considered **Rank Five** within the Wulin. Heroes who go out into the world and start making a name for themselves are considered **Rank Four**. Those who have traveled the paths of the Rivers and Lakes for some time, and whose actions have earned them some renown, are **Rank Three**. Heroes with fame spread all across the Wulin, whose deeds have shaken the Jiang Hu, are **Rank Two**. Generally, these are the elders and well-respected heroes of the different factions.

The great masters in lofty peaks, the heroes whose deeds are legendary and have shaped the history of the Wulin, the heads of the major factions, and the reclusive greats who elude the problems of the Jiang Hu and only appear under special circumstances are **Rank One**.

No matter the level of power they achieve, Wulin legends cannot sit idly on their accomplishments, for those who

The Wulin Judges Destiny Cost: 5

Whether the Sage actually exists in this world or not, there are legends regarding a group of unidentified heroes said to wander the Martial World. If such a figure actually exists, they report to it; if not, it is believed they have taken the duties of the Sage upon themselves.

They are said to watch over the progress of important heroes, to reveal secrets here and there whenever they are needed, and to appear to aid in fights against evil warriors and mysteriously disappear afterwards.

It is said there cannot be more than four at a time, and that they were all once notable heroes of the Wulin, but that they have renounced their former status, identities, and past.

Regardless, Judges wear masks or defile their own faces, so as to not be recognized.

Legends also say that they all take the name and appearance of Heavenly Guardians or Protective Deities, especially Buddhist ones. They possess such powerful and esoteric kung fu styles as Ashen Palm that burns through Corrupt Chi, or King Yama Sword that judges a target and damages them according to their selfish deeds.

2+ Fortune: Introduce a fact about the history of the Wulin Judges that will be relevant to the current story. You spend destiny according to the importance of the fact and the relevance to the current plot.

3-5 Involvement: Your destiny will be somehow tied to the mysterious Wulin Judges.

1-3 Entanglement: The destiny of an NPC of your choice will be tied to the Wulin Judges.

15 Technique: You will have the opportunity to learn one of the Transcendent Styles of the Wulin Sages - either by apprenticing to one of them, or by somehow getting a secret manual.

Work with your Sage to decide the circumstances where you learned the Style, and to design it as a custom made Transcendent Style fitting the themes of the Sages



constantly rush to meet further challenge ensure their Chi is ever-flowing, like a powerful river. Their kung fu grows strong through conflict, and their accomplishments earn them a greater destiny. They advance in rank, gaining higher status and respect from the Martial Arts World. Their bodies and minds remain healthy and in peak condition, as if Heaven itself would slow down the ravages of time to preserve the beauty and glory of the great heroes.

Those who stop searching for challenge, no matter how powerful they are, watch their Chi become stagnant like water trapped in a pond. Their kung fu wanes, and they slowly but surely see their power lessen as the ravages of time catch up with them. No matter how much they meditate or practice, there is no way of cheating the golden rule of the Wulin.

The rule prevails as if a Mandate from Heaven itself: those who do not challenge themselves and the world see their power fade and their deeds forgotten.

Although many fighters adopt the role of loner or hermit, the Wulin is based on social relationships. The greatest masters become tired and wish to leave a life of conflict behind, succumbing peacefully to the golden rule. Even those who constantly seek challenge must one day pass away from this world – in a life of conflict, failure is inevitable. Thus, fighters seek to leave a legacy greater than their own personal history, just as men in normal society seek to pass down their family name by siring children. In the Wulin, those of great accomplishment and power seek to pass down their knowledge, teaching worthy successors to live up to their legacy. Thus, the masters search for students, and societies and factions are formed to pass down and protect legacies and histories.

By this same principle, those who seek great achievement and attain great power are bound to look for similar-minded individuals – only someone like themselves can become a true brother, sister, lover, husband, or wife. While grudges and conflicts can erupt for any reason, the truest aim of finding a rival is to discover someone of equal or greater accomplishment in order to challenge them. By doing so, one may overcome one's own limitations.

Part of being in the Wulin is constantly trying to outdo other legends and earn more respect and renown, with a hero's behavior ranging from friendly and respectful rivalries (like the one between the Little Forest Sect and The Heaven Sword Clan) or bitter and violent grudges. This social competition has led to the creation of several so-called Lists of Greats. Mostly, everyone seeks to be included on one of those lists at one time or another during their Wulin career. Some lists grant a clear honor in their title, like the *Top Ten Heroes of All Time*, or the *Top Ten Young Heroes* of a given generation. Others have a more dubious nature, like the *Top Ten Sinners* of All Time, or the *Top Ten Traitors*.

For many in the Wulin, it is better to live in infamy as a legendary sinner than to be forgotten by history. Thus, they strive to achieve such a status. Kung fu means living according to one's true natures with the outmost excellence.

Despite the challenge and conflict inherent to life in the Wulin, killing another fighter intentionally is a rare occurrence, and something normally ascribed to only the most ruthless warrior. Even though fighters may seek to best one another, the outright killing of a martial artist would make their world a poorer place, for the victorious



fighter has lost a brother in arms. A slain foe offers no further challenge. Chivalrous heroes would rather grant a fallen enemy the chance to redeem himself, to become a friend and ally; fierce and selfish heroes would rather gloat over a fallen rival at their feet, letting him live with the pain of losing rather than the relief of death.

Sometimes killing a foe is the only option: when their actions have turned them into mortal enemies, when an enemy has destroyed a heroic past and stands in the way of their future. In such rivalries, Heaven has no place below it for both fighters to exist. Destroying a foe that has become the bane of a heroic existence is the subject of many tales and adventures, but it is not something that is expected to happen casually.

Wulin Traditions

As with any net of social relations, the Wulin has certain protocols, rules and regulations.

Although the Martial Brotherhood doesn't necessarily adhere to the traditional Confucian obeisance to the elder and those of higher social status, it has its own version of those values as a core tenet. Those who have attained higher rank are respected and followed like fathers, teachers and leaders. They enjoy many privileges; they sit at the highest chairs in their organizations, and are treated with respect. Heroes with more prestige gain the privilege of calling upon other heroes or the martial community as a whole by sending out **Hero Invitation** letters, addressing reputable members of the martial communities (both orthodox and unorthodox) for a variety of purposes:

Duel Challenges can be declared by any hero with a certain standing and reputation. They can formally challenge any other hero for a duel. The reasons can be anything,

from a simple desire to compare skills to settle a grievance. The reason for the challenge, as well as time and place and any special requirements, should always be stated on the invitation. Such duels are generally not deadly, but duelists will usually instruct followers and comrades not to seek revenge in case of accidental death.

To intentionally kill an opponent, or to use underhanded methods such as poisons or traps in a duel, is highly dishonorable and a terrible breach of Wulin etiquette. Such fighters are at the very least looked down upon, and frequently hunted down by all involved, even their own factions!

Wulin are only bound to respond to those duels issued by someone of their own rank. Refusing them wounds their status within the martial community. It is seen as unrighteous to challenge someone of a lesser rank, and those of higher standing can refuse a challenge from someone below them without any damage to their reputation.

Tournaments: Such spectacles are grand social affairs among the Wulin that can be called upon by faction leaders and other respected members of the Martial Brotherhood. Heroes will gather from all corners of the Jiang Hu to participate, and they present a golden opportunity for exciting challenges, for meeting new friends, teachers or opponents, and to witness and possibly learn new styles and techniques. Besides combat, many tournaments have challenges of secret arts and skill.

Most tournaments offer a special reward to the winner, such as a position in an organization, being taken as a student by a renowned master, being granted access to a secret manual, earning a legendary weapon or valuable item, and even winning someone's hand in marriage.

Just as in duels, combat during tournaments should not be deadly, although accidents are an accepted liability. Underhanded methods are usually severely punished, but there are many unorthodox tournaments that eschew such rules. Such tournaments usually hide an evil agenda behind them.

Wulin Leadership

The Wulin Mengzhu: In times of extreme crisis, all factions and heroes of the Wulin will put aside their differences and rally under the guidance of a single champion to lead them against the oncoming menace. Such a leader is called *Wulin Mengzhu*, or *Wulin Supreme*.

Such a position is not akin to a Wulin Emperor! It is not a position of absolute power. The Wulin Mengzhu is more of an arbiter on matters regarding the conflict at hand, and a committee of the high-ranking members of the Martial Brotherhood takes most decisions. Any member of the Wulin can be selected as leader during the crisis, regardless of rank and position; they are selected by vote from all the assembled heroes, by vote of the highest-ranking heroes or by a series of contests and challenges. This is a complicated matter; the Wulin has previously refused to come under a single leader or have been unable to decide on a candidate. Instances where the whole of the Wulin have come under the guidance of single hand have been rare, although many heroes, both righteous and corrupt, have aspired to the position of Wulin Mengzhu.

Only high-ranking members of the Wulin can call a summon, so the hero who requests such a meeting often puts forth themselves or someone of their choosing as candidate for Supreme. The Wulin Mengzhu has leadership over the combined might of the Wulin; this authority does not extend over the internal workings of individual Wulin organizations.

After said menace has been vanquished, the Supreme is generally expected to resign the position.

Leaving the Wulin

Most heroes leave the Wulin only in death; they live by the blade and die by the blade. It is rare for the heroes of the Martial World to pass away peacefully in bed of old age. However, there are those who, after years of adventuring, become weary of life in the Jiang Hu, tired of a violent existence and never-ending challenge. They may have taken many lives, or seen masters, lovers and comrades fall; the endless circle of revenge and retribution weighs upon their soul. Others grow bored as they reach higher levels of power; they find that there are no worthy rivals or impressive enough challenges for them under Heaven. The heroes remain great, but the world has become too small for them.

All of these and more are reasons for heroes to retire from the Wulin. This means that they will no longer engage in the affairs of the Martial Brotherhood, and they will stop seeking challenge. Their kung fu will peak, and they will no longer

The Wulin Salutation

Members of the Wulin greet each other – and other figures of respect – by wrapping the right fist on the left palm, and bowing slightly. Such a simple gesture has great meaning in the Martial Brotherhood: the right fist signifies martial power, and the five fingers represent the five selfish virtues. As both hands meet, the arms lock in a circle, signifying that the hero has taken the whole world as his home, and he bows out of respect and humility; no matter how powerful one is, a true hero is forever a student at heart, and seeks kindred spirits through the martial arts. The left palm represents refinement, nobility, and self-control, and the hand's fingers stand for the five Chivalrous virtues. The fist represents strength and might, contained and complemented by the palm's culture and civility: great force controlled by a noble will.

Variables of this salutation are holding a preferred weapon in the right hand and wrapping the handle with the left palm; or extending the left palm over fist or weapon instead of wrapping it. The meaning always remains the same: a balance between power and wisdom, the true ideal of any Wandering Hero.

grow in Rank and status; by ceasing to cultivate their chi, the ravages of time will fall upon them and they will age and wane just like the common people of Shen Zhou.

The chance of retirement and peace is attractive to some. It is the opportunity to put behind Chivalrous or selfish deeds that would turn a man into a demi-god or fiend, to end their lives seeking transcendence or atonement in lonely temple of high mountain peaks, or to live their last years as a normal person and share experiences with loved ones. These simple pleasures are worth the price of watching their former glory fade away.

A lifetime of adventures tends to create a net of social obligations and connections to enemies and allies, who would seek revenge on past deeds or ask for assistance. Teachers and friends whose pledges cannot be ignored, rivals that keep coming back – these are relationships, duties that cannot be ignored, consequences of past actions demanding present responsibility.

Despite the best intentions, retirements often don't last. Heroes return to the Jiang Hu for "one last adventure." Heaven offers the Wulin power and glory, and the chance to become legends to shape the Martial Arts World. As a price, it demands the most magnificent treasure: complete and total dedication. Heroes who truly wish to retire just vanish from the world; they fake their deaths or sequester themselves, leaving no notice or explanation.

The legendary Lonely Devil Dugu chose this route. At the peak of his martial prowess, he was on his way to becoming a swordsman such as the Jiang Hu had not seen in centuries... but he simply vanished from the world. Some say he was saddened that the world held no worthy rival for his might.

The lores say he retired to a distant peak, where he carved his magnificent style manual in the face of the mountain itself. Legends say he died a commoner's death a few years after ceasing to cultivate his chi.

Washing Hands on the Golden Basin: Those who enjoy great prestige in the Martial Brotherhood, who sit at the top of factions and organizations or leave a legacy of students and followers behind, cannot simply disappear from the world. That would be unfit for someone of their glory.

Instead, such important personages issue Hero Invitations calling upon the Wulin to witness their retirement. They perform a short, solemn ceremony, where they wash their hands with water from a golden basin while surrounded by their successors, trusted disciples, advisors and esteemed comrades. They swear upon Heaven, revered ancestors and the Wulin Sage that they will wash their hands of the affairs of the Wulin, and leave the Jiang Hu behind. Such oaths are sacred, and after uttering them the retired hero forsakes all his status and authority in the Fighting Community. It is dishonorable to challenge him or attempt to involve him in Wulin matters in any way.

It is customary for heroes to announce such retirement in advance; important Wulin personages are usually invited to a banquet or ceremony where the hero informs them of his or her future retirement. Usually, this takes place a year prior to the Hand Washing Ceremony. (Announcing retirement in

less than a year's time is discourteous.) The retiring hero uses that time to put their affairs in order, to settle any lingering disputes, and to select a successor to take over their duties.

Scholars and priests are consulted to determine an auspicious date for the ceremony to take place, as is the case with most important occasions in Shen Zhou. Such an event cannot take place randomly!

Despite the sacred nature of the ceremony, it is not always respected. Enemies and rivals may seek to goad the hero out of retirement in order to face them, and allies and successors will still seek advice from them. There are even cases where the retired hero still involves themselves in Wulin affairs and seeks challenges in the Jiang Hu, usually under assumed identities or under the cover of shadows. One legend speaks of a respected elder of the Falling Leaves Society who publicly retired from his position and the Martial Brotherhood as a whole in order to involve himself in a plot of political assassination without risking his faction and Wulin comrades.

Retired heroes can rejoin the Wulin very easily, without ceremony or oaths, simply by openly involving themselves on Martial affairs again or by achieving a deed publicly acknowledged in the Fighting Community. Such a hero is said to have reentered the Jiang Hu, and though they will probably be granted their former standing, going back on a sworn promise will almost certainly cost them prestige.

The Wulin Mengzhu*

Destiny Cost: 10

In times of great crisis, all factions and heroes of the Wulin put aside their differences and rally under the guidance of a single champion to lead them against the oncoming menace. Such a leader is called Wulin Mengzhu, or Wulin Supreme.

Any member of the Wulin could be selected as leader on a time of crisis, regardless of rank or position. They are selected by vote from all the assembled heroes, by vote of the highest ranking heroes, or by a series of contests and challenges.

5 Status: You descend strongly by blood or martial tradition from a character previously elected as Wulin Supreme, or from a runner-up for the prestigious position. Are you trying to follow in their glorious footsteps, or atone for their mistakes? Or live a life of your own, and not one in the shadow of an ancestor?

0 Bonus: You get +5 on all relevant Skill rolls (mostly social ones) when your prestigious ancestry will be of help to you.

+5 Bonus: You are destined to be a great leader! This manifests as a Major Predictionist Condition, granting you an Entanglement Bonus. As long as you act like a proper leader – gather followers, amass influence, show wisdom and forbearance and ruminate a lot on the responsibilities of leadership – you gather more glory, allies and followers. Your legend will be a great one!

5 Destiny: You get involved in a plot of to become the new Wulin Mengzhu!

-2: It is not you who is positioned to become the new Supreme, but an NPC.

3 Fortune: You discover a secret of a character that was previously selected as Wulin Mengzhu, a runner-up, or a current candidate. Such a secret will be an important plot point in the current story.

• *Sages and players are encouraged to create their own Loresheds pertaining the position of the Wulin Mengzhu, or any character who served or currently serves under that position in their stories.*

Hero Invitations

Destiny Cost: 5

Prestigious heroes have the privilege of calling upon other heroes, or the martial community as a whole, by sending out **Hero Invitations**. These are letters addressing reputable members of the martial community, both orthodox and unorthodox, for a variety of purposes.

Duel Challenges

If you are at least **Rank 4**, you can formally challenge other heroes to a duel. Only those of the same rank are obligated to honor a duel challenge; those who fail to attend lose face. This might entail loss of Status, or even a new, less flattering Status. Deeds achieved within the context of a duel can earn Joss, Destiny and Entanglement. Unless previously specified, duels are not to the death, but accidental death is an accepted risk.

3-7 Fortune: A great hero has accepted your challenge and will travel to the set location for your duel! As is the custom for these duels, rumors tend to spread, so they probably won't arrive alone even if they wish to.

3 Fortune: A distinguished opponent within your Rank has challenged you. This is an opportunity for challenge and glory, but the path along the way to meet your destiny often will be paved with trouble! This manifests as a Minor Paired Condition, which is a Hyperactivity giving you a bonus (commonly a Breath or Action bonus) when you are making your way to the challenge (regardless of whether that is the wisest course of action), and a Weakness that applies whenever you try to resist or ignore it. Its duration is one Story.

3 Fortune: You can declare that an NPC has been challenged to a duel. This might provide story opportunities for you, or provide a solution to a problem. The character suffers from a Minor Entanglement Weakness, gaining them hurtful Entanglements and bad status if they try to resist the call!

2 Fortune: Integrate an existing duel challenge into the story plot, so that the journey flows towards meeting your appointed date with destiny.

Tournaments

Tournaments are grand social affairs among the Wulin that can be called upon by faction leaders and other respected members of the Martial Brotherhood. Destiny and Joss can be earned by participating in tournaments, and they make it easy to justify new Entanglements like Friends, Enemies, and so on!

Anyone can participate in a tournament unless the invitation specifies otherwise. Even if they aren't participating, there are always interesting things happening in and around a tournament.

15+ Victory: If you are at least Rank 3 and have at least one Status of 4+ appropriate to such an authoritative task, your toil brings fruit and you organize your own Tournament! The Sage will, as always, decide the final prizes depending on resources, setting, and planned attendance.

-3: There are substantial complications. Maybe someone decides to use your tournament as cover to stage an assassination of the greatest warriors, or perhaps the Emperor's forces show up midway to stop it. By accepting this discount, you give the Sage free reign to add complications that will make this challenging.

3+ Involvement: Involve another character in a tournament you are participating in or organizing.

3-5 Fortune: Once per story, introduce a Tournament into the current storyline. This will provide various opportunities for interesting Entanglements and martial Deeds.

2+ Destiny: An existing Tournament, either introduced as above or by the Sage, will provide you with opportunities to solve a problem or situation at hand. This might entail getting the opportunity to fight a hated enemy to the death, to find a sought-after object (now a prize!), or the chance to find a practitioner of some exotic Style that you want to learn.

1-5 Status: Your exploits in the arena (or lack thereof) add to your personal legend. This could mean official recognition and status, or maybe it is more about reputation and deeds. In any case, you will probably gain a new nickname or two to reflect your actions!

Wulin Summons

This is a very rare event: a call to arms for all the Wulin against a single threat. It can only be called upon by the highest ranking members of the Martial Brotherhood, and it needs to be in response to a menace so great that it requires the combined might of the Wulin to repel.

2+ Destiny: Wulin Summons have only taken place twice in recent history, once against the original Fire Cult (a heretic clan from the land of Bharata that attempted to burn down the land of the gods with their unholy fire), and the second time to defend Shen Zhou from the alliance of barbarian forces from the north.

The legacy of your character is somehow tied to one of those historic events.

Maybe you descend strongly by blood or martial tradition from a character involved in a summons, or maybe it's something else, but that history will play a role in your present. How will this legacy affect you?

3+ Fortune: You discover a great secret about something that happened during one of the historical Wulin summons. This will be of great help to you in some current endeavor or mission. Could it have to do with the secrets of the legendary elders? Perhaps you are trying to repeat their deeds and call a Summit of your own!

15+ Victory: Having made all of the effort and preparations, you call to a Wulin Summit. What grand threat could have arisen to necessitate this? What heroes and villains of legend will attend?

Top Ten Destiny Cost: 5

Part of being Wulin is constantly trying to outdo one another and earn more respect and renown. This competition ranges from friendly and respectful rivalries to bitter and violent grudges; this has led to the creation of several ranked lists of great heroes.

0 Destiny: You descend strongly by blood or martial tradition from one of the “Top Ten Greatest (something) of all time”. Does this legacy fill you with pride, or is it a source of shame? Do you seek to live up to that reputation, or to escape from it?

+5: If this is a legacy that you are trying to embrace and live up to, you gain the benefit of a Minor Hyperactivity pertaining to your quest; the Sage designs the details.

-2: If it is a legacy that you are trying to escape, you get it as a Disadvantage. You gain one bonus Destiny (max one per chapter) whenever your heritage drags you into trouble.

1-3 Fortune: You learn that a character of higher rank than you is a Top Ten Great of their generation, or of all time, and has been hiding their reputation for some reason. How will this discovery affect them and their allies?

3-5 Fortune: Declare that an NPC is being considered as a candidate for a Top Ten Great list of his generation. How will such pressure affect this hero? The nature of the list should match the character's actions, or you should offer a good explanation for why they're being considered.

The price is set by the Sage, and reflects the likelihood of the nomination with possible modifications based on your story.

5 Fortune/Destiny: You are being considered for a Top Ten Greatest list!

-2: A dangerous enemy of yours is being considered for this same position... If they do not already know that you are rivals, they will soon. This will be a challenge for the ages!

5+ Victory: After performing great feats and having already been nominated for a Top Ten Greatest list, you secure the position!

• This lore can be used as a template to create individual Top Ten Great list Lores.



WULIN FACTIONS

The night sky was clear and full of stars; the soft murmur of the sea accompanied the soothing melody coming from Master Liu's jade flute. The fire was warm and Xiao Yu's heart was content; she was almost ready to fall asleep.

Lying across from them, atop the branches of an old tree, was Moon Devil. He was drinking his wine and gazing at the moon with longing eyes. The melody of the flute had transported him to a faraway place and time. Maybe he was in the Moon Palace, drinking with Chang'e herself.

Xiao Yu had seen so much, since her adventures with Master Liu began. The days of her pampered but tedious life as a noble daughter in the capital seemed so far away now, as if it had been the life of someone else, glimpsed barely through dreams.

Xiao Yu knew that father would not approve of her running around in the Jiang Hu, throwing her lot with the Wulin. The mysterious Wulin! She had always been intrigued by them, the so-called *Stalwarts of the Martial World*. Their tales and legends even reached the sheltered spheres she grew up in.

For her father, having contacts in the Wulin was a necessary evil; as an important official he had to be informed of the comings and goings of the Jiang Hu underworld. Though there were a few heroes that he admired and trusted with his life, like Dragon Flute Liu, he saw most of the Fighting Community as rebels and vagrants.

Xiao Yu knew that there were many organizations in the Wulin, and that most heroes would belong to one faction or another and that relationships between factions were as complicated as those between nations and states. They would form alliances, and they would wage war upon one another. The more she swam deeper into the waters of the Rivers and Lakes, the more she was fascinated by it.

She interrupted her master's melody, and broke the calm of the night with her questions.

-Master, how many groups exist in the Wulin? And how can you tell them apart?-

Dragon Flute Liu smiled. A playful note came out of his flute, followed by a long, reflexive pause. He looked up to the sky for a few moments and spoke.

-We can think of the sky above as Shen Zhou. The day sky is the normal world, Li Shan, Forests and Mountains, while the night sky is *Jiang Hu*. The sky covers the same during day and night: the same towns, the same villages and cities.

-Yet at night,- he continued, -it seems like a completely different world. The night sky is mysterious and dark, holding many secrets and perils. That is why people in the normal world are afraid of the night, just as they are afraid of the Jiang Hu. They see the stars and are amazed by their light, but they don't really understand them, and cannot grasp the complex relationships between them.

-It is said that the heroes in the Jiang Hu are like the stars in the night sky. Some shine for generations, their stories told across time. Others burn briefly but with an intense, almost blinding light. Others remain unknown or are soon forgotten. Just as the stars in the sky cluster together in constellations, so do the heroes of the Martial Circle gather in communities, clans, sects, cults and societies, and in the Heavens of The Martial World there are always new stars and constellations waiting for their stories to be told.-

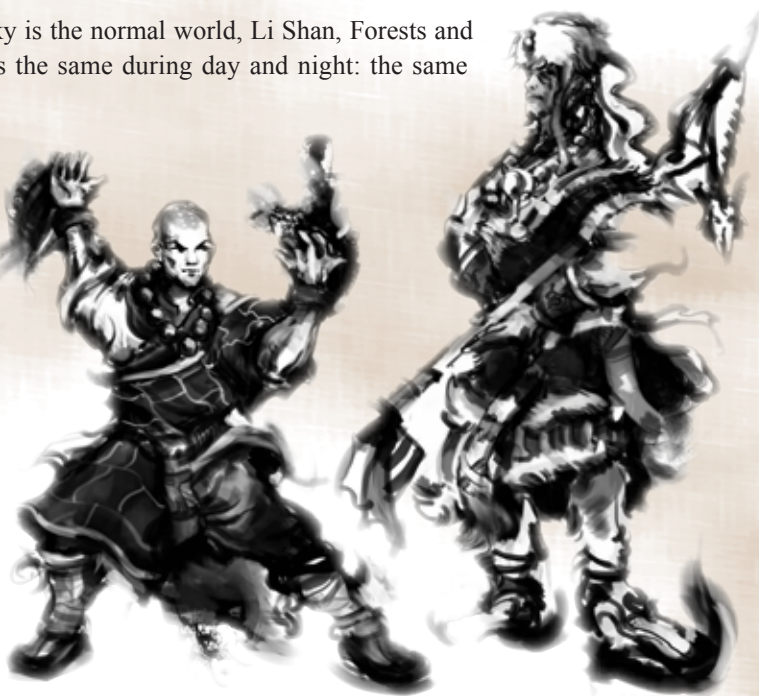
WULIN FACTIONS Destiny Cost: 0

The heroes in **Shen Zhou** are like stars. Just as the stars in the sky cluster together in constellations, so do the heroes of the Martial World gather themselves in communities, clans, sects, cults and societies. In the Heavens of the Martial World, new stars and constellations are striving to shine with blinding light!

0-10: Destiny: You belong to a Wulin Faction other than those presented in the setting. Work with the Sage to create the basis of this organization, and decide how it will help or hinder your character. How big of a player will it be in the Martial Arts World? What impact will it have on the storyline? All of these questions will influence the final story.

If several players are interested in belonging to the same organization, they should define the history and characteristics together, and the Sage should allow them to either create this organization for no destiny cost or allow them to pool their Destiny for purchasing this option.

8+ Victory: After hard work and firmly cementing your legend(s), you create your own new Faction, recognized (although not necessarily liked) by the Wulin! The reputation and status of the new Faction will, of course, derive from the Rank, Virtues, and prominent Deeds of the founder(s).



ORTHODOX FACTIONS

Factions at least nominally inspired by the Chivalrous Virtues are considered Orthodox. Besides cultivating their Chi and increasing their kung fu, these factions seek to benefit society in one way or another, at least in theory.

Orthodox Factions try to maintain cordial relationships with one another and maintain the peace, at least on the surface. They are very zealous about protecting the purity of their Martial Arts; learning a variety of styles is encouraged, but they always try to exalt their signature styles, remembering their teachers and ancestors and upholding their legacies.

Orthodox Factions always try to maintain honorable behavior at all times, or at least the appearances of such. They avoid using underhanded methods in combat, or cover them up if they do. Individual actions of the younger heroes reflect on their masters and the organizations at large; dishonorable actions of a student bring dishonor upon a master and on the faction.

Factions considered Orthodox also eschew the open practice of so-called heretical or forbidden styles: the styles that contaminate a hero's chi, turning their cultivated essence into Corrupt Chi by the flames of rage, hatred and unmeasured ambition. Such flames ultimately leave one cold with despair, sadness, and the absolute desire for destruction.

The Jiang Hu is a world of Crouching Tigers and Hidden Dragons, where things are not always what they seem. Some Orthodox Factions appear to keep the moral high ground, but this is not always the reality. There are heroes within these factions that merely pay lip service to the Chivalrous virtues; in reality, they are some of the worst villains and tyrants. Of course, they would be terribly offended and might possibly go into a fit of righteous anger if you put them in the spot. (How *dare* you?!) Many members of Orthodox Factions, even the factions themselves, practice heretical styles or techniques; they just do it secretly. At the same time, many heroes from Unorthodox Factions have the most noble intentions; they just pursue them in more direct and violent ways.

Although there is always pressure to uphold the faction's good name and reputation and honor a faction legacy with your actions, the pressure greatly depends on who your ancestors actually were. If a hero's teacher was the pious Abbot Golden Arahāt, his actions should reflect the highest ideals of Buddhism; anything less would be held in contempt. On the other hand, if his master was Mischievous Monkey Saint, no one would really care about what he does with his reputation.

Characters are not only allowed to play against type, they are encouraged to do so. This will only bring conflict into their lives, but what is life in the Wulin about if not conflict?

Their members are generally the most respected of all the Wulin, and their four leaders are often considered the most important elders in the Martial Brotherhood. They are always treated with great deference wherever they go, and their voices carry enormous weight.

Little Forest Sect

Once upon a time, a wise Buddhist sage came to Shen Zhou from a faraway land in the west. He was descended from a royal lineage, and had given up the glory and power of his birthright in order to search for enlightenment. He roamed the world, cultivating his Chi and mastering many forms of kung fu.

Above all, he cultivated wisdom and compassion. He sought to find liberation from this mortal coil not only for himself, but to help the whole world to eventually achieve freedom from suffering.

Despite his good will and saintly intentions, deep within his body there beat a warrior's heart, so his temper had a short fuse. He did not stand for injustice and tyranny in this world. Due to this mix of enlightenment and martial might, and his piercing blue eyes, he was known as the Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon.

Buddhism had already taken root in the Land of the Gods at the time of his coming, and was no longer considered a foreigner religion. The Emperor himself favored Buddhist practice, and had commissioned the building of many magnificent temples and the translating of many sutras. He also supported the ordination of monks.

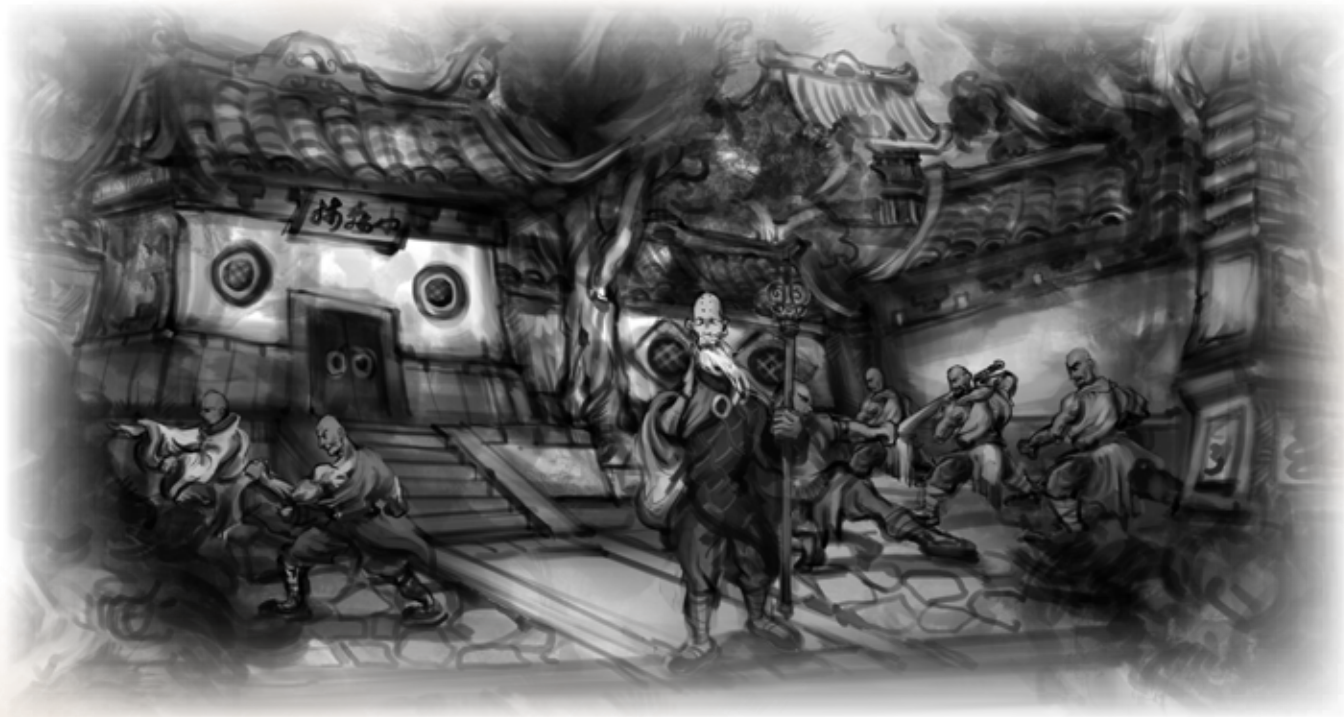
The Wandering Saint heard about this, and traveled to Shen Zhou hoping to find a heavenly land on the right path to enlightenment. Instead, when he arrived at the Celestial Garden Monastery, the greatest and most holy temple in the land, he found a den of sin and inequity!

He saw that the monks had been corrupted by the power given to them by the Empire and lived lives of luxury and pleasure. They abused their exalted status and lorded above the common people, acting like gods.

More importantly, Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon found out that they focused on the ceremonial and external aspects of Buddhism, such as making offerings, performing ceremonies, and repeating sutras without even pondering their meaning! They had steered away from the Dharma, the true essence of Buddhism: to liberate oneself of attachments and desires, to seek to end suffering, and to move forward towards the

THE FOUR PILLARS OF THE WULIN

Amongst all the Orthodox Clans, these four are considered the most powerful and virtuous. The deeds of their members are echoed across the Jiang Hu, from desolate mountains to busy tea houses. The powers of their Martial Arts are legendary.



spiritual advancement not only of the individual but of all sentient beings.

Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon called the monks on the error of their ways. He was challenged by the foremost Buddhist heroes of that time, the so called Four Lotus Kings; despite their astonishing kung fu, he defeated three of them easily, for he was of a different level altogether. His Chi was enlightened and he had reached a transcendent destiny.

The final Lotus King was the abbot of that monastery, who had dedicated his life to cultivating his chi, practicing many different styles and techniques. Some of them were forbidden arts, and had corrupted his mind and soul. In his view, power equaled enlightenment, and he had achieved such power that he was already a Buddha!

After an epic battle, he too was defeated by Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon. The opulent monastery was destroyed in the fray. This sage from another land achieved the greatest victory a Chivalrous martial artist could achieve: he made villains turn over a new leaf. He made the corrupt mend their ways, and he turned enemies into friends. The fallen heroes had seen the error of their ways, so they became the wandering saint's disciples.

The five of them traveled to the Imperial capital, and Blue-Eyes Celestial Demon met with the Emperor; the Son of Heaven received him with all the pomp and circumstance of a foreigner ambassador, treating him like a royal guest.

They retreated to the Imperial gardens and talked for an entire afternoon. The Sage realized why the Emperor had favored Buddhism – despite having complete domain of everything under Heaven, the emperor lacked control over the cycle of life and death, and had done all that he had in order to earn a favorable reincarnation!

The Wandering Saint explained that no matter how many temples he built, monks he ordained, or sutras he had translated, the Emperor's actions were empty. He had acted out of desire and attachment to earthly power. This was only a gilded cage, a prison from the true path.

The Emperor decided that the Sage was nothing but a fool, and the Sage decided the emperor was completely blinded by his attachment to power. Both decided they wanted nothing to do with one another from that point onwards.

The former abbot of the Celestial Garden Monastery told the Emperor that it was a shame that his majesty had “received the sage without meeting him, looked at him without seeing him”, and they left the palace. At this point a smile crossed Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon's face, for he realized that in his simple and wandering ways, he had more freedom than the Son of Heaven.

They rebuilt the Celestial Garden as a simple and humble monastery called *Little Forest*. They rounded up many of the old monks and gathered new disciples. The meditation methods and transcendent martial arts of Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon proved very advanced, serving to strengthen the bodies of the decadent monks before their souls. They began practicing many forms of external martial arts, which came in handy, because they no longer had the protection of the Emperor. Many bandits came looking for the former riches of the temple. The more the monks fought, the stronger they became.

Not only did they defend themselves from attackers, but the monks traveled the land far and wide fighting for good causes, protecting people, and refining their martial arts. Their founder had decreed that they shall not be cloistered in a monastery, reciting sutras and lighting incense, but that they

should take the whole world as their master, and that the power they achieved should be used for the good of all living beings.

So began the legend of the Little Forest Sect, mighty warrior monks possessing great kung fu who would travel the land searching for wisdom and enlightenment, righting wrongs and helping those in need along the way.

One day, Master Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon decided to retreat from the world. It was revealed that he had been hurt by the Black Lotus Palm used by First Lotus King when they had their fight. The corrupt style had poisoned his chi, and the corruption was spreading; his character had become darker and irascible, and his kung fu was tainted. Worst of all, the corruption left him unable to attain the absolute liberation of Nirvana.

He retreated into deep meditation to purify his chi; since he held no resentment towards his disciples, he wanted to leave them in charge of the sect, and pass on his greatest style – the Buddha Palm – to them before retirement, but the former Four Lotus Kings were overcome by guilt. Besides, all of them had practiced corrupt kung fu in the past, and they were afraid that such techniques could be tainted if they were passed to them.

Thus, the leadership of the sect was passed over to a young monk, who eventually became known as the First Great Abbot Golden Sky. Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon retreated deep within a cave overlooking the temple, and the former Lotus Kings (now renamed The Four Lotus Vagrants) left the monastery behind to roam the Jiang Hu. Neither master nor students were seen again, and only legends account for their fate.

Over the years, Little Forest Sect became one the most important factions in the Martial World. Their fame spread across Shen Zhou, and students came from all over the land seeking to join the sect.

The once-small monastery grew to become great yet humble, a temple to the ideals of Buddhism and martial arts. The monks sought to learn from every source, and their halls became the largest library of kung fu in existence. Even those in the Jiang Hu with no allegiance to the sect felt honored and humbled to be allowed in their halls.

Even though they have established several monasteries across Shen Zhou in the modern era, the original Little Forest monastery is still considered their headquarters and spiritual home. The stones of the main training courtyard are sunken and cracked under years of intense training upon them. Currently, it is a vast temple complex that holds many training grounds, weapon storage areas, halls dedicated to prayer and meditation, and several libraries with comprehensive martial and spiritual knowledge.

Besides the main training courtyard, famous features include the Forest of Pagodas, containing the earthly remains of distinguished monks. The Forest is more training field than graveyard, however, as new generations hope for inspiration from the deeds of famous heroes. Some hope to entertain those paragons awaiting reincarnation with displays of martial excellence.

The most famous feature of the temple is also the most mysterious; it is an underground labyrinth full with traps and challenges. Those monks who graduate from novices and go out into the world as full-fledged Small Forest Monks have all had to cross the gauntlet maze, and pass the tests of the elusive Bronze Arahats, the elite of the Sect. It is said that these exams are designed to try not only the physical prowess of the novices, but also their spiritual mettle.

The Little Forest Sect has faced many problems across the years, from external attacks to internal division, but none more terrible than the rebellion of Hei Mei. A disciple of the current abbot White Cloud, Hei Mei's youth was marked with rebellion and a selfish, mischievous nature, with no patience for spiritual pursuits.

Growing older and stronger, he also grew Malicious and conniving. Other monks warned the abbot that he was acting against the ways of the sect, tarnishing its good name, and a bad influence for other monks, but the abbot was convinced that there was good in him. He felt deeply responsible for the wayward disciple, for Hei Mei's parents had abandoned him at the temple. He had no one else.

Hei Mei would have never been anything more than a bully in monk's robes, if not for his acquisition of the Black Lotus Style manual, practiced years ago by the First Lotus King when he was abbot of the Celestial Garden Temple.

The manual held only the basics of the style, but it was enough to taint Hei Mei's Chi. The demon Chi made him powerful enough to challenge the kindly abbot, who he greatly but inexplicably resented. He completed his treason by making the duel with the abbot a mere distraction for bandits to attack the monastery. That day, the Little Forest was set ablaze; many secrets were stolen or burned, many monks died, and abbot White Cloud lost his right arm.

The sect rose from the ashes, and some would say it is stronger even than before. Abbot White Cloud lost more than an arm that day; since the day of burning, he has become more distant and aloof, cynical and detached. That is, perhaps, the greatest loss Little Forest took that day. Hei Mei eventually formed the Black Lotus Society, one of the greatest scourges in the Jiang Hu, and his hatred for the Little Forest Sect remains strong to this day.

The Little Forest Sect may be the strongest in the Wulin. Some would say – albeit not to their faces – that this has made them arrogant. They often see themselves as the conscience or righteous leaders of the Martial Brotherhood.

Currently, the Little Forest Sect only accepts male disciples in their temples, though many individual masters have taken female students. There are rumors of girls sneaking up in the temple under a shaven head and baggy monk's tunics to learn the secrets of the sect. The abbot frowns on women learning the ways of the sect, but it is a minor offence as long as they behave accordingly and stay out of the temple after discovery.

The Little Forest Sect enforces strict codes of conduct. Members must refrain from drinking alcohol, consuming intoxicating substances, eating meat, getting married,

LITTLE FOREST SECT

Destiny Cost: 3

Concept: Warrior Monks roam the land, helping those in need while striving for enlightenment and balance.

Inspired the teachings of the great hero saint **Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon**, who came to Shen Zhou from the distant lands of the west, the Little Forest monks harden their bodies to be as resistant and strong as steel, while molding their spirit with wisdom and compassion.

Although they cultivate a humble nature, it is said that arrogance is their biggest downfall. Indeed, many see themselves as “the wisest and most righteous among the Wulin.”

Main Virtues: **Piety** (Buddhism), **Kuan** (Benevolence), **Yi** (Righteousness)

Secrets of Destiny: Little Forest Sect

3+ Status: You are a member of the Little Forest Sect. The principles of the sect require you to live a life of simplicity and humility, and to use your strength and wisdom not for personal benefit, but to alleviate the suffering and improve the conditions of all beings, as well as to guide you towards enlightenment.

Members of the Little Forest Sect are traditionally male and take full monastic vows; therefore, they must refrain from eating meat, consuming alcohol or other intoxicating substances, and abstain from sexual and romantic involvements. Nothing may distract them from their practice of the tenets of Buddhism.

0 Bonus: If you are a member of the Little Forest Sect, you may purchase the Buddhism Loreshet at a -2 Destiny discount.

0-5 Disadvantage: Heretical Buddhist. You are an atypical member of the Little Forest Sect. Maybe you have a bad temper, or you have not given up such earthly delights as meat, wine and women. You may even be a woman, or have an unorthodox views of the sutras. This does not mean you do not respect the main ideals of the organization, just that you are a tad heretical!

Unless you actually take this as a Disadvantage, you handle this just fine without your life getting too complicated. If you do, your woes are part of your story; gain 1 bonus Destiny when your unorthodox approach gets you into trouble.

Secrets of Destiny: Little Forest Sect Kung Fu

0: Bonus: As a member of the Little Forest Sect, you get a one-time 2-Destiny discount when buying one of the following as a secondary External Style: **Blossom Harvest**, **Eight Legends**, or **Destiny Cloud Fist**.

0 Technique: If you are a member of the Little Forest Sect, you probably have Iron Body as your primary Internal Style. You can learn all of its techniques rather than one of each level.

8 Technique: You have the opportunity to learn the most enlightened Transcendent technique: **Buddha's Palm**. This is usually reserved for high-ranking and Enlightened Sect members. If you are not one of them, how is it that you have come across this secret?

2 Secret: You have spent many hours on the temple yard practicing your stances, and you have managed to internalize the Iron Palm. Fighting Unarmed now also counts as fighting with a Massive weapon. This allows you to claim the weapon bonuses of both and to combine different types of styles. If you know multiple Secrets that improve your unarmed fighting, you can only use one at a time; choose at the start of each round which one you'll use.

The following martial secrets are developed through the lessons of the **Iron Body Internal Style**; you must know it to be able to purchase them.

5 Technique: You master the defensive lessons of the **Heaven Covered With Clouds** technique.

- If you're in the *Destiny Cloud Fist stance* and use *Iron Power*, you may apply the bonus to Dodge instead.
- If you're in the *Destiny Cloud Fist stance* and use *Eternal Temple's God-Armor*, you may extend the technique for only one point of Chi if you also use your Lightfoot ability that round.

5 Technique: Long hours of body-hardening exercises have granted you mastery of the **Immortal Soul of Iron** technique.

- If you're in the *Blossom Harvest stance* and use the *Jade Tiger Techniques*, the bonus to hardiness and might is +10.
- If you're in the *Blossom Harvest stance* and use *Leading Ox through River*, you ignore up to 25 points of penalties.

5 Technique: Combat exercises and extended meditations have opened your mind and body to the **Supreme Divine Accomplishments** technique.

- If you're in the *Eight Legends stance* and use *Fierce Dragon Breaks Bones*, that technique also gives a +5 bonus to Strike.
- If you're in the *Eight Legends stance* and use *Swaying Branches Surround Willow*, that technique also gives a +5 bonus to Toughness.

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The Bronze Arahats and the Gauntlet

All those novices who graduate from the Little Forest Sect to become full-fledged monks and go out into the world must face the judgment of the mysterious **Bronze Arahats** and pass through a deadly gauntlet as a final test of their mettle and skills. A starting character is assumed to have faced these trials behind the scenes before play begins. This lore allows you to bring those elements into your character's current storyline.

The Bronze Arahats and the Gauntlet are also said to stand as the last line of defense against intruders trying to infiltrate or invade the monastery.

1+ Involvement Your character has not yet faced the trials for some reason, or he has reason to face them again. Passing the trials will be an important part of the character's story.

3+ Fortune: Your experience in the trials allowed you to discover a secret about the Gauntlet or the Arahats themselves. This secret may come on handy later on the story for you or another character.

The Little Forest Library

The main library of the Little Forest Monastery is regarded as one the most significant repositories of knowledge in all of Shen Zhou. Especially dedicated to the Martial Arts, it also holds manuals of the Secret Arts, historical records and other valuable documents.

3 Bonus: Your character has vast experience in the library, and can claim a +5 bonus for rolls relating to it, such as performing research, dealing with its librarians, infiltrating it, or fighting inside its halls. These bonuses are dependent on access to the library and spending time among its treasured scrolls; the Sage may always reduce or completely veto access to bonus if they feel the character has not spent sufficient time interacting with it.

5+ Victory: You successfully declare that a document you are looking for is in the Little Forest library. Spend destiny according to the importance of the document to the story. Depending on how likely it is for the document to be there, the sage may ask you to spend Joss in addition to the destiny cost.

The Four Lotus Vagrants

Long ago, the Four Lotus Kings were the foremost Buddhist heroes of the Wulin. Blinded by their accomplishments, they confused earthly power with enlightenment. Blue Eyed Celestial Demon challenged their supremacy and defeated them, and they became his first disciples. When he disappeared from the world, they declined his offer to lead the order. Instead, they wandered the Jiang Hu as The Four Lotus Vagrants to atone for their past.

5 Fortune: You trace your martial tradition directly from the Lotus Vagrants! Those touched by the Vagrants are usually seeking redemption. These are heroes who used to think that might made right, and that power and strength were equal to wisdom and enlightenment. You have vowed to make up for your past. Work with your sage to design a **Minor Chi Hyperactivity** that comes into effect whenever you act to cleanse the sins of the past, whether your own or those of another individual or organization.

2+ Fortune: You know a secret regarding the legend of the Lotus Vagrants. Spend destiny according to the importance of the fact and its importance to the current story.

- This Lore can be used as a template for a group with a similar theme designed by the Sage or players.

Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon*

A hero-saint from a distant land, once the inheritor of powerful dynasty, he renounced his birthright to pursue the path of Buddhism. He preached that to conquer the self was a greater act than to conquer the world. The stories compare him to a great ocean; he could be calm and reflective in times of peace, or furious and awe-inspiring when faced with tyranny and injustice. After being deeply wounded by a Corrupt technique, he found himself unable to achieve Nirvana. Instead, he locked himself into a cave deep below the Little Forest Monastery, disappearing from the world to meditate and purify his Chi.

10 Destiny: You descend strongly from this true Legend of the Wulin by martial or spiritual tradition. You gain the following benefits:

- You have **Status 5** ("Descendant of the Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon") within the Little Forest Sect. In the Wulin at large, this counts as Status 3.
- You have a -3 discount for buying the Transcendent Style **Buddha Palm**.
- You have a -5 discount for buying your first point of **Enlightened Chi**.
- You gain a **Major Chi Weakness** – suffer Cultivation Penalties if you ever succumb to the temptations of wealth and earthly power.

-2: There are others who share the same legacy, and one or more of them will see you as a rival, or even an enemy! This will entail meaningful opposition and plenty of challenges for your power and piety.

3+ Fortune: You know a secret fact about the history of Blue Eyed Celestial Demon. Knowledge about such a figure may shake the Wulin.

- This lore can be used as a template for any Lore relating to a character of legendary or mythical importance in the Wulin, to be designed by the Sage and/or the players.

or engaging in sexual or romantic relationships. They must live in humility and reject all forms of wealth. Most importantly, even if they are members of the Wulin, they must be in control of their strength: they should show mercy even to their enemies, and only kill in the most extreme circumstances. Despite their strict rules, the sect values adherence to the principles of righteousness, altruism and simplicity far more than complete adherence to the forms and restrictions.

Heaven Sword Alliance

Long ago, a mysterious man shook the Wulin. He was a most peculiar man, hairy and scruffy-looking, with long arms, short legs and strange facial features. Upon seeing him, many would think that he was an ape, or a spirit from Heaven or Hell, but he was a man, one of great passion, capable of immense joys and deep melancholies. He was a man of few words, but when he spoke he did so cryptically, or humorously. No one knew his origins, whether he was a foreign barbarian or a heavenly immortal.

His skill with the sword was unmatched at the time. It was more than mere swordsmanship; it was a supernatural mastery over blades. His Chi aura could make blades fall from the hands of their users, stick in the floor and bend as if they were bowing down to him. He was the Master of Swords.

When that happened, he would often talk to the swords, telling them there was no need to apologize! It was not their fault to have such rude and unskilled owners, and they had nothing to be ashamed of, but they should choose their wielders more carefully. He could summon the blades around him to attack on his behalf, and turn any object into a deadly blade by infusing it with his Chi; sticks, blades of grass, even drops of water flicked by his fingers were as flying swords. People began referring to him as the Sword Spirit, and that is how he became known in the Martial Arts World.

He was a man of peculiar habits. He could stay in immobile meditation for days at a time; other times he would use his amazing kung fu to fly atop his sword for countless li. He liked good food and loved good wine, and he always appreciated the company of beautiful ladies.

Ultimately, though, he was a very lonely man. He traveled the world just for the pleasure of seeing what was out there, and fought other heroes in order to know them and make them his friends. Yet across the Jiang Hu, he found that none could truly understand him and none could match his skill. If there was a destiny for him in this world, it kept eluding him.

One day, he fell asleep while drinking under a tree. A young girl came and started shaking the top

of the tree with a stick in order to collect fruit. Enraged by this intrusion, he took a branch and lunged at the girl in order to seal her pressure points and paralyze her out, so she'd let him sleep. Surprisingly, the girl defended herself, using her fruit picking stick as a sword as if by instinct. Of course, the girl only managed to defend for a couple of stances, and was easily disarmed and subsequently paralyzed, but at that moment the elusive Sword Spirit realized something.

Despite having no kung fu skills, she had sword Chi. It was as if the potential for excellence in swordsmanship was already there, waiting to be cultivated – the sword on her hand just needed to catch up with the sword already in her heart. He took the girl as apprentice. It mattered little that he didn't speak her dialect – they communicated through swordsmanship. Over years of training, they bonded like a father and daughter without ever needing to speak with one another.



HEAVEN SWORD ALLIANCE

Destiny Cost: 5

Concept: Wandering Blades hailing from all paths of life, following the way of the sword.

Also known as *The Heavenly Blades* or *Sword Eccentrics*, members of the Heaven Sword Alliance seek to understand the world by the **Dao of the Blade**. They see the sword not as a mere weapon, but as a companion and a friend, a lover and a teacher. Each challenge—no matter whether it yields victory or defeat—is a chance to test oneself, to improve, and to grow.

The mastery they seek is not mastery over a cold piece of metal, but over the peerless blade that is a warrior's spirit.

Main Virtues: Xin (Honor), Bao (Force)

Secrets of Destiny: the Heaven Sword Alliance

3+ Status: You are a member of the Heaven Sword Alliance. The Heavenly Blades come from all paths of life, from nobles to commoners, but all seek a greater understanding of the world by walking the path of the blade.

Members of the alliance can be **Chivalrous** or **Selfish** in their actions, but they are for the most part honorable and straightforward, placing great value on proving their mettle in battle. They usually show disdain for power, status, or wealth that does not derive from personal prowess.

3+ Fortune: Whether you are a member of the Alliance or not, your actions in battle have earned the respect of a Heaven Blade sees you as a potential ally, rival, or student. Spend destiny depending on how relevant this character will be to the story. Work with your Sage to determine the details of this character. By default, this character will either be of the same Rank as you, or (at the Sage's discretion) one Rank above you if it seems appropriate for the story.

Secrets of Destiny: Heaven Sword Kung Fu

These are the martial secrets practiced by the Sword Eccentrics. Normally, you must be a full member to get to learn them—otherwise, why would you be taught these secrets?

0 Bonus: You get a one-time -2 Destiny discount when purchasing one of the following as a secondary External Style: **Eight Legends, Graceful Crane and Ultimate Dragon**.

0 Technique: If you are a member of the Heaven Sword Alliance, you probably have **Jade Spirit Sword** as your primary Internal Style. You can learn all of its techniques rather than one of each level.

The following martial secrets are closely tied to the Alliance's mastery of the **Jade Spirit Sword Style**; you are required to know it to purchase them.

3 Technique: You take the first step toward enlightenment along the Dao of the Blade as you learn the **Sword-Heart Skill** technique. Fighting unarmed now also counts as fighting with a sword, and vice versa. This allows you to claim the weapon bonuses of both and to combine different types of styles. If you know multiple Secrets that improve your unarmed fighting, you can only use one at a time; choose at the start of each round which one you'll use.

5 Technique: You are allowed to learn the secret **Storm of Swords** technique. The merest flick of your hand or furring of your brow can command a rain of blades to fall upon your enemies! This is usually reserved for high-Ranked or highly respected members; if you are not one of those, how did you learn this exclusive technique?

- If you're in the *Eight Legends* stance and use *Scything Moonlight Cut*, you can extend the attack one zone away, targeting people there instead of in your own zone.
- If you're in the *Eight Legends* stance and use *Soaring Phoenix*, you can block Area attacks on behalf of others. Anybody you choose to protect can use either your Block result or their own defense roll, whichever is better.

5 Technique: You learn the **Streaming Dragon Blade** stance. You move swiftly across the field of battle, afterimages of your sword tracing your path!

- If you're in the *Ultimate Dragon* stance and use *Dragon in Flight*, opponents trying to prevent your movement by *Breaking the Wave* suffer a -5 penalty to their checks.
- If you're in the *Ultimate Dragon* stance and use *Blade of Infinity Strokes*, you have a +5 Strike bonus to the primary attack. This bonus is granted by this Loreshet Secret, and so stacks with Kung Fu.

5 Technique: You master the forms of the **Elegant Blade-Wings** technique.

This teaches you to read the Chi of your opponent, reacting to their forms and movements as swiftly as they can make them.

- If you're in the *Graceful Crane* stance and use *Tenfold Steel Guard*, you may apply the Block bonus to Dodge instead.
- If you're in the *Graceful Crane* stance you may also use *Iron Heart Clarity* when you dodge and attack.

The Blades Divided

The Heaven Swords are divided within themselves. One faction wants to focus more on the outside world, to purge the Wulin—and, eventually, all of society—of corruption. Their goal is to lead (or at least police) the Martial Arts World. The other faction wants to retreat into themselves, to transcend the mundane and seek a higher understanding through the sword.

This conflict has only been ideological so far, but at any moment, it could escalate into a full-blown civil war tearing the Alliance apart from within.

(continue)

3+ Destiny: This conflict will be an important part of your character's life. Spend destiny according to how much the conflict will affect the story.

5+ Fortune: You possess a unique secret that could tilt the scales of the conflict to one side or the other. If this is revealed, you may be beset on both sides, as individuals from both factions seek to gain your support, learn your secrets, or ensure your silence.

7+ Victory: After taking decisive action and throwing your all into the conflict, you become the wavebreaker who decides the ultimate fate of the Heaven Swords. Will this be a permanent split, a union under one banner, or a way to compromise?

Sword Heaven

Sword Heaven is a secret chamber in the Heaven Sword Alliance headquarters. It holds so many blades that they shine as the stars in the sky. Many illustrious weapons—some of them lost to history, a few of them powerful **Legendary Weapons**—lie hidden in this chamber.

3+ Fortune: You gain secret knowledge regarding Sword Heaven or the weapons that lie there, along with the secret of how to enter. What will you find inside?

10+ Treasure: You claim one of the Legendary Weapons from Sword Heaven as your own! Work with your sage to define its history and its characteristics.

+3: Its characteristics are based on a Special Weapon.

The Seven Heavenly Blades

Also known as the Seven Stars, the Seven Heavenly Blades were the original disciples of Sword Spirit and founders of the Heaven Sword Alliance. In every succeeding generation, there have been seven heroes and seven blades. They are the considered the greatest heroes of the faction and they form the ruling council of the alliance.

10+ Destiny: Your destiny is entangled with that of the Seven Stars, either the entire group or an individual member.

0 Bonus: By spending destiny on the previous option, you gain Status 4 within the society and Status 3 in the Wulin.

0 Bonus: You get a -3 discount on the cost for obtaining a Legacy Weapon, assuming that its history is connected to the Seven Heavenly Blades.

-2: Another powerful person has the same Entanglement (including its advantages!), and you are destined to become rivals! This will mean powerful opposition and an interesting future.

3+ Fortune: You learn a piece of information related to the story of the Seven Heavenly Blades, either their current incarnation or a historical one.

SWORD SPIRIT

Once upon a time a mysterious man appeared in the Jiang Hu. He had a unique appearance and a strange personality, and people thought of him as a spirit made flesh. His mastery of swords was preternatural; his legacy was passed through the Heaven Sword Alliance.

Even now, the leader of this faction is known as Sword Spirit, and their mastery of the blade is equaled only by their wisdom and eccentricity. The current Sword Spirit has cloistered himself within the chamber known as Sword Heaven for unknown purposes.

10 Destiny: Your martial or blood lineage ties you directly to the line of succession of Sword Spirits. Maybe you are the current Spirit's stellar pupil, or the last living descendant of a previous one

- You have **Status 5** ("Successor of the Sword Spirit!") within the Heaven Sword Alliance. This counts as Status 3 in the rest of the Wulin.

- You learn the *Storm of Swords technique* at no cost.

- You learn the *Sword-Heart Skill technique* at no cost.

- You gain a Minor Hyperactivity (Action Bonus) to be applied as a "**Laughs at**" modifier to any style that has swords as its preferred weapon. You gain this bonus as long as you behave as if your main reason for fighting is the pure joy of the fight itself and regard your opponent as a kindred spirit instead of an enemy.

-2: There are others who share this same Destiny, and at least one of them is destined to become a powerful rival... or even a sworn enemy! They benefit from the same advantages as you, so your battles are destined to be extraordinary.

3-5 Fortune: You learn an important fact concerning the history (or the current reality!) of the Sword Spirit.

10+ Treasure: You obtain a Destiny Weapon forged by the current Sword Spirit or one of his predecessors. This is a unique and powerful weapon. Work with your sage to devise the weapon's stats and history.

-5: Acquiring this weapon will bring great complications and misfortunes to your life! Maybe the weapon is cursed, or it's sought by a legendary hero. Maybe an organization has discovered that its wielder is destined to slay their leader? Work out the details with the Sage.

They forged a deep bond through the way of the sword. This had been always his dream! Finally, the Sword Spirit found someone who truly understood him. As the girl turned into a woman, she grew stronger, unlocking the true blade within. Sword Spirit forged a special blade for her, delicate and subtle like water that could flow harmoniously with her every movement. It would become like an extension of her arm, and an extension of her heart.

The girl became a famous heroine of the Wulin, once leading an army against a barbarian invasion. Normal people believed she became a hero because she had a great master. Sword Spirit asked himself if she was capable of learning from a great master because she had been a hero all along. He came to believe she already had a transcendent destiny; he'd just helped her reach it, and as she already had a sword in her heart, he'd just needed to bring that sword to her arm. He came to believe that there were people who were swords from birth, just as there were people who were sabers or spears, or abaci and brushes, or farming tools and rakes.

Just as a physical sword would soar like a dragon across the battlefield, these hearts of sword craved to soar the Jiang Hu as heroes. They needed the physical blade in their hands to serve as a channel for the blade inside their souls.

To ponder this, he retreated from the world to a high peak. There he forged six blades of amazing quality and power, each of them different from the other. One was large and heavy, designed to be used by someone of great physical strength; another was light and impossibly sharp, designed to be used by someone incredibly fast. Others didn't look like swords at all.

He roamed the Martial Arts World for years in search for the heroes that would wield those blades, whose destinies were already intertwined. He gathered six students of radically different backgrounds and personalities. Some were old, some young; some were paragons of morality, others were irrepressible rogues; one was the son of a noble judge, another was raised by wolves, another was a bandit prince, and still another was the royal executioner of a deposed dynasty. He did not judge those who the swords chose; the right owners would invariably end up with the proper swords, and they would take their destiny forward from that point.

Along with his original disciple, he took them deep into the peaks where he'd forged their blades, training them to harness their sword Chi. Living high above cloudy peaks and far from the world, they would descend to achieve great deeds, and then disappear mysteriously.

They became known as the Seven Heavenly Blades, but they were merely the first generation of many. Eventually history mixed with fiction, and the deeds of heroes of several generations combined. Each of the Seven Blades took their own student, and passed on a lineage of their teaching. The unnamed master passed his legacy to his most advanced disciple, along with the title of Sword Spirit. While the faces of the heroes would change, and so would the swords in their hands, the Seven Heavenly Blades – also known as the Seven Stars and the Sword Spirit – would always remain constant in the Martial Arts World.

In this way, the current Heavenly Blades descends from eight different lineages: the original master, and his seven disciples. In a way, they are eight different organizations under one banner, which is why they are also called the Heaven Sword Alliance, yet they consider themselves a single faction. Their current sword style has synthesized the greatest strengths of not only of the seven original swordsmen, but of many subsequent masters of the blade. The result is a style that is extremely flexible and adaptable to different fighting approaches and personalities.

The philosophy of the school is thus: the sword is not simply a weapon, but a friend, teacher, lover, and faithful companion in a cruel world. It should not be seen as an object, but as a projection of the thoughts and personality of the warrior. Walking the edge of the blade is a trajectory to a hero's destiny.

The mastery of the true sword they seek is not over a cold piece of metal, but over the peerless blade that is a warrior's spirit. This is the *Dao of the Blade*. Adherence to it is the alliance's only requirement; their membership is one of the most diverse in all of the Martial Brotherhood.

The society has few tenets. Members should seek to improve themselves and change the world through the Dao of the Blade, they should abstain of seeking worldly gain and glory, and they should not wield any power that does not flow directly from their cultivation and achievements.

Even though the Alliance is considered an Orthodox member of the Wulin with a strong tendency towards the virtues of Justice and Force, the lines are blurred sometimes. Some members clearly have a selfish bend, but as long as they seek their goals through the Dao of the Blade, they are not restricted by the society. The original Sword Spirit believed the sword to be a tool to reveal one's destiny; sometimes that destiny is Chivalrous, and sometimes it's selfish. This has created controversy within the society, as it reevaluates its philosophy and roles within the Wulin and the world at large. Some among their members believe that the Alliance has grown enough in power and reputation to make a difference in the Martial Brotherhood, and that they should transcend from being mere wandering swordsmen to guide the Fighting Society as a whole towards greater ends.

For this, they believe they must have a more unified front and eliminate corrupt elements from their organization, and after that, they should proceed to do the same with the Wulin. They believe serving as guardians and guiding society towards a brighter future is not only the destiny but the *responsibility* of the swordsman.

Another faction believes that this would go against the most basic tenets of the Alliance. While the swordsman is a guardian and protector, he should not be a leader; this position will only corrupt the purity of the sword with mundane power. The purpose of swordsmanship is to unlock the destiny of each individual swordsman, and not guide the Wulin or the world.

The intensity of the debate has increased since the current Sword Spirit stepped out of active duty and went into a state

of deep meditation, leaving the faction without an acting leader. The chasm grows deeper among the elders, and many believe that this could eventually erupt in an internal war, dividing the alliance.

The Alliance's headquarters lies in a series of mountains known as the Heaven Peaks. Many of their structures can only be reached through lightfoot or the use of dubious-looking rope bridges and steep stairways. This is on purpose: advancing within the complex reflects the advance of a warrior's path. Thus, the parts of the temple that are harder to access are generally reserved for those of higher rank. There are many secrets hidden in those peaks: legendary weapons, kung fu manuals, and techniques and secrets that unlock the blade in the soul of the swordsman.

The current Sword Spirit has locked himself in the chamber known as the Sword Heaven, a lair filled with hundreds of legendary blades that shine like stars in the night sky. It is considered the most sacred and secret chamber for the Alliance, and one of the most legendary places in the Jiang Hu. Those who understand the mastery the blades impart would unlock the invincible power of the founder. Whether he can do it, and whether he will emerge from this chamber before the Alliance tears itself apart, remains to be seen.

The Eagle Talons

The man known as Gallant Eagle came from unremarkable origins; he refuses to acknowledge such insipid beginnings, so not even his real name is known. It is rumored that his real surname was Yin. If there was something that characterized Gallant Eagle, it was the burning desire to be extraordinary; his is the archetypical story of how one's start in life is irrelevant to their path through the Wulin. A person can write his own story and become a hero; an ordinary piece of metal may forge itself into a magnificent blade.

Since he was a boy, Eagle dreamed about becoming a hero. He wanted to storm the Martial Arts World and become a legend that would live for generations, leaving the greatest of legacies, ensuring that his name would always be spoken with awe and respect. Upon becoming a man, he wandered into the city of Bird's Progress, one of the most important centers of trade and commerce in the Land of the Gods. Even as a youth he had an impressive appearance – tall, broad-shouldered, with deep penetrating eyes and a forward, firm character.

Soon he found employment as a guardian escort, distinguishing himself in kung fu he learned from many varied masters. He found that he easily surpassed them, and since he was never able to find a worthy sifu, he was forced to teach himself. As much as he learned from his instructors, he learned more from battling allies and enemies, and striving against the world itself.

As a caravan escort, he traveled across all the important trade routes – the Silk Road, the Horse and Tea Route, the Bohai Sea, the Grand Canal. He fought bandits, barbarians and pirates; he became known in the Jiang Hu as a contender for one of the Top Ten Young Heroes of his generation.



In a banquet celebrating his mercenary group's founding, he swore upon his very life that the Eagle Talons would become the foremost security escorts in all of Shen Zhou! Not only that, but that in his lifetime he would take it to the top of the Wulin; he would see it become a power in the same league as Little Forest and the Heaven Sword Alliance.

The very idea was preposterous; those organizations had been around for generations, had built a great legacy across the years. Such a feat could not be done in one man's lifetime. At most, he could hope to have his organization reach the level of one of the minor factions. He had no master himself, he belonged to no legacy; it would be impossible for him to accomplish such a thing.

Most of the heroes present that night believed this to be drunken boasting, yet it was a well-known fact that Gallant Eagle did not take losing face lightly. He had a quick temper—especially when drunk—and the strength to back it up. Despite their disbelief, they said nothing. The ones who'd been with him the longest and shared many adventures together knew that Gallant Eagle always accomplished the goals he set for himself, no matter how difficult they were. The weight of his word was that of gold; no matter how dire the situation, his steely determination allowed him to reach his objective.

Those men became his brothers that day, and he swore to take them to the top with him. If they accepted his leadership, they vowed to follow him to the Avici Hell if necessary. That day marked the start of ascension for Gallant Eagle and the Eagle Talons.

The man and his escorts were beset by difficulties innumerable; it was as if Heaven had decided to swat this arrogant eagle out of the sky for daring to soar for the highest peaks. Yet no matter the hardship, the Eagle Talons would always come out triumphant, as if the fierce wind only made them stronger. In turn, they challenged Heaven to try harder to bring them down.

In the short years to come, Gallant Eagle became a force to be reckoned in the Wulin. In his late thirties he achieved a feat that only the highest masters and kung fu prodigies can hope to accomplish, but that is the ambition of every martial artist, and the test of a true master: he invented the technique known as Eagle Claw, making his hands as powerful as sabers. This put him in the indisputable post as one of the greatest heroes of his generation, and all the Wulin started believing that maybe his goals were not so far away. Maybe he would accomplish the task of turning his organization into one of the pillars of the Wulin during his lifetime.

Alongside his martial might and unbreakable spirit, he also possessed an undeniable business savvy; he made contacts and friends in the ordinary world as well as the Jiang Hu. Despite his ferocity, he would always rather make allies than enemies. It was better for business that way. Instead of fostering rivalries with the many other security escorts in Shen Zhou, he established bonds of friendship, and the Eagle Talons would eventually absorb many of the most competent, increasing his power. He would always offer a hand in friendship first; it was only when that hand was denied that he would strike with the

Claw. He would let nothing and no one stand in his way on the road to greatness! Those who gave him their loyalty would always have his protection and aid, while those who became his enemies would always pay a steep price.

The Eagle Talons *did* become the most powerful and influential guardian agency in the vast and dangerous land of Shen Zhou. It now has branches in all major cities and trading posts; it is believed that everywhere valuable goods or notable persons are transported across the Land of the Gods, they are *somehow* involved.

The path has been long and hard, but the Eagle Talons have finally done it: they have reached such heights of power and influence. They are the Fourth, where once there were only Three. Gallant Eagle sits along such luminaries as Abbot White Cloud, Sword Spirit, and Snow Leopard. He has a place of honor among the most respected and important leaders in the Martial Brotherhood.

This does not sit very well with many in the Fighting Community. Gallant Eagle had no notable sifu, and does not belong to a martial legacy. His organization is embedded in the ordinary world, and places great importance on attaining mundane wealth, status, and influence. Some believe this should prevent the Talons from having such a noble position in the Wulin, and that they are nothing but arrogant upstarts.

Yet - all are equal in the Wulin. It is the place for men and women to forge themselves into legends; deeds and achievement are valued above else. The Eagle Talons, also known as the Eagle Clan or Eastern Condors, have more than earned their place amongst the Pillars of the Wulin.

However, there is a fact more worrisome than the legitimacy of their claims to glory, and that is their moral ambiguity. As an organization that is, above all, a business, they serve only those who pay for their services, no matter their intentions. Despite the fact that protecting goods for an evil person can still be considered Chivalrous, many such treasures do not rightfully belonged to their employers, and the Eagle Talons have protected many precious heirlooms from those trying to rightfully recover them. They have acted as bodyguards for tyrants and villains, protecting these evils against those who would rise against them. The Talons are soaked with the blood of many heroes, and they have never looked back; they value their honor and loyalty to those who would contract their services above all else.

This mercenary attitude weighs heavily on many of Gallant Eagle's peers in the Martial Brotherhood. It also weighs heavily upon Gallant Eagle, as the dream of his life was to become a Chivalrous hero. The philosophy he attempted to engender in all his followers was to see themselves as brave knights protecting goods and people from all danger, without discrimination. Yet as the Gallant Eagle grows older and older, the many selfish deeds upon his shoulders grows heavier and heavier. It is not only the blood of enemies that taint his hands, but also that of friends sacrificed for his ambition. All but one of the comrades that swore allegiance and brotherhood to him on the fateful night when he pledged his glory have died along the path, their

life's blood watering the ground around the Pillars of the Wulin to fuel the ascent of the Eagle. Their sacrifice—willingly given—increased their glory, and today they are venerated as noble ancestors by new members. Their descendants and students are proud members of the clan, their parents and widows and infants lack nothing. They will be taken care of by the Eagle Head for all their lives, but the sacrifice is another one of many regrets in the heart of Gallant Eagle.

Silver Talon, the only surviving member of his original followers, is the Eagle Head's most trusted advisor. He is a sharp strategist and powerful martial artist, despite the fact that he is affected by a powerful poison that continues to ravage his body. It has already cost him the use of one eye, and someday it may cost his life.

Gallant Eagle works hard and plays hard. Though strict and disciplined, even humorless, when it comes to work, he's boisterous when it comes to friendship and camaraderie. His status and wealth affords him the opportunity to enjoy the finer things in life, like fine foods and finer women. He frequently shares said bounty with those near him, sometimes to the point of debauchery.

Gallant Eagle had one wife and several concubines. He has an older daughter from a Tsubo concubine that was rumored to have been the love of his life, and a younger son from his now-deceased wife. His daughter is Zhou Ma, a clever leader and tactician. His son is called Hawk, and he is strong but impulsive and impatient. Both are very active in the Eagle Talons.

It can be fairly said that the Eagle Talons are at their peak. Their reputation and fame are unmatched, their power and influence are on the rise, and they attract the attention of young heroes everywhere seeking to make a name in the Wulin.

The Eastern Condors place great value in their reputation as a faction and as individuals. Despite the fact that many consider them little better than mercenaries, they see themselves as errant knights. This makes them arrogant and self-righteous on occasion. Any insult on their honor, and any act that makes them lose face, is considered a terrible offense, only paid for in blood.

Because their lives depend on each other, the Talons value camaraderie and brotherhood above all else. A member of the Eagle Talons would undoubtedly give his life or travel to the Hell of Blades for a sworn brother. Once a Talon has given his loyalty, it is a bond for life that will be honored at all costs. This is one of the organizations more used to teamwork, as they can often be found working in units instead of as solitary heroes.

In the harsh canyons and peaks of the northeast, the Eagle Head carved his lair. At once an impenetrable fortress and a lavish palace, a testament both to martial power and wealth, it is known as the Eagle Nest. A complex with many training grounds and

housing for hundreds of members, the followers and low-ranking members live in simple military conditions, luxury rising with Rank.

First Lieutenant Silver Talon is said to live in quarters that would put those of a provincial governor to shame, to say nothing of how Gallant Eagle and his son and daughter live. Those who make it within the faction can reap great wealth and have access to great pleasure, yet weakness, complacency and decadence are not tolerated. Discipline is always strictly enforced, from the lowest member to the Eagle Head himself, who trains every day and takes care of important matters personally.

Gallant Eagle loves to entertain others among the Fighting Community, so heroes-as-guests are a permanent if ever-changing feature of the Eagle's Nest. They take pride in hosting many Wulin events; unlike many other headquarters, visitors have no restriction besides private quarters. The Eagle Clan does not hide its power, they flaunt it!

As the Eagle Talons rise high in the Martial Arts World, it came as a surprise when Gallant Eagle announced his retirement in a year's time. His reasons are his alone; some say he wants to retire while on the top, others said that he has reached his goal, and therefore no longer needs any challenge. Still others believe that he cannot live with the guilt of his many sins. Only he knows the truth, and he doesn't feel the need to explain himself to anyone.



Before he retires, he will pass on the leadership of the clan and his legacy techniques to his successor. Silver Talon has declared himself out of the selection; thus it is assumed that his successor would be either his son or daughter. Both have their supporters within the clan, but the Eagle Head has announced that he will choose his inheritor out of merit, not blood or relationship with him. Worthiness is the only consideration—it doesn't even need to be a current member of the Eagle Talons.

Along the path of building the Pillar, Gallant Eagle mastered an extremely powerful transcendent technique called *The Eyes of the Fiery Raptor*. This is one of the secrets of his ascension, albeit a poorly-kept one; it shall become the legacy of his clan, and perhaps the ruination. No one knows the true origins of this technique, but it is rumored it was passed to him by a dying hermit in the ruins of Only Six Devils City. Only one person can have this technique at a time; it is not really taught, but transmitted from one user to another, making this one of the more mysterious techniques in the Wulin. It is wildly believed amongst young wandering heroes that this is a corrupt technique that taints the Chi of the user. The Eagle Talons and Gallant Eagle have strenuously denied this rumor, and quell it whenever it arises. Many elder martial artists, and those who know the Eagle Head personally, believe that this

is due to Gallant Eagle's ego and the affront caused by the rumor, but perhaps the purity of his Chi and soul are another sacrifice for the glory of his dream.

The Yun Clan

The Western territories of Shen Zhou are a painting of contradictions. They are a harsh and cruel land, yet beautiful and plentiful beyond measure. It is a land of barbarians, who are also considered pure and noble. It is where the strange kingdoms and foreign cultures that lie beyond it come to bring their exotic treasures and strange ideas to Shen Zhou. It is a jeweled thorn in the side of the empire.

Who could embody the contradictions of the West more than the Yun Clan? Once they were mere wandering nomads of Xiongnu, but they built a magnificent kingdom which has maintained its autonomy for centuries. They have maintained their traditions in the face of many hardships, and given the Jiang Hu many legendary heroes in the process. This has assured them a place of honor as one of the Four Pillars of the Wulin.

The Yun clan rose to power by gaining control of the Tea-Horse Road, a trade-route as important as the Silk Road. It brings the best horses from the Tibetan plateau to the

EAGLE TALONS

Destiny Cost: 5

Concept: The foremost security escort agency in Shen Zhou, ambitious and honorable.

Like the majestic bird they emulate as it soars into the heavens, the Eagle Talons have risen to dizzying heights in the martial arts world, all due to the power and ambition of their leader, Gallant Eagle.

This pillar of the Wulin still adheres to its roots as a simple security escort service. Its members will safely transport people or cargo anywhere in the Land of the Gods, they will fight to the last man standing to fulfill a contract, and their word is as good as the gold they charge. Due to their power and size, they are also known as the Eagle Clan.

Main Virtues: Zhong (Loyalty), Ba (Force)

3+ STATUS: You are a member of the Eagle Talons. Clan members come from all parts of Shen Zhou and from all backgrounds; they can be male or female and of any age, but they're usually physically fit, possessing strong survival skills and at least rudimentary business sense. Contacts outside of the Fighting Community are highly prized.

The only thing demanded of the Talons' membership is that they guard the persons or goods in their care with their lives. They must honor every contract and promise they make until completion. They are also expected to defend the name and reputation of the Eagle Clan and bring glory to it with all their actions.

Secrets of Destiny: The Eagle Talons

1-5 Fortune (Contact/s): You have a contact or web of contacts outside the Wulin, which is a valued asset within the society. Work out the details with the Sage.

3+ Fortune: Select a person or group from the setting and declare that you have been assigned to protect them or their goods.

4 Secret: Through a combination of training and long experience of working with others from your society, you learn the Eagle Defends the Nest technique of protecting targets from assault. When you fight alongside at least one other person who has learned this technique in a situation where you are working to protect someone or something from harm, your Styles are never considered to Fear your opponents' styles.

Secrets of Destiny: Eagle Talon Kung Fu

0 Bonus: You get a one-time -2 Destiny discount when purchasing one of the following as a secondary External Style: **Ravenous Wings, Bone-Fed Wolf Fang or Shadow Catching.**

0 Technique: If you are a member of the Eagle Talons, you probably have *Nine Sun Birds* as your primary Internal Style. You can learn all of its techniques rather than one of each level.

(continue)

2 Technique: Eagle Claws. Fighting unarmed now also counts as fighting with a saber. This allows you to claim the weapon bonuses of both and to combine different types of styles. If you know multiple Secrets that improve your unarmed fighting, you can only use one at a time; choose at the start of each round which one you'll use.

The following Techniques are based on the lessons of the Clan's favored Internal Style, **Nine Sun Birds**. You must have it to be able to learn them.

5 Technique: Diving Eagle Spirit. You may obtain this secret technique only if you have learned the *Nine Sun Birds* style.

- If you're in the Shadow Catching stance and use Light Diffused by Clouds, the technique also works against people whose initiative beats yours by 30 points or less.
- If you're in the Shadow Catching stance and use Supreme Burst of Speed, the bonus to finesse and footwork is +10.

5 Technique: Heavenly General. You may obtain this secret technique only if you have learned the *Nine Sun Birds* style.

- If you're in the *Bone-Fed Wolf Fang stance* and use *Reincarnating Nine Brothers*, you may also use the Burn effect's result to Maim the target if it hits.
- If you're in the *Bone-Fed Wolf Fang stance* and use Cry of the Golden Crow, any groups of minions under your command act on your initiative rather than at the end of the round.

5 Technique: You master the fearful secret of the **Rending Claws of the Sky-Father**. You may learn this secret technique only if you have learned the *Nine Sun Birds* style.

- If you're in the *Ravenous Wings stance* and use *Hou Yi's Arrows*, that technique also gives a +5 bonus to Damage.
- If you're in the *Ravenous Wings stance* and use *Scattering the Golden Feathers*, you have a +5 bonus to Damage if you don't make the Area attack selective. This bonus is granted by this Loreshet Secret and so it stacks with Kung Fu.

Gallant Eagle

Despite his unremarkable origins, Gallant Eagle carved himself a path of blood and glory across the Martial Arts World, becoming one of the Legends of his generation.

Many in the Fighting Community see him as no more than an arrogant upstart who would do anything to achieve his goals, but he styles himself and his faction as Chivalrous Heroes in a chaotic world.

5 Destiny: Your destiny is tied to Gallant Eagle's. You may be one of his disciples, or he may see you as a promising recruit for the Talons... even a possible successor.

0 Bonus: Being regarded as important by the leader will grant you Status 4 ("Favored by the Gallant Eagle") within the Eagle Talons. This counts as Status 2 within the rest of the Wulin.

0 Bonus: Being regarded as important by the Eagle Head will grant you + 5 as a modifier to social rolls when conducting business on behalf of or on matters related to the Eagle Clan. You must be honest and honorable in your dealings in order to apply this modifier. This counts as a bonus gained from a Hyperactivity.

-3: You have at least two powerful rivals who are similarly connected to Gallant Eagle. Each of you is aware of the others, and each rival wants to come out on top! Expect nefarious plans, violent rivalries, and a truly interesting time.

3-5 Fortune: You learn an important secret about Gallant Eagle or his background.

The Eagle Head

The entire Wulin was shocked to its core when Gallant Eagle announced his retirement at the peak of his power. He will step down in a year's time, and anyone in the Martial Brotherhood who proves his worth to him and the clan will inherit the mantle of Eagle Head. His successor will gain control over one of the Four Pillars of the Wulin, as well as one of the most influential organizations in Shen Zhou.

3 Destiny: The competition to become the Eagle Head will be an important part of your story. Maybe a friend or rival will vie with you for the position. Maybe the competition will affect the world around you or those close to you. Work with your sage to design what kind of advantages, disadvantages and possibilities this brings for your character.

Character Option: Your character is **Zhou Ma**—the first daughter of Gallant Eagle with the Tsubo concubine who might have been his one true love. You are a brilliant tactician and show strong leadership skills, a sharp mind and strong personality.

Use a the write up for **Zhou Ma** as a **Rank 4** character presented in the Scrolls of the Sage chapter, or create your own version of the character

Character Option: Your character is **Hawk**, the younger son of Gallant Eagle, sired with his first and only official wife with whom he shared the management of the clan. You are fearless and strong and will fight to the death for the things you cherish. You possess a stubborn and restless personality.

Use the write up for **Hawk** as a **Rank 4** character presented in the **Scrolls of the Sage** chapter, or create your own version of the character.

Note: The **Scions of the Eagle** are presented in this book as **Advanced Rank 4** characters, therefore may not be suitable as starting characters in all campaigns without some modifications. Consult with your Sage



mainland, and carries the finest teas to the high elites of the Tsubo kingdom, along with many other lesser goods and destinations.

The Tea-Horse Road is, without a doubt, one of the most dangerous routes in Shen Zhou. It passes across vast forests, merciless mountains, desolate plateaus, and raging rivers, and it is full of barbarian tribes and bandit gangs. Many would say that terrible spirits and demons dwell on those paths!

Those who traveled the roads in the west were considered the bravest of heroes. They saw the sky-piercing steep mountains and saw only a challenge to overcome. They became legends by defying nature, and the gods who ruled it. None were greater heroes than the Yun Clan! They tamed mountains and charted the passes, built towns and trading posts, and brought prosperity and civilization to these harsh and savage lands.

Today, most of the caravans are protected by the Eagle Talons, but the Yun still control the greatest part of the trading. They know the territory better than their breathing, so they often work as guides or explorers.

Of all the important factions in the Wulin, only the Yun Clan is a clan in the ordinary sense. Almost all of their members are related by blood-ties or marriage; their lineage,

meticulously recorded, can be traced back for centuries. Heroes who are tied to the clan by martial tradition rather than blood or marriage begin with lower status, but the Yun are still of the Wulin; if they accomplish worthy deeds, their status in the clan can rise as high as blood-kin.

Members of the Yun family are tall and lean, with piercing eyes that reflect the vast western lakes and firm, beautiful features. Their hearts are as resilient and strong as the snowy mountain peaks; they are proud and stubborn and passionate, loyal and honorable to a fault, but impetuous and quick to anger. They are a happy, boisterous people, but tend to a certain melancholy, especially when far from their homeland.

The Yun stand in a state of flux between past and future, between Shen Zhou and the lands beyond, and derive their power from the contradiction of that position. Once, long ago, they were outsiders from beyond the Land of the Gods, but no more. That was the past. Now it has swallowed them up; the blood and traditions of the Han people has mixed with theirs.

Although the Yun are not of the empire, they dwell in its shadow. The Yun pay tribute to the Imperial Throne, but they retain their autonomy. They control great wealth and power, thanks to their dominance over the Tea-Horse Road and their vast territories in the West, but they know that this is nothing before the empire; a real conflict with the imperial throne would be the end of the Yun's prosperous trading, and the whole clan with it.

The Yun are quick to assert their cultural independence. They use their own Xiongnu language amongst themselves, rather than the Han, and their unique written language is a treasure of the clan. The Yun clan pictographs were one of the first forms of writing in Shen Zhou; many ancient legends and secrets are written in those glyphs alone.

The Yun came to power on the frontier, but their very success is turning it in to civilized land. They brought roads and maps and civic order to the West, and made it safe for trade, with the power of their wild spirit and mastery of the untamed lands. Yet, now those lands are tamed by their own hands; what place do such wild people as they have now?

For most of the Han and the Wulin, the Yun are an odd anachronism from a long ago time, but one which represents the best of that savage era. They are the noble barbarian, the untamed wild beast; they are something to be admired, but only from a safe distance. In turn, the Yun are conflicted in their feelings toward the Han. They can't deny the strength of the Han Empire or the magnitude of the cultural accomplishments of the collective Han people, but compared to the Yun, most Han seem so shallow and delicate.

The Yun are defined by this tension between representing Shen Zhou's past and ushering in the future, between being masters of their domain and petitioners to the Empire, between being of the Land of the Gods and visitors from another land. The power of this ambiguity ensures that the Yun, even though they are a great kingdom, belong to the Jiang Hu and the legends of the Wulin.

The Yun Clan treats the civilized lands in the West as their territory. Even when they don't control them, the leaders are allied or related to them by marriage and so can count on Yun protection. Their headquarters is in the magnificent city of Gathering Clouds, an oasis of splendid civilization in the harsh and violent lands of the West. Many cultures, local and foreign, congregate in this haven, and heroes from all over the Jiang Hu seek glory and adventure there.

The head of the Yun Clan is named Snow Leopard, the most recent of a long line of Yun chieftans who achieved heroic stature in the Wulin. He is a stern, powerful man, whose strong features are framed by ice-white hair and beard. He led the clan to glory on a firm path in his younger years, but that all changed when he became enthralled by the legend of the Glacier Maiden.

There is a majestic mountain range in the west known as the Snow Dragon. No hero has ever touched the highest peak. And ancient stories claim that in each of the thirteen peaks hides an amazing demon-killing weapon from ancient myth. Of the many legends supposedly in these mountains, there is none more famous than the Glacier Maiden.

The Glacier Maiden has the ethereal and everlasting beauty of the frozen mountains. Her heart is cold and merciless. She is as winter made into a woman, but if a lover can warm her heart in their embrace for even a single night, she will whisper secrets of the transcendent Glacier Heart Style in their ears. Many have pursued the Glacier Maiden, only to die on the mountain or in her arms; some of her favorites stayed with her forever, frozen in her gallery as ice statues.

Only a few have walked away knowing the secrets of Glacier Heart Style. Snow Leopard is one of them. Snow Leopard didn't pursue the Glacier Maiden to learn her kung fu secrets. He was in love... but she pushed him away and broke his heart. When he returned to the world, he carried coldness in his chest to match the Maiden's.

The Yun Clan chief is obsessed with the Glacier Maiden; he will transform the world in to a cold, dark place worthy of her beauty to prove his love. As his power in Glacier Heart Style expands, what little warmth and light is left in him dwindles away, and like the maiden, he learns to delight in cruelty and evil. Someday, Heaven willing, he will give her a lightless, frozen world as a nuptial gift.

Snow Leopard's two sons are divided by his growing darkness. The elder son, Xiao Lan, was a kung fu prodigy from an early age; the clan had a great future in his hands. However, he always was a free spirit with not much respect for authority, so he constantly clashed with his father. The younger son, Xi Feng, is completely loyal to his father, regardless of how Snow Leopard ignores or belittles him. He compensated for his lack of talent with constant effort, and became an accomplished hero in his own right.

The heir clashed with Snow Leopard more and more as the clan head became more consumed by the Glacier Heart Style. The clan advisers finally manipulated the two in to open conflict, hoping that Xiao Lan would defeat Snow

Leopard and take control of the clan, but this gambit failed. The eldest son exiled himself from the Yun and all their affairs, and Snow Leopard disowned him as a coward. He now roams the Jiang Hu as a wandering hero known as The Wolf Swordsman, avoiding the attempts by the Yun Clan counselors to find him and force him to confront his father. Meanwhile, Xi Feng, known as The Western Wind dutifully serves Yun Clan, willing to do anything for his people except challenge Snow Leopard. Despite all evidence, he believes his father to be fundamentally good, if ill.

Yun Clan carefully conceals Snow Leopard's corruption from the world and keep their most righteous and admirable heroes, such as The Western Wind, in the public eye. Their fortune is built on trade, so they can't afford to get a reputation for villainy.

Secrets can't be kept forever in the Jiang Hu, however; rumors of Snow Leopard's rising power and corruption are spreading through the Wulin. Heroes whisper that it will only become a matter of time before he becomes a terrible menace, and they may be right. There are many in the clan who would support Snow Leopard if he pursued greater power for the Yun Clan, no matter how viciously, but others would fight against him before sullyng their glorious past. Will this story spread beyond the Yun Clan on a tide of ambition and ice-darkened blood, or will it eventually lead to redemption?



THE YUN CLAN

Destiny Cost: 5

Concept: Nobles from a “barbarian” culture, defending their territory and way of life while fighting to become a relevant power in the current world.

The only one of The Four Pillars who is a clan in the true sense of the word, the Yun family remains fiercely proud of their Xiongnu heritage. Their eyes always reflect the deepest lakes of their homeland, and their hearts are as strong and resilient as the eternally snow-covered mountains that shelter their home.

Members of the Yun Clan are expected to prize the well-being of the clan above their own, keeping in mind how their individual behavior reflects on their family and teachers. Most heroes of the Yun clan have a deep love for their homeland and way of life that manifests as nostalgia when far away.

Main Virtues: Zhong (Loyalty), Yi (Righteousness)

Secrets of Destiny: The Yun Clan

3+ Status: You are a member of the Yun Clan. Clan members are usually related by blood, but being tied to the clan by marriage, alliance, adoption or martial tradition is also possible. Most members come from the western parts of Shen Zhou and are at least partly of Xiongnu descent.

0 Bonus: As the Yun Clan ruler their own lands, every point of Yun Clan status also counts as status (“Lord of the Lands”) with ordinary people in Yun territory.

0 Bonus: You may choose Survival Skill Specialty: *Yun Clan Territory* or Ride Skill Specialty: Western Breed Horses for free.

5 Disadvantage: Black Sheep. You are an atypical member of the Yun Clan! You may have left behind the old ways, preferring big cities to snowy mountains, or you may have done something the clan frowns upon. You are not necessarily ill-natured, but you are some kind of renegade. As usual, you get one bonus Destiny whenever this gets you into trouble

-5: You have less than two Disadvantages before getting this one.

Secrets of Destiny: Yun Clan Kung Fu

0 Bonus: You get a one-time -2 Destiny discount when purchasing one of the following as a secondary External Style: **Storm God’s Fury, Divine Pattern Long-Strokes, or Blossom Harvest.**

0 Technique: If you are a member of the Yun Clan, you probably have *Ice Sutra* as your primary Internal Style. You can learn all of its techniques, rather than one of each level.

2 Technique: You’ve mastered the barbarian fighting arts of the **Six-Armed Demon God!** Fighting unarmed now also counts as fighting with paired weapons. This allows you to claim the weapon bonuses of both and to combine different types of styles. If you know multiple Secrets that improve your unarmed fighting, you can only use one at a time; choose at the start of each round which one you’ll use.

The following martial secrets are dependent on using the lessons of the *Ice Sutra*, manifesting them through external stances. You must have this Internal Style to be able to learn them.

5 Technique: You’ve spent time out training on the frozen slopes, and have mastered the **Mountain’s Frozen Heart.** If you’re in the *Blossom Harvest stance* and employ any *Ice Sutra technique* that lets you use the Freeze effect, any Rippling rolls you make as a result of the Freeze effect receive a +5 bonus. This bonus is granted by this Loreshet Secret, so it stacks with Kung Fu.

5 Technique: The raging snowstorm holds no secrets from you! You master the **Plains-Scouring Blizzard Lance technique.**

- If you’re in the *Divine Pattern Long-Stroke stance* and use *Ice Cracking the Willow*, that technique also gives a +5 bonus to Damage.

- If you’re in the *Divine Pattern Long-Stroke stance* and use *Frozen Shadow*, the technique also imposes a -5 penalty to Damage. This penalty is not increased by the technique’s boost.

5 Technique: You have ridden the icy plains and learned the secrets of the **White North Wind.** If you’re in the *Storm God’s Fury stance* and use any *Ice Sutra technique* that lets you use the Freeze effect, you have a +5 bonus to that check.

Snow Leopard

Snow Leopard is the current patriarch of the Yun Clan, and one of the current Great Leaders of the Wulin. Rumors are that he is affected by a **Corrupt Chi Condition** that is making his nature cold and dark. While he has largely retreated from the Wulin, it’s said that he is as paranoid and hostile as he is powerful and ruthless, and that he may become a threat to the Martial Arts World.

5 Destiny: Your destiny is tied to that of Snow Leopard. You may be one of his disciples, or he may see you as a promising member of the clan. He may even think you are fit to stand by his side in his plans for control over the Wulin!

0 Bonus: Being regarded as important by the Yun patriarch will grant you the equivalent of **Status 4: The Leopard’s Ward** within the Yun Clan. This counts as **Status 2** among the rest of the Wulin.

(continue)

0 Bonus: Being regarded as important by the master of the Yun Clan grants you + 5 as a modifier to social rolls when acting to increase the influence of the Yun in the outside world, or to defend their independence. You must be uncompromising and even ruthless in your dealings in order to apply this modifier (which counts as a Minor Hyperactivity).

-3: At least one other person holds the same Destiny, and they do not take kindly to having to share Snow Leopard's attentions. They strive to oppose you and make your life more difficult, either as rivals or bloody-handed enemies.

3-5 Fortune: You learn an important secret about Snow Leopard or his history.

5-10 Destiny/Victory: Either through your own hard work or by the grace of Heaven you become—or will become—the person who decides the fate of the Yun Clan. Maybe you cause a full-on war against the Wulin (causing the Yun Clan to be considered one of the Banes!). Maybe you cause Snow Leopard to be overthrown from leadership. Or maybe it's through you that the Clan moves towards peace.

Character Option: Your character is **Yun Xiao Lan**, the eldest son of Snow Leopard, and the rightful heir of the Clan. You were always a martial arts prodigy, and achievement in kung fu came almost naturally to you, but you were too interested in drinking, womanizing and having adventures to fall prey to your father's wicked mind games and intra-clan intrigue.

You left the clan to wander the Jiang Hu as **The Wolf Swordsman**. You have a devil-may-care attitude and a lighthearted but melancholic personality, and you live life on your own terms.

Use the writeup for **Yun Xiao Lan** as a **Rank 4** character presented in the **Sage Scrolls** chapter, or create your own version of the character.

Character Option: Your character is **Yun Xi Feng**, the youngest son of Snow Leopard. You have always had to fight tooth and nail to earn your place within the Clan. You have worked hard all your life and have finally become a renowned young hero in the Wulin, but your father still looks down on you and constantly belittles you.

You fight to earn the respect of your father, to increase the power and glory of the Yun Clan and to keep the peace with other factions, while trying to save your father from the edge of darkness. You are known as **Western Wind** across the Jiang Hu.

Use the writeup for **Yun Xi Feng** as a **Rank 4** character presented in the **Scrolls of the Sage** chapter, or create your own version of the character.

Note: The **Yun Brothers** are presented in this book as **Advanced Rank 4** characters, therefore may not be suitable as starting characters in all campaigns without some modifications. Consult with your Sage

Glacier Maiden

There are many legends about Snow Dragon Mountain, but none is more famous within the Martial Brotherhood than the one about the **Glacier Maiden**—her beauty ethereal and everlasting, her heart cold and merciless, like winter given a woman's shape.. It's said that she yearns for the warmth of human arms, and that she will teach formidable and terrible Kung Fu—the Transcendent style known as **Glacier Heart**—to any lover that can warm her heart for even one single night.

3 Destiny: Your destiny will touch that of the mysterious Glacier Maiden. Do you want to become her lover, or do you seek revenge on her for the suffering she has caused? Do you seek to learn her powerful Kung Fu to further your own ambitions, or do you want to protect the world from it?

5 Fortune: You learn an important secret about the history of the Glacier Maiden or about her Glacier Heart Kung Fu.

0 Bonus: This secret grants you a measure of protection; your Style never Fears Glacier Heart when you fight against it.

10 Technique: You learn the **Glacier Heart** Transcendent Style. The default assumption of the setting is this can be granted by becoming a satisfactory lover to the Glacier Maiden. If this is not the case, how do you manage to learn such a coveted and terrible secret?

The Tea Horse Road

The Yun Clan rose to power by gaining control of the Tea Horse Road, a commercial route as important as the Silk Road. It is a trade route used to bring the best horses bred on the Tibetan plateau to the mainland and the finest teas to the high elites of the Tsubo kingdom. Along with tea and horses, the road carries many other goods.

This is one of the most dangerous routes in the land of the gods. It crosses vast and thick forests, steep and merciless mountains, desolate plateaus and raging rivers. It is also full of barbarian tribes, bandit gangs, and terrible spirits and demons. In the west, those who traveled those roads were considered the bravest of heroes. They became legends by defying nature, which in the eyes of the people was like defying the very gods..

3 Destiny: The Tea Horse Road will be an important part of your story.

0 Bonus: Taking this entanglement grants you a +5 **Survival Specialty Bonus: Tea Horse Road**.

1-5 Involvement: Tie another character or organization that has caught your fancy as a player to the Tea Horse Road.

0 Bonus: Taking this entanglement grants the associated character or organization a +5 **Survival Specialty Bonus: Tea Horse Road**. This might be a learned skill or simple good fortune.

THE FOUR GREAT SOCIETIES

After the Pillars of the Wulin, the Four Great Societies are the most respected and powerful Orthodox organizations in the Jiang Hu.

Secret Societies usually have a more specific agenda, involving affecting the Martial World and ordinary society in a more concrete and immediate fashion than the Pillars. Despite being “secret societies”, their existence is pretty much public in the Wulin, though their methods and agenda usually are only fully known to members.

The Resplendent Phoenix Society

Founded by a legendary heroine named Ban Zhao, Resplendent Phoenix is an all-female society, dedicated to one purpose above all: to improve the lot of women in Shen Zhou.

According to what is believed to be the proper order of things under Heaven, women should bow down to men and always be subservient to them. But all are equal in the Wulin; heroes are judged by the greatness of their deeds and the power of their kung fu, not according to gender or other considerations. This society was formed in order to allow women everywhere to escape their circumstances and join the Martial Arts World. Due to their grace and beauty, as well to their mysterious reputation, definitive power, and the fact that most members move like heavenly royalty, they are also called the Fairy Clan.

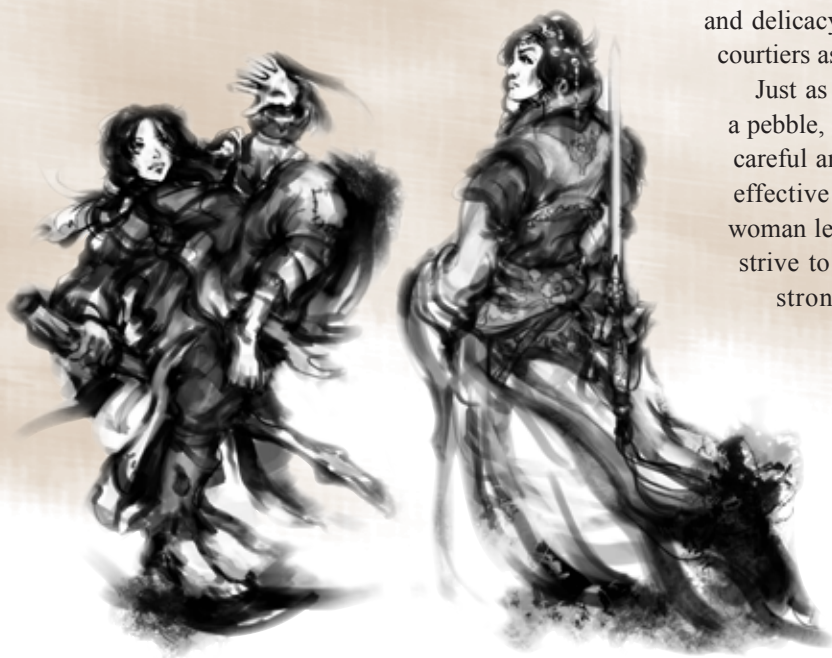
Training heroines and sending them to accomplish great deeds across Jiang Hu was not enough for Ban Zhao; her ambition was for women to stand tall under Heaven, to

rule and shape society alongside their fellow men both in the Martial Brotherhood and in the secular world. While the Resplendent Phoenix Society is deeply rooted in the Rivers and Lakes, gifting it with strong and powerful female heroes, it also has a foot in the Mountains and Forests, training women to become the wives and concubines of influential men or the governesses of their sons and daughters.

The society does not intend to overthrow a society with force, but to subvert it from within through subtlety and cunning: the traditional and time-honored weapons of women in a patriarchal culture. The society does not rebuke the qualities normally attributed to women, but instead embraces them, seeking to sublimate the principles of grace and delicacy. As a society, the Phoenix produces as many courtiers as it does warriors.

Just as water erodes a powerful rock until it becomes a pebble, a concubine might control the emperor through careful and subtle action; such a champion would be as effective to the betterment of Shen Zhou as a warrior woman leading an army in the field. In many ways, they strive to become ideal women, beautiful and delicate, strong and perseverant, educated in the arts and academics as well as kung fu.

Heroines of the Resplendent Phoenix are zealous of their virtue, very careful in accepting courtship and taking a lover or mate. That man must be one of great potential or accomplishment, her equal in many respects. The stereotype of a maiden of the Fairy Clan has her acting distant and cold towards men in general, and especially callous towards misogynists.



Women from this faction who are willing to marry or become concubines are known as Phoenix Brides. They are desired by many men, not by petty and simple men who want a woman with no backbone and character, but by the cultured and the powerful seeking a companion, someone who would educate sons into being strong and righteous men, and daughters into being graceful and resourceful ladies. (They are also desired by cruel and vainglorious men who wish to break such a splendid bird.)

Such brides can be found acting with the outmost excellence and grace all over the Jiang Hu, and as women in high positions in secular society. When interacting with the Wulin, they will adopt another persona entirely, occasionally disguising themselves with a mask. Whenever it is needed most of them, they will go out of their way to help women in trouble.

The Society as a whole follows the Chivalrous Virtues, especially Righteousness and Altruism. They follow these to the extreme; those who pursue justice by fighting criminals and corrupt heroes do so with utmost zeal.

Secretly, the society has a grander, darker agenda: besides training heroines and improving the situation of women in general in Shen Zhou, the elders of the faction seek to place a “Phoenix under the Dragon’s Shadow” and have a Resplendent Phoenix become an Imperial concubine, or Empress. By controlling the Emperor, they will control the country.

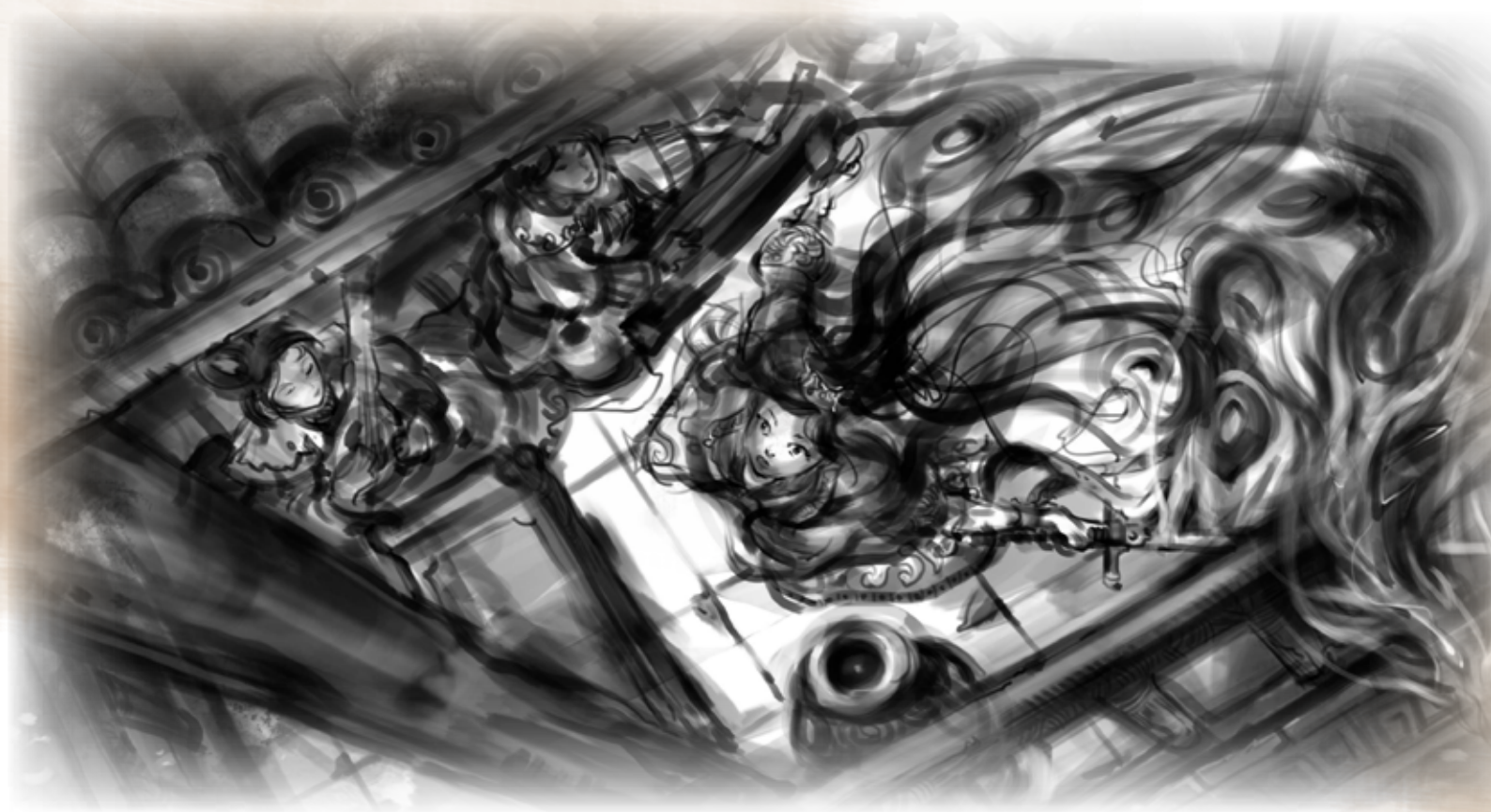
The higher powers of the order would do anything to

achieve this goal, by methods legitimate or underhanded. Nothing will stand in the way of that dream; they have even created a secret technique that embodies this purpose, with the naked name of *Phoenix under the Dragon’s Shadow*. None outside the order has seen the technique and lived, nor even discovered the name.

The current head of the Resplendent Phoenix Society is the powerful heroine Blue Phoenix Princess. She is nearing fifty, yet remains an unmatched beauty due to her Chi cultivation. After many deeds made her famous in the Jiang Hu, she recently became a recluse for reasons of her own; her detractors say she has turned bitter and shrewd, while her supporters say she is as wise and kind-hearted as ever.

Day-to-day society affairs are handled by the Four Celestial Maidens, who live in the four corners of Shen Zhou. Second Celestial Maiden, who loves to mingle in all sorts of Wulin affairs, has become more active in the Jiang Hu recently. She is considered a brat due to having lived a sheltered and privileged life as the Blue Phoenix Princess’s favorite, but it seems her heart is in the right place.

The Resplendent Phoenix Society has headquarters all over Shen Zhou, most of them taking the form of luxurious palaces near gardens and lakes. More secretive locales are set on the middle of lakes, so they may only be reached by lightfoot or boat. The main headquarters is called Red Phoenix Manor, set in the middle of the Flawless Mirror lake in the city of Notably Picturesque. It is said to contain a thousand chambers.



The Resplendent Phoenix Society

Destiny Cost: 5

Concept: As powerful and strong as they are graceful and refined, this Society seeks to embody feminine perfection in both the Wulin and the ordinary world.

The Resplendent Phoenix Society is an all-female society that seeks to improve the circumstances of women in Shen Zhou; in the Wulin, they foster and train women to be great heroines. In the ordinary world, they tutor young women to attain important positions with the power to shape society.

Members of the Society come from all backgrounds. They strive for grace and dignity, but the Society demands that its members be ready to protect their loved ones and themselves with their own strength, and to altruistically strive for the well-being of all women across Shen Zhou.

Virtues: Yi (Righteousness), Kuan (Benevolence)

3+ Status: You are a member of the Resplendent Phoenix Society.

0 Bonus: You get a -2 discount for purchasing the **Daoist Sexual Techniques** Lore.

0 Destiny: You are something rare: a man who has been trained by the Society! This is highly unusual; you might conceal your true gender or otherwise keep a low profile.

0 Fortune: You are a male son of a Society member. Being born into the bloodline, you can learn the society's secrets without developing Chi imbalances.

3 Fortune: Practicing the Society's Yin-centered kung fu techniques has caused a slight unbalance, which manifests as a Paired Minor Medical Condition: a Yin Hyperactivity and a Yang Weakness. Work with the Sage to determine the effects.

Secrets of Destiny: Resplendent Phoenix Kung Fu

These are the martial secrets of the Resplendent Phoenix Society:

0 Bonus: You get a one-time -2 Destiny discount when purchasing one of the following as a secondary External Style: **Flying Red Silk, Graceful Crane, or Eight Legends.**

0 Technique: Martial members of the Resplendent Phoenix Society traditionally learn *Fox-Spirit Song* as their primary Internal Style. You can learn all of its techniques rather than one of each level.

2 Technique: Sun-Draining Talons. If you impose any Ripples with an unarmed attack, you can reduce the amount of Ripples inflicted by one and drain a single point of Chi from the enemy. He loses this point from his reserves, and you may add it to your own. You can only drain normal chi; special types are unaffected. If the target doesn't have any Chi left, you also gain nothing. If you know multiple Secrets that improve your unarmed fighting, you can only use one at a time; choose at the start of each round which one you'll use.

The following Techniques require, beyond membership, that you have mastered the basics of the Fox Song Internal:

5 Technique: Dancing Phoenix: You flow away from harm in a wave of motion and color, with the dancer's grace and poise that is the core of Resplendent Phoenix philosophy.

- If you're in the *Graceful Crane stance* and use *Laughing Face Under Smiling Mask*, that technique has round-long duration.
- If you're in the *Graceful Crane stance* and use *Parting the Grass*, you have a +15 bonus to Dodge Area attacks even if they are not selective.

5 Technique: Splendor of the Silver Empress: You turn softness and beauty into strength by striking out and allowing your grace and splendor to blind your enemies!

- If you're in the *Flowing Universe stance* and use *Songs of Mystery*, all Extraordinary Techniques that require the flooding of dice are affected, not just those of the Warrior's Arts.
- If you're in the *Flowing Universe stance* and use *Hidden Teeth*, your attack may use either Perform or Inspire, whichever is higher. The defender's default defense is either Confidence or Wu Wei, whichever is lower.

5 Technique: You manage to learn the rare and deadly **Phoenix under the Dragon Shadow** technique. This is generally reserved only for high-Ranked and -respected members of the Society (meaning that you should have a Status of 5 or more); if you are not one of them, how on earth have you managed to get hold of it? This underhanded technique teaches you the way to hide an attack in another attack – not revealing its true strength until too late!

- If you're in the *Red Flying Silk stance* and use *Flicking Tail Lashings* after your opponent rolled his defense, you can also use one other internal or formless kung fu technique of second level or lower at that moment.
- If you're in the *Red Flying Silk stance* and use *One-Tail-amongst-Nine-Dance* after the opponent rolled his defense, you can also use one other internal or formless kung fu technique of fourth level or lower at that moment.

Phoenix Brides:

Society members aspire to be beautiful, strong, talented, and intelligent. Many men would fear a woman like that, yet many would cherish a companion that could stand firmly by their side.

Thus, wives, concubines, and courtesans from the Resplendent Phoenix Society with powerful Chi are considered great blessings both in the Wulin and the secular world

1+ Fortune: You are a Phoenix Bride, and have Entanglements with another organization, society or similar by virtue of your status as wife, concubine or governess. This comes with certain privileges and obligations, work out the details with your Sage

Phoenix Under the Dragon's Shadow

It is whispered in the Jiang Hu that the Resplendent Phoenix Society seeks to place a *Phoenix under the Dragon's Shadow*, meaning put a Phoenix Bride by the Emperor as a concubine, or Empress. It means gaining control of the Empire.

This is not only the name of the plot, but also the secret martial technique that reflects their final ambition. It is as subtle as it is lethal; This technique is detailed under *Resplendent Phoenix Kung Fu*, above.

You are required by the society to keep this technique an absolute secret, or else pay a very steep price for your indiscretion.

3 Involvement: The Phoenix plot to control the throne becomes an important part of your story.

1-5 Involvement: The plot by this society to control the throne becomes an important part of the story of player character or NPC of your choice.

10 Victory/Destiny: By hard work or Heaven's providence, you are in a position to dictate the fate of the Plot! This will determine the future of Shen Zhou – will the Emperor end up controlled by the elegant but firm hand of the Phoenix, or will the Society be annihilated in the struggle?

The Beggar Fraternity

If the Jiang Hu is a refuge for outsiders, no one has a more righteous place in it than the members of this secret society.

Those who are rejected and despised by so-called normal society, those who most of the time are not even seen by the regular world, the poor, the sick, the crippled, the mad – they are the blood and bones of the Beggar Fraternity.

As is to be expected, they are by far both the largest organization in the martial world and the most widespread, yet not all beggars in Shen Zhou are members and not all the members are actually beggars. Some of their ranks even stand in the highest positions of society.

The Fraternity possesses two Divisions: the Dirty Clothes Division, those who dress and live like beggars, and the Clean Clothes Division, who dress in normal clothing and live in all strata of society.

It is said that they constitute an entire sub-world within the Wulin because of their large numbers. The complexity of their ways is known only to those inside the organization; only they can recognize each other and tell the ranks of their members.

Members of the society may generally recognize each other by wearing pouches; the more pouches one wears, the higher his or her status within the organization. While other members of the Wulin know that beggars from the association have pouches, they generally know nothing about recognizing status.

Even if one dressed as a beggar and wore certain pouches to disguise himself, it would not fool a typical beggar clan member; the Fraternity easily recognizes impostors by small details, such as pouches being the wrong color or being worn in the wrong order, or by asking coded questions.

Because they are practically everywhere, passing unnoticed most of the time, the Fraternity members are masters of subterfuge and information. It's well known that if you want to learn a secret, you should search for a member of the Beggar Clan. The Beggar Fraternity is known across the Fighting Community as paragons of the Chivalrous Virtues of Altruism and Loyalty; it is their creed to never deny their help to those who deserve it, to never own more than they need to survive, and to always give to those in real necessity.

Even members, who stand high in society, keeping sumptuous manors and great fortunes, do so in order to maintain the appearance of their status; they are expected to readily place all their resources at the disposal of those with a just cause, or leave everything behind if the society requires it of them.

The Beggars love to enjoy a simplistic life. The Fraternity plays host to travelers, lovers, poets, drunks, experts on good food, and everything in-between. Most of them see camaraderie and friendship as the greatest of treasures; the society is famous for their hospitality and Beggar's Banquets are legendary all across the Martial World.

To be ignored and unseen by much of the world may be a curse to many, but the Beggars find it a blessing. One would be surprised to find exiled ministers and generals, princes and princesses among the Beggar ranks. Those who hide from their way of life or are targets of assassination are welcome in the Fraternity –it is even rumored that once they hid a deposed emperor among them.

But this also constitutes a problem: many assassins, criminals, and those escaping from rightful retribution hide behind the protective shadow of the Society. Most join for redemption or peace, but there are many who seek to escape justice.

Their leadership is quite particular: they have a Council of Beggar Elders elected from within the clan, and a Beggar King who acts as the face of the clan and as leader on most matters, especially martial ones. The peculiarity lies in that upon a Beggar King's death or retirement, the society holds a tournament open to all the Wulin, competing on matters ranging from kung fu to Secret Arts to ethics. The winner of the tournament, no matter whom he or she may be, will become the next Beggar King (a gender-neutral term). It is customary for all present members to spit on the newly elected king when he takes the title.

The Beggar King stands at a level of respect and reverence only surpassed by the heads of the Pillars. The current King is man of uncertain origins and youthful appearance; he is a good-humored person, who enjoys playing jokes on people and not acting very seriously. It appears that he spends a lot of his time trying to escape the

responsibility of leadership and his henpecking wife by wandering off and having adventures across the Jiang Hu. He is rumored to be a master of disguise and manipulative arts; thus, he often manages to pass along undetected and get away with whatever he is doing. Anyone, at any moment, may encounter the Beggar King without knowing it, or so the stories claim.

The founding of the Beggar Fraternity is shrouded in mystery, with many contradicting legends about their origins. The Beggars like it that way. They often add things to the stories in order to make them more confusing. Their impudence is aided by their possession of one of the most famous techniques in the Martial Brotherhood, the simple-yet-effective transcendent style known as Dog-Beating Stick.

The Beggar Fraternity considers the entire world their home, and as such they don't have a specific place that they call headquarters. They have lodges all over Shen Zhou; these lodges are often hidden underground lairs known only to society members. When an outsider is taken to one of this lodges, even as a friend, he will probably be rendered unconscious first and dragged in a roundabout manner. Often these lodges are temporary; even if an outsider managed to find one they'd likely find nothing, as the association has already moved to a different headquarters.

Beggars may stand in the lowest place in society in the Jiang Hu, but only a fool in the martial world would ever disrespect a beggar. Others may look on them with contempt, but they are amongst the greatest heroes in the Wulin.



The Beggar Fraternity

Destiny Cost: 5

Concept: Salt of the earth, roaming the Jiang Hu searching for adventure and enjoying life at the fullest! With eyes everywhere, they are the masters of information and disinformation in the Wulin.

If the Jiang Hu is a refuge for outsiders, none have a greater right to a place within it than the brothers of the Beggar Fraternity. Those who are rejected and despised by so-called normal society, those who most of the time are not even noticed by the ordinary world. Hidden in plain sight with members everywhere, they are the masters of espionage in Shen Zhou.

Fraternity members come from diverse backgrounds. Some have no place else in the world, and no family but the Fraternity. Others have chosen to leave their old lives behind, either to find a new, simpler life or to escape something dreadful in the past.

Virtues: Zhong (Loyalty), Kuan (Benevolence)

Secrets of Destiny: the Beggar Fraternity

3+ Status: You are a member of the Beggar Fraternity.

0 Bonus: You may choose a **Survival Skill Specialty: Roughing it up** or a **Stealth Skill Specialty: Another Face in the Crowd** for free.

The Beggar Fraternity has two divisions that you can belong to.

0 Destiny: The Dirty Clothes Division: You live life as a simple beggar. This may be the only life you have ever known, or you may have shed your former existence to lead a life of humble simplicity. Normally you manage just fine, and humble as it is, you never lack food in your bowl or a place to sleep...

5 Disadvantage: Poverty... unless you take this Disadvantage, in which case you may earn extra Destiny when your misfortune comes into play.

0 Destiny: The Plain Clothes Division: You live a normal life as a member of any strata of society yet your loyalties lie with the Beggar Fraternity who may require you to perform such tasks as spying on someone, give refuge to members and leave whatever you may be doing to go into missions, normally you manage to balance this aspects of your life without a problem.

5 Disadvantage: Double Life... unless you take this option, in which case you may earn one extra Destiny every time balancing your allegiance to the organization and your ordinary life gets you in trouble.

(As usual, you only have to pay for Disadvantages if you already have two or more.)

1+ Destiny: Fly on the Wall: The Beggar Fraternity are known masters of espionage, for they can eavesdrop almost anywhere without attracting attention. (Who notices beggars?) Declare that you overheard something important to the current story. This must be at least somewhat plausible - a beggar might go unnoticed in a busy teahouse, but they'll stick out like a sore thumb in the royal chambers.

3+ Fortune: Whether you are a member of the Fraternity or not, you have earned their friendship and loyalty: they will come to your aid in times of need. Work with your Sage to define the background of this relationship. Once per Story, you may call upon the help of the Beggar Fraternity. The cost will depend on the magnitude of the favor and the impact on the story.

Secrets of Destiny: Beggar Fraternity Kung Fu

Naturally, these all require that you are a full-fledged member of the Beggar Fraternity.

0 Bonus: You get a one-time -2 Destiny discount when purchasing one of the following as a secondary External Style: **Subtle Force, Divine Pattern Long Strokes, or Eight Legends.**

0 Technique: Martial members of the Beggars Fraternity traditionally learn **Boundless Prosperity Manual** as their primary Internal Style. You can learn all of its techniques rather than one of each level.

2 Technique: Somehow, you are trained in the Beggar Fraternity's legacy technique, **Dog-Beating Stick!** If you fight with a staff, you may treat it as a special weapon that is also either flexible or massive. Choose at the start of each round which one you'll use.

The martial secrets of the Beggar Fraternity are intimately tied to the Internal lessons of the *Boundless Prosperity Manual* – the different External stances contain secrets to enhance these powerful techniques. If you have this Internal and are a member of the Fraternity, you can buy the following Techniques:

5 Technique: Lessons in Humility.

- If you're in the *Subtle Force stance* and use *Act Without Resistance* while attacking for superficial damage using *Correct Approach*, your *Rippling Roll* ignores the target's armor.
- If you're in the *Subtle Force stance* and use *Retain Balanced Nature*, you may apply the bonus to remove any kind of *Disorient* or *Disrupt Marvel* regardless of how they're described.

(continue)

5 Technique: Old Immortal Rascal.

- If you're in the *Eight Legends stance* and use *God-Body Transcendence*, the first extension is free of charge. Thereafter the cost still cumulative increases by one each round (0 Chi for the first extension, 1 Chi for the second, 2 Chi for the third, etc.).
- If you're in the *Eight Legends stance* and use *Be Where You Must*, enemies trying to Break the Wave of your covering ground suffer a -10 penalty to their check.

5 Technique: A World Without Dogs.

- If you're in the *Divine Pattern Long-Strokes stance* and use *Reflexes Like Lightning*, that technique has round-long duration.
- If you're in the *Divine Pattern Long-Strokes stance* and use *Five Elements Supreme Combination*, you may also choose to have your attack be an Area attack that is automatically selective. You can still boost the technique to gain the other benefits as well.

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

Many members of the Beggar Fraternity are not what they seem. They might have a tumultuous past, or even come from royalty! For reasons noble or nefarious, they have shed their identity and taken on a new one.

3 Destiny: You have a hidden past, but it's hard to escape it. You found a new life with the Beggar Fraternity, yet Heaven will not allow you to put your past behind you until you have resolved it. What an adventure that will be! Work with the Sage to design a *Minor Hyperactivity* that would come in to effect when you act as the person you were (or were supposed to be). This behavior should risk blowing your cover and bringing your past back to haunt you.

1+ Fortune: Declare that an NPC member of the Beggar Fraternity is actually an important person whose revelation would affect events in the story; they have been hiding in plain sight as an anonymous beggar!

THE BEGGAR KING

The Beggar Fraternity is ruled by a council of elders and by the Beggar King. When the Beggar King dies or retires, the Fraternity holds a tournament to select the new head of the society. This tournament is open to anyone, regardless of association, Rank or reputation; kung fu is but one of the qualities tested. The winner becomes the new Beggar King!

The current Beggar King is good-humored and enjoys playing jokes on people. He spends much of his time wandering off to have adventures across the Jiang Hu. Being a master of disguise and manipulation, he often manages to pass along undetected, so anyone may unknowingly encounter the Beggar King!

3 Destiny: You will enter the competition to become the new Beggar King. What possibilities and adventures will this bring for your character?

-1 At least one of your rivals or enemies will also enter the competition. The beggar elders shake their heads; this will certainly be interesting.

5 Destiny: Whether you realize it or not, your path has crossed, or will cross, that of the Beggar King. It will likely be a mixed blessing to entangle your story with that of this powerful, unpredictable, playful immortal!

-2 The Beggar King has decided to share his attention with one of your rivals or enemies, or just someone you can't stand. His machinations will bring you two together to compete, fight, or (worse!) work together.

3-5 Fortune: You learn a powerful secret regarding the current Beggar King, or the process to select a new one.

10 Destiny/Victory: With hard work and the favor of Heaven, and maybe with more than a little bit of trickery, you are in the position to decide who will be the new Beggar King. Maybe you have earned that position for yourself, or maybe you can play the hand of the gods and appoint someone of your choice!

10 Treasure: Due to some extraordinary circumstances – or suspiciously mundane circumstances – you acquire the Legendary Weapon normally carried by the Beggar King: the Dog-Beating Stick that gave its name to the Beggar Fraternity's martial arts!

-3: This is all part of a joke played on the Wulin by the Beggar King! What complications will it bring to your life, and how long will you manage to hold onto this powerful weapon?

The Falling Leaves Society

Of all the factions in the Wulin, none claim a greater legacy than the Falling Leaves Society. They proclaim to descend by direct martial tradition from **Huangdi** himself, the **Yellow Emperor**, who in ancient times descended from Heaven to bring order and civilization to Shen Zhou.

There is no way to prove or disprove the veracity of

such claims, and there are many contradicting legends about their true origins. The society bolsters stories that back their authenticity and noble lineage, and tries to bury those that deny it. They may well be the oldest society in all the Wulin, the one with the proudest and most noble origins, or they may be the newest one, gaining inspiration from the past and trying to rebuild an ancient legacy to rescue it from oblivion.



They take their name from the concept that they are the last leaves of a Golden Age, of the glorious summer in Shen Zhou when civilization shone bright, and society grew strong as a mighty tree. Today is the autumn of the world; the glory of the past fades away as values and principles are forgotten, and the remnants of that glorious past are scattered like leaves in autumn across the four winds, and crushed into the ground. If the world keeps following this path, it is headed for a terrible and cruel winter of absolute chaos and decadence, where the once-mighty civilization will be destroyed and forgotten.

The missions of the Falling Leaves Society are to prevent this disaster from occurring, to cling to the last golden leaves of the glorious past, to stop decadence in its tracks, and to bring the Land of the Gods to glory once more.

The Falling Leaves are heavily involved with the idea of changing society as a whole. They consider themselves stewards of the magnificent past of Shen Zhou; besides the Chivalrous Virtues of Righteousness and Honor, they hold high ideals such as knowledge, civilization, and social harmony. Everything and everyone has a proper and respected place. Societies who advocate social change – such as the Resplendent Phoenixes – are disdained by the Falling Leaves.

Their highly conservative attitude puts them at odds with many of the more liberal-minded members and factions of

the Martial World. They do not see the Wulin as a place to escape the bonds of society and forge a unique identity, but as a force of righteous heroes that should rise when society becomes corrupt to bring it back into place.

This tension increased some years ago when the previous leader of the sect, Immortal Crane, attempted to unify the forces of the Wulin to prevent the current dynasty from taking power. He attempted to attain the title of Wulin Mengzhu. He was rejected, ending his dream of a unified Martial Brotherhood fighting for the restoration of Shen Zhou. Since then, the Falling Leaves have been seen as a living relic, an organization trapped in the dream of a past long gone.

Yet, their wisdom, their determination, integrity, courage, and martial might cannot be denied, nor can their many heroic deeds. They have earned their rightful place among the orthodox factions of the Wulin, and most heroes know it is better to be on their good side than against them.

Since their plan of unifying the Wulin to prevent the current dynasty from taking power failed, they have been involved in many underground plots to overthrow it. The most notable of these occurred when Immortal Crane attempted to assassinate the previous Emperor; he was discovered, but because he had previously sworn off all ties to his organization with the Hand Washing ceremony, he was executed without involving the Wulin. Although the Falling Leaves claimed he acted independently, it is widely believed that such a plan came from within the faction, and that Immortal Crane had the backing of the Society the whole time.

The fact that the Emperor disappeared shortly after this failed assassination attempt tied the Falling Leaves Society to an even stranger legend. The official records say the emperor committed suicide, and that is a fact accepted by most people, but the Jiang Hu is full of rumors. Some say that the Emperor survived whatever attempt happened on his life and faked his own death, and that he is currently a prominent hero of the Wulin. One legend declares he was so moved by Immortal Crane's sacrifice that he now fights to overthrow the corrupt dynasty he once headed alongside the Society, or even guiding it behind the shadows.

Not much is known about the current leader of the Falling Leaves, except that he is a stern but just man who prefers to have his actions speak for his ideals instead of involving himself in the squabbles of the Martial World. Known as Helmsman Oak, he is highly respected by all heroes who have had the pleasure of meeting him.

Like many other organizations, most of the affairs of the society are handled by a council of four elders, comprised of two elderly women, one ancient man, and a youthful prodigy.

There has recently been a division within the society as one of the branches strives for greater independence and autonomy. This branch has a conflict of ideals with the main corpus of the Leaves; this branch calls itself the Blue Flame, and they are based around the scholar family of Zhuge.

The Blue Flame believes that the glorious past should serve as inspiration for the future, but not as a map to create a new golden age. They must not copy what was done before,

but instead create something new, and as such they are very open to new ideas and dedicated to imposing positive changes in society.

As this society is formed in great proportion by Courtiers and Scholars, this debate has been largely philosophical as both branches try to convince the other of the validity of their view. The main society sees the branch as well intentioned but misguided youths, who waste time and energy on silly ideas and strange inventions. The branch sees their predecessors as wise but stubborn elders, who just need to

open themselves to the future in order to truly change the world.

The Falling Leaves Society has its headquarters in the Jade Ink Manor in the scholarly city of Magnificent Ink; it is a respectable house with a noble history, where everyone is welcomed to study kung fu or the classics with the society. There are, of course, secret chambers known only to members, where they practice their powerful kung fu and make their plans for the betterment of Shen Zhou.

The Falling Leaves Society

Destiny Cost: 5

Concept: Gentlemen and ladies of a far better age, they follow the example of Huangdi and seek to bring Shen Zhou back to a golden era.

The Falling Leaves may be one of the newest or the most ancient among the factions Wulin, they lay claim to a legendary and most illustrious legacy than. They believe themselves to be martial descendants from the Yellow Emperor, Huangdi himself who brought order and civilization to Shen Zhou.

They proclaim themselves stewards of the glorious time, and they embody the ideals of that past through their actions. By their deeds they will bring a new golden age.

Virtues: **Xiao** (Filial Piety), **Yi** (Righteousness), **Xin** (Honor)

3+ Status: You are a member of the Falling Leaves Society. Members of the society fight for civilized ideals of knowledge and social harmony, where everyone has a proper, respected role. They see the modern day as decadent and chaotic. They'd prefer to teach by example, but they will knock some sense in the world if necessary.

Most members of the society come from noble (or at least well educated) families with lineages that go back generations; many of these families have been tied to each other by blood, marriage, or martial tradition for living memory. The Society roster is predominantly elderly, but they aggressively recruit young heroes to carry on their traditions. Without the future on their side, how can they recover the past?

The society is egalitarian with regard to age, gender or social rank; prospective members are judged only by their accomplishments, character, and the will to be *Junzi* – a proper gentleman.

0 Bonus: As a member of the Falling Leaves Society, you get a one-time 2-Destiny discount when buying one of the following as a secondary External Style: **Eight Legends**, **Divine Pattern Long Strokes**, or **Graceful Crane**.

0 Technique: If you are a member of the Falling Leaves Society, you probably have *Heaven's Lightning* as your primary Internal Style. You can learn all of its techniques, rather than one of each level.

0 Bonus: If you are a member of the Falling Leaves Society, you may purchase the Confucianism Lore at a -2 Destiny discount.

5 Disadvantage: Glories of the Past. The conservative attitude of the Falling Leaves puts them at odds with the progressives of the Martial World. For most Society members this isn't a problem, but if you take this Disadvantage, you earn an extra point of Destiny every time your conservative attitude gets you in trouble.

5 Secret: As a righteous member, you are deemed worthy of learning the **Star Crown of the Morning technique**, which allows you a point of Cultivation every time you perform a Chivalrous Deed.

Secrets of Destiny: Fallen Leaves Society Kung Fu

As a member of the Falling Leaves Society, you have access to the following martial Secrets. All but **Golden Saint Palms** require that you have mastered the basics of the **Heaven's Lightning** Internal style.

2 Technique: You learn the **Golden Saint Palms** technique. If you fight unarmed, any Chivalrous joss you spend also applies to the Rippling rolls you make. If you know multiple Secrets that improve your unarmed fighting, you can only use one at a time; choose at the start of each round which one you'll use.

5 Technique: You learn the **Divine Thunder King** technique. If you're in the *Eight Legends stance* and use any *Heaven's Lightning technique* that lets you use the Shock effect, any Rippling rolls you make as a result of this Shock effect receives a +5 bonus. This bonus is Lore-derived, and so it stacks with Kung Fu.

5 Technique: You learn the **Edict of Heaven** technique. If you're in the *Divine Pattern Long-Strokes stance* and use any *Heaven's Lightning technique* that lets you use the Shock effect, you have a +5 bonus to that check.

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5 Technique: You learn the secrets of **Sky-Skorching Flight**.

- If you're in the *Graceful Crane stance* and use *Traveling the Instant Path*, you also get a +10 bonus to any Covering Ground check you make.
- If you're in the *Graceful Crane stance* and use *Holding Yin and Yang*, you may choose to have the technique apply its bonuses to Dodge and Toughness instead of Strike and Damage.

Inspired By The Past

The Falling Leaves Society is inspired by great heroes and sages of the past. Many members can trace their blood and martial lineages across generations back to a past legend of the Wulin!

3 Fortune: You descend strongly by blood or martial tradition from a legendary ancestor who lived up to the ideals and virtues defended and practiced by the society, or from someone who fought to preserve the civilization and culture of Shen Zhou. You gain a *Minor Hyperactive Chi Condition* based on living up to such an illustrious legacy. Work with your Sage to design those details, as well as an outline of the background of your ancestor.

3 Destiny/Victory: Once per story, you may automatically Inflammate your condition into a *Major* one for a scene in which you are closely reenacting the deeds of your ancestor's moment of glory, echoing their legend, the destiny cost should be paid for each individual use.

-2 You are tied to your ancestor's Destiny, including their manner of defeat or death! You are considered to be suffering under a Prediction Weakness of the same intensity as the Hyperactivity. This Weakness predicts your defeat and demise; work out the details with the Sage.

The Blue Flame Branch

This minor branch of the Society, known as the Blue Flame Branch, believes that the glories of the past should serve as inspiration for the future, but not as a map. In order to create a golden age, they must do more than copy what was done before. They must do new things! They are very open to novel ideas and dedicated to imposing positive change on society.

Most members of the Blue Flame are from the scholarly Zhuge family. They struggle for greater independence and autonomy from the larger Society in war is waged with debate and philosophic discourse rather than violence.

2+ Status: You are a member of the Blue Flame Branch of the Falling Leaves. You believe the glories and achievements of the past should serve as inspiration but that society must move forward instead of looking back. You are most likely a member of the Zhuge family or someone tied to them by marriage, alliance or martial tradition.

0 Bonus: You may choose a **Crafting Skill Specialty: Inventions** or an **Inspire Skill Specialty: Idealistic Change** for free.

0 Bonus: If you are a member of the Blue Flame Branch, you may purchase the **Mohism Loresheet** at a -2 Destiny discount.

5 Disadvantage: Radical Dreamer. Members of the Blue Flame Branch are considered wishful thinkers by the Falling Leaves, and sometimes by the rest of the Wulin. Normally this isn't a big problem for you, but if you take this disadvantage, then you gain a point of Destiny every time you get in trouble for being ahead of your time.

10 Destiny/Victory: Once per game, you successfully introduce a world-changing, possibly anachronistic idea to Shen Zhou, or make a great achievement that will move society forward in a positive manner. You might establish positive relationships with the "mysterious white ghosts" who've just landed on the southern continent, discover a world-changing scientific theory, or convince the Emperor to change the legal status of all peasants! Work with your Sage to design this change so that it becomes a fun new part of the setting, rather than something that breaks it.

Leaves Tainted with Royal Blood

Many years ago, the former master of the Falling Leaves Society, Immortal Crane, sought to become the Wulin Supreme, and unify the forces of the Martial Arts World to prevent the rise of the current, usurping dynasty.

This attempt failed, leading Crane to break his ties to the Fighting Community so he could to make an unsuccessful assassination attempt on the former emperor. Because of this shameful episode, many believe the Falling Leaves Society is still secretly pursuing an overthrow of the current dynasty. This has led to much tension between the Society and the rest of the Wulin.

3-5 Fortune: You learn an important secret about Immortal Crane and his bid to unify the Wulin, as well as his assassination plot against the emperor; you might discover the true goals of the Falling Leaves, and the final fate of the former emperor.

3 Involvement: The Falling Leaves plot to overthrow the Jin Dynasty becomes an important part of your story.

1-5 Involvement: The plot by the society to destroy the Jin Dynasty becomes an important part of the story of an NPC of your choice.

10 Victory/Destiny: By hard work or the hand of Heaven, you end up in a position to dictate the fate of the plot! Will the Falling Leaves succeed in overthrowing the Jin and restoring the Han? Will they be exterminated by the fury of the empire? Will the rest of the Wulin support them or turn against them?

The Dragon Well Sect

The Dragon Well Sect is a Daoist Sect that seeks to achieve harmony with the universe through all their actions. For them, practice of kung fu and Secret Arts are tools that lead to inner enlightenment and peace, their actions and deeds means to bring harmony to the world as a whole.

It is their objective to lead society to a more harmonious existence, where humanity would grow by following the natural flow of the universe and not by trying to dam it or swimming against the current. In order to create a more harmonious world, they first have to become harmonious themselves.

They believe that a person must first conquer themselves before attempting to conquer the world; human beings must learn to live in accordance to the Dao, and then the outside world will follow. They tend to be more introspective than other factions.

Members of the sect believe that the well of inner power is the source from which they will raise as dragons, perfected and enlightened. They seek to be “like water”, strong and soft at the same time, flexible and formless, adapting and reacting to any situation, while always retaining their essence.

External quests are paths to internal growth; the true challenges a hero must overcome are internal. True victory in defeating an enemy lies in breaking past one’s limits.

They are known as masters of internal cultivation and the secret arts of Daoism. Their practices lead to higher harmony with the world, and some say to enlightenment and even immortality. Certainly, the myths of Daoist Immortals lend credence to these rumors. They are likely the only faction in the Wulin to have a predominance of Priests, and cultivate Daoist esoteric arts with as much zeal as kung fu. They are known to experiment in internal and external alchemy and Five Element Theory.

The Dragon Well Sect has very strict rules of conduct for their members, as they are ordained priests and priestesses. They must abstain from eating meat, consuming intoxicating substances and romantic or sexual activity. They do not claim these things are inherently evil, but they are distracting and contaminating; their internal energy is a well of fresh water, and must be kept clean and pure. Any elements that can pollute the Chi, distract the mind and weaken the body must be avoided!

Dragon Well Sect accepts male

and female members, and they are treated equally. For them, gender is simply another superficial difference like skin tone, or national origin, and not something that should affect the internal cultivation of a person. Male and female disciples usually dress in a simple gender-neutral manner. They are expected to treat each other as brothers and sisters.

There are some heretic members of the sect who roam the world as wandering Daoist sages, going and doing as they please. They are considered eccentrics, and sometimes are even seen as unorthodox members of the Wulin. Yet, if their wisdom and deeds makes them into great heroes, and their infractions are minor, they are still accepted within the sect, though more as affiliates than full members.

Many across the Jiang Hu attribute power over the supernatural world to members of the Dragon Well Sect; many are the tales of brave Daoists fighting demons, spirits and ghosts. The truth of such stories can never be fully confirmed or denied.

It can be said that above all their greatest strength is to be like water or like the Dao itself: ever changing and adaptable. They will flow across obstacles if they cannot overcome them; crush them when they cannot flow around them. They know when it is better to contain power and when to release it. They strive for a Yin-Yang balance between tranquility and force, contemplation and dynamism, and the sect is known for its embodiment of the virtues of Harmony and Benevolence.

Currently, the Dragon Well Sect has only one monastery, deep within the Five Dragons Mountain Range in the central region. It is a retreat of unearthly beauty and humble simplicity. At the core lays the greatest treasure of the sect: the Dragon Well itself. It is said that whoever drinks the well-water will experience an instant with complete clarity of purpose, where all doubts will vanish; that person will be able to focus all their efforts upon whatever goal they need to be achieved with the utmost excellence.

Despite having only one temple, there are Dragon Well masters all across the Jiang Hu, open to take worthy individuals as disciples. Each master is believed to carry a shard of the temple’s wisdom within.

The current leader of the order is an elderly abbot named Subtle Willow; despite his age, he’s known as a great hero of the Wulin who often serves as the voice of wisdom and serenity in many conflicts within the Martial Arts World.



The Dragon Well Sect

Destiny Cost: 5

Concept: Daoist Sages in lofty peaks, seekers of enlightenment and harmony.

The Dragon Well Sect is the foremost Daoist society in the Wulin. They are masters of internal cultivation and the secret arts of Daoism. For the Dragon Well Sect, the inner power is a well whose waters can make heroes rise as dragons to perfection and enlightenment. Like water they strive to be strong, yet soft, flexible and formless, adapting and reacting to any situation while always retaining their essence.

The majority of members are ordained priests or priestesses who follow strict codes of conduct. They abstain from eating meat, consuming intoxicants, and amorous activity so as to keep their internal energy clean and pure, like a well of fresh water.

Virtues: Daoism, Kuan (Benevolence)

Secrets of Destiny: The Dragon Well Sect

3+ Status: You are a member of the Dragon Well.

0 Bonus: You may purchase the Daoism Loreshet at a -2 Destiny discount.

Secrets of Destiny: Dragon Well Sect Kung Fu

0: Bonus: As a member of the Dragon Well Sect, you get a one-time 2-Destiny discount when buying one of the following as a secondary External Style: **Destiny Cloud Fist**, **Subtle Force** or **Flowing Universe**

0 Technique: If you are a member of the Dragon Well Sect, you probably have *Removing Concepts* as your primary Internal Style. You can learn all of its techniques, rather than one of each level.

2 Technique: Infinite Universe. Your Chi allows you to extend the power of palms and fists across the universe ignoring the limits of time and space. Fighting unarmed now also counts as fighting with a ranged weapon. This allows you to claim the weapon bonuses of both and to combine different types of styles. If you know multiple Secrets that improve your unarmed fighting, you can only use one at a time; choose at the start of each round which one you'll use.

Sect members with the *Removing Concepts Internal Style* can learn the following techniques:

5 Technique: Harmony Towards all Things.

- If you're in the *Destiny Cloud Fist stance* and use *The Instant Now*, the bonus is +15 instead.
- If you're in the *Destiny Cloud Fist stance* and use *The Force of Lightness*, you have a +5 Strike bonus to the primary attack. This bonus is granted by this Lore Sheet Secret, so it stacks with kung fu.

5 Technique: Revealing the Universe.

- If you're in the *Subtle Force stance* and use *Yielding to Adversity*, you may choose two dice that you keep and reroll the others.
- If you're in the *Subtle Force stance* and use *Calm Heart Skill*, the bonus applies to both Awareness and Wu Wei, and the technique has round-long duration.

5 Technique: Waves Without Origin Or End.

- If you're in the *Flowing Universe stance* and use *Spontaneous Effort*, you may perform two minor actions based on a single die each.
- If you're in the *Flowing Universe stance* and use *Impassive Existence*, you may extend that technique for one Chi each additional round.

Heretical Sage

You do not abide by the tenets of the order. For you, doing what you will and going where you want is the true nature of the Dao; any restriction will only hinder your understanding of it! You are likely to both indulge in excess and abstain from the most basic necessities; likely you live on the fringes even of the Jiang Hu. Some would say you live on the borders of the supernatural world.

The Dragon Well Sect and other Orthodox sects consider you a heretical sage with mad wisdom; you are respected and listened to, but you are too unpredictable and strange to be trusted or accepted.

Work with your sage to devise a *Minor Paired Chi Condition*. It grants you both a Hyperactivity for engaging in a specific weird or eccentric behavior and a Weakness for restraining from such behavior to fit in normal society.

(continue)

The Unseen World

It is believed that those in harmony with the Dao tread a fine line between the natural and supernatural worlds, and that they can glimpse into the world of Immortals, spirits, gods and demons. One can never be sure if some things are mere superstitions, or glimpses of an unseen world just beyond our own.

3+ Destiny: You declare that some event in the current story, or a significant plot regarding your character, has been influenced by the supernatural. It should be ambiguous whether this influence stems from something strange in the natural world or from a true supernatural power, but it should be worthy of rumor and legend! This creates a supernatural Chi condition – a Minor Curse or Influence that can affect the character himself, other specific characters, or anyone or anything associated with that particular situation or place, for example “a curse affecting Minister Wong in particular or a curse affecting every person who takes the title of Minister in Grey Bark Town”,. This is created just as if the character was making a Discovery, only without the prerequisite use of the Priest's Art

The Dragon Well

The Sect's greatest treasure is the Dragon Well itself, a literal well whose waters purify. There are many legends of it in the Wulin; it is said that it lies deep within the mountains where the Sect keeps its headquarters, so that none can find it without the endorsement of the Sect elders. The road to the Well confronts the seeker with dangers drawn from their inner turmoil; perhaps it is not the well but the road that cleanses their spirit.

Many miraculous properties have been attributed to the well water. Whoever drinks from the well shall know true clarity and freedom from doubt, such that they can pursue their goals with excellence and without distraction. Even the most wrathful warrior or endemically distracted mind could be calmed and find harmony with the world... if the legends are true.

3 Destiny: You quest to drink the water of the Dragon Well. This is not only literal, but also metaphorical: in order to reach the Dragon Well, you must first find the well of fresh water in your own spirit. Both martial excellence and spiritual refinement will be needed to overcome the trials before you, and within you!

-1 At least one foe or rival pursues the Dragon Well and opposes your efforts to do the same! Can either of you realize your true enemies lie within your troubled hearts before the waters are forever lost to you?

3-5 Fortune: You learn of an important secret regarding the Dragon Well and its waters.

10 Victory: After overcoming terrible internal and external impediments, you reach the Dragon Well and drink of its pure **Jade Water**. See pg. 269 for how its transcendent power will change you!



UNORTHODOX FACTIONS

The so-called Unorthodox Factions are on the other side of the Wulin. Inspired, for the most part, by either the Selfish virtues or a mixture of virtues Selfish and Chivalrous, they are not necessarily evil, but possess ideals and agendas that are considered against the general well-being of society. Their methods are considered savage and dishonorable by most of the Orthodox Factions, which brings them into constant conflict across the Jiang Hu.

They disregard social norms and rules, and though they respect their sifu, elders value individual achievement more than legacies. An individual hero's actions are not necessarily held against teachers and organizations.

Some Unorthodox Factions have very clear goals and agendas, usually to benefit those in charge. Members are judged by how much they benefit those in power.

Most Unorthodox Factions value strength and efficiency over anything else. Whatever methods help them achieve greater power and reach their goals are valid. Many mix-and-match styles freely, and openly practice techniques both heretical and forbidden.

It must be noted that while Orthodox Factions follow a certain uniform code of conduct, Unorthodox Factions are vastly

different from one another. While some may be considered evil and chaotic, and would do anything to further their path to power, others live by the same codes of the Orthodox Groups. Sometimes they even embody those codes better, but for some reason or another they exist outside the social order.

Despite their methods, Unorthodox Factions are considered a part of the Wulin, and on most occasions they at least try to pretend to behave according to the standards of conduct of the Martial Brotherhood. But then again, there are unorthodox heroes who do what they want, when they want, and follow no law but their own.

THE HETERODOX FOUR

These four organizations can be said to tread the line between good and evil. Usually they behave according to the norms of the Wulin, yet their loyalties more often lie with their own goals rather than the Martial Brotherhood as a whole.

In most cases, their agendas remain a mystery to the outside world. They can embody the Chivalrous virtues as well as Selfish, easily shifting allegiance from friend to foe or vice-versa.

The difference between Clan, Society, Sect and Cult

These are the most common forms of Wulin factions:

Clans follow a structure that emulates a family, with important figures taking the role of the parents – usually the father – along with other respected members who act as uncles, aunts and elder sisters and brothers. The patriarch has absolute authority, and only those of his choosing (usually related by lineage) may take on the leadership, and then only in his absence.

While most factions that follow the clan structure share blood ties, making them actual clans, this is not always the case. Examples of clans are the Yun Clan and the Eagle Talons (in the Orthodox Factions) and the Hundred Ghosts and Southern Dragon Clan (in the Unorthodox).

Societies come together not out of blood ties but out of commonality of purpose or methods. They are usually dedicated to a common activity or goal, acting in the world at large in order to further that goal. Power within societies tends to be less centralized, having many important figureheads who oversee different parts of the organization (such as different activities or locations). A powerful figure may sit at the center of it all, but the head's authority is based more on his title as chief of the organization than his ties to other members. Members can ascend within the society based on accomplishments, and may eventually ascend to the position of leadership regardless of ties to the current leader.

Examples of Societies are the Resplendent Phoenix Society and Beggar Fraternity (in the Orthodox Factions) and the Black Lotus Society (in the Unorthodox).

Sects and **Cults** usually have a religious orientation besides martial achievement that they seek to live up to. Advancement within these organizations is based not only on achievement and attained power, but on a deeper understanding of religious principles. Their leaders are usually regarded as enlightened figures that must be respected and followed not only because of their earthly power, but also due to spiritual attainment.

The main difference between Sects and Cults is size. Sects are significantly larger and more influential than Cults, and the word 'cult' has a negative connotation associated with forbidden practices. Sects usually keep their beliefs to themselves, preach by example, and are tolerant of those of others. Cults tend to be more fanatical about their beliefs, tend to believe the absolute truth of what they preach, and try to force that truth upon the world in one way or another.

The term Sect is commonly used for Orthodox Factions, while Cult is used for Unorthodox ones. Examples of sects are Little Forest Sect and Dragon Well Sect; examples of cults are the Fire Doctrine and the Vile Rain Cult.

The Liquid Metal Delegates

Orphans from all across of Shen Zhou, raised by secret masters to be the eyes and hands of the Empire in the chaotic world of Martial Arts – these are the Liquid Metal Delegates. Most are constables, rangers, soldiers, even magistrates and tax collectors. They live to bring criminals to justice, investigate mysteries, uncover conspiracies, and to try to bring Imperial law to a lawless world.

They are stalwarts of the Chivalrous Virtues of Righteousness and Loyalty. They hunt down dangerous criminals and corrupt heroes who are a threat to both the Jiang Hu and normal society. They are dedicated in their pursuit of justice and honorable towards those who have earned their friendship, but their deepest loyalty lies with the Empire - with law, rather than justice. Ultimately, members of this organization are expected to place the decrees of courts and Imperial edicts above the ways of the Wulin.

Most members are honorable heroes, but the Martial Brotherhood sees them with a certain degree of mistrust. Despite their deeds, they are not considered full members of the Wulin; heroes from the Liquid Metal Delegates have a harder time proving their loyalty and worth than most other heroes.

They are a faction only in the loosest sense of the word, as they have no visible leadership or internal organization. They have a deep sense of loyalty towards one and other born out of sharing the common past of being orphans thrown into a world of conflict, being considered outsiders among the outsiders, and of trying to bring a semblance of order into a chaotic existence – but they have no leadership. Lacking a legacy and a history as a faction, they also lack a distinctive style of kung fu. Liquid Metal Delegates can be seen practicing a variety of styles from all across the Jiang Hu. They are masters at creating and improvising weapons, some developed out of adaptability and practicality to fit the personality of the individual. They regard survival and success more highly than tradition.

This drive to give themselves an individual identity despite lacking a legacy – to leave their mark in the world by bringing order and law to the lawless of Jiang Hu – allows



them to be considered amongst the heroes of the Wulin. But there is a darker side to the orphans of steel.

There are many legends about sleeper agents living years as members of one faction, cultivating allegiances and close ties, only to turn on those who trusted them like snakes in the grass upon the order of their masters. They are known across the Wulin as the dreaded Invisible Hell Killers. The Delegates deny these as rumors to destroy their reputation, but the stories remain.

Only they know that the will of their masters is cast upon them like a heavy shadow, no matter where they are and what they are doing. Their Imperial masters know, and control them from a distance.

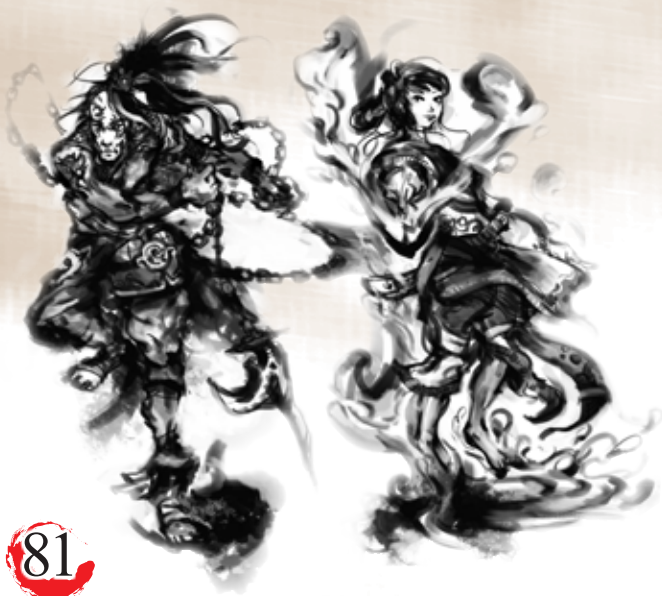
Individuals know little about their masters, as most of their memories are often confused and their pasts blurred, but most of them feel a mixture of intense loyalty and gratitude mixed with healthy doses of fear and awe towards those who raised them. Collectively, these hidden puppet masters are referred to as The Liquid Shadow Magistrates.

The Southern Dragon Clan

Once upon a time, there was a brilliant naval commander in the Imperial fleet. He was known across the realm for his accomplishments, but also because of his unbridled ambition. He dared to call himself Dragon of the Ocean; in the secular world, where only the Emperor can be rightfully referred to as a Dragon, this caused rumors that he ambitioned the throne.

Whether these rumors were true or not, he would bow down to none, standing defiant even in the face of the Emperor himself. He was not liked in the courts, and so the Emperor exiled him to World's End, a desolated island in the farthest reaches of the Empire - there, at the very borders of Tian Xia, where civilization ends.

It was there that he plotted his revenge. He swore to the sea gods that his fury would descend upon Shen Zhou



The Liquid Metal Delegates

Destiny Cost: 5

Concept: The eyes and fists of the Empire across the Jiang Hu.

Orphans from all across of Shen Zhou; raised by secret masters to be the eyes and hands of the Empire in the chaotic world of martial arts. Bringing criminals to justice, investigating mysteries, uncovering conspiracies, and trying to bring imperial law to a lawless world – it is all in a day's work for the Delegates!

Virtues: Legalism, Yi (Righteousness), Zhong (loyalty)

Secrets of Destiny: The Liquid Metal Delegates

2+ Status: You are a member of the Liquid Metal Delegates. You were an orphan raised to be a servant of the law; you are most likely a constable, ranger, soldier or even a wandering judge or tax collector. Regardless of your ties in the Fighting Community, you owe your greater loyalty to the Empire.

The Liquid Metal Delegates have no formal structure or leadership. They usually travel alone or in small groups, and they openly identify themselves as agents of the Empire. Despite a lack of organization delegates have a strong loyalty to each other – and barring extraordinary circumstances, members help each another even if they were not previously acquainted.

0 Treasure: If you are a member of the Liquid Metal Delegates, you may purchase one Special Weapon combining the characteristics of two weapons at a -2 discount.

2 Treasure: If you are a member of the Liquid Metal Delegates, you may purchase an ordinary object that functions as or perfectly hides a normal weapon, but is otherwise indistinguishable from an ordinary object of its type. If this is a **Special Weapon** the cost is 3 Destiny.

0 Bonus: If you are a member of the Liquid Metal Delegates, you may purchase the Legalism Loresheet at a -2 Destiny discount.

5 Disadvantage: Clashing Loyalties. Sometimes the views and morals of the Martial Arts World do not match with those of the empire; normally you manage to reconcile both views and exist as a member of both worlds... but having purchased this Disadvantage, it will be a problem, gain a point of destiny when this gets you into trouble. (As usual, you only have to pay for these Disadvantages if you already have two or more.)

Secrets of Destiny: Liquid Metal Delegate Kung Fu

Like most societies, the Liquid Metal Delegates have their own training regimens expressing their mastery over their own select combat forms. As usual, you can not combine these secrets with **Loresheetsecret** Techniques from other sects.

0: Bonus: As a member of the Liquid Metal Delegates, you get a one-time 2-Destiny discount when buying one of the following as a secondary External Style: **Shadow Catching or Murderous Shadows**

5 Technique: You learn **Iron Shadow Skin**. The Toughness bonus of your *Murderous Shadows stance* increases to +5.

5 Technique: You learn **Liquid Slithering Darkness**. When in the *Murderous Shadows stance*, your Strike bonus increases to +15.

4 Technique: Inevitable Death Sentence. Learning the proper focus, you will never be deterred from your appointed task. When in the *Shadow Catching stance*, you never fear the style of anybody with a lower initiative than you – even if they use a weapon, technique or ability that says you should.

4 Technique: Instant Killing Blow. Internalizing countless lessons about the weak points of a human body – both vital organs and acupuncture points to disrupt the natural Chi Flows – you act in a split second to cause horrible damage. If you are in the *Shadow Catching stance* and your initiative is higher than the target of your attack, this style's Damage bonus increases to +10.

2 Technique: Swirling Shadows. You can now also use the *Shadow Catching style* with flexible weapons.

The Invisible Hell Killers

There are legends across the Jiang Hu of shadow agents of the Empire hiding among the Wulin – agents who may pose as regular Delegates or members of another faction. Yet, if their secret masters order them so, they would strike at comrades, masters or lovers without hesitation... like snakes in the grass.

3 Fortune: You are an Invisible Hell Killer – a shadow agent of the Empire hidden amongst the Martial Community! Due to secret techniques practiced on you during your training, your masters are always aware of your location and can make their will known to you. If you follow their orders, your power will rise – but if you doubt your purpose, you will be haunted by pain and weakness.

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Work with your Sage to design a *Minor Paired Chi Condition* that will grant you a Hyperactivity when you act to fulfill the orders of your masters, and a Weakness when you act against them.

1-5 Fortune: Declare that an NPC is really an Invisible Hell Killer in hiding. What is their true mission, and how will this affect the story?

The Liquid Shadow Magistrates

Little is known about the masters who train the Metal Liquid Delegates. The memories that the Delegates have of the Magistrates are blurry and due to conditions imposed on them during their training, they seem to always know the location of their charges, and have a way of transmitting their will to them. They are the puppet masters pulling the strings of the infamous Invisible Hell Killers. The only sure fact known about them is that they do not react well to failure.

5 Fortune/Disadvantage: Whether you are an Invisible Hell Killer or a regular Liquid Metal Delegate, you've managed to resist or counteract your conditioning to some extent. This often takes an extreme display of willpower, or the meddling of an outside force. These suppressed memories usually come as flashbacks in the most appropriate (or inappropriate) moments, and tend to be followed by terrible pains as the conditioning resists being broken.

Once per episode, you may declare that your character is having a flashback of his training - this will often reveal clues about the current situation as suppressed information comes to light. Plausibility is always advised, as there are situations that will have no relation to your training. The following round, you will be afflicted by a Minor Weakness condition as the secrets of your past fight not to be revealed; this normally takes the form of an action penalty tied to you clutching your head and moaning from the pain.

3-5 Fortune: You discover a secret about the Liquid Shadow Magistrates, their secret training methods or their goals.

6 Victory/Destiny: Somehow you manage, or have managed, to break free of the control of the Liquid Shadow Magistrates. You are free to follow your own path, but this freedom comes at a steep price! You now have the Hunted disadvantage and are persecuted by your former comrades of the Liquid Metal Delegates... and even worse, the dreaded Invisible Hell Killers.

like the rage of the ocean itself, and he would raise his own dynasty from that forsaken island. One day his name would be spoken with the same reverence as the Emperor, and that the seas and waterways would be his empire.

He recruited other fallen officials and disgruntled nobles, along with buccaneers and bandits, to create the greatest pirate fleet the Land of the Gods had ever seen. He modeled his organization on the courts of the Great Dragon Kings, mythical rulers of the oceans. He called himself Southern Dragon King, greatest among them, a Dragon to rival the Emperor himself.

The Southern Dragon King has a boastful and ambitious personality. He enjoyed the company of strong and defiant women, and across the Jiang Hu he was famous for his dalliances with many of the great heroines of the Wulin.

The great dragon met his match in a bandit queen of the southern shores. She controlled a net of smuggling ships and floating brothels; after a courtship consisting of trying to outdo one other in piracy, fighting fierce kung fu duels, and sinking each other's boats, they saw they were made for one other. Today they are married: she is known as Empress Stingray, and they rule their pirate empire together.

Southern Dragon King and Empress Stingray have five daughters known as Dragon Princesses, all of them beautiful, headstrong, and possessed of strong kung fu. The older ones already command their own pirate gangs and have become forces to be reckoned with, while the younger ones are beginning to adventure in the Jiang Hu.

The Pirate Clan fancies themselves akin to the mythical royal courts of the oceans. They are fond of royal regalia and association with creatures of the sea; most distinguished members use official titles with the names of aquatic beings, such as General White Shark, Captain Hammerhead, and Minister Giant Crab.

What they take from the passing ships they see as taxes to cross their territory; they will often grant safe passage to those who offer them a tribute and acknowledge their domain before traveling. Many times they take over the villages and towns near the waterways and see their inhabitants as their subjects. Despite demanding tribute, work, and a safe haven, the pirates usually make good big brothers. They treat their erstwhile subjects with fairness, and protect them from other dangers like bandits or the government. Though motivated by ambition and selfishness, they see themselves as the nobility of the waterways. Most members, at least those with some Wulin rank, often behave honorably and Chivalrously. They honor the rules of the Martial Brotherhood, do not hurt civilians, and show mercy to the defeated.

Rage of the Dragon Kings is their distinctive kung fu, a powerful technique fit for the ruler of the ocean himself; it's based on controlling and manipulating water. The Dragon King himself shapes weapons such as lances or kwan dao out of water; Empress Stingray uses droplets of water as projectiles and needles; while Second Dragon Princess shapes streams of water as duplicates of her sword to act in conjunction with it. Captain Hammerhead uses water to make his fists as powerful as raging waves.

The Southern Dragons Pirate Clan

Destiny Cost: 5

Concept: Pirate royalty, rulers of the seas and waterways of Shen Zhou!

A powerful and ambitious naval officer exiled to the forsaken island known as World's End vowed to shake the Land of the Gods with the fury of the ocean. Today he is known as Southern Dragon King and he heads the greatest pirate fleet in the history of Shen Zhou! They are pirate nobility, fierce and proud, and they see the seas and waterways as their kingdom.

Virtues: Chou (Revenge), Si (Individualism)

Secrets of Destiny: The Southern Dragons Pirate Clan

2+ Status: You are a member of the Southern Dragons Pirate Clan. It is most likely that your background is either that of a disgruntled noble or exiled official, or that you come from a life of piracy and crime.

0 Bonus: You may choose a **Survival Skill Specialty: Bodies of Water** or a **Tactics Skill Specialty: Naval** for free.

5 Disadvantage: Outlaw. You might be the rightful rulers of the waterways of Shen Zhou, but many within the Jiang Hu see you as nothing but a pirate. Even though the arrogant empire will one day bow down to you, they still hunt you as a simple criminal! Never the less, you manage to get along without much trouble... unless you take this Disadvantage, in which case members of the Orthodox factions, the Empire or both are after your hide. Earn an extra point of Destiny per Story every time this gets you in trouble.

5 Fortune/Disadvantage: If you have purified Water Chi, and you take your name or base your image on an aquatic creature, you have a Chi Deviation that is unusually strong related to that being. This might be a behavior that emulates the real or symbolic characteristics of such a creature, or a mutation related to its physical characteristics. You will be sure to have an unusual life and will always be easy to recognize. This is a Minor Paired Hyperactivity (counting as an Influence) that grants a Breath bonus (+1 Water Chi) when you act according to it or a similar penalty when you try to avoid or ignore it.

Secrets of Destiny: Southern Dragon Pirate Kung Fu

These are collected secrets that comprise the martial legacy of the Clan. As usual, these Techniques cannot be combined with **Loresheet Secret** Techniques from other organizations. You must be a full member of the Southern Dragon Pirate Clan (or Sage-deemed equivalent) to buy them.

0 Bonus: You get a one-time -2 Destiny discount when purchasing one of the following as a secondary External Style: **Eight Legends** and **Flowing Universe**

3 Technique: If you have a status of 3 or higher within the organization you may be allowed to learn their greatest secret: the formless technique **Rage of the Dragon Kings**. Water is yours to command to shape into any weapon.

3 Technique: You may learn **Dyeing the Sea with Crimson**. The waters turn red with the blood of your enemies. In the *Eight Legends stance*, you may ignore up to 5 points of the target's armor if you use a Rippling roll to create a new wound condition (but not if you use it to Inflammate an existing condition).

2 Technique: You may learn **Submission to the Pirate Kings**. Sooner or later, all those who travel the waters will bow to their masters. In the *Eight Legends stance*, all your attacks count as Area attacks for the purpose of damaging groups of Minions.

5 Technique: You may learn **Thrashing Dragon Wave**. You stride the world like a mighty dragon across the waters. The Footwork bonus of your *Eight Legends stance* increases to +10.

5 Technique: You may learn **Blood in the Water**. You are unstoppable, like a shark smelling blood. The Speed bonus of your *Flowing Universe stance* increases to +10.

5 Technique: You may learn **Iron Dragon Scales**. No attack shall bow down the mighty dragon kings!. When in the *Flowing Universe stance*, treat your total Chi as if it were 3 points higher for the purposes of determining your Chi threshold.

Southern Dragon King and Empress Stingray

Once upon a time, he was an accomplished but arrogant naval officer. He would bow down to no one - some say he even dared to defy the emperor. Exiled to the last reaches of the empire, he became the scourge of the sea and waterways.

She was a bandit queen of the southern shores who controlled a net of smuggling and floating brothels. Their courtship was a battle of wits, fierce kung fu duels, and boats sinking to the seafloor.

They realized they were made for each other. Today, they are married; he is the Southern Dragon King, and she is Empress Stingray. Together they rule the greatest pirate empire in the Land of the Gods!

7 Fortune: You are highly regarded by Southern Dragon King, Empress Stingray, or both; they have interesting plans for your future.

0 Bonus: Being the protégé of one of both members of the Dragon Couple grants you **Status 4 ("Protegé of X")** within the Southern Dragon Pirate Clan and Status 2 in the Wulin, yet this status is interpreted as infamous. Depending of the circumstances, it may be more of a curse than a blessing.

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0 Bonus: Being in the good favor of Southern Dragon King or Empress Stingray will grant you a **+5** modifier to all intimidation rolls in with people who know about this relationship if acting arrogantly and haughtily, yet honorably and gallantly. This count as a *Hyperactivity*.

+3 You get your own ship and a unit of minions of the same Rank as you.

4 Destiny: Even though they love each other fiercely, both Southern Dragon King and Empress Stingray are passionate people known both for their dalliances and excesses and for their jealousy and possessiveness. Whether or not these feelings are mutual, one of them has started pursuing you as a romantic interest, showering you with gifts and attention. What horrible vengeance will the other seek, and how will they make your life miserable?

1-5 Involvement: Involve an NPC as a protégée or romantic interest of Southern Dragon King and Empress Stingray.

3-5 Fortune: Discover an important secret about the two pirate royals.

The Dragon Princesses

Southern Dragon King and Empress Stingray have five daughters known as the Dragon Princesses, all of them beautiful, headstrong, and with powerful Kung Fu.

3-5 Destiny: Your character gets involved with one of the five dragon princesses as a rival, enemy, friend, ally, or romantic interest. Depending on the nature of this relationship you may end up being hunted by the Southern Dragon Pirate Clan, counting them among your allies, or even end up marrying into the family! What fortune or misfortune awaits you for crossing paths with such magnificent heroines?

Character Option: Your character is one of the two middle daughters of the dragon couple. Known across the Wulin as **Third or Fourth Dragon Princesses**, you are beautiful, headstrong and have powerful Kung Fu, you are famous, wealthy, and feared. The world is truly your oyster! You are expected to live up to the legacy of your legendary parents and your already famous elder sisters, and possibly look after your younger sister as well.

Use the write up of either of the Dragon Princesses as **Rank 4** characters presented in the Scroll of the Sage chapter or create your own version of these characters.

Note: The **Dragon Princesses** are presented in this book as **Advanced Rank 4** characters, therefore may not be suitable as starting characters in all campaigns without some modifications. Consult with your Sage

At first the Southern Dragons were only based in the southern seas of Shen Zhou, but now they've grown more and more powerful, making alliances with other pirate families like the Poison Salt Pirates and the East River Pirates. They have expanded their operations, not only across the oceans but also into rivers and waterways, becoming a painful thorn on the side of the Empire and an important power in the Martial Arts World.

The Hundred Ghost Faction

Few factions are as steeped in mystery as the Hundred Ghost Faction. Many strange legends surround them: it is said they walk the edges between life and death, and that the faction is formed of the ghosts of wronged heroes of the past sent back to the living world to bring retribution and revenge. Rumors say that the leader of the faction is an incarnation of Yama,



the King of Hell himself, and that they raise corpses and use them as minions.

Most of these stories are exaggerations or flights of fantasy, but the Faction does nothing to discourage them. On the contrary; it embraces them and does everything it can to increase its fearfully preternatural reputation. They certainly see themselves as ghosts, roaming between life and death and bringing harsh retribution and dark justice to an unfair and corrupt world.

The Hundred Ghost Faction is comprised mostly of those who have lost everything. Their lives have been destroyed entirely, they've been betrayed, and sometimes even left for dead. They've found a new existence in the society, leaving behind the trappings of the mundane world and the limitations of their former identities to become pure spirits of justice, revenge and retribution.

The world is a corrupt place where those wronged will oft go unavenged even as their spirits cry for justice from the underworld, while the guilty will go unpunished. Even in the Wulin, a society that should be ruled by honor and chivalry, there are many who would commit heinous acts and hide under the façade of righteousness and respectability. They go about the world as proud heroes, when truly they are underhanded villains.

It is the duty of the Hundred Ghost Faction, then, to bring punishment to those who would otherwise escape it. They normally don't bother with the selfish or corrupt heroes who wear ruthlessness on the sleeve and revel proudly in their savagery, openly defying Heaven and Earth; they save their effort for those who hide their evil deeds, engaging in cruelty yet displaying a mask of kindness.

Members of the Hundred Ghost Faction embrace supernatural paraphernalia, taking the names and appearances of ghosts, demons, and other supernatural creatures. Their actions are guided by a powerful sense of poetic justice and divine retribution. This ranges from the cruel torture of a ghostly courtier driving a minister mad and forcing him to destroy his own career and lose all his assets, to the irony of a Fox Masked Thief playing pranks on a self-righteous and hypocritical monk in order to unveil his perversions to the world, to the ruthless and bloody path a demonic hero would carve across the clan that killed his family.

The Hundred Ghost Faction is ruled with an iron hand by two terrible legends of the Wulin: White-Haired Ghost Lord, a giant of a man who appears as the judge of hell himself and carries a giant coffin as his weapon, and his lover, the merciless heroine known as Crimson-Haired Demoness.

One story states that White-Haired Ghost Lord is none other than the previous Emperor, betrayed and left for dead only to be rescued by the Crimson-Haired Demoness. Driven mad by his betrayal and moved by overwhelming love towards his savior, he gained power from corrupt kung fu and became as a living ghost, a *demon* of revenge and retribution!

If there is any truth to this, it is not known. What is known is that White-Haired Ghost Lord and Crimson-Haired Demoness are fiercely loyal to each other, and that they are even more powerful and terrifying when fighting together.



They have vowed to follow each other across the gates of death when the time comes.

The Hundred Ghost Faction is known to possess a very corrupt and powerful manual known as the Living Ghost Scroll, which contains two powerful yet corrupt forms acting as a macabre Yin and Yang. Each of the two leaders of this clan is the undisputed masters of one of the scroll's aspects.

White-Haired Ghost Lord's Corpse Style forces practitioners to become more and more corpse-like as they progress in the style, their life heat extinguished with the passion of their emotions. They become cold and detached, but incredibly resilient and strong. They no longer feel pain or fatigue and so are able to withstand much more than any normal fighter should.

Crimson-Haired Demoness' Bone Demon Claw Style is a dark mirror of her lover's style. This form demands the practitioners act with mad passion and abandon. It demands they become as vengeful demons fueled by fury and revenge. It is an almost imaginably cruel style: it not only rips flesh and bone with talon-like fingers, but distills the user's Chi into a powerful hallucinogenic poison that inflicts horrifying illusions upon victims.

The Hundred Ghost Faction

Destiny Cost: 5

Concept: Fallen Heroes who become as wrathful specters and demons to avenge the wrongs of the world.

Many are the legends that surround the Hundred Ghost Faction; people whisper that they are truly ghosts, or demons sent from the underworld to punish the wicked. Although undoubtedly flesh and blood, its members view themselves as living specters – existing in the borderlands between life and death to bring ghastly retribution on those who would go otherwise unpunished for their evil ways.

Virtues: Chou: (Revenge), Yi: (Righteousness)

Secrets of Destiny: The Hundred Ghost Faction

2+ Status: You are a member of the Hundred Ghost Faction. This organization is formed mostly by people who have lost everything, whose entire lives have been destroyed – usually through betrayal. Many of them have even been left for dead, which is a fitting introduction into their new existence. They leave behind the trappings of the mundane world and the limitations of their former identities to become pure spirits of justice and revenge.

It is the duty of the Hundred Ghost Faction to balance the scales of justice, one bloody deed at the time.

0 Bonus: You may choose a Hardiness Skill Specialty: Resist pain or an Inspire Skill Specialty: Fear for free.

5 Disadvantage: Unwholesome As a member of this faction, you probably have an unusual aspect and behavior, your Kung Fu is probably considered corrupt, and your beliefs are likely extreme and heretical. Despite all this, you get along fine... unless you take this Disadvantage, in which case you earn an extra point of Destiny every time your creepy appearance and behavior gets you in trouble. Take this for free if it is your first or second disadvantage.

5 Fortune: If you have purified *Metal Chi* and you take your name from or base your imagery upon a ghost, demon or spirit, you can take this Fortune to change the nature of your Chi Deviation. It is now strongly connected to that type of supernatural creature in appearance as well as behavior (although one is stronger, you will have at least some elements of the other). This allows you to gain the benefits of a Minor Hyperactive Breath condition – respiring one extra point of Metal Chi at the end of the turn as long as you engage in your chosen behavior and/or accentuate your freakish appearance.

Secrets of Destiny: Hundred Ghost Faction Kung Fu

These are the martial secrets practiced by the Faction.

0 Bonus: As a Faction member you get a one-time -2 Destiny discount when purchasing one of the following as a secondary External Style: **Storm God's Fury** and **Murderous Shadows**.

The Restless Ghost Scroll

8 Technique: Restless Ghost Scroll (Corrupt). If you have at least Status 4 in this organization you may learn the most secret technique of the Hundred Ghost Faction - a dreadful method that brings you one step closer to living death!

- By spreading your yin throughout your body you take on a cold, pale appearance. You must act without emotions. As long as you do so, your Toughness and Damage both increase by 5. This aspect of the Scroll is also called the “**Living Corpse Technique**”.
- In contrast, by spreading your yang and acting like an insane, vengeful specter from hell you can use the Scroll's other aspect, the “**Bone Devil Claw**”. You must act wildly passionate, wallowing in all your regrets, roaring with unrestrained laughter or howling in rage. If you do, your unarmed attacks can cause a fear passion on their Rippling rolls. This roll ignores the target's armor. The victim must act as if he's trapped in hell, terrified and plagued by waking nightmares or else he'll suffer a penalty to his breath.

If you aren't of the Hundred Ghost Faction, work with your Sage to come up with an explanation for how you acquired such forbidden knowledge. Destiny spent on buying this secret counts towards your Corrupt Chi cultivation.

5 Fortune: You learn an important secret about The Restless Ghost Scroll.

0 Bonus: This secret grants you a measure of protection – your Style never Fears Living Corpse Technique or Bone Devil Claw when you fight against it. You must choose one or the other.

+2: Your style never Fears either technique.

Spirits of Vengeance

5 Fortune: You had a life once – you were someone, and you had things that brought you joy. All of these things are now swept away, destroyed by the wickedness of men. You were reborn into the Faction as a spirit of vengeance, your entire existence dedicated to bring justice (or revenge) to those who wronged you... or to prevent the tragedy that befell you from being repeated for someone else.

You develop a Minor Chi Hyperactivity (counting as a Righteousness/Balance Inspiration or Grief /Anger Passion) that gives you a bonus to Chi Breath when you act to wreak literal or symbolical revenge for the wrongs in your past. Work out the details with your Sage.

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5 Disadvantage: Hunted Due to real or perceived actions in your past – either your own or of your forebears – you are in the Dark List of the Hundred Ghost Faction and will be hunted by hellish wraiths all across the Jiang Hu! Take this for free if this is your first or second disadvantage.

5 Fortune: You discover that an NPC is on the Dark List of the Hundred Ghost Faction, targeted for punishment; what secrets hide in their past to warrant such fearsome enemies?

White-Haired Ghost King and Crimson-Haired Demoness

The Hundred Ghost Faction is ruled with an iron hand by two terrible legends of the Wulin, who are surrounded in a shroud of mystery. White Haired Ghost King and Crimson-Haired Demoness are fiercely loyal and faithful to each other – and they are even more powerful and terrifying when fighting together! They have vowed to follow each other across the final gate of death when their time comes; two destinies truly tied as one.

3-5 Fortune: You know a secret regarding White-Haired Ghost King, Crimson-Haired Demoness or both. Are they the ghosts of star-crossed heroes reunited as specters of revenge? The living incarnations of the judges of Hell? A fallen emperor and his lover? Or something else entirely?

6 Fortune: Through truth or trickery, you drive a wedge between White-Haired Ghost King and Crimson-Haired Demoness – or make them worried about the fate of the other. In any case, this weakens them! You are considered to always Laugh at their style for as long as they remain separated or doubtful of each other.

Most of the Wulin doesn't know what to make of the Faction. They are considered neither good nor evil. Their motivations and actions are clearly inspired by Chivalrous ideals, but their methods and appearance are unusual and gruesome, and their kung fu is clearly corrupt. While individual members may be honorable, as a whole they place allegiance to their own organization above the ways of the Wulin.

The Hundred Ghost Faction has their headquarters in the Lifeless Valley, a desolate and barren place where the only life that grows is sickly and crooked. At the entrance of this valley there is a gate, old and ruined, covered with weeds and inscribed with the words Hell Gate. Most common people believe that *hell* really lies on the other side, and that no living thing should enter.

The Blood Wind Cult

This female-only faction remains another of the great mysteries of the Wulin. They are known and feared for their unique ferocity and callousness. They keep to themselves, and are known for having an intense antagonism with Orthodox sects and nothing but contempt for Unorthodox ones. Those who cross their paths tend not to survive.

No one really knows the truth about their origins, but legends speak of their elusive leader known as the Demon Wolf Princess, a woman of great beauty but also terrible cruelty and mercilessness. It is said she created the cult out of a deep betrayal and a broken heart.

The truth of her story is unknown, but what is known is that she holds a deep grudge against the Wulin. She sees the Orthodox Factions as hypocritical and arrogant, claiming to be heroic and Chivalrous yet only acting for their self-gain and reputation. The Unorthodox Factions, on the other hand, are like useless and egotistical children in a tantrum!

Little is known about the true purpose and motivations of this faction, but members will act as assassins and bodyguards. The prices for their services are always steep, and considered something of a devil's bargain, as payment for a job is oft demanded in things other than money.

An assassination job will not end until all intended targets are dead. If an assassin falls, another will take her place. In the case of a protection job it will usually last for the lifetime of the ward and the guardian, sometimes even extending for generations. This is why Blood Wind bodyguards develop such close relationships with those they protect.

Stories say that a Blood Wind killer can smell the blood of her prey, and that she will not stop no matter what. She will cross storms of rain, snow, and even blades until her lips can taste the blood of her prey.

Women from this sect live their entire lives consumed by hatred and fury; some women join the cult to escape a life of suffering and oppression, harboring a great hatred against the world, while others are raised within the sect from a very early age knowing nothing of the outside world. All are thought to be hunters and killers, with no personal desires or will. Just as a den of wolves, they see the sect as their only family, their only world. Their loyalty to it is absolute. Failure is not an option; most members would kill themselves rather than suffer the shame of a mission unaccomplished.

Members of the sect are known to be hateful or at distrustful towards males, and will often go to great lengths to defeat male adversaries in the grandest and most humiliating way. Yet when a member of the Blood Wind Sect gives her loyalty or love to another person, male or female, she will fight and protect that person from all dangers. Thus, she will put the object of her affections above herself and her sect.

Like wolves hunting in packs, they have learned to coordinate their kung fu styles, making them more effective when fighting in groups. Blood Wind fighters will gang up

The Blood Wind Cult

Destiny Cost: 5

Concept: Feral female assassins from harsh and mysterious lands.

This female only sect remains another of the great mysteries of the Wulin. They are known and feared for their unique ferocity and callousness - like a pack of wolves, they keep to themselves. Those who cross their paths tend to tell no tales.

Despite their fearsome reputation, they are known to sometimes perform Chivalrous deeds without any apparent ulterior motives. Most often, this concerns protecting the weak - especially children and women - from abuse or danger.

Virtues: Bao (Ferocity), Chan (Obsession)

Secrets of Destiny: The Blood Wind Cult

2+ Status: You are a member of the Blood Wind Cult. Women from this sect tend to wear physical and emotional scars from their previous lives - many join the sect to get an outlet for their rage and get the power to strike back. Others are raised within the sect from a very early age, knowing nothing of the outside world.

The Cultists are thought to be hunters and killers - they are believed to have subsumed their personal desires, to be as dedicated to the Cult as a wolf to its pack.

0 Bonus: You may choose a **Survival Skill Specialty: Tracking** or an **Inspire Skill Specialty: Fear** for free.

5 Disadvantage: Feral Child. Whether they were raised within the remote confines of the Cult or if they joined because of their own terrible past, members of the Blood Wind Cult tend to have little patience for the niceties of society. Many are considered vicious and distrustful, even feral and antisocial - usually, their other virtues help to balance this out and allow them to interact with the world at a somewhat even standing. (As a player character, this tends to be color rather than something that heavily influences your character's story.) With this Disadvantage, though, the drawbacks come to the forefront; your half-feral heritage is intimidating and unnerving. You gain one extra Destiny per story when this gets you into trouble. As usual, this is free if it is your first or second Disadvantage.

3 Destiny: You are something as rare - a man who has been trained by the Cult! This is highly unusual and is associated with odd circumstances. You might have been castrated, or gone through some other kind of odd, mutilating, or frightening initiation ceremony.

3 Fortune: Practicing the Cult's Yang-centered Kung Fu techniques has caused a Minor imbalance, which manifests as a Paired Minor Medical Condition - a Yang Hyperactivity and a Yin Weakness. Work with the Sage to determine the effects.

3+ Fortune: Whether you are a member of the cult or not, you have earned their loyalty - they owe you a favor or some other type of debt (whether you consider them to or not). You may call them as allies - given enough motivation or a steep enough debt, they will storm the very gates of Hell for you. Work with your sage to device the details of this relationship. You can buy this Fortune at most once per Story.

Secrets of Destiny: Blood Wind Cult Kung Fu

These are the martial secrets practiced by the Blood Wind Cult; you are most certainly a member of the Cult if you have them. otherwise, you'd be a rare individual, with luck and fearlessness (as well as possibly a very short life!) in abundance.

As usual, these Techniques cannot be combined with secret techniques from the Lores of other organizations.

0 Bonus: You get a one-time -2 Destiny discount when purchasing one of the following as a secondary External Style:
Bone Fed Wolf Fang and Ravenous Wings.

5 Technique: Eating Your Own Kind: Like a maddened beast, you have learned to draw strength from your own suffering! In the *Ravenous Wings stance*, any use of this kung fu style that requires you to inflict a Ripple now also works if you receive a Ripple.

5 Technique: Flock Hungers as One: You hunt together with your flock, and your training allows you to act with perfect coordination. If you are in the *Ravenous Wings stance* and there are allies present in the same zone who also know this technique, you may all use the best initiative result amongst you.

2 Technique: Culling the Weak: In the *Bone-Fed Wolf Fang stance*, any technique of this kung fu style that works against people with a Disoriented or Disrupted condition also works against groups of minions.

5 Technique: Flesh-Destroying Slaughter. Any technique of the *Bone-Fed Wolf stance* that works against people with a Disoriented or Disrupted condition also works against people with a Major physical wound condition.

3 Technique: Quenching the Thirst for Blood: If you cause a Disoriented or Disrupted condition, *Bone-Fed Wolf Fang's* Speed bonus increases to +10 for the next round.

(continue)

Bodyguards and Assassins

Little is known about the true purpose and motivations of this sect, but they do offer their services as bodyguards or assassins – in both cases they are considered by many to be the best at what they do. (This stings the eyes of many others who aspire to those positions, not least the Eagle Clan!) Their prices are consequently very steep. They usually do not ask for money, but for their patron to owe them a substantial favor for a job well done.

Stories say that a Blood Wind killer can smell the blood of her prey, and that she will not stop no matter what – she will suffer storms of rain, snow and even blades until her lips taste blood! As a bodyguard from the sect, they say, will become so devoted to her charge that she will dedicate her life to their well-being – in rare instances, they have even taken up places as their wife or lover just to stay close.

5 Fortune: As a member of the Blood Wind Cult, you have been assigned to end or protect a life. Until your mission is complete, you are expected to be absolutely dedicated to that purpose. Failure is not an option.

You gain a *Minor Hyperactive Chi Condition* that will come into play when you act towards killing or protecting that person, as the case might be. Work with your Sage to devise the details of this condition.

5 Disadvantage: Hunted. You have become a target of the Blood Wind Cult! They will stop at nothing to end your life as they chase you across the Jiang Hu. What could you have done to have someone go to such lengths to see you dead? Take this for free if it is your first or second disadvantage.

3 Fortune: You declare that an NPC is hunted or protected by the Blood Wind Cult; who can be so important that their lives need ending or protecting at such a cost?

5-8 Victory: As a Cult member who accepted a mission from a powerful or influential patron and gave your utmost to achieve it, you've finally closed the deal. Someone is dead, or no longer under any threat. You've shed blood, sweat and tears – but now you will see your reward, and you will dictate the price!

Wolves of the Steppes

The Blood Wind Cult has its base in the harsh northeast of Shen Zhou – a territory as cruel and savage as they are – and they are greatly influenced in their style and behavior from the foreigners and barbarians of these lands.

The Cult has become a sort of guardian for some of the nomad tribes in the northeast region who are often harassed by bandits, barbarians, and the government. These nomads see them as almost mythical figures to be respected and revered – but also feared, as they often demand a cruel tribute of infant girls in exchange for protection.

1-3 Status: As a member of the Blood Wind Cult, you have a relationship with the nomad tribes of the steppes. They respect you and fear you at the same time, like a mythical creature. You are expected to protect them against their enemies, and in turn they will offer you shelter and help in time of need. You may even discover that you share their lineage and were taken by the cult as an infant. Will you embrace or despise that legacy? Will you be a heavenly protector or a cruel demon to them?

The Demon Wolf Princess

No one really knows the origins of the cult, but the legends say that its leader – known as The Demon Wolf Princess – a woman known for her great beauty but also terrible cruelty and lack of mercy. It is rumored that this is because of a deep betrayal and a broken heart.

The truth of her story remains unknown, but what is known is that she holds a deep grudge against the Wulin. She sees the Orthodox Factions as hypocritical and arrogant, claiming heroism and chivalry but still only acting to serve their own reputations... and the Unorthodox Factions as useless and egotistical, children on a tantrum.

6 Fortune: You are highly regarded by the Demon Wolf Princess; she has seen something special in you, perhaps something that reminds her of herself. She is grooming you for important things.

0 Bonus: You gain **Status 4: Cub of the Demon Wolf**. This is useful inside of the Cult, but in the outside world none will know of it.

0 Bonus: Being seen as the star disciple of the Demon Wolf Princess will grant you a **+5** modifier to *Tactics* rolls when coordinating other **Ranked Heroes** or **Minions** belonging to the Blood Wind Cult on the battlefield. You must be strong and cunning, willing to spill the blood of the pack and yourself for victory but never sacrifice without a clear objective or for empty glory. This counts as a Minor Hyperactivity – an Inspiration geared towards Balance.

+3 Pay extra destiny to get a unit of minions of the same **Rank** as you – only they aren't humans, but a pack of wolves who follow your every command. As such they are limited by what wolves can or cannot plausibly do, but they are sure to be skilled trackers and hunters.

-3 The Demon Wolf Princess has other favorites besides you, who share the same status and benefits. They will probably become rivals or enemies, like wolves competing for the hunt. Only the strongest will earn her favor...would you end up eating each other?

3-5 Fortune: You learn an important secret about Demon Wolf Princess or her background. Maybe the truth of her tragic past, or the real reasons why she formed the sect?



on a stronger opponent, like wolves on a tiger, siphoning the strength of their rival with every grievous wound, channeling their own pain to become fiercer and stronger as the fight goes on.

Most of the Wulin views the Blood Wind Sect with distrust and fear, for they can be the most relentless and savage of enemies. If one manages to earn their loyalty, however, they can be the greatest of allies – ready to storm the very gates of hell for what they’ve sworn their allegiance too.

The Blood Wind Sect has their base in the harsh northeast of Shen Zhou, a territory as cruel and savage as they are. They take a great influence in their style and behavior from the barbarians of these lands. It is said that their headquarters are located inside a hollowed mountain peak, but none outside the sect has ever confirmed this. The Blood Wind Sect has become a protector of some of the nomad tribes in the northeast region. These tribes are often harassed by bandits, barbarians, and the government. The nomads see the Sect as almost mythical, figures to be respected and revered but also feared – in exchange for protection, they frequently demand tribute of infant girls to increase their numbers.

THE FOUR BANES OF THE WULIN

Of the factions of the Wulin, these four are considered totally evil and irredeemable. Not only are their methods unorthodox, but they are also totally ruthless and corrupt. The majority of their members disregard all the rules and values of the Martial Community – and more importantly, their goals and agendas are considered to be against the well-being of the Jiang Hu and the whole of Shen Zhou.

Members of one of the Four Banes will not only be distrusted by the majority of the Wulin, but probably be treated with open hostility. The violence is often justified, but even Orthodox Factions have attacked the Banes unprovoked.

Legends speak of a time when the majority of the corrupt and baneful fighters united under the single banner of a fearsome organization, an infernal alliance that shook Heaven and Earth. At the top of it there was a single terrible hero who held dominion over all of them. His kung fu had power like that of a god.

He hid behind magnificent armor; Shen Zhou hasn't seen the likes of it since. Nobody knew his real identity or his origin. Perhaps there was no one inside that armor, and it had been moving by its own power all along. The legends say that he not only wanted to bring chaos to Shen Zhou, but sought overthrow Heaven itself. Some stories say that he was once a powerful, Chivalrous hero of the Wulin, who grew so powerful, and so thirsted for worthy challenge, that he decided to divide the Martial Arts World and pit it against itself just for entertainment. Others say he was sent forth by Heaven to prove the folly of the decadent heroes of the time.

Whatever the truth, he was defeated under unknown circumstances. He fell either to his own pride and ambition, or to the most powerful heroes of the time –ultimately, it matters little. His fall marked the end of an era in which heroes relied on amazing weapons believed to be gifts from Heaven itself, so he became a symbol of that now-forgotten age.

Once he fell, unorthodox and evil heroes divided and formed conflicting factions, fighting amongst themselves and against the orthodox sects. They fought like hungry dogs, biting and clawing for scraps of power and influence.

Though the Four Banes are considered individually powerful and dangerous by other factions of the Wulin, as long as they don't ally amongst themselves or grow so



powerful as to challenge the Wulin, they don't really present a true danger to the Jiang Hu and Shen Zhou. Perhaps this is the arrogance of the current age.

There is an obscure rumor that states that the pieces of the mythic armor worn by the leader of the alliance are spread across all of Shen Zhou. The one who gathers them all would be able to learn the secrets of his terrible, world-shaking kung fu. The hero who does so would be able to unify all of the evil and most of the unorthodox factions under his or her banner to shake the Martial Arts World and Shen Zhou itself.

For now, all of the Four Banes remain busy with their individual agendas, without an apparent hope of a united front. What does the future hold in store for them? Only Heaven knows.....or Hell.

The Black Lotus Society

Deep in the northern desert, hidden among never-ending storms of black sand, lies a palace of every vice and pleasure. It is the headquarters of the Black Lotus Society: the Black Sand Pagoda.

If any of the current Banes have come close to ruling the entire criminal underworld in Shen Zhou, the Black Lotus have. Yet they suffered a deep blow, as a group of arrogant upstarts dared to rise against them. The upstart's strength was greater than expected, and they managed to destroy great part of the Lotus' power and influence.

The Lotus was weakened, but not defeated; a noxious weed never truly dies. They are making a comeback, slowly but strongly regaining their power. Soon, the black petals of the lotus shall extend across all criminal activities in the Land of the Gods. Corruption, theft, blackmail, assassination, gambling, slavery – they are involved in all of them!

If the infernal alliance controlled the criminal underworld with sheer strength of numbers and overwhelming power, the Lotus pursues control through subterfuge and manipulation. Why kill an official if he can be bought? Why openly attack a faction, when you can place an agent among them to undermine their power from within?

The Black Lotus Society moves behind the shadows, hidden in plain sight.

They seem to retreat as they attack, they feign weakness as they gather strength, they make alliances and they betray in the same breath.

They are experts in most of the Secret Arts, but in the art of medicine above all. They have developed methods to manipulate the body and Chi to create beneficial conditions, but ones that will eventually kill the user if left un-tended, or worse, warp them in such a way that their lives become a hell of agony, therefore insuring the loyalty of their subjects.

The Black Lotus Society is lead by the former disciple of Abbot White Cloud of the Small Forest Sect, Hei Mei,



The Four Banes as Character Options

The Four Banes of the Wulin are presented here as antagonists in the game. As a whole, they are presented as utterly evil and beyond redemption. They are not meant as viable character choices by default.

It doesn't need to be so. Not all the members of the Four Banes are *necessarily* evil and villainous. It's perfectly possible to have anti-heroes with ruthless methods but good intentions.

Characters belonging to a Bane or another faction considered evil will be treated with utmost distrust, if not outright hostility, by most of the Wulin. Common people will treat them with aggression, or complete terror. If they are deserters to their organizations, they will be probably hunted down like dogs.

Some players may find the idea of playing such a character very interesting, so consult with your Sage. Should Sages and players want, they can create stories about the redemption of these organizations, or decide that they weren't really that evil, just misunderstood. This, then, is the story of the Banes earning their rightful place among the rest of the Wulin.

On the other hand some groups may find it interesting to have a campaign where all the players take the role of awful villains, enemies to the Orthodox Factions. In this case, have at it!

What if I just want their kung fu? The Four Banes have access to some very interesting martial arts secrets. It's pretty much a given that you'll take a fancy to some of them. This poses a problem – you might not want to play a flesh-eating monk in a group otherwise filled with Chivalrous heroes. Should the Sage be favorably inclined, this matter can be handled with some deft storytelling – maybe you have defected from the Sect, or have made contact with a previously unknown society practicing a variant style?

Sit down with your Sage and discuss the details. The important thing is to be open for options, but at the same time not making this a shortcut to power without your character having any ties or obligations! In Legends of the Wulin, it is important to belong to something larger than yourself; you should be able to change where you belong (especially if you think that fire-based Kung Fu is neat but do not want to play a world-burning villain) but not to belong nowhere at all. Staying alone and unaligned comes with a price, and that price is usually having to fight for every little secret or martial technique. The Sage sets the final price for this option according to these principles – it should be cheaper and easier to buy if you stay true to the themes and contribute to an interesting setting!

also known as the Black Storm Buddha. He is an elusive mastermind shrouded in a veil of mystery.

He is responsible for reviving one of the most powerful and terrible styles of the past, Black Lotus Style. Even if the current form, Unstained Lotus Mastery, does not compare to the alleged power of the Four Lotus Kings, it is still a style to be reckoned with that has spread across the Wulin.

The Black Storm Buddha is seldom seen in the Jiang Hu, but his four trusted ministers Thunder, Rain, Lightning, and Dark Cloud – known as the Dark Heavenly Kings – are seen doing his bidding all across the Martial Arts World. They have become well-known and feared figures in the Wulin.

The organization places great value on individual power and initiative, even encouraging a degree of internal backstabbing. Anyone with enough thirst for power can rise in the society. The elders have not avenged the faction's recent crippling by wayward scions; some say they're encouraged by them.

The Fire Doctrine

Once upon a time, a cult from the faraway land of Bharata invaded Shen Zhou. A terrible and devastating cult it was, one that worshipped fire and sought to burn the Land of the Gods to the ground. They sought to purify the Land with fire

and chaos. They sought the legendary Fire Sutra's Divine Manuals, believed to have been brought to the Land of the Gods long ago, their origin in Heaven itself.

They were defeated by the united forces of the Wulin of the time, scattered and humiliated. Today, their dark teachings have reappeared in the Jiang Hu, and their cult has reformed. They are barbarians, born in the depths of Shen Zhou itself, seeking to burn the Land of the Gods down from the inside.

This new incarnation of the Fire Doctrine is led by a charismatic figure known as *Fire God*. All that is known about the God is that he is a corrupt hero of immense power; many believe him to be divine. Even the gender of such a hero is unknown, and even though the God uses the masculine when referring to himself, the legends surrounding Fire God sometimes refer to the Living Flame as female or as an androgynous being.

Fire God has a flickering personality; it can be nurturing and protective, but also cruel and capricious. Those who follow the banner of flames will do anything to please their leader and avoid its wrath.

The cult has its larger following in those of non-Han origin. Those considered barbarians and savages find refuge in the cult, as well as those outcasts persecuted by so-called civilized people. It appeals to magical beliefs and it offers them a chance for revenge on their persecutors. With the

The Infernal Alliance

Destiny Cost: 7

When the majority of the corrupt and baneful fighters united under the banner of a single fearsome organization, they formed an infernal alliance that shook the Land of the Gods to its core! A single, terrible hero held dominion over all of them.

Whether he fell victim to his own boundless ambition or to the efforts of the Chivalrous heroes of the time it shook the Wulin is unknown, but the results splintered his faction to pieces. There are remnants that exist to this day – some legacies last forever.

3-5 Fortune: You know of a secret about the time of the Alliance, or about the dark villain who controlled them all; this information will be relevant to the current story.

1-5 Fortune: You discover that an NPC has more information about the evil organization that once made the Wulin tremble. Might they be the last living descendant of that legacy, a descendant of the heroes who defeated them, or simply someone trying to reunite - or prevent the reunification of - this hellish faction? How will this discovery affect the life of this character and the story?

5 Fortune: You have set yourself to reuniting all of the evil factions under your banner, whether your goal is to storm the Martial Arts world, or even to redeem the original Alliance. You have a *Minor Hyperactive Prediction Condition* that comes into play every time you try to unite the evil factions under your banner through either diplomacy or force. Work with your Sage to design the details of such condition.

+ 3 Fortune: You are believed to be the rightful heir to the terrifying hero that once held dominion over the greatest villainous faction in the history of the Wulin. Whether this is truth or myth, you do not know, but there is a *Minor Hyperactive Prediction Condition* around you: *Will Become Overlord of the Evil Factions!* You get no personal benefit from it, but those who follow you will benefit from a Hyperactivity as long as they work for that purpose under your banner.

Work with your sage to design the specifics of this prediction and under which conditions it will be broken.

- 3 There is a character of at least the same Rank as you who has the same ambition and may even be affected by a similar prediction! You are bound to encounter each other constantly, and as their goals differ from yours, you will probably become each other's archenemies. Heaven plays an interesting game!

The Demon God's Armor

The leader of the Infernal Alliance hid inside a magnificent and terrifying armor, many legends surround this legendary armor, some even going as far as saying that there was no one inside and it moved on its own volition, nevertheless the armor and its wielder became symbols of a far gone era when heroes fought and quested for weapons believed to hold the power of the gods, instead of relaying on the strength of their kung fu. If the suit was empty or not, it is commonly believed that the secrets of his godly kung fu are hidden within it, and that its fragments have been scattered all across Shen Zhou. Some scholars believe that the pieces of the armor form a manual that allows for the creation of every possible kung fu style under Heaven... but such theories are dismissed and ridiculed at best, persecuted and condemned at worst.

Among the Banes and other Unorthodox Factions, it is believed that only the one who manages to reunite all the pieces of the armor will be able to unify them and reform the infernal alliance that once shook Heaven and Earth.

Legends speak of a mysterious child known only as **Dark Master Wu** in possession of the armor's mask; he is said to be skilled in a terrifying, powerful, and unique kung fu seen nowhere else and to have formed a cult around him deep in the southern jungles where he keeps away from the affairs of the Jiang Hu... for the time being.

1-3 Fortune: You discover a fact about Dark Master Wu and the cult around him; this will become relevant to the current story.

3-5 Fortune: You discover a fact about the so-called Demon God's armor. How will this affect the story and the Wulin itself?

3+ Destiny: The quest for the pieces of the Demon God's armor will become an important part of your story; it will touch your life, and that of those around you, and it may become a part of your legend.

3 Fortune: Declare that an NPC is involved in the quest for the armor. How will this affect this character's life and the story?

10 Victory: After grueling tests and possibly the hand of Heaven - or that of Hell - you manage to obtain a piece of the infamous armor! This should provide you with benefits equal to those of a **Legendary Weapon** or a **Transcendent Technique**; Work with your Sage to design the specifics

If you decide to make this knowledge public across the Jiang Hu, you also get the following

0 Bonus: You become known as **Living Bane**! This grants you **Status 4** with any faction that favors the Selfish Virtues and **Status 3** with the rest of the Wulin. This will most likely be a mixed blessing, with as many inconveniences as benefits.

0 Bonus: You automatically earn the **Hunted** disadvantage for free, even if it isn't your first or second disadvantage. Depending on your actions and allegiances, you chose if you are hunted by the Four Banes, the Orthodox factions, someone else, or all of them! You may only benefit from one additional point of destiny per episode regardless of how many factions are after you.

The Black Lotus Society

Destiny Cost: 3

Concept: Kung Fu Masters of the Criminal Underworld

Hidden in the darkness, the black lotus spread its petals all across Shen Zhou to control the dark underbelly of crime and corruption. The society is involved in all sorts of illegal and back handed affairs

Like the black sands of the northern desert, they slowly but surely erode the structures of power of the Land of the Gods, stepping in to fill the void that results.

Virtues: Hen (Ruthlessness), Si (Individualism)

Secrets of Destiny: The Black Lotus Society

1+ Status: You are a member of the Black Lotus Society. You may be anything from a simple thug or bandit who openly leads a life of crime to a corrupt minister who keeps a façade of respectability. You may live a life ruled by violence, or you may use more subtle methods, but you are dedicated to a life of crime!

At your very core, you seek to undermine the structure of society, either bending it subtly or breaking it completely for your ultimate benefit and that of the society.

Members usually have some variant of a black lotus tattooed somewhere on their bodies.

0 Bonus: You may choose a **Inspire Skill Specialty: Deceit** or a **Politics Skill Specialty: Corruption** for free.

5 Disadvantage: Untrustworthy Whether you are a charming rogue or a terrible villain, there is no denying that you are a criminal - you set your own personal rules above the ones of a righteous society and your own needs before anyone else's. Nevertheless, you manage to hide this well enough, or people around you have learned to accept you for who you are, so you manage to get along - unless you take this Disadvantage, which will make people distrust you even when you are being honest! Take this for free if it is your first or second disadvantage.

2+ Fortune: You discover that a member of an organization currently antagonistic to you is in reality a hidden member of the Black Lotus Society, who might act as your secret ally and help you out of trouble. This needs to be at least somewhat plausible; a judge or minister might be a secret member, but Abbot White Cloud certainly will not!

Secrets of Destiny: Black Lotus Kung Fu

0 Bonus: You get a one-time -2 Destiny discount when purchasing one of the following as a secondary External Style: Murderous Shadows and Graceful Crane.

0 Technique: Martial members of the Black Lotus Society traditionally learn Unstained Lotus Mastery as their primary Internal Style. You can learn all of its techniques, rather than one of each level.

The following techniques are based on **Unstained Lotus Mastery** and you must learn it to be able use them.

5 Technique: You learn the **Splintering Shadow** technique. With imperceptible movements you create destructive dark aftershocks in your opponents. If you are in the *Murderous Shadows stance* and use any technique that creates one or more petals, that technique creates one additional petal.

5 Technique You learn **Stainless Black Feathers** techniques, emulating the poison-fed black swans of the Black Sand Pagoda.

- If you're in the *Graceful Crane stance* and use *The Unstained Flower*, that technique also gives a +5 bonus to Dodge.
- If you're in the *Graceful Crane stance* and successfully Dodge a strike by 10 or more points, you may use *Lotus Breaks the Tiger* against the attacker.

Black Storm Buddha and the Four Dark Heavenly Kings

The Black Lotus Society is led by the former disciple of the Abbot White Cloud of the Little Forest Sect, Hei Mei - known across the Jian Hu as **The Black Storm Buddha!** Not many people outside the organization have ever seen him (at least, as far as they know), and rumors about his appearance and behavior are inconsistent. It is believed he usually places others to masquerade as himself while he observes from a nearby location, either completely hidden or posing as a bystander.

The Black Storm Buddha is seldom seen in the Jiang Hu - instead, his trusted ministers, the **Dark Heavenly Kings**, are seen doing his bidding all across the Martial Arts World. They are **Thunder, Rain, Lightning, and Dark Cloud**, and have become well known and well feared in the Wulin

4 Fortune: You discover a secret regarding the elusive Black Storm Buddha. How did you manage to pierce his veil of mystery?

-2: This information is genuine, but incomplete. It reveals a secret about the Black Storm Buddha, but misses out on some nuance or additional fact that will prove to be important. The Sage will consider the details of this, and likely keep them to themselves.

3-5 Fortune: You discover a secret regarding one or all of the Dark Heavenly Kings, their history, and goals.

3-5 Involvement: You become involved with one or all of the Dark Heavenly Kings. Would they be teachers, allies, friends, or enemies?

(continue)

Black Lotus Pills

The reaches of the society are so vast, its membership so diverse, its leader always distant and aloof - how does the society control its members? The answer lies with the **Black Lotus Pills**. These pills, made from unknown ingredients, create a variety of Chi Imbalances in people who take them. They offer great power, but also twist users in strange ways! The pills are highly addictive and must be consumed at regular intervals, or the user will die a death both painful and horrifying as they are overcome by their conditions.

There are pills of various strengths for different ranks. The lowest in power will “simply” offer increased stamina and strength, while the most powerful can create a squad of freakish, inhumanly fast assassins! Every year, the leaders of all the lodges of the organization gather at Black Sand Pagoda to replenish their supply of the drug as well as to discuss society affairs.

Although they are pills by default, the drug is not restricted to that form. There can be Black Lotus Potions, Balms, Ointments, or whatever presentation the players and Sage want to give them.

3 Fortune: You take a **Black Lotus Pill**. This creates a *Paired Medical Chi Condition* that gives you a Hyperactivity whenever you are under the effects of the Pill, and a *Weakness* that has to do with the strange side effects; the latter works as a Chi Deviation. Work out the details of the condition with your Sage.

The condition starts out at Minor intensity. In anywhere from a month to a year of game time, you will need to be given a new type of Pill that will inflame your condition to *Major*, or take an antidote that will eliminate the condition. Both can be found only in the possession of a **Black Lotus Lodge Master** (a character of at least Rank 3) or found in Black Sand Pagoda.

If you fail to take one of these in the allotted time, the Weakness will inflame into Major and the Hyperactivity will be soothed to Trivial intensity; if another period passes without you getting a new Pill or an antidote, you can expect a messy and unpleasant end appropriate to the condition in question.

For doctors trying to manipulate or cure conditions imposed by Black Lotus Pills, the difficulty is **Fantastic (60)** if the conditions are *Minor* and **Legendary (80)** if they are *Major*, and the **Recovery Rate** is always one week. If the roll of the doctor who created the Pill is known, that is the difficulty instead.

3 Secret: You learn important medical secrets on the composition of the Black Lotus Pills! The Difficulty for treating its conditions are lowered by one step, down to Memorable (40) for Minor conditions and Fantastic (60) for Major conditions.

3+ Treasure: You own one or more **Black Lotus Pills**. Each purchase buys you an extra Pill. Each Pill causes a condition as described above.

Each Pill you own can cause the same or a different type of condition. Work with your Sage to design what each Pill does. A person can only be affected by one pill at time, without exception.

0 Bonus: If you are a member of the Black Lotus Society, have the Secret Art of Medicine, and have at least **Status 4** within the organization (preferably related to heartless use of medicine), you may take the **Medicine Skill Specialty: Black Lotus Pills** for free, to create them, cure and manipulate their effects.



cult, they will create a world that will be their own after the burning of the present era.

Rumors say that Fire God has announced its return to the Jiang Hu. It is more furious and powerful than ever, having mastered all of the currently-known Fire Sutra techniques. The cult is ready to take the Martial Arts World by storm.

For most people, Fire Sutra is the collective name given to very powerful but widely spread internal techniques that allow the user to ignite their chi, creating powerful flames. What is known in the Wulin may be but only partial knowledge. Beyond the initial sutras, there are many Holy Fire Sutras, each containing powerful secrets

The Fire Doctrine's primarily motivation is searching and obtaining those sutras. Many in the Wulin fear they will be unstoppable if they do so; others ambition the power of the sutras for themselves. The cult has many enemies, chiefly, rivals who compete against them for control of the power of fire.

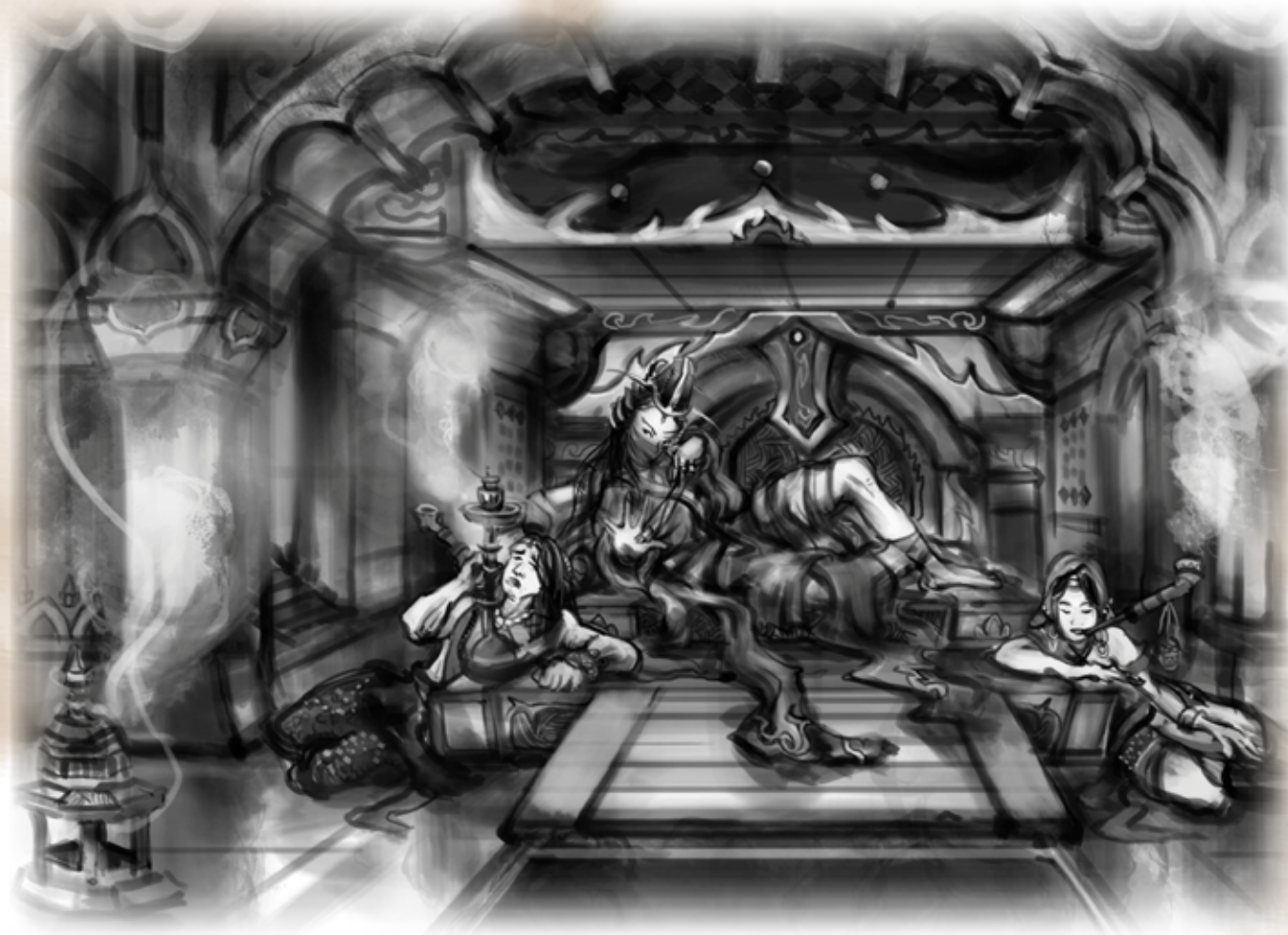
The Blade Dogs

This gang is the newest addition to the Four Banes; it's barely existed for ten years. This lack of time-honored tradition, which makes some elders of the Wulin scoff, is not so much a hindrance as it is the whole point of their existence. The dogs are young, they are new...and they are hungry.

No one knows exactly what circumstances shaped the young boy who would become the leader and originator for the gang; they merely tell the tales of a forest in the country of Yang haunted by a terrible beast, which slew travelers trying to pass it. None knew the shape or nature of the beast, but the peasants feared it and merchants refused to travel by it. Righteous heroes from the surrounding provinces – many of them wandering blades from the Heaven Sword Alliance – traveled to fight the beast and restore peace. One by one, the bodies of these heroes were discovered floating downriver or lying along the road.

It was not long before the Wulin who came after made a discovery – the bodies were not cut apart by the teeth or claws of some beast of the forest, but by powerful kung fu! Naturally, this only renewed the efforts to slay the evildoers. The righteous heroes wanted to punish whatever murderer who had taken up residence in the deep forest, and selfish ones were drawn there by the promise of battle against a new master.

This time, too, the trees swallowed them all...but not all of them were slain. After weeks of silence let the people hope that the killings had finally ended and the masters of the forest had slaked their thirst for blood, a gathering of fearsome warriors emerged. They could all be recognized as infamous fighters who had come to the forest to test



The Fire Doctrine

Destiny Cost: 3

Concept: A savage and fanatical cult seeking to burn down Shen Zhou and remake it in their image

Once upon a time, a cult from the faraway land of Bharata invaded Shen Zhou wielding terrible and devastating power. They worshipped fire and sought to burn down the Land of the Gods to the ground - purifying it with the flames of chaos. They sought the legendary **Fire Sutras**, divine manuals that were believed to have been brought to the Land of the Gods in ages past.

At the time they were defeated by the collected forces of the Wulin - yet now, years later, they have reformed. No longer a foreigner cult but deeply rooted in the earth of Shen Zhou they have recently become more and more active, becoming an important power in the World of Martial Arts... and a possible threat to the land once more!

Virtues: Hen (Ruthlessness), **Chan** (Obsession)

Secrets of Destiny: The Fire Doctrine

1+ Status: You are a member of the Fire Doctrine. You most likely come from a non-Han minority that is considered barbarian and savage and that has often been made into outcasts and become persecuted by so-called civilized people.

Members worship the element of fire, and tend to have excessive and often destructive behaviors - seeking the extremes of pleasure and destruction, preferring to be burned by their passions rather than trying to contain them.

0 Bonus: You get a one-time -2 Destiny discount when purchasing the **Daoist Sexuality Lore**.

5 Fortune: If you have purified Fire Chi, your Chi Deviation takes on an unusual strength - relating as always to a fire aspect behavior or appearance. You are sure to lead an unusual life and to always be easy to recognize. Breathe back two points of Fire Chi instead of one at the end of the round as long as you keep up your behavior or the focus on your altered appearance.

5 Disadvantage: Uncivilized Whether you come from a culture considered savage or barbaric or if you simply have led a life in the wild or engaged in the excessive lifestyle of the Doctrine, find so-called civilization stifling and their hypocritical restrictions absurd. Most Doctrine members manage to adapt or at least pretend well enough (or from a game point-of-view, not have their lack of civility a major theme for their story!). If you take this Disadvantage, though, these tensions will definitely come up. You get a bonus point of Destiny per story if you get into trouble or suffer complications. This Disadvantage is free if it is your first or second one.

Secrets of Destiny: Fire Doctrine Kung Fu

These are the martial secrets preserved by the Doctrine. You must be a full member, or otherwise obtain the Sage's permission (as above) to purchase them.

0 Bonus: You get a one-time -2 Destiny discount when purchasing one of the following as a secondary External Style: **Shadow Catching and Destiny Cloud Fist**

0 Technique: Martial members of the **Fire Doctrine** traditionally learn **Fire Sutra** as their primary Internal Style. You can learn all of its techniques rather than one of each level.

The following techniques are based in the *Fire Sutras*, and you need to practice that Internal style to be able to purchase them:

5 Technique: Thousand Miles of Light: When you are in the *Shadow Catching stance* and use any *Fire Sutra technique* that lets you use the Burn effect, you have a +5 bonus to that check.

5 Technique: Volcanic Cinder Cloud If you're in the *Destiny Cloud Fist stance* and use any *Fire Sutra technique* that lets you use the Burn effect, any Rippling rolls you make as a result of the Burn effect receives a +5 bonus.

The Holy Fire Sutras

The many fire-based kung fu techniques across the Jiang Hu are collectively known as the *Fire Sutra*, and they are all believed to have a common origin in ancient sutras that came to the Land of the Gods a long time ago. The Fire Doctrine has meticulously gathered all of these different techniques, and thereby became the undisputed masters of this style. They consider their heritage, yet they believe that there are more undiscovered sutras out there that hold powerful secrets. The cult holds these scripts as sacred, and argues that they came to Earth from the Fire Temple in Heaven itself. Thus, they refer to them as the **Holy Fire Sutras** and consider its acquisition their life's mission and the key to their power.

3-5 Fortune: You discover a secret fact about the Fire Sutras, their history or their content.

3-5 Destiny: The quest for the Fire Sutras will be an important part of your game; it will affect you or those around you, and become part of your legend.

3 Fortune: An NPC of your choice becomes involved in the quest to find the mythical Fire Sutras. How will this affect this character's life, and what impact will it have on the story?

4-10 Victory: Due to great effort and luck you come into possession of one of the previously undiscovered **Holy Fire Sutras**. What secrets does it hold? Work with your Sage to devise the details - you may earn a single formless kung fu Technique or Secret Extraordinary Technique appropriate to the Destiny invested.

(continue)

-2: Apply this discount if there is a powerful drawback to possessing the sutra - such as it being cursed, you becoming an enemy of Fire Doctrine, or by having an inherent weakness in the technique itself (such as having to take a ripple, spend Joss or Flood dice to activate) or possibly a unique Fear condition in which it will be less effective.

Fire God

This new incarnation of the Fire Doctrine is led by a charismatic figure known as Fire God; a being of incredible power and indeterminate gender, but definite passion.

5 Fortune: You are highly regarded by Fire God; he/she/it has recognized a special fire in you. Maybe he (or she, or it) believes your strength is an asset to the cult, maybe he is attracted to you... or maybe you simply amuse him.

0 Bonus: You gain **Status: Fire God Acolyte**, and gain a **Status 4** within the organization. Most likely none outside the cult will know about this relationship.

0 Bonus: Being close to the Fire God can warm and nurture, but it can also burn and destroy! You earn a *Minor Paired Chi Condition* that grants a *Hyperactivity* when you act directly to fulfill the orders and wishes of your master, and causes a *Weakness* whenever you actively go against his will or disobey him.

+5 You are Fire God's lover. Your lovemaking is intensely passionate, and carries with it blisters, scorched flesh and the scent of charred meat.

0 Bonus: Your *Paired Chi Condition* has been inflamed. You now get the benefit of a *Major Hyperactivity* when you please or act according to the wishes of your master, but also a *Major Weakness* if you deny him.

0 Bonus: Being the lover of their living god, none in the cult will dare oppose you, at least not openly. You get an **Inspire Skill Specialty: Obedience Fire Cult**.

- 3 Discount: You have been warped and unusually affected by Fire God's strange sexual techniques against your will, you may have shifted genders or exist as an intersex gender. Look at the **Daoist Sex Lore** for reference and work the details with your sage

-.3 In the bedchambers or in the battlefield, Fire God favors others besides you who share the same status, benefits and drawbacks. You will likely become rivals or enemies, fighting for the respect or affection of the Living Flame.

3-5 Fortune: You learn an important secret about Fire God. Its true identity, past or maybe its true purpose, or the reasons why he formed the cult?

The Western Fire Doctrine

The cult came originally from Bharata, where they were merely a branch of a much larger organization. After their defeat, they lost all contact with the main body of their sect and became completely independent. At any point, however, the original Fire Doctrine might send emissaries to reunite their stranded followers (or to hunt down the heretics).

What is the true nature of the Western Fire Cult? Will they try to conquer Shen Zhou once again? Were they always a Chivalrous faction, the invaders mere dissidents or exiles? Will they become allies or enemies to the Fire Doctrine that has taken root in the Land of the Gods? Do they have anyone comparable in power to Fire God? And how would they even react when they find out about Fire God?

3 Fortune: You introduce an important fact about the Western Fire Cult. Something about their history, their true intentions or their relationship with the Shen Zhou version of the cult?

3-5 Destiny: The Western Fire Doctrine will play an important part of your story. Will they consider you an ally or an enemy? Will you be burned by their flame or nurtured by it?

3 Fortune: You discover that an existing NPC is in reality an agent from the Western Fire Doctrine, or one of their enemies that had been hiding his identity.

1+ Status: You become a member of the original Fire Doctrine and gain status in it. What secrets will they teach you? How will this affect your place in the Wulin? And most importantly, what are they expecting of you?

themselves against the master – and walking among them was a boy. Were it not for the reverence shown by the scarred warriors walking by his side, his soft, effeminate features would never have been mistaken for those of a warrior. Yet, here was the master of the forest, walking in broad daylight.

Rumors were spreading across the wulin,– talk about the hero-slayer. It was whispered that the boy, whoever he was, had come across the remains of a text long thought lost to fire and time – the Seven Cloud Manuscript. The boy, who would

shortly be known as the Sword Bastard, had assembled the damaged manuscript and internalized the lesson... after a fashion. Where the original text described the cultivation lessons of the glorious Devil-Deflecting Blade technique, he had filled in the blanks of the incomplete texts with his own detached killing intent. Wretched and Baneful, the emptiness of his heart could not restore the original techniques – instead, he created something new. Thus the Sword Bastard entered the Jiang Hu, and his Devil-Saint Apotheosis technique left a trail of bodies.



His name, 'Sword Bastard', was an insult thrown in his face by a dying hero, but now he wears it as a badge of honor. Likewise, his gang call themselves the "Blade Dogs". Their ranks swelled as newcomers were drawn to the martial prowess of the Bastard and his contempt for tradition. Some were deviants who sought strength in numbers. Others were murderers and criminals seeking to escape punishment. As long as they were competent warriors, the Bastard didn't seem to care.

With this, their activities subsided for a while. The Dogs seemed content to haunt the countryside in small gangs, not making any big splashes apart from the occasional duel... Then, as suddenly as they had first appeared, they stormed the floating boat-fortress of the Western branch of the Black Lotus Society! The boat-fortress sank into the deep waters of the Yangtze river as a burning wreck, as Lotus members waged a desperate but losing battle against the bloodthirsty Dogs.

This put a sizeable dent in the operations of the Society. Although they have managed to recuperate, puzzlingly enough they still haven't attempted revenge. The Dogs, for their part, were launched to the rank of the Fourth Bane of the Wulin, and appropriated many of the Lotus Society's gambling dens and protection rackets. (Admittedly, they handle them with much less finesse. Most of the Dogs aren't good long-term thinkers.)

The Dogs are not so much a school or sect as they are a violent gang of raucous hooligans. They revel in their outsider

status, often accentuating it by adopting extreme or foreign fashions and accoutrements to loudly proclaim themselves as transgressors ready to bare their fangs at the world.

The organization is hard for someone used to virtuous hierarchies to understand. Although they have a nominal leader in the youthful kung fu prodigy, Sword Bastard, they do not resemble an organized gang so much as a loose extended family – rife with rivalries and violence, but a united front towards their many foes. In this sense, they are a clan.

Among the Unorthodox Sects, the Dogs stand out in that they occasionally perform what can be perceived as (usually exceptionally violent) heroic or virtuous deeds. On these rare occasions, Blade Dog members have arrived at some remote location to provide unexpected help or assistance to the needy. Sagacious observers note that this almost always involves taking a bloody-handed stance against established authority... Most agree that this is an inevitable expression of their tendency to bite every hand that gets close enough to their mongrel maws.

Their leader, the young and slender Sword Bastard, is renowned almost as much for his effeminate beauty as for his invincible sword skill - many a warrior has failed to recognize a proper threat in his frail form, but this is changing as his reputation spreads. Under his banner, a collection of thugs and outsiders have gathered around a common ethos - to seek prowess beyond anything else, to strike back on a world that has cast them out, and to spit in the eye of Heaven!

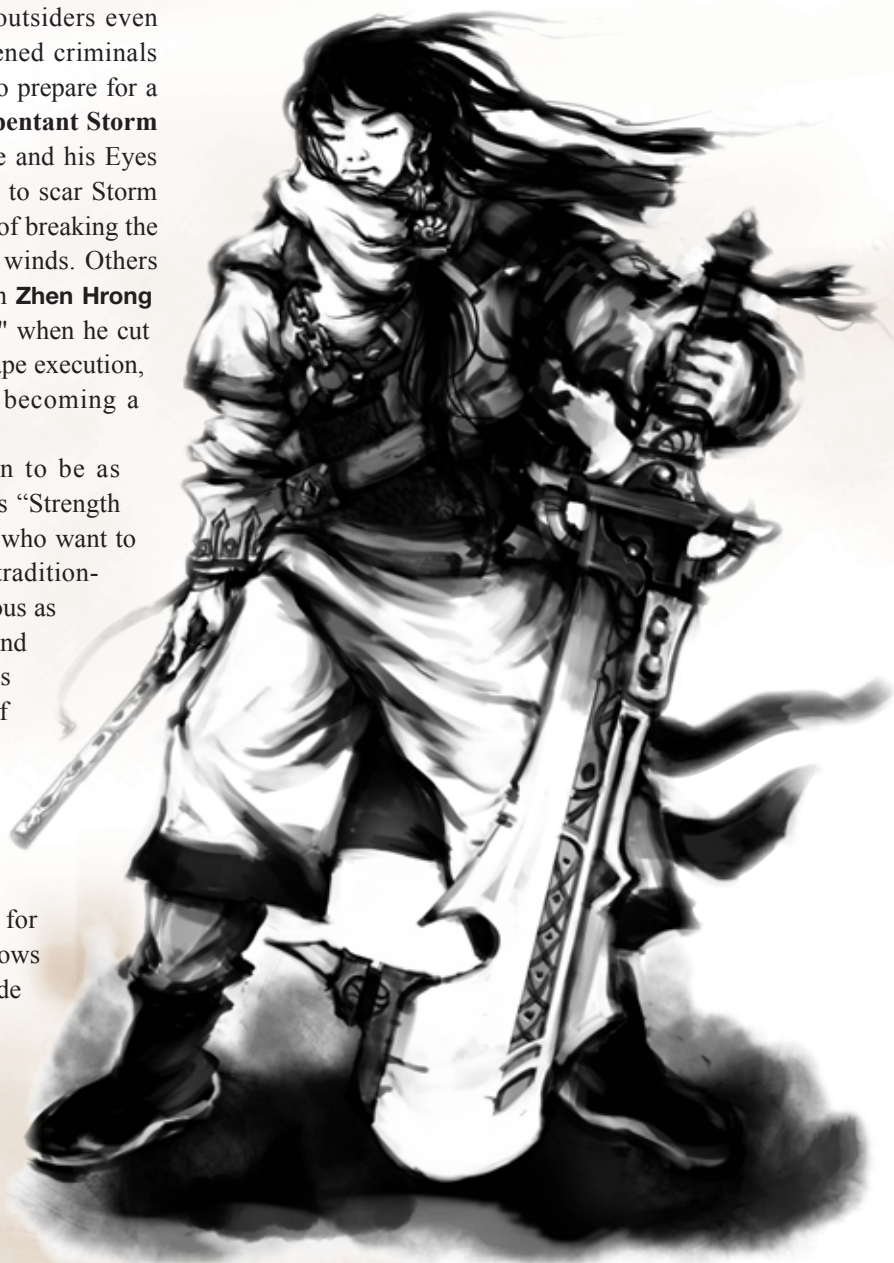
The Dogs are made up of outcasts and outsiders even by the standards of the Jiang Hu, like hardened criminals or foreign mercenaries. Some join the Dogs to prepare for a personal revenge; the barbarian warrior **Unrepentant Storm** resents the Eagle Talons leader Gallant Eagle and his Eyes of the Fiery Raptor kung fu, which was used to scar Storm horribly and slaughter his men. Storm dreams of breaking the gallant warrior and scattering his sect to the winds. Others simply have nowhere else to go; the spearman **Zhen Hrong** earned the nickname "Hundred-Body Cleaver" when he cut his way out of his own Clan compound to escape execution, leaving his home running with blood and becoming a fugitive from Clan and Imperial law alike.

Some come because they want to learn to be as hard as the Bastard. The credo of the Dogs is "Strength conquers all." It has a certain appeal to those who want to become incomparable warriors outside the tradition-laden sects of the Wulin. **Morning Rain**, vicious as they come, murdered the master of her house and ran away with the ancestral technique manuals to reforge herself under the harsh tutelage of the Dogs.

A silent maiden, known only as **Gray Whisper** because of her prematurely graying hair, has followed the Sword Bastard for a year without any hint to her motivation. It is rumoured that she's waiting for the proper moment to kill him, but no one knows why; it is also rumoured that her Hidden Blade Style is the only one in the whole gang to measure up to the Bastard's Devil-Saint Apotheosis technique.

In any case, the Dogs identify very strongly with their clan affiliation – probably because they have nothing else. They strongly favor individualistic styles and colourful aesthetics; hair styles (braiding their hair in the manner of barbarians or cut in shocking styles), body paints, loud and garish clothing, barbarian tattoos, and wielding strange or unorthodox weaponry are only a few of the elements that make up the individual Blade Dog. Adopting a new name to go with the refurbished persona is also common. Being recognized for your striking appearance and signature styles and weapons is generally marked as cause for great pride.

The Dogs have no particular signature kung fu style – instead, they use a plethora of styles borrowed and stolen, or simply outlawed and heretical on account of being odd foreign Styles that pay little regard to proper forms! The one who seeks power out of desperation or single-mindedness might well find it with the Dogs, provided that they are willing to endure the scorn of the proper Wulin and the harsh



hazing that is the Dogs' custom. Newcomers aren't welcome unless they bring something to the table, and the only thing they care about is battle prowess and new techniques.

If there is a great and guarded secret, it is the Devil-Saint Apotheosis Style, the sarcastic name of the hybrid technique practised by the Sword Bastard. Instead of reconstructing the legendary technique, he filled in the blanks by finding his own heartless approach to battle – his blade represents nothing but the arbitrary decision to kill another human being, the imposition of will on flesh.

People argue this makes him a terrible god of battle.

The Blade Dogs

Destiny Cost: 3

Concept: The absolute rebels, Wulin punks who bite those who get to close and spit in the eye of Heaven.

The youngest and hungriest of the Four Banes – as well as the least structured or disciplined – the Blade Dogs are simultaneously detested and grudgingly respected for their devil-may-care attitudes and incredible prowess. Their very existence is an affront to the traditions of the Wulin, but they are hard to pin down or defeat; living on the outskirts, swelling their numbers by bringing in the outcasts and the dispossessed, some say that their very existence is merely the manifestation of a curse on Shen Zhou itself; a sickness resulting from the wrath of Heaven.

The Dogs don't care what gossiping old masters think of them - at all. The Dogs are here to stay, and they will not be ignored.

Virtues: Baneful, Si (Individualism), Bao (Ferocity)

Secrets of Destiny: the Blade Dogs

3+ Status: You become involved with the Blade Dogs, and get a chance for initiation in their ranks. To do this you must normally show battle prowess and have learned at least 15 Destiny's worth of both External and Internal Techniques. If not, discuss with the Sage what you could bring with you to be accepted. Also, this will probably bring you at least as many enemies as it does allies... but then, since when does anyone who wants a nice, quiet life join the Dogs?

0 Bonus: You receive a -2 Destiny discount for learning the **Baneful Heresy** Lore.

0 Bonus: You get a free **Confidence Specialty** that relates to the attitude of the Dogs, such as **Spitting in the eye of tradition** or **Fearless**.

5 Fortune: The Dogs proudly flaunt their eccentricities and relish in their status as freaks of the Wulin. What a lesser man may consider a curse is just a reason to be stronger for them. Take one of your **Disadvantages** and work with your Sage to create a *Minor Hyperactive Chi Condition* based on it. It stops functioning as a Destiny-earning Disadvantage, and you can only do this once.

Secrets of Destiny: Blade Dog Kung Fu

The Blade Dogs have no ancestral secrets, no traditional techniques, and no martial philosophy save one: always strive to be the strongest, and do whatever you have to do to win. Naturally, this is interpreted differently by everyone!

New martial techniques are always highly prized, and an influential member will have the opportunity to learn a variety of exotic techniques as long as they are willing to pay the price.

1-5 Technique: As a member of the Blade Dogs, you get to partake of martial secrets from other members who either take a liking to you or want to exchange favors. Each point spent on this Fortune allows you to learn two Destiny's worth of additional techniques from Internal Kung Fu styles past the one-per-level standard. This can allow you to learn additional techniques from several different Styles.

0 Bonus: You receive a -2 Destiny discount for learning one additional External technique within a style that you already possess.

The Sword Bastard

The leader of the dogs is the young and slender Sword Bastard, renowned almost as much for his effeminate beauty as for his invincible sword skill and the **Devil-Saint Apotheosis Style**. He is a terrible god of battle, but a boy, for all that..

2 Fortune: You learn an important piece of information about the Sword Bastard and his famed combat style – perhaps enough to deduce a fatal weakness, or to start a quest for the reconstruction of the true *Devil-Deflecting Blade* style!

10 Technique: You learn the much-vaunted but ominous **Corrupt Formless Technique** dubbed **Devil-Saint Apotheosis (Formless Techniques Pg 220)**. Do you learn this from the Sword Bastard himself? If so, why has he chosen to share his secrets? If not, how have you managed to steal it?

-5: You are a Baneful human, to whom these lessons come easier.

5 Victory: After a long search, you manage to reconstruct the missing fragments of the manual to create a Style that could rival the Sword Bastard's! Is it a reborn *Devil-Deflecting Blade* to guide your sword with virtue, or something entirely new blossoming from the soil of the legendary fragments? How long will it be before you confront the *Devil-Saint Apotheosis* technique in battle?

The Vile Rain Cult

The Wulin believes the Vile Rain Cult to be mere legend, ancient history, tales to scare brash heroes and children. It is not. It is a terrible reality; that most of the Martial Community sees them as nothing more than a ghost story is where their greatest strength lies.

The cult is one of the oldest corrupt organizations in Shen Zhou. It has appeared, risen to power and been destroyed and defeated time and again, utterly and completely. It is annihilated, only to be reborn again generations later, with a different face, form and name, but the same viciousness and corruption.

The most recent incarnation is named after a legendary corrupt Heavenly weapon, one that rained sickness and plague to the world with every attack.

Their philosophy is based on the belief that the current age is utterly corrupt and doomed; that its heroes are a symptom of that corruption rather than the cure, that the Land of the Gods cannot be saved, and that the only merciful thing to do is release it from its agony. By poisoning and destroying the world, they are being merciful, just as a doctor hastens a terminally ill patient's demise.

Legends say that they appear once an age has reached its zenith, in order to destroy it and facilitate the birth of a new one. If people outside of the faction hear of this, they think it a self-righteous lie to justify the cult's depredations and wicked ways. Those outsiders are mostly right.

Much of the cult is formed of psychopaths and sadists, from decadent nobles with too much time on their hands to

inbred barbarians who desire to crush the world around them. They prey on the weak and feeble, but also want to bring the strong to their knees to humble and destroy them.

The leadership of the cult is composed of corrupt Scholars and Priests who, through complex calculations, determine the points in the world that need to be poisoned in order to bring forth magnificent devastation. A hero who needs to be corrupted, a minister killed, a sacred site destroyed, all of these are valid objectives for them.

They enjoy being cold and calculating, and making their enemies suffer rather than killing them fast and in the open – this is well-known. They are experts in underhanded methods of destroying an opponent: poisons, torture, and manipulation. They are known to favor elaborate mazes and labyrinths full of deadly traps, and terrible fighters used to defeat their strongest victims.

Most of the ranked members of this cult dress and behave in a dark parody of Buddhist and Daoist ritual and hierarchy. The current leader of the cult is a wretched old man known as Abbot Spider Wolf. He is said to possess poisonous finger nails, and is able to use his long white hair and beard as if it were a weapon made of spider silk. He was once a beautiful youth, so pious he was considered the reincarnation of a Buddhist saint, but he fell to utter corruption and decadence. Like many members of the sect, he is believed to eat human flesh; it is well-known that the flesh of heroes, rich with chi, is sought after for the cult's deviant cultivation.



The Vile Rain Cult

Destiny Cost: 3

Concept: A corrupt and twisted cult, seeking to bring the current age to an end for reasons only known to them.

The Cult is horrifyingly real, yet the Martial Community views them as another cautionary tale, one without truth or substance. The Cult has reappeared once more, and though their face has changed, their corrupt core has not. The current Age is ending, and they are the ones to bring about a swift death.

Virtues: Bao (Ferocity), Hen (Ruthlessness)

Secrets of Destiny: The Vile Rain Cult

2+ Status: You are a member of the **Vile Rain Cult**.

Most of the ranked members of this cult dress like dark Buddhist and Daoist priests and monks. Members hide in plain sight they take many guises - usually appearing innocent or Chivalrous - to fool their victims like spiders catching flies.

0 Bonus: You may choose an **Inspire Skill Specialty: False Sense of Safety** or a **Tactics Skill: Traps** for free.

0 Bonus: You get a -2 Destiny discount to buy the Deviant Heresy Lore.

5 Disadvantage: Unwholesome The practices of the cult are strange and unholy, and they twist your body and soul. Most people will notice that something is not *completely* right with you; you nevertheless manage to hide this (for the most part) and get along fine, albeit with some social discomfort.

If you take this as a Disadvantage, your very presence makes others uncomfortable; once a chapter, earn an extra point of Destiny if this gets you in trouble.

Secrets of Destiny: Vile Rain Kung Fu

During their time in hiding, the Vile Rain Cult has preserved several martial traditions.

0 Bonus: You get a one-time -2 Destiny discount when purchasing one of the following as a secondary External Style: **Murderous Shadows** and **Ravenous Wings**.

0 Technique: Martial members of the **Vile Rain Cult** traditionally learn **Thousand Venoms Style** as their primary Internal Style. You may learn all of its techniques, rather than one of each level.

The following techniques are based in the internal cultivation of their **Thousand Venoms Style** - you must be a practitioner to purchase them.

5 Technique: Soul-Penetrating Evil: If you're in the *Murderous Shadows stance* and use any *Thousand Venoms technique* that lets you use the Poison effect, you have a +5 bonus to the check to inflict the effect.

5 Technique: Unclean Bloody Rain: If you're in the *Ravenous Wings stance* and use any *Thousand Venoms technique* that lets you use the Poison effect, any Rippling rolls you make as a result of the Poison effect receives a +5 bonus to the damage caused by the effect

These bonuses counts as being derived from Secret Arts, and so stacks with kung fu.

Abbot Spider Wolf

The current leader of the cult is a wretched old man known as **Abbot Spider Wolf**, a cannibal and a killer, utterly decadent and far deadlier than his namesakes

3+ Fortune: You discover a secret regarding the Spider Wolf, maybe something from his terrible history or something related to his true goals. Maybe even a clue to defeat him...

Best Served Cold

The Cultists are nobles who keep paralyzed Wulin as statues in a garden, apparently affable inn keepers who build deadly labyrinths in the underground of their inns, flesh-eating cooks who sell buns filled with the meat of warriors. No act is more than those Wulin hypocrites deserve.

3 Bonus: If you are a member of this cult and achieve a Deed of **Bao** (Ferocity) or **Hen** (Ruthlessness) through particularly devious and elaborate means, you may take one point of that entanglement Destiny and apply it towards your **Corrupt Chi Cultivation**.

1-5 Fortune: You discover that a seemingly innocent and harmless situation is, in reality, an elaborate trap by the Vile Rain Cult. This must be plausible, and the cult must have been previously introduced and have a particular reason to attack in that way. What impact would this have on the story?

3+ Destiny: For some reason (that you may or may not know), the Vile Rain Cult has taken an interest in you. Maybe they want to corrupt you to further their plans? Or maybe they want to recruit you for their cause? Or do they simply want to destroy you in painful and elaborate ways? Work with your Sage to define the details and discretion; if the machinations of this organization make players uncomfortable they should be dispatched soon, but if their evil is particularly enjoyable to your players, the cult may become plot driving antagonists.

3+ Fortune: You discover an existing NPC is involved with the Vile Rain Cult! They may be one of the cult's evil agents, someone who is secretly working to destroy them, or someone who has been targeted by the cult as a victim.

10 Destiny/Victory: If you are a member of this cult, once per game you manage to create a plan so devious and elaborate that it will live through the ages as a legend. It may be a maze full of cruel traps, or subtle manipulations that destroy a family from within. Whatever it is, it should be just as imaginative as it is perverse!

THE WULIN GREATS

Destiny Cost: 4

These Lores can be used as templates for Sages and players wanting to introduce their own Greats.

Of all the legends of the Wulin, none are more fantastical than those regarding the heroes known as the Greats. In every generation, there are heroes who stand beyond the highest-ranking legends of the Martial Brotherhood, independent of the factions, above the petty bickering of the Jiang Hu.

Such heroes live their lives as hermit-sages, trying to transcend the limits of kung fu, Secret Arts and Chi cultivation. They exist in the border between the great Martial Arts masters of the Wulin and the Immortals and Bodhisattvas of Daoist and Buddhist myth.

Legends grow around such figures like mushrooms from the ground after a hard rain. Many powerful and renowned styles of kung fu originated from them, and they are said to have lived for hundreds of years, well beyond even the greatest living masters with the purest internal cultivation.

Some of those legendary heroes have been terrible. They were corrupt and baneful fighters, demonic saints who posed a threat to the Wulin and to Shen Zhou itself. Others have been saviors and champions of justice in times of darkness. For the most part, such legends, commonly known as hero-saints, are so above the Wulin that such concepts as Chivalrous or Selfish become insignificant.

Their names are legendary, inspiring dreams and nightmares. Names such as:

Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon, the hero-saint from a faraway land who founded the Little Forest Sect, and disappeared at the height of his power. [Little Forest Sect Pg 50]


Sword Spirit, the one who brought together the first generation of the Seven Heavenly Blades. He also left the world mysteriously in search for greater knowledge and power. [Heaven Sword Alliance Pg 55]

The Three Power Sage, a hermit secluded from the world in the peaks of Grey Foot Mountain. If he is still alive, then he would have lived for hundreds of years. He is rumored to have been the master of the first emperor, **Qin Shi Huang Di**!

The Three Power Sage

3+ Fortune: You know of a secret regarding the Three Powers Sage. Something related to the tragedy that darkened his heart, or perhaps the true source of his alleged immortality?

5+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to the Three Powers Sage. For him to even consider seeing you and sparing your life, you must be truly remarkable! For example, someone whose potential is on the same level with the First Emperor...or someone in possession of a tea brewed so fine and rare that it would please the August Jade Emperor in Heaven.



He is also rumored to be as mad as he is powerful, possessing kung fu capable of laying waste to entire towns. Perhaps his longevity is due to extreme Chi cultivation? Legends declare that he is haunted by a broken heart, and that this has made him as empty as the Void itself... but perhaps it is his loneliness and the boredom of a such a long life that makes him entertain heroes from time to time. He is a lover and connoisseur of fine tea.

Lonely Devil Dugu, a hero legends speak of, who reached the pinnacle of swordsmanship - beyond even that of Sword Spirit, his descendants and disciples. The hero could wield the entire world as his blade and break the mightiest weapons with his fingers - yet reaching the peak left him with nothing but loneliness, staring up into the emptiness.

None could truly understand his warrior heart, and there was no challenge great enough for him - his greatest techniques remained unused! He became a wanderer, looking for a worthy opponent all across the Jiang Hu and came to be known as the Defeat-Seeking Vagabond.

Lonely Devil Dugu

3+ Fortune: You know a secret about Lonely Devil Dugu. Is it about his unique style, or perhaps about his quest for the perfect opponent?

5+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to that of Lonely Devil Dugu. Perhaps you will encounter one of his four legendary blades - each representing a critical step on his path as a swordsman - or maybe you will find his kung fu secrets carved into the face of a lonely, lofty mountain.

Alternatively, if you have become a hero worthy of legends who has achieved magnificent deeds and defeated countless enemies, you might find yourself challenged by a mysterious figure claiming to be the Defeat-Seeking Vagabond...

THE FOUR SAINT BEASTS

The current Greats have taken the name and characteristics of the Four Guardian Beasts of myth, and are thus called the Four Saint Beasts. Each of them resides in one of the four directions, and each of them practices a unique and powerful style. Each of them also possesses a Legendary Weapon, one that shares his or her name.

None of the Four belong to any faction within the Fighting Community, yet they are far from being the enlightened hermits their predecessors have been. As they have many conflicting ties with each other, and with many factions and heroes of the Wulin at large, they can often be found involved in the affairs of the Jiang Hu despite playing at solitude. Legends say that each of them is immensely powerful, above the levels of the heads of the factions and the greatest heroes and elders of the Martial World at large.

A hero who would challenge one or all of them, seeking to prove the truth behind the legends, would be both admired as a paragon of his time and seen as a foolish, arrogant upstart. But such is the way of the Wulin - walking between fools and legends.

The Four Saint Beasts are:

Eastern Azure Dragon: Meng Zhang, a man of noble bearing and delicate, somewhat androgynous features, is said to embody the lavish vitality of the Wood Element. He lives in the Peerless Bamboo Manor deep within the eastern forests, and is always followed by a retinue of great beauties with prodigious kung fu. Some say they are his maids, others say they are his concubines.

He is a masterful flute player; it is said his music can unleash devastating attacks just as easily as it breaks the hearts of the stalwart.

Azure Dragon is fond of entertaining guests, and of playing all manner of games of chance and skill. Yet he grows bored easily, and he has been described by visitors as childlike in his character. He is capricious and impatient, yet kind and full of a sense of wonder. All agree that he values beauty above all else.

His greatest treasure is the magnificent sword that bears his name. He believes such a weapon is to be admired and protected, not sullied with the blood and grime of the battlefield; thus, he rarely uses it. He prefers to rely on a decorated fan or his flute to defend himself, sealing opponent's pressure points with alacrity.

On the rare occasion when he considers a challenge worthy of unsheathing his sword, he prefers to cast sword energy from a distance so as not to stain his blade and clothes with blood. Such an attack is known as "*Thousand Bamboo Cutting Wind!*"

Azure Dragon

3+ Fortune: You know a secret regarding Azure Dragon; his true origins, or the nature of his relationship with his retinue, or perhaps the reason for his obsession with beauty?

5+ Involvement: Your story is tied to Eastern Azure Dragon. You are most likely a hero whose elegance and grace is matched only by prowess in battle. You may be a great beauty yourself, and he wishes to make you part of his retinue; or you may be a dashing hero whom he wishes to mentor - or, worse, he may consider you a rival!

Perhaps you are even someone who stands against the very principles of beauty and perfection, and as such deserve his *personal* attention in your disposal... even if it may, lamentably, dirty his hands.

Southern Vermillion Phoenix: Ling Guang styles herself the mistress of the south direction. A woman of classical beauty, she is passionate and fickle of character, just as the fierce seas and lush jungles of the south. She is believed to embody the burning passion of the Fire Element, and she lives by the ocean in an elegant but run-down state called, fittingly, Brokedown Palace.

She is surrounded by servants and one small boy. Many believe him to be her son, as she cares deeply for the boy, yet he seems distant to her. This breaks her heart. No one knows who the boy's father is, and she would deny she is the mother, saying he is just the son of someone she cared deeply about and has sworn to care for him. She falls in love easily, though, and just as easily grows bored and tired of those that share her bed and her life.

Among the notable heroes of the Wulin, she is believed to have been attached to the Southern Dragon King, who it is said has never been able to take the Vermillion Phoenix out of his heart completely; and Gallant Eagle, who has always denied such an affair ever took place (and soundly thrashed the brash young hero who asked him directly).

Her love is said to be ardent and intense, but also as destructive and terrible as fire itself. Those who would fall for the great Wulin beauties of the age are like moths to the

flame... Men and women alike cannot help falling deeply in love with her upon meeting her, and this love ends up consuming their lives.

She deeply hates the other woman known to inspire legendary passions in the Martial Art World, the icy beauty known as Glacier Maiden. Vermillion Phoenix considers her a hated rival in kung fu and love, and has sworn to destroy her. As far as anyone knows, Glacier Maiden doesn't even acknowledge the existence of Vermillion Phoenix, which just infuriates the red heroine even more.

Her weapon is a very unusual one, as it is her very garment – a crimson dress believed to be her never-used wedding gown. Wedding dresses in Shen Zhou are traditionally red, but hers was allegedly dyed in the blood of untold enemies who stood between her and her love. Yet, this love was not meant to be, and the dress became a Weapon of Legend known as Vermillion Phoenix. She can manipulate every strand of its fabric as if it was an extension of her self, unleashing its full power in an attack known as "*Phoenix Everlasting Regret!*"

Vermillion Phoenix

3+ Fortune: You know a secret about Vermillion Phoenix. Maybe the secret tragedy of her past? Her relationship with the child in her care? Or maybe something concerning her torrid love affairs and rivalries in the Wulin?

5+ Involvement: Your story is tied to Vermillion Phoenix. If you are a hero who would love a woman whose power is matched by her beauty, you are almost certain to fall for her. Perhaps it is she who has fallen for you, and would do anything to have you!

Maybe she sees you as rival or worthy apprentice - or maybe your future is tied to her past, and you will force her to acknowledge the history she is trying to escape!

Western White Tiger; Jian Bing is a wandering swordsman in the inhospitable western territory. He doesn't call any place his home, but if he had one it would be the White Camel Mountains of his childhood. A story of great heartbreak and sadness turned him into a vagabond soul in that place. He embodies the cold precision of the Metal Element.

He has a disheveled appearance like many a wandering blade, with ragged clothes, unruly hair and beard, and a broken down straw hat over his face. His entire body is callused and scarred by a hundred battles, but his soul is even more wounded.

He is a man of great sadness and melancholy who once loved a woman as much as any man could... yet he lost not only her, but everything he had in his life. Friends, family, respect... he lost all of these, walking the martial path. For many, the way of kung fu led to glory and power. For him it led only to loneliness and heartbreak.



Despite his tortuous past, or maybe because of it, he has not given up on mankind. Even though he has a gruff and irascible personality, he has a kind heart, and is the least volatile of the Four Saint Beasts. Deep inside, he is a man dominated by loneliness, desperate for friendship and companionship.

Unfortunately, all those who befriend him or who become his companions fall victim to a terrible curse. This makes life very difficult for those who would share his life; peril and misfortune always follows those who stand by the White Tiger, and it is even worse for those who become his lovers or friends. They have all lost their lives in terrible, unfortunate ways.

Still, he keeps walking the path putting his amazing tactical and analytical skills and his incredibly powerful kung fu at the service of those who need him the most. He is always ready for a duel with a rival, or a drink with a friend. His tolerance for hard wine is as legendary as his Martial Arts; he roams the West in search of suitable drinking companions and the perfect wine.

Recently it is believed that he drank the wine of forgetfulness in an attempt to put his sadness behind him - but that this has made him forget friends and foes, old allegiances and conflicts.

His Legendary Weapon is the famous saber White Tiger, his most beloved possession, his only friend and companion. The blade is believed to possess the soul of true heavenly tiger, who seems to roar with every strike and even to appear as an ephemeral Chi image when he unleashes his devastating master attack "*Mournful White Tiger!*"

White Tiger

3+ Fortune: You know a secret about White Tiger. Is it the truth behind the curse that follows those close to him? A glimpse of his sad history? Or, maybe something concerning the rumored forgetfulness wine?

5+ Involvement: Your story is tied to that of the White Tiger. Perhaps you will bump into the legendary swordsman and be offered some help you with your troubles. If you're strong enough, maybe he'll challenge you to a duel! You may have been tied to his past - someone he willingly or unwillingly caused pain, or someone he helped before, even if he doesn't remember it.

Just keep in mind that those who earn the friendship or love of the White Tiger of the West may have the undying loyalty of one of the most powerful heroes in the Wulin... but they are also cursed to be followed by pain and suffering wherever they go.

Northern Black Tortoise; Zhi Cheng is true mystery of a man. No one has seen him in years, and many would even say that the current Black Tortoise is not even him, for how could it be? His last confirmed appearance in the Wulin was almost seventy years ago, and he was already an incredibly old man back then. It couldn't possibly be him... but the tortoise is associated with longevity, and if anyone could live that long, he could.

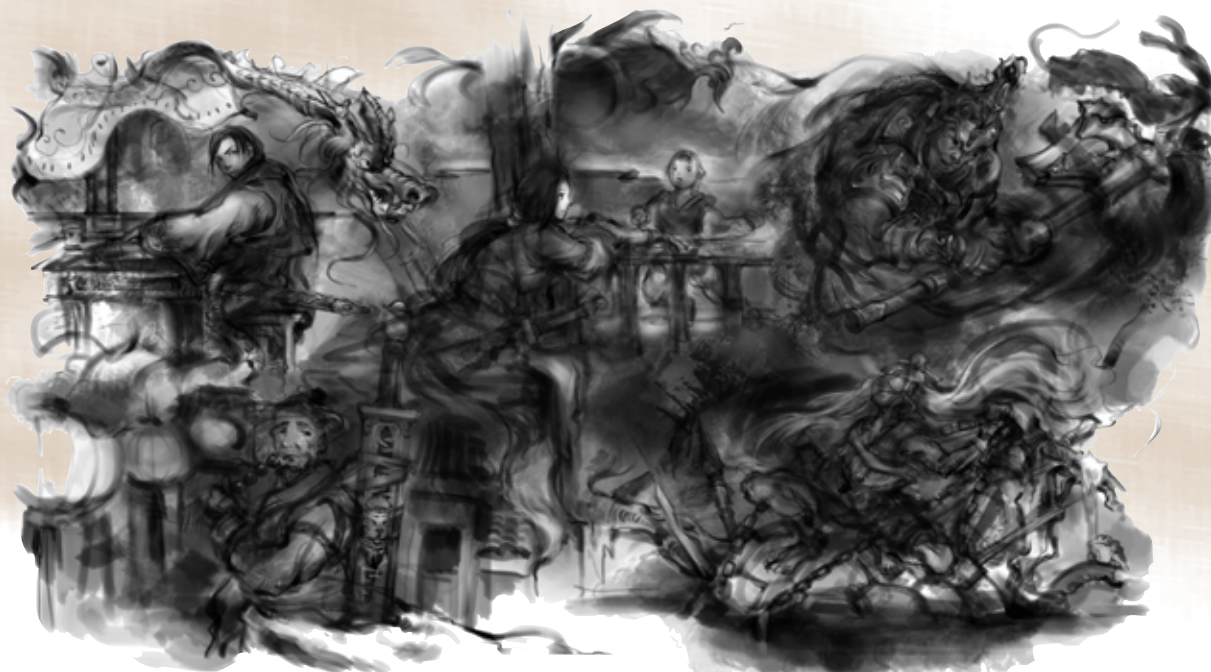
He is a hermit in every sense of the word, living deep in the Rotting Magnificence Marshes of the north. He normally refuses all human contact, and whenever he ventures from his domain, he does so under different disguises and identities. He embodies the ever-changing versatility of the Water Element, and is thought to be completely mad by most of the Martial World.

After training the legendary Five Venoms, once the greatest assassins in the whole of Shen Zhou, he retired from the Jiang Hu and hasn't taken any students since. He is a master of the Doctor's Arts, and he has taken to experimenting on himself. The results of his experiments are many and diverse – Northern Black Tortoise's body is a catalogue of odd Chi Conditions, making him a living treasure of the Wulin!

Consequently, there are many who search for him not just for his knowledge, but out of the belief that his blood and flesh may be key ingredients to ultimate potions and cures, or even the secret of immortality. He will not be found unless he wants to be found, however. Even if he is, there is the small matter of defeating him. Those very few who have come back alive after wishing to do him harm have returned severely warped in body, chi, and mind.

It is no surprise that this legendary Beast Saint is the personal hero of the Black Lotus Society's leader, Black Storm Buddha. The Buddha has done everything in his power to make the Black Tortoise join the Society, yet all his attempts at flattery, bribing, tricking, shaming and challenging, the tortoise have failed miserably.

His Legendary Weapon is a strange contraption, made from a giant tortoise carapace filled with all sorts of chains, saws, and blades that spring in all directions. Known as Black Tortoise, it brutally slashes all enemies, as his master laughs when he executes his signature attack "*Demon Army Unleashed!*"



Black Tortoise

3+ Fortune: You know a secret regarding Black Tortoise. Is it something related to his amazing longevity? Perhaps a truth about the many Chi Conditions that afflict him, or the qualities that he seeks from a prospective student?

5+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to Black Tortoise. Perhaps you have met him unknowingly in one of his many disguises. You may be a great doctor, or someone who accidentally bumped into a unique potion or marvelous medicine, thus awaking his interest. Maybe you are looking to become his student, or hunting him for his unique properties.

THE FIFTH SAINT BEAST

In the myths there is a fifth Sacred Beast, one above the rest. He is the Golden Dragon, who embodies the magnificence and harmony of the Earth Element, resides in the center of Shen Zhou, and is associated with the figure of the emperor.

None would ever dare to take the mantle of the fifth beast. For one, any hero who would do so would have to embody the excellence of Huangdi himself. Second, and more important, only the emperor of Shen Zhou may be called Golden Dragon. Taking such a name, even in the Wulin with its hundred dragons and dozens of phoenixes, would be open defiance of the throne. For all their bravado no hero would dare. Until now.

There have been rumors of a powerful new hero, deep within the region of the imperial tombs. His appearance can only be described as regal and magnificent. He calls himself, or rather others are calling him, the Fifth Beast Saint Central Golden Dragon. He wields an impressive spear with a golden dragon inscribed at the base of the blade; according to the tradition of the beast saints, the weapon would also be called Golden Dragon.

Little is known of his kung fu. Some legends assert he uses the kung fu of the royal family, the famed but rarely seen Celestial Dragon Style, which only those of royal blood are allowed to learn, but so few even know what the style looks like. What is known is that he uses a devastating technique called "Frolicking Dragon Pierces Heaven"! Whether this form belongs to Celestial Dragon, or any other style, remains unknown.

His legendary status grows with his alleged deeds. Many affirm that he is none other than the previous emperor, believed by Shen Zhou at large to be dead, but often rumored to be living in the Jiang Hu as a powerful Wulin hero. Regardless of his true identity, the other Four Saint Beasts as well as many other in the Fighting Community elite have expressed their desire to face him in combat and challenged him to duels. So far, he has responded to none of them.

Golden Dragon

3+ Fortune: You know a secret regarding the so-called Golden Dragon. Something about his identity, perhaps related to the mysterious kung fu he practices, or his true goals and agenda?

5+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to the figure currently known as Golden Dragon. Perhaps he sees you as worthy of his attention. Maybe you are related to his mysterious past. If you have become a great hero in the Wulin, he may accept your challenge, even as he has denied all others – surely, this will rattle the heroes who were denied!

Such a figure is bound to strike awe and terror into the Martial World, possibly even Shen Zhou itself! Whether he is worthy of such a lofty title or a base pretender, those tied to him are bound to change history.



FORESTS AND MOUNTAINS

Shen Zhou (神州). The Land of the Gods! Vast and bountiful, strong and powerful! Majestic mountains are piercing Heaven, roaring rivers are telling countless tales as they rush to meet the ocean. The forests are lush and green, the deserts are cruel and merciless.

It is the home of many cultures and peoples. The Central Plains are the realm of princes and generals, scholars and merchants. The great steppes of the north are harsh and cruel, full of wandering nomads both strong and proud. They worship the wind and laugh at how soft the so-called civilized folk have become. The far south is the lush but dangerous home of a beautiful and boisterous people, who dance instead of walk and sing instead of talk. The west is a land where gods reincarnate in human form and spirits live in mountains and lakes, and monks seek to commune with them in ancient and foreign languages. The mysterious lands of the east are a melting pot of cultures and kingdoms, with hundreds of travelers and languages, hiding countless secrets.

Shen Zhou has a long and illustrious history, going back thousands of years to mythic times, when Pangu the First Being fought the **Void** by casting pieces of oblivion aside and creating the universe. The goddess Nüwa molded humans out of clay from the Yellow River, beginning a time where gods and demons fought legendary battles across Heaven and Earth.

The Yellow Emperor Huangdi is said to have been sent by the gods to bring civilization to humankind. He fought many battles and achieved many deeds, and through his excellence he ordered All Things Under Heaven and laid the foundations of a magnificent and glorious civilization.

From that time forward, the Emperor was the link between Heaven and Earth – a guide and architect. Through wise rule, he kept **Shen Zhou** orderly and harmonious. At first, Emperors chose men of great virtue and accomplishment as their successors, regardless of their origins or lineage. This was the time of the **Three Legendary Emperors**. They battled natural disasters and tamed nature, developing agriculture and sciences in order to perfect civilization.

All of this changed when successor Emperors, hungry to carve their names in the annals of eternity and achieve an immortal legacy, decided to pass their title to their descendants, creating dynasties. Each dynasty dreamed of lasting ten thousand years or more, yet empires rose and fell in the time it took the Heavenly **Jade Emperor** to blink.

Most dynasties started as a dream to raise culture and civilization above their predecessors. Almost inevitably, they would become corrupt across generations. Emperors sought to satisfy their own desires and ambitions, disregarding the good of the land and losing **the Mandate of Heaven** – the divine right to rule – by doing so.

When this happened, the land would fall into chaos. Natural disasters and corrupt warriors would torment all under

Heaven, and order would give way to chaos, until someone motivated by righteousness or ambition would claim the Mandate for themselves and give birth to a new dynasty.

The land, once united, is now divided. It is a time of great tumult. A barbaric dynasty sits upon the Dragon Throne, a mere shadow of the magnificent past. States fight each other for supremacy while the threat of foreign invasion is ever-present.

Shen Zhou is the Land of the Gods in name only. The influence of godly and demonic beings has receded, and remains only in religious rites, songs and legends. It is the responsibility of humanity to create its own destiny, to keep the world orderly or plunge it into chaos. Men and women alone have the power to accord themselves the status of saints or devils.

It is a wonderful time to be a hero.

Forests and Mountains

Destiny Cost: 0

Secular Society

You still have strong ties to the world outside the Jiang Hu. Maybe your parents depend on you, or you have a family of your own. Maybe you have debts that need to be paid, or you are tied to a secular organization important in ordinary society.

1+ Destiny: No matter where you came from - noble or peasant, merchant or soldier - you still carry the weight of your previous life. This affects your life within the Wulin, and is tied to both your starting wealth and your status in secular society. Work with your Sage to discuss your specific background and ties and how it influences your story

TIAN XIA (天下) ALL UNDER HEAVEN

The concept of Tian Xia, or “All Under Heaven”, is very important in Shen Zhou. Originally, it was meant the world of mortals, separate from the abodes of Gods and Demons. In the current day it has more mundane (yet very significant) uses.

Politically, Tian Xia is the civilized and harmonious world ordered by the Emperor, who in turn is appointed by Heaven itself. In this use of the term, Tian Xia's center resides in the throne and expands like circular waves on a lake into the court, the governors, the lords and princes, all the way to the vassal states, who – even if not directly under the control of the Emperor – derive their power from his divine right.

Those who do not accept the Heavenly Mandate of the Dragon Throne – rebellious states, fringe barbarians,



and most of the Jiang Hu – are outside Tian Xia. They do not exist within the Heaven-imposed order, and therefore are dangerous outsiders who must be subdued or shunned.

There is a more inclusive definition of Tian Xia, where All Under Heaven is the whole of Shen Zhou: all the vast territory, the many cultures and languages, even the outsiders of the Jiang Hu. It is the soil that gives them life and nourishes them, the culture they breathe, and the very words that flow out of their mouths.

In this definition of Tian Xia, kung fu and secret arts – even those used to break the Earth and defy Heaven – are cultural treasures, just like language, art and history. In the first definition, only those who accept the reign of the Emperor and Imperial civilization are part of All Under Heaven. In the second all of those who come from or live in Shen Zhou have a place under the sky.

It is the way of Wulin to believe in the second definition, so it is the duty of the Wulin to protect Shen Zhou, defend it, and give their life for it if need be. Even if the allegiance to

clan and sect is greater than to state and kingdom, the heroes of the Wulin will unite and shed their blood unconditionally if the very Land of the Gods, its territory and culture, if All Under Heaven, is ever under attack.

Tian Xia Destiny Cost: 3

5 Fortune: You follow the principles of Tian Xia, in any of its interpretations. You might fight to conquer by force and unify the land, or defend different cultures and points of view. You might be completely loyal to the ruling dynasty, or its fiercest enemy.

In either case, as long as you act for the greater benefit of All Under Heaven and put the benefit of the land, the people, and the culture of Shen Zhou above your own well-being, you gain the benefit of a *Minor Hyperactive Chi Condition*. (It's probably an Inspiration, but almost anything goes.) Work with your Sage to design the details.

The Mandate of Heaven and the Empire

The ordinary world, outside the Jiang Hu, is undisputedly ruled by the Empire, which rightfully derives power from the Emperor on the Dragon Throne. In the Land of the Gods, the Emperor is much more than a mere ruler; he is the steward of Heaven on Earth, the pillar around whom the land is ordered. If the Emperor is just and good, the land will be harmonious, peaceful, and bountiful; if the Emperor is corrupt and baneful, the land will plunge into chaos, poverty, and misrule.

The Emperor's power over the Land of the Gods is known as the Mandate of Heaven. Such a power and authority cannot be denied by anyone in Shen Zhou, even the outcast and rebels of the Wulin. Only the most baneful heroes would deny the divine power of the Emperor over the land, and the need for an Emperor in Shen Zhou.

Yet, for all his power, the Emperor is a man, not a god. The Mandate of Heaven flows not from him, but from the mantle of Emperor itself. It must be earned, and it must be kept. It is his duty to use the Mandate not for personal gain, but for the benefit of the whole of Shen Zhou.

If the Emperor ever becomes corrupt, the land will fall in to disarray, and he will become undeserving of the Mandate of Heaven. It is then that heroes are expected to rise to the occasion, take the Mandate from the undeserving and unrighteous, and place a new Emperor on the throne who will fulfill his duties and deserve the Mandate.

Back in the ancient days of the Three Legendary Emperors, when an Emperor was near death or saw fit to retire, he would search the land for a worthy inheritor for the Heavenly Mandate. Humanity is ambitious by nature,



though... Those upon the throne did not wish to relinquish their power, and came to believe that passing their power through their bloodline would grant their names immortality. Thus, Dynasties were born.

Dynasties are like the cycles of the seasons. Each dynasty has a beginning, where it rises to power; much of the time, this starts with a dream of correcting the evils of the current regime, and the desire to rightfully rule over Shen Zhou to create an age of everlasting splendor.

Some dynasties achieve this glory. It seems that their reign will bring unending glory to the land, and last for ten thousand years... but it never does. As dynasties reach their zenith, they become complacent, decadent, and tyrannical. They bring misery and strife to the land until they fall, usually at the hands of heroes taking power. Thus a new dynasty begins!

The power of the Emperor flows from the title, so anyone who considers himself deserving of the Mandate of Heaven is free to attempt to take it. There is a strong belief in Shen Zhou that only those of Han origin should ever rule the Land

The Mandate of Heaven*

Destiny Cost: 3

3+ Destiny: The quest for the Mandate of Heaven will be an important part of your story. Maybe you are a Han loyalist searching for the seals. You might be a follower of someone believed to be of Imperial blood, or perhaps there's Han blood in *your* veins.

Conversely, you may serve the Jin and fight for their right to unify the land and become recognized as a legitimate dynasty, or serve the cause of one who seeks to claim the throne and start a new one. You may even seek to claim the Mandate of Heaven for yourself!

10+Victory: After many adventures requiring great sacrifices - and maybe even the aid of Heaven itself - you are in the position to dictate who will take the Mandate of Heaven. In your hands rests the fate of Shen Zhou - choose wisely!

-3: Apply this discount to either or both of the previous options if being a hero of the Wulin would prevent you from ever taking the throne yourself. Whether you rightfully earn it or not, Heaven and the land will never accept one as you as an Emperor; you may be a hero, but never a ruler.

- *Sages and players are encouraged to use this Lore as a template to expand or create their own Lores pertaining to the Imperial Seals and the current and previous dynasties involved in their games*

Is Shen Zhou China?

Yes and no. Shen Zhou is a China that never was; while it shares geography, some of the myths and legends, and parts of its history, it is not meant to be a reflection of historical China. It is instead a kind of Mythic China.

The Wuxia genre is rarely faithful to history. Usually, the comings and goings of the Jiang Hu are more important than historical events. Many stories have no specified date, and history is only relevant as much as it affects the story. While we try to emulate the feeling of ancient China and be faithful as much as we can to the culture, we intentionally play loose with history.

We do this because History is merely the backdrop for the epic tales of the Wulin. Sages and Players should be able to use as much or as little as they want; if they want to set the story in the magnificent and cosmopolitan Tang Dynasty or the Mongolian invasion in the Song, to explore the world alongside eunuch Zheng He and his massive fleet during the Ming, or introduce guns and westerners during the Ching Dynasty, they can do so without modifying anything in this book.

Even if they want to create their own alternate stories, with their own made-up dynasties and Emperors, invasions and conflicts, they can still do so and still find all of the information in these pages relevant.

We've taken bits and pieces of different periods of Chinese history to create more of an archetypical ancient China in Shen Zhou instead of emulating a particular period. Even if our ruling dynasty is named Jin Dynasty, it is a mixture of setting elements readapted from the game **Weapons of the Gods**, representations of Chinese Dynasties in wuxia fiction and our own ideas. It is not supposed to reflect the real Jin Dynasty (264-420)!

of the Gods, but many would dispute this, especially among the ambitious and hot-blooded heroes of the land. Anyone powerful enough to take the Mandate and righteous enough to wield it can do so regardless of bloodline; so the theory goes.

The Mandate of Heaven is traditionally represented by the Imperial Seals. The current Jin Dynasty does not possess the seals of the previous Han Dynasty, and therefore established a

new reign instead of taking over the previous one. The absence of the seals, and their origin as foreigner invaders, leaves their Dynasty illegitimate and unrighteous in the eyes of many.

Currently there are many heroes who dream of unifying the land, whether by reinstating the Han to bring legitimacy to the Jin or by starting a new dynasty. What will come of these dreams?

THE JIN EMPIRE

The soldier flew across the yard, as if knocked back by a strong wind. The young Emperor smiled; he was pleased with himself. He'd certainly grown stronger. A second soldier dashed at him with a stick—one more second of being smug would have cost him dearly in a real battle.

He barely dodged the padded stick, yet it came close enough that the force of the attack managed to muss his hair. He'd ordered them to not take it easy on him. Jin Tian Long crouched and stabbed the soldier in the abdomen with his middle and index fingers in the sword position.

The soldier stepped back a couple of paces, clearly numbed by the attack. Jin Tian Long had been too rough with the last soldier, making him fly across the yard like that. They were not allowed to hurt him, while he had no such restriction. He should go easy on them and merely disable them.

Apparently the soldier had found the mercy of His Highness condescending, and instead of being thankful, he leapt across the yard ready to hit the young Emperor in the head. Even with a padded stick, such an attack would at least give the young Emperor a headache if it managed to connect. That would certainly be unforgivable, yet the Emperor had demanded that they fight with all their strength; what is a good soldier to do but follow orders?

A white shade flew across the training ground like a zephyr, cutting the stick in half as it neared the royal head. The young Emperor and the gathered soldiers all turned to see **Imperial Minister Wong** as he walked into the yard, his white fan returning to his hand like a faithful hawk. Such a level of cultivation, to be able to use an ordinary object as a powerful weapon! With a swift turn of the wrist, the eunuch opened the fan across his face, barely hiding his disapproving stare.

The soldiers all dropped to the ground and kowtowed, as the minister came close to the Emperor.

-A bit too close for comfort, I'm afraid, your majesty.-

The young Emperor sneered. This old eunuch seemed to be always trying to spoil his fun! Sure, it would be the soldier's

head if a single hair on the royal head got cut in training, but it wouldn't come to that. He had seen that attack and could have easily evaded it, of that he was sure.

-Not as close as you think. Maybe the eyes of the **Imperial Minister** are not what they used to be?- The Emperor arched an eyebrow. -Tell me, Minister... have you seen your family jewels, lately?-

Minister Wong smiled. The boy incessantly tried to get on his nerves, to no avail. He had tolerated his father before him, with those insipid dreams of the Wulin. That had been a headache; this Emperor had to do better than those childish jabs to get him agitated.

-I have not, your Majesty. But I have seen that your Majesty has trained enough for today! There are other obligations that he must not neglect.-

The young Emperor picked up a one of the padded swords, slashing across the air as if he was wielding steel.

-I have merely started, old eunuch. The Emperor must become strong, now leave me to it.-

Yet the young man seemed to be going in the right direction for making the Minister lose his nerves. With all this time spent playing with soldiers and risking getting hurt, he could not allow the same flights of fancy as his father; this nonsense had to be nipped in the bud.

-Perhaps Your Highness will allow this humble Minister to train with him; he might help this old minister improve his worthless kung fu.-

Jin Tian Long looked the old eunuch up and down, thinking about what surely was meant as a challenge. How dare he? Old Man Wong might have been good at kung fu when he was young, and sure, he still had strong internal energy, but he just looked so frail and brittle. He'd shatter him like a vase! Yet, he'd humor the good eunuch. Maybe then the man would see how much progress the young Emperor was really making and let him be for once.

-Worthless kung fu is right. I will show you how real men practice the Martial Arts, Minister Wong.-

The Old Minister smiled. He had the young man where he wanted. This would be easy; he requested his always-present assistant to immediately prepare his quill and a scroll to write. The soldiers were dismissed and cleared the ground.

-This Humble Minister will certainly appreciate the lesson. In fact he will write down the teachings of His Majesty. Please attack whenever His Lordship is ready...of course, as he does so, he should explain the importance of training and kung fu for an Emperor. This old man will try his best to keep up.-

Jin Tian Long was infuriated. This crazy eunuch, who had ever heard of writing while fighting? He'd teach him a lesson and hit him in the head with that scroll of his. The young Emperor moved as swiftly as lightning, his fake weapon lunging forward like a snake.

As he attacked, he spoke:

-Kung fu is of vital importance for an Emperor, as a strong Chi cultivation ensures a healthy and strong life.-

The old eunuch wrote this down casually, as he evaded the attack by slightly bending backwards. The young Emperor swiftly used his free hand to attempt to snatch the scroll.

-The practice of Martial Arts helps an Emperor develop a sharp mind, quick wits and allows him to adapt to any situation.-

The Minister gently pushed the scroll upwards with his knee, avoiding the claw-like hand, while continuing writing. Jin Tian Long unleashed what seemed like hundred attacks in a second, such an onslaught will certainly allow for him to blow the scroll away as he hit the eunuch.

-The Emperor is expected to lead his armies in times of war, therefore he should be strong and capable. Powerful kung fu will make him an undefeated leader.-

Minister Wong managed to simply *not be there* when the blows struck. He just kept writing the words of the Emperor; the scroll seemed to remain untouched by even the slightest breeze.

Tian Long could not believe the speed of the Minister. He had to stop playing around! This man could not possibly have as much Yang Chi as he; physiological circumstances prevented it. He had to focus all of his strength in a single attack. It did not longer matter if he got the scroll or not, he at least had to *hit* the Minister. He drove his stick downwards with amazing force, in such a strike as to split a rock.

-In times of peace, a strong cultivation will allow an Emperor to practice the qualities of patience, temperance and wisdom, all essential to rule the land.-

Wong closed the scroll with the swiftest motion of his hands, and used it to parry the attack just as it was about to split his head. The young Emperor was blown backwards.

He lashed at the young Emperor with the power of a furious wave crashing in the ocean. The Emperor tried to move aside, but the hand of the eunuch twisted in mid-air, his fingers poked at the boy's midriff at the pressure point known as "**Gate of Life**", the same point the youngster had hit on the soldier.

Yet he did not hit – he stopped a mere inch away, as he admonished the youth.

-The Emperor is not only responsible for his health and well-being, but for that of all the land, as such it is his duty to look over his subjects, and take to the matter of ruling without distractions.-

As the young man leapt backwards, Old Wong seemed to vanish from view and appear behind him. He attacked a point

in the ruler's back called "*The Guarding Gate*" yet again stopped just before hitting.

-There are a myriad things happening in Shen Zhou at all times! Countless threats and opportunities. It is in the best interests of the Emperor and the Land that he study them and learn as much as he can, and be prepared to act on a moment's notice."

Wong's hands moved like the spreading wings of a crane, folding back upon the body of Tian Long and giving the Emperor no place to run. The Minister jabbed at both arms, and he would have closed "*The Gates of Strength*" rendering them useless, but again stopped just next to them as he had done before.

-The Imperial strength is not in muscles, but in his army. He must become a mastermind and tactician, to know their strengths and weakness as he does his own, to know how to make the most efficient use of their power.-

As the young Emperor scurried away, the minister spun in the air. He passed just above Tian Long's head and lashed at a point in the center of the skull known as "*Gate of Knowledge*", and as he did all the times before, his fingers stopped just before striking. The eunuch touched the ground in front of the ruler.

-The Emperor is a man; therefore he cannot be knowledgeable of all things. Yet he must act with the wisdom of an expert in all subjects. There are men more learned than he; to rule wisely he should listen and learn from them, heed their advice and take from their wisdom.-

Young Tian Long kowtowed to Minister Wong. Despite his lack of manly equipment, the Minister had certainly won this encounter. Being the Son of Heaven he had a hard time remembering that he was barely starting on the path of life, and that his path was harder than anybody else is. The weight of All Under Heaven fell on his shoulders.

Minister Wong quickly helped the emperor rise, and started kowtowing in turn, yet as he did he had a smug smile on his face, this was bound make the young man act responsibly and stay out of his hair at least for a while.



Imperial Titles

Jin Tian Long is the current Emperor's Imperial Name, not his birth name. Just as Jin Fei Long and Jin Shi Hu were not titled with given names but Imperial Names. When an Emperor takes power, he takes a new name that shall identify not only him but the era of his reign from then on.

The current year will be measured according to how many years the Emperor has been in the throne, such as the fifth year of Tian Long or tenth year of Fei Long, and so forth.

After taking the throne, no one will refer to the Emperor by his personal name - with the possible exception of very close relatives, and only in private circumstances. No one in the history of Shen Zhou would ever dare to refer to legendary Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi by his given name of "Ying Shen"!

Imperial Names usually have great significance, and take the name of their Dynasty as a surname. For example, Qin Shi Huangdi means *First Emperor of the Qin*, and Jin Tian Long means *Heavenly Dragon of the Jin*. Even this name is the shortened version of the full Imperial Name used when addressing the Emperor, a name that is constituted by a multitude of titles and virtues both real and fictitious. A full Imperial Name can often be several pages long, and if Sages feel the need to reference it, they may simply make up evocative titles on the fly.

Emperors are also given a posthumous name after they die, to be engraved in their tombs and funerary paraphernalia. This is the name by which they should be addressed in the otherworld, and it usually has associations with Buddhism, Daoism, or both, depending on the Emperor's favored faith in life.

The Current Dynasty- The Jin Empire

After the fall of the Age of Glory that was the Han Dynasty, and the end of the Time of Heroes that was the Three Kingdoms era, an Age of Chaos fell over Shen Zhou. It was a time of disunity in which several states and lords fought for power. In these times, when the Han people lacked a strong empire, several tribes of barbarians grew stronger in both power and influence.

Eventually, an alliance of barbarians took control over a large part of central Shen Zhou. They overthrew the lords and kings of many states, growing more powerful than all of the surrounding nations, and declared themselves the Jin Dynasty.

The rise to power was bloody and cruel, leaving a trail of death and destruction in its wake. This bellicosity, alongside the fact that the Han Dynasty never officially ended (and that the newcomers were barbarians to boot), fostered immense hatred and resentment against the Jin Empire. Regardless, none have been powerful enough to oppose them.

During the reign of Emperor Jin Shi Hu, the Jin Empire grew in power, yet remained mostly isolated, growing within its territory but seldom expanding. Jin Shi Hu – known as The Emerald Tiger – was a decadent and self-obsessed ruler who worried more about his own search for pleasures than about expanding his territory or taking care of Shen Zhou. While the Empire kept a vigilant eye on other states and kingdoms and prevented them from growing into a threat, it kept an unsteady but constant peace with them, and they retained their independence.

Yet, the peace during this period was merely skin-deep, an illusion easily broken; in reality, the Land of the Gods was in chaos. States and kingdoms fought endlessly among themselves. The Jin Empire was not expanding, but held its territory with iron hand and subjected the populace to cruel and devastating taxes. The military became powerful and corrupt.

While the Empire rarely engaged in open conflict with other states, it usually sent secret agents through the Jiang Hu underground to destabilize rival kingdoms and Wulin factions that could become a threat to the Empire. These agents became known as Invisible Hell Killers, and their name is still spoken in fearful whispers across the Martial Community.

While Shen Zhou fell apart from the inside, barbarians were at the gate. Just as the ancestors of the Jin had done so a generation before, a new wave of invaders took the opportunity to burst through the cracks of civilization to threaten Tian Xia. Led by the monstrous hero known as the Beast of the North, they fell upon the Land of the Gods like a demon storm.

The Jin Empire rallied all its power to defend, ironically, the civilization it had once menaced. Alongside the heroes of the Wulin, it managed to defeat the Beast and turn back the tide of invasion.

In the following years, the once-divided states and kingdoms, now weakened by the invasion, willingly and unwillingly became more dependent on the Jin Empire for

their survival. The Empire's grip over the Land of the Gods increased, and subsequent Emperors became more expansionist. Some ruled tyrannically, others more-or-less justly.

Currently, the Jin Dynasty is becoming more stable, with a firmer hold on power. While still a far cry from the glory of the Han, it has come a long way from the voracious kingdom state of Jin Shi Hu. The dynasty reached its peak under Emperor Jin Fei Long, a just, Chivalrous Emperor with a philosophical heart and strong ties to the Wulin.

Emperor Jin Fei Long died under mysterious circumstances, and he'd always been afflicted by a deep sadness. The official story is that his melancholic character took the best of him and he ended his life. Some rumors say that this was prompted by his inability to make his favorite concubine into his Empress, as she was not considered a fitting consort. (She didn't belong to the approved consort clan.) Others say that he was secretly assassinated by the Imperial court, as he refused to be manipulated by the scheming eunuchs. Yet another version, especially popular in the Jiang Hu, is that he was left for dead by his betrayers but survived and currently lives as a great hero of the Wulin. It remains to be seen whether there is any truth to this legend, or if it's just wishful thinking from Jin Fei Long's old friends in the Wulin.

The current Emperor is Jin Fei Long's sixteen-year-old son, Jin Tian Long. He is mostly controlled by the royal court, yet all signs indicate that he will not accept being a puppet even at his young age. He is said to have firm character, a desire to learn more about his kingdom, and – like his father – a great interest in kung fu.

The Jin Empire is (arguably) becoming a better, more stable government, but there are still many who would challenge them for the Mandate of Heaven: those who still resent their early atrocities and depredations, those who would never accept an Emperor without Han blood sitting the Dragon Throne, those who believe that Heaven had not removed the Mandate from the Han Dynasty and therefore should be reinstituted, and those who wish to create their own dynasties and usher a new era for Shen Zhou.

Jiankang: The Imperial Capital

In the cosmology of Shen Zhou, the Imperial Capital is conceived as the Center of the universe, the axis mundi, the pivot of the four corners of north, east, south and west, and the river mouth from which all order and civilization must flow across All Under Heaven.

The current capital of Jiankang is atypical. For starters, it was founded by Jin nomads of Xiongnu origin, considered by many to be barbarian usurpers. It was also the first capital situated in the southern reaches of the Empire; traditionally, capitals were set in the north.

Despite initial reluctance to accept such an unusual place as a capital and many inauspicious omens by predictioners and sages, the capital has grown more prosperous and magnificent as time passed. It was built in the south to protect against remnants of the Han Dynasty and the many

The Jin Dynasty

Destiny Cost: 3

When the Han Dynasty reached its zenith, the Land lacked unity and sank into chaos. An alliance of barbarian tribes invaded Shen Zhou and usurped the Mandate of Heaven, becoming the Jin Dynasty.

The Jin's rise to power was bloody and violent; yet they in turn rose against the terrible menace represented by the armies headed by the Beast of the North. In this way, the Jin went from invaders to being defenders of the Land of the Gods.

The Jin have assimilated Han culture and language, and recent Emperors have been more temperate and fair. Some take this to mean that they may become a legitimate dynasty and the rightful rulers of Shen Zhou, but others will never accept an invader on the throne.

3+ Fortune: You know of a great secret regarding the Jin Empire. Is it something about their bloody rise to power, or about how they have managed to maintain it? Perhaps a fact about their fight against the Beast of the North, or maybe something about the lives of previous emperors?

0/5 Disadvantage: Hunted: Whether because of your own actions or those of your forebears, for reasons true or false, you are considered an enemy of the Jin Empire and are hunted by them. The Jiang Hu is your only refuge, but sooner or later, this is bound to bring you trouble. Work with your Sage to design the details about why are you being hunted. You may take this for free if it is your first or second disadvantage.

3+ Status: You have a strong relationship with the Jin Empire. Maybe your forebears helped them in their rise to power, or you're a scion of one of their influential families. Perhaps you are tied to them by marriage or alliance. You may have done something great to earn their favor or even have some royal Jin blood in your veins.

Take into consideration that while this status will certainly be beneficial in high places and with most of the secular world, there are many people who still hate the Jin, especially in the Jiang Hu. Within the Wulin, where people are instead judged by their own power and deeds, your status may carry little weight.

Emperor Jin Fei Long

It is said that Jin Dynasty reached its highest point with Emperor Jin Fei Long. A hero with the soul of a poet, he was a just and righteous Emperor, the likes of which the Land had not seen in hundreds of years! He was also a rarity among Emperors, as he had strong ties with the Wulin.

Unfortunately, Emperor Jin Fei Long died mysteriously; while official reports say it was a suicide, many doubt this, and indeed much of the Wulin believes the Emperor to still be alive – and active within the Jiang Hu!

There are three legends regarding his possible identity:

Falling Leaves Society Legend

One legend says that the failed imperial assassination plot from the Falling Leaves Society and the sacrifice of its leader *Immortal Crane* made the Emperor realize the unrighteousness of his dynasty, and that as Emperor even he could not cleanse the blood and suffering caused by his forefathers. He was merely a pawn controlled by a corrupt government.

The Emperor faked his own death and joined the Fallen Leaves Society. Today, he acts under the guise of **Helmsman Oak** (or the hidden power behind him), dedicated heart and soul to undo the dynasty he once inherited.

Hundred Ghost Faction Legend

A second legend says that he was left on the brink of death by his would-be assassins in a merciless and harsh land where he could not have possibly survived, but was rescued by the heroine known as **Crimson Haired Demoness**, who healed him and became his lover.

He realized the world was utterly corrupt, and that he was destined to become a spectre of vengeance dedicated to punishing not only those who wronged him, but all the wicked in the world who would hide behind their power and status or a façade of righteousness to escape punishment! So, he became the leader of the Hundred Ghost Faction, called **White-Haired Ghost Lord**.

Central Golden Dragon Legend

The third, most recent legend says he has recently resurfaced as the legendary hero known as **Golden Dragon** of the central direction. He now wields not the earthly power of the Jin Empire but the Heavenly power of the Yellow Emperor, and with it he will herald a new age of glory both for the Wulin and Shen Zhou.

3+ Fortune: You know a secret that backs one of the many theories regarding the fate of the Emperor as the truth! This can be his suicide, his treason, or his identity as one of the three rumored heroes of the Wulin (or even as someone, or something, else).

10 Victory: After many quests, and with the possible aid of Heaven, you discover the absolute and undisputed truth about the fate of Emperor Jin Fei Long. How will this discovery affect the Wulin and Shen Zhou as a whole?

(continue)

The Current Emperor Jin Tian Long

The son of Jin Fei Long has just ascended to the throne at the age of sixteen as **Emperor Jin Tian Long**. Due to his young age, he wields little real power. He has a strong will and stubborn personality, and is not one to be easily manipulated. He seems to have great interest in kung fu and a curiosity about the tales of the Wulin.

Many forces will seek to touch the young Emperor's life: there are those who wish to end it, and those who will want to protect him; those who will seek to influence him for their own goals and those who will seek to mold him into a leader for the Land.

How will this new Emperor live his life? How will his fate affect the Martial Arts World? How will his destiny shape Shen Zhou, and what legends will be told about him?

3+ Fortune: You discover than an existing NPC has strong ties to the young Emperor. They might be an Imperial agent or a lost sibling, a guardian or someone plotting against him. Might he even be the young Emperor in disguise, roaming the Jiang Hu for his own reasons?

5+ Destiny: Your story will be tied to that of young Emperor Tian Long. You may seek him out intentionally or cross his path by chance. You two may be destined to be great friends, rivals, or lovers. Perhaps you seek to kill him, or you are assigned to protect him.

You may seek your own benefit from this relationship, or seek to guide him into becoming the Emperor he needs to be. Work with your Sage to design the nature of this relationship and remember: if your story influences the Emperor, it will influence Shen Zhou.

squabbling warlords in the north; this has proven a blessing, for the lands of the south are rich and abundant compared to the harsher north, with bountiful water and resources

The once-barbarian Jin have gradually adapted more and more to Shen Zhou civilization. Though conquerors militarily, *they* ended up being conquered *culturally*. In seeking to create an Empire in the image of the Qin and Han, they have accepted the filial devotion to the authority of the state proposed by Confucianism and the strict rules of legalism as the correct ways to manage a capital and an empire, while looking at the metaphysics of Daoism and Buddhism in search for spirituality and transcendence. Besides ways of governing and spirituality, the Jin have adopted Han costumes and language. Their nobility is encouraged to marry with Han nobility, and so blood, not merely the culture, is mixed. They seek to become more integrated, yet despite this there will always be those who will see them as usurpers and invaders.

Under the reign of the Emerald Tiger Jin Shi Hu, Jiangkang was a bleak city under draconic law and subject to the whims of a depraved ruler. Later Emperors have worked to turn the capital into the center of civilization, a magnificent city with no equal under Heaven, where commerce, art, and culture would flourish.

Though Jin's Jiankang still pales in comparison with Qin's Chang'an and Han's Luoyang, there is no one alive today in Shen Zhou who would not be overwhelmed by the majesty of the capital. Goods from All Under Heaven can be found in its many markets and bazaars, from the common to the obscure; its many undulating streets and alleys follow alongside canals of singing water; its many gardens invite the people to escape the dreariness of daily life by losing themselves in a world of aesthetic perfection and tranquility. Its academic districts encourage students to learn of all subjects, from the classics and politics to Daoist theory and divination; the palatial states

of the rich and powerful host pleasure gardens where cups of wine flow across water canals, and the guest who picks a cup must then compose a poem. Within its many entertainment venues, like the famous Willow District, beautiful courtesans take their patrons to a world of music, dance and untold pleasures; in the legendary Hermitage Wine House, a brothel famous for being secret, members of the Jiang Hu are said to hold meetings and duels in many hidden chambers.

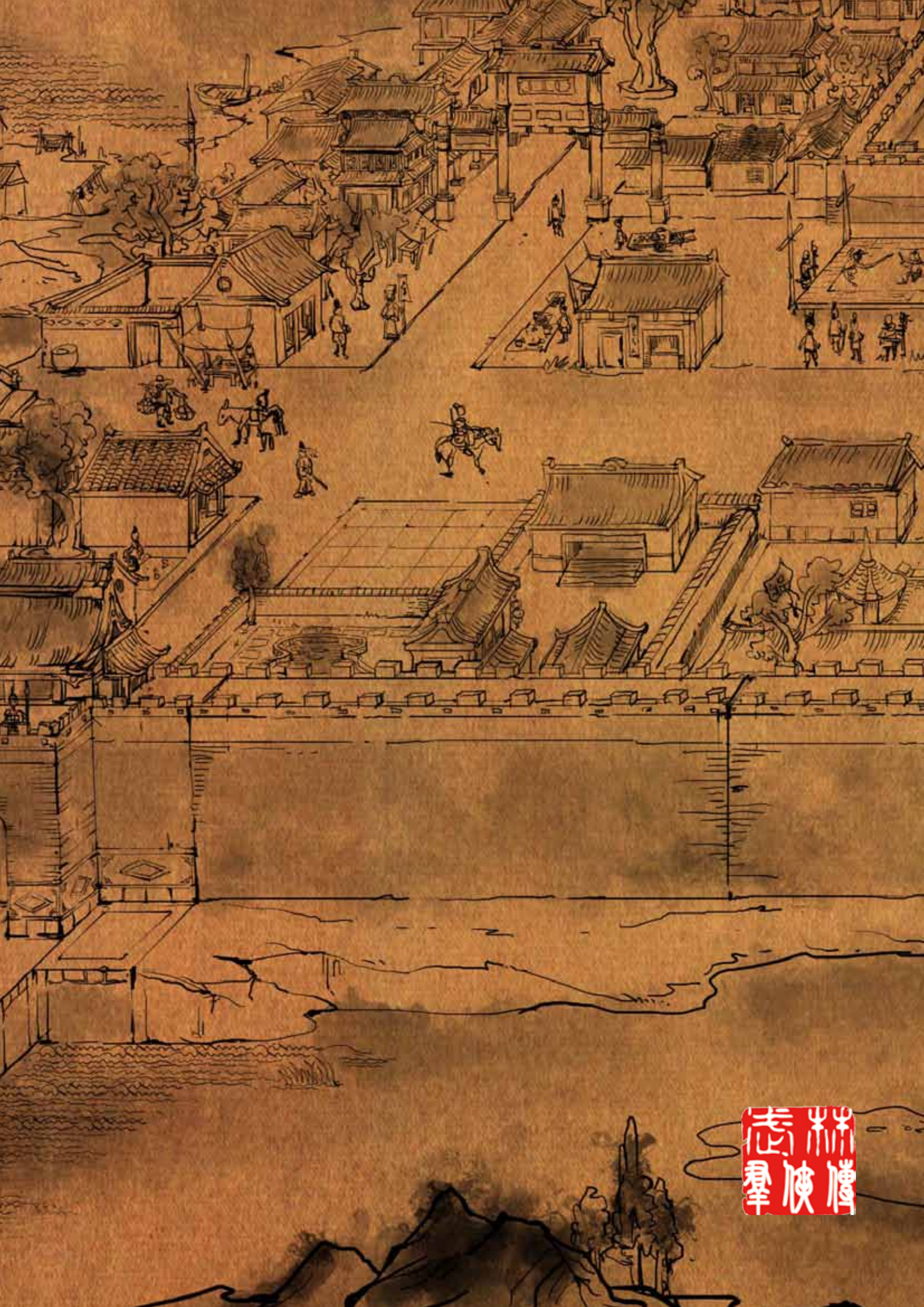
Even the lower classes live a bustling and active life in the capital, with its many wine shops and tea houses, gambling dens, brothels, and music halls. Pastimes as cricket fighting and the husbandry of singing birds are commonplace between rich and poor.

As Emperors preoccupied with immortality and spiritual merit have favored both native Daoism and foreign Buddhism, the city is dotted by temples and monasteries of both faiths. (Some of them more concerned with material wealth and status than transcendental enlightenment.) Alongside are temples and shrines dedicated to the Gods of the Celestial Bureaucracy, and Confucian sages considered saints. It makes for an active spiritual life in the capital.

The center of the capital, and therefore the center of the Empire and All Under Heaven itself, is the Imperial citadel, the Forbidden City, where only the Emperor, his direct relatives, eunuch ministers, servants, and guards are permitted to live. It is a magnificent complex larger than most small cities. Molded by the ambitions and dreams of each particular Emperor in the dynasty, the Forbidden City has inherited many unusual features from its previous inhabitants, like the magnificent harems, pleasure gardens, and banquet halls of Jin Shi Hu.

Emperor Jin Fei Long grew easily bored with palace life, and longed for the outside world; so, he had an entire city street built inside the palace complex. Concubines and servants would play the part of shopkeepers, merchants and





commoners, while he pretended to be a beggar, a monk or wandering hero of the Wulin. Later, an Emperor fond of Daoism ordered the construction of an enormous artificial mountain that can be seen across the city and threatens to pierce the sky, as a sort of embassy for the elusive immortals to visit him. If they ever did, none can say.

When the Buddhist Emperor (the same who once received the hero-saint Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon) set forth to build a giant Buddha statue, he commissioned it to exemplify his own features, faithful to the smallest mole. A monument both to Buddhist transcendence and Imperial glory, this statue can now be seen overlooking the Imperial Palace.

Connected by direct axis with the Forbidden City is the Temple of Heaven. Without affiliation to Daoism, Buddhism or any of the traditional gods, it is – as the name implies – a magnificent temple complex dedicated to Heaven itself. The entire complex is a very powerful geomantic construction, representing a miniature model of Heaven and Earth. It is believed to hide the secret of the Imperial kung fu style, Celestial Dragon, amongst other mysteries.

The cult to Heaven is the oldest in Shen Zhou, and the Emperor its direct representative. Only he – assisted by the magistrates of rituals – is fit to perform the sacred rites on the beginning of the lunar year and on the solstices. No one else is allowed within the temple.

Because the current Emperor, Jin Tian Long, is still young and has just ascended to the throne, it will be some time before he fully grasps the reins of power. Meanwhile, true control of the capital city and the empire falls to other hands.

The military is probably the only arm of the Empire where the Jin tries to maintain their Xiongnu origins at the forefront. While the lower ranks are formed of conscripted men and volunteers of all ethnicities, the highest ranks are almost completely comprised of Xiongnu, creating an elite clique of prominent military posts passed on by inheritance and close relationships.

The military elites remain fiercely proud of their origins and their so-called "barbarian" fighting techniques. Despite their uncivilized origins, these techniques won them Shen Zhou; why then should they 'civilize' and lose their edge? Nevertheless, even in the military, most members have married Han women (or at least taken them as concubines), mixing their blood. A great number have embraced the concept of a society under the strict rule of legalism, where ethnicity would be moot before the iron law.

On the other hand, the bureaucracy is a mechanism designed to keep the Empire running in perfect order since the times of the Han, despite dynastic changes or even weak or selfish Emperors. Confucian in inspiration, it seeks to place the most capable men (who embody the greater virtues of proper gentlemen) in position to govern society; to rule, not by forceful laws, but by exemplary action. Like the Wulin, the Confucian bureaucracy favors achievement over origin and wealth. Unlike the Wulin, succeeding in the bureaucracy requires compliance with a very narrow and formalized system that encourages knowledge and culture,



but suppresses individuality and stresses the value of an orderly state and a stratified society over personal goals.

Both the military and the bureaucracy are means for people of common origins to advance in an otherwise stratified society, and to work for the greater benefit of their country. There is no better place for those who wish to make a life in either than the capital, so it floods with aspiring politicians and soldiers-in-training every spring.

Military and bureaucratic power should, in theory, work together for the benefit of Shen Zhou, but they are often in conflict (especially in the capital), due to the fact that one represents the strength and power of the invaders while the other represents the excellence of Han culture and its traditions. Like all organizations, there are members who are corrupt, and wish to further only their personal ambitions.

The nobles and merchants are other important powers, with a more subtle influence. The nobles are those related to the governing families of the past or to the current Imperial family. Although legally they have no power at all, they own abundant land and wealth, and will often have blood ties to bureaucracy, the military, and even the royal eunuchs and concubines. They can wield family influence and financial pressure to shape policy to their benefit.

Jiankang - the Imperial Capital

Destiny Cost: 4

In the cosmology of Shen Zhou, the imperial capital is the center of the world from which all Heavenly authority radiates. The Jin have built it to a hub of culture and civilization featuring myriad markets, temples, academies, and gardens. Every type of person can be found in the capital - from nobles, merchants, bureaucrats, and soldiers to wandering heroes, spies and criminals. The Jiang Hu underground is as rich and varied as the secular life in the capital.

A member of the Wulin visiting the capital is bound to find intrigue and adventure.

1+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to the imperial capital. Whether you were born there or not, events within the city walls will reach out to affect your destiny, and perhaps draw you to that storied and heavenly metropolis.

3+ Status: You have significant status with one of the Jiang Hu factions that focus on Jiankang's underworld - perhaps one of the many criminal societies or guilds, or one of the major Wulin factions like the Resplendent Phoenix Society, Black Lotus Society, or the Beggar Fraternity. You may be a member, or have earned your status through your personal deeds. Hidden or overt, their power can be felt everywhere in the capital.

3+ Status: You have significant status with one of the major secular powers in the capital, such as the military, the bureaucracy, the nobility, or the merchants. Whether you are tied to them by blood, alliances, or your deeds, their influence will certainly affect your life in the capital.

-2: The capital is important, but not the main location of the story.

The Forbidden City

The Imperial citadel, also known as the Forbidden City, is the political and symbolic center of all of Shen Zhou; from there, the power of the Emperor expands like ripples on a lake to cover All Under Heaven.

It is a small city within a larger one, and as magnificent as the abodes of the Gods - a place that outsiders can only dream about, for only those of the direct Imperial bloodline (as well as their ministers, concubines and personal servants) are ever allowed inside of the walls of the Forbidden City.

1+ Destiny/Involvement: Your story is tied to the Forbidden City. You might be one of the few who will be allowed inside, or are otherwise bound to set foot where only the Son of Heaven and those near him can. Maybe events that transpire within its walls will send forth waves that will affect your destiny!

4+ Status: You may be of royal blood yourself, or be granted the status of concubine, eunuch or minister. Maybe you faked or lucked your way into such blessed place. Either way, you are allowed to come and go from the Forbidden City. This is sure to come with certain obligations and make you a target for enemies who want to use you to get access.

-2 : You are allowed within the Forbidden City, but you are not supposed to leave it! Going out into the world to have adventures, is complicated for you and probably requires ruses, tricks, and disguises... but it is certainly worth it!

Work with your Sage to determine the inconveniences of wandering out of the citadel, and whether they are significant enough to qualify as a possible *Disadvantage*.

7+ Victory: With great effort and unique fortune, you have managed to enter the Forbidden City. How did you manage such a feat? Maybe your deeds have made you worthy of the attention of someone inside; maybe you managed to sneak in. What do you seek within its walls?

The Imperial Eunuchs

The Eunuch Ministers of the Forbidden City wear the guise of obedient, humble servants of the Emperor, but this is a lie. In reality, they freely use their connections to exert influence not only within the Forbidden City and the capital but all across Shen Zhou - even into the underworld of the Jiang Hu.

The two most significant eunuch factions of the Forbidden City are the ministers of the **East** and **West Chambers**, based on their place of operations within the city... but outside, in the realm of the Jiang Hu, stories are whispered about the **Liquid Shadow Magistrates** and the **Spider Judges**.

The East Chamber

The East Chamber is dedicated to protecting the throne and the nation from external treats. Their main focus is espionage and intelligence. These are the secret masters behind the **Liquid Metal Delegates**, who represent the eyes and fists of the Empire within the Martial Arts World. Their power does not end there, for they also pull the strings behind the infamous **Invisible Hell Killers** - the secret spies and assassins said to reside as sleeper agents within all of the major organizations in Shen Zhou, ready to cause chaos - or force stability - in the name of the Empire.

The East Chamber is dedicated to seeking out enemies of the empire all across Shen Zhou, but have a special interest in manipulating the Wulin; they view the Martial Arts World as both a great weapon and a most terrible enemy. The greatest asset of the Magistrates is a secret technique that allows them to monitor and influence their agents regardless of distance.

(continue)

The West Chamber

The West Chamber is dedicated to protecting the Emperor and, by extension, the institution of the Empire itself; as such, their focus is mostly within the Forbidden City. They not only protect the Emperor and other important personages from physical harm, but strive to protect them from more subtle forms of influence. They control (or *attempt* to control) those closest to the Emperor himself - his teachers, closest advisors, concubines, and his personal maids and servants. They are the power behind the Imperial Guard.

They are known as the **Spider Judges**, due to their special method of initiation - castration involving certain type of poisonous spider. This ghastly ritual deadens them to human emotion and fortifies them against the influence of the Courtier's Arts. They are experts in detecting and defending themselves against influences, and closely monitor everyone who gets access to the Emperor and his servants to limit the influences of the Arts on Imperial policies. Pity those courtiers who they catch in their webs.

Though the two Chambers are supposed to work alongside each other for the protection of the throne and nation, they often find themselves at odds; both Chambers are staunchly Legalist, but have very different views on how to approach the Imperial power. The Liquid Shadow Magistrates argue that the power of the Imperial institution must be protected and increased at all costs, while the Spider Judges seek to preserve the integrity and mystery of the Emperor by cutting off all lines of hidden manipulation.

Consequently, they both vie for more power and influence - backstabbing and intrigue even goes inside the individual Chambers, as members disagree on important tasks and policies and seek to increase their personal power.

Both chambers are known to use heroes of the Wulin as agents and pawns in their power games, whether willingly, unwillingly, or unwittingly.

3+ Fortune: You discover a secret regarding the eunuchs of the East or West Chambers - maybe their secret influence on a certain affair, or something related to their methods and agendas? An important fact regarding their continuous rivalry?

3+ Fortune: You discover that an existing NPC is involved with one of the two chambers. Maybe they are an agent of the eunuchs? Or, perhaps, they've been secretly manipulated and are now misled (or out for revenge)?

1+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to one or both of the chambers. Whether you are willing agent, an unwilling pawn, or you just happen to cross their paths, they will play a part in your story.

4+ Status: You become a member of one of the chambers. Usually this will require you to be a castrated male - or at least have convincing ways to pretend to be one (which, in the case of the Spider Judges, will be quite difficult -they perform the castration themselves) and to be dedicated to the protecting the Empire from threats (or make a very good show of it). This status will grant you great influence and access to many secrets.

-2 : What was the cost of you joining one of the secret powers behind the curtain? You may have sacrificed more than the obvious, perhaps you earned the hatred of a powerful enemy, or had to betray your friends or forsake your love. Maybe you are affected by a powerful curse! Whatever it was, you may have wished it ended at mere castration. The price you paid will certainly scar you for life.

On the other hand there are the merchants. *Technically*, they are the lowest class in Shen Zhou, even lower than artisans and farmers, but this isn't how it works in practice. Their power and influence grows along with their wealth, as they become better able to bribe officials, hire mercenaries, and use monopolies and cartels to exercise influence over the economy. Even if the bureaucrats and soldiers scorn them and the nobility sneers at them, they just laugh. They have the money and the goods, and no one knows better than them how powerful that is.

Of course, there is the undeniable influence of the Jiang Hu underground, with criminal sects like Black Lotus who secretly control people of all strata in the capital and go largely unchecked. The Resplendent Phoenix and the Beggar Fraternity are both benign factions in Jiankang, who nonetheless possess enormous power.

Deep inside the Forbidden City, there is a hidden power

that sits alongside (perhaps even above!) the Emperor himself: the eunuch ministers. Many assume them to be no more than obedient, humble servants and advisors, but in reality they hold great power and influence, and pull strings everywhere from the Forbidden City to the Jiang Hu.

There are two eunuch factions within the Forbidden City, both notable for their power and influence, the Ministers of the East and West Chambers, so named for their place of operations. Outside in the realm of the Jiang Hu, however, they have different names; stories are whispered about the Liquid Shadow Magistrates and the Spider Judges.

No one can be sure of how strong their pull is on the strings of the military, bureaucrats, nobles, merchants, and even the Wulin. The true reach of their power in Shen Zhou is unknown, but in Jiankang, and inside the walls of the Forbidden City, their will is unchallenged.

THE CENTRAL PLAINS

Destiny Cost: 4

The area situated on the banks of the Yellow River is known as the Central Plains, considered to be the cradle of Shen Zhou civilization. The Plains are the very center of All Under Heaven, the focal point of the Celestial Empire from which it expands to overtake the World.

It is an area of magnificent and prosperous cities, of well-maintained roads, canals and waterways for travel and commerce, and areas with many splendid rivers and lakes. It is rich in resources; people of the central plains consider themselves civilized, and tend to cultivate the Arts and culture. In times of peace, life can be considered tranquil and placid; luxurious for the powerful and at least not too-harsh for those of the lower classes.

Cities are exemplar centers of civilization, possessing a strong sense of the aesthetic besides mere practicality and safety. Those in the Central Plains believe their cities should be as beautiful as they are utilitarian, and the cities have many gardens, parks, lakes, and centers for culture and entertainment.

As communication and travel between cities is easier than in other parts of Shen Zhou, people from the central parts often encounter a sampling of the many different cultures in the Land of the Gods; they consider themselves cosmopolitan and sophisticated as a result. Many residents hail from and reside within the big cities of the Plains, though even otherwise isolated villagers and farmers may have contact with other cultures besides their own. In some cases, villagers may have even encounter travelers from lands well beyond their birthplace, although only rarely peasants and commoners of those far-off lands.

Han language is widespread throughout the region, and most people have at least a passing familiarity with the common tongue (besides their regional dialects). Those of higher classes, or those possessing a certain level of wealth, will likely know how to read and write; even those of lower classes may be familiar with several characters.

The Area is considered the granary of Shen Zhou and the production of rice is abundant, which has turned the starch into a staple food in most tables. Due to the many rivers, lakes and waterways connecting to the sea, fish, shellfish, crabs, eels and other water-based products are a basic part of the diet.

Some of the notable products of the area are silk, porcelain and fine tea. They've become valuable luxury items all across the Land of the Gods and – thanks to the many commercial routes that bring contact with other cultures – well beyond it.

Besides the Imperial capital of Jiankang, some of the notable places in the Central Area are:

The Grand Canals

Among all the man-made waterways in Shen Zhou The Grand Canals is king, a marvel of design and engineering. It is the largest man-made canal in history and a testament of the greatness of civilization in the Land of the Gods; it unites the central plains with the northern regions, bringing goods and civilization.

Life is bustling across the canal as well as the many rivers and water avenues, which crisscross the central area, filled with boats for commerce and pleasure. Besides a prominence of merchants one can find security services, vagabonds, traveling poets, criminals and of course pirates across the length of The Grand Canals.

It is said that to celebrate its construction, the decadent Emperor Jin Shi Hu took a pleasure cruise across its entire length with the most beautiful women in the realm, at his beck and call. Many bored nobles and womanizing heroes have tried to recreate that journey without success.

Grand Canals

1+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to the Grand Canal. You may be a sailor, a pirate or a security escort, but you are bound to eventually navigate the greatest man-made canal in the world (and have adventures upon it).

0 Bonus: You get the **Survival Skill Specialty:** Grand Canal for free.

Magnificent Ink

A city with a predominantly scholarly character, sometimes simply known as Ink, is known for academics and literati. Many notable bureaucrats in high government positions have studied within the city, as along with poets, painters, philosophers and calligraphers.

It is a beautiful and serene city, full of crisscrossing canals, and magnificent gardens, manors and pavilions despite or possibly because it is a scholarly city. Notable Ink is also famous for its Willow District its pleasure quarters that are said to contain the greatest courtesans in the realm.

By day, they recite the Confucian virtues; nights are spent lost in a dream land of music, poetry and beauty. The high-class courtesans of the Willow District are not truly prostitutes. as they are not required to sleep with their customers; they are known more for providing educated and pleasant companionship than sexual pleasure.

Many nobles, officials and functionaries have leisure houses in this city, and many seek to take their retirement here. Despite the peaceful surface, deep inside it is a city full of bohemian poets and artists, beautiful courtesans, ambitious academics seeking a post in the government, and high ranking functionaries escaping the pressures of their duties. It is ripe with intrigue and conspiracies.

Both the Falling Leaves Society and Resplendent Phoenix are the most powerful Wulin factions in the city, locked in a constant – but mostly polite rivalry – with one other.

Despite its peaceful nature, the city was the site of one of the bloodiest battles in recent history. When the Jin took over the country, the city was defended by the famous hero **Fei Peng**, a master spearman said to have invented a style called **Divine Guardian**!. Despite the government prohibition on his name and image, he is still seen as a revered city hero and ancestor, and his secret tomb is a site of pilgrimage for

rebels against the government and those who wish to learn his powerful style.

Notably Picturesque

Entering the city of Notably Picturesque is like entering a painting in a silk scroll; it is dominated by the magnificent Flawless Mirror Lake where the Resplendent Phoenix Society has its main headquarters on an island that can only be reached by boat or lightfoot.

Magnificent Ink

1+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to this magnificent city of beauty, knowledge and intrigue. You may be student, a courtesan, or merely a hero lost in its splendor. You may have come to learn or to rest but you are bound to find adventure.

Fei Peng*

A legendary spearman, he died defending the city against the Jin, who have proscribed his image. He is said to be the creator of the **Divine Guardian** style; whether or not this is true, he was certainly a master of the powerful martial art. His tomb is a site of secret pilgrimage and his name and image are still revered as a heroic patriot.

3 + Fortune: You know a secret regarding the history of legendary hero Fei Peng, his kung fu style or his bloody fight against the Jin.

6 Fortune: You descend strongly by blood or martial tradition from Fei Peng. This will grant you the following benefits:

0 Bonus: You gain a *Minor Hyperactive Chi Condition* that comes into effect whenever you are actively opposing the Jin Dynasty -either fighting them directly or rousing people against them. You will lose this benefit if you ever ally with them, or stop opposing them. Work with your Sage to define the details of this condition.

0 Bonus: You gain **Status 4: Heir of Fei Peng** with all of those who actively oppose the Jin (like the Fallen Leaves Society). If you ever ally with the Jin or stop opposing them entirely this will instead become Status 4: Betrayal to **Fei Peng's Ancestry**.

0 Bonus: If your legacy ever becomes known to the Jin they will consider you an enemy to be eradicated: you will get the *Hunted* by the Jin Empire as a *Disadvantage* for free even if this takes you over two Disadvantages.

10 Victory: You manage to learn **Divine Guardian**, the famous style created by Fei Peng. Work with your Sage to design this style.

- This lore can be used as Sages and Players to create their own Lores about heroes of the past.



The great lake is dotted by many a small island, most of them house temples or shrines dedicated to Daoism, Buddhism or many gods. The Resplendent Phoenix Island, for example, holds an ancestral shrine dedicated to Nü Wa, the goddess who created humanity. Many other islands serve as refuges for hermits and sages seeking to escape the mundane world.

Notably Picturesque is famous for being where the Imperial family has their luxurious Summer Palace, on the banks of the Flawless Mirror Lake. A magnificent complex of manors, gardens and temples, it was commissioned by the Empress Dowager; she has retired this residence since the

young Emperor took the throne.

Besides its magnificent scenery, the city is famous for its cuisine. Sailing through the lake is an opulent floating restaurant, with a legendary Wulin chef who has mixed cooking with kung fu and Secret Arts and is able to create Chi conditions with his food (and demonstrably fight with cooking utensils). He is known as the God of Cookery.

The city has a high-class floating Willow District, and most parties and entertainment are held in boats in the lake; when things get out of hand, it's best to have good lightfoot skills. The pleasure district is believed to be controlled by the Black Lotus Society.

Notably Picturesque

1+ Involvement: Your life will be tied to this placid city, whether you are a member of the royal family on a holiday, a student of the Resplendent Phoenix, a gourmand seeking the perfect meal, or a pilgrim visiting its many temples, you are bound to find adventure in it.

The God of Cookery

There is a floating restaurant sailing across the lake run by an unstoppable warrior who wields his kitchen utensils as deadly weapons. He is known simply as **The God of Cookery**.

3+ Fortune: You discover that an existing NPC is related to the God of Cookery. They might be his student, rival, or the God himself in disguise. It should be someone that has at least showed a passing fondness for (or relationship with) cooking and food.

3+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to the famous God of Cookery. Will he become a friend or teacher? Enemy or rival? He is a character of at least **Rank 3** who can use cooking-based kung fu and/or Secret Arts.

3 Fortune: You may have been his student or stolen his secrets, but you've managed to learn from the God of Cookery!

+2 Secret: You learn the *Cooking Tool*. You can use this instead of the Herbal tool for the Doctor's Arts, Benevolence for the Courtier's Art or Finger Gestures for the Priest's Arts. This allows you to create or manipulate Chi conditions through your cooking, but demands tools, ingredients and the proper time.

+2 Technique: You learn the *God of Cookery Style of Kung Fu*! This External style uses kitchen utensils as weapons; check with the Sage to make up details for it, or use the rules for a preexisting Style.

+7: Whether it is a gift or stolen from the depths of the God's kitchen, you gain a *Legendary Weapon* that appears as a cooking tool. Is it a cleaver, a ladle, or something even more exotic, like a legendary preserved duck? Work with your Sage to design the nature and capabilities of this extraordinary weapon.

-2: Such knowledge or power comes at a severe cost; you may not be able to taste food anymore, or you may have become forever hungry, or crave a special type of flavor over all others. This should work as a *Disadvantage* or *Weakness Chi Condition* (possibly connected to your use of your new techniques or tools).

The Dowager Empress

The former Empress is believed to have retired from the world, spending her days in leisure at the Summer Palace. Yet there is more to her than meets the eye - rumors say that she is held there in exile, and that the palace is little but a gilded cage. The reason for this, the rumors say, is her *alleged* involvement in the death or disappearance of the former Emperor and the death of the current Emperor's birth mother.

The truth of these rumors are only known to by the Emperor himself and his highest ranking officials, but there are many legends regarding the Dowager Empress. Clever manipulator, or innocent victim? There are many stories that also tie her to everyone from the Two Chambers of the Imperial Palace to Wulin factions like the Resplendent Phoenix, the Fallen Leaves, or even the Black Lotus and the Blood Wind Cult.

What is the truth behind the Dowager Empress in her Summer Palace?

3+ Fortune: You know a secret about the Dowager Empress. Her involvement with the fate of the former Emperor? Or perhaps the real reason why she is in the Summer Salace? Her true allegiances?

3+ Fortune: You discover that an existing NPC is tied to the Dowager Empress. They might be one of her agents in the Wulin, someone involved in the conspiracy to frame her...or maybe the Empress herself in disguise?

3+ Destiny: Your fate is tied to that of the Dowager Empress. Maybe you are descended from her, by blood, martial or spiritual tradition? Perhaps you are meant to set her free? You might even be fated to become her enemy.

The Heavenly Dragon Mountain Range

It's said that to walk into the Heavenly Dragon Mountains is to leave behind the world of mortals and enter the domain of Daoist Immortals. Legends speak of Huangdi the Yellow Emperor trying to distill the elixir of immortality on its peaks.

Magnificent peaks emerging from a sea of clouds, resembling a dragon frolicking in the sky. Like many mountains in Shen Zhou, it seems like a true land of gods and spirits, and the mountain is home to many rare animals and plants said to possess unique properties, highly sought after for medicines, elixirs and rituals.

The Heavenly Dragon Mountains may (or may not) be the abode of immortals and spirits, but they are always filled with Daoist temples of different sects and schools. The most prominent of them all, at least in the Jiang Hu, is the Dragon Well Sect, high above the tallest peaks. Legends say they take their name from a true Dragon Well, a sacred spring with waters attributed with many spiritual properties, like longevity, increasing one's internal energy and unique kung fu.

Heavenly Dragon Mountains

1+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to the Heavenly Dragon Mountains. You may be a Daoist seeking enlightenment, a doctor searching for rare ingredients or simply a hero bound to get lost in their mystical peaks.

3+ Fortune: If you practice the Doctor's Art, you may discover that a valuable ingredient that will be helpful to the current story can be found at the Heavenly Dragon Mountains.

THE SOUTH

Destiny Cost: 4

A warm and humid coastal area, full of fishing villages and maritime ports, with lush tropical forests, rolling hills, and mountains, the south is home to many ethnicities, each with its own dialects and costumes. The people tend to be good-humored and boisterous, skilled at commerce and sailing.

Even the languages of the south have a certain musical cadence, and the people move as if dancing across the world. The Han dialect is not so predominant here; people tend to speak a plethora of regional dialects, and even those who speak the common tongue do so with a characteristic accent.

Due to their variety of ethnicities, their notable maritime culture, and the fact that the south borders kingdoms beyond Shen Zhou, southerners consider themselves forward-looking and open-minded. Their acceptance of foreign ways, with strange costumes and ideas, means people from other regions often consider them exotic, or somewhat crude.

Their cuisine is notable; they will eat things no one else in Shen Zhou will touch, such as rats, monkeys, and many unusual forms of seafood, all cooked in sophisticated, elaborate ways. It is said southerners will eat anything airborne that is not an arrow, anything on land that is not a carriage, and anything on water that is not a boat.



Southerners are often fishermen, sailors, naval officers, merchants, traders and pirates. Working the seas and waterways to fish and ply commerce are the main ways of earning a living.

Of special note, the Little Forest Sect has many adherents in the southern regions. Blue-Eyed Celestial Demon spent a great deal of time in the south after arriving in Shen Zhou; his deeds are many and myriad, but all are local legend.

Golden Harbor

Golden Harbor would rival the city of Bird's Progress in the east as the most important port of trade in Shen Zhou, if it wasn't also a nest of pirates and bandits. Once upon a time it was a simple and quiet fishing village, but today is a garish and bustling city full of floating brothels, opium dens, night markets, and taverns.

The Imperial navy has made many attempts to pacify the port and take control of it; a great number of officials have been killed, but most have been bought, and have subsequently joined in the debauchery and decadence. Thus, the port remains in criminal hands.

That said, legitimate trade and navigation does take place, and official business can occur without much interference, but there is no denying that the port is controlled by pirates and gangsters. They just allow their government puppets to make business so they can get a fat cut, naturally.

Golden Harbor

1+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to this heaven of piracy whether you're a pirate or bandit yourself, an agent of the empire trying to clean up the city, or a simple hero passing by. You will be involved in the many conflicts of the city and will certainly find adventure.

Flying Sparrow

The officer known as Flying Sparrow was the number one enemy of the Pirate King, until he betrayed the government and joined with the Southern Dragon Pirates. Now, rumor has it that he is either the newly adopted son of Southern Dragon King or the secret lover of Empress Stingray, but his fellow orphans in the Liquid Metal Delegates will soon bring him back in to their ranks – or kill him.

3+ Fortune: You know a secret regarding Flying Sparrow. Perhaps it is the true reason for his defection, or the nature of his relationship with the Dragon Couple?

1+ Destiny: Your fate will be tied to Flying Sparrow's. Maybe you are one of his former comrades trying to bring him back, or you were sent by the empire to kill him. Maybe you are a pirate competing with him for power! He might become a friend or ally, teacher or lover, enemy or rival.

He is at least an **Advanced Rank 4** hero. Work with your Sage to design the details of your relationship.

The city used to be controlled by the bandit princess who became the legendary pirate Empress Stingray, wife of Southern Dragon King, but the port has grown so much that it has escaped their control. Now the Southern Dragon Pirate Clan is in constant conflict with the Black Lotus Society (and other sects like Fire Doctrine), as well as the Imperial government, for influence and control over Golden Harbor.

A heroic young official known as Flying Sparrow was once the pirate king's number-one enemy and the Empire's only hope to take control of the port, but it is believed that the orphan has betrayed the government and became the pirate king's adopted son! Other rumors say that he was the pirate Empress' lover, and betrayed his country for her. The Dragon King dislikes this version of the story, to say the least.

There have also been rumors of Sparrow's sworn Liquid Metal Delegate brothers infiltrating the port to either bring Flying Sparrow back or kill him for his treason. Of course, the rumors also say they'll do whatever is necessary to take the port back from rebel Wulin.

Stone Drunk Town

This town was founded by a tribe of northern nomads, driven from their homeland and seen as nothing but unwelcome guests in the southern regions. They developed a unique style of architecture, with each compound a self-contained fortress of circular or square buildings, able to house and protect many people from the outside.

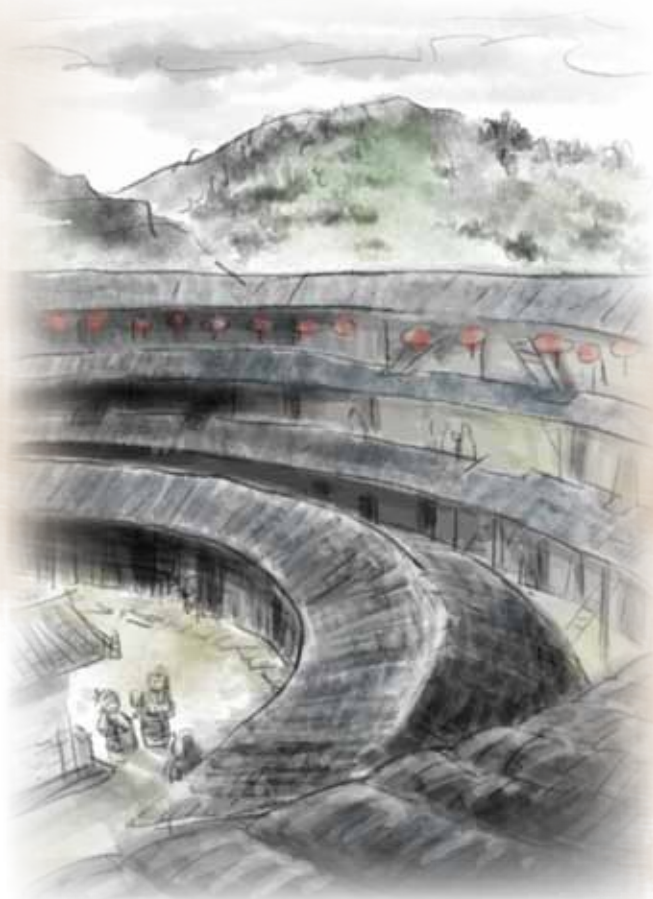
Each complex is like a turtle shell for its reclusive inhabitants.. Each complex holds its own habitation for several families, storage, public areas, and sacred spaces. Even more, each is designed with geomantic Daoist principles in mind, defending them not only with sturdy walls but mystic principles.

This town developed quite a drinking habit while isolated from the rest of the world. They are legendary connoisseurs of all fine wines and liquors, ready to drink visitors under the table!

Not only do they know how to hold their wine and appreciate liquor, but they consider the disciplines of distilling and fermenting arts unto themselves! They have crafted many medically potent wines, unique spirits capable of creating and inflaming Chi conditions, like **Brotherhood Wine, Nine Devil Wine, and Happy Go Lucky Wine.**

Each of these special wines is extremely rare - in some cases, unique. Even a single bottle is highly valued, especially in the Jiang Hu; there are many who would go to great lengths to learn the recipes of such wines.

There are many hard drinking Wulin heroes, like drunken swordsmen, poets, or even monks, so Stone Drunk town is a natural destination for them, a place to imbibe legendary wines and match drinking skills with the most distinguished drinkers in the world! However, very few strangers are welcomed in Stone Drunk Town. Any guests have to earn their admittance through favors or reference.



Stone Drunk

1+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to this turtle-shell city. You may come from Stone Drunk Down, or you may be an architect seeking to learn the secrets of their constructions. Perhaps you are a drunken hero looking to try their legendary wines or seeking isolation from the world. You will certainly find adventure.

Turtle Shell City

Each living complex is a single sturdy fortress shaped like a turtle shell, capable of housing several families and built with Daoist geomancy. What a mystery these petite arcologies are to the scholars of Shen Zhou!

5 Fortune: Whether you were born in Stone Drunk Town, or just studied their unique buildings, you have learned to take great advantage of their unique architecture in combat. Your style never *Fears* another when you fight inside one of their complexes!

-2: Stone Drunk Town will be important to the story, but not the main location.

7 Victory: After studying their fortresses for years using the Art of the Scholar and/or the Priest to grasp the esoteric methods of their construction, and struggling to collect materials and workers for just as long, you manage to build one of these sacred fortresses. This Victory can only be used once per Story..

Drunken Masters

The people of Stone Drunk Town know great secret arts of liquor! They have created many potent, mystical liquors with the power to change whomever imbibes them.

Due to the special care and extraordinary effort required to distill these liquors, they are extremely rare and valuable, especially in the Jiang Hu. There's no telling what lengths someone would be willing to go to acquire or replicate them.

3+ Treasure: You have in your possession a bottle of one of the unique wines of Stone Drunk Town. This creates a unique Chi Condition upon imbibing it. By default, they create Minor Conditions with [Recovery 40/Duration 1/Interval 1 Scene]. These default bottles cost 3 Entanglement or Destiny points to acquire. Increasing the Severity of the Condition created by the wine increases the cost of the bottle appropriately. Each bottle contains enough for five uses - although trying to get a happy drunk to stop drinking might be an effort in itself. The Conditions are normally Hyperactivities, but in some cases could be Weaknesses, or even Paired Conditions.

A person can only be affected by one condition imposed in this way, and drinking more wine won't inflame the condition beyond its original strength.

5 Secret: By studying the unique distilling and fermentation processes of Stone Drunk Town, you learned to brew marvelous wines; you may now use wines you create as Tools for the Doctor's, Courtier's or Priest's Arts. (These stand in for *Herbal Remedies*, *Propriety*, and *Pacing the Constellations*, respectively.)

0 Bonus: You gain the **Craft Skill Specialty: Wine Making** for free.

Sun Moon Lake

This unique lake is named for its shape: one half is round like the sun, while the other has the shape of a crescent moon. It is surrounded by magnificent forests and mountains, and has pleasant weather all year round.

South of the lake there is Green Dragon Hill, home to many temples, monasteries, and hermits. It is believed that

some Buddhist temples here possess sacred relics of ancient hero-saints.

A magnificent but run-down manor at the banks of the lake, between the sun and the moon halves, is the abode of the aloof and beautiful Saint Beast of the South, Vermilion Phoenix.

The area around the lake is home to the indigenous Eight Fish tribe. They are the only ones who are allowed to the island in lake's middle, where they worship their ancestors.

Sun Moon Lake

1+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to this heavenly lake. Perhaps you will search for the legendary beauty of Southern Saint Beast Vermilion Phoenix, or travel across its many temples as a pilgrim. You might be a hero searching for the secrets of Eight Fish tribe kung fu. This place may seem peaceful, but you are bound to find adventure around its tranquil waters.

Southern Vermillion Bird: Find this Lore in the **Wulin Greats Lore** section. You are assumed to have access to that Lore by purchasing this one.)

Lore Seeds: Sun Moon Lake

These are topics that might be expanded into new Loresheds of their own if they catch the eye of a player or Sage.

Relics of the Sun Moon Lake

The hills around Sun Moon Lake are filled with monasteries that are believed to contain relics of great Buddhist or Daoist Hero Saints of the past. What are the legends of such heroes, and what power lies in their relics?

Eight Fish of the Sun Moon Lake

The island on the center of the Lake is the domain of a mysterious tribe; no outsider is ever allowed to set foot on the island as it is dedicated to their ancestors. What secrets do they hide? Did they truly create the Rage of the Dragon Kings?

Legends say they can wield the waters of the lake as a weapon, and the central island holds the origins of Rage of the Dragon Kings, the kung-fu technique of the Southern Dragon Pirate Clan.

World's End

This island is the end of the empire, at the very edge of Tian Xia. Once it was a place of punishment, where the emperor exiled those who defied him. Now it is the fortress of the Southern Dragon Pirate Clan.

Once considered a desolate hell, it has become a luxurious, paradisiacal fortress with a surrounding pirate port. If the ambitions of the Southern Dragon King ever come true, it will be the capital of a new empire. None save the Pirate Clan can approach the island, except as a guest or a prisoner. Getting in or out without clan permission is nigh impossible; those who achieve such a deed will become legends. (They probably won't live very long, but they will become legends.)

World's End

1+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to the pirate paradise - you may be a pirate yourself, someone seeking to invade them, or a previous inhabitant of World's End. In such a dangerous place you are surely bound to find adventure!

THE WEST

Destiny Cost: 4

The west is an untamed land of savage beauty, of massive sky-piercing mountains, furious rivers with waters that run like wild horses, lakes so large the locals refer to them as seas, sky-swallowing forests, and horizon-spanning plains.

Its people bear Xiongnu barbarian blood, as proud and untamed as their lands. Their hearts are as strong and resilient as their snowy mountains, and one can always see the crystalline lakes of their homelands in their eyes. These are people who grin at the face of challenge, who pass their stories and legends through song and dance. Adventuring heroes hailing from the west often originated as hunters, herdsman, traders, explorers, or rural nobles.

It is a land of mystery and superstition, where gods, demons, and spirits are still said to reside in forests, mountains, and lakes. Buddhism and Daoism have mixed with the local shamanistic religions, and holy men are ambassadors and masters of the supernatural world. Monks constitute a royal class thought to inherit their power and titles through reincarnation.

To outsiders, it is a land of vast opportunities and untold riches, but also dangers, for it's full of barbarians and monsters. To those who live there, the land itself, their culture and history are treasures more valuable than imperial gold and even life itself.



Its massive mountain ranges go from the misty, blade-like Five Peaks in the southern borders which house the headquarters of the Heaven Sword Alliance, to the majestic and heartless Snow Dragon lying like a sleeping god deep within the western territories, abode of the legendary Glacier Maiden.

Only Six Devils

Once it was a massive metropolis ruled mercilessly by the Iron Shadow Warlord and his elite Blizzard Wolves. Now it is a fallen city. Nothing remains of the glorious past but ruins, haunted by demons and ghosts. Common people stay far from its gates. Wulin heroes, however, come here for the shopping.

Legends said that anything could be found in Only Six Devils if it was ever lost in a war. This still holds true: the whole city is the greatest secret market under Heaven, a true bazaar of the bizarre! Everything can be traded, from unique and marvelous treasures to Legendary Weapons - even long lost kung fu secrets. Some say that even lives and souls can be bought here.

The city is an impenetrable labyrinth that can only be crossed with either a native guide or amazing wits and luck. It is haunted by statues of angry gods and demons, which are rumored to spring to life and kill trespassers. The city is divided into six districts, each controlled by a member of the **New Six Devil Gang**. Every one of the Devils is a capable Wulin hero.

Each of the districts specializes in a unique merchandise or service. In one district, every pleasure imagined can be found at a price; in another, weapons and kung fu styles of all types and histories can be purchased; yet another specializes in rare medicines and poisons, and so on. Access to a district is forbidden without the favor of the Devil who controls it.

In the heart of the city, deep within the ancient sunken market, among the ruins of past marvels and broken treasures - legend says that here rests the Iron Shadow Warlord, deprived of his magnificent night armor, old, injured, half mad, and kept alive by unique medicines and Chi cultivation. Is he training to regain his power, waiting for the right moment to strike against a Shen Zhou that dared forget him?

Heroes of all factions of the Wulin can be found at any time in Only Six Devils, as well as vagabonds and strangers from all arms of the Jiang Hu, whether they are selling or buying its many wares and services, searching for something, or being lost themselves.

Only Six Devils

1+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to the fallen city. Whether you are searching for something lost, trying to get rid of something or are lost yourself - in such a maze of strangeness you are bound to find adventure.

3+ Fortune: You discover that a unique treasure or rare piece of information relevant to your current adventures and trials has turned up in Only Six Devils.

The New Six Devil Gang

The city is ruled by the Wulin Heroes known as the New Six Devil Gang. Each of them are Wulin of at least Third Rank, with some of them rumored to be even stronger. Per their name, there are six of them, but little more is known, as they seldom leave the city. Still, they are rumored to have students, agents and minions across the Jiang Hu.

To be granted access to a district controlled by one of the Devils, and therefore the goods in it, a hero must earn the favor of that particular Devil; this may require them to go through to some test on arrival, to offer a unique gift or bribe, or simply have notable previous deeds and reputation.

Some say that the districts of the city are arranged in ascending order - that each has more exotic and unique merchandises than the other - and that the Devils are in turn gradually more powerful and more selective in granting their favor. Others say that each district has the most unique and rare merchandises of its type, that the Devils are roughly equal in power and their demands vary just according to personal preferences. Only those who have been in the city and navigated the various districts know for sure.

3+ Fortune: You know of a secret regarding the New Six Devils - either one of them as an individual or about them as a gang. This might pertain to their preferences for granting access to their districts, or something deeper still - perhaps even something about their true identities and motivations!

3+ Fortune: You discover that an existing NPC is tied to the Six Devil Gang. They might be a student, ally, enemy or recruiter - or perhaps even one of the Devils in disguise venturing out of the city!

6 Victory: Having done your utmost, you manage to cause a favorable impression in one of the Devils. This will grant you access to their district and the incredible merchandise within.

The Iron Shadow Warlord

Once, the city of Only Six Devils was one of the greatest metropoli in Shen Zhou, ruled with an iron fist by the terrifying hero known as the **Iron Shadow Warlord**. Clad in his impenetrable Night Armor and possessing magnificent Kung Fu, he inspired fear in the surrounding lands and even the Empire itself with his ice-wielding Blizzard Wolf soldiers and his famous generals - the original **Six Devils**.

Now the Jiang Hu has almost forgotten about him - yet, there are whispers that say that beneath the ruins of the city, the Iron Shadow Warlord still lies deprived of his magnificent armor, broken and half mad, slowly regaining his powers, and waiting to strike back at the Wulin.

3+ Fortune: You know a secret regarding the Iron Shadow Warlord. Perhaps the hidden truth of the fall of the city, and his true fate? Perhaps something related to the New Six Devils - are they related to his old generals? Are they his protectors, or jailers? Maybe it concerns the location of his fabled Night Armor.

1+ Destiny/Involvement: Your story is tied to that of the Iron Shadow Warlord. Perhaps you descend from him strongly by blood or martial tradition, and are destined to wear his legendary armor and master his feared kung fu. Maybe you are bound to prevent his return. If he does come back to storm the Wulin, you may become his ally, peer, or foe. Crossing the path of such a legendary hero will change you, for better or worse.

Gathering Clouds

The city of Gathering Clouds is the most magnificent city of the west. It is the capital of the Yun Clan; from here they control the commerce of the dangerous and bountiful Tea-Horse Road, taking the finest horses from western lands to the central plains, and tea from the central and southern regions to the sacred elites of the Tsubo Kingdom.

Gathering Clouds is an oasis of civilization deep in savage lands, a cosmopolitan city that welcomes people of all cultures and origins. Here, trade and culture flourish and expand; it is truly a magnificent site to behold.

The city itself is built in ascending levels, with the lowest levels used for markets, gathering areas, and living quarters for commoners, and the highest levels reserved to the Yun nobility. At the center of the city there is a stream of pure water, descending from the palace springs towards the city's lower levels like a waterfall; in every level there are gardens, tea houses, and willow districts surrounding the flowing waters.

The city is surrounded by the Snow Dragon mountain range, and it borders the Thousand Gods Lake, so it is a remote and defensible position. Just beyond the city there are three giant pagodas where warrior monks protect the weapons and relics of the Yun, train young heroes, and predictionists map out the destiny of the city and clan.

Gathering Clouds

1+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to the Garden City. You may be scion of the Yun, one of their allies or enemies or perhaps a hero on his way to the Tea Horse Road.

Shambala

Shambala is unique in all Shen Zhou as a theocracy ruled by an elite of Buddhist monks considered to be reincarnations of great hero saints of the past. Religion is the greatest power within this outpost of the great Tsubo Kingdom in the Land of the Gods.

Buddhism in the west is different than from the rest of Shen Zhou, as it has mixed with the local shamanistic traditions. The monks are believed to be in contact with, and sometimes to incarnate, several deities, spirits, and demons that dwell across the world and have power over natural phenomena. Most monks of the west are scholars and priests, instead of the warriors and doctors which are predominant in the Little Forest Sect.

The center of the city is a magnificent monastery complex; only the monks are allowed to live there. The monastery is a fortress just like a castle or palace in other cities, and the town grows around it and expands. Outside of the city, there are vast plains and grasslands used for cattle pasture.

In the center of the town, there is giant prayer wheel made of gold. Every day, the townsfolk - rich or poor, noble or commoner - strain to spin the great wheel, to let their prayers reach heaven and purify their souls. The hero-priest Eternal Recurrence, who protects the wheel, hasn't let any thieves touch it yet.

The Jin Empire distrusts Shambala. Only the emperor is the true Son of Heaven, and monks claiming to be living gods are a threat to his authority. They know, however, that its inhabitants are devoted to the cult and would defend it with their lives; further, the monks are experts not only in Secret Arts, but also kung fu.

So far, the theocracy of Shambala has stayed within the city, and they have presented no threat to the empire; they pay tribute and submit to imperial authority. In addition to this, previous emperors have been devout Buddhists with a great concern for the afterlife, which has helped relationships with the so-called Holy City remain friendly.

The city is also a border town far from the thick of the

Shambala

1+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to the Holy City. You may become one of its monks, or a delegate from another faction establishing relationships. Perhaps you are simply yet another hero wandering into the border town. In this place, where the scared and the profane mingle, you are bound to find adventure.

Monk-Kings of Shambala

Western Buddhism is a different from what is practiced in the rest of Shen Zhou, having mixed with the local shamanistic traditions. They believe the spirit world is close, and the responsibility for embassy with it falls to the monks. These monk-kings of the supernatural world are mighty Scholars and Priests, who claim to reincarnate in to their positions again and again.

3 Fortune: You know a secret regarding the monks of Shambala. Perhaps this concerns the way they govern the city, a fact about their unique kung fu and Secret Arts, or the secrets of reincarnated Hero Saints?

3+ Status: You belong to the Buddhist Monks of Shambala. This means that you are likely a Priest or Scholar, although there are monks of other archetypes as well. Depending on status, you may be a simple novice, notable disciple, or assumed reincarnation of a Hero Saint of the past. (In the latter case, you will have a lot to live up to!)

5 Fortune: If you are a recognized reincarnated Hero-Saint (which assumes a Status of 5+) you benefit from a *Minor Chi Hyperactivity* related to living up to the deeds and ideals of your former incarnation - or possibly fulfilling their karmic goals. This probably takes the shape of an Inspiration or Influence; work out the details with your Sage.

0 Bonus: You may take the **Inspire Skill Specialty: Devotion** or **Learning Skill Specialty: Western Buddhism** for free.



empire, serving as a meeting point between the so-called civilized men and those called 'barbarians'. It may be a sacred place, but it also holds many rogues and fugitives. Prayers might be heard day and night, but there is always adventure brewing underneath.

Sweet Melancholy

If Gathering Clouds is the political and cultural capital of the Yun, Sweet Melancholy is the commercial core, deep in the center of the Tea Horse Road. This is where the caravans are set and organized to depart on their dangerous road. At the center lies a massive market, where goods from all over Shen Zhou and the Tea-Horse Road are sold and exchanged.

Sweet Melancholy is a pleasant, beautiful city. Outside the bustle of the market square and the districts for merchants and adventurers, it is quiet and peaceful, crisscrossed by canals and river ways full of multicolored fish. The cobblestone streets are filled with weeping willows, softly swept by the wind.

The very water and air sings a soothing song to calm the

heart of the weary traveler, filled with tea houses and wine shops, where they may enjoy the company of beautiful girls and boys. It is one of the few cities in Shen Zhou without walls, and yet it has never been invaded, as if no one would dare to soil this paradise with blood.

Many heroes come to Sweet Melancholy in order to join the caravans, make a name for themselves, and start off on a life on adventure. Many of those heroes will never leave the city, not because of any hidden dangers, but because they find happiness and contentment in this place and do not want to leave.

On the surface, Sweet Melancholy is an earthly paradise where wanderlust is sated, and even the most conflicted hero can find a respite from the troubled world. Farther in, however, there is a dark secret. Sweet Melancholy is cursed; the entire city is a void that consumes heroic destinies. Any who enter the city will find a reason to leave their life of wandering behind and settle down; a romantic finds the love of his life, a filial heroine finds an elderly couple who reminds her of her dead parents, and a restless wanderer finds the perfect scenery that stills his aching heart.

The greater the hero, the more the city hungers. Heroes

will eventually forget their purpose, their dreams, and their ambitions. Eventually, they will be drained of not only their destiny but of their very chi, until they wither like commoners and spend the rest of their lives in a state of sweet melancholy.

It takes great will to escape Sweet Melancholy, and even greater power to free someone else, but the rewards are worth it. Those who do escape emerge stronger, their Chi empowered by the ordeal. It is a land of masters who have forgotten they are masters, of legendary weapons left by the wayside as meaningless trinkets, and of long lost styles that haven't been practiced in generations.

Those who tried to break this epic curse have found it impossible, as they cannot find the source. Some say that the its origin lies in the conflict between Snow Leopard and his brother, Hunchback Toad of the Five Venoms, over the elusive Glacier Maiden. The Leopard supposedly chained the Toad at the bottom of the Black Dragon Pool, the most sacred place in the city.

Others believe that the root of the curse is the Glacier Maiden herself, and that this is the place where her heart originally turned to ice; the entire city was corrupted by her melancholy and her desire for no more heroes to walk the earth.

A handful of very few, very wise scholars believe that the origins of the course of Sweet Melancholy lies in the very creation of the world. When Pangu the First Being split the primordial Void apart, one shard of the Void fell where the city would one day be built. The city itself is what some esoteric experts call a Black Void Treasure; it feeds on the heroic destinies of those who would stop the primal Nothingness from returning to consume the world.

Sweet Melancholy

1+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to the Bittersweet City. You may come there as a traveler from the Tea Horse Road, or perhaps seeking someone that came before and never came back. You might be a wandering hero arriving by chance. In any case, you might never leave.

The Curse of Sweet Melancholy

On the surface of Sweet Melancholy is an earthly paradise, where the thirst of adventure and wander lust is satiated, but there is a dark secret; Sweet Melancholy is a cursed city. The entire city is a void that consumes heroic destinies and drives heroes to retirement. Those who fall for its temptations forget about their life, their purpose, and their past! Their Chi wanes as the city feeds on it, and those who were meant to be legends instead grow old and die, lessened and forgotten.

3+ Destiny: If you travel to Sweet Melancholy you may become bound to an old hero of the Wulin who had been thought dead or lost, or a weapon or style that had been forgotten by history. These things or people are residing in Sweet Melancholy, wasting away their destiny. You are bound to try to bring them back to the Jiang Hu, or, perhaps, to assure they remain lost.

3+ Fortune: You discover than an existing NPC has fallen, or is likely to fall prey, to the curse of Sweet Melancholy.

How does the curse work?

The curse that makes Sweet Melancholy into a honey trap for heroes manifests in the game as a Paired Daoist Condition – a Water Influence encouraging you to stay and enjoy the many pleasures of the city, and a Fire Curse that encourages you to express your joy and satisfaction with it or exalt it in song, arts or poetry.

(continue)

The Influence is a Weakness, causing an action penalty whenever you try to uproot, finish your business or otherwise prepare to leave – this generally manifests as absent-mindedness or a series of unlikely events that simply get in your way and need to be dealt with before you move on – just one more night...

The Curse is a Hyperactivity, granting a bonus to Breath as long as you spend time expressing your joy – drinking with friends, making a great painting dedicated to the beauty of the setting, or the like.

Everyone with cultivated Chi who even enters the city will be affected by this condition at Trivial Intensity; staying even one night Inflames it to Minor. Since the secondary effects and manifestations of the Water Influence tends to sink its hooks into a hero by this point, it is likely that they will prolong their stay. Further delays will give the condition a chance to strengthen itself even more, making it even more unlikely that the hero will ever leave.

At each point that the condition tries to Inflame itself beyond Trivial, the character gets a chance to roll their Wu Wei to resist. The Difficulty for this starts out at Moderate (20), and then increases by one each time.

Discovering that something is wrong is no easy task – a Wu Wei roll at Memorable (40) Difficulty will give you an eerie feeling of an unseen influence over the city. (This has occasionally caused enough interest to make a visitor stay to investigate, with predictable results.) A critical success will give a stronger indication on the nature of the condition. A Priest can try to Soothe it temporarily, although the condition will always reassert itself if you stay, and never goes below Trivial intensity as long as you do. The Difficulty for this is Memorable (40) for the Minor-strength condition and Fantastic (60) if it has become Major – in the latter case, the character practically belongs to the city!

7 Victory: You discover the source of the curse; does it lie with the feud between Snow Leopard and his Brother Hunchback Toad, the ice cold heart of the Glacier Maiden, or might the city even be a shard of the Void bringing eternal darkness back into the world? The possibilities are manifold. In any case, discovering the source is altogether different from actually breaking the curse; the latter will surely be a source of challenging adventures!

THE NORTH

Destiny Cost: 4

The north is a land of scorching summers and freezing winters, of steppes and deserts. Despite its harshness, it is where civilization flourished. The Qin capital of Chang'an was situated on the north, and many heroes and plunderers still search for the imperial tomb of the first emperor, with its many treasures and his army of statue-soldiers of terracotta and bronze.

Although there are many nomads and Xiongnu settlements, Han culture dominates and the common language is widespread. Northerners consider their land the true basis of Shen Zhou culture, and often look down on people from other regions; many still believe the capital should be reestablished in the north.

Northerners tend to be forward and direct, with strong and irascible character. They are quick to anger, but loyal to family and friends. Northern heroes often have a background as military, traders, or farmers.

Travel is difficult due to extreme weather despite the well-maintained Qin roads, so cities are self-contained. Villages and towns are isolated. People in the north base their diets on wheat products rather than rice-based ones; bread, dumplings and noodles are quite popular.

Bandit and barbarian raids are quite common, so working as a caravan escort is a perfect opportunity for heroes making a name for themselves, or short on cash. The north is an important commercial region, as the famous Silk Road passes through it, and the Grand Canal reaches its end.

The Great Wall

A massive protective wall built under the rule of first emperor Qin Shi Huangdi, the wall resembles a gigantic dragon soaring across mountains and hills for miles and miles. It was built to protect Shen Zhou from outside invasion, but its construction cost thousands of lives.

Many legends surround the great wall. Some say the ghosts of the workers who died building it still haunt the stones. Others say that Qin Shi Huangdi's legendary armor and sword lay waiting in one of its many posts; both are extraordinary items of legend that could lead a hero to unify and rule the country.

Some whisper that there are dragon bones encased within it, and that those bones are the foundation of Shen Zhou and the rule of the empire. Whether this story refers to actual dragon bones or the bones of legendary heroes is unclear.

The wall was the site of the legendary battle eleven years ago between the Saint Beasts of the North and West, Azure Dragon and White Tiger. Many in the Wulin still remember the battle; a span of the wall was destroyed in the duel. The site has become one of pilgrimage among the Martial Community. Brash heroes seeking to emulate such luminaries duel upon the wall, to the dismay of the government.

Today, most areas of the Great Wall remain well maintained, and keep military posts in vigilance over Shen Zhou.

Great Wall

3+ Fortune*: You know a secret of one of the many legends regarding the Great Wall.

5 Fortune: The Great Wall has a great symbolic value for the heroes of the Wulin! If you choose a portion of the wall as the site of a duel when you challenge someone and can make up an interesting explanation on why it is significant to the conflict or of personal importance to you, you gain the benefits of a *Minor Hyperactivity condition* tied to a proper Inspiration. Work out the details with the Sage.

5 Destiny: Your background is tied to the Wall, whether you are or were a soldier assigned to patrol it, one of the many Scholars assigned to make repairs, or a descendent of one of the original architects.

0 Bonus: You get **Status 3 Wall Architect/Guardian**. This status is especially relevant with people consigned to work on the Wall and surrounding areas, as well as with certain members of the government. It is mostly a positive status, but there might be people resenting the depredations made in the construction of the wall or its political meaning.

0 Bonus: You get the **Tactics Skill Specialty: Great Wall** for free.

- Sages and players are encouraged to expand upon these options or create their own, for their own Legends of the Great Wall.

Sky Lake

The beautiful and moody Sky Lake lies in an enormous volcanic crater, surrounded by sixteen eternally snow-covered peaks. The waters can be serene one day and raging in a maelstrom of furious winds and crashing waves the next.

Legends say that the God of Medicine, Shen Nong, once lived on this crater, and within it he perfected the art of medicine and mastered unique herbs found nowhere else in Shen Zhou. It is believed that in one of the many caves, or maybe even deep within the lake itself, one can still find his secret headquarters, and within, his tablets containing the greatest secrets of medicine.

Such stories cannot be confirmed; if anyone has found such precious knowledge, it has not been shared with the world at large. What is known is that none of the precious ingredients found in and around Sky Lake is more coveted than the precious **Snow Ginseng**, a root that matures once every five hundred years. It reverses aging and cures all ailments; the Emperor would pay a fortune to acquire it.

Others say that, before the crater was flooded, it was the stronghold of the Wulin Clan that ruled over the Northern Territories. Legends say that it was their own actions and ambitions that led to the flooding, but their treasures and secrets can still be found in the frigid depths...



Sky Lake

1+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to the cold beauty of Sky Lake. You may be a doctor searching for ancient knowledge or rare ingredients, or a hero hunting for the relics of a lost clan. Maybe you just came to find respite in the unique scenery.

3+ Fortune: If you practice the Secret Arts of the Doctor, you discover that a valuable ingredient that will be helpful to the current story can be found at Sky Lake.

3+ Fortune: You discover that a valuable or powerful item belonging to a clan of old is located at Sky Lake.

Snow Ginseng

Of the many rare ingredients found in Sky Lake, none is rarer than the 500-year root, Snow Ginseng. Supposedly it cures even the rarest diseases or poisons, reverses aging, and grants immense longevity.

There many legends about the dangers of obtaining it. Some say it is guarded by a terrible white tiger, others say that it is guarded by a sorrowful swordsman saving the root for his beloved. The truth of these stories is unknown.

6 Fortune: Whether due to scholarly insight or good fortune, you come across information on the exact date and place where a Snow Ginseng root will mature. This knowledge will be very valuable in the Wulin and could trigger many an adventure.

+3: You also have privileged knowledge about the unique properties of Snow Ginseng, and/or the dangers of obtaining it.

-2: A rival or enemy also has this knowledge, and knows that you share it. They will do everything in their power to get there before you or your allies, or to prevent you from divulging this information to anyone else.

10 Victory: After many adventures, hard work and possibly the hand of Heaven you manage to obtain the Snow Ginseng root. What greatness can you achieve with it? Among its possible uses are soothing any Chi Condition regardless of severity and difficulty, increasing Cultivation, purifying Corrupt Chi, increasing longevity, and regressing aging. By default, properly preparing Snow Ginseng requires at least a **Fantastic (60) Medicine** Roll; after successful preparation, it can only be used once. Its final properties are up to the Sage, but should naturally be fitting for the campaign.

The God of Medicine

In ancient times, Shen Nong perfected his arts in the area that would become Sky Lake. His knowledge formed the fundamentals of the Doctor's Art! If there are records of his discoveries somewhere in the Lake, they constitute a cultural treasure unique in all of Shen Zhou.

6 Fortune: Whether through scholarly effort or good Joss, you learn the locations of the ancient headquarters of the God of Medicine. This knowledge may shake the Wulin, and is sure to lead to adventure.

+3: You also have privileged knowledge about the content of the headquarters and/or the dangers of reaching it.

-2: A rival or enemy also has this knowledge and knows that you share it; they will be a constant rival in trying to get to the untold treasures.

6 Fortune: If you have access to the Doctor's Art, you descend strongly by blood or medical tradition from Shen Nong; this grants you the following benefits:

0 Bonus: You gain a *Minor Hyperactive Chi Condition* that comes into effect every time you work towards revolutionizing the world of medicine by coming up with new medicinal methods, searching for rare and legendary ingredients or even experimenting on something potentially dangerous but potentially world-changing. Work with your Sage to define the details of this condition.

0 Bonus: You gain **Status 4: Descendent of the God of Medicine**. This will mean a lot to people versed in the Doctor's Arts, as well as to the learned who have an understanding of its' importance.

-3: Such notable lineage comes with a strong drawback - maybe you are cursed, or hunted by a powerful enemy. Maybe your *Hyperactivity* comes with a unique *Weakness*! It is said that Shen Nong was a literal dragon - might the heavenly bloodline have been corrupted, and will you then be fated to become a half lizard monster who hungers for the flesh of his loved ones?.

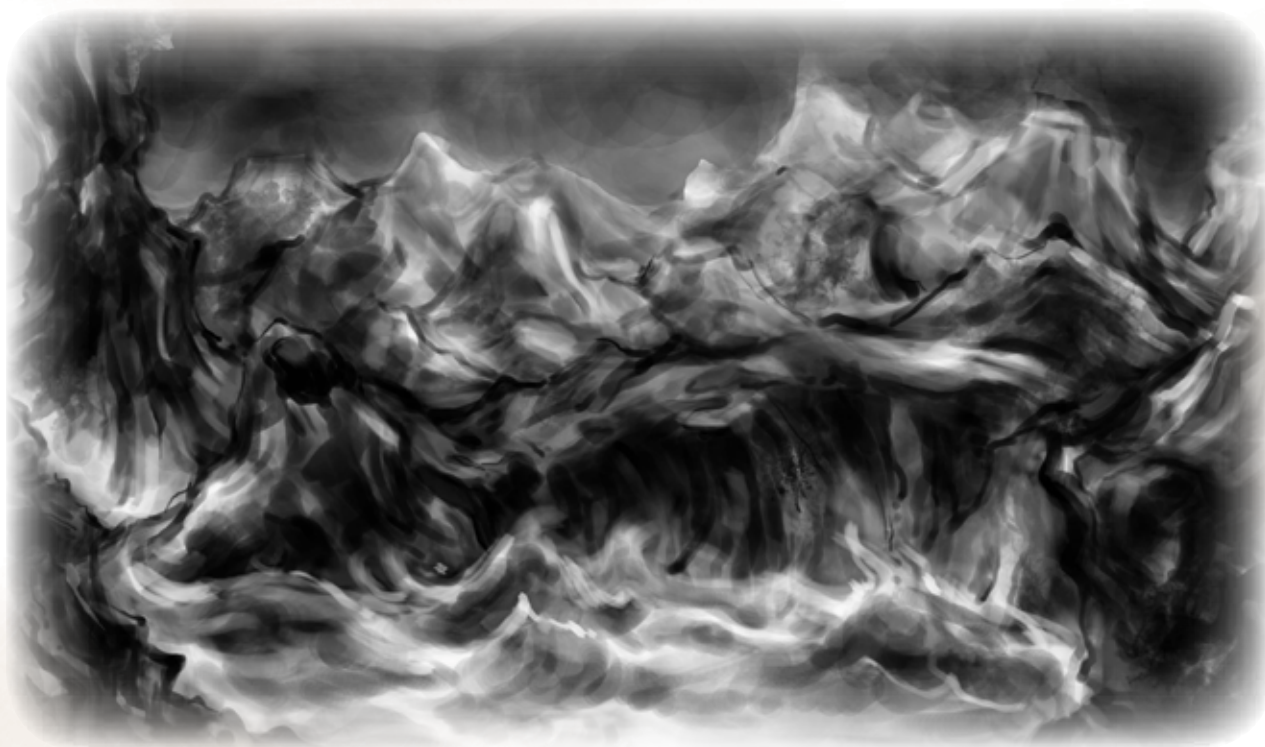
10 Victory: After surviving many perils and facing many tests, you finally have access to the headquarters of the God of Medicine in Sky Lake. What treasures of medicine will you find inside?

Lore Seeds: Sky Lake

This topic might be expanded into a full Lore of its' own if the subjects catches your attention.

The Fallen Clan

Legends say that the most powerful Wulin clan in the North once had its headquarters in Sky Lake. What caused the fall of this clan? What secrets did they leave behind? Could their descendants, allies and enemies still be around?



Snow Gift

1+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to the Arctic Town. Whether you are a native wandering out of your land, a lost traveler, or a hero wishing to learn of their unique ways - when entering the frozen land you are bound to find adventure.

Inhabitants of Snow Gift

The people of Arctic Town claim to be the descendants of the mercenary elite of the west - The **Blizzard Wolves**, who migrated north when **Only Six Devils** fell.

They are strong and resilient people with physical features such as extremely white skin, eyes in pale shades of blue, green and grey, and blond, white or grey hair; this is due to them mixing with people of exotic barbarian cultures but also from the cultivation of unique Chi Conditions.

1+ Status: You belong to the people of Snow Gift - whether you were born or adopted into it, you have spent most of your life inside its icy walls. Now it is time for you to adventure outside.

10 Technique: The people of Snow Gift have developed their own branch of cold based Kung Fu and have a strong rivalry with the Yun Clan, the alleged masters of ice-based Martial Arts. You have managed to learn your ancestral style. This style may be a variation on Ice Sutra, or a completely new style. Work with your sage to design the details. These 10 Destiny counts as the buy-in cost for an Internal Water-aspected Style, so they count towards your Water Cultivation.

5 Fortune: You have an unusually strong Water-based Chi deviation associated with coldness, snow and ice. You might have white skin and eyes, your skin radiating cold. You might give off a chill aura, making people shiver and frosting over your surroundings whenever you spend Chi. You might have an utterly cold and unattached personality. In either case, you will certainly have an interesting life and be easy to recognize. You may respire two points of Water Chi instead of one at the end of the round.

0/5 Disadvantage: Outsider Your unusual appearance and costumes makes you stick out when traveling across other lands - even among the Wulin, you're a rarity. Your odd appearance makes you easy to recognize and track down, and people might take offense to it or your "barbarian" ways. You probably have a hard time with officials and bureaucrats outside of the Jiang Hu. This is free if you have less than two Disadvantages.

Snow Gift

Within the deepest north, where ice and snow seem eternal, lies the fortress city of Snow Gift, also known as Arctic Town. The walls and palaces are built from the hardest, coldest ice; its people claim to be descended from elite western mercenaries, the Blizzard Wolves, who migrated north when Only Six Devils fell.

They are strong and resilient, with exotic features such

as ice-white skin, eyes in pale shades of blue, green, or gray, with blond, white, or grey hair. This is partly due to mixing with ethnic groups beyond Shen Zhou, but also thanks to the cultivation of unique Chi Conditions.

Legends also speak of them domesticating beasts such as bears and wolves to use as pets and steeds. Really, most all that is known about the people of Snow Gift are rumor and legend; except for a few commercial ventures, they prefer to keep to themselves.



Thousand Swords Peaks

The peaks are strange rock formations shaped as blades. The different peaks are named for the sounds of the wind as it clashes with the rocks: Weeping Blades, Laughing Blades, Clashing Blades.

It is highly difficult to travel across the peaks due to the blade-stones; even with Lightfoot, falling into the peaks is as lethal as falling into a forest of swords.

Legend speaks of the **Sword Devils**, a village of sublime weaponsmiths settled deep within the peaks. They are the foremost creators of Legendary Weapons in Tian Xia; their creations have no peer. Many heroes have tried to find the Sword Devils, but it is believed they cannot be found unless they want to be. If any heroes have happened upon them, they have guarded the secret with their lives.

THE EAST

Destiny Cost: 4

The east is a melting pot bringing many cultures in contact with Shen Zhou; it is a land of nomads and traders, of foreigners and disparate ethnicities; it is a land of coastal ports but also harsh steppes. In this land, the Han are still a minority, and the common tongue is lost among the many

dialects of a thousand nameless wilderness tribes as well as Xiongnu and the language of the eastern Hangok kingdom.

Trade dominates the area; no matter your origin or allegiance, all that matters in the east is the gold in your pockets and the willingness to trade. Despite this, or maybe because of it, religion and faith have gained great importance, so the mundane mixes with the sacred.

Many religions coexist in the east. Some are local, some foreign and unknown anywhere else in Shen Zhou. There are many monks and itinerant holy men alongside the traders, bandits and caravan guards of the east.

The majority of people in the East are still nomads; the few towns that exist are border towns and trading posts, with little law except that of

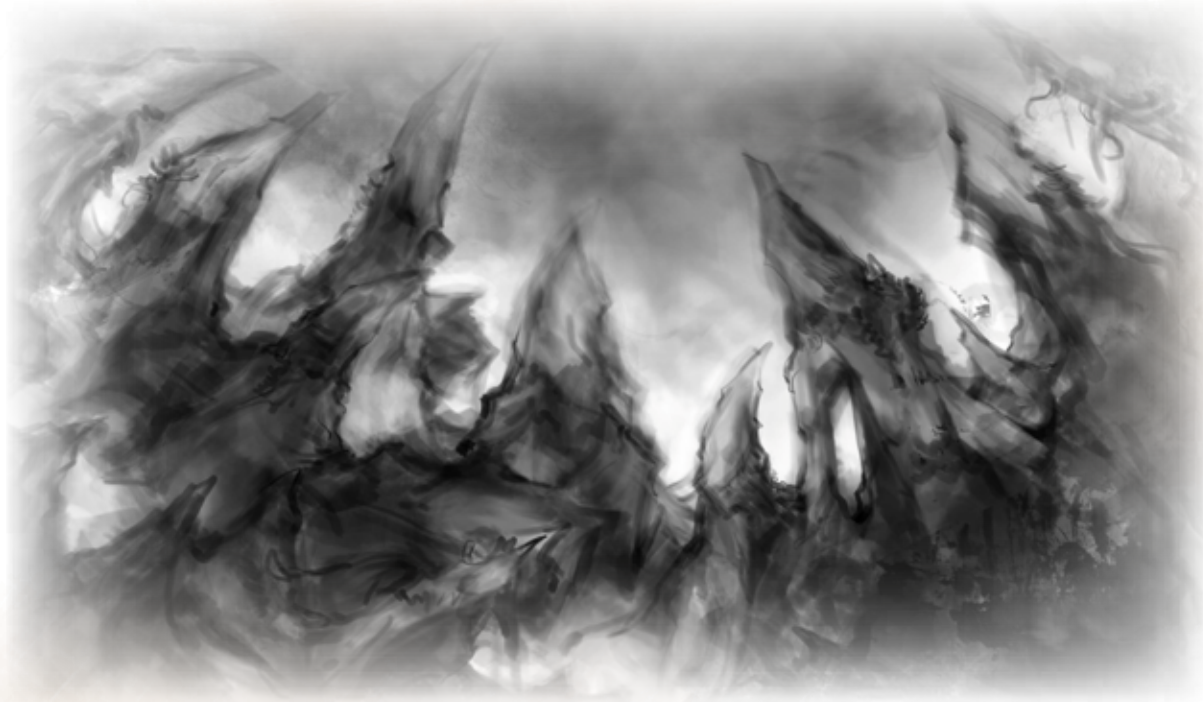
Thousand Swords Peaks

1+ Involvement: Your story will be tied with the mysterious Sword Peaks; perhaps you will seek the elusive Sword Devils and their fabled weapons? Maybe your past ties you to them? Or... might they be searching for you?

3+ Fortune: You discover a fact about Thousand Swords Peaks and the Sword Devils. Is this something related to their history, or to their unique crafting methods? Is it a secret passage to their village?

3+ Fortune: You discover that an existing NPC is tied to the Sword Devils. They might be a secret spy looking for worthy wielders for their weapons, an exile, or an enemy. How will this affect this character and what impact will it have on the story?

7 Victory: Due to your own effort, the manipulations of unseen forces, or as a matter of completing your destiny, you manage to cross the Thousand Sword Peaks and reach the village of the Sword Devils. Will they consider you friend or foe? What secrets do they hide? You have the chance to obtain great power, status and - if you are worthy or lucky enough - a Legendary Weapon.



Bird's Progress

1+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to the pearl of the East - whether you mix with the elite living in the high peaks above the city or walk through the shadows of its underworld, you are bound to find adventure!

Black Dragon Slayer*

Far outside the bustle of the city on a small island is the **Ocean Unbound Monastery** - an oasis of calm in a chaotic world. The spot is dominated by a giant statue of Guan Yin, the Buddhist Goddess of mercy, and it is said that the founder of that monastery was once a terrible pirate and a master swordsman.

On this island, the story says, he found solace and became a monk. His heart was purified, but not his blade - a sword believed to have slain a Son of Heaven. The sword lies deep in the monastery chambers, chained to a hundred Buddha Statues simply to contain its killing intent. It is hoped that, one day, the taint can be removed, and this powerful weapon will be able to serve humanity.

Many in the Wulin quest for this weapon, either to help it redeem or to free it to continue its path of destruction - or because they don't care, and simply want to enhance their personal power regardless of the consequences.

1+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to the weapon known as Black Dragon Slayer. Will you be a part of its redemption, or play a hand in its damnation? You may want it for yourself, or be drawn against your will into the struggle.

3+ Fortune: You discover that an existing NPC is searching for the weapon known as Black Dragon Slayer. How will this affect the life of this character and the story?

3+ Fortune: You discover a fact about Black Dragon Slayer its history, that of its wielders or the monastery where it awaits.

+ 2 Bonus: Due to your knowledge of Black Dragon Slayer, your style never Fears its wielder's style.

10 Victory: After thrilling adventures and heroic struggle, you obtain this Legendary Weapon. Will you be a part of its redemption, or will it corrupt you? What great and terrible Deeds will you achieve together?

• Look for more information about Black Dragon Slayer in the Legendary Weapons Section.

the strong and the rich. The cities, however, are massive and cosmopolitan.

It is only natural that the two most business-minded of all the Wulin factions, the orthodox Eagle Clan and unorthodox Black Lotus Society, have their strongholds in this region. It is also the home of the savage Blood Wind Cult.

The empire seeks to pacify its four corners as it expands by spreading culture and civilization, and to tighten its grip on all provinces. Just as it has done in the south, west and north, the empire has send many officials and their families to establish themselves in the east, but where the merchants thrive, the bureaucrats fail.

Bird's Progress

The most important trading port of Shen Zhou lies on the coast of the Bohai Sea. A bustling city built over steep cliffs, it defies nature itself in the name of commerce and civilization. The squawking of seagulls and pelicans mix with the rattle of fishermen and merchants in a mad cacophony.

The city is distinguished by its massive docks where goods from all over the empire and beyond are sorted and dispatched in the four directions.

High above the city on the cliff-peaks are the palatial manors of rich merchants and trading officials; deep within the city are the domains of the underworld, where criminals and adventurers mix.

Thrashing Minister

After the imperial capital, Thrashing Minister is the most important city of all Shen Zhou. It is the capital of the Kingdom of Yang, ruled by blood cousins to the emperor, and famous for a royal palace second only to the Forbidden City, surrounded by a beautiful but deadly garden full of every poisonous plant imaginable. Its Walled District, once the lawless territory of the criminal underworld, is now a pleasure dome, housing lush parks, menageries with hundreds of wild animals, and one of the most distinguished and elaborate Willow Districts of all of the Land of the Gods.

It is also the home of the Phoenix Market, a labyrinth market built according to Daoist principles. It specializes in artwork and unique, aesthetically pleasing objects, which go for great prices or unique favors.

It is also rumored to be the last hiding place of the Han imperial line. If the descendents are still alive, this is where

Thrashing Minister

1-3 Involvement: Your story will be tied to the Capital of Yang. Whether you are related to the current ruling family, searching for the last scions of the Han, or just passing by, you are bound to find adventure within its walls.

Claiming The Mandate

Thrashing Minister is known as one of the last hiding places of the Han Imperial bloodline - a place where they still hide and plot a rebellion, and seek the missing Imperial Seals! The relatives of the current Emperor may likewise plot against him, while nominally ruling the area in his name.

If you have this Lore, you can buy the **The Mandate of Heaven** Lore at a **-2 Destiny** discount as long as you are acting to restore the Han Dynasty, or to usurp the throne in the name of the Imperial relatives who rule over Yang.

The Phoenix Market

Thrashing Minister is the home of the Phoenix Market - a labyrinth market built according to Daoist principles. It is a market specialized in artwork and unique objects of beauty; these tend to command great prices or equal favors.

3+ Fortune: You discover that a unique object of great aesthetic value has wound up in the Phoenix Market.

3+ Fortune: You discover a secret about the Phoenix Market. Perhaps regarding the merchants that control it, the unique goods in it, or the nature of its unique layout?

5 Fortune: If you have access to the Priest's or Courtier's Art and have Status 3 or higher in the Phoenix Market, your knowledge of the intricate Daoist layout or the local politics grants you a Minor Hyperactive Chi Condition - usually in the form of an Action Bonus - when you perform Secret Arts in the Market.

-2: Phoenix Market is important but not essential in the story.



they can be found plotting for rebellion. The Han Imperial Seals, which could restore their dynasty or lend legitimacy to the rule of whomever possesses them, are supposed to be lost in this area.

Mount Tai

This is the most sacred mountain in Shen Zhou. This is where the emperors of the past would perform the sacred rituals for maintaining the order of the land in ancient times; today, they are performed in the Temple of Heaven in the imperial city.

Mount Tai

1+ Involvement: Your story will be tied this most sacred of mountains - whether you seek to honor the past or plunder it, when you venture into its heights you are bound to find adventure!

3+ Fortune: You know a secret about Mount Tai. Perhaps it concerns the final battle that was fought there, the Wulin summits held at the peak, or the relationship of between it and the ancient Emperors.

3+ Fortune: You discover that an existing NPC has ties to the secret history of Mount Tai; they might be the descendant of someone who witnessed the last battle, someone involved in the summits, or even a survivor?

1+ Involvement: Your story will be tied to the palace of unearthly delights. It will be as traveling through the realms of Heaven and Hell - you may emerge mad or purified, or perhaps not emerge at all, but you are certain to find adventure.

3+ Fortune: You know a secret of the Black Sand Pagoda - perhaps something about what goes on inside, or a way to get in and out as you please?

6+ Victory: Whether you were let go or managed to escape, you are one of the few who have left Black Sand Pagoda alive! This will certainly will make you famous in the Wulin; many will want to hear your tale, and the Black Lotus will want you to stop you from telling it. This may have also have changed you in a more unique way - you may have learned a unique kung fu or technique, or obtained a rare poison, item or weapon! Work with your sage to design the details and assign a final cost.

It is believed to be the abode of Gods and Immortals. It is also a place of great significance for the Martial Brotherhood. Several Wulin summits have been held in its peaks, and long ago, the great battle that brought forth the fall of the Great Clans of the Past, and put a stop to the Northern Beast invasion, took place there. It signaled the end of one era and the beginning of another.

Not all of the heroes who visit Mount Tai do so out of reverence; many try to find and pillage the great secrets and legacies of the past.

The Black Sand Pagoda

In the warmest reaches of the north, nestled among snowy peaks but far from the eternal ice, lies a land of steppes and deserts. Sandstorms are common flooding the cities with black sand, and the cutting winds make travel impossible...

Deep within those lands, impossible as a mirage, lies the Black Sand Pagoda. It stands eternally at the eye of a black sand maelstrom. It is at once a palace of earthly delights and a pit of unbearable torture, depending on if you are a friend or a foe of the Black Lotus Society - for this is where they hold their headquarters.

Surrounding the pagoda is the **Black Reflection Spring**. At first view, it appears like nothing more than a shallow pond, but its depths are unimaginable. The very waters cause visions of madness on those who drink them. The unique black lotuses the Society distills its poisons and drugs from grow in this pond and none other.



THE PHILOSOPHIES OF SHEN ZHOU

This is a collection of the dominant philosophies – religious or secular, transcendent or pragmatic – that have shaped Shen Zhou in the past and still do so today. They contain options for players who want their characters to be focused around their particular sets of values and beliefs, and who want tools to model this in the game.

CONFUCIANISM

Destiny cost: 3

Zi-lu said, "The ruler of Wei has been waiting for you, in order with you to administer the government. What will you consider the first thing to be done?"

The Master replied, "What is necessary to rectify names."

"So! indeed!" said Zi-lu. "You are wide off the mark! Why must there be such rectification?"

The Master said, "How uncultivated you are, Yu! A superior man, in regard to what he does not know, shows a cautious reserve.

If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things!

If language be not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be carried on to success!

When affairs cannot be carried on to success, proprieties and music do not flourish!

When proprieties and music do not flourish, punishments will not be properly awarded!

When punishments are not properly awarded, the people do not know how to move hand or foot!

Therefore a superior man considers it necessary that the names he uses may be spoken appropriately, and also that what he speaks may be carried out appropriately. What the superior man requires is just that in his words there may be nothing incorrect."

(Analects XIII, 3)

Confucianism: Discussion

Confucianism is a philosophical and moral tradition that largely defines the society of Shen Zhou. It does not concern itself with deities or lessons about an afterlife, but it has the societal influence one would expect from a state religion. There are Confucian rituals of state that are observed, and its edicts are the context within which citizens of the Land of the Gods think about virtue. The core concepts of Confucianism are Humaneness, as expressed through the pursuit of virtue; Filial Piety, as expressed through the Five Relationships in the Relationships Lore (pg. 151); and Truth, as expressed through the rectification of names.

Humaneness

Harmony is served through personal cultivation and observation of the Virtues. A person is good if they personify the principles of the "gentleman" - a person of virtue and cultivation that combines the elements of saint, scholar and noble. Given the time and money required to cultivate the proper skills and the pay for higher learning, these tend to hail from nobility. Confucian Gentlemen were supposed to act as moral compasses to society, their every action exemplary: cultivating themselves morally, showing filial piety and loyalty where it was due, and working to be benevolent and humane. Confucius described one opposed to this virtuous figure as the "small person". Where the gentleman personified virtue, thoughtfulness, and cultivation, the small person is petty, materialistic, greedy, and superficial.

The Wulin and Confucian Virtues

The Wulin generally reject strict interpretations of the Confucian Virtues; their glorious heroes and corrupt villains have their own philosophies to cling to! This doesn't mean that they don't get some mileage out of Confucian thought, however. They simply express them in a different way, such as reserving the reverence and obedience normally would grant a father or lord for their Sifu. The dynamics of their relationships resemble and overlap with "normal" ones, but are filtrated through the same magnifying lens as everything else for people with advanced Chi cultivation - their relationships are bigger, bolder, and more keenly felt.

Though Wulin redefine *who* they relate to, they approach their relationships with the intensity that is their custom: they act, feel, and observe their surroundings *passionately*! Their transgressions may be larger than life, but so is their virtue. Hence, they may hold ferocious loyalties for their sworn brothers that vastly transcend the loyalties normal virtuous people feel for their flesh-and-blood kin!

Chinese translations:

A gentleman, or "perfect man" - Junzi

A "small person" - Xiaoren

Filial Piety

Meaning "the piety of a child", this is the virtue *Xiao*. It deems reverence for one's father (and by extension all elder relatives and superiors) the very foundation of society. A father's rule is inherently virtuous: it establishes a clear line of authority and banishes chaos and conflict when every person acts according to their place. The unvirtuous person who sets themselves above this perfect system of respect and obedience only promotes chaos and misrule, no matter their good intentions.



Truth

Confucianists concern themselves with finding the “truth” of every situation. They value the ability to assess their surroundings and identify the relationships at play, so that

they may act correctly and observe propriety at all times. This means that a virtuous person acts with reserved curiosity, showing humility in all things. To assume too much could cause you to misjudge and thus treat people improperly, which would make you a source of chaos!

Secrets of Destiny: Confucianism

5 Destiny: You are a Humane hero, and can perform Deeds in the name of the virtue of **Filial Piety (or Xiao)**. One would assume that this is only the case with dedicated Confucian junzi, but more than one moral hero has come from humble origins. Your Filial Piety Virtue starts out with a value of 1; you can add more at character creation if you start play with this Lore.

2 Fortune: You are skillful and knowledgeable on propriety. By paying 2 Chivalrous Joss, you discover one local custom that can be beneficial to you and your allies. By paying 2 Malicious Joss, you can declare one custom that is inconvenient or unfavorable for an enemy. This can be a lot of help in dealing with one particular situation – i.e., *“In the springtime, the magistrate of Three Gorges is beholden to hear out the case of a person wearing the traditional green robes of a scholar”* – but will not cause miracles or directly solve problems for you – i.e., *“Anyone entering Only Six Devils in the thirteenth hour of the day without singing the traditional rhymes will be sentenced to death by boiling oil!”*

5-7 Victory: Once per Story your great adherence to virtue allows you to dispel chaos, defuse conflict, and create lasting alliance between two warring factions. This requires you to place yourself in the middle of the conflict and talk to the main representatives of all involved factions. In the end, though, this Victory assures that your good advice and virtuous nature prevails.

1-5 Status: After performing Deeds of Xiao, or other noteworthy pursuits where your adherence to the Confucian ways are noted, people tend to want to bestow titles and functions upon you. Maybe a local magistrate declares you “Chief Advisor On the Proper Pursuit of Righteous Matters”, or perhaps the local peasants starts talking about you as “the Shining Gentle(wo)man”.

1-5 Fortune: After displays of virtue and courage, followers begin to flock to your banner. These are Minions, as per the normal rules for such. They might not want you to pay them for their services, but they will probably expect you to keep being an inspirational figure.

3 Secret: After meditating upon the Classics, you learn a great secret about Truth. The **Virtue-Seeking Eye Technique** will enable you to determine someone’s highest Virtue after a scene’s worth of interaction. If they have a value in the Xiao Virtue, you will also learn this for free whether it is the highest Virtue or not. (It shows clearly for one as accomplished as yourself.)

3 Secret: You learn the **Cordial, Upright, Courteous, Temperate and Complaisant Technique**. This is detailed in the Extraordinary Courtier Techniques on p.252.

LEGALISM

Destiny Cost: 3

Legalism: Discussion

Like Confucianism, Legalism rose from the strife of the Time of Chaos, and seeks to pose a means to promote stability and harmony. It has a much less optimistic view on human nature – in the eyes of a Legalist, humans are fundamentally weak, flawed, selfish, and evil! A strong individual ruler does little to promote stability. At best, they stave off chaos temporarily, and at worst, they promote chaos; since the ruler has the highest authority, their people will seek to rise in status by accommodating their wishes and desires. This creates corruption and conflict.

The Legalist's answer, therefore, is the ascendance of the law as ultimate ruler. If everyone is equal under the rule of law, no one can be exempt from it. If everyone is rewarded for abiding by the law and punished when they break it, stability and harmony will follow. It matters little whether they are a charismatic ruler or a weak one, since they are merely executors of the law.

Han Feizi speaks of the three tools of auspicious rulership:

Law is the first and foremost. The code must be written and public. When it is known to all, the consequences of all actions shall be predictable, and people are encouraged to adhere to its edicts. All people shall be equal under its rule! Since the system of law is what ultimately runs the state, even a weak ruler will be made strong. This also makes the state less vulnerable to the chaotic whims of a single, ruling individual.

Tactics are employed by the ruler to protect the state from being taken over by others. Foremost of these secret tactics is the maintenance of the “mystery of rulership”; this is how the lord conceals their own desires and personal motivations. Their reasons for handing out orders should be mysterious and their ultimate goals shrouded in mystery, so that no one will know how to please their ruler except by following the letter of the law.

Influence entails being mindful of one's own position. It is the seat of power that maintains the right to rule, not the person in that seat. A proper Lord must make sure to always analyze the current trends and the relationships that spawn them to be knowledgeable of what goes

on in their realm, and therefore be prepared to rule it. This need to know is a right and proper thing, and any means by which they learn of their realm justify themselves.

The Emperors of Shen Zhou have long ruled according to a complex system of Confucian and Legalist principles. One expression of Legalism is the rule of ministers, the intricate bureaucracy of the courts. Within its labyrinthine folds, each of the thousands upon thousands of ministers and bureaucrats are ordered by an intricate system of checks and balances. Each knows exactly what they need to perform their particular job, and each is always reporting back to someone else who has the responsibility to measure and track their work.



Secrets of Destiny: Legalism

"People are submissive to power, and few of them can be influenced by doctrines of righteousness." – Han Feizi, "Influence"

1-5 Status: One who follows the doctrines and the law with great conviction will be noted for their character, and trusted with a powerful status. You know this to be true; that's how you acquired your position!

1-5 Fortune (Followers): After demonstrating the strength of your convictions, you draw people to flock under your banner and become allies and servants.

5 Victory: After performing a deed of merciless justice, the harsh virtue of your actions are noticed by all –you create stability in a region previously marked by strife and chaos.

-2 You have to make an important personal sacrifice for this. (It is up to the Sage to decide if something would be enough to achieve the desired effect.) You might lose status, a possession of personal importance, or someone precious to you.

2 Secret: As a practitioner of the Courtier's Art, you learn the Dispassion Tool in place of the Confucian Tool of Benevolence. It functions just as Benevolence, except that instead of showing helpfulness, you must display your detachment by explaining how your actions are driven by your philosophy.

4 Secret: Finding harmony in Han Feizi's lessons on virtue, you discover how ruthlessness is honesty and cruelty is power; there is no separation as long as they flow from the same sense of duty. This Virtuous Cruelty Technique merges your Loyalty/Zhong Virtue with your Ruthlessness/Hen; the two are considered one, you sum the two values. If this should take the merged Virtue over 5, the excess Destiny is refunded as appropriate Entanglements chosen by the Sage.

Legalist Heroes

Legalism is characterized by utilitarianism. Using underhanded methods to do away with threats to the current ruler can be a virtuous act if it works, and Han Feizi himself talks about surrender as a perfectly acceptable option when the tides turn against you. It is also cynical about the human condition; humans are weak and ruled by their desires. Anyone with virtue and skill should naturally rise above their original position, so plebeians remain as they are simply because they lack such qualities. This is an easy interpretation to make, so we see a lot of Legalist villains in stories – cruel lords and executioners, tyrants in every aspect.

However, this can obfuscate the potential for idealism and self-sacrifice inherent in the philosophy! At the core, it seeks the rule of law as opposed to rule by greedy, impulsive nobles and hereditary lords. Though Han Feizi's edicts preach *incredibly* harsh consequences for lawbreakers, they also demand equality before it – no one may escape the terrible punishment for their crimes simply because they wear the fine silks of a gentleman.

Here we find opportunity for a kind of hero not unlike the dedicated lawmen and detectives of modern police shows: heroes who stand against corruption and relentlessly pursue their idea of fair and equal justice, who believe in the letter of the law as a just arbiter of punishment for the wicked. This might be a Liquid Metal Delegate working in the shadows to ensure the continuing rule of her Emperor, or a Magistrate who genuinely wants to see justice for all, and will not flinch from the work that needs to be done to weed out the corrupt and the wicked – no matter how powerful they are, no matter how connected.

MOHISM

Destiny Cost: 3

A carpenter uses standard tools to measure his work.

A ruler stands without standards to rule by.

The carpenter measures by his tools, not by his heart.

The ruler needs standards to measure by, since his heart is insufficient.

These standards cannot originate from men – no man is perfect!

Heaven must provide the guidance.

That law of Heaven is love.

Mohism: Discussion

Mohism was born in the Time of Chaos in the Hundred Philosophies Era that also spawned Legalism and Confucianism. Its practitioners are few in number next to the millions of Confucianists and Legalists, probably because of its open criticism of certain Confucian ideals. Mohists argue the virtue of universal care, Ren; instead of merely caring for your family and observing ritual patterns of relationship, a virtuous person should be willing to show generosity and love towards anyone, be they close relatives or complete strangers.

The Mohist schools have a peculiar relationship to the concept of warfare. They firmly condemn offensive warfare as a despicable act lacking any moral value. (This has not gained them any popularity among Shen Zhou's nobility.)

Secrets of Destiny: Mohism

3 Secret: As a practitioner of the Courtier's Art, you learn the **Wits** Tool, which can be used in place of the Confucian Tool of *Fidelity*. This allows you to show the superiority of your philosophy through your obvious grasp of tactics. Your participation in a battle of wits suffices as a Tool for your art – either a simulated war game (a classical board game like Go could be appropriate) or a real (possibly nonlethal) battle. If you manage to score an impressive or particularly poetic victory, you get a +5 Toolset bonus to your Manipulation roll!

5 Victory: Once per game, you can make a peerless feat of engineering and bring a world-changing invention to Shen Zhou. While technically anachronistic, this should be fitting to the tone of the game. An intricate system of water-powered locks that allow ships to sail uphill might be fitting, as might some sort of steam train.

-2: This is a singular invention. It will be a testament to your great ingenuity, but won't be repeated for a long time.

1-5 Status: You are a member of the *Yellow Ink Sect*. You can enter and leave the fortress at will, and you're free to study inside its libraries and workshops. You might even get the chance to learn powerful martial secrets, work with the Sage to detail this sect and its particular knowledge

1-5 Status: Your Deeds bring you recognition and the goodwill of the common people... possibly also the hatred of the wealthy and affluent.

2 Victory: Your display of universal care and abhorrence for needless violence opens the eyes of your opponents. After defeating an enemy, you can forego the Ripple roll and instead choose to cause a Major Inspiration geared towards Benevolence – maybe towards Universal Care, where the Sage feels it appropriate.

5 Destiny: You are a particularly dedicated Mohist: you start out with a value of 1 in the Mohist Virtue of Universal Care (Ren), and can raise this value as normal. You gain Deeds through stalwart work to show compassion and generosity to people as equals while you stick to your ascetic Mohist ideals

However, they traditionally take after the great sage Mozi. He was an artisan who rose to position through his own merits, a master strategist, and an engineer of legendary prowess. As his followers often came from the same class of craftsmen, Mohist sects still have the most brilliant battlefield engineers known to Shen Zhou! It is not uncommon for single Mohists to answer the call of a besieged city or province to lend their considerable skills at defense. Being firm ascetics, they refuse payment for this work beyond food, lodgings, and mending their clothes.

Mohists also cherish the principle of meritocracy – a person should be able to rise to any position they are qualified for, and conversely should be barred from responsibilities they cannot handle. Needless to say, these thoughts verge on heretical in places; yet another reason why Mohists are persecuted by nobility. (Unless, of course, it is wartime and the nobility need their defensive expertise..)

The most famous Mohist sect in Shen Zhou is the Yellow Ink Sect, who built their stronghold high up where the mighty river flows into the Five Ox mountain chain. The path to the fortress is said to be filled with intricate innovations that can make roads and bridges appear and disappear according to the wills of the engineers. The fortress is a place of learning, where the Mohists act as teachers to guests and the needy, or anyone who makes it there on their own. The *Yellow Ink masters* are rumored to have created great secrets of kung fu to mimic their marvels of engineering – fighting styles that emulate great fortresses and allow the sect members to fight in unassailable formations!

BUDDHISM

Destiny Cost: 3

In far-off Bharata, the prince lay down his robes and sword and wandered into the wilderness. Far from the opulence of the palace, he came across three men.

First, he met an old man and learned about aging and the ravages of time.

Second, he met an ill man and learned about the suffering of sickness.

Third, he met a corpse and learned about the inevitability of death.

Nearly falling to despair, the prince then met a monk – who despite living among all of this suffering carried himself with serenity and beauty. Sitting down under a large tree to meditate on these things, the prince found the road to enlightenment.

Buddhism: Discussion

Buddhism is the newest religion to find its way to Shen Zhou, but also one that has drawn many followers – whether they are cloistered monks or simply people who come to learn for a time to prosper by the words of the Buddha. In the Wulin, the most famous and powerful Buddhist faction are the warrior-monks of the **Little Forest Sect**, but many others exist, as do innumerable versions of Buddhism and interpretations of the words of the Buddha.

Since Buddhism came to Shen Zhou from Bharata, most of its scrolls of learning are prized collections written in mystical Sanskrit, carefully guarded by the cloisters. Its edicts are condensed in the *Four Noble Truths*:

The Truth of Suffering

To live is to suffer; this is the first and most important truth that the novice learns. A life contains a multitude of sorrows, yet one cannot allow oneself to fall to despair. One must simply recognize this first of the Noble Truths to be able to see the world as it is, and to reach rectification.

The Truth of the Cause of Suffering

All suffering derives from desire and ignorance. Desire is our craving for pleasure, happiness, and material goods; while achievable in the short term, this happiness is fleeting. Our thirst is ultimately unquenchable. A mind ignorant about the true state of things looks only to the near future – without capacity for concentration or insight, it is left undeveloped and unable to grasp the true nature of the world. Vices such as the Corrupt Virtues stem from this ignorance.

The Truth of the End of Suffering

Suffering ends only with the end of your existence on this earth – which is to say, death – or in spirit, which is to achieve Nirvana; to transcend the states of suffering and rebirth and reach true freedom and Enlightenment.

The Truth of the Path to the End of Suffering

A person collects karma as a result of their actions. Good karma comes from good deeds. (These can stem from negative action – i.e. abstaining from doing something bad even when tempted to do so by circumstance, or else from positive actions such as benevolence, righteousness and meditation.) In the long run, they bring happiness. Conversely, bad actions such as stealing, lying, or killing brings bad karma. They bring about unhappiness and weigh your soul down.

Being born as a human in the realm of men offers a unique opportunity to approach the Enlightenment of Nirvana; this is done by following the **Noble Eightfold Path** of right understanding, thought, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration.

The Noble Eightfold Path

In Shen Zhou, these eight practices are generally divided into three groups, each practiced and cultivated in a different manner:

Good moral understanding (Understanding, Though, Speech): This is practiced through the learning of Skills, interactions with the world, practice of External styles, and striving for proper moral Deeds.

Meditation and mental cultivation (Action, Livelihood, Effort): This is achieved through meditation and internal Cultivation - including Internal styles.

Wisdom (Mindfulness and Concentration): This is achieved by focusing on acts of Buddhist Piety and careful action.



Buddhist Piety

Once achieved, this Virtue works alongside the others – you can perform Deeds of it, but the achieved Entanglement works a little differently. One point of Entanglement Destiny from every Deed of Piety will go towards cultivation of Enlightened Chi, modeling how your adherence to the principles of Buddhism takes you closer to its transcendent truths.

The maximum number of Enlightenment cultivation Destiny that you can earn during a Story equals your value in the Piety Virtue.

A true Buddhist does not kill – that horrible crime takes away any chance for the victim to reach enlightenment in this life! Therefore, they do also not eat meat or fish. Unless they are caretakers of important Buddhist treasures, they do not burden themselves with worldly possessions beyond the bare necessities. They must constantly perform the proper rituals and meditate upon the nature of enlightenment, striving to give up their ties to the sorrow of existence.

Secrets of Destiny: Buddhism

5 Destiny: You are a dedicated and pious Buddhist; the words of the Buddha is your life. You gain – and can gain Deeds in – the **Piety** Virtue (see sidebar). Your Piety starts out with a value of 1, and can be raised like any other Virtue.

1-5 Status: Your Deeds bring you recognition and the honor of greater responsibilities – maybe in your cloister, if you have one. Maybe the local people elevated you to the protector of their villages after you defended them against the dreaded Ten Fire Warlord? Your stubborn insistence on piety, virtue, and the protection of the helpless might also serve to make you powerful Enemies.

2 Victory: Humble in victory, you inspire virtue in your opponents! After defeating an enemy, you can forego the Ripple roll and instead pay this cost to choose to cause a Major Inspiration aimed towards a proper Virtue set – maybe even Piety, if everyone agrees it would be appropriate.

3 Destiny: If you buy this Lore later in the game, it can symbolize you casting off your previous life and remaking yourself in the name of the Merciful Buddha. This allows you to convert all of your points of Selfish or Corrupt Virtues into Chivalrous ones as you spend a period of time making amends for your previous deeds. (Normally, this should at least take a few months.) Once this is done, you are a new person, although if you were infamous before, you might have to convince people of your change of heart.

1-5 Treasure: Having performed great Deeds of Piety, protected the helpless or the like, your good karma (or your budding reputation) serves to bring you in contact with rare Buddhist treasures. Maybe these are priceless Sanskrit scrolls detailing exotic exercises or Enlightened Techniques? Choosing what to do with them might be your greatest challenge yet.

8 Treasure: Your good karma intertwines your destiny with that of one of the Great Buddhist Weapons – traditionally weapons that emphasize the peaceful nature of the Buddha, but also often leveraging great force! Legendary weapons such as *Buddha's Finger* and the *Great Stone Saint* are said to be stored at the Little Forest Sect monastery – do your Destiny compel you to be involved by one of them, or is it another weapon altogether?

+3: This is a Special Weapon.

DAOISM

Destiny Cost: 3

*People conform to
the Laws of the Earth.*

*The Earth conforms to
the Law of Heaven.*

*Heaven conforms to
the Dao*

*The Dao conforms to
its own nature.*

-Lao Tzu

Daoism: Discussion

Daoists preach, when they are inclined to do so, that humans make the world too complicated – they exert their will against the world to accomplish things, thus upsetting and disturbing the natural order! Instead, they should look towards placing their will in harmony with the universe. This is the truth of Wu Wei – action through inaction, accomplishments flowing from the Way.

According to the Dao, it is not important to amass followers or treasures, to slay your enemies or forge mighty empires. These things just make trouble. Instead, you should

treasure the smallest things as if they were great treasures, and find contentment in the Natural Way.

In the time of *Legends of the Wulin*, Daoist thought has influenced much of the knowledge of Shen Zhou; Five-Element Theory comes from Daoist principles about natural balance. It also preaches a magical worldview, where everything is inhabited by spirits, curses and influences are acts of magic, and immortality can be achieved by the proper achievements of internal alchemy. These secrets require special study, and are detailed in the Secret Arts chapter under *The Priest's Art* (pg. 259).

You shouldn't think of Daoism as an organized religion – it is a collection of many philosophies and revelations. In addition, it is often mixed with folk beliefs, some of which outdate even the words of Lao Tzu.

Daoist Philosophies and Virtue

*“Manifest plainness,
Embrace simplicity,
Reduce selfishness,
Have few desires.”*

As an ethical tradition, Daoism emphasizes the Three Treasures of the Dao, which are understood to be compassion

(kindness to other people), moderation (the absence of excess), and humility (modesty). A proper Daoist tries to live by these principles, although they are expressed differently among differing traditions and individuals.

Philosophically, Daoism focuses on the principles of nature (the relationship between humans and the universe, as part of the larger system of the natural world and its interacting forces), health (cultivation and internal alchemy), and Wu Wei.



Daoist Virtue

*Know honour,
Yet keep humility.
Be the valley of the universe!
Being the valley of the universe,
Ever true and resourceful,
Return to the state of the uncarved block.*

Once achieved, this Virtue works alongside the others – you can perform Deeds of it, but the achieved Entanglement works a little differently. One point of Entanglement Destiny from every Deed of Dao will go towards cultivation of Enlightened Chi.

The maximum number of Enlightenment cultivation Destiny that you can earn during a Story equals your value in the Dao Virtue.

The virtue of Dao encompasses a practicing Daoist's adherence to the Natural Way and the philosophies of Daoism. The virtuous Daoist is compassionate, moderate, and humble. They do not seek to amass money or influence, but always strive to improve their understanding of the universe and themselves. They do away with worldly things, trusting in the Dao to provide. They seek wisdom and understanding in the ways of Nature, and take time off in reclusion where they perform acts of deep meditation. (The most pious of Daoist priests in the Dragon Well Sect is known to meditate eleven of the twelve months in a year!) They cultivate humility and appreciation for the small things in life that people take for granted. They may or may not be Priests with extraordinary magical secrets, but they do tend to be fonts of esoteric wisdom.

Secrets of Destiny: Daoism

0 Bonus: It is good to not worry too much about material things! By spending a point of Chivalrous Joss, you ensure you'll find a roof over your head and food in your stomach for the night. By spending a point of Corrupt Joss, you ensure you can endure the rage of the elements and the rumblings of an empty belly without problems.

5 Destiny: You are more than a virtuous Daoist – you have taken the first step towards Enlightenment! You start out with a value of 1 in the **Dao Virtue**, which can be raised like any other.

10 Treasure: Some of the Legendary Weapons are intimately tied to the principles of Daoism – like the famed *Dragon Well Sword* or the mysterious *Thousand-Form Sun*. Due to the workings of the Dao, one of these might fall in your lap. It might happen as a result of a Deed of Dao, or seem to come completely out of nowhere – clearly some unseen balancing of the natural scales! It might even be the result of a spiritual quest, a dream journey in one of your meditations. The way it arrives in your hands tends to fit the principles of Dao; it might even be one of your own meager possessions suddenly revealing its true nature!

-2: You have to go through some sort of trial before it is revealed to you – maybe this is revealed to you in a dream, or maybe it's just obvious in the larger scheme of things. The Sage decides on something appropriate befitting the Dao. When (and if) you succeed in this quest, you are allowed to pay the Destiny to achieve the weapon. (As per usual for Entanglements, it could also be bought for you by the Sage or another player.)

-4: All things are impermanent! The weapon is extraordinarily powerful – it counts as a fully developed Legacy Weapon with 50 Glory – but simply passes through your hands, disappearing after fulfilling its purpose. It stays with you for the duration of one story and is then lost, never to be held by you again. You can only take this option once per game.

+3: This counts as a Special Weapon.

4 Destiny: Once per game, probably after having withdrawn from society for a while to meditate, you emerge from the wilderness as a new person. You can discard your old Archetype, gaining another in its stead – meaning that you can gain Cultivation by spending Destiny on Secret Arts native to your new one. Even more extraordinary, you may refund some or all of the Destiny spent on your old native Secret Art and buy up your new native Art, if you wish.

1-5 Status: Your Deeds (Dao or others) bring recognition. Maybe you are offered membership in an existing Daoist sect – maybe you are simply recognized as a person particularly wise in the workings of the Natural Way.

RELATIONSHIPS IN SHEN ZHOU

Power Relationships of Shen Zhou

Destiny Cost: 0

(This Lore is free for all characters)

Since the dawn of civilization, when the Yellow Emperor forged harmonious order out of chaos, the people of Shen Zhou have been defined by their relationships. Their actions are, ultimately, dictated by a web of obligations and privilege, the will to make loved ones happy and hated ones hurt. In the game, it means that relationships between characters can be tracked by a **Relationship Chart** (elaborated on in the Sage's chapter on page 285).

This information is of particular interest to Courtiers – their manipulations depend on the Passions and Inspirations that strengthen these relationships and gives them definition – but it's also a powerful tool for Sages who wish to generate intrigue. People act on their relationships, which generates emotion. Actions cause conflict, emotions fuel drama; this is what makes great wuxia stories! Passions tend to flow ever-stronger in those with cultivated chi, so you will rarely find a Wulin fighter without notable and defined relationships that they feel strongly about.

When visualizing a relationship chart, you will make use of the **Five Major Relationships** and the **Five Derivative Relationships**; these are defined from Confucian principles of propriety, which – to a large extent – governs the minds and values of the people of Shen Zhou.

The Five Major Relationships

Each person relates to others through one or more of these key relationships. They are listed with names and connotations of obligation, which can be mutual or one-sided.

- **Parent and Child:** Parents dominate their children. Within the Wulin, teachers and sifus often treat their students as “martial children”, and filial piety is transferred to this relationship.
- **Ruler and Subject:** Rulers dominate their subjects. Leaders of sects often relate to their organization as a ruler.
- **Elder and Younger Brother:** The elder brother dominates the younger, but the younger one can still influence the older. Wulin sect members often relate as brothers. Unmarried couples sometimes do as well.
- **Husband and Wife:** The husband dominates the wife, but the wife can often influence the husband. Unmarried couples often relate as husband and wife.
- **Friends:** Friends influence one another. Siblings sometimes relate as friends, as do sect members.

The Five Derivative Relationships

These are additional relationships flowing from the major ones – for the purposes of tracking, they might be treated as independent ones.

- **Superior and Minion:** Superiors exert influence over their minions. Sisters often relate to their brothers as minions.
- **Family Member to Family Member:** This implies a shared general loyalty, to a degree decided by the family or sect itself.
- **Ally to Ally:** Allies are not necessarily linked through blood, tradition or friendship; this makes them untrustworthy (although not necessarily less so than those linked by any of the above). Often characterized by mutual suspicion, the relationship still exists.
- **Rival to Rival:** Rivals exert influence on each other – by example, if not by word. Some of the greatest deeds of Wulin heroes are performed when they are spurred or provoked by their rivals.
- **Romantic Interest and Interested Party:** This tends to throw other relationships into chaos, as the romantic interest can exert a powerful influence on the interested. It is no wonder that many philosophers recommend caution and discipline in these matters! This influence is one-sided, unless the interest is mutual.

MAJOR RELATIONSHIPS

Parent and Child

In Shen Zhou, the virtue of filial piety – the Confucian virtue of *Xiao* – is of supreme value, and the relationship between parent and child overshadows all others. A child must offer the parent absolute respect and obedience, loyalty and consideration. Conversely, the parent has no such obligation. While encouraged to be righteous, to care for the child and be a good moral example, it is up to the individual person to honor this or not.

No matter how a parent acts, even if they are wicked and cruel, an unfilial child is unrighteous. A child has no right to set themselves as fit to judge their parent! At most, a virtuous child is expected to respectfully beseech their parent to change their mind three times. If the parent refuses, they are expected to go along and obey. The parent is not in any way obligated to receive these admonishments in stride; in fact, some insistent children have to proclaim their respectful protests while being soundly thrashed!

Parents are not afraid of their children being openly disobedient – this would be too horrible a transgression to even contemplate! Instead, unruly children display covert defiance by delaying duties and interpreting directions from

their parents in uncharitable ways. In a way, this is also an acknowledgment of the higher rank of the parents.

The fighters of the Wulin, as people who cultivate their Chi and dedicate themselves to struggle and conflict, generally focus on the more martial virtues. Although they often transfer the reverence offered for a father to their teachers, this does make them both glorious and terrifying in the eyes of ordinary people. Transcending such a mighty barrier with apparent ease makes them larger-than-life. Depending on how the martial artist in question might value virtuous behavior, this perception can tilt either towards a glorious (but intimidating) hero or towards a heartless, terrifying demon!

Secrets of Destiny: Parent and Child

Destiny-binding/breaking:

1+ Destiny: Increase the role of your mother/father in the story.

0 Destiny: Decrease the role of a father/mother in your story. This is an option when their presence encroaches on the player's (as opposed to the PC) fun.

3 Victory: When performing an act of filial piety above and beyond what could be expected of a child (by blood or martial lineage), your adherence to virtue is witnessed as a shining example of everything that should be! This will be enough to solve one difficult situation to your satisfaction – if your father asks you to assassinate an ally of yours, your immense dedication to his word even in the face of your own anguish can move him to withdraw his wish.

2 Secret: You get the chance to learn the **Jade Reverence** Technique, through which a child can strengthen their parents through the example of their accomplishments! Some whisper, though, that this technique is in fact corrupt in nature, subverting the will of Heaven...

Whenever you gain a Deed, you can choose to donate some or all of the achieved Entanglement Destiny to your parents on a 2-for-1 basis; this will directly further their cultivation or otherwise contribute to Entanglements that will better their lot in life (Sage's choice).

2-5 Discovery: You discover that your parentage is more than you had previously assumed! Maybe one of your parents is a great hero who has retired in secrecy, and who now shares their knowledge with you. Maybe your true parents are not who you thought they were. This can bring both fortune and misfortune, but is sure to put you in the spotlight.

1-5 Status: You gain the **Status** of "**Exemplary Child**" to your parents! The cost is defined by the Sage and should be decided based on story opportunities and benefits that this will bring you.

1-5 Status: You gain the **Status** of "**Black Sheep of the family**"! What could you have done to deserve this? The cost is defined by the Sage and should be decided based on the story opportunities that this will bring.

Most importantly, the virtue of filial piety matters to the people of Shen Zhou. It is the heart of being a good and righteous person, not a dull and dreary obligation. Showing filial piety makes the regular person sleep soundly, content in the knowledge that all is right with the world.

Ruler and Subject

A leader's will is relayed to his subjects through symbols of power – most commonly, the seal. It is a physical token, a physical object representing the power streaming down from the seat of the Emperor – and ultimately the Mandate of Heaven itself through the three royal Jade Seals traditionally kept at the Imperial Palace. It is therefore important to maintain the impression of righteousness. If someone opposes a righteous ruler they are not only traitors, but sinners in the eyes of Heaven! This means that a ruler must act swiftly against criticisms to his rule or his decisions, and that the more public they get, the harsher the reply will be. Allowing a loud-mouthed detractor to keep his head would be the same as recognizing your own lack of virtue.

Legalists argue that there is no such thing as an unrighteous ruler – the power to exert your will and have your words carried out is enough, and a ruler is merely the acting arm of the laws. Confucians argue that they can exist, but that chaos inevitably consumes their rule.

Secrets of Destiny: Ruler and Subject

2 Discovery: A current objective of yours is discovered to also contain opportunities to please your lord by achieving his goals! This will, at the very least, give you the opportunity for an audience and possibly come closer into his confidence and good graces.

-1: This also adds at least one significant obstacle to your current course.

1-5 Status: As a result of your deeds and hard work, you gain the **Status** of "**Trusted Subject to (Lord)**". The cost is defined by the Sage and should be decided based on the story opportunities that this will bring.

Elder and Younger Brother

Brothers are both natural allies – since they are of the same blood and share the same father – but also natural competitors. While the younger brother is naturally deferent to the older, this is not an absolute status quo. Depending on the moods of the father (and, possibly, which mother is most highly favored in his eyes – since many heads of households take several wives if they are able), it is quite possible that the younger may overtake the elder. Unless their relationship is exceptionally good, this tends to weigh on their minds.

Sisters, conversely, does not have a clearly defined place or way to relate to each other; since they are expected to get married and move away from the household, they are “outsiders” to the family and rarely treasured as much as their brothers. Their position in the household is more defined on context than on tradition, though they are always expected to be deferent to their brothers. For more information, see the Gender in Shen Zhou Lore on page 156.

An elder brother will expect respect and deference from a younger, although it is inappropriate for this deference to be too great. It should never approach the submissive attitude reserved for fathers and lords.

Secrets of Destiny: Elder and Younger Brothers

Destiny-binding:

1+ Destiny: Increase the role of your elder brother(s) in the story. This ties them/him more into the storyline, with all the complexity of motivation and added nuance of personality that this entails.

1+ Destiny: Increase the role of younger brothers in the story – if this means competent flunkies that the character can push around, the Sage should make sure to adjust the price to match. Otherwise, it functions as the same sort of Destiny purchase for elder brothers.

0 Destiny: Decrease the role of an elder/younger brother in the story if it intrudes on the player’s (as opposed to the character’s) enjoyment.

Brotherly struggle:

2 Bonus: It is the nature of the balance between brothers to shift and change. In a conflict with your elder brother, you are assumed to be under a *Minor Hyperactivity* condition (usually an Action Bonus, but the exact details are to be worked out in conjunction with the Sage) predicting your victory.

+1 Destiny: This is increased to a Major Condition.

Husband and Wife

Like all the hierarchical relationships, the one between husband and wife is patterned after the father/son relationship and governed by filial piety. As she enters a marriage, the wife also enters her husband’s family and is considered to be of his blood. This does not sever old relationships of respect and deference to one’s parents, but it means that she has – in essence – been sold to her new family by the transaction of marriage. Her virtue and status depends on her ability to contribute by serving her husband and giving him sons.

Again, this is a place where Wulin can serve as a great exception to a rule – since people with cultivated Chi have a harder time with subordination at large, and since entering the Jiang Hu already means leaving a lot of mores and taboos behind, wives can and do act as equals to their husbands. While not universal, it is also not uncommon.

While Shen Zhou is a horrible place for many women, the wuxia genre traditionally concerns itself more with heroic deeds than with historically correct oppression. This means that the backdrop of cruelty and angst exists to motivate great heroines in the making, not to paralyze them by removing options. More than one wandering swordswoman has entered the Wulin as an alternative to forced marriages and unthinkable subordination! The Sage should be careful not to enforce unpleasant situations of oppression simply for the sake of historical accuracy. While the actual lot of most women is a dire one, wuxia heroines are by nature empowered to transcend these limitations. (More on this in the *A Woman’s Life* lore on P. 156.)

Secrets of Destiny: Husband and Wife

Destiny-Binding:

1+ Destiny: Increase the role of your husband in the story.

1+ Destiny: Increase the role of your wife in the story.

0+ Destiny: Decrease the role of spouse.

2 Fortune: A good marriage option will reveal itself shortly – either a supportive stay-at-home kind of spouse that has no problem with you being on the road and having adventures, or someone who will follow you around with no complaints. This can be a new character or a pre-established NPC.

+2 or more: Your spouse is rich, influential or a powerful and competent Wulin fighter.

-1 or 2: The marriage brings substantive complications – such as rivals, an unsupportive family, enemies of your spouse or some such. (“What were you thinking, marrying a pirate prince?!”)

3-5 Destiny: If you are a woman, kung fu can be part of your dowry. This option allows you to find unexpected harmony between the secret kung fu of your birth family and your adopted one. Work with the Sage to create (or appropriate) a Lore that enhances your Style – either by allowing you to unlock some long-lost combination techniques or discover them for yourself. These should be equivalent to existing enhancement Lores, but might have the advantage of being unexpected!

This option is also open to husbands who get to learn their wife’s family kung fu.

5 Secret: While working as a harmonious husband-wife pair in seeking a combination of Styles, you uncover special techniques that enhance your prowess on the battlefield when you fight together! This takes the form of a *Minor Hyperactivity*, giving a +1 bonus to Breath as long as you are fighting together and covering each other, compensating for strengths and weaknesses. The condition is permanent and maintained by your relationship; if trust between you is broken, so is the Condition.

2 Fortune: In the case of a marriage where the two spouses are of vastly differing levels of Cultivation (or where one of them might not even have cultivated chi!), you gain the opportunity to learn Daoist sexual techniques that helps with the discrepancy of inner power, allowing the weaker partner to sustain the other and keeping the stronger one from getting sick. (For further information, see the Sexuality Lore on p. 160.)

Friend and Friend

Out of the primary relationships treasured by Confucius, this is the only one that is truly voluntary. In a society where the ways in which you relate to others are governed by rules and thousand-year old tradition, a friendship is a rare opportunity for the individual to define the social context. Since it is not mandated by law or tradition, it also has the possibility of being ended, which makes enduring friendships all the more rare and valued.

A friendship is also non-hierarchical, which means that the heart is not being constrained by duty or filial piety. In a relationship between friends, one can be truly equal. The sages praise the bond of friendship because it allows people to inspire and influence one another towards virtue.

This is not to say that friendships are entered or ended casually – an individual is still going to be responsible for their friends and required to offer them advice and assistance. Ending a friendship is acceptable if the other part strays too far from virtue, but carelessly dissolving a friendship is a sure sign of low character. In general, you are expected to treat the friend's life and family as your own, and set aside earthly factors such as rank or material wealth from influencing your relationship.

Secrets of Destiny: Friendship

1-5 Fortune: You make a friend, who will become part of your story. The cost for this entanglement varies depending on how influential they are as well as their good nature and loyalty. Some particular cases might even qualify for a Flaw (and as such costs 5 Destiny)!

• **Bonus:** At some point, a friend might call upon you for assistance. This will provide an opportunity for you to achieve a Deed of Loyalty or other similar benefit.

Dramatic Sacrifices

It is traditional to sacrifice yourself for your friends – and this is also what many a good wuxia story depends on. This can prove problematic in the game, though, as wanting to play a virtuous character does not necessarily mean that you want to give them up without warning, especially early on in the game. These options therefore exist to alleviate these situations. Use them sparingly, though, as too much frivolous use will detract from the drama of sacrifice (which is why it is also recommended that you take advice from the group and the Sage regarding their use).

1 Victory: After suffering a serious wound or equivalent (ie. at the very least a Minor Condition) for a friend, you can declare this to be a near-fatal sacrifice. You are allowed to have a short, dramatic monologue before collapsing. There is no risk of you taking more damage in the scene, and you are guaranteed to be seen to by a doctor or otherwise survive through fortune and circumstance.

3 Victory: You can declare that an NPC friend who apparently made a fatal sacrifice for you will survive (if perhaps not unscarred).

DERIVATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Superior and Minion

A superior-minion relationship is defined by the sworn loyalty of the latter to the former – the superior takes on a position of authority based on the one that a ruler has for a subject, a father for a son or a teacher for a student. This is not to say that the superior assumes these precise functions – simply that the relationship they form towards their minion is based upon these principal ones. This is the position of appointed officials to underlings, recognized scholars to their assistants and gentlemen to their servants. Unlike their relationship models, superiors are not inherent fonts of righteousness. Their orders might be weighed and questioned by a higher authority, and they are in turn responsible for the failures of their minions.

Ideally, a superior commands his minions with an eye towards righteousness. The minion obeys with respect. This is the basis of a sound and working relationship, and opposes chaos. This means that people will often weigh the status of a superior based on the respect shown by their minions; if those that they command do not show proper respect, then what good can they possibly be?

Consequently, many superiors are very stringent in demanding respect from their minions – their positions depend on it! Harsh punishments serve to alleviate this matter somewhat. The minion in turn, like many lesser parts of the Relationships, has very few options if the superior is not righteous. If they are lucky, they might try to apply for another position (although that kind of mobility is pretty rare). They are stuck with being pressured into trying to do good work.

Secrets of Destiny: Superior and Minion

1-5 Victory: Minion-stealing! Through a proper show of virtue, you cause the minions of an opponent to leave their service and flock under your banner instead. These count as Minions per the proper rules.

3 Secret: Wise to the ways of superior-minion relationships, you learn the ways of Excessive Respect Management! Whenever you show truly excessive amounts of respect for someone, you gain a +5 to the Courtier's Arts that utilize the Benevolence tool.

3 Fortune: You manage to hire quality minions or find hidden qualities in the ones you have! They can provide a +5 bonus (equivalent to a Skill Specialty) to extended skill tasks within their chosen (and narrow) profession when they are assisting you.

Family Members

People living under the same roof, sharing blood, have a common bond of experiences and loyalties. Even if you leave them to marry into another family or join the Wulin and drift off into the Jiang Hu, some people will always expect you to honor some familial responsibilities. Few Wulin heroes can resist the call when their families are in danger and in need of help.

Outside of the Major Relationships, family members tend to find their own reference points in how to relate to each other. Sisters tend to treat each other as Friends if their relationship is good, or as Superior/Minion if it is not.

Secrets of Destiny: Family

1+ Destiny: Make your family more important to your story.

1-5 Fortune: When called to perform some service for your family, you discover that this will provide an opportunity to further a personal or group goal. Maybe the task set for you by your father coincidentally causes you to meet a potential ally, or learn secrets about yourself or the world?

1-4 Fortune: You discover that your ancestry is more prestigious than you had previously been led to believe! This will provide them (and you) with opportunity for good and bad fortunes, but is sure to be fuel for a good story.

Allies

Allies occupy a curious niche in between the recognized Relationships – bound to each other by word alone but without the deeper ties of friendship, they often balance at a knife's edge between support and betrayal. Still, few people get where they want all by themselves.

Secrets of Destiny: Allies

1+ Involvement: Make an existing Ally more important to your story.

1-5 Fortune: You make a powerful and influenced Ally! Price is set by the Sage depending on how much help and support they can and are willing to give you.

(-1 to 2): This comes with a complicated set of obligations in turn!

Rivals

The world is full of people who want to excel – it is only natural that they tend to bump elbows a lot. Whether on the field of battle, in the courts of intrigue or one of the other thousands of contested grounds in Shen Zhou, successful heroes are bound to build up a collection of rivals. Noteworthy ones can influence your life and fortune – ideally, you will spur each other towards feats of greatness. Less auspicious rivalries can lead to obsessions, betrayals and unrighteous behavior!

Like friendship, rivalry is an informal position without societal rules (even if it is very common in the Wulin). It too is open to interpretation and choice, though depending a lot less on mutual consent.

Secrets of Destiny: Rivals

1+ Involvement: Make your Rival more important to the story.

1 Involvement: Someone you defeat, or who has defeated you, will become a recurring rival.

(+1-2): Deepen the relationship (as such) that you have with your Rival.

1-2 Fortune: A Rival will in some way be of help to you in your current situation – even if they are only stepping in as an unwitting distraction, or because they don't want to see you defeated by someone else before they have a chance for their big moment.

1-3 Victory: After an impressive enough Deed or some other noteworthy achievement (or sacrifice), you manage to move the heart of your Rival – they become an Ally, a Friend or even Romantically Interested in you!

1-5 Status: After scoring an impressive victory – or defeat – against your Rival you gain the reputation to match.

Romantic Interests

One of the many complications that a character is bound to run into sooner or later is the one of love. At the very best, this is a mutual event where two would-be lovers develop bonds of mutual affection.

More commonly, love tends to be complicated – life has a way of setting barriers and obstacles in the way of love. Most common, there is the question of societal barriers and familial obligations. It is not uncommon for marriage deals to be made a long time in advance between families, and fathers are notoriously reluctant to have their children run off to marry some wandering hero without house, home or prospects of a long life. People also tend to create difficulties for themselves by falling in love with other people's spouses, offsprings and betrothed. This complicates wedding arrangements and leads to young people being advised to avoid falling into love at all – it is a source of chaos!

Secrets of Destiny: Lovers and Romantic Interests

1+ Involvement: Increase the role of your love interest in the story, or add a new and interesting romantic interest to same. This tends to bring complications and drama, but also the opportunity for great Deeds.

4 Destiny: Having interacted meaningfully with a romantic interest and gotten interested in having them around, you can spend this Destiny and make it your one true love! You two will only be temporarily separated and will always find your way back to each other somehow – even if this does in no way guarantee a harmonic relationship. In fact, most of the legendary couples tend to have stormy romances full of misunderstandings, trials and travails and even outright armed conflict! At the end of the day, though, this ensures that you will always have a chance to patch things over.

0/5 Disadvantage: A complicated love life! Your love life really lends truth to the sayings of the elders – it seems to do nothing but bring complications to your life! This is free if it is your first or second Disadvantage.

Worse still, there are people who are apt in manipulating feelings of love and affection – whether it is the romantic interest itself or some third party arranging events in hopes of winning influence or gaining the upper hand over someone. The way of love is hard!

A WOMAN'S LIFE

Destiny cost: 4

Women and family: Discussion

In a regular family, it is regarded as an auspicious sign to have sons and an inauspicious one to have daughters. Although individual exceptions do exist, a daughter is generally viewed as a burden to her family – in the end, she will be married and leave her birth family to become part of her husband's.

Therefore, not many families are willing to spend more than they have to in educating or caring for a young woman. If the family has sons, she is probably going to be marginalized.

When entering her husband's family, a young woman will experience high pressure and expectations to fit in and behave impeccably – respecting the elders of her new family as well as their ancestors, which are now viewed as her own. However, she still maintains a link to her birth family, and is expected to obey her birth parents as well.

A Married Woman's Family: Discussion

In higher levels of society, women will have to face a second problem: men have the right (and social license) to take concubines or additional wives. It is common for this to occur when the husband becomes disenchanted with some attributes of his wife – showing signs of age is a common reason, but it could be failure to give him sons or merely him losing interest in her familiar charms. If a man takes a concubine or second wife when their first wife is still young and healthy this will naturally cast a shadow of suspicion over the assumed shortcomings of the latter even if she has acted exemplary in all ways.

On playing a female character

For a regular person in Shen Zhou, being born female is definitely a disadvantage.

Playing someone who constantly is made a target of sexism tends to make the game less fun. Fun tends to be kind of the point of the game - few people are drawn to the hobby out of a need to reenact historically correct unhappiness!

Aside from this, there is also the fact that as a genre, wuxia is full of extraordinary women (and other individuals) who rise up to transcend the limitations that society wants to put on them. Therefore, all-pervasive sexism is not only a threat to someone's fun but also a breach of genre.

This Lore contains the elements that you might want to tailor your experience in the game – you decide how much or how little you want your gender to matter for your story. For some, the challenges of exploring historical (and contemporary) biases makes for exciting stories. Others do not want to be bothered, and would rather want to focus upon acquiring the Weeping Black Leopard scrolls and achieving rulership of the Wulin!

Both are valid choices – and furthermore, choices to be made by the individual player.

Sages and other players should take note of this - if someone chooses for their characters not to be measurably burdened by social biases against their gender, it is not only bad form to ignore this but essentially against the spirit of the rules. It should also be noted that this state is not something that you pay Destiny to achieve; it is the assumed default. There are tailored Disadvantages available for players who want to experience measurable troubles. Things like a happy marriage with a supportive husband do cost Destiny, but that's because it is useful in the game.

For the ones that do pick these Disadvantages, it should be noted that this does not make their story any less heroic! It simply means that the lot of women and the troubles facing them on account of societal pressures are part of the story, much like the heinous murder of your master by the Vile Rain Cult might be for another character. As always, they should provide interesting story opportunities - not bury the character under a pile of insurmountable obstacles.

Your character gets to be cool.



SECRETS OF DESTINY – WOMEN AND FAMILY

0 Bonus: You receive this Loresheet for free if you grew up an “outsider to your family”. This has no mechanical effects as such, but it colors your story and your perceptions of women and their lot. If you don’t take this bonus, you grew up with typical male privileges as a valued family member (and will have to pay the Lore cost just as anyone else who wants to access its’ secrets and options).

3 Fortune: Your family (by blood or tradition) is arranging your marriage! This will come with an expected mix of complications, but also useful allies and connections.

-3: It will not come with useful allies and connections, or there are substantial complications involved – like an influential and spiteful first wife.

2 Fortune: One of your husband’s other wives or concubines is someone who is worth allying with, and you get the opportunity to do so.

2 Fortune: You get the opportunity to exploit some strife between an enemy and their spouse or other wife/ concubine to further your own goals.

A favored concubine’s status might well surpass that of a wife, which puts the disfavored woman in jeopardy. The struggles that ensue have given women a reputation for being troublemakers, sowers of chaos and discord. This is not the case for every household, though; there are plenty of examples where wives and concubines exist in harmony or even as close friends.

A Married Woman’s Life – The Three Solutions (Discussion)

Many women have been forced to contemplate their precarious lot – they invariably get older and have a harder and harder time in maintaining the interest of their husband. Most are forced to simply bow their heads and persevere, making the best of a bad situation; if they can maintain good relations with concubines and secondary wives – or at least avoid enmities – they can live their life in relative peace. If they are favored concubines who have not become wives, their position is even more precarious than that of a wife – they do not even have bonds of marriage to protect them, should they lose the favor of their patron.

Consequently, they devise differing tactics for maintaining their influence. This is the essence of the Tale of the Three Maiden’s Answers, a parable about three concubines of a king choosing three different solutions to the problem of his shifting attentions:

The first concubine was a pale and light-haired woman from the north, and she chose the Scholar’s Solution – making herself a wise and reliable advisor for her king. Forsaking passion for clarity, she became a pillar of wisdom and stayed in her king’s good graces. Some stories also tell us of how her righteousness finally became her fall, as her king started to regard her as a threat... but that, as always, depends on what point the storyteller wants to make.

The second concubine was a dark-haired girl from the central provinces, who chose the Courtier’s Solution and developed techniques for enhancing and preserving her

beauty. Staying forever beautiful, she did not only remain in her king's good graces but also developed her influence over others. Some stories paint her out as a ruthless schemer, manipulating heroes into her service to slay the king so that she could take all his power for herself. Others paint a picture of her as a beautiful bird in a cage – something to be adored and valued for precious looks, but ultimately just another possession.

The third concubine was a green-eyed daughter of the Western deserts who cultivated her Chi and joined the Wulin! Through the **Warrior's Solution**, she became a powerful fighter - her prowess enhancing her appeal in spite of her stepping out of normal society and into the world of martial arts. Some versions of the story has her emerging triumphant as a champion of the king. Others have her transgressions making her unseemly in his eyes, as he could not abide a woman more powerful than he, nor trust one who so easily defied convention.

Women in the Wulin

All are equal in the Wulin – or so the saying goes. While martial excellence technically allows anyone with the proper skill and effort to rise up and gain notice and respect, practicalities always tend to intrude. For young women, even gaining access to training to cultivate their Chi properly can be a challenge; for every instance where you have a sifu open-minded enough to admit girls (by virtue of experience, or possibly by being female herself), you have cases where women are blocked from participating in training.

Of course, people with the sense of mind to want to join the Wulin in the first place rarely take no for an answer! This is why we have a myriad of stories about young heroines who secretly spy on a master's lessons, internalizing them in secret, or who hide their nature and joining kung fu schools disguised as boys. Some even cross the boundaries of righteousness and steal valued kung fu manuals, or otherwise

Secrets of Destiny: The Three Solutions

The three solutions are differing answers to a riddle – by default, you can only purchase one of them. With Sage permission and an entertaining story or solution for how you might be able to reconcile two different approaches, you might be permitted to by another. Considering the circumstances in which they have developed, few men ever deign to ponder these lessons. This is social bias, though, and not a hard limit; if you as a player want to buy some of these options for your male character, you are free to do so.

5 Destiny: You have internalized the **Scholar's Solution**, becoming a philosophical successor to the pale woman.

0 Secret: You can show others the way to strength through your **Righteous Advisor Technique**. Whenever someone performs a Deed of **Righteousness (Yi)** by following your advice, they gain 2 points of Destiny in addition to the Entanglement that they usually get.

0 Bonus: A proper advisor merely shows the way – she does not make people walk it. Allowing people to choose their own course simply reinforces your position as righteous and unbiased. Whenever tragedy or misfortune strikes someone valued to you – spouse, friend, family member or child – because they ignore your device and you accepted their decision calmly, you are counted as having performed a Deed of **Righteousness (Yi)**.

5 Destiny: You have internalized the **Courtier's Solution**, becoming a philosophical successor to the dark-haired girl.

0 Bonus: You are a great beauty. This grants you a +5 bonus to all social rolls where your looks would be an advantage (mostly ones where the person you are trying to influence could be attracted to you). This counts as a Secret Art-related bonus.

0 Secret: You have mastered the ways of relying on others for support – you can spend Joss from your romantic partners and others who are fully dedicated to you (such as a chaste but extremely loyal protector). They will notice when you are doing this – how they react will depend entirely upon your relationship and the Sage's discretion.

5 Destiny: You have internalized the **Warrior's Solution**, becoming a philosophical successor to the green-eyed daughter

0 Secret: You gain a +10 "damage" bonus to all Ripple rolls made at the end of combat where you emerge victorious, solely for the purpose of creating Conditions that make people smitten with you because of your prowess. This counts as a damage bonus from Secret Art-related techniques.

3-5 Victory: Once per story, you can make a great show of martial excellence that will allow you to solve a difficult but generally non-combat related situation. Maybe a superb display of sword work reaches the heart of a cruel nobleman and makes him reevaluate his stance on killing all the peasants for failing to pay taxes. Perhaps the grace with which you disarm his guards makes the magistrate interested in meeting you rather than furious and vengeful.

comes into possession of martial secrets through thievery and deceit; the way of kung fu is hard!

Still, when they have managed to show discipline through Chi cultivation and proven their proficiency in combat, relatively few within the Wulin tend to question whether they are fitting to be warriors – kung fu speaks louder than words, and is many times as painful!

Something that is harder for many to reconcile with is the practices of love and marriage with female Wulin; the views on proper relationships are still colored by the views of the secular world, and while the fighting woman becomes a stunning exception to normal rules and norms just like anyone who steps out into the world of Rivers and Lakes, when it comes to romance it is hard to view her simply as another fighter! This is a powerful, and potentially very painful choice to make – one that echoes the choice to join the Wulin in the first place. Will she find someone who will respect her as a warrior and as a woman, or will she have to choose between love and self-determination?

Some choose to withdraw from the Wulin when they are married, their skills remaining largely unused as they instead focus on raising children and maintaining a household. Others resolve this dilemma by deciding never to marry; love relationships are painful, outdrawn affairs that inspire great deeds and passions, but are rarely consummated. In some cases, these women even take monastic vows.

Others manage to reconcile the twin roles of Wulin and

Secrets of Destiny: Women in the Wulin

0 Destiny: You tend to draw less attention as a woman than you really should – even if you dress very feminine and act flirtatiously, men will still mainly think of you as a fighter.

0 Destiny: You tend to attract more attention than you should – you have to go to great lengths to present yourself entirely as a warrior and act strictly formal, and even then some men will mainly see you as a woman.

5 Disadvantage: For some reason, you have to deal with prejudices and resistance to your place in the Wulin because you are a woman. The reasons for this may be manifold – unusually strict cultural barriers, specifics of your family or even a bad luck curse! In any case, expect a lot of your challenges to have to do with your place in society.

womanhood – their prowess makes them more desirable, not less! Marriages between consenting Wulin heroes tend to be spectacular affairs, and the children resulting from these marriages tend to be on the fast track to becoming heroes in their own right.

Autumn Blossoms

The soldiers rushed out into the courtyard, armored boots drumming against stone as they quickly took up positions, lowering the points of their heavy spears at the intruder stepping through the opened gates. Iron Arm stepped out behind them, eyes widening in disbelief as his senses recognized the shape of the lone enemy through the whirling dust.

-Ridiculous!- He stared at the slender girl standing in the middle of the circle of steel. -What are you doing here, Jingchu?! Are you asking to be killed?-

-Brother.- Her hair had come loose, blowing gently in the wind. Her eyes were downcast as ever, her voice as soft as he remembered... and yet, her posture seemed as firm as the mountains. -It is time for this to end.- The sword in her hand was not raised, but didn't waiver.

He gritted his teeth. -I have already told you! Father was a fool – there is no resisting the Yun Clan! He would have us fight and die for nothing! Instead, the frozen lord got his tribute.

She frowned, still looking at the ground. -You killed them, brother.

As one, the guards shifted their hold on the spears, readying themselves – and Jingchu unsheathed half of the sword's blade from its sheath, causing a mighty wind to send soldiers reeling back - blowing away all of the dust and earth and leaving only the bare rock!

Iron Arm rooted himself to the ground with his chi, but was still forced to take two steps back.

-What is this?!-, he yelled. -I have known you for your entire life! Your Kung Fu is worthless!-

-It is strange,- replied the girl as she stepped forward, meeting his gaze. -But I think that I finally understand.-

She raised the half-sheathed sword before her as her brother scrambled for his own. Gracefully, she unsheathed another inch. Iron Arm's sword snapped in two, and a wound opened over his chest!

-Sword chi!- Blood stained his lips.

She nodded. -I had wanted to show it to father and mother. Perhaps it would have pleased them. But now, brother...-

The blade sung as it was unsheathed.

Some women are fierce by nature; it is clear to everyone that they are far too strong-willed to bend or acquiesce to the limitations and behaviors expected of them, and it can even be a relief to their family when they storm off to join the Wulin! But there are others who bloom late; despite seemingly lacking the natural ferocity and force of personality than tends to characterize people of a cultivated nature, they harbor hidden potential. By the scholars and sages who know of such things they are called *Autumn Blossoms*.

The few examples that have been recorded of these extraordinary young women tell us they have all been born into the Wulin from martially-inclined parents but all failed to show any extraordinary talents for the first stretch of their lives. Many have seemed to be naturally-inclined towards more traditionally feminine duties, but others simply seem to get in trouble all the time, constantly being in need of assistance and rescue.

In any case, they have powerful destinies; there will come a time of great peril when they throw off their timid shells and emerge as radiant flowers! Needless to say, this happens very rarely – enough so that very few people in the Wulin even remembers – but those who blossom have all become powerful prodigies of kung fu!

Secrets of Destiny: Autumn Blossoms

8 Destiny: You are an Autumn Blossom, your true potential still slumbering. This counts as a special type of condition that works similar to a Disadvantage; you earn a point of Destiny and a point of Cultivation each time you are useful to the story as a sidekick, victim, hostage or otherwise playing second fiddle or lady in distress. These points are set aside, not spent or added to your Cultivation total. Additionally, set aside the Entanglement Destiny earned for any Deeds of **Force**, **Honor** or **Ferocity**. These effects persist until you use the *Victory* below.

0 Bonus: You can flow your Kung Fu into traditionally feminine chores, spending 1 Chi per +5 modifier (spending up to as many Chi as your Rank level) to Crafting rolls to maintain a household. This might not be particularly glorious as most people see it, but for higher-Ranked individuals it can be damn impressive – cleaning out a castle with a single burst of Chi, renovate a mansion with a single sword stance and seamlessly mending the garments of an emperor!

3 Victory: At a dramatically appropriate moment in the game, you reveal your hidden potential to the world! You immediately receive all of your accumulated Destiny, Cultivation and Entanglements to be spent immediately without having to spend any training time (the Entanglement is still spent by the Sage or other players, and will probably take your dramatic awakening into account!). Furthermore, due to the near-Enlightened nature of your blossoming, your Lake is temporarily raised with 3 for the entire scene!

DAOIST SEXUALITY

Destiny Cost: 3

In the fast-flying world of the Jiang Hu, sexual encounters are a complicated thing. This Lore tries to explain how the people of Shen Zhou think about this most basic of motivations and explore some of the story possibilities within. This is not to say that you, as a player, are expected to play out your sexual exploits in detail (unless that is something that you and your group are into!), but rather to build a foundation of understanding that can influence romantic motivations and actions.

This Lore is usually known and practiced by doctors, Daoist recluses, learned concubines and people striving for immortality.

Daoist Sexual Basics: Discussion

From a Daoist perspective, a sexual union is about the exchange of female Yin and male Yang Chi. A woman's Yin Chi is bottomless and inexhaustible; conversely, a man's Yang Chi is precious and limited. At the peak of his pleasure, he is weakened in all ways. This poses a dilemma – without restraint, a man can easily spend too much energy and stunt his Chi cultivation! Some solve this by simply practicing abstinence (there's something to be said for monastic environments), while others by observing proper techniques of Chi exchange.

The Classic of the Plain Girl speaks of the ideal exchange between man and woman – the woman's pleasure nurtures the man with her limitless Yin. Following from this, she should reach pleasure with frequency while the man restrains himself – reaching pleasure without emitting vital fluids (and therefore, without exhausting his Yang). This is what is known as “the Jade Path towards long life”. Pursuing this sound state of sexual management will allow a man to live a long and healthy life. Like with Chi cultivation, most people squander their energy management – if everyone observed the qualities of proper living, who's to say what greatness humanity could achieve?

Bedroom Strategies

Heterosexuality

For the Wulin (and by extension other people with cultivated chi), choosing sexual partners can be tricky – if someone's energies are too strong (or too weak), the Yin/Yang exchange becomes unbalanced and can make you sick! A woman of Daoist inclinations seeks a male lover who is as powerful as possible; it takes a powerful Yang Chi to nourish her boundless Yin. A man needs to be at least her equal, and it takes a truly massive difference of power – more than two Ranks above her own – before it risks unbalancing her chi. On the other hand, once his Yang becomes that overwhelming it can cause all kinds of trouble and harmful imbalances.

A man, conversely, seeks a woman with power close

to his own; her Yin Chi can nourish him where his Yang overwhelms that of a weaker lover. If her power is greater than his own, he might be overcome in bed as in battle – her endless Yin a void that drowns out his Yang fires. Therefore, the ideal lover is a woman who he can just barely beat in battle, or who can sometimes be beaten and sometimes not.

As one might expect, ritual combat is a normal as well as necessary part of courtship rituals. Some powerful men also orders for the most beautiful young concubines in their employ to be trained in powerful kung fu so that they will cultivate their Chi to proper levels.

Homosexuality

Although people in Shen Zhou do not conceptualize sexuality as we do in the contemporary world, the distribution of people who prefer the company of their own gender (or who distribute their affections equally) is about the same; it is the societal labels and expectations that differ. Since people are eager to apply the normal labels to a relationship, this means that one part will usually be seen as gender-dissonant – usually, more “female” in the case of men (and sometimes “male” in case of women, although this is less ensured).

The Wulin transcend normal societal limitations. When you are planning to learn powerful kung fu and rule the

Secrets of Destiny: Daoist Sexuality

Many techniques have been perfected over the years to enhance or transcend normal bedroom procedures. These are some of them:

1 Secret: If you are a man, you have mastered the techniques of **Daoist Self-Control**, granting you the discipline to have relations without exhausting your Yang Chi. This allows for a longer life and staying healthy even at an advanced age – even more so than regular people with cultivated chi. Since this matters little in most campaigns, this technique is very cheap to learn. In a game taking place over a very long stretch of time – perhaps even across generations – the Sage might want to bump up the cost.

4 Secret: You have learned secret Daoist techniques of **Harmonious Abstinence**, through which you refine and cultivate your chi. This counts as a **Minor Medical Hyperactivity** condition that grants a bonus of 1 Cultivation per chapter as long as you make a big deal about your strict regimen of abstinence, refusing to make close contact with the preferred sex and so on.

2 Secret: You have mastered the secrets of **Cultivated Ying/Yang Energy**. By cultivating an inadequate partner's Chi (the Yin of a woman, or the Yang of a man) you can make it safer to have sex with them. Ideally, this will strengthen them – but if the cultivation becomes unbalanced, it has the possibility of making them sick! Your partner must make a **Hardiness** roll each time you use the technique, starting at **Trivial (10)** and going up one step each time you use the technique inside of a week (or chapter, whichever is appropriate). If they succeed, they get a bonus point of Cultivation. If they fail, they get sick! For a woman, this becomes a **Too Much Yin** Medical Weakness condition that makes her tired, cold and withdrawn. A man, conversely, starts suffering from a **Too Much Yang** Medical Weakness making him feverish, fatigued and beset with delirium. The most common effect is an Action Penalty unless they make a big deal of acting according to their condition. [Recovery = (Difficulty of failed Hardiness roll), Interval one day, Duration 3].

1 Secret: You've mastered your Yin/Yang energy, which makes it safer to sleep with someone who is superior to you. You count as being up to two ranks higher for the purposes of not getting sick from these liaisons.

3 Secret: **Ying/Yang Sacrifice** allows you to grant good health to your partner. When you use the Doctor's Art to create Paired medical Conditions, you can accept the Weakness for yourself and have the Hyperactivity affect your lover.

5 Secret: You are a **Yin-Yang Warrior**. You become a well of Yin and Yang Chi, and can apply sexual techniques as a heterosexual or homosexual member of either sex (although still only one sex per encounter). Your enhanced reserves of Chi also enable you to transcend gender limitations for specific and exotic secret techniques and styles that can be learned only by men or women.

-2: Internalizing this technique you to go through a physical transformation, changing sexual characteristics to that of the opposite gender or to an intersexed shape.

+2: Your complete understanding of the techniques involved makes you able to function as male and female within the same encounter – which can be useful if you are entertaining several partners at once. One can only marvel at the life you must have to pursue these techniques!

10 Secret: You learn the extremely rare art of **Sexual Transformation**, through which you can change the sexual characteristics of yourself or a partner of yours. If you are feeling unscrupulous, the use of this technique can even be a secret to your partner! They must, however, consent sexually – even when it is apparent that you are using some sort of secret technique.

2 Secret: You learn the art of **Sexual Alchemy**, which can be used as a Tool for Secret Arts! It can be used instead of acupuncture needles for the **Secret Art of Medicine**, of Benevolence for **The Secret Art of Intrigue** and for Pacing the Constellations for **Daoist Magic**.

martial world, some things tend to lose the impact that they have in secular society! The real tragedy is one of Chi exchange – from a Daoist perspective, homosexual relations are viewed as suboptimal. A man has Yin Chi of his own, but far too weak to be able to nurture a male partner – it is too easy for them both to grow sick and weakened. Sex between women, on its part, is pretty much viewed as a non-event; one woman's Yin Chi cannot nurture another's, but at least no one gets hurt in trying.

This tragedy is handled pretty much like others of its' kind by the Wulin – it drives powerful Grief Passions, it makes people go off to meditate on mountaintops and it makes them refine secret techniques to work around the issue. The solution to the problem of inadequate Chi is twofold; there is *partner cultivation*, which is about learning special techniques to be able to nurture your lover's Chi, and *the way of the Yin-Yang Warrior*, which refers to an exotic technique that allows a person to become a well of both Yin and Yang Chi – and consequently be able to function as both a “man” and a “woman” for sexual encounters, in an energy-transfer sense.

Sexual Alchemy

Sexual alchemy is a series of special techniques for nurturing Chi flows. It converts natural secretions and energies into sources of power. This can be used to heal and strengthen – or for some unscrupulous users, to warp and hurt. Many stories are told (although usually in private) about emperors who had thousands of concubines schooled in various arts of sexual alchemy in hopes of finding the secrets of immortality!

Sexual transformation

As the Yin and Yang energies of a person are essentially female and male, advanced manipulations of these energy reserves can have dramatic effects – secret techniques to make a person change from a man into a woman, or into an intersexed body.

Some of these transformations arise from seeking to master more advanced secrets of Chi manipulation, others from an honest wish for transformation and change.

There are also stories of how truly unscrupulous villains have chosen to transform an object of desire to make them into beneficial bedmates. Regardless of intent, having someone changed like this without consent for your own personal gain – even if it is due to an honest wish to be able to be intimate without fear of illness and ruin – can only be described as a horribly Corrupt Deed.

Regardless of motivation and morality, this type of sexual transformation should not be confused with the superficially similar techniques of transformative self-mutilation taught by texts such as the Wind-Feather Manuscript (see the Lore on “**Corrupt Chi**” on p. 162) ; those are vile rituals whose very affront to nature makes the individuals into fonts for Corrupt Chi!

HERETIC LORES

CORRUPT CHI

Destiny Cost: 0

The Wulin have always been concerned with power: the power to dominate your enemies or remake the martial world in your image. Many individuals grow stronger as human beings as well as warriors through this way of life; whatever virtues they settle on, they remake themselves, internalize their lessons, and grow as individuals. Power is within the grasp of those who have the drive and the discipline to grab it.

But there are those for whom this is not enough. Power for power's sake is a compelling idea for an embittered or one-track mind. Instead of walking the road of growth and learning from the journey they only want to grasp what's at the very end – this is the path of Corrupt Chi.

Though the source varies, as detailed below, corruption is enlightenment's dark mirror; where the enlightened warrior transcends their limitations and gains a deeper understanding of the world, the Corrupt-Warrior only grows more embittered and ravenous. They are trapped in the wheel of lust for greater power, until their desire consumes them from within.

The most terrifying thing about them is the immense power that they gain – yet another trap for heroes who seek new ways to stand against them! Far too many times, a Chivalrous young hero who have sought revenge against a



Deviant or Baneful villain, or who have sought to protect the world from their ravages, have themselves fallen for the siren call of forbidden power.

BANEFUL HERESY

A Baneful person spits in the eye of Heaven; more than merely selfish, their solipsism separates them from the rest of humanity. This denouncement of the ways of nature might be deliberate rejection of the authority of Heaven, or they might have, with casual nihilism, forgotten to believe in anyone but themselves. They still observing a few Virtues, but some believe the Baneful can scarcely be seen as human; indeed, stories tell of warriors appointed by Heaven itself to hunt them down and free the world of their monstrous presence.

The Sword Bastard leads his gang of Dogs to affront the Wulin – his every victory is a testament to the horrible power of his philosophy. Virtue is a lie. Heaven doesn't care. Heroism is a thin veneer to hide the ugliness of violence and the arbitrary and dishonorable nature of taking another life. Unbearably empty inside, perhaps wounded beyond redemption, he flaunts his Baneful nature to all.

The Three Powers Sage is poisoned by his own hurt and spite – because of lost love, he worked his own pain into powerful kung fu techniques, raining down death and destruction on the villages around his mountain. He has remained up there alone for generations, except for the Chivalrous heroes who keep trying to seek him out to slay him... or others who hope to learn his astounding techniques. In any case, their bodies keep littering his garden.

Heaven Hunters

There plenty of stories about celestially-appointed warriors who are equipped with great martial secrets and tasked with hunting down Baneful humans, but very few scholars take these claims seriously. Be that as it may, there are cases where heroes have been contacted by mysterious forces, usually by visiting their dreams and speaking to them there, to grant them visions and knowledge that remain after they have awoken.

None of these mysterious patrons have directly claimed to be celestial beings, but they are more than happy to announce their work as the will of Heaven. Those who accept the call are soon led into conflict with their first Baneful enemy;

Secrets of Destiny: Baneful humans

10 Destiny: You are a Baneful human, walking outside the graces of Heaven.

- You no longer gain any Joss from Deeds other than Force (Ba) and Ferocity (Bao).
- You start out with one point of Corrupt Chi.
- When you gain Deeds in Force (Ba), Ferocity (Bao), Ruthlessness (Hen), or Obsession (Chan) one Entanglement Destiny per Deed can be spent on Cultivation for Corrupt Chi. You can spend a maximum number of points per Story equal to your highest rating among these Virtues.
- You must buy the Unwholesome Disadvantage, modeling how you make people uneasy with your very presence; this can vary by person, from an aura of ill omen to obvious radiated killing intent, but it always makes it hard to fit in and get along. Chivalrous heroes also always seem to find you to make your life more difficult, and there are the persistent rumors of the Heaven Hunters coming to hunt you down... This is free if it is your first or second Disadvantage, but otherwise costs 5 Destiny.
- You gain Status 3: Baneful human. Many will fear you, and just as many will hate you. The oddest kind of heretic might show you respect.

Secrets of Destiny: Heaven Hunters

7 Destiny: The stories are true! Contacted by patrons beyond your understanding, you are appointed as a Heaven Hunter. You will periodically receive guidance and information that will bring you into conflict with Baneful humans, whom you are tasked to destroy!

0 Secret: In your dreams, you learn the **Jade Emperor's Breath** technique to protect you against your enemies. Whatever style you use, it is always considered to be Laughing At Corrupt techniques and styles used against you for the purposes of defense.

0 Status: You gain **Status 5: Heaven Hunter**. This won't mean much to anyone outside a very select few, and half of them will try to kill you, but it is still an extremely rare and prestigious title. Occasionally it might make all the difference.

X Treasure: After you dispose of a Baneful opponent, you are rewarded by your patrons. Spend an amount of Destiny – up to twice the Rank level of your defeated enemy. For each Destiny so spent, the Sage spends two Destiny's worth of Treasures, Techniques, Secrets or other appropriate things that seems fitting. These will be left for you at some location of your finding in the very near future. Many of these rewards will carry some hidden meaning, hint at further quests to come, or give some kind of implied guidance to other problems that you are currently facing.

10 Victory: After defeating seven Baneful targets, you are bestowed with greater power – this often involves learning a **Transcendent Style** or obtaining a **Legendary Weapon**, but may be other martial secrets of equivalent impact.

as you might guess, they are never easy opponents. If the hero survives this ordeal, or even emerges victorious, they are contacted again later – if not through dreams, by hidden messages and secret missives.

Strange and wondrous rewards also fall into their hands. Whether weapons or secret scrolls, treasures or tools, they reflect their recipient as well as their trials with meticulous care, and often seem to be picked with a certain sense for symbolism.

After the first challenge, it is always unclear how long it will be before a Heaven Hunter is called again – the only thing that one can be sure of is that there will always be a next time.

DEVIANT HERESY

Perhaps even more insidious than the Baneful wretches who turn their back on the natural order are those who delve into darker rituals to gain power over themselves and the world. From the grotesque ritual self-mutilations practiced by the *Powdered Veil Cult* of the southern plains, through the deceptively enticing lessons of the *Sun-Moon Manuscript*, to the subtly corrupt martial techniques practiced by some of the most powerful of sect leaders, they all grant power at a price.

In a way, it takes much less of an initial effort to start down the deviant path than the extreme philosophical stances of the Baneful one. You do not usually foreswear human contact or invite the fury of Heaven – you're just exploring another road to power. Almost invariably, though, the path gets more and more demanding, or a hidden price was attached to the lessons that gave you the excellence you coveted. In other cases, the path is pretty much painted on the map, and it takes a certain kind of madman to even contemplate taking the first step. Overt or covert, by will or deceit, Corruption enters.

As opposed to being Baneful, being Deviant is seldom the result of one big step that changes everything – it is the sum of a multitude of choices, and you bear its consequences in mind and body. In terms of rules, its Corruption is intimately connected to various forms of Chi Conditions, many of whom work along similar lines as the training regimens used by Secret Artists to promote elemental Chi.

These allow you to cultivate Corrupt Chi in the first place. Requirements for respiring Corrupt Chi tend towards the more horrific – in some cases, permanent mutations (i.e., Chi deviations or the results of mutilations or medical experiments) are the key. Other times, behavior is key – such as regularly feasting on the flesh of humans, always cruelty ruling the relations with all that you love, or to feast on poisons that make your body twisted even as you grow more powerful.

When gaining your first point of Corrupt Chi through the Deviant Ways, you always gain a Mutation appropriate to your particular path. When you increase your score, you gain new Mutations, or increase the intensity or visibility

of one you already have. (These can as always be mental rather than physical, but they will have a deeply unsound and unnatural quality, as opposed to the strange but more “natural” expressions of Elemental Chi.)

Example: The Iron Devil goes overboard in his quest for absolute justice, gaining his first point of Corrupt Chi. This causes his eyes to flare purple whenever he spends that Chi. As he keeps on the Deviant path and gains greater power within it, this exacerbates – at first, his teeth and fingernails turn black. The next time, the purple flare is more like balefire surrounding his body!

The Lessons of the Starving Tiger King

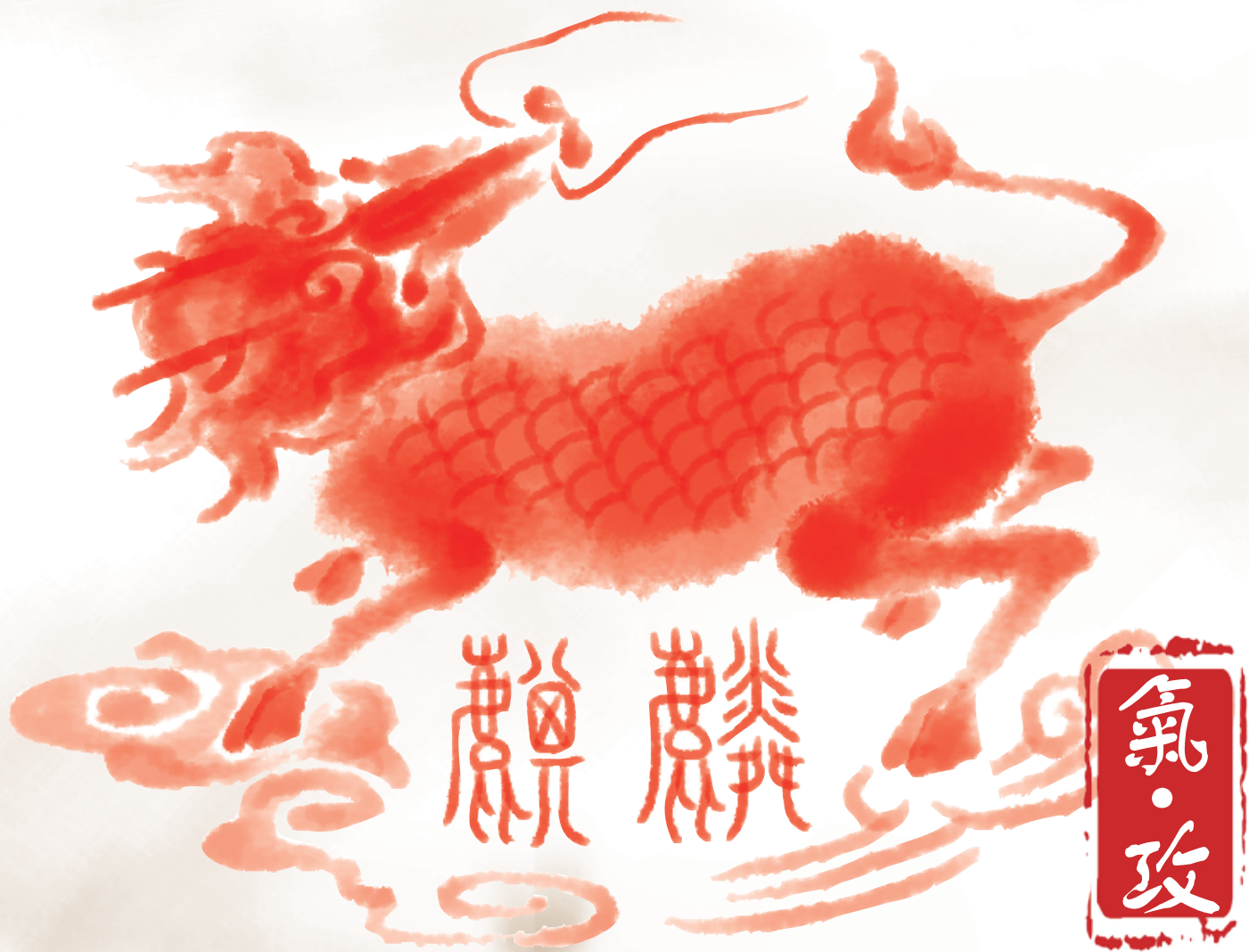
The Starving Tiger King lived a long time ago – a powerful barbarian lord, he was said to be a Prince of Bharata who was exiled from his lands because of his violent temper and murderous ways. In the remote peaks of the Northwestern mountains, he resolved to forge a new empire for himself; gathering the mountain tribes under his banner, he created a barbarian army to march on the Land of the Gods!

As he faced and killed the great warriors sent against him, he consumed their flesh to add their strength to his own – his pot bubbled over with the boiled fat of heroes! In the end, the Starving Tiger King was defeated; some say that he fell in battle against a king using mighty kung fu granted by the Jade Emperor himself. Others say that the Tiger-King's hunger grew even stronger, until not even his monstrous diet could sustain him – these tales end with him slaying his own army and consuming them to a man before devouring his own flesh.

Whatever tale is true – or indeed, regardless of whether the Starving Tiger King ever truly walked the face of the earth – there are ways for unscrupulous humans to draw power from eating human flesh.

Secrets of Destiny: The Starving Tiger King

6 Secret: You learn the Lesson of the Starving Tiger King. Who taught you to commit such vile deeds? This works as a Cultivation Hyperactivity (starting as Minor) requiring you to stay on a regular diet of human flesh; you must consume a hearty meal on it at least once per week. You raise your Cultivation of Corrupt Chi by 1 per story; this can be Inflamed to a Major Hyperactivity if you wallow in your cannibalistic urges by consuming at least ten people in an extended feast, or consume the body of a person of at least Rank Four. This allows you to gain an additional point of Corrupt Chi Cultivation for each Deed of Cruelty or Ferocity that is keyed to your particular dietary regimen. (There is no limit to the number of points you can gain, although it can be hard to invent new Deed-worthy cannibalism stunts; your behavior is also more or less guaranteed to call righteous heroes to oppose you).



THE BOOK OF EARTH

SWORD DAWN

The sun slowly rises over Dreaming Breeze Mountain, hues of red and orange shine upon the snow, outside a broken-down log cabin. A middle-aged man plays his reed flute as two young boys, novices in the nearby monastery, listen to the sweet melody.

Birds chirp above, chickens run by clucking, yet they do not disturb the melody. Instead they seem to merge seamlessly with it; as the man welcomes the new day, he is dressed in simple hemp clothes, humble yet impeccably white. His graying long hair falls upon his face, and as the sun shines upon it, he smiles.

He has done this every day since he came to Dreaming Breeze Mountain two years ago. Everyone knows him as Uncle Pai, and he is a welcome addition to the small community that lives in and around the humble Buddhist monastery that is dedicated to Guan Yi, the Bodhisattva of Infinite Mercy.

Uncle Pai is not a monk – not even a novice – yet he wakes at the break of dawn with the monks, and always listens to the sutras. Though he doesn't live in the monastery, he follows the simple lifestyle of the monks. He is known to everyone in the mountain by the bittersweet melody of his reed flute.

Suddenly he changes his tune, and it is no longer the plain-yet-harmonious notes with which he usually welcomes dawn. This tune is graver and strong, carrying hints of a deep sadness tinged with expectation and excitement.

Today he is playing for someone more than the young monks and the birds and the chicken. Uncle Pai knows that today he will have an encounter that will change everything, and his new melody is a fitting overture.

A young woman comes into view; the sun shining strong against the snow blurs her image and makes her appear an apparition on the horizon. She is dressed in worn-down traveling clothes; a broken-down straw hat falls upon her face. She has traveled long to be here.

She carries a heavy case upon her back: it seems an enormous sword sheath with a pommel protruding from it. The case is held by tow chains that cross at her chest. It must be incredibly heavy for a weapon to be carried, let wielded even by a strong man; how much more so for a thin girl like her?

Uncle Pai gazes at the girl with an affectionate – even proud – look. yet his are not the eyes of a father. There is the longing and regret of a lover who realizes what he lost long ago. The young monks stare at the girl, puzzled. A strong wind blows by, the air heavy with emotion and elemental grandeur: killing intent mixed with sorrow, fire mixing with ice, the bright sun upon the mountain peak.

The woman stands now less than a dozen paces from the cabin's porch. The chickens cluck around her curiously, pecking at her run-down boots. A twist of her hand opens the lock across her chest; with a single swift motion she pulls the titanic sword case from her back. A swing generates a fierce blade wind that blows the chickens away in a torrent of feathers.

The monks cover their faces from the strong wind and back a step, yet Uncle Pai keeps playing as if this display is the usual for a sunny morn. His long grey hair flutters around his face, and the reed flute's music intensifies in the wind, following her blade's melody.

One-handed, she plants the case firm into the earth; even sunk a foot in the soil, the case is almost as tall as she. Holding the pommel in a firm grip, she smiles, her eyes locked on Uncle Pai.

-Phantom Cloud! You really haven't aged well.-

He lowers his flute and smiles at the girl. He stands slowly, and it seems to take him some exaggerated effort – as if he were an old man with weak bones, or simply someone who doesn't want to get out of bed.

-Mei, you have grown...scrawny. You look tired and thin, and you used to dress only in peerless silk.-

She takes off her straw hat, letting it hang at her back, a mane of red hair falls to her shoulders, framing a face beautiful and delicate. She would look like the spoiled daughter of a nobleman (one who had never lifted anything heavier than a sowing needle) if not for her eyes. They shone a verdant green, bright with willpower and a fury that threatened to melt the falling snow.

-I don't go by Mei anymore. Just as you taught me, I now I prefer steel over silk. I am known across Rivers and Lakes as the **Ten Sword Princess!** -

Uncle Pai gets lost in thought for a moment, remembering days gone by: a young girl dressed in blue silk, her skin white and soft and her lips ripe and red; a noble girl wanting to learn swordplay, ordinarily to be humored until he had his way and then let her go, but she had been different; he had seen in her eyes that her soul was already a sword that could not be contained.

-I have heard of the exploits of Ten Sword Princess even here, I have my means. And yet, I still miss my sweet Mei.-

The two young monks look perplexed, glancing between the two of them. They could feel the tension in the air; so much karma! Maybe it was better to live isolated from the world as their master said. Such a conflictive existence could only bring suffering. Yet they cannot avoid being intrigued by these grander-than-life figures and the fire awakening in their hearts. Even humble bumpkin Uncle Pai seemed more alive, now, his mask of genteel simplicity falling away to reveal an infinitely nuanced character.

Pai pats their heads gently, kneels down to their level and talks to them in sweet voice, as a father would.

-Boys, this young miss and me need to have a private talk. She is an old dear friend and we haven't seen each other for a long time. Now run along back to the monastery and tell Master Liu that I may not be there for the noon sutras.-

The youths give the man a deep hug, and walk away. They know, deep inside their hearts, that whatever karma may lie between those two they will never see Uncle Pai again or hear the sweet sadness of his flute. Such was the way of the world.

As the children slip out of sight. **Ten Sword Princess** giggles, as if just witnessing a great irony, something she could not believe had just happened.

-Do they know who you really are? What you did? Do they know of all the blood in your hands, of how you trained children younger than they to be killers? How you would make them fight until their hands bled and they fell unconscious? How you used them, used us, as pawns in your attempt to take over the Alliance?-

Phantom Cloud plays a few mournful notes with his flute, and looks to the ground.

-It doesn't matter how I was. That is not who I am any...-

She doesn't even let him finish speaking. Her voice ignites with fury.

-Mei died in **Black Blood Manor**. I am not that person anymore either, and it is your fault. You were my only family, they my brothers and sisters. You were my reason to live, your cause was my cause, and you left me there to die.-

He looks at her, half apologetic but half a stern master chastising an errant student.

-Your kung fu was weak.-

She twists the pommel in her grip and the case pops open. From the sides spring nine swords, five on one side, four in the other. An empty space beckons, saved for the last blade, the one she seeks to claim right now.

-I am not weak anymore. I am the strongest of the Fell Wind Brotherhood! Their souls and their blades can attest to that. Here they are! Six Star, Nine Dog Brother, Four Flames and the rest of them, they all fell to my blades. I had my revenge, and now is your turn.-

The snow behind her explodes. Twin blades – identical in all respects, belonging to the twin brother and sister **Three Sky** and **Six Star** – flash towards Phantom Cloud. With them, the twins fought as one, and Princess' hands move in perfect unison as she closes on her foe.

“Dragon In Flight!”

The man calmly takes his reed flute to his lips, and lets a single note escape. Suddenly the air is alive with sword energy, projected through the sound by combining the formless technique known as **Deadly Music!** With his own mastery over the **Jade Spirit Sword** style, blades of pure sound shimmer in the air.

“Melody of Mournful Swords!”

The twin swords of **Ten Sword Princess** dance around her, creating a panoply of blade afterimages, flashing rainbow and scarlet like the plumage of the immortal phoenix. She leaps upwards and the attacking sonic swords shatter mercilessly in her wake, a cacophony echoing from the mountain.

“Soaring Phoenix!”

Phantom Cloud is forced to his knees, coughing and spitting black blood. Yet he is still smiling. He had hoped she had reached at least this level of power.

As soon as **Ten Sword Princess** comes within reach, she unleashes an onslaught of attacks.. The two blades seem to multiply around her as she strikes countless times in an instant.

“Blade of Infinite Strokes!”

Even if he does not hold a weapon, **Phantom Cloud** is able to parry her attacks with his bare hands. Such is his domain over all blades that he no longer needs a physical sword; he has mastered the technique known as **The Sword Heart Skill!** making his hands as steel.

Both of them close their eyes, and the world vanishes around them. They float across the snowy field, both lost in the moment, and through combat read each other souls, peering through the surface to glimpse their true power. There is no hiding or bluffing between these two heroes – for a moment, the act of combat is so similar to the act of love.

Such is the nature of the technique known as

“Iron Heart Clarity!”

They land across from each other as phantom blades vanish in the air. The Nine Sword Case stands between them; despite her best efforts **Ten Sword Princess** falls to one knee. She stays aright by shoving her blades into the ground, then vomits a gout of black blood. She could not withstand the power of the attack known as

“Streaming Dragon Blade!”

Yet **Phantom Cloud** clutches his chest at the exertion. He has spent too much internal energy. He may not have been hurt so much physically, yet seeing her again, fighting her, spilling her blood has taken its toll. If he wants to win and live, he must end this fight soon.

Is what he really wants?

She leaves the twin swords planted firmly in the snow, and releases a new blade from the case – a heavy broadsword. He immediately recognizes the sword of First Ox, the number-one lieutenant of the Fell **Wind Brotherhood**.. Close to Cloud as a son, his mighty sword was ranked the most vicious among the previous generation of **Heavenly Blades**.

Ten Sword Princess unleashes a fearful attack that sends forth a wave of snow, the internal energy turning it into hundred blades of ice, lashing at **Phantom Cloud**.

“Scything Moonlight Cut!”

He knows that even with his strong internal energy, he cannot defeat all the Nine Blades of the Fell Wind. He needs to call forth his faithful companion, sleeping these two years. It surely hungers for blood. He had hoped never to see it again, yet could not fairly say he did not miss it.

“Submissive Steel!”

The sleeper has awoken! It burns a path from the snowy depths where it slept for so long, erupting in an explosion of rock and snow that nearly blinds **Ten Sword Princess**. It flies to its master's hand like a faithful hawk, the crimson blade known as

“RED SLAYER!”

It feels like an extension of his hand, like old lovers reunited. They know each other perfectly and fight better in conjunction. The sword sweeps around **Phantom Cloud**, scarlet patterns tracing delicate mandalas in the snow, burning draconic Chi breaking away the storm of icy blades.

“Tenfold Steel Guard! “

She was expecting this moment with almost uncontainable anticipation. Since she started her path of revenge, this is what she has been looking for. She knows how powerful he was with Red Slayer in his hands, and she knows how hard it will be to beat him. This makes her happy, as it means he finally saw her as an equal.

Ten Sword Princess uses the power of the huge sword in her hand to propel the case skywards, releasing all of the blades at once. They will move as one on her final attack, and she will teach her old master what she had learned.

Hopefully, it will impress him.

Once again time seems to stand still. With a single turn of her wrist the blades come under her sway, controlled by her internal power. His eyes are full of disbelief but also immense joy: not only is he fighting against a swordswoman that could finally match his kung fu, but it was her. It had to be her and none other.

Time unfroze and the blades attack in a rain of fury across the field.

“**Storm of Swords!**”

Whatever the outcome, destiny has been fulfilled. Once, not so long ago, he fought for power, for control. He tried to make the world bow down to his will. Since then he had learned to let go, to live in the moment and appreciate the beauty of the present, of pleasure or pain, happiness or sadness.

Now she, his beloved one, his favorite one, has come this far and grown so strong. He could not disappoint her.

-The supreme sword and the supreme warrior are no longer separate beings. Just as the sword has followed the guidance of your heart, so does your heart now follow the guidance of the sword. Harmonious and natural, your power becomes all-encompassing!-

Such had been the words of the ancestor of the *Sword Eccentrics*, the first *Sword Spirit*. Such was the essence of the ultimate technique, he shall become as a pure *Sword God*!

“**Sword Mindset!**”

....

Amidst the remains of the log cabin, ashes and splinters and melted snow, lies Phantom Cloud. Surrounding him are Ten Glorious Blades, **Red Slayer right** in front of him. He has been cut a thousand times, and he falls to his knees. A crimson mist sprays from his wounds, red color across Red Slayer’s mandalas, yet he smiles.

-Take care of **Red Slayer**, take care of all of our **Ten Swords**, you owe us that much. And don’t ever let the grime of the world, greed and ambition, sully the purity of your *Heart of Sword*! -

The man once known across the Wulin as *Phantom Cloud* passes away from this world. She knows he was a devil, he caused countless deaths. He broke her heart and destroyed her life. He was the one let her to die as if she was nothing. Yet as the sun rises above the snowy peaks of Dreaming Breeze Mountain, Ten Sword Princess falls to her knees and weeps.



CHI

Chi is a vital concept in the Wulin. It is energy or life-force. With every breath taken, Chi is stored within the body, flowing throughout the organic systems and transforming them. It makes growth and good health possible. To a martial artist, Chi affects much more than vitality. When properly strengthened and wielded, Chi can allow fantastic feats that appear superhuman, even supernatural, but these feats are the result of great effort and human skill. They are an expression of the power of chi.

These rules provide a structure for people who can consciously harness their own inner energy. Although everybody has chi, not everybody can wield it. Just as there are no special rules for having bones or skin, these rules aren't intended for normal people; they have life force, but can't do anything unusual with it.

Chi comes in points, which are expended to activate certain abilities - usually Internal Kung Fu techniques. More powerful techniques cost more Chi to use, so be careful so that the kung fu you use doesn't deplete your reserves faster than you can regenerate them

CHI REGENERATION

Chi is a renewable resource and constantly regenerates. This is called Breathing; when regeneration is modified, it is called a Breath bonus or penalty

At the end of every round of combat, you regain one point of Chi per Rank attained, i.e., one point at 5th Rank, two points at 4th Rank, three points at 3rd Rank, etc. Special effects can alter this amount somewhat, as explained in the Chi Conditions section.

Focus on Breath

You can take an action called *Focus on Breath* to breathe more Chi at the end of the round. This represents fostering a state of wholesomeness that expands and nurtures your internal energies. This is a Minor Action on your Initiative roll modified by your *Archetype Skill*. If your check is Moderate (20) you breathe one extra Chi at the end of the round, if it's Memorable (40) you breathe two extra chi, and if it's Legendary (80) you breathe three. You can only Focus on your Breath for normal chi, not any other special types you might have cultivated.

As their repertoires of techniques grow, many fighters come to appreciate the value of being conscious of their breath. It isn't always easy in a pitched battle, but it can save their lives!

TYPES OF CHI

Normal Chi is a blend of the five elements. It is possible to purify one element out of the whole to gain a new type of Chi in addition to the regular type. There is also Corrupt and Enlightened chi, which stem from a specific lifestyle and unorthodox moral



codes. You don't start out with any of these special types of chi; they must be specifically cultivated. For rules on doing so, see the Character Advancement section (pg. 24).

Elemental Chi can be spent like normal chi, but counts double when paying for techniques that are associated with that element. For example, if a Fire Sutra technique costs 4 Chi to use, then you can do so with 4 normal chi, 2 Fire chi, or 1 Fire Chi and 2 normal chi. You can't use elemental Chi to pay for techniques that belong to a technique opposing or opposed by it, so Fire Chi can't pay for Metal or Water techniques.

Corrupt Chi counts double for the purposes of so-called Corrupt techniques, and also counts as all five elements. That same Fire Sutra technique could also be fueled by 1 Fire and 1 Corrupt Chi. Corrupt Chi can't be spent on Enlightened techniques.

Enlightened Chi counts double for all purposes, even for techniques that don't have any elemental association. Enlightened Chi can't be spent on corrupt techniques.

Unlike normal chi, these special types are essentially a form of Chi condition, an imbalance within yourself that gives you extra energy... but at a cost.

Examples of these imbalances will be presented further in this chapter after the concept of **Chi Conditions** is explained.

Chi Transfer

You can transfer Chi to a willing subject. Outside of combat, you can donate from your own reserves of Chi to someone else by touch. This is helpful if the recipient's breath is impaired

due to injury or other harm. You can only donate a specialized Chi if the recipient has a pool of that Chi type - e.g., you can only donate Water Chi to someone if the target has a Water Chi pool. In addition, you can't give somebody more points than they can hold within their reserves.

The rules for donating Chi during combat are a little more complex. You must make a Wave with the same skill you use to Focus on Breath. You and the target must keep in contact until the Wave finishes, which might pose problems with certain defenses or actions. The Sage should keep this restrictive immobility in mind when determining modifiers or whether anyone's style laughs at or fears its opposition. If the Wave successfully completes, you can donate one point of Chi per Rank achieved (two points at 4th Rank, three points at 3rd, etc).

Chi Aura

People who can wield their Chi can draw on their reserves of inner power to fortify themselves against harm and imbalance; this is called Chi Aura.

Chi Threshold

Your maximum sum of all Chi types is your *Chi threshold* - e.g., if you can hold a max 11 Normal Chi and 3 Fire Chi, your Chi Threshold is 11+3, or 14. This abstract value represents your general physical, mental, spiritual and even social well being, and determines how hard it is to injure or unsettle you with sword or sorcery.

The mechanics of Chi Aura and Chi Threshold are covered in the **Rippling Section** (pg. 183) of the combat chapter.



CHI CONDITIONS

A Chi Condition is a fundamental imbalance in an individual, a situation, or in Destiny itself. They're potentially harmful, but they can bring significant advantage! A completely healthy person is in balance with herself and the Natural Way; she has no Chi Conditions. However, when her system is unbalanced physically, psychologically, or spiritually, she develops a Condition that exerts influence over her!

Whether they're a sickness, a blessing, a heart swayed by powerful emotions, an inspiration to do good, or the inherent nature of a monstrous being, all Chi Conditions occupy the same basic framework. They are **Hyperactivities** or **Weaknesses**, i.e., **conditional bonuses or penalties**:

Hyperactivity – “If you do this thing you get (carrot X)”

Weakness – “If you do not do this thing, you get (stick X)”.

Detecting and exploit Chi Conditions is the domain of the **Secret Arts**.

Chi conditions should always be *conditional* – “stop acting completely or get a -10 penalty” is just a penalty. Weaknesses aren't meant to be a wet blanket that stops you from accomplishing anything! Rather, it should force you to act in entertaining ways to work around the penalty. This is the true nature of the Arts – to influence action, whether it is to discourage boring actions with the stick of a Weakness or reward interesting ones with the carrot of a Hyperactivity. This does not mean that they won't be a great inconvenience for your character, but the favorable option should very seldom be “stop acting completely.”

You can have multiple Chi conditions at once, but *their effects don't stack*. If one condition gives you a +2 Chi Breath bonus and another condition gives a +1 Chi Breath bonus, then you only get two extra Chi every round, not three. That doesn't mean you can ignore Chi conditions whose effects currently don't apply to you, however. It's still possible that the stronger condition will be lifted first, or perhaps you'll simply fail to meet the condition that empowers it. Keep careful track of your conditions, even if they appear meaningless right now. You never know what will happen next!

The Strength of a Condition

Chi Conditions come in three different strengths:

A Trivial Condition can be safely ignored – its effects range from the purely cosmetic to the easily overcome. It can, however, be manipulated by odd circumstance or creative Secret Artists inclined to meddle. (*Examples: sniffles, a slight melancholy, or a feeling of bad omen.*)

It has no immediate mechanical effect.

A Minor Condition gives a palpable effect and might tip the scales one way or the other, but its effect can usually be negated by circumstantial modifiers or hard work. (Examples:

feeling sick as a dog, a sorrow that touches everything you experience, or bad luck in the worst possible situation.)

Common effects are a -5 Action Penalty, or a -1 Breath Penalty.

A Major condition is as big as it gets – it can help or hinder immensely, and be very hard to affect, an immense boon or a horrible burden. (*Examples: being bedridden and feverish, soul-crushing despair, a bad luck curse that seems to thwart your every effort*)

Common effects are a -10 Action penalty or a -2 Breath Penalty.

So, Do Conditions Matter?

Well, yes.

As mentioned before regarding influence, Chi Conditions cannot force you to act a certain way. You can work around most of them if you describe your action in a way that's compatible with the requirements of the condition. For example, if you're suffering from a Major Injury Condition (Severed Leg), you're going to have trouble Covering Ground by yourself. However, if combat is taking place in a crowded market with panicking crowds, you might posit the existence of a stampeding mule which you can grab and then tag along with to try to reach a foe, allowing you to negate the movement penalty. Of course, if you want to suddenly run another way, it's a little unreasonable to assume there's a second mule that just so happens to be going your way... At times like this, getting around the condition simply *will not work* – if you absolutely want to cover ground, you better suck up those penalties!

On the other hand, tactically applied Weaknesses can be conceptualized so that they work to your advantage whether your enemy goes along with the condition or just accepts the penalties. If you manage to use some stealthy Medicine work to make your greatest rival in court **Drunk** at the Emperor's celebration party, he's in a genuine bind. Acting out his Weakness and being drunk and impulsive could probably get him killed, or even worse, humiliated and ousted from the court! If someone accepts that they're drunk and integrates that in to their action descriptions, they're *still drunk*, and that can get them in trouble!

This is how you navigate people into situations where every plausible action guarantees a favorable outcome (for you)! It is also a good argument for getting to know other characters and learning what they will find acceptable... the better to play to their weaknesses.

Chi Deviations

Cultivating an exotic Chi, like Fire Chi or Enlightened Chi, creates an imbalance in you - a Chi Condition. Your ability to recover that Chi is contingent on you fulfilling the requirements of that Condition! These conditions are either behaviors, or mutations.

If your exotic Chi requires a specific behavior, then you can't regenerate that exotic Chi if you fail to uphold it until you properly satisfy the Condition again. These behaviors are always unorthodox and strange; they are caused by internal imbalance, so they're unusual, rarely socially acceptable, and make it hard to keep a low profile.

Mutations are much simpler: they are always active, so you always regenerate your exotic Chi. However, like behaviors, they are clearly unnatural and you can't hide them. Such physical oddities are commonplace in the Jiang Hu, so most of your peers won't much care, but common people aren't so enlightened - it's always embarrassing when some peasant mistakes you for an evil spirit - and they make you stand out in a crowd. Mutations can cause increased difficulties for certain tasks or force you to take them into account when describing your actions; for example, if you lost one of your eyes due to a mutation, certain Awareness checks might be harder.

Deviations intensify as the corresponding exotic Chi increases. With a single point, it can be noticed. With three points, people might question your humanity. With five, the change dominates how the character interacts with the world.

Example: The Golden Dervish King has special Fire Chi. When he had just a single point, his skin darkened and his hair reddened, and his breath smelled of ashes. With a few more points, his hair rose and waved like flickering flames in slow-motion, and trickles of smoke occasionally puffed from his mouth when he yelled in anger. Now, with five Fire Chi, he needs to search out special clothing that won't smolder away as he wears it, and drops of rain instantly boil and evaporate as soon as they touch him.

Below are some example Chi Deviations. The Sage and player can work together to invent new ones, particularly if the player has some cool idea that adds more flavor to her character.

Wood deviations center on growth, strength, sensuality, and idealism.

- You look more animalistic, with fangs, claws, inhuman eyes, and an abundance of hair.
- You develop benign but unsightly tumors that distort your facial features and riddle your body.
- Your behavior must include frequent sexual intercourse. (This is not an excuse to make the other players uncomfortable. Check with the rest of the group before including such a mature subject.)
- Your behavior can't be pessimistic. The glass is always half full, everybody deserves a second chance, and the most dire odds are still worth a try. Even the most hopeless situations don't scare you off.

Fire deviations center on heat, creativity, and impulsiveness.

- You have bright red hair and skin dark as coal. Your breath smells like ashes and there's always a faint scent of smoke around you.
- Your body generates excessive amounts of warmth. You need to regularly and drastically cool yourself down to preserve your breath; otherwise, your body will stop generating Fire Chi to prevent itself from burning up!
- Your behavior dictates that you can't stagnate. You must always stay on the move, try new things, and change your style of hair and clothes frequently. You'll probably never marry or have a peaceful life.
- Your behavior must strive towards innovation and challenging traditions. You are considered exceptionally liberal and might be branded a rebel by the governments you challenge.

Earth deviations center on stability, balance, obsession and patience.

- You have a grey, hairless body with coarse skin.
- Your behavior dictates that you must always remain impartial. Your allegiance is won slowly and lost quickly.
- Your behavior forces you to focus on only one thing at a time. Whatever your current goal or project is, it is all you have eyes for... until something else comes along, which is when you forget all about it.
- Your behavior dictates that you most thoroughly contemplate all plans, get all points of view and all the facts. While your decisions are well informed, it prevents you from acting as quickly as others would like.

Metal deviations center on rigidity, control and ambition.

- Your body becomes partially torpid. Your legs might not bend properly anymore, forcing you to scuttle sideways like a crab, or one hand might curl up in a gnarled claw, limiting what you can hold.
- Your body no longer performs all vital functions by itself. Several times daily, you must manipulate your own pressure points to keep your heartbeat stable and your metabolism going. If you fail to do so your body stops generating Metal Chi to remove the blockage that prevents it from remaining alive on its own.
- Your behavior dictates an inordinate greed. Money, power and rare treasures - you want them all. Simply coveting such things is not enough to satisfy this deviation. You have to scheme and strive to actually acquire the riches you so rightly deserve.
- Your behavior forces you to remain traditional, orthodox and predictable. You should study the writings of great teachers and follow their advice at all times. You shouldn't think for yourself or look kindly upon novelties.

Water deviations center on cold, wisdom and flexibility.

- Your body grows exceptionally cold. You need to regularly heat yourself up by drinking warm blood straight out of living creatures, or your body will stop generating Water Chi to prevent itself from dying.



- You have blue or green skin, and similar hair. Your eyes are black like a shark's, and you always thirst for something to drink.
- Your behavior dictates that you are easily swayed and changed, fluid like water. You should adhere to any passion and influence Chi conditions you pick up, meaning you are easily convinced by others.
- Your behavior dictates you must live like a hermit, removed from worldly concerns.

Corrupt deviations are the most bizarre and frightful. They mark you as clearly unwholesome.

- Your body has a freakish mutation. You might grow a third eye on your forehead, or your mouth might grow with several rows of teeth without molars.
- Your behavior dictates that you engage in all manner of vice, like abusing opium and espousing openly heretical philosophies.

- Many loresheets that provide you with Corrupt Chi will specify their own unique deviations.

Enlightened deviations don't technically exist. Enlightenment isn't the default for mankind, but attaining it isn't an imbalance - it's surpassing your natural state. However, if you ever get a corrupt Deed, you lose your breath of Enlightened Chi for the rest of that scene and you lose one point of your Enlightened Chi's cultivation track, effectively stunting your own spiritual growth with your pettiness. This can't retroactively undo a point of Chi you've already obtained but you can go into 'debt', making your cultivation track go negative until you've earned the points to pay off what you should have lost before your actual growth begins again.

COMBAT

The Wulin is a world of martial arts, where feuds and rebellion simmer under every surface, where ambition drives men to greatness and ruin, where one's destiny is to struggle and yearn for peaceful days. Combat is where the differences between people become most apparent. Two warriors who could have been friends are forced into a duel due to their duties to their quarrelling superiors. Lovers are torn apart by acts of vengeance – and sometimes not just figuratively. In this chapter we discuss how the purest expression of conflict works.

Combat is measured in rounds, which is roughly three seconds of real time. Within a round each fighter gets the opportunity to act and react to others.

COMBAT SUMMARY

Step 1.

At the start of each round, the combatants roll initiative. Extra sets on this roll can be used for certain Minor Actions or to start a Wave. Use of Joss should always be declared at this point

Step 2.

The first combatant declares his attack and the target, and then rolls his Lake.

Step 3.

After the roll, the combatant can use kung fu, the River, and other abilities to generate a Strike result and possibly Marvels as well. He then describes the action and announces the value for his attack and any included Marvels.

Step 4.

The defender declares her defense (usually Block or Dodge) and rolls her Lake.

Step 5.

After the roll, the defender can use kung fu, the River, and other abilities to generate one defensive result against each component of the attack. She then announces her results and describes the defense.

Step 6.

Resolve the effects of any attack that hit, as well as any other power or ability. If the attack causes a Rippling roll, do that now.

Step 7.

Resolve steps 2 through 6 for every combatant until the round is over. At the end of the round, the combatants respire Chi as determined by Rank, focus on Breath, and other modifiers.

Step 8.

At the end of the fight, each combatant suffers one final Rippling roll to determine if they acquire any additional long-term effects from the fight.

COMBAT STATISTICS

The External Kung Fu style you use has several statistics and qualities. These are the cornerstones of combat to be explained first, as well as the various actions and uses for them. Once they have been reviewed, you'll have a basic understanding of combat.

Speed

This measures your swiftness and decisiveness. A style with a high Speed bonus is quick and aggressive while one with a lower Speed bonus is likely to be passive, preferring to let others make the first move. Your Speed score is used to determine your *initiative*.

Footwork

This represents is your mobility and lightness. It is used for two distinct types of action. First is to **Cover Ground**. When you wish to move from one location to the other, your Footwork will make it possible. Covering Ground is a Wave on the initiative roll. More details about this action can be found in the section on **Waves** later on this chapter

The other action is **Dodge**, which is a type of defense. Attacks and defenses are explained in more detail later in this chapter.

Block

Yet dodging is not always the best choice. By Blocking the attack, such as by battering the weapon aside with your own, kicking a table into your opponent, or in any other way interfering with the execution of the attack, you can defend yourself handily.

Strike

This is, quite simply, the accuracy of your attacks. It can represent economy of motion, furious power, elaborate patterns, or deceptive feints.

Damage

Although it would be nice if you could instantly pulverize an enemy with a single hit, that probably won't happen (much). If your strike hits, you inflict a **Ripple**. These rules are explained a little further on. (see Ripple, pg. 183) Suffice it to say that Damage makes it more likely for your attacks to cause serious lasting harm. A high Damage bonus typically represents greater destructive force, with more focus on specialized striking points on the body or sharpness.

Toughness

Some martial art forms tighten your muscles until they are unbreakable like iron. Others sway with attacks, rolling with the blow rather than resisting it. However they accomplish it, martial arts can provide an added level of protection by not only making you harder to hit but also harder to hurt. Your Toughness bonus is instrumental in many Rippling rolls, which will be explained shortly (see *Rippling Rolls*, pg. 183).

Qualities and Descriptions

Besides your basic statistics, External Kung Fu styles also have qualities to them which serve as the basis for describing what your actions look like. Each style specifies what it's like or how it works.

It also specifies what it **"Laughs at"**, which are the things the style is specifically strong against.

The things a style **"Fears"** in contrast are those things which the style fares poorly against. You can use these things as the basis to improvise details about your style, although it also works as a generic catch-all for the various more mundane techniques the style is comprised of. Weapons also have similar descriptive qualities to them.

Whenever you make an opposed roll in combat (i.e. an attack or a defense) you're encouraged to describe what your action looks like and what you actually do. Although it's sufficient for the rules to simply state your final Strike result, it doesn't conjure up a clear mental picture. But there's no need to get overly dramatic and wax lyrical about the exact scents and sounds of the moment. Instead, you have an opportunity to exploit real tactical advantages here.

If your description plays to the strengths (what it laughs at) of your style or the qualities of your weapon, you get a +5 bonus to your check (or checks, if your single roll covers multiple actions). If your description exploits weaknesses (what it fears) inherent to your opponent's style or weapon, you also get a +5 bonus. These bonuses stack so if you exploit both, you then have a total +10 bonus!

You can use not just your own qualities to exploit weaknesses but may also freely use stunts and descriptions to claim these bonuses, subject to the approval of the Sage. Say for example you know your opponent's style is weak against being "contained" but there's nothing in your own arsenal that fits the bill. No matter! Perhaps you can force or lure your opponent into a narrow alley or a crowded marketplace. That would justify a marked disadvantage for your opponent and thus you can claim the bonus.

Using creative descriptions the **Laughs** and **Fear** labels can be applied not only to External Kung Fu Styles but to any opposed roll, and even for rolls that affect the environment, granting appropriate bonuses and penalties with the Sage approval.

If you want to determine what things your opponent's style laughs at or fears, you could take some pointers from somebody familiar with it.

But a more immediate way to study a character's fighting technique is by making a Tactics check. You can do this once per round if you're witnessing the combat, or as a minor action on the initiative roll if you're also busy fighting. On a successful roll, the Sage must reveal to you the style's description, the things the style laughs at, or the things the style fears.

The difficulty of this roll depends on the rank of the person you're analyzing.

Fifth Rank:	10
Fourth Rank:	20
Third Rank:	30
Second Rank:	40
First Rank:	60

Additionally, people may make a Stealth or Tactics check as a minor action on the initiative roll to oppose any checks meant to analyze their fighting style.

Example:

Bright Snow is locked in a duel to the death against the horribly ugly assassin known only as Centipede, who waited in ambush in her luxurious room at the inn. She has figured out that his style fears being overwhelmed, but what can she possibly do on her own? Thinking quickly, she picks up the large mirror in the corner of the room and flings it at her assailant like an oversized dart. But it's a feint! Rushing forward and slashing wildly, she fragments the mirror and scatters reflective shards in all directions. Momentarily confused, it looks to Centipede as if he's surrounded by dozens of Bright Snows!

The Wulin Sage allows her to exploit his weakness this way, granting her the +5 bonus. He also decides that Centipede would be best served by Dodging this attack, leaping out of the cloud of mirror-glass instead of trying to parry a sword that seems to wink in and out of existence all around him.

Of course, this doesn't necessarily mean Bright Snow will hit. Centipede is still allowed a defense roll and a description of his own...

INITIATIVE AND WAVES

Initiative

At the start of each round, you roll your Lake and apply your Speed bonus. The result is your *initiative* score which determines when you act in the round. Each fighter gets one turn, taken from highest to lowest initiative scores. On a tie the person with the higher roll on the dice, not counting modifiers, goes first. If there's still a tie, the Sage should determine who goes first, whether by a random die roll or a judgment call.

You may use minor actions on the initiative roll in order to accomplish several things. First of all, some actions specifically call for it; for example **Focus on Breath**. Secondly, you can use the action for a skill roll in order to obtain information. Maybe you're fighting but you suspect



there's somebody hidden nearby. In that case, you might want to try an Awareness check. And last, but by no means least, you can try to initiate a **Wave**. (See below.)

When your turn comes up you may choose to delay taking your action until a later point in time. You can then later take your action at any point, even during somebody else's turn, but you can't interrupt another's action this way. You can act before somebody else attacks or after it, but not during the attack itself. This option might be useful sometimes, such as when demanding someone's surrender. This way you can hold off attacking him until you know whether he plans to surrender or not.

Waves

Waves are special actions that influence the situation of the fight. Because they involve almost any action that a player might think of it's hard to give an exact definition. As a guideline, a Wave is any action that affects the environment or other characters without necessarily hurting them. Shaping and Covering Ground are the two most common Waves you'll probably see. (See below.) Neither of these directly harms anybody, but they do change matters for others. If you run out of reach, people can no longer attack you. If you block off a door, people can no longer walk through it.

To initiate a Wave you need to use an extra set from your initiative roll. Like any other minor action you then apply a bonus and that will result in the Wave's final score.

But although Waves are created during the initiative roll, they don't yet reach completion until your turn comes up, at which time you can first take your normal action and then resolve the Wave or vice versa, if the sequence matters. In between this time, anybody who acts before you is aware

of all present Waves and can try to Break those Waves. Breaking a Wave is a minor action on your attack roll. You don't have to complete a Wave on your turn if you no longer want to or if the circumstances have changed. For example, if you intended to break a wall but somebody else has already broken it before your turn arrived, you are under no obligation to keep smashing the rubble even further.

The Wulin Sage determines which skill bonus is used for the Wave-Breaking check and can apply further bonuses based on the description of the player. It's also possible to improvise a technique using internal kung fu, getting a +5 bonus per point of Chi spent up to a maximum of the highest level technique you know in the style you're using. The Sage must approve of the way you use your kung fu to improvise an effect – you might use lightning to start a fire, but using it to freeze a bucket of water doesn't make any sense. If this check exceeds the one made to create the Wave, it is broken and the action doesn't finish.

Example:

The assassin Centipede slipped some poison into Bright Snow's wine and she's gasping for air on the floor as he moves in to finish her off. Fortunately Wan He Bao is also present! Initiative is rolled and Wan He Bao has a total initiative of 30. He also tosses a small bottle at Bright Snow with a total result of 26 (the Sage determines that Finesse is best, trying to carefully aim a fragile bottle like that). But Centipede's initiative is 37 and he doesn't plan on letting that doctor hand her any antidote! His attack roll only has a single set of three 9s and some individual other results. Since you can only perform minor actions with sets of dice he devotes those to Breaking the Wave, using a single die to attack with. He stabs at Bao but swiftly runs past the doctor and grabs the bottle

from thin air with his Finesse skill of +10 (for a total of 49), the attack itself a feint never intended to hit. Since this is a critical success the Wulin Sage also allows him to grab the bottle rather than just knock it off course. But Centipede's joy is short-lived. The bottle feels too light. He realizes too late that it is empty and that he spent his set of three dice on this Wave-Breaking action for nothing! It was a trick!

ZONES AND COVERING GROUND

The stables beside the inn. The roof of the villa. An alley in the city. The throne room.

All these places have a distinct identity and form a different kind of backdrop in a fight. Rather than map out every square inch on the battlefield, the rules use the concept of Zones instead. A Zone is such a distinct place that separates itself from others through its own unique qualities. All combatants within a Zone are assumed to be able to attack each other in melee. They may freely run around within a zone, run over walls, do backflips, or describe movement in whatever fashion they can get away with. These descriptions are exciting and fun, but in terms of rules, they are merely flavorful descriptors. There's no check required for movement within a Zone.

If the Sage feels that a place is too large to comfortably be described as a single Zone, he may 'cut up' the location into smaller sections. The main road of a town might simply be too long, so the Sage determines that the road near the town's northern gate is one Zone, the road near the taverns another separate Zone, and so forth.

If you want to move from one Zone to another, this is called Covering Ground and all you need to do is make a Footwork check as a Wave during your initiative roll – meaning you'll need to devote a set of dice to the check – and decide which adjacent Zone you want to go to. If your check is good enough you will move from your current Zone into that one, either before or after you make your regular action – assuming your Wave doesn't get broken. It is one thing to say you walk out the door, it's quite another to actually do this when there's a crazy guy with a spear in between!

The difficulty of moving from one Zone to another depends on the obstacles and terrain you face. Most of the time, the difficulty is Trivial (10) because even in the middle of a fight it's not so hard to run over a street or field. So any set should be enough, even if you have a slight penalty of some sort. The set simply can't be used for anything else, representing the focus it takes to do many things at once, but you're very unlikely to fail. (Assuming nobody Breaks your Wave.)

But, of course, the Wulin Sage can assign a higher difficulty. The following chart contains examples on what could make traveling more difficult;

- **Moderate (20):** Light obstructions, loose sand, uneven terrain. Normal people can travel here but not comfortably.
- **Hard (30):** Heavy obstructions, walls, dense growth, water. Normal people can travel here, but not quick enough to

be worth measuring in the scale of the combat system. To those with cultivated Chi though, these obstacles are not so great. Rather than climb or swim they can run over sheer walls and glide over the water!

- **Memorable (40):** or higher: Very distant places or obstacles that are actively dangerous. Moving past deathtraps with spinning blades or leaping from boulder to boulder in an avalanche.

The difficulty can be relative from one Zone to another. It's harder to jump up to the roof than it is to jump down from it!

Besides helping you determine where everything is in relation to each other, Zones can have special rules in place of their own. For example, a burning building might be such an inferno that anybody inside is in serious danger, suffering frequent Ripples (depending on how fierce the fire is).

Lightfoot

All people with cultivated Chi are able to move with grace and precision, soaring through the sky in great leaps and stepping over the water's surface. Whenever you make a Covering Ground check you may spend Chi, with each point giving you a +5 bonus. The maximum amount of Chi you can spend in this manner is equal to your River size.

Example 1:

Centipede rolls initiative and plans to flee from Wan He Bao. He rolls his Lake and uses one set for his Footwork skill to Cover Ground with a final result of 30, while his initiative score itself is 40. The doctor would love to be able to stop him from getting away, but his initiative is only 39. And so the Wave completes before she has any chance of stopping it. Centipede chooses to attack him first with a boot to the face, using him as something to kick off from as he soars out the window.

Shaping

You directly alter the battlefield itself, somehow changing whatever is there.

Shaping actions are made during the initiative roll using an extra set, working as a Wave. Your roll is not defended against by any opponent but possibly they can possibly break your Wave before it finishes. Also, depending on the action you're trying the Sage may impose a certain difficulty.

One of the most basic functions of Shaping Marvels is altering how difficult it is to cover ground from one zone to another. If the Shaping succeeds then the final result becomes the new difficulty of covering ground, replacing the old one if it was lower. The opposite can also happen, removing a created obstruction by exceeding the result of a previous Shaping Marvel and restoring the difficulty to its former level.

Besides this use there are many other possibilities. The Sage can determine what options you have and what results there are. Some he might have planned out ahead as a centerpiece of a particular fight while others you think of



on the fly. You might cut down bamboo to limit the available hiding spaces around you, you might try to break into a vault even as you fight off the guards, sink a ship, or anything else you might want!

Many other shaping actions are of a much less spectacular nature. Because it takes some focus to do things in the middle of a fight, shaping actions can also be things like catching a falling vase, opening a window, breaking a statue, and so on.

Example 1:

Ghost Li is running for his life because a very angry Yin Ice Minister is chasing him through his mansion. Fortunately he spots some jars of oil and a lit candle nearby. Thinking quickly he starts a fire to set a corridor ablaze so that he won't be followed by the Minister and his servants. The Sage lets him use his Finesse skill to quickly manipulate these objects on the run. He also grants a bonus (fire laughs in the presence of oil!) and another one (this narrow wooden corridor would certainly fear the presence of an inferno), so that's +10 total. Ghost Li's dice were two 5s, to which he adds his Finesse of +0 (alas!) and the extra +10 for a final result of 35.

Example 2:

A Yin Ice Minister notices that some lowlife is trying to set his mansion on fire! Such an action is a Wave, which happens to have a final result of 35, a fact the Minister is aware of. Fortunately for the Minister he has a higher initiative score. As his powerful palm reaches for the culprit he scowls and makes a dismissive wave with his other hand. With his supreme knowledge of the Ice Sutra he can easily claim a +25 bonus just by spending a few points of Chi. The

fire never stood a chance against this kind of power. A blast of utmost cold instantly smothers the flames and freezes the remaining oil, while the Minister keeps chasing Li!

ATTACK ACTIONS

When your turn comes up you're allowed a single action; chances are that you're going to want to attack someone. To do so, roll your Lake and apply your Strike bonus. The result is the total against which your opponent must defend himself. You can include various effects and enhancements on your attack, such as special kung fu techniques and special Marvels (see further on in this chapter). Once you have rolled and decided on which effects you'll include, determine your final result and inform your opponent of that.

Anybody who is attacked is allowed a chance to prevent being hit. When you don't interfere with the attack directly but instead try to avoid it, you are trying to *Dodge* it. If you instead try to parry or deflect the attack you're using *Block*. Whatever the case, both work the same. Roll your Lake and apply your bonuses, as well as any extra effects like River, kung fu techniques, and so on. If your defensive result is higher than the Strike, you have successfully evaded the attack entirely.

With two types of defense available, you might wonder why you'd ever choose one over the other. The answer is that while both options are valid in theory, in practice one is often preferable over the other. If you describe your attacks, the Wulin Sage will decide whether Blocking or Dodging would work best based on the description. The target is still allowed



to use the disadvantageous defense but he'll suffer a -5 penalty for doing so. For instance, say a spear comes at you with snake-like movements. You realize that if you'd try to parry it with your saber it would twist and shift out of the way, so your best bet is to leap backwards out of reach entirely! So in this scenario, Dodging is a better choice over Blocking. Additionally, Block is more specialized than Footwork, but the former isn't penalized by wearing heavy armor.

If an attack hits it inflicts a **Ripple** and possibly forces a **Rippling Roll**. This will be explained later in the chapter.

Marvels

Besides simply trying to just stab or punch you, enemies will set you on fire, bruise your organs, paralyze nerves, and fling you into the dirt. The way of kung fu is hard!

Marvels are special minor actions you can include on your rolls. They exist to allow characters to try any trick or improvised tactic they reasonably could pull off. This system presents several default options for Marvels, but these are *outcomes*, not methods. It is up to the players of the game to determine how the characters attempt to accomplish these things. Whether you try to force somebody back with brute strength or by cleverly using a dozen slashes that herd your opponent backwards, it is called a Knockback Marvel.

In order to attempt a Marvel you need two things.

First, just like with any other minor action, you need a set of dice to form the basis of the Marvel. Depending on what type of Marvel you attempt, this is either during the initiative roll or with the attack roll

Second you need to justify your effect. Describe what you're doing. Take into account the various facts of the situation, the comparable strengths and weaknesses of the kung fu styles involved, your available weapons and tools,

as well as any other aspect that sounds relevant. Don't just say, "My enemy now has trouble dodging." Say something like, "I pick up the snake and throw it at him, distracting him until he can uncoil himself!" or "I strike a pressure point that weakens the muscles in his legs!" Make it sound plausible, make it visceral, but most of all make it cool.

Based on your description the Wulin Sage will decide which skill bonus will function as the basic modifier for your Marvel. So, forcing somebody back with brute strength? Sounds like Might. Cleverly using your attacks to herd the opponent backwards? That would be Tactics. The Sage might also allow you to improvise a special technique by using **Internal kung fu**. Instead of using a skill bonus as your basic modifier, you get a +5 bonus for each point of Chi spent, up to a maximum amount of Chi of your highest technique level in that style.

Of course, based on your description, the Sage will also grant you certain bonuses for exploiting advantages due to **laugh** and **fear** as described previously, just like with any other opposed check.

Disorient

It can be hard to keep track of every detail at once in the middle of a fight, and it's possible for even seasoned warriors to get overwhelmed with too much going on at once. Breathing exercises, hidden lore and higher education are swiftly forgotten when the pressure builds.

Disorient Marvels are made during the attack roll, targeting the same characters as the strike itself. Your opponent can defend himself against your Disorient Marvel, blocking or dodging it just as if it were an attack. This defense is made from the same roll used to defend against the strike, the defense does not count as a type of minor action; this means you can use a single die for it instead of needing a set.

If the Disorient Marvel succeeds the target will be less effective for a while. The attacker chooses any one skill. The target then suffers a -5 penalty to all such skill checks for the remainder of the fight.

At the start of each round the defender may use a minor action on the initiative roll to make a skill check. The difficulty of this check is the total result of the Marvel that inflicted the condition. On as success the condition goes away. Exactly which skill is used depends on how you describe the efforts to restore yourself, just like with inflicting it.

Example:

Centipede's turn comes up so he rolls his Lake and gets two sets, one of 25 and one of 28. First he decides to use the 25 for his attack, to which he adds his +10 Strike bonus. He plans on running away and hiding so he tries to disorient Bright Snow, causing her Awareness to go down. He describes how he uses an improvised Heaven's Lightning technique to add some sparks and claps of thunder to his attack. He knows up to the third level of techniques in that style, so he spends three Chi at most on this. (There is an actual technique in that style that could've further increased his bonus, but unfortunately for Centipede he didn't learn that particular technique.)

The Sage grants him a basic +15 for the improvised Heaven's Lightning technique. For the sake of this example, we'll say that Centipede's attack description earns him another +5 bonus across the board, so his final results are Strike 40 and Disorient 48.

Bright Snow manages to avoid getting struck but she's dazzled by the sudden flare of lightning, getting only a 34 to defend herself with. She is now Disoriented for the rest of this fight until she can make a skill check with a result of 34 or higher.

Disrupt

You directly hinder your opponent's ability to fight. You could close off a key pressure point, weaken the grasp on his weapon, force him to change his rhythm with carefully timed attacks, disturb his footwork just as he tries to step forward, trick, feint, or otherwise prevent him from utilizing his full strength.

Disrupt Marvels are made during the attack roll, targeting the same characters as the strike itself. Your opponent can defend himself against your Disrupt Marvel, blocking or dodging it just as if it were an attack. This defense is made from the same roll used to defend against the strike, the defense does not count as a type of minor action; this means you can use a single die for it instead of needing a set.

If the Disrupt Marvel succeeds the target will be less effective for a while. The attacker chooses one of the one of the combat stats provided by the External Kung Fu the target is using such as: Speed, Footwork, Strike, Damage, Block or Toughness. The target then suffers a -5 penalty to that statistic for the remainder of the fight.

At the start of each round the defender may use a minor

action on the initiative roll to make a skill check. The difficulty of this check is the total result of the Marvel that inflicted the condition. On as success the condition goes away. Exactly which skill is used depends on how you describe the efforts to restore yourself, just like with inflicting it.

Example:

Wan He Bao has figured out how the style of a corrupt priest works and he waits for a critical moment. Just the priest rushes forward, Bao lashes out and strikes a pressure point! The priest is now in danger of numb muscles and a weakness in the knees, causing a -5 penalty to Footwork. The Sage grants Bao the use of the Medicine skill as the basis for this Marvel.

Knockback

You often do not want your enemies in certain places. You may throw them back with the force of a hurricane, cause them to stumble back a few steps with an intimidating glare, or maneuver your enemies with clever strategy without them even realizing it.

Knockback Marvels are made during the attack roll, targeting the same characters as the strike itself. Your opponent can defend himself against your Knockback Marvel, blocking or dodging it just as if it were an attack. This defense is made from the same roll used to defend against the strike, the defense does not count as a type of minor action; this means you can use a single die for it instead of needing a set.

If the Knockback Marvel succeeds the target will be forced out of the zone he's currently in and into another of your choosing. This other zone must be next to the one the target starts in and should be accessible, using the Knockback result in place of a Covering Ground roll if necessary.

Example:

Bright Snow feels like showing off and thinks it would be cool to punch a bandit so hard that he'd fly all the way up to the rooftops of a nearby high building. Taking into account the various factors at play, the Sage allows the use of the Might skill and grants her a +5 bonus due to her exploiting something that the bandit's style happens to fear. Her dice were two 0s and her Might is +5, so in total she's got 30. The bandit only has 29 Block so he up he goes... but the Sage also determines that the building is so high that it would take a Memorable (40) result to get up there!

Frowning, Bright Snow watches as the bandit clearly won't make it all the way up. The Sage grins and offers her a point of corrupt Joss if she's willing to accept Interesting Times. Snow shrugs because the bandit was pretty much defeated anyway so she'll take the Joss. The bandit crashes through a window, disappearing somewhere into the building's interior, possibly escaping, possibly making a nuisance of himself in there. Bright Snow sighs. She isn't looking forward to explaining to that building's owner how a bandit suddenly showed up in there...

Some attacks actually consist of multiple components that you need to defend yourself against, most commonly in the form of Marvels. It might seem odd at first glance that an attack can fail to hit you but somehow still harm you in some other way. How do you reconcile the ideas that you were missed and yet also hit?

The key lies in description and realizing that a single roll doesn't necessarily represent a single swing. One single attack roll can consist of several moves or even a few seconds of lightning-quick activity. And it can also respond to the actions of the defender. Your sword can be blocked but you might kick your opponent in the gut afterwards. This is a perfectly acceptable description for an attack that was almost entirely blocked but still surpassed the defense roll by a few points, hitting the defender without slicing him open.

So how does this apply to attacks with multiple components?

Let's say you're attacked by a vile cultist leader who practices a rending claw-form kung fu. Dark vapors swirl around his hands and you realize that his nails exude a deadly poison. So in this example we have an attack that consists of two components: the strike itself and a poison effect. There are now four possible outcomes.

1. Both components hit.

Despite your best efforts the claw rends over your chest, ripping your shirt and drawing blood. You can feel the deadly venom burning through your blood stream...

2. Both components miss.

The cultist swings his claws this way and that but he hites nothing but empty air.

3. The strike misses, the poison hits.

The deadly claw narrowly grazes your arm, leaving only a tiny scratch. Had this been any other attack you would have laughed it off as harmless, but to your horror you see the flesh around the scratch darken to a bruised purple. This is no laughing matter!

4. The strike hits, the poison misses.

The cultist leaps at you with his claw extended. You grab his elbow and prevent his venomous nails from reaching you. But he bends his arm and continues his movement, hitting you in the jaw with his elbow.

All four scenarios are plausible outcomes. In fact, if you look at movies where this kind of fight occurs, you can probably spot each of them actually happening at some point! Keep thinking creatively and you can use the combat system to create some pretty cool descriptions of your own.

Other

The Marvels detailed above are the most commonly used options but you're free to work out other improvised actions with your Sage. As a general guideline, if a Marvel doesn't directly affect an enemy it's a Wave (see below). If it does affect an enemy directly it's a minor action on the attack roll, thus potentially allowing your target the benefit of a defense roll.

Don't underestimate the potential of Marvels. If you're involved in a fight over a special scroll or treasure, using Marvels to grab and steal the item from each other's grasp might be far more important than hurting your opponents.

Area Attacks

Some attacks cover a great area, send forth a shockwave, or are so quick and powerful that they seem to occur everywhere at once. Such Area Attacks affect everyone within the same zone. Both the Strike and any secondary effects on it apply to every target, who must each make their own individual defenses against it. Some targets might escape entirely unharmed, while others are shredded to ribbons! Area attacks are also more effective against units of minions, inflicting an extra Ripple per unit.

Area attacks usually can't exclude anyone, so be careful when using them around friends. If you Flood one die from the River, you may make your Area attack selective, allowing you to pick specific people who won't be affected by it.

Reply

Usually if a defense succeeds it means only that the attack failed, nothing more. But certain special techniques allow you to sometimes Reply, which is a sort of counter-attack. You can only Reply against people within the same zone as you – even if your weapon would allow you to reach further, the split-second precision required can't cover that kind of distance. A Reply inflicts a single Ripple against the attacker. You can Reply only once against any given attack.

Secondary Strikes

When an attack is so quick or effective that it lashes one opponent several times in the blink of an eye, it is represented with a Secondary Strike. You may include another attack as a Minor Action against the same opponent. This second attack uses the same basic statistics as the primary, but any internal kung fu techniques used are not copied over. You may, however, use such techniques a second time to have them apply to the secondary strike as well. (This is an exception to the normal rule that any given technique can only be used once per round.)

The target uses a single roll to defend against all components of the attack, requiring a result against the main Strike, the Secondary Strike, and any Marvels that might be included. However, the Secondary Strike is not considered a Marvel, and so the defender can use a single die to generate a defensive result without needing a set.

Energy Attacks

Some attacks have more to them than just slicing and crushing; they allow you to wield your Chi in such a way as to generate power which can harm your opponents. There are four types of power: Burn, Freeze, Shock and Poison. If an attack includes an effect of the appropriate type, you should treat it as a Secondary Strike that is best defended against with Dodge. You might be able to block a sword, but it's much harder to block a flame or a blast of biting cold. Your regular Strike bonuses from kung fu and weapons don't apply to this special attack, but it does get its own special bonus by the technique that made it possible to use. Remember that you don't need a set of dice to defend; a single die is also acceptable, though you'll probably want use a set if you can.

With Sage permission and if circumstances warrant it, you can accomplish these effects without a special technique. You might pour venom over a sword to Poison enemies, or if you're near a fire, you might Burn people by kicking them into it. The strike bonus is usually +0 in these cases, or +5 if the venom is particularly potent or the fire a true inferno, but rarely higher; you need specialized kung fu techniques for that level of lethality. For a +10 Burn effect, you'd need magma!

Just like a normal Secondary Strike this energy can cause damage. Just like with Strike, the effect has its own Damage bonus that doesn't use your kung fu or weapon. If you improvised a way to gain access to the effect then the Damage bonus is +0, or +5 in extreme cases.

When you cause a Rippling roll with an energy effect, the target doesn't add his Toughness bonus to Chi Aura, nor can he add his Armor bonus to his Chi Threshold. You can be clad in iron and toughened muscles, but lightning will sear a path straight through them! Fortunately, the total damage bonus of such attacks tend to be lower than the damage bonus of regular swords and fists, but heavily armored fighters will be at a disadvantage, as one of their main strengths is useless.

Energy attacks can only inflame the Injury Condition they caused, and can't be inflamed by other attack types. This exclusivity also applies between the energy types; Burn attacks can only inflame Burn injuries, Shock attacks can only inflame Shock injuries, etc.

Finally, the wound conditions caused by energy attacks have special effects above and beyond the regular effect that Injury Conditions have.

Burn attacks consume flesh and crack bones. They are especially devastating! Burn attacks always cause an action penalty, but the penalty doesn't only apply to Lake rolls; it applies to Toughness as well.

Shock attacks pierce right into the core of the body and cause the internal balances to be upset. Muscles clench up, nerves are frayed, and thoughts are put in disarray! Shock attacks always cause an action penalty, but the penalty is 5 points higher than normal: i.e., Trivial wound conditions caused by lightning impose a -5 action penalty, Minor conditions

impose a -10 action penalty, and Major conditions impose a -15 action penalty.

Freeze attacks diminish your life force directly, making limbs go numb and eventually brittle and necrotic from a lack of healthy warmth. Freezing is a truly gruesome way to die! Freeze attacks always cause a breath penalty, but the amount of Chi points it penalizes is also the amount of River slots it closes off to you. For example, if you have a Minor Injury Condition caused by freezing and you incur the penalty, you get back 1 Chi less that round, but also one of your River slots can no longer be floated into or be used for flowing or flooding. The Frozen person may choose which slot, but if there's a die stored there it's automatically washed away.

Marvels can add a lot of tactical depth and cool visuals to your fight. However it can also be daunting to have to think of a new cool description with every attack you make.

Make things easier on yourself by not re-inventing the wheel each time you roll. Come up with a few standard combinations that you'll often be using. Then you'll have something to fall back on and it also lends more flavor to your character.

For example, let's say your highest skill is Inspire and you really favor the Disrupt Marvel to penalize your opponent's Speed. Rather than describe at great length how you hinder your opponent every single time over and over, you could invent your own "*Monkey Poses Riddles*" maneuver. This isn't a true technique in the sense of the game's mechanics but convenient shorthand of saying that you're acting in an odd and distracting manner that startles your opponent.

This is a lot quicker and can be very rewarding. At some point everybody will know that "*Monkey Poses Riddles*" actually means that you're using a Disrupt Marvel based on the Inspire skill. When that moment comes it's a sign that your character became a memorable person to the group.

These personal maneuvers are just a way of helping you describe your fighting style and lending some consistency. They're a package of options you already had, so there's no cost or limit to obtaining these personal maneuvers; you just think of a cool name and think of what it includes. This can be Marvels, weapons and of course real techniques. You can even build variations, like "*Monkey Challenges the Buddha*" if you include a technique that improves your Strike, or "*All the World is Illusion*" if you use a technique that lets you use you maneuver as an Area Attack.

Poison attacks make the blood curdle and go black. They rot the body from inside and choke away its health. Poison attacks always cause a breath penalty but the penalty is one Chi more than normal. That is, Trivial wound conditions caused by poison already impose a -1 breath penalty, Minor conditions a -2 and Major conditions a -3 breath penalty. (Not all toxins use this energy attack. These rules are meant to handle the most common types of poison which cause immediate harm, but some poisons have long-lasting and esoteric effects. In such cases, you're better off using a Medical Chi Condition.)

RIPPLES

A swordsman achieves victory, but at a price. He bruised three ribs, lost a lot of blood, and almost lost his eye during the fight. Now that the rush of battle fades, shock sets in.

An assassin can't stop thinking of her latest victim. His face haunts her dreams, and she remembers how her hands trembled as she took his life. Only now, far too late, does she realize that she has fallen in love.

A defeated criminal vows to give up his violent ways and become a monk, forever toiling to make amends for his misdeeds.

Conflicts have repercussions. Beyond the immediate risk to life and limb, they can change lives and reveal inner turmoil. Few people can kill and not feel a thing. Whether it is displayed through guilt, acceptance, or glee, violence leaves

marks. The *Ripples* system is an abstract way of measuring the risks and consequences of a fight. Generally speaking, the longer and more dangerous the fight is, the more significant the long-term effects will be. (In a nutshell, Ripples apply undesirable Chi conditions to the victim. You may also want to read up on those; see *Chi Conditions*, pg. 171.)

All attacks (and some Secret Art techniques) that hit will inflict one or more Ripples. This is not a tangible thing, but a mechanical representation of being pressured by the opposition. Most successful attacks don't immediately decapitate or skewer you, but they still put you in danger and batter you around. They leave Ripples behind, even if they don't cause obvious trauma. That punch might not have shattered you, but that doesn't mean it was useless; the pain might distract you later on, making the difference between a narrow dodging and a narrow hit. A fierce insult might not cause you to entirely lose your cool, but it might lead to just enough loss of focus for you to make a vital mistake later. Just as ripples spread in a pond long after the stone has been cast, the consequences of hostile action are not always immediately apparent, nor do they always result in quite what you had thought.

At the discretion of the Wulin Sage, certain improvised Marvels or Waves can inflict Ripples as well. Normally they don't, so use this cautiously, but, for example, if Ghost Li set a corridor on fire with people still in it, they might be asked to make a Dodge roll to avoid suffering Ripples from heat and smoke.



Depending on how well the attacker rolled, the following happens:

Attacker succeeds by...	Result
0 to 9	1 Ripple
10 to 19	1 Ripple and an immediate Rippling roll.
20 to 39	2 Ripples and an immediate Rippling roll.
40 to 79	3 Ripples and an immediate Rippling roll.
80 or more	4 Ripples and an immediate Rippling roll.

Rippling Rolls

The defender faces a Rippling roll if the Attacker succeeds by 10 or more. Roll an amount of dice equal to the total amount of Ripples present on the victim and apply any relevant bonus. This doesn't consume the Ripples; they are only compounded by new unfortunate events.

The victim spend Chi to protect himself with Chi Aura, i.e., their inner power gathered to fortify the user. They roll one die per point of Chi spent, up to the maximum allowed by their Rank. The result of the Chi aura roll is subtracted directly from the result of the Rippling roll. Note: neither the aggressor nor the victim can use the River with, or apply Joss to, these rolls!

- If the remainder is zero or less, nothing happens; the attack is ineffective.
- If the remainder is more than zero but less than the Chi Threshold of the target, a Trivial Chi Condition is inflicted.
- If the remainder amount is equal to or greater than the Chi Threshold, a Minor Chi Condition is inflicted.
- If the remaining amount is equal to or greater than double the Chi Threshold, a Major Chi Condition is inflicted.
- Finally, if the remaining amount is equal to or greater than triple the Threshold, the character gets Taken Out. Whether he is dead, unconscious, or something stranger depends on the description of the attack. Nevertheless, a Taken Out condition can normally only be caused by Physical attacks or techniques that specifically allow it under their description.

Remember that the victim's Chi threshold is equal to their maximum Chi points, not the amount of Chi they currently have.

The attacker chooses the details of the condition within the limits set by the event that caused the Rippling roll, as defined by the Wulin Sage. The Recovery of the condition is equal to the final result of the Ripple roll after subtracting Chi Aura. The Interval is one day, and the Duration is 1. Most of the time, Rippling rolls are caused by physical attacks, so their results come in the form of injuries. However, injuries are not the only type of conditions that can be inflicted this way, as explained on pg. 185.

It should be obvious that the longer you keep fighting, the more Ripples you'll suffer. And the more Ripples you get, the more likely and more severe the consequences become. Consider retreating sometimes...

Example:

Ghost Li's Chi threshold is 11. If a Rippling roll's final result was 19, taking Chi aura into account, then he would suffer a Minor Chi condition. After all, it's more than 11 but less than 22.

Physical Attacks

Swords, fists, and maces are dangerous things. Physical attacks work as described above, but there are a few specialized rules that apply. Other types of attacks, such as those made with the Secret Arts, use the above rules but have their own special rules to take into account. These are explained in the **Secret Arts in combat**, ahead on this section

First, any Rippling roll from a physical attack adds a Damage bonus to the result. The victim, in turn, can apply his Toughness bonus to his Chi aura. In many cases these two bonuses cancel each other out, but very powerful or sturdy styles can offer an advantage to the user.

Physical attacks cause wounds, represented by special Injury Conditions. Each attack injures a body part. One slash of your sword might cut an artery in the leg, another might send blood trickling into the enemy's eyes, and a third might pierce his left lung. Each distinctive injury you can think of is its own condition. You can also Inflammate an existing Injury Condition if your result would cause a condition of the same severity, instead of creating a new one.

Physical attacks can also cause you to be Taken Out. This means you are defeated, and possibly killed or maimed – you are truly at the mercy of your enemies here. This happens if the total result of the Rippling roll is three times your Chi threshold or more, or if a Major Injury Condition is Inflamed to Taken Out by a Rippling roll from a physical attack.

Again, remember that armor adds to your Chi Threshold when determining how badly physical attacks damage you.

Example 1:

Ghost Li already has six Ripples after a few rounds of fighting with the Yin Ice Minister. The Minister attacks once more and scores a powerful hit! The hit overcomes defense by 13, inflicting one additional Ripple for a total of seven. The Minister makes a Rippling roll with 7 dice and gets a set of 26, adding a +10 Damage bonus from his kung fu for a total of 36.

Ghost Li spends two points of Chi and rolls two Chi Aura dice, but only gets a final result of 19, meaning that 17 points of damage make it through. This is more than Li's effective Chi Threshold of 16 (11 normal, +5 from armor), but less than 32, so he takes a Minor Injury Condition. The Ministers lashes out and strikes him square in the chest, so that Li sprays blood from his mouth and nose! Unless he rasps for air and keeps spitting up blood, it will interfere with his lungs, and reduce the breath that lets him nourish his chi!

Example 2:

Wang Yuan, the 'Black Sands Bandit', strikes the caravan escort with his spear. However, after Chi Aura, Wang Yuan only deals enough damage to inflict a Trivial Chi Condition - easily ignored. The bandit declares it's a small cut on the escort's thigh. Later, Wang Yuan inflicts another Trivial Chi Condition, and instead of inflicting another minor cut, he targets the leg again to Inflamm the Trivial Condition into a Minor Condition. Now the agent needs to start worrying, as he can no longer run and leap as freely without incurring penalties... Death by a Thousand Cuts!

Example Injury Conditions

These are examples of conditions caused by physical damage. Of course, you can think of others. Injuries also count as Medical Conditions (pg. 229) and can be manipulated by Doctors. You don't have to think about the condition's place on the Five-Phase Wheel unless a Doctor uses advanced medical techniques to start creating Paired Conditions, Elementally Progress the injury, etc.; if this happens unexpectedly, it is quite acceptable to decide the injury's association retroactively.

Physical attacks default to these type of conditions. This is the only type of condition that they can cause as the result of a mid-combat Rippling roll.

Injured Leg

(Action penalty)

You've suffered a leg wound; your joints and muscles are bruised, bleeding, or even severed! You limp around, gritting your teeth at the pain when you accidentally try to support yourself on your damaged limb. You're not going to be Covering Ground any time soon unless you come up with a compelling explanation for how you work around your handicap; if you want to ignore this limitation, you suffer an Action Penalty for all actions.

Crushed ribs

(Breath penalty)

Your chest hurts, it is hard to draw breath, and you cough blood. You have to make a big deal about the pain, cough a lot, and grasp at your chest as you struggle to concentrate. Unless you make a proper show of this, you suffer a penalty to your Chi Breath. You will need proper rationalizations to justify taking a Focus on Breath action without suffering the penalty.

Arm wound

(Action/Breath penalty)

Your arm has been mangled or cut; it is useless! Using two-handed weapons suddenly becomes extremely difficult, as do many other actions that require both arms to work. The arm is limp, or possibly twisted by the wound. You need to protect it from further damage by putting it in a sling or otherwise keeping it out of the way.

Bleeding

(Action/Breath penalty)

You've suffered a deep wound – maybe a strike caused internal bleeding, or the slash of an edge has opened up your arteries! You must do what you can to stifle the bleeding, and trying to keep your pulse from going up. You avoid excessive movement; you grow pale and dizzy.

Death

(Special)

The victor can always choose this result when an enemy is Taken Out; it means that the person's life ends as the victor chooses. It is common for dying people who are important enough to the story to have names and motivations to have the time to utter a few final words of zenlike wisdom, regret at what they have done of their life, acceptance of death, or just about anything appropriate to the situation at hand. When this is done, they are taken out of the game; memories may remain, but it is time to make another character.

THE SECRET ARTS IN COMBAT

A Courtier unbalances her enemy with a few well-spoken words.

The Doctor flicks his sleeve and covers the assassins in an herbal cloud that stings their eyes.

The Priest locks her fingers in a series of ritual gestures, and uses their killing intent to weave a curse.

The Secret Arts are ripe for use in combat, and their users can pull out tricks to baffle even a battle-hardened fighter. Here is how they work.

You must have the *Quick Work* technique from the appropriate Loreshet to use your Secret Art as a directly applied combat technique. You make an "attack" using the Manipulation Skill of your Art as a "Strike" bonus. For the Courtier Arts, for example, this would be Inspire. Your opponent defends, using the appropriate Resistance or Recovery Skill as a stand-in for Dodge or Block respectively.

These concepts are explained in detail in the **Secret Arts Chapter (pg. 223)**.

This is an alternative to making a physical attack, not a complement to it. To be able to do a Strike-dependent attack as well, you need some sort of technique that allows for a Secondary Attack. You are, of course, free to describe the Secret Art-based "attack" as occurring in a furious exchange of blows; that is highly genre appropriate!

A successful attack is treated just like a normal attack: it inflicts one or more Ripples and it can force an immediate Ripple roll if you get a critical success (as per pg. 184). If a mid-combat Ripple roll results in a Chi Condition, the Condition chosen must be appropriate to your Secret Art. A Courtier can choose to cause a Passion or Inspiration, for example, but he can not choose to do break his foes' arm or Curse them with bad luck, no matter how stinging an admonishment he delivers! These Ripple Effects are subject to the same type of contextual penalties from the Sage as

those caused at the end of combat; combat cannot sidestep higher Difficulties for unlikely conditions.

Additionally, the Arts cannot directly cause someone to be Taken Out unless the attacker has a specific Extraordinary Technique removing this limitation. They can deceive, complicate, and hurt, and they can make a combat nearly unbearable for someone to continue, but they cannot win the battle for you.

Using the Arts in this accelerated manner relies upon large reserves of perception, quick thinking, discipline and skill, so they cost Chi. A Secret Arts “attack” costs 1 Chi.

Secret Art	Attack Skill	Defense Skill
The Doctor's Art	Medicine	Hardiness
The Courtier's Art	Inspire	Confidence
The Warrior's Art	Tactics	Tactics
The Priest's Art	Learning	Wu Wei
Chi cost for a standard Secret Arts attack: 1		

Fear and Laughter

Unlike External Kung Fu Styles, Secret Arts do not have Fears, nor do they exactly Laugh At things. However, there is a pattern to follow that allows you to profit in the same ways for playing to your own strengths and exploiting the weaknesses of an enemy. If you know about a functioning Weakness Condition and weave it into the description of your attack (or defense!) in a way that makes sense, you get a +5 bonus to your roll. Likewise, playing to a Hyperactivity of your own can net another +5, for a possible total bonus of +10. This is not a flat bonus given for simply mentioning a Condition! You have to work it into an ongoing narrative, exploiting these Conditions to the Sage's satisfaction.

Example: Despicable Chen has learned about a Grief Passion in the Silver Fox Bandit – she blames herself for the peasants that were slaughtered by Duke Wu's assassins in retaliation for her thefts. When slyly making a reference to the Bandit's failures and the insurmountable weight of their deaths, he gains a bonus to his underhanded Courtier attacks. If Chen would also be Inspired towards petty cruelty (and let's face it, this is not altogether unlikely!) he could look at a total bonus as high as +10! Silver Fox Bandit, will you be able to strike down this loathsome villain?!

What about Predictionism?

The Scholar's Art works on a wider scale than its four siblings; it is inapplicable to the immediate and short-term use of Quick Work.

Secret Arts and Marvels

Using the Secret Arts in combat is highly compatible with the Marvels – depending on description they can be part of the same discrete narrative action (your biting words fill your enemy with doubt, causing a Disorient effect that targets his Confidence!), or separate from it (as your enemy feels the air thicken with ill intent, you kick him in the belly so that he falls down from the balcony – a Knockback!). The target defends against these Marvels as usual. It is up to the Secret Artist's player to make their description make sense – no matter how proficient an orator you are, you are unlikely to blow people off their feet with the sheer force of your voice!

The standards for a reasonable narrative can vary a lot between play groups. Assume that, as a baseline, Secret Artists in **Legends of the Wulin** do not set fire to people by making a reference to the texts of Lao Tse. That is the domain of Kung Fu! However, nothing prevents you from delivering your ominous monologue proclaiming the inevitable death of your enemy and the destruction of everything that they love while also practicing Fire Sutra forms, i.e. making an Inspire-based attack along with an Energy Attack. The latter is not narratively “attached” to your attack, but simply something that you are doing at the same time.

Examples:

Phantom Doctor uses his Secret Art of Medicine to make a dastardly attack against Raven Scholar Liu using his favorite method – nasty herbs mixed up with his tobacco! Breathing out noxious fumes that he inhaled from his pipe, he aims to paralyze her lungs! As this kind of thing is his specialty, he has also taken the time to learn the secrets of Sliding Viper Style, giving him access to Poison energy attacks. He describes using the technique along with his medical Arts as the smoke taking on a purple hue. The Sage agrees that this works fine, so narratively it is described as the same attack.

Octopus Li, Daoist outlaw extraordinaire, uses his blunt form of the Courtier's Art to rain abuse on Constable Pei as the two circle each other on a rapidly sinking boat. He also wants to use his Heaven's Lightning Style for a Shock attack. The Sage finds it unlikely that his words will be literally electrifying, so she vetoes the first description. Li's player changes this to the bearded bandit finishing his piece by thrusting his hands down in the water that they are both standing in, sending a bolt of lightning through it.

Note that in both of the cases, the characters are permitted to use their Energy Attack – they just have to adjust the description to fit its inclusion.

Secret Arts Attacks

A forbidden pressure point technique might cause you to instantly fall over with a heart attack, and a courtier might be so terrifying that people pass out with whitened hair. The techniques themselves will specify which special rules and modifiers apply.

Your Armor and Toughness bonuses don't offer any protection against these kinds of Rippling rolls.

Examples of Conditions Caused by the Courtier's Art

These are the Passions and Inspirations born through conflict; by default, they are caused by end-of-combat Rippling rolls (pg. 188) or the Courtier's Art. Next to wounds, they are probably the most common conditions to be imposed by duels; through fighting, the Wulin comes to know themselves.

Fear of Dying

(Water/Fear Passion, Action Penalty)

You've stared your own death in the eye, and flinched – you want to live! You think about all the reasons you have to stay alive. You try to find ways to escape danger. You have to heartily try to avoid all risky actions, or rationalize them as a part of your work to frantically avoid putting yourself in a life-or-death situation.

Enamored

(Fire/Joy Passion, Breath Penalty)

The battle awakens a passion inside of you – is this love? You fidget and stammer, or you simply stare dreamy-eyed; you cannot take your eyes off them! You have to spend time pondering this love and the admirable qualities of your object of desire. You might blush and stare, or become caught in emotion. You cannot possibly oppose them, except when you make it a part of your dance – exclaiming your admiration or making internal monologue about wanting to spend time with them.

Newfound respect

(Earth/Contemplation or Fire/Joy Passion, either penalty)

As so often happens within the Wulin, the clash of swords is merely the first step of a friendship, or at least lingering respect. You see new qualities in your opponent; their positive traits are now apparent. You cannot help but ponder these qualities, and how their behavior and form express them, and you spend time exclaiming this respect and admiration to them. You will have a natural inclination to hear them out and treat them respectfully. If you oppose them, you must do so with all due respect and apologies for what you are forced into.

Converted

(Any type of Principle – usually Propriety, but anything goes. Action Penalties are common.)

What better way to show off the superiority of your philosophies than through Kung Fu? Your opponent has done just that – you cannot deny the truth of their principles, although depending on the situation, you might force yourself into denial! You have to ruminate extensively on this change of heart and on the truth of their words and actions – compare them to what you previously knew to be true, and either ponder your newfound strength of conviction, or wallow in angst as you try to reconcile this with your previous beliefs.

This new principle might range from “There is strength and truth in acting according to Confucius' ideas of propriety!” to “The Buddha's words are empty and full of lies.” (As usual, the Sage will want to assign modifiers to the Ripple roll to denote how hard it would be to get a specific character to change their minds on specific philosophical stances.) You have to either act according to the philosophy, somehow rationalize how your actions express it, or simply swallow the penalty.

Examples of Conditions Caused by the Priest's Art

These conditions are about how the natural world interacts with you as a person. It reveals the forces that are influencing you to do, or not do, certain things. Sometimes, the conflict even causes them. They are by default caused by end-of-combat Rippling rolls (pg. 188) or the Priest's Art (and also manipulated by that art).

Death curse

(Wood Curse, Action Penalty)

These curses are most often uttered at the point of someone's death – or possibly when they think that they are about to die. They concern the manner in which someone will meet their final fate: “snakes will be the death of you”, “a vengeful woman will bring your death”, and so on. This Curse means that you suffer an Action Penalty when facing that type of situation! It can be hard to avoid this penalty, but it might be done by going on about how your death is assured and your fate inescapable, and generally being haunted by memories of the uttered curse in your dreams.

You are incomplete!

(Metal Curse, any penalty)

The conflict reveals something about you – there is an absence in your life, an emptiness that needs to be filled. Maybe you are unloved? Maybe you lack familial connections, or a proper philosophy to align with. In any case, you are incomplete without it! Suffer a penalty when you try to act contrary to this, or go into other conflicts while trying to ignore it. Avoid this penalty by making a huge deal out of missing that certain something, wondering where it all went wrong, and seeking out opportunities to achieve completion.

Examples of Conditions Caused by the Doctor's Art

These conditions affect your body from the inside out. They are Medical Conditions, but not injuries caused by blade or fist, so physical attacks don't usually cause them. As a rule, they are only caused by use of the Doctor's Art or the end-of-combat Rippling roll (pg. 188).

Partial paralysis

(Wood condition, action penalty)

One of your limbs is now numb and useless. Perhaps one of your body's major pressure points has been sealed off, or maybe you took damage to the nerves or spine. If it's a leg, avoid the penalty by slowly hobbling along with a cane, and not practicing any kicking attacks. If it's an arm, avoid the penalty by doing only simple tasks and holding objects that are light and small.

Organ damage

(Variable condition, breath penalty)

A life of fighting has left deep scars; it was bound to catch up with you eventually. One of your organs functions very poorly, or maybe not at all. The symptoms and way to avoid the penalty depend on which specific organ is affected. You are no doubt weakened and in pain, but you might grow very cold or warm, experience disorientation or a discoloration of the eyes or skin.

ENDING THE FIGHT

At the end of the fight, everybody suffers a Rippling roll for the total amount of Ripples they've received. This roll represents the total amount of injury and hardship that has accumulated through the battle, not any specific attack, so this roll has no modifiers.

Characters also make their own Chi Aura rolls without a need to spend any points of chi. Note that Toughness and Armor don't apply for this final roll; this might mean that highly resilient fighters might escape most wounds during the fight itself, but suddenly feel all the bruises and shocks once the rush of adrenaline wears off.

If a condition would be imposed, then the *opponents* may determine what that condition is. **It doesn't have to be an Injury Condition.** Regardless of the type of attacks used during the fight, **end-conditions** can be virtually anything. However, the Sage still imposes a modifier based on plausibility. People can discover long-term organ damage after a fight (a Medical Condition), sudden pangs of guilt (a Passion or Inspiration) or they might be haunted by the hateful ghosts of the people they just killed (a Curse), but it's unlikely their latest fight results in them suddenly hating their own mother. Of course, pangs of guilt aren't particularly likely for anybody with a high Ruthlessness or Ferocity Virtue either. Consider all the factors at play when deciding if something is probable or not.

The most straightforward way of ending a fight (or just your own involvement in it) is to get Taken Out, or to simply not fight anymore (such as when you find out you've been fighting for the wrong reasons). But there are some other methods as well.

Example:

Centipede lies defeated, his broken body surrounded by his slain minions, a drunken prostitute, the decoy leopard, and the rubble of the Hundred Ton Buddha statue. (It was

a pretty crazy fight.) Now it is time to check for long-term consequences.

Ghost Li had only a single Ripple. With his Chi Aura of two dice, he escapes all harm.

Bright Snow had eight Ripples. The roll is made and comes up 31 while her Chi Aura roll is only 12, for a net of 19! Her Chi Threshold is 12, so she will suffer a Minor Chi Condition. Centipede unwisely decides that she fell in love with him during their fights, but Centipede is so ugly that this is absurd! The Wulin Sage applies a -20 penalty to the Rippling roll, which causes it to fail after all. (This shouldn't occur often in real play; this example serves as warning to keep things plausible, so you'll never have to squander the Chi conditions you might inflict!)

Wan He Bao had nine Ripples. His roll is disastrous: 46! His Chi Aura is a respectable 17, but that still leaves 23 points, enough for a Major Chi Condition! Centipede's player considers an injury, but realizes that Bao is a doctor who could treat any wounds declared. So instead, he chooses to Curse him from beyond the grave so that Bao takes a -10 penalty to all rolls involving centipedes, be it fighting them, spotting them, or treating their venomous bites. He vowed that Bao would die at the hands of Centipede, and death is not stopping him!

Surrender

This is a proposal to the opponent that you lose the fight and suffer specific consequences of your choice. If the offer is accepted, the winner doesn't get to decide on the Chi condition; you already did that with the offer. This option is most commonly used when two sides fight for a very specific goal. By surrendering, the winner is assured of having achieved that goal, while the losing party gets to cut their losses and prevent worse from happening. There is no penalty to this Rippling roll due to implausibility; by making the offer, the loser has already made it a likely outcome.

The consequences can include swearing an oath, and the offer for surrender is often made in-character. "If you don't kill me, I will swear to Heaven that I won't harm these villagers anymore!" This is a perfectly acceptable way of dealing with a bandit problem. Oaths are voluntary conditions accepted by a character when they surrender in combat. Generally, they work out like Predictions – the character states something about how they will act and behave, and the Ripple roll decides how much they are affected by the oath in a mechanical sense (as well as how easy it may be to get rid of in the end, assuming an open-ended condition). They cannot be directly manipulated by Secret Art techniques, although the behavior they impose might easily spawn secondary conditions that can be Discovered! The person who volunteers the Oath can formulate it as they please, but this can be vetoed by another character (in case that character is the victor to whom you have surrendered – offer an inadequate oath and they just might decide to continue fighting instead!). As usual, the Sage is the final arbiter of the

exact mechanical effect of the condition. The most common effect is an Action Penalty, though this may vary.

Example:

You used to be the terror of the mountains, taking what you wanted from the silly goat herders and farmers who inhabited these peaks! This was until that damned Wulin hero beat you down – and worse, she forced you to swear an oath to not only abstain from terrorizing them, but to also protect them from harm! Since this was a lot better than having her slaughter you and the second half of your men like she did the first half, you offered unconditional acceptance of her terms.

As long as you abide by the oath, doing your best to protect the villagers from stray beasts and other brigands (all the while absolutely not helping yourself to their grains) you can escape the penalty. When you try to act against it, your stomach locks in terror at the thought of the revenge that the hero will rain down upon you when she hears of your betrayal. After nearly plunging down a ravine when your legs became weak at the thought, you decided to abide by your oath.

Retreat

Some unbeatable opponents just want to kill you. Some people are too proud to ever offer surrender even when they're outmatched. In some cases, it's best to just flee. To do so, announce your intention at the start of a round. The opponent can simply accept, and then you've fled from him. If he doesn't accept, then it becomes a matter of Footwork rolls, zones, and Wave-Breaking as you attempt to get away. The Sage will determine whether you've successfully fled at any point based on distance and comparative skill of the people involved, but if you're equally matched it can become a very tricky challenge. Sometimes you simply won't be able to escape!

If you successfully retreat, the winner doesn't get to determine your consequences. You may decide on those for yourself. The Wulin Sage can still veto any improbable or abusive condition. You're given the chance to determine your own consequences, but they should still be serious, not meaningless or blessings in disguise. If the Wulin Sage feels you're trying to be too clever for your own good, he can give back the right to decide on your consequences to your opponents!

Example:

Iron Eye Nan spots the Silver Fox Bandit robbing a noble's mansion at night, and he quickly leaps into action. The fight is fierce, but the Fox has no interest in exchanging blows with a constable, so she tries to escape with her loot instead. She darts over the rooftops, but Iron Eye Nan manages to keep up!

Then the Silver Fox Bandit spots the noble's guards giving pursuit on the streets below. She twists around and towards them, stepping over their heads and kicking away

their lanterns before leaping back up towards the rooftops, taunting them to follow her. The men become so angry that they fail to notice that their dropped lanterns are about to start a fire! Iron Eye Nan has both keen sight and good moral character, so he recognizes the danger and he makes sure to prevent this disaster from breaking out. But that buys the Fox precious time. The only people still following her are witless minions without light - her escape is a foregone conclusion.

At the end of that scene, the Fox makes her own Rippling roll and may decide on a consequence. On a whim she picks a Prediction that Iron Eye Nan will chase her more often in the future. He was such good fun!

Condition penalties

Rippling rolls are intended to create a nearly free-form system that allows you to creatively impose wounds and other consequences. It can create results of anything from a thrown knife to a particularly terrifying glare. However, you do need to keep plausibility in mind. Some attacks seek to create conditions upon their intended target that, quite frankly, don't make sense. Keeping this in mind, there are special modifiers that the Sage can use if she feels a Rippling roll's intended consequence is particularly likely or unlikely to occur.

+5

Based on past descriptions and events, the condition is entirely expected. It's a little surprising the target doesn't have such a condition already!

Examples:

- *Re-opening an old wound that only just healed*
- *A Passion that the target is clearly exhibiting*

+0

The default difficulty. The condition could be there, but nothing says it should be there.

Examples:

- *Almost every weapon attack under normal circumstances*
- *Closing off an exposed pressure point*

-5

The condition is possible but not expected. There's something going on that makes this particular result dubious, either because something is resisting or because the intended result is without any established precedent.

Examples:

- *An attack described in such a way that it strikes an armored portion of the body*
- *Closing off a pressure point that is covered by thick clothing*
- *A Passion that the subject hasn't previously displayed*

-10

The condition is unlikely because there's strong evidence that the exact opposite should be true. People who hear about the result will act surprised that things worked out this way.



Examples:

- *A Passion that is out of character for the subject*
- *A Curse that is contrary to established circumstances and feelings*

-20

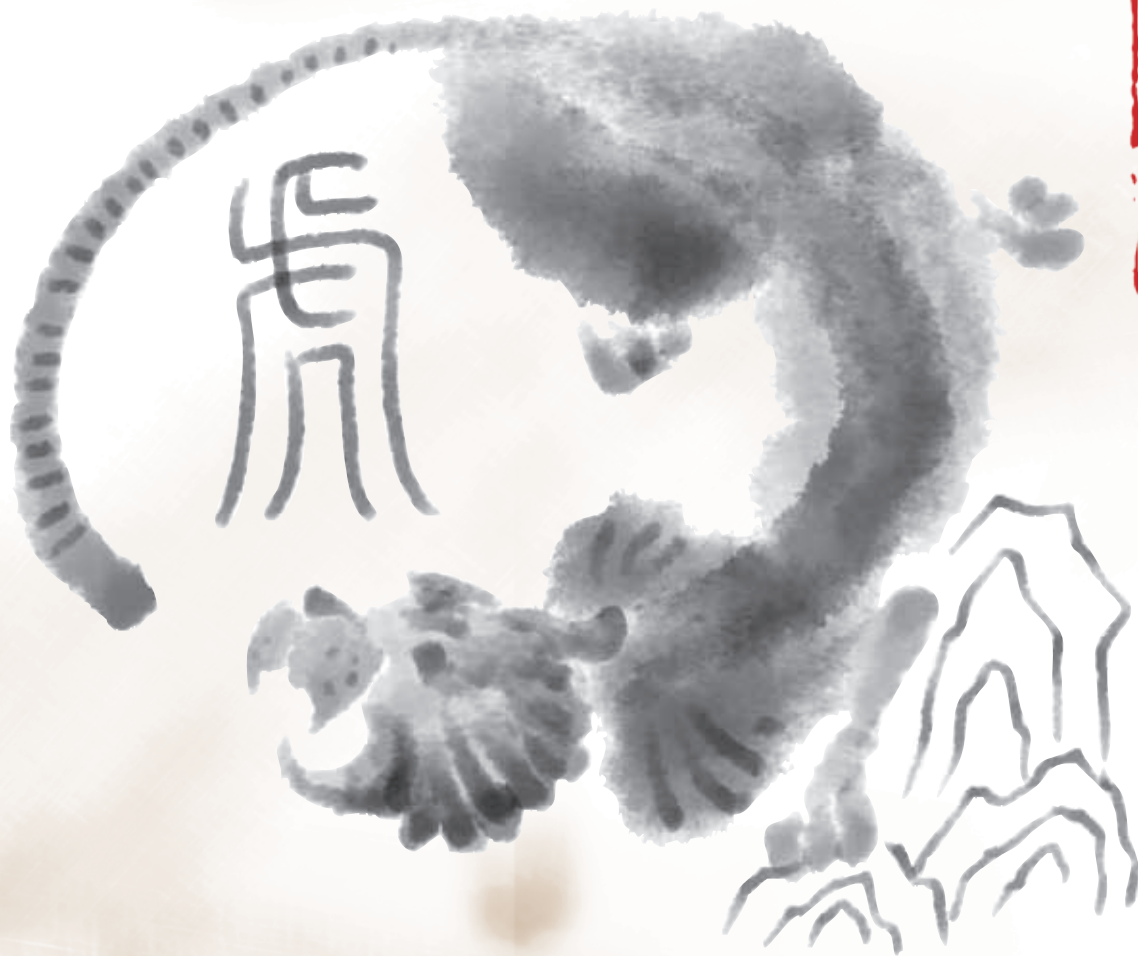
The proposed condition sounds so far-fetched that it's a little ridiculous. This is a very steep penalty that should only be used if the intended consequence is really something unsuitable, so strange that you might ask yourself if a roll should be allowed at all.

Examples:

- *An Inspiration that drives a magistrate's senior torturer to suddenly become a pacifist*

- *A Prediction that the emperor will die in poverty*
- *A Medical Condition on a healthy young warrior who follows the advice of a famous doctor*

However, if there's a penalty due to plausibility in play and the condition does appear despite it, then the penalty is removed from the result for the purpose of determining the Recovery value. So if that senior torturer does suddenly feel pangs of guilt, it's a very serious personal crisis that won't just blow over in a day or two! This is why you should always allow a roll for a proposed consequence, even if it sounds entirely implausible. Stranger things have happened in both fiction and real life. These sudden unexpected conditions can add interesting and fun plot points for your game.



THE BOOK OF METAL

THE BASTARD AND THE HERO

-It is extraordinary.- Proud Long Feng, of the Top Five Swordsmen of Mount Lingshou's Mountain Sword School, crumpled to his knees. His voice was quiet, but clear. One hand pressed white-knuckled to his chest with blood sopped in to the fabric from the wound beneath. -Extraordinary, and terrible.-

A wind blew through the overgrown garden where Long Feng and his killer had fought, rustling the burned, stained pages of ancient parchment that had been nailed to the petrified trees and stones. Long Feng leaned against an obelisk and touched a paper with his one clean hand, reading the faded characters. -The remains of the Seven Cloud Manuscript held the secrets of Devil-Deflecting Style,- he murmured. -But your style...- He coughed once; black blood spattered the ground and his white lips. -The Devil Deflecting Blade was radiant and true, so no man or devil could stand against its simplicity. Your blade is strong, but... your style is cold, and empty.-

The beautiful boy with the ragged hair, the dirty robes, and the bloodied sword nodded quietly as he watched Long Feng bleed. -Perhaps that's fitting. Fate was not kind to the manuscript... Time claimed what the fires did not. It was incomplete... I had to improvise.-

Long Feng's face twisted in pain deeper than the wound in his chest. -Incomplete?!- He searched the fluttering pages for some explanation, but found none. -But... to take an incomplete manuscript and create another style from it... you cannot possibly have done this yourself! Even Gray Master Lin could only manage to create variant techniques!-

The boy watched Feng bleed. -And yet...-

Feng slumped down to the base of the obelisk, despairing. -I am defeated,- he choked. -You have broken my style, and wounded me irreversibly... Allow me a final request. Please, tell me the name of the technique that was my death.-

The boy studied his weapon. -I suppose that I shall have to name it.-

-Unforgivable!- coughed Feng. He crumpled to the earth, leaving a crimson stain on the stone, voice weak, face ashen. -Am I to be cut down by a nameless blade, a no-name style? You serve no one. You have no master. You stand for nothing! Walking unseen by Heaven – you are a mongrel. A bastard!-

-That will do,- said the Sword Bastard.

WEAPONS

BASIC WEAPONS

All starting characters get one weapon for free. If you use one of the weapons listed under your External Style, you may add the weapon stats to the basic combat statistics provided by your style, and get access to the weapons' special properties while using that style.

On the other hand, if your weapon is incompatible with your style, you won't have access to its stats and properties while using that style, but you could learn a style compatible with it later on, learn a technique that makes that style and weapon compatible, learn a secret that allows you to combine the properties of another weapon with those of your own making it compatible with a greater range of styles, or spend Destiny to turn it into a special weapon (pg. 294) for the same end.

You can use a certain weapon in conjunction with a certain style even if you don't get any mechanical benefits, simply because it fits your concept and it looks cool.

Flexible Weapons incorporate chain or rope into their design, allowing them to twist and entangle. This can make them seem unavoidable!

- +5 Strike
- If an attack with a Flexible weapon is described in such a way that it is best Blocked instead of Dodged, the penalty to Dodge is -10 instead of -5.
- You may Flood one die from the River to extend an attack into an adjacent zone.

Massive Weapons, such as hammers and axes, deliver large impacts with their heavy heads. They can easily smash or batter through any obstacle.

- +5 Damage
- If an attack with a Massive weapon is described in such a way that it is best Dodged instead of Blocked, the penalty to Block is -10 instead of -5.



- You may Flood one die from the River while you make the attack to ignore the target's armor on any resulting Rippling roll.

Paired Weapons are designed to be used in unison, one light weapon in each hand. They allow dazzling displays of speedy flurries, overwhelming enemies with twice the fury!

- +5 Strike
- If you Block an attack against an opponent in the same Zone by 10 or more, you may Reply against that opponent.
- You can Flood a die or set of dice from the River as the basis for a Secondary Attack.

Ranged Weapons, whether thrown or launched, can strike at a distance. Although there are marked differences in the

effective ranges of a crossbow and a thrown rock, in most practical fighting conditions it is the presence of buildings and trees that limits range rather than their technical performances. To most martial artists these differences are of little concern; those trained in kung fu can expertly sidestep any attack from more than a few paces' distance, unless the shot is truly exceptional.

- +5 Strike
- You can make attacks against targets in adjacent Zones.
- You may Flood one die from the River to make an attack against targets further away, up to the limit that the Sage feels is reasonable.

Sabers (dao) are single-edged blades, from knives to ferocious broadswords. They are considered one of the Four Major Weapons and they are called the "General of all Weapons."

- +5 Strike
- +5 Damage
- You may Flood one die from the River to force an immediate Rippling check if the Strike exceeds the defense by 5 or more, instead of 10. You may do this after the defender rolls. (This doesn't apply to other attack forms, such as Secret Arts or energy attacks.)

The Staff (gun) is the most basic and oldest weapon known to man. It is one of the Four Major Weapons and called the "Grandfather of all Weapons." Its basic design is versatile and enduring, still forming the foundation from which all other weapon spring.

- +5 Strike
- +5 Block
- You can Flood a die or set of dice from the River as the basis for a Secondary Attack.

Spears (qiang) and other polearms feature a long handle upon which is a sharpened end. The spear is one of the Four Major Weapons and called the "King of all Weapons."

- +5 Damage
- You may Flood one die from the River to extend an attack into an adjacent zone.
- You may Flood one die from the River while you make a Block. If you do, you may exploit your weapon's superior reach. For this defense you Laugh at your opponent and do not Fear him, unless he can claim a similar long reach (such as from using a spear or a ranged weapon).

Swords (jian) are straight, double-edged weapons. They are one of the Four Major Weapons and are called the "Gentleman of all Weapons." Although it doesn't have the mass to hack like other sharp weapons, it is a more refined weapon of balance; combining hardness and softness, motion and stillness. It is truly the master of all things!

- +5 Strike
- +5 Block
- You may Flood one die from the River while you make the attack. If you do and cause a Rippling roll, any Chi Aura used to protect against this damage costs 2 Chi points per die to purchase.

Unarmed fighting involves fist, palm, claw, kick, elbow or even the head if so inclined. Many warriors prefer the use of a well-forged blade but there is a subtle power in fighting purely as yourself rather than being weighed down by iron.

- +5 Speed
- +5 Footwork
- You can Focus on Breath using only a single die from your initiative roll, instead of needing a set.

There are some further considerations for weapons beyond the weapon categories ...



Improvised Weapons were never intended to be wielded like they are. With Sage permission just about anything can function as an improvised weapon, from belts to tools to tree branches. As long as the object somewhat resembles the weapon you intended to mimic it's alright. An improvised weapon allows you to use your kung fu style that you normally wouldn't be able to with your bare hands, although they don't get to claim the specific properties of the weapon itself. (One exception: if you use an improved Ranged weapon, you don't get the +5 strike, but you do get the abilities that let you attack at a distance.)

Using an improvised weapon can also hardly be called an advantage, so your enemies might exploit that with clever descriptions or the Warrior's Arts. Even if the object you're using is a weapon in its own right you don't get to claim its bonus because you're using it the wrong way.

Example:

Bright Snow is fighting soldiers during the great rebellion but loses her sword when the bridge she is on is destroyed. When she drags herself out of the canal she finds a saber on a dead soldier. (More accurately: she kills the soldier and takes his stuff.) The Sage agrees that sabers and swords are rather alike, so he allows her to use it as an improvised jian. Now she can use her best kung fu style again, although the weapon doesn't provide the saber's stats or the sword's stats.

SPECIAL WEAPONS

Combine the properties of two weapons. This allows you to claim the benefits of both weapons at once (identical benefits do not stack, i.e., Paired Swords do not get +10 Strike) as well as practice two dissimilar kung fu styles without needing to carry multiple weapons; as long as one of the weapon-types is allowed by your style you can use it, even if the other

weapon-type is not. You can select any two base weapons (except Unarmed) to combine into a special weapon.

Some special techniques also let you treat your weapons as special, adding an extra weapon type to them. You can only benefit from two weapon types at once though. If you manage to get more than that, you must choose at the start of each round which two types you'll combine.

For example: a guandao polearm is essentially a saber-like blade on a very long handle, so for the purposes of this game it is both a Saber and a Spear. A sectional staff is both a Staff and a Flexible Weapon. A hundred-pound sword is a Sword that is also a Massive Weapon. A flying guillotine is a Saber and a Flexible Weapon, while a meteor hammer is Flexible and a Massive Weapon.

Obtaining a special weapon costs 3 Destiny.

ARMOR

Light Armor lets you count your Chi threshold as 5 higher for the purpose of Ripple rolls intended to cause physical injuries. All but the lightest clothing can already count as Light Armor. It costs no Destiny to obtain.

Medium Armor lets you count your Chi threshold as 10 higher for the purpose of Ripple rolls intended to cause physical injuries. It also imposes a -5 penalty to Speed and Footwork, as well as Finesse, Stealth and any other skill use the Sage deems appropriate. This represents thick hardened leather, heavy furs or simple plating. It costs 1 Destiny.

Heavy Armor lets you count your Chi threshold as 15 higher for the purpose of Ripple rolls intended to cause physical injuries. It also imposes a -10 penalty to Speed and Footwork, as well as Finesse, Stealth and any other skill use the Sage deems appropriate. This is solid iron armor reserved only for wartime or elite guards. It costs 2 Destiny.



KUNG FU

EXTERNAL KUNG FU

External Kung Fu represents the obvious, physical aspect of fighting: kicking, punching, stabbing, and so forth. External styles are limited by the weapon you're using.

Unlike Internal styles, External Kung Fu requires no expenditure of Chi points to work; you always gain all benefits of the style has to offer. However, you can only use one style at a time; just as you can't clench your fist and open your palm at the same time, you can't use two external fighting styles simultaneously. (For the clever people: the metaphor assumes a single hand, not both of them.) You decide which external style you're using each combat round, before rolling initiative. That choice is then set and you can't change it until the next round.

Each style determines your Speed, Footwork, Strike, Damage, Block, and Toughness bonuses. Each style also has a description of its function and nature, as well as the sort of things the style laughs at and fears. These are descriptive qualities that serve as anchors or starting points when improvising combat maneuvers such as Marvels.

Weapons also have descriptive qualities of their own; usually they affect one or two of your combat stats, but very special weapons might affect more (pg. 194). These stack with the bonuses provided by your kung fu. Some people pick weapons that further increase the bonuses of their style; others like to shore up *weaknesses* or expand their versatility instead. Both are valid options you might want to consider.

External styles also have 20 Destiny worth of additional techniques for purchase, which provide new benefits or enhance existing benefits. The cost for each technique is listed in parentheses after its name. Obviously, you don't get the benefit of these techniques until you purchase them.

External Kung Fu List

The external styles available are listed here. The weapons they can be with used are listed in parentheses.

- **Blossom Harvest** is strong, tough, and honest. It is a favorite of the common people. (Massive, Staff, Unarmed)
- **Bone-Fed Wolf Fang** was designed by soldiers to cripple the strong and finish off the weak. (Massive, Saber)
- **Destiny Cloud Fist** is a flexible, adaptive style that allows for wide mobility. (Unarmed)
- **Divine Pattern Long-Strokes** uses long reach to control the area around the user. (Flexible, Spear, Staff)
- **Eight Legends** is an old, solid style that knows the correct response against most adversity. It focuses on the use of the "Four Major Weapons." (Saber, Spear, Staff, Sword)
- **Flowing Universe** fights like water, changing and adapting to the current situation. It's good at defending and counter-

attacking, washing aside the weapons of the enemy. (Flexible, Unarmed)

- **Flying Red Silk** is an elegant style that uses soft power to overcome its opponents. (Flexible, Sword)
- **Graceful Crane Style** mimics the movements of the crane, side-stepping the charging tiger and pecking as it passes by. (Sword, Unarmed)
- **Great Ultimate Dragon Style** uses dualities, powerful yin and yang both. Depending on its needs, it can be ferocious or subtle. (Paired, Saber, Sword, Unarmed)
- **Murderous Shadows** is a popular assassin's style. It hides even in the middle of a fight! (Flexible, Ranged)
- **Ravenous Wings** is merciless and cruel. Inspired by flocks of hungry crows eating the dead, it grows bolder as its prey is weakened. (Paired, Ranged, Unarmed)
- **Shadow Catching** is swift and mobile, cutting through the battle like a flashing blade. (Saber, Sword)
- **Storm God's Fury** is like lightning, instant and destructive. (Massive, Paired, Saber, Spear)
- **Subtle Force** seeks to end the fight with minimum casualties. In many ways, it is the very antithesis of conflict. (Ranged, Sword, Unarmed)

Blossom Harvest

Massive, Staff, Unarmed

Qualities

This is one of the most honest and straightforward fighting styles there is. It dispenses with trickery or fancy moves, and compensates with sweat and resilience. Its training methods use everyday items and situations, such as running upstream through a river to build stamina, and using farming tools to practice weapon forms. Most of its techniques and theories also incorporate metaphors that are easy for common people to understand.

Because it is so approachable, it has achieved a folk hero status; peasant rebellions often start training with this fighting style, calling those who stand against injustice "Blossoming Heroes".

Laughs At

A chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and so Blossom Harvest laughs at styles that are overly complicated or full of flourishes. These intricate methods are easily smashed aside and broken. It likewise laughs at such trivialities as being outnumbered, or disadvantageous terrain – pure grit and hellish training have rendered Blossoming Heroes fearless to such things!

Fears

This style has problems when facing fighters who are reactive. Blossom Harvest's openness is easy to read and predict, giving such opponents everything they need. It's also ill-prepared for enemies who wield supernatural forces or influence.

Statistics	
Speed:	+5
Footwork:	+0
Strike:	+5
Damage:	+10
Block:	+5
Toughness:	+10

Techniques

Heart-Fire Temper Skill (4)

Pain and fear blunt edges worse than rust, but your training has seen every bone broken and regrown stronger. To you, pain is but a reminder of your lessons and your teacher's wisdom.

- When you have a physical wound condition, this style's Damage bonus increases to +15.

Iron Skin (5 or 9)

Hardened muscles and willpower have given you great resistance to physical punishment. Spears bend and sticks break upon striking you!

- This style's Toughness bonus increases to +15.
- For 4 additional Destiny, you may also treat your total Chi as if it were 2 points higher for the purposes of determining your Chi threshold.

Nine Mountains Great Strength (5)

Your attacks are like mountains: grand and overwhelming, undeniable and unmovable.

- This style's Strike bonus increases to +10.

No Vermin in the World (2)

The corrupt are numerous and the virtuous seem but few these days. Villages are razed to the ground and orphans cry in the streets. The great men of this age therefore have no choice but to be Blossoming Heroes, fighting off entire gangs all by themselves!

- All your attacks count as Area attacks for the purpose of damaging groups of Minions.

Bone-Fed Wolf Fang

Massive, Saber

Qualities

Generations of battlefield experience have shaped a fighting style developed with the practicalities of warfare in mind. Some maneuvers were loosely inspired by the gruesome methods by which wolves drag down their prey. It is mainly taught by the military, but unfortunately, many deserters take up a life of banditry, making this style a common plague for simple people. Because of this, the style is also often called a dog's way of fighting.

This style focuses on hard, linear movements designed to cripple and exploit *weaknesses*—the supreme soldier needs efficiency, not beauty. It cruelly maims first, and dispatches second. No methods are too dishonest when victory is on the line.

Laughs At

The wolf laughs at honesty, which it rewards with hungry teeth. Above all else, the wolf knows no greater joy than to fight someone vulnerable or caught off guard.

Fears

The wolf fears what is hidden or unorthodox, for his many strategies don't account for them. The wolf also dislikes being outnumbered and surrounded; it relies on being the hunting pack, not the hunted.

Statistics	
Speed:	+5
Footwork:	+5
Strike:	+5
Damage:	+10
Block:	+5
Toughness:	+5

Techniques:

Circling Pack (4)

Wolves strike from all sides to overwhelm their prey. You force a response with your weapon, creating an opening so you can deal a blow to a vulnerable spot.



- The difficulty to recover from Disrupt or Disorient Marvels you have imposed is increased by 10.

Fighting With Fire (4)

Fire is a useful, if dangerous, tool to use in war. Its effects on the enemy are startling: set something ablaze that they value and they will flock towards it; set something ablaze that they can afford to lose and they won't dare approach. So too must your strikes be utilized to force them into a pattern and method of your choosing. An enemy that follows your lead is not worthy of the name.

- This style's Block and Dodge bonuses increase to +10 against any Disoriented or Disrupted target.

March Towards Hell (4)

The wise general makes his enemies tire themselves out by forcing them to march towards his position. Once in battle, he cleverly uses his troops to dictate the maneuvers of his enemy. Your attacks follow the same philosophy; your enemies are already defeated, the slaughter a mere formality.

- You may Flood 1 die from the River while you make an attack. If you do, the strike also creates a Disorient or Disrupt condition if it hits.

Rainfall at Night (4)

The battlefield is where wars are ended, but to a peerless general their outcome is determined beforehand. Assassinate their officers, poison the wells, fill their hearts with propaganda, and creep inside their camps to set fires and steal horses. These are the ways of the warrior who knows neither honor nor defeat.

- This style's Strike bonus increases to +10 against any Disoriented or Disrupted target.

Wolves Devour the Lion (4)

Stress bruised ribs until they crack. Lash sore flesh until it rips. The tales of glorious battle are for the halls of gold and silk, but they are built on your acts in the fields of iron and wolves.

- This style's Damage bonus increases to +15 against any Disoriented or Disrupted target.

Destiny Cloud Fist

Unarmed

Qualities

The wind can be calm or furious, clear or hidden amongst dark clouds. It is everywhere, yet cannot be grasped. These all hint at what its true strength is: versatility. The ability to adapt quickly and have a response to all adversity is key to attaining victory.

Laughs At

Destiny Cloud Fist laughs at both excessive yin and excessive yang, as it can easily adjust itself to defeat either method. Those who rely on raw power or speed without cunning, as well as those who are passive or defensive without aggression, are equally predictable to this style.



Fears

Destiny Cloud Fist fears swiftness. As the wind sweeps away the clouds, so do fast rushes overwhelm the adaptive power of this style. Highly specialized unorthodox methods are also a *weakness*, as the power of this style to handle all adversity is not quite as complete as its practitioners like to claim. In the face of fire, it might starve the flame with the absence of air. In the face of water it might shape the waves and currents with strong gusts of wind. But in the face of the unexpected, the wind is at a loss!

Statistics	
Speed:	+5
Footwork:	+10
Strike:	+5
Damage:	+5
Block:	+5
Toughness:	+5

Techniques:*Guarding the Sun and Moon (3)*

The brilliant sun, the enchanting moon, and the limitless stars. Look above you and you may witness all that heavenly glory. That is, if the clouds allow it.

- Opponents suffer a -10 penalty to their checks when trying to use the Warrior's Arts against you. This benefit extends even outside of combat, unless there's some reason you wouldn't be subconsciously using your Destiny Cloud Fist kung fu.

Heavenly Warrior (5)

The sky enjoys true unfettered freedom. The student of this style may linger in one place like settling fog, only to dissolve into air and become the careless wind in the blink of an eye!

- This style's Footwork bonus increases to +15.

The Impermanence of Clouds (7)

Clouds have no concept of shape. They shift and roll across the sky, ever changing and drifting. Your attacks are the same. Just as it seems clear what you're doing, you switch to a different method and overwhelm your opponents by best using your lightness and momentum.

- Whenever you use your Lightfoot ability, this style's Damage, Block, or Toughness bonus increases to +10 for the rest of the round. If you spend at least 2 Chi on your Lightfoot, you may choose two statistics to increase, and if you spend at least 4 Chi you may increase all three.

Windy Cloud Force (5)

Although appearing soft and airy, clouds bring snow and storms. Its subtle power is not to be underestimated!

- This style's Strike bonus increases to +10.

Divine Pattern Long-Strokes

Flexible, Spear, Staff

Qualities

This style relies on the reach of its weapons to establish its dominance over the area. Rather than trying to respond to the actions of the opposition, it anticipates the most likely positions of the enemy and fills those spaces with deadly sweeping movements. Like an expert player of chess, the warrior blocks off vulnerabilities and covers *weaknesses* with deadly retaliation. The "divine pattern" is said to be without defense – instead, it attacks in such a way that counter-attack is impossible to begin with!

Laughs At

The divine pattern laughs at reactive styles, because it already made their best options into impossible tasks. Naturally, it also laughs at anybody foolish enough to get trapped inside the pattern, like a fish hoisted into the air in a net.

Fears

This style fears opponents who fight from outside of the space they control, meaning anything from out of their reach, and, paradoxically, anything that is extremely close, in the calm and uncontrolled space surrounding the fighter himself. The style requires a stable stance to weave the pattern, and uncontrolled movements can disrupt it.

Statistics	
Speed:	+5
Footwork:	+0
Strike:	+10
Damage:	+5
Block:	+10
Toughness:	+5



Techniques:*Damming off Fortune (3)*

Luck has no place within the divine pattern. Coincidences and wild odds only happen because there was a small chance of success to begin with. Using the very best of your abilities, you can enhance the pattern to scythe down even the possibilities of flukes and fortunes.

- You may Flood 1 die from the River while you make an attack. If you do so, the target may not flow or flood dice from his own River to aid his defense, nor can he float dice from the defense roll into his River.

Divine Iron Web (4)

Your weapon closes in on your enemies like an avalanche of blades. You predict their movements and fill their path with danger, overwhelming and burying them within the divine pattern.

- The difficulty for people to reach or leave your zone is equal to your initiative result if this is higher than what the difficulty would normally be. If you voluntarily move to a new zone, then the effect also transfers along with you. If you are somehow forced there, then this aspect of the pattern temporarily falters for the rest of the round. You may exclude specific individuals from this effect if you choose to allow their movement.

Forbidden Gate of Heaven (5)

You improve your techniques to cut off more approaches towards you than you could previously manage. You might be mistaken for a supreme oracle, always having his weapon ready wherever his foes may be.

- This style's Block bonus increases to +15.

Hell-Pattern Judgment (5)

Your weapon sweeps with anticipation this way and that, luring enemies into safe places that turn out to be vicious traps!

- If you successfully Block a strike by 10 or more, you may Reply against your opponent, inflicting 1 Ripple upon him.

Sweeping to All Sides (3)

Your weapon moves without pause, ever ready to harass and torment. Those who think they can spot openings and move before you have time to react will soon learn the error in their ways!

- Opponents who would normally get bonuses against you for having a higher initiative are denied those bonuses against you.

Eight Legends

Saber, Spear, Staff, Sword

Qualities

This style claims to have the oldest and most respectable history of all fighting arts, the original style from which all others are but derivatives. It is said that the Yellow Emperor invented kung fu and taught the first eight of his loyal subjects, selected for talent and a purity of spirit. They were

then sent out into the world to spread kung fu across the empire. Their exploits and deeds are still famous, and used to teach virtue and upright behavior. Rarer stories, jealously guarded by sects and gangs, also teach of combat.

Thousands of schools teach Eight Legends across all the kingdoms, each with their own variations on the myths and maneuvers. These differences are very small and thus the source of intense rivalries.

This style has more maneuvers, steps, and stances than any other in the world. From rote memorization of hundreds of options, the correct response against any given adversary comes naturally. It is a reactive style in this regard, letting the enemy reveal his methods and then selecting the suitable maneuvers to deal with them.

Laughs At

Eight Legends laughs at its fellow traditional styles as it regards them all to be offshoots, wayward children who have lost sight of their elder's teachings. It also laughs against anyone using the saber, spear, staff or sword – the Four Major Weapons – because Eight Legends is their absolute master, and there can exist no maneuver which it doesn't know.

Fears

Eight Legends fears the use of needles, chains, and any other uncommon weapon that doesn't resemble the ones it knows. It also fears fighting methods that are unorthodox or sinister because it can't imagine performing such acts, let alone getting one step ahead of them.

Statistics

Speed:	+5
Footwork:	+5
Strike:	+10
Damage:	+5
Block:	+5
Toughness:	+5

Techniques:*Golden Flash (5)*

Gleaming and magnificent, your weapon soars with such ferocity that it cuts through enemies too quickly to even be stained.

- This style's Damage bonus increases to +10.

Legendary Force (5)

Your weapon takes control over that of your enemies, forcing obedience and breaking their techniques.

- This style's Block bonus increases to +10.

Miracle Strike (5)

By carefully reading your opponent, you understand what is the best maneuver to use. It appears to the amazed onlookers as if you execute perfect attacks against which your enemies are helpless!

- This style's Strike bonus increases to +15.

Trigram-Pacing Steps (5)

You are, by tradition, the successor of eight immortals.



Perfection and wholesomeness come naturally to you. The world and heaven could only move to support you.

- Opponents suffer a -10 penalty to their checks when trying to use the Priest's Arts against you. If they fail their check, they suffer a Ripple. This benefit extends even outside of combat, unless there's some reason you wouldn't be subconsciously using your Eight Legends kung fu.

Flowing Universe

Flexible, Unarmed

Qualities

Water can take the shape of everything it is held in. It can flow around or over obstacles. Be like the flowing water and change along with your opponent. When this style encounters resistance, it uses soft, circular motions to retreat or flow aside, but never meets it head on. It's a subtle, mercurial style that relies as much on intuition as it does physical motion.

Laughs At

Flowing Universe laughs at direct linear movements, which it washes away. It also laughs at attempts at deception, for it is so perceptive and adaptable that it can sense the hidden intentions underneath and change to account for them.

Fears

Like flowing water, anything that can restrain, hold, or freeze this style causes it to slow and settle down. Flowing Universe also fears fighting many opponents at once, as water spread over many different channels reduces them all into small trickles.

Statistics

Speed:	+5
Footwork:	+5
Strike:	+5
Damage:	+0
Block:	+10
Toughness:	+10

Techniques:

Contained Water Sphere (4 or 7)

You control the space around yourself to such an extent that no harm can reach you without suffering resistance, as if suddenly plunging from air into water.

- You may Flood 1 die from the River at any point. If you do, this style's Block and Toughness bonuses both increase to +15 for the remainder of the round.
- If you pay an additional 3 Destiny, you can have 1 additional slot in your River. This extra slot can only be used to Flood dice for Contained Water Sphere. If this slot is ever filled while you change your active style, it automatically Washes empty.

Dragging Currents (5)

Your movements don't just flow around weapons; they subtly entrap them and drag them away!

- If you successfully Block a strike by 10 or more, you may Reply against your opponent, inflicting 1 Ripple upon him.

Smothering Pressure (5)

Your strikes flow over your enemies, naturally finding their way towards the lungs and other organs. With a few well-aimed strikes, it feels as if they are drowning!

- This style's Strike bonus increases to +10.

Universal Flowing Form (3)

You have perfected your ability to match rhythms with your opponents and surroundings, further enhancing your fighting abilities. To anyone caught within the flows of your style, it is as if they are caught within a whirlpool, surrounded on all sides by water yet powerless to break it.

- You have a +5 bonus to any check made to break a Wave, as well as any Shaping Marvels.

Flying Red Silk

Flexible, Swords

Qualities

This style is said to have been invented by an intelligent and graceful woman who adopted a philosophy of 'minimal force' in order to obtain the highest degrees of efficiency. With long silken sleeves, she dominated all opposition, beating hardness with softness, iron with lightness, and pressure with yielding power.

Your attacks slither over your opposition, naturally finding the strengths and weaknesses, all the habits picked up over a life of hard work, and all the mistakes. Your movements are soft and gentle – some would say timid, but those people fail to understand your subtlety. This style is not commonly used with flails and chains but with lighter weapons like brushes, silken wires and, of course, long sleeves.

Laughs At

Flying Red Silk laughs at brute force and excessive motion. These things are easy to figure out and manipulate. Overly straightforward and traditional styles are likewise regarded as easy prey, because this style has had a long time to develop suitable responses.

Fears

Flying Red Silk fears deception, because it can't control what it doesn't understand. It also has problems when facing an adaptable reactive fighter who doesn't allow his form enough solidity to be vulnerable.

Statistics	
Speed:	+5
Footwork:	+5
Strike:	+10
Damage:	+5
Block:	+10
Toughness:	+0

Techniques:

Looking through Destiny (4)

Your subtle power alters the rhythm of your opponents, forcing change upon them without them realizing. You contain them within the invisible net of your art and softly bring them to quietness.

- When your attack inflicts a Ripple on a target who hasn't yet acted this round, you may reduce her Strike against you by 5 for the rest of the round. You can do this only once for any given attack, even if you inflicted multiple Ripples.

Misty Rain Storm (5)

Ten thousand raindrops fall for every bolt of lightning that scorches the sky. By mastering this technique your weapon glistens, feints, and distracts your enemies.

- This style's Strike bonus increases to +15.

Soft-Sliding Silk (4)

Your weapon twists and bends like a dancing snake, sliding around defenses towards vital spots.

- Your opponents suffer a -5 penalty to Block your Strikes.

Thousand Streaming Rivers (5)

This is a marvelous collection of attacks, each inspired by the natural course of a river: The Black Cliff Waterfall, which darts forward and suddenly shoots down without warning. The Sixty-Mile Stream, which turns left and right and picks up speed with every turn. The Three Brothers, which crisscross all the time and have estuaries branching in all directions. The Great Bend, which courses around an insurmountable hill to reach its destination. All these and many more form the basis of your skill.

- This style grants you an extra +5 bonus to Disorient, Disrupt, Knockback, or Shaping Marvels. You may change which Marvel receives this bonus at the start of each round.

Victory in Surrender (2)

Resistance is a source of struggle and troubles. Know when to bend like a willow instead of breaking like a pine branch. Withdraw from attacks and all of your opponent's efforts will be wasted.

- When hit by a Strike or Marvel, you can flood a die from the River to Reply against your opponent, inflicting 1 Ripple upon her. You can do this only once for any given attack, even if it included multiple elements that hit you.

Graceful Crane Style

Sword, Unarmed

Qualities

The crane is patient and elegant, and the kung fu they inspired is likewise. It uses dance-like circular motions, well suited for defense and directing aggression back upon itself. A true Crane fighter never needs to attack his enemies; he lets his enemies defeat themselves. This style is popular amongst nobles, women, travelers, and bureaucrats for self-defense.

Laughs At

The Crane laughs at attacks based on linearly focused aggression; it lightly avoids such things and strikes them from the side. Very stubborn and rigid styles doom themselves to failure when fighting a Crane: everything breaks in time and they just invite more of the Crane's harsh education until they do.

Fears

The Crane fears fluidness, which it can't scratch with talons or peck at with its beak. The Crane also fears becoming hobbled or lame, as its delicate movements can't function without grace.

Statistics

Speed:	+5
Footwork:	+15
Strike:	+5
Damage:	+0
Block:	+5
Toughness:	+5

Techniques:

Crane Shelters Amongst Reeds (2)

You expertly stalk past blades and cudgels, letting your many opponents get tangled in each other and themselves.

- This style's Dodge bonus increases to +20 against groups of Minions.

Educating Wings (5)

With a side-step, you avoid an attack and the advancing opponent meets only the wisdom of your philosophy: destruction can only bring more destruction.

- If you successfully Dodge a strike by 10 or more points, you may Reply against your opponent, inflicting 1 Ripple upon him.

Patient Crane (2)

A simple crane humbled a fierce tiger once; it waited and allowed the mighty beast to act first and reveal its weaknesses. Slowness is not a disadvantage for one who wisely guards himself.

- When rolling initiative, you may voluntarily lower your initiative by 10 points. If you do, opponents who would normally get bonuses against you for having a higher initiative are denied those bonuses.

Soaring Crane (4)

From careful steps to graceful flight, the crane is the master of always surprising your opponents with your expert movements.

- If an attack is described in such a way that you suffer a -5 penalty to Dodge it, you may ignore that penalty. If the penalty is -10 or higher (perhaps from using a Flexible weapon) then the penalty is reduced by 5.

Twin Tiger-Subduing Talons (3)

You exhaust your opponents with an endless torrent of scratches, buffets and pecks. In the end even the most ferocious enemy will collapse under your gentle force, which can defeat without killing.

- When you make any Rippling roll, you may choose for it to not inflict an Injury Condition, but instead a Passion condition such as fear, awe, despair or contemplating the error in their methods.



White Crane Attacks (4)

Even when aggressive, the crane does not try to kill. It simply protects and disables, preventing hunters and rivals from getting what they want with a minimum of bloodshed.

- You have a +5 bonus to Disorient and Disrupt Marvels.

Great Ultimate Dragon Style

Paired, Saber, Sword, Unarmed

Qualities

All of existence arises from the combination of yin and yang. This supreme polarity, opposite yet not opposing one another, is both the most primal and the highest principle in the universe. Nowhere is this better represented than in the chimeric form of the dragon, which combines the semblance of many different animals, is at once strong and elusive, and is associated with earth and rivers, benevolent but sometimes also destructive. This style is master of both extreme yin and extreme yang. Motion, stance, and energy alternate between violence and stillness. Yet although the form of Great Ultimate Dragon Style goes from extreme yang to extreme yin and back again, it never finds balance between them.

Laughs At

The Great Ultimate Dragon laughs at things which are very aggressive, as well as those which are very passive. As master of both yin and yang, it understands the methods and shortcomings of either method very well, and can defeat them easily.

Fears

Great Ultimate Dragon style fears the balance it can't attain itself, which is equally hard to deal with from either a yin or yang perspective. It also fears deception, because the Dragon style can't choose the best method for dealing with things it doesn't know.

Statistics	
Speed:	+10
Footwork:	+5
Strike:	+5
Damage:	+5
Block:	+5
Toughness:	+5

Techniques:

Dragon Stance (0)

It is said that the dragon reveals itself only to vanish. Like all of existence itself, it can be sensed but never grasped. Both sides are reflected in a specialized stance. When the dragon is in the sky it can create storms and its glory is plain for all to see. When it hides in dark water it is completely concealed from mortal eyes – but still present.

- At the start of each round choose whether you will use the 'Dragon in Heaven' or 'Dragon in Ocean' stance.

117 Impenetrable Scales (4)

As a symbol of fortune and longevity, no harm could befall a dragon. As the source of existence itself, the taiji cannot be fought.

- If you use Dragon in Heaven stance and your initiative is higher than the attacker's, this style's Block bonus increases to +10.
- If you use Dragon in Ocean stance and your initiative is higher than the attacker's, this style's Dodge bonus increases to +10.

Permeating Presence (3)

The world is surrounded on all sides by sky and sea. Water and air are always present and flowing over, under, or into the earth. Valleys and mountains alike are subject to their shaping touch.

- If you use Dragon in Heaven stance and your initiative is higher than the defender's, this style's Strike bonus increases to +10.
- If you use Dragon in Ocean stance, you have a +5 bonus to any check made to break a Wave, as well as any Shaping Marvels.

Supreme Strength (4)

Despite the efforts of demons and tigers, the dragon has no equal. Who would dare to stand up against this kung fu?

- If you use Dragon in Heaven stance and your initiative is higher than the defender's, this style's Damage bonus increases to +10.
- If you use Dragon in Ocean stance and your initiative is higher than the attacker's, this style's Toughness bonus increases to +10.

Ultimate Expression of Motion and Stillness (5)

Whether swimming through the sky or sleeping for a hundred years, the dragon performs all its actions perfectly.

- This style's Speed bonus increases to +15.

Universal Grasping Claws (3)

The talons of the dragon rend flesh and spirit alike. This collection of potent offensive maneuvers will likewise bring ruin to your enemies.

- If you use Dragon in Heaven stance, you receive an extra +5 bonus to Disrupt Marvels.
- If you use Dragon in Ocean stance, you receive an extra +5 bonus to Disorient Marvels.

Murderous Shadows

Flexible, Ranged

Qualities

A style praised by assassins and spies, damned by the righteous and feared by the nobility, Murderous Shadows is the art of killing quickly and unseen. Its practitioners move without a sound, even in the midst of battle, and launch attacks that are hard to predict. Murderous Shadows conceals its movements and intentions, preferring to wear dark and billowing clothes with many folds and wide sleeves that let you keep your enemies guessing where exactly you're reaching. It also deceives with feints and unusual angles meant to confuse the eye. The ideal scenario for this style is to strike from ambush, deal a telling blow, and then fade away again.

Laughs At

Murderous Shadows laughs at orthodox styles, which carry presumptions in them that are easy to exploit. It also laughs at reactive opponents because its deceptions allow it to manipulate such enemies into making mistakes.

Fears

Murderous Shadows fears the kind of raw strength which can devastate an entire area without caring if a blade may have moved subtly to the left or right. Simple and straightforward styles are also harder to manipulate, as they rely more on their own power rather than trying to exploit a falsely perceived weakness.

Statistics	
Speed:	+10
Footwork:	+5
Strike:	+10
Damage:	+10
Block:	+0
Toughness:	+0

Techniques:

Ghostly Presence (4)

You conceal your motives underneath misdirection and an empty form that doesn't betray your intentions. Your sinister movements leave your enemies only guessing where you will be next.

- You may make a Stealth check as a Minor Action on the initiative roll. If you do, you have a +5 Dodge and Toughness bonus against all strikes and combat effect results against you, unless the attacker includes an Awareness skill check as a Minor Action during the attack that equals or exceeds your Stealth result.

Gliding Shadow (4)

You master a secret stepping technique that makes you run as a shadow, sliding naturally over walls and water.

- You have a +5 bonus to Covering Ground.
- If the Sage assigns you a penalty to Stealth rolls due to environmental concerns, such as rustling leaves on a forest floor, or a peculiar echo in the valley that is disturbed by your presence, you may reduce the penalty by 10 points. This can only reduce or negate penalties; it never grants a bonus.

Hidden Execution Strike (3)

Your enemies see only a strange maneuver, a flourish, or an obvious distraction meant to confuse them, but only too late do they realize the true danger behind your moves.

- Regardless of description or circumstance, you may always use the Stealth skill for Disorient or Disrupt Marvels.

One Murder per Heartbeat (2)

Important men surround themselves with guards and servants to shield themselves from harm. Assassins long ago learned a gruesome technique for overcoming this defense, rapidly striking down the hapless with unexpected attacks or hidden weapons.

- All your attacks count as Area attacks for the purpose of damaging groups of Minions.

One with Shadows (2)

You have meditated upon the empty concepts in life such as darkness, silence, cold - the absences of matter and energy. You may count yourself as one such absence, being noticed not as a presence but as the lack of one.

- You have a +5 bonus to your Stealth.

Shadows Cast by All Things (2)

Assassins frequently have to resort to disguises. The inexperienced guard looks for needles and poison. The wise ones have learned to suspect everyone, for there is no tool that the clever killer won't deign to use.

- Choose one weapon type. You can now use this style with that weapon type.

Void Nature (3)

You erase from yourself all form and clarity. Those who would anticipate your actions and prepare for them are left puzzled. It is as if you act without prior intent, an emptiness that cannot be predicted!

- Opponents who would normally get bonuses against you for having a higher initiative are denied those bonuses against you.

Ravenous Wings

Paired, Ranged, Unarmed

Qualities

War is said to be a terrible affair, filled with death and loss. Such is the talk of victims and those who lack a wider perspective. To the murders of crows that gather on the battlefield, there is no tragedy to be found in war. It is wise to emulate these flocks of corpse-eaters. In battle one must be ungraspable, omnipresent, and above all... hungry. Ravenous Wings feasts upon the *weaknesses* of others. It attacks with careful jabs and pecks, all aimed at joints and arteries, to wear down opponents. As the opponent becomes weaker, the flock grows bolder and stronger.

Laughs At

This sadistic style laughs at sickness and scars, the mark of death upon its meal. It also laughs at fluidity, for the flying flock can ascend and surround water effortlessly.

Fears

Ravenous Wings fears what is pure and wholesome, healthy and strong. It also fears powerful yang energies, being the expression of vigor and health, as well as the flames that can panic the crows and disperse the flock.

Statistics

Speed:	+5
Footwork:	+10
Strike:	+5
Damage:	+10
Block:	+0
Toughness:	+5

Techniques:

Calling Out Crows(4)

Each flock starts with just a single bird, but more gather with every corpse that it finds. Each death brings out more carrion eaters, until finally all the world is covered with black feathers. Your attacks make the best of injured opponents in the same way, and overwhelm them while they are vulnerable.

- If the target of your attack has a wound condition, this style's Damage bonus increases to +15.

Heaven Darkened by Wings (3)

You abhor growth and recovery. Cruelly, you claw and peck at exposed organs, inflicting contagions and misery.

- When your attack inflicts a Ripple on a target, you may choose one of the following special benefits in addition to your attack's other effects:
- The target doesn't receive the benefit of Focusing on Breath at the end of this round;
- or he suffers a -5 penalty next round to recover from a Disoriented condition;
- or he suffers a -5 penalty next round to recover from a Disrupted condition.

Leaving No Remains (5)

Famished scavengers leave behind nothing, not even bone. Their hunger inspired this supremely vicious technique, filled with killing intent.

- This style's Strike bonus increases to +10.

Meat-Gorged Murder (4)

The flock must feed. A beak filled with flesh, a black feather stained red – these are the signs of prosperity.

- If you inflict a Ripple, this style's Speed bonus increases to +10 for the next round.

Sated Crow Takes Flight (4)

Once the flock has fed, the beasts within it disperse and the united whole spreads and ceases to exist.

- If you inflict a Ripple, this style's Footwork bonus increases to +15 until the end of the next round.

Shadow Catching

Saber, Sword

Qualities

It is said that a famous master created this style long ago and that he became so quick that he could overtake his own shadow! Swiftiness is the key to overcoming all adversity, he teaches, anticipating and eliminating problems before they can harm you. This style always stays on the move and seizes the initiative, striking an opponent and then retreating before a counter-attack can be made. Although it uses orthodox techniques, it is highly popular due to its fierce and impressively flashy displays, making it seem much more spectacular than its fundamental workings are.

Laughs At

This style laughs at versatility and reactive strategies, because it moves too swiftly to be truly kept up with. Such methods are left overwhelmed with the potential choices at their disposal as Shadow Catching rapidly employs one maneuver after another.

Fears

Shadow Catching fears anything that can keep up with its speed. The techniques it uses are quick but not particularly complex, and anybody who isn't overwhelmed by the quickness has little trouble unraveling the secrets behind the techniques. It also fears the unpredictable and unexpected because such things give it pause – a fatal mistake for this style!

Statistics

Speed:	+10
Footwork:	+10
Strike:	+5
Damage:	+5
Block:	+0
Toughness:	+5

Techniques:

Exceeding the Shadow (5)

Legend has it that the founder of this style ran so fast that he detached himself from his shadow. Although obviously nobody alive today could compare to this great grand-master, the followers of his martial tradition nevertheless master a form of footwork that allows for fabulous sprints!

- This style's Footwork bonus increases to +15.

Holding the Shadow (4)

Your movements are quick. Your form is ungraspable. Your enemies could no more harm you than they could grab illusions.

- If your initiative is higher than the attacker's, this style's Toughness bonus increases to +10.

Reflecting on Freedom (5)

Students of this style train knee-deep in marshes, with their clothes drenched and heavy with water or carrying great weights. Their bodies are made strong and light this way. When remembering their lessons, they feel as light as a feather!

- This style's Speed bonus increases to +15.

Three Visions Reunion (4)

So quick do you strike in all directions that your opponent cannot tell where you are – you appear to be making several attacks at once! Only when the attack finally strikes home do the seemingly separate assaults converge.

- If your initiative is higher than the target of your attack, this style's Strike bonus increases to +10.

World-Arranging Sweep (2)

The struggles of your enemies are in vain. Before they are able to accomplish their goals, you have already intervened and altered things to thwart them.

- You have a +5 bonus to any check made to break a Wave.

Storm God's Fury

Massive, Paired, Saber, Spear

Qualities

This style favors great speed and flurries to overwhelm the defenses of the enemy, hoping to exhaust opponents before the storm blows over. It strikes with raw force of motion, like hammering gusts of wind accompanied by lightning that scorches erratically through the sky.

Laughs At

The storm laughs at fluidness. It shapes the seas and lakes, commanding currents and waves to move in the same direction as the blowing wind. Excessive yang energies are also useless against the wind; when faced with the storm you should seek shelter, not struggle with it!

Fears

The great mountains and trees with sturdy roots are left unmoved by the storm, so this style fears solid, stable opposition. Also, the fury of the Storm God can be quenched by imposing a great deal of yin energy upon him – things that slow, calm, or cool down this style leave it toothless.

Statistics

Speed:	+10
Footwork:	+5
Strike:	+10
Damage:	+5
Block:	+0
Toughness:	+5

Techniques:*Howling Gale Force (3)*

A master of storms assaults his opponents at once with wind, rain, and lightning. He is an expert fighter who can attack with several methods at once!

- If you make an Area Attack, it is automatically selective without the need to Flood a die from your River.
- If you make a Secondary Attack, this style's Strike bonus counts as +15, for both the primary and the secondary.

Lightning Flash (5)

You deliver swift and certain destruction in the blink of an eye! Where once stood a tree lashed with rain and wind is now merely the charred remains of your handiwork.

- If your initiative is higher than the target of your attack and you make an immediate Rippling roll, you may flow a single die from the river into that roll.

Storm Burst (5)

Like the hurricane you sweep over the world, dominating the earth and snuffing out life.

- This style's Speed bonus increases to +15.

Tempest Step (4)

You move with the swiftness and immaterialness of the storm, sliding past blades like empty air.

- If your initiative is higher than the attacker's and you're Dodging, this style's Footwork bonus counts as +10.

Thunderclap (3)

Like the thunder that follows lightning, your searing blows throw the heavens into disarray.

- Any opponent who suffers an immediate Rippling Roll from your physical attacks also suffers a -5 penalty on his next initiative roll.

Subtle Force

Ranged, Sword, Unarmed

Qualities

This is a gentle, merciful way of fighting often practiced by monks and gentlemen. As much an ideology as a martial art, it teaches its students how to protect themselves with minimum risk to themselves and to their opponents. It approaches fights with a distinctly yin-aspected mindset to breeze past defenses with an economy of motion, subdue without struggle, and retreat from violence. The subtle force that can overcome mindless violence is, of course, kindness and forgiveness. Being a collection of methods unified by a single, common philosophy, it's not unheard of to hear people

refer to their style as "Subtle Hand" or "Subtle Blade" or the like, preferring that method above the others.

Subtle Force's universal approach works equally well against all things. Like kindness, it has nothing that opposes it naturally. It neither laughs at nor fears anything in particular.

Statistics

Speed:	+5
Footwork:	+10
Strike:	+10
Damage:	+0
Block:	+5
Toughness:	+5

Techniques:*Correct Approach (1 or 4 or 7)*

Regretfully there are many who are caught within a world of violence. Such individuals often refuse to listen to reason. Rather than slaying these persons, you can subdue them, if not without pain then certainly without lasting harm.

- If you make a Rippling roll, you may choose to cause superficial wounds. These function exactly as normal injuries, except they automatically heal after a good night's sleep. They can cause somebody to be Taken Out, but never killed, only unconscious. A superficial wound that becomes inflamed stays superficial, even if the inflaming attack itself does not deal superficial wounds. Attacks that deal superficial wounds can't inflame normal wounds.
- If you pay an additional 3 Destiny, this style's Damage bonus increases to +5 when rolling to create superficial wounds.
- Finally, if you pay another 3 Destiny this style's Damage bonus increases to +10 when rolling to create superficial wounds.

Disorder-Dissolving Presence (2)

You bring tranquility and stillness with you, allowing people a moment's time to collect their thoughts and realize their errors.

- You have a +5 bonus to any check made to break a Wave.

Fighting Without Fighting (3)

There is little need to harm your opponent. Violence is its own worst enemy! By redirecting the forces directed against you back upon the aggressor, you let them create their own misfortunes.

- When someone's strike or Marvel against you uses 0 on the die or set of dice, they must either accept Interesting Times or suffer a -5 penalty to the result of that particular check.

Heart-Cutting Strike (3)

Despite the name, this is not a violent attack. Instead of attacking the person himself, you disable the core of his violent actions: his fighting style. By striking key muscles and nerve clusters, you wash away his warlike stature without damaging organs or blood vessels.

- You may use a Disrupt Marvel instead of an attack,

allowing you to hamper your opponent without the need for a Minor Action. Use the Strike of the attack to determine the effectiveness of the Marvel. If you use an attack in this way, it no longer causes Ripples or Rippling rolls.

Patience Towards Conflict (5)

Instructing the bloodthirsty in the error of their ways is not without its risks. Often you will have to endure insults, hardships, or worse. When violence comes your way, let it move past and through you, doing you no harm as you do not offer any resistance.

- This style's Toughness bonus increases to +10.

INTERNAL KUNG FU

Basics

Internal kung fu utilizes your inner power to bring about great effects. Unlike External Kung Fu, it doesn't rely much on physical movements. (Certain motions can help to guide your chi, but that is a matter of description, not rules). With internal kung fu, you can make your body perform past its normal limits, or punch lightning straight into your enemy's skull!

When you purchase an Internal style, you immediately get its basic technique, a minor but defining core ability of the style.

Each style offers 30 destiny worth of upgrades in the form of additional techniques: five level 2 techniques, three level 3 techniques, two level 4 techniques and one level 5 technique. In order to learn a technique of a given level, you must know at least one technique of the previous level. Learning an advanced technique costs destiny equal to its level.

However, you can only learn one technique of each level. In essence, the rules provide you a package you can select from to make your own specific school of training. Different sub-schools who teach variations of the same basic style often have intense rivalries with one another. These sub-styles are often splinter schools from a common heritage, though some have simply been developed independently by two great minds who thought alike.

Example:

You decide to learn Fire Sutra, but from whom? One old master might teach a version called 'The Holy Flame' whose techniques are Breath of Buddha, Mantra of Immolation, The Sun Scripture, and Prayer of Cosmic Rebirth.

Meanwhile, another sifu in the neighboring town teaches a version he calls 'Yang Legends' whose techniques are Fire to Heaven Ascension, Elusive Desert Being, Aura of the Qilin, and Prayer of Cosmic Rebirth (which he happens to call "Phoenix Rebirth" instead).



Some Clans or Factions have a far more absolute mastery of certain kung fu styles than any others. They can potentially teach all techniques within the style, but they jealously guard their secrets; not just anybody is allowed to learn their prized kung fu! You will need to consult the Loresheets of such organizations to see what they can teach you.

Chi

Using an internal kung fu technique costs Chi equal to its level. Some techniques can be boosted, allowing you to spend more Chi beyond the required cost for additional effect. Some techniques can also be extended, which increases their duration.

A technique usually lasts for only a single roll. Most techniques make it clear from context when they should be used. A technique that increases your damage obviously has to be used during an attack, for example. Techniques that last for the entire round apply their benefits to all relevant rolls during that round.

You can use any given technique only once per round. Keep this in mind when facing superior numbers; if you only know a single defensive technique, you will fare reasonably well in a duel, but you won't be able to protect yourself as much against two enemies at once! Having some redundant techniques to fall back on can save your life. Secondary Attacks are the one exception to this rule: you may re-use any techniques you used on your attack on a Secondary Attack made with the same die roll. You still need to pay for these techniques separately.

Special Styles

Some styles are designated as special most of them are Elemental but can also be Enlightened or Corrupt styles. Any destiny you spend towards these styles cultivates special Chi of that type. See Cultivation in the Character Advancement section.

Kung Fu List

The internal styles available are as follows.

Boundless Prosperity Manual promotes the growth and health of the practitioner. You will learn flexible powers, expanding your strength in all things. This is an elemental Wood style.

Fire Sutra masters raging yang-energy. It is aggressive and powerful. This is an elemental Fire style.

Fox-Spirit Song projects false impressions to trick the enemy. It controls their perceptions to turn their 'sixth sense' against them

Heaven's Lightning uses the stable interaction between yin and yang to harmoniously combine offense, defense, and overwhelming power. This is an elemental Earth style.

Ice Sutra masters silent yin-energy to freeze opponents and robs them of their power. This is an elemental Water style.

Iron Body Skill hardens you, making you strong, rigid, and persistent. You will learn to be forceful like an axe, and

enduring like armor. This is an elemental Metal style.

Jade Spirit Sword combines the essence of the sword with the heart of its wielder. A focused mind, clear on its goals, will attain supreme swordplay.

Nine Sun Birds teaches you overwhelming speed. You strike first, and strike last.

Removing Concepts allows you to exceed your assumptions and see the world with clarity. Naturally flawless understanding comes from untainted perception; the best approach to any adversity will be obvious to you.

Thousand Venoms transforms your Chi into deadly toxins inspired by poisons found all over the world. This is a special corrupt style.

Unstained Lotus Mastery uses insidious breaking-techniques that shatter people from the inside. Skill, armor and even distance are no obstacle to your devastating art.

Boundless Prosperity Manual

(wood style)

One of the most famous instructions on health is the Boundless Prosperity Manual. It teaches proper breathing and exercise, and brings long life and vigorous health. Some rare copies go much further! They can teach you how to transcend mortal limitations through internal alchemy. Those who carefully decipher the clues and study the methods await a transformation to a higher state of being! These rare copies are all jealously guarded by gangs and martial masters.

Basic Technique:

1: "Retain Balanced Nature"

You promote the circulation of breath throughout your system by clearing away pollutants and obstructions.

- You have a +5 bonus to a roll made to remove a Disoriented or Disrupted Marvel, provided the Marvel is described as being caused by pain, blocked pressure points, injuries, or similar effects. You can also make such checks using only a single die, instead of needing a set.

Advanced Techniques:

2: *Act Without Resistance*

One of the many techniques of physical augmentation, the manual teaches you how to achieve a forcefulness in your movements that sweeps away opposing powers.

- You have a +10 bonus to Damage.

2: *Be Where You Must*

The key to increased physical potency isn't just greater power, but knowing when to show restraint. Precision can cut away unnecessary motion and purify your movement.

- Round-long duration.
- You have a +10 bonus to Footwork.

2: *Move According To Purpose*

Many act without being truly aware of what they are doing. You cast aside such sleepwalking and go through life with certainty and flawlessness.

- You have a +10 bonus to Strike.

2: Understand What You See

Hone your mind to clarity. All phenomena and occurrences will become obvious!

- You have a +10 bonus to Speed.

3: Covering Weakness with Strength

Many people in need of the Manual are sick, crippled or scarred. It can't restore what is truly lost, but it can help overcome the troubles these unfortunate conditions bring.

- Round-long duration. You may spend one Chi per round to extend the technique's duration another round; you must spend the Chi at the beginning of each new round.
- Treat your Injury Conditions as if they were one step less severe when determining the Action or Breath penalty they inflict.
- This doesn't cure or reduce the conditions, only their effects.

3: Fortifying Oneself against the World

The world is filled with harmful maladies that can damage your organs. The manual teaches methods which bolster the body against such dangers.

- Round-long duration.
- You have a +10 bonus to your Hardiness and to Chi Aura when resisting Rippling rolls caused by the Doctor's Arts.

3: Reflexes Like Lightning

Life is tenacious and adaptive. If you can fully attain these qualities, then you can truly be a master of yourself and of others.

- You have a +10 bonus to any Marvel or attempt to break a Wave.

4: Five Elements Supreme Combination

You can use internal alchemy to directly enhance the workings of your body.

- Round-long duration.
- You have a +15 bonus to your Speed, Footwork, Strike, Damage, Block, or Toughness.
- You may boost this technique, adding the bonus to another statistic for every two Chi you spend.

4: King of Heaven Shapes the Earth

You are struck by a fatal blow, yet miraculously you are alive! You direct blood away from the open wound, dull the pain with your will, and even rearrange your internal organs to keep them away from the injury. Only someone with absolute control over their own body could perform this feat.

- When someone makes a Rippling roll against you to cause an Injury or Medical Condition, reduce the number of dice in the roll by two. You may boost this technique to remove one more die per two Chi spent. You can't reduce the number of dice below one.

5: God-Body Transcendence

The final technique of the Manual is not taught, but understood. The accumulation of physical and spiritual health has created an immortal divine body that will endure after death on a higher level of existence. It is exhausting to do so,

but you can briefly bring forth this higher nature.

- Round-long duration. You may spend Chi each round to extend the technique's duration another round; you must spend the Chi at the beginning of each new round. The first extension costs 1 chi, the second costs 2 chi, the third costs 3 chi, and so on.
- Increase your Lake size by 1.

Fire Sutra

(fire style)

Few forces in the world are as primal and respected as fire, so it is no wonder that this sutra was a common art even in ancient days, particularly in the west where the sutras are thought to have been first written. Through meditation and purification, the student learns how to excite his own yang-energy to the point of ignition.

Basic Technique:

1: Thought of Flame

The most basic of techniques; once mastered, it is as easy and natural as exhalation. Internal power is gathered and expelled as yang-aspected energy.

- You can use the Burn effect as a Minor Action on your attack with a +5 bonus.

Advanced Techniques:

2: Breath of Buddha

You expel your internal power directly in to your opponent. Normally, a transfer of inner power is used to heal, but your raging energy heats and dehydrates their body

- If your strike hits, and the target has purified Earth, Metal or Water chi, he doesn't recapture any spent Chi points of those types at the end of this round.
- You have a +5 bonus to any Disrupt or Disorient Marvel that narratively uses heat or dehydration.

2: Fire to Heaven Ascension

It is the nature of fire to grow tall and turn away from the earth. Following this example, you transform your energy and achieve similar properties.

- You have a +15 bonus to your Footwork when rolling to ascend, such as by jumping or running upwards.

2: Fusing Flames

Bring a flame close to fuel and it will scorch or ignite, but bring two flames together and they only merge into a greater whole. Flame cannot burn flame. Instead of expelling your yang-energy, you keep it close to the surface, so that flames leave you unharmed.

- Round-long duration.
- You have a +10 bonus to your Chi Aura when rolling to protect against Burn damage.
- If one or more fighters other than you within your zone use any points of Fire Chi, you regain one additional point of normal Chi at the end of this round. You can gain only a single point this way, regardless of how many people use Fire Chi or how much they use.

2: Verse of Fire

A few simple words instruct the student on key points in their body to flow their internal energy through, and in what order. It's easy to learn, but the effects are spectacular: intensely hot fire!

- You can use the Burn effect as a Minor Action on your attack with a +10 bonus.

3: Elusive Desert Being

The texts speak of gods and ghosts that dwell in hot and distant places. A holy man once traveled far to seek these beings out, and he impressed them with his enlightenment. They rewarded him with their secrets, which he wrote down in this sutra. It speaks of foreign monsters made of smokeless fire, their cunning trickery, and their mirages.

- You must activate this technique while rolling initiative, and it lasts for the entire round.
- You have a +10 bonus to your Speed and Footwork.
- If you Dodge an attack, your opponent can negate this technique's bonus to your roll by including a Hard (30) Awareness check as a minor action on his attack roll. You may boost this technique to increase the difficulty by one step per point of Chi spent.

3: Mantra of Immolation

A profound phrase teaches a transformation of inner power to create fire so hot that it can melt iron.

- You can use the Burn effect as a Minor Action on your attack with a +15 bonus. If it forces an immediate Rippling roll, the roll receives a +5 bonus.

3: Nine-Fire Seal

Power coruscates through your body, flooding your chakra and bringing your nature closer to that of a wildfire than that of a mere man.

- Round-long duration.
- You have a +20 bonus to your Chi Aura when rolling to protect against Burn or Freeze damage.
- If you used this technique last round as well, you have a +5 bonus to your Strike this round.

4: Aura of the Qilin

The mythical Qilin symbolizes prosperity and wisdom, but its ability to surround itself in flames is more practical to you. You may not have seen such a beast yourself, but the sutras describe how to mimic this trick.

- Round-long duration.
- You have a +30 bonus to your Chi Aura when rolling to protect against Burn or Freeze damage.
- If you score a critical success on a Dodge roll, you may Reply against your opponent and inflict one Ripple.

4: The Sun Scripture

The sun is a heavenly fire of such strength that it can't reside on the earth. Your yang-energy approaches divine nature: you can create fire more brilliant than any torch, hearth, or forge.

- You can use the Burn effect as a Minor Action on your attack with a +20 bonus. If it forces an immediate Rippling roll, the roll receives a +10 bonus.

5: Prayer of Cosmic Rebirth

Religious texts describe the death and resurrection of the universe. A cleansing fire will consume all material existence, and so purge impurities. With a display of utmost skill and benevolence, you call upon the brightest fire that resides within the human spirit to free a life from its current, unclean incarnation.

- You can use the Burn effect as a Minor Action on your attack with a +20 bonus. If it forces an immediate Rippling roll, the roll receives a +15 bonus; any Chi Aura used to protect against this damage costs 2 Chi points per die to purchase.

Fox-Spirit Song

All warriors rely on a certain sixth sense to aid them in their fights. Awareness of Chi lets them sense the presence of enemies and reveal their intentions and power. The hulijing laughs at such abilities! Just as the eye and ear can be fooled, so can chi-awareness. Through fine control over your own power, you present deceptions to confound those who stand against you.

Basic Technique:

1: Fox Leaves No Tracks

You give your enemies pause by hiding your intentions, leaving them guessing as to yours plans. You can use this breathing room to act safely, knowing your foes will fail to capitalize on any *weaknesses* in your form.

- This entire round all opponents receive a -10 penalty to break your Waves.

Advanced Techniques:

2: Flicking Tail Lashings

Just as the fox appears to be defeated, she scornfully laughs and twists around to reveal one more unexpected trick.

- You can apply a +5 Strike bonus after your opponent rolls his defense.

2: Hidden Teeth

There's more to a fox's mouth than amused smiles and poorly-hidden mockery. Listen too intently to her song and you can forget that she is still a hunter, with fangs.

- You substitute your Perform bonus for your external style's Strike bonus. Your target uses his Wu Wei skill as his default defense. Your opponent may still use Dodge or Block, but the attack considers them inferior options and imposes a -5 penalty to both.

2: Mirthful Fox Plays With Her Shadow

You pull off a cunning deception and make your enemies think your attacks are more dangerous than they truly are.

- For this attack, you automatically Laugh at your opponent, and can't Fear him. Your opponent's defense automatically Fears you and can't Laugh at you.

2: Parting the Grass

Swords and lances may fall at you like rain, but their numbers are meaningless if you can open up a path and walk away unchallenged.

- You have a +10 bonus to your Dodge, or a +15 bonus if it is an area attack that can exclude targets. Whether it excluded anyone is irrelevant; if it can be selective, then you can manipulate it into missing you.

3: Songs of Mystery

Those who try to analyze your movements are left dumbfounded. They search for patterns and find only contradictions!

- Round-long duration.
- If you use an Approach from the Warrior's Arts, enemies trying to identify or soothe it suffer a -20 penalty to those checks.
- If enemies use Extraordinary Techniques from the Warrior's Arts against you that require them to flood dice, they must flood two dice to get the benefit of one.

3: Laughing Face under Smiling Mask

Trapping a trickster fox is an impossible task. It is the height of overconfidence to even consider it!

- You have a +20 bonus to your Dodge against attempts to Disorient or Disrupt you.

3: Dispersing Like Songs

You suddenly conceal your presence within the surroundings; it feels as if you briefly cease to exist. It's too short to be of any use in hiding - your sudden "reappearance" would only draw attention - but it creates a split-second moment where your enemies have no idea what you're trying to do.

- Your attack may not include any Marvels; your window of opportunity is so small that you can't afford to focus on secondary concerns.
- You reverse the usual order of rolling and declaration: your opponent rolls defense first, and you roll the attack afterwards. This lets you delay choices such as whether to use certain techniques or the River.

4: Leading Astray the Innocent

Fox spirits are regarded as malevolent beings that tempt

humans in to folly, and with good reason. You can fool people in to ignoring their common sense by giving off false impressions.

- You have a +20 bonus to Disorient or Disrupt your target.

4: One-Tail-amongst-Nine Dance

You cruelly play with your enemies, tormenting them with confusion as much as by spilling blood.

- If your strike succeeds, you inflict one additional Ripple.
- You can use this technique after the defender makes his roll.

5: Eyes Away From Heaven

"An old monk meditates upon lovely maidens. / A soldier slacks his duties for a cup of wine.

A king ignores wisdom due to his love of gold. / Enlightenment is praised by all yet achieved by few."

So goes the fox's mocking song. This bitter lesson is passed directly to the unwilling student, whose eyes are opened at once, and yet closed. He only perceives what the fox allows him to perceive.

- If your strike succeeds, then the opponent loses one die from their Lake on any roll that opposes you for the rest of the fight, just as if you had spent a point of Malicious Joss.
- Victims may make a Wu Wei check as a Minor Action on their initiative roll with a difficulty equal to the total Strike that inflicted this technique. On a success, they regain their full senses and are no longer affected by this technique.

Heaven's Lightning (earth style)

The story goes that the people of the great plains were beset by invaders wielding terrible forces of nature. From the far west, Tigers brought fire. From the far north, Wolves brought frost. When all hope seemed faded, a hero like a dragon arrived. With the power of heaven on his side, victory was assured.

This style relies on neither yin nor yang, but the rapid transition from one state to another. The interaction between opposites—Heaven and Earth, light and dark—is what creates lightning, the purest expression of energy.



Basic Technique:*1: Yin and Yang Rotation*

Using fortified Chi as a grounded center, you cycle your inner power through stages of growth and recline. Do this quickly and you discharge sparks of power into all you touch.

- You can use the Shock effect as a Minor Action on your attack with a +5 bonus.

Advanced Techniques:*2: Bringing Together Heaven and Earth*

When energy strikes, you let it flow through you harmlessly and dissipate into the ground and air.

- Round-long duration.
- You have a +10 bonus to your Chi Aura when rolling to protect against Shock damage, and a +5 bonus against Burn or Freeze damage.

2: Travelling the Instant Path

Rather than creating lightning, you emulate it! You eliminate hesitation, moving naturally and immediately. This is the way of lightning.

- You have a +10 bonus to your Speed.

2: Yellow Emperor's Hand

Lightning can sear and destroy, but it's not limited to destruction, like fire. You can carefully target the muscles of your enemies, to drop them before you as if they were kowtowing or drive them away from your presence!

- You have a +10 bonus to Disorient or Knockback your target.

2: Yin and Yang Separation

You let your yin and yang energies gather on a point, then instantly force them apart. The sudden 'vacuum' of energy fills up with lightning!

- You can use the Shock effect as a Minor Action on your attack with a +10 bonus.

3: Holding Yin and Yang

Opposites are not necessarily opposed; they complement and create each other. Most Heaven's Lightning techniques require you to separate your energies, but this technique brings them explosively together.

- You have a +5 bonus to your Strike.
- You have a +5 bonus to your Damage.
- You have a +5 bonus to any Shock effect you create.
- You can boost this technique for an extra +5 Strike or Damage. You are limited to boosting by 5 total points per Rank achieved. (So if you are Fourth Rank you can at most increase Strike by 10, Damage by 10, or both by 5.) You can't boost the bonus to Shock effects.

3: Lightning Strike

Your power tears through your hands with a thunderclap, making even a touch lethal.

- You can use the Shock effect as a Minor Action on your attack with a +15 bonus. If it forces an immediate Rippling roll, the roll receives a +5 bonus.

3: Sky under Storm

Dark clouds may flash with lightning, and the trees might

crack and fall when struck, but the air between them is left unscathed. Heaven's bolts pass through with disinterest.

- Round-long duration.
- You have a +20 bonus to your Chi Aura when rolling to protect against Shock damage.
- You have a +10 bonus to your Dodge when rolling to evade a Shock Marvel.

4: Dragon Chi

You have mastered your inner power, and purified it to the most potent combination of yin and yang. You can be said to be a supreme warrior, lord of the Earth and soldier of Heaven!

- Round-long duration. You may spend one Chi per round to extend the technique's duration another round; you must spend the Chi at the beginning of each new round.
- When you Focus on Breath, it also improves the regeneration of Earth Chi.
- When you use any technique that lets you use the Shock effect with a bonus, you can instead apply the bonus to one of the following: Speed, Footwork, Strike, Damage, Block, or Toughness.

4: Scattering Yin and Yang

Yin and yang's perfect interaction shines in this technique, which creates lightning with the greatest intensity that a human being could hope for.

- You can use the Shock effect as a Minor Action on your attack with a +20 bonus. If it forces an immediate Rippling roll, the roll receives a +10 bonus.

5: Earth Chi Rejection

The entire world is surrounded by a field of power, known to the educated as the "Chi of the Earth." You can charge your opponent with lightning to put them in opposition to this energy field; your enemies don't face your power, they face the power of the entire living world!

- You can use the Shock effect as a Minor Action on your attack with a +25 bonus. If it forces an immediate Rippling roll, the roll receives a +15 bonus.
- If the Shock effect of this attack hits, the target takes -10 penalty to Chi Aura rolls to protect against Rippling rolls caused by Shock damage for the rest of the fight.

Ice Sutra**(water style)**

Stillness, silence, and hunger are the hallmarks of winter – and of Ice Sutra Style. Purified yin-energy manifests as bitter cold capable of reducing even the greatest of men to shivering wrecks. This style is particularly common in the North.

Basic Technique:*1: Moment of Cold*

The first lesson of the Frost Sutra student is to achieve a state of passivity so devoid of form or action that heaven and earth seem to pass her by. Being in this kind of meditation for too long would surely unmake her, but when called upon but briefly, that heatless feeling can be safely handled.

- You can use the Freeze effect as a Minor Action on your attack with a +5 bonus.

Advanced Techniques:

2: Heart-Chilling Frost

You exude an intensely cold aura around yourself and your weapon. Those who inhale this wicked air find that it suppresses life rather than nurturing it.

- If your strike hits, and the target has purified Wood, Fire or Earth chi, he doesn't recover any spent Chi points of those types at the end of this round.
- You have a +5 bonus to any Disrupt or Disorient Marvel that exploits the use of cold or freezing.

2: Ice Cracking the Willow

The sturdy forest that bends in the storm shudders when winter comes. The boughs weigh down with snow, and the cold creeps into the core; the once-proud tree splinters and falls. Thusly your chilling attack cuts through iron and bone!

- Apply a -10 penalty to the defender's Toughness.

2: Snow-Carrying Clouds

The cold is seen as a destroyer, yet it can co-exist with many things in nature. Learn to be like the elusive north wind, the stone mountains, and the shifting dark clouds; you'll be unharmed.

- Round-long duration.
- You have a +10 bonus to your Chi Aura when rolling to protect against Freeze damage.
- You have a +5 bonus to your Toughness.

2: Verse of Frost

A short line of sacred text instructs the flows of Chi to purge all notion of warmth.

- You can use the Freeze effect as a Minor Action on your attack with a +10 bonus.

3: Frozen Shadow

Snow and freezing winds swirl around you; you become a focal point of cold. Fighting you is like fighting a blizzard!

- Round-long duration.
- Everybody in the same zone attacking you suffers a -5 penalty to their Strike.
- You may boost this technique to increase the penalty by 5 per point of Chi spent. You can only increase the penalty by 5 points per Rank you have.

3: Mantra of Winter

A profound understanding of frost's true nature gives rise to this technique. The student and her weapons are coated in creeping ice which forms from moisture in the air, growing at an abnormal rate.

- You can use the Freeze effect as a Minor Action on your attack with a +15 bonus. If it forces an immediate Rippling roll, the roll receives a +5 bonus.

3: Unmoving Yin Air

You grow cold and pale. Your heart beats only a few times per minute. Some would say you are like the cruel winter; others, like death.

- Round-long duration.
- You have a +20 bonus to your Chi Aura when rolling to protect against Burn or Freeze damage.
- Treat your passions and inspirations as if they were one step less severe. This doesn't cure or reduce the conditions, only their effects.

4: Devastation of Black Ice

Your freezing aura creeps over your hands and weapons, coating them with a thin layer of frost. This frost is held together with bleakest yin, and it yearns to smother warmth. The hungering ice eagerly reaches out towards its prey to wither life.

- Apply a -10 penalty to the defender's Dodge and Block.
- If the attack hits, inflict one additional Ripple.

4: The Lunar Scripture

Your own Chi now resembles the moon's pale light, a divine source of yin-energy. The frost you create is colder than anything in the natural world.

- You can use the Freeze effect as a Minor Action on your attack with a +20 bonus. If it forces an immediate Rippling roll, the roll receives a +10 bonus.

5: Returning-to-the-Void Prayer

The sutras tell of the creation of the world, when all sprang forth from nothingness. You emulate this primordial void in your thought and power. Invoking it ceases thought, action, and being.

- You can use the Freeze effect as a Minor Action on your attack with a +25 bonus. If it forces an immediate Rippling roll is forced the roll receives a +15 bonus.
- If the Freeze effect of this attack hits, the target regains no Chi of any sort at the end of this round.

Iron Body Skill

(metal style)

Arguably the "hardest" kung fu one can find, the Iron Body Skill uses Chi to directly strengthen the bones and muscles of the practitioner. When this style is combined with a tolerance for pain, its masters seem indestructible. You test your mastery of Iron Body Skill by striking an iron pot filled with hot coals and letting people freely strike your body with iron rods.. If you aren't crippled for life, you pass!

Basic Technique:

1: Iron Power

By strengthening the tendons and joints with inner power, you can strike with much more force than is safe for normal people.

- You have a +5 bonus to Damage.

Advanced Techniques:

2: Grand Horse Tramples Rice

Your movements are inexorable once begun; your inner power endows them with irresistible force that bulls through opposition.

- You have either a +10 bonus to Knockback your target or a +15 bonus to Cover Ground.

2: Humble Man's Stern Rebuke.

This powerful attack strikes with a single undeniable blow, shattering opposition and denial.

- You have a +10 bonus to Strike.

2: Mountain Endures Storm

You strengthen your skin to a stone-like hardness and subtly bend with impact to dissipate the power of an attack.

- You have a +10 bonus to Toughness.

2: The Jade Tiger Techniques

Many hardships may befall you, but you need not fear them. You have learned how to concentrate Chi directly in your Chi meridians to withstand them. You have learned 72 distinct techniques, each focusing on a different part of your body, for concentrating inner power directly in your Chi meridians to withstand harm. Depending on whether you try to fight off sickness, keep a fractured bone together, or try to break a wall, you might actually be using “Jade Tiger Defies Winter”, “Jade Tiger Nurtures His Legs”, or “Jade Tiger's Flexing Claws.”

- Round-long duration.
- You have a +5 bonus to the hardness and might skills.
- You have a +5 bonus to Chi Aura rolls. This doesn't stack with your Toughness bonus, but it does apply against rolls such as energy attacks that don't allow you to make use of that statistic.

3: Leading Ox Through River

The untrained body is treacherous: pain and crude instincts cause doubt, fear, and a loss of focus. With your self-mastery, this is no a concern.

- You ignore up to 20 total points worth of penalties caused by Marvels, techniques, or Chi conditions.

3: Fierce Dragon Breaks Bones

Your Chi greatly magnifies your destructive power. With this technique you can leave your palm print on bronze bells or smash boulders to powder!

- You have a +15 bonus to Damage.

3: Swaying Branches Surround Willow

You infuse your limbs with potent inner strength to brush aside attacks that would ordinarily snap or sever them.

- You have a +15 bonus to Block.

4: Eternal Temple's God-Armor

A superb combination of hardness and softness makes you nearly impervious to attacks.

- You have a +15 bonus to Toughness.
- Round-long duration. You may spend one Chi per round to extend the technique's duration another round; you must spend the Chi at the beginning of each new round.

4: Black Tigers Hunting

This technique has the lethal force of an entire family of wild tigers. It's pretty amazing to watch from a safe distance!

- You have a +20 bonus to Strike.
- You have a +10 bonus either to Disorient or Disrupt your target.

5: Iron Buddha's Disapproval

The force of this technique is a world-altering power, radiating from inner energy, guided by the hand. Those injured by this technique are unmade, as if expunged from the world by divine decree. Those killed by this technique leave no corpses, erased from existence!

- You have a +25 bonus to Damage.
- If this attack causes an Injury Condition, the Recovery of that condition is increased by 10 and its Duration is 5.

Jade Spirit Sword

The sword takes the longest to master, but it is the most rewarding of all weapons. Like Chi itself, it combines sharp and gentle aspects, hardness and softness, clarity and illusion. Generations of grandmasters have praised the sword and devoted themselves to passing on the weapons greatest potential to their students. All soon discovered that it is not the arm or the mind that makes the sword great, but the heart. Do not struggle against what comes naturally to you, but live in accordance with it. This style is the culmination of centuries of efforts, the secret to become the true master of the sword – and to let the sword master you.

All techniques of this style can only be used while fighting with a sword.

Basic Technique:

1: Sword-Heaven

The sword can be furious or calm, seething or admiring. There is no emotion or concept that cannot be reflected with the swords movements. Like Heaven, it is grand, and encompasses all underneath it.

- Choose any weapon type, with the exception of Paired, Ranged or Unarmed. Until the end of the round your sword adds the characteristics of that type of weapon to its own. This allows you to claim the weapon bonuses of both, and to combine different types of styles as if it were a special weapon.

Advanced Techniques:

2: Dragon in Flight

Your sword swiftly flies forward, striking at enemies and cutting a path through troubles.

- You have a +5 bonus to Speed. If you have a Passion or Inspiration *Hyperactivity* and act in accordance with it, you may use your initiative result to Cover Ground.

2: Iron Bows before the Tiger

With a ferocious lunge, the sword pierces through all obstacles like a tiger's talons through flesh.

- You have a +5 bonus to Damage. If you have a Passion or Inspiration *Hyperactivity* and act in accordance with it, your opponent doesn't add his armor to his Chi total if you make a Rippling roll.

2: Snake Hiding in Grass

The deceptive and cold sword lashes out suddenly, hard to predict and impossible to take lightly. Its hidden power can only be gleaned by counting its endless victims!

- You have a +5 bonus to Strike. If you have a Passion or Inspiration *Hyperactivity* and act in accordance with it, your attack still inflicts one Ripple if it misses by 5 points or less.

2: Soaring Phoenix

The sword dances lightly around the battlefield, brushing aside threats like motes of dust.

- You have a +5 bonus to Block. If you have a Passion or Inspiration *Hyperactivity* and act in accordance with it, you may Reply if your defense exceeds the attack by at least 10 points.

3: Blade of Infinity Strokes

Your attacks fuse together into a single, endless assault that flows like a river.

- You have a Secondary Strike.

3: Flawless Blade

You know your weapon perfectly, like an extension of your own body.

- Reroll an attack roll.

3: Iron Heart Clarity

Fighting is an expression of conflicting desires and ambitions. Warriors reveal their true selves through their actions! Your understanding of blades brings you understanding of their wielders.

- Use this technique after one of your attacks is blocked or you block an attack; it doesn't matter whether the block is successful or not. The opponent reveals to you her current River and how much Chi she has left, including elemental chi, but not including Corrupt Chi or enlightened chi.

4: Scything Moonlight Cut

Your sword becomes like pale light, a diffuse shining that reaches through the darkness and illuminates the world.

- This attack is an Area Attack. It is automatically selective without the need to Flood a die from the River. If you have a Passion or Inspiration *Hyperactivity* and act in accordance with it, opponents struck by this attack suffer one additional Ripple.

4: Tenfold Steel Guard

You move your sword so swiftly around you that you are encased in steel at all times, like armor woven from swordplay and chi.

- You have a +15 bonus to Block and a +10 bonus to Toughness.
- If you have a Passion or Inspiration *Hyperactivity* and act in accordance with it, this technique has round-long duration.



5: Sword-Mindset

The supreme sword and the supreme warrior are not separate beings. Just as the sword followed the guidance of your heart, your heart now follow the guidance of the sword. Harmonious and natural, your power becomes all-encompassing!

- Round-long duration. You may spend two Chi per round to extend the technique's duration another round; you must spend the Chi at the beginning of each new round.
- For the purpose of Jade Spirit Sword techniques, you are considered to be acting in accordance with a Passion *hyperactivity*. Each round, you may use one second-level Jade Spirit Sword technique which you know at no cost.

Nine Sun Birds

The story goes that some men were arguing who was fastest. One boasted that he had the speed of the wind and none could win against him in any race. Another claimed he had the movement of the panther and nobody would win against his claw-form. A third staked his pride on the flight of the falcon, a fourth on the horse whose endurance lets it run for hours. They all had good kung fu, but the matter remained unresolved.

One day, a philosopher happened to pass by and overheard their conversation. He laughed and said, "Hero Hou Yi, whose arrows slew nine suns, can tell you what is quicker than all of these." He knew that the sun traverses all the world in a single day, never grows tired, and conceals its effortless superiority with the illusion of slowness. What better kung fu could there be?

Basic Technique:

1: Cry of the Golden Crow

The sun rises quickly in the mountainous highlands; one moment all is darkness, the other moment all is light. Become a sudden presence without prior warning!

- You have a +5 bonus to Speed.

Advanced Techniques:

2: Dipping Crow

Your amazing speed conceals a clever trick: you're intentionally holding back. By slowing down and conserving energy, you can muster sudden bursts of speed to evade attacks more effectively than trying to constantly perform at your peak.

- You have a +10 bonus to Dodge.

2: Hou Yi's Arrows

Your assault is deadly quick and precise. Surely only the God of Archery himself could compare!

- You have a +10 bonus to Strike.

2: Light Diffused By Clouds

When clouds hide the sun, light still shines through, but it's hard to tell exactly where the sun is. This technique accomplishes a similar result, losing nothing in brilliance but obscuring it with vaporous intentions.

- People whose Initiative exceeds yours by 20 points or less can't break your waves, as if the waves had already finished. They don't actually finish until your turn comes up, but their completion becomes inevitable.

2: Three-Legged Shuffle

The legendary sun crows are said to have three legs. This technique is inspired by that imagery. It uses such speed and confusing movements that your enemies see impossible contradictions.

- You can make your initiative roll after everyone else, allowing you to make your choices based upon their results and planned Waves. If two or more people use this technique, then they make their rolls simultaneously after the others.

3: Flight of the Golden Crow

You soar over the world like sunlight, crossing streams, mountains, and cities instantly.

- You may cross multiple zones within a single Cover Ground result. After traveling to a new zone, treat all adjacent zones as one difficulty step higher to reach; if your result is still high enough to reach a new zone, you may move there. Repeat this process, cumulatively increasing difficulties, can't go further or don't want to.

3: Lashing Flurry

This attack overwhelms enemies with rapid strikes that flow into an endless assault.

- You have a Secondary Strike.

3: Scattering the Golden Feathers

Your weapon seems to multiply, leaving bright images of itself in its wake. A slash comes to resemble a great feathered wing sweeping over the battlefield!

- This attack is an Area Attack.

4: Crow Eclipses the Sun

Just as you seem cornered or surrounded, your great speed allows you to perform one of the best defenses there is: you seem to cease to exist.

- You have a +20 bonus to Dodge.
- You may boost this technique. Each point of Chi spent grants you a +5 Dodge bonus against a different element of the same attack, up to a maximum of +15. Each separate element is also boosted separately. (For example, you could use the main bonus to evade an attack's Strike, and then boost Chi to improve your defense against a Disrupt marvel.)

4: Supreme Burst of Speed

This technique's speed is like the sun itself: it has no equal on earth!

- You have a +20 bonus to Speed.
- This entire round, you have a +5 Finesse bonus and a +5 Footwork bonus.

5: Reincarnating Nine Brothers

Hero Hou Yi had to slay the legendary sun birds; they all played together in the sky, but their combined heat was so strong that it threatened to scorch away all life! This technique makes your speed so ferocious that you appear to have nine copies of yourself joining you in the fight.

- You have a +25 bonus to Strike.
- You can use the Burn effect as a minor action on your attack with a +10 bonus.



Removing Concepts

Men go through life trapped in illusion, seeing only their own assumptions and desires rather than the reality in front of them. You open your eyes and mind to what is really there. The higher truth is your world now, and you see solutions where others have yet to stumble upon the problems.

Basic Technique:

1: *Calm Heart Skill*

First, you must learn to quiet your feelings and mind. Empty yourself, and true understanding will flow towards you as naturally as rivers flow downward.

- You have a +5 bonus to Awareness or Wu Wei.

Advanced Techniques:

2: *All-Seeing Eye of God*

You have already read intentions from the smallest of movements. You evade attacks through not existing where your enemies expect you to be. An omniscient defense, a sure sign of divinity!

- When rolling to Dodge, you may substitute your external style's basic Footwork bonus with either your Awareness or Wu Wei skill bonus.

2: *Continuation of Motion*

Your opponents may frantically move this way or that, but you aren't aiming for them. You're aiming at where they will be in one heartbeat.

- When rolling to attack, you may substitute your external style's basic Strike bonus with either your Awareness or Wu Wei skill bonus.

2: *Spontaneous Effort*

You do without thought. You achieve without exertion.

- This roll, you can perform a single Minor Action that is based on a single die instead of needing a set.

2: *The Instant Now*

Panic and doubt set in when confronting the strange and unusual, but you have never truly been in this location and point in time, going through life from one unique moment to another. After all, when in the past has it ever been right now? You need only a glimpse to understand the nature and shortcomings of any action.

- You have a +10 bonus to any action to break a Wave.

3: *Clarity in Openness*

When you let go of restraints that are ultimately self-imposed, you can excel in all things.. The sign of a master is, after all, not effort but the lack of effort when doing great things.

- You have a +10 bonus to any single Skill check.

3: *Impassive Existence*

Most troubles are only obstacles to routine and traditional ways. Accept your condition, and invent new ways for all your troubles.

- Round-long duration.
- Any and all penalties to your rolls you might be suffering from are reduced by 5.

3: *The Force of Lightness*

Eliminate all motion except the strictly necessary, and you achieve an effectiveness in your fighting that resembles swiftness, and yet entirely transcends it.

- You have a Secondary Strike.

4: *Existing Without Definition*

The wise man is not educated. The educated man is not wise. All beings affect their surroundings and communicate their identity to it. Stop forcing your will on the universe, and the universe stops enforcing its will on you.

- When someone makes a Rippling roll against you to cause a Passion, Inspiration, Curse, Influence, or Prediction, reduce the dice in the roll by two.. You may boost this technique to further reduce the amount by one die per two Chi spent. You can't reduce the amount of dice to zero.

4: *Yielding to Adversity*

Give up your struggles and relent your determination. Learn how to bend and see new approaches.

- In an opposed roll, re-roll your entire Lake.

5: *Erasing the Concept of Emptiness*

One of the last few barriers to true perception is the word "emptiness" itself, and the associations it planted in your perspective. Lift that barrier and you sense the All as it is. Of greatest interest are the 'breaking points', vulnerable places that erase the object or person along with all fading illusions when struck.

- Make an Awareness check as a minor action on the initiative roll, and choose a target.
- Later within this same round, if you get a Rippling roll against that target, you may forgo rolling and instead treat the result of the Awareness check as the result of the Rippling roll. The target may still use Chi Aura to resist it.

Thousand Venoms (corrupt style)

Poison can be found all over the world. Insects, plants, reptiles, minerals, fish and even the human body can all contain substances that are harmful to others. This style is a collection of techniques and observations by doctors and assassins alike, gathered and brought together with a single grim purpose: to transform your own Chi so it is deadly to others, killing with only a breath.

Basic Technique:

1: *Cobra Strike*

Unclean Chi flows outwards and into the body of your victim, where it curdles the blood black.

- You can use the Poison effect as a Minor Action on your attack with a +5 bonus.

Advanced Techniques:

2: *Black Wasp Sting Husk Technique*

As a student of toxicology, you frequently risk exposure to poison. This technique uses a tiny amount of special poison generated in the heart to temporarily stop the flow of blood and harden your meridians, stopping the spread of

harmful substances and giving you time to cleanse yourself.

- Round-long duration.
- You have a +10 bonus to your Chi Aura when rolling to protect against Poison damage.
- You have a +5 bonus to checks to prevent or remove effects that directly impact the functioning of your body. This includes the Doctor's Arts, Marvels described as pressure point techniques, etc.

2: Miasma of Long Suffering

Your inner energy transforms into a harmful vapor that infiltrates the lungs of your victim. It clings there and chokes him, weakening him from within. Those who try to purge the miasma fall into a devious trap: purging the miasma stirs it up and bursts arteries in the lungs!

- If this attack inflicts any Ripples, then an amount of the subject's normal Chi equal to the number of Ripples inflicted becomes infected. Two points of infected Chi need to be spent to gain the benefit of one normal chi. Multiple applications of this technique stack. The quickest way to remove tainted Chi is to spend it, but you can also expel it with a Hard (30) Hardiness or Medicine check as a Minor Action on the Initiative roll, with success healing a single point. Otherwise, the points heal naturally at a rate of one per round.
- If the subject Focuses on Breath while he has any amount of tainted Chi in his reserves, he suffers one Ripple.

2: Power-Dissolving Radiance

Like rust eating away at iron, or a viper slithering unseen through a garden, your evil energies scatter the protective air that surrounds living things.

- If this attack forces a Rippling roll, the defender can only purchase up to one less than his usual maximum Chi Aura dice. If the defender needs to make multiple rolls, this effect counts for all of them.
- You can use this technique any time before the defender's Chi Aura roll.

2: Scorpion and Toad Tablet

This is a more advanced application of the style's basic technique. It was rediscovered only recently, written on a forgotten stone by an unknown assassin in ancient times. Exposed victims start to rot on the inside, their blood stinking like the dead, their organs bruised and sore like rotten fruit.

- You can use the Poison effect as a Minor Action on your attack with a +10 bonus.

3: Devil-Flower Essence

In a faraway land, mysterious plants with beautiful black flowers grow. Their scent is very sweet and pleasing, but it has an unusual property: only the pure can survive it. Upon smelling it, old scars reopen, illnesses return, and residual traces of poison bubble up into fierce virulence. They are a forbidden treasure which mankind was never meant to experience.

- If the target currently has a Trivial or Minor Poison condition, this attack inflicts one extra Ripple.
- If the target currently has a Major Poison condition, this attack inflicts two extra Ripples.

3: Iron Blood Strike

Your venomous Chi thickens the blood until it becomes grey sludge oozing through putrid veins.

- You can use the Poison effect as a Minor Action on your attack with a +15 bonus. If it forces an immediate Rippling roll, the roll receives a +5 bonus.

3: White Mist Exhalation

Your mastery over poison lets you swiftly purge yourself of all toxins, expelling them into a deadly cloud of poison gas that swirls around your hands and weapon.

- Round-long duration.
- You have a +20 bonus to your Chi Aura when rolling to protect against Poison damage.
- If you use any technique that lets you use the Poison effect, then that becomes an Area attack. Other parts of the attack do not become Area attack. This comes in the form of a deadly fog, so you can't make this Area attack selective. You're immune to your own attack.

4: Organ-Despoiling Evil

This is a supremely Malicious technique that refines your Chi not just with internal alchemy, but also with spite and the will to do harm. The venom eats away at the insides of the victim to hollow them out like a gutted fish!

- You can use the Poison effect as a Minor Action on your attack with a +20 bonus. If it forces an immediate Rippling roll, the roll receives a +10 bonus.



4: Transformation of Dark Jade

With controlled applications of poison, you briefly toughen your skin to dry leather, deaden your nerves so you don't feel pain, and pull your tendons tighter. The result is an unhealthy increase in power and an unwholesome strength. Frequently using of this technique is likely to eat away at your lifespan.

- Round-long duration. You may spend two Chi per round to extend the technique's duration another round; you must spend the Chi at the beginning of each new round.
- You have a +10 bonus to Speed, Footwork, Strike, Damage, Block, and Toughness.
- You automatically gain one Ripple whenever you activate or extend this technique.

5: Five Divine Venoms

There exist five special venoms, said to be the strongest in nature. This technique combines them all to create a vile mixture in the victim's body. Each toxin can only be held in check by the efforts of one specific organ, but they also each attack a different organ; in unison the five destroy the body's defenses in a cycle of reinforcement!

- You can use the Poison effect as a Minor Action on your attack with a +25 bonus. If it forces an immediate Rippling roll, the roll receives a +15 bonus.
- If this attack causes a Poison Chi condition, the condition has the following special property. At the end of any scene where the target physically exerted himself or had a quickened heartbeat, including the scene where the condition was created, roll three dice and compare the result to the subject's Chi Threshold. If the roll's result is equal or higher, then the difficulty to remove the condition increases by 5 points. This effect is cumulative, and can increase the difficulty to a maximum of Legendary (80). Dangerous scenes include combat, running, physical labor, or receiving very upsetting news. Basically, you should remain calm and move slowly to avoid this roll.

Unstained Lotus Mastery

The lotus is a divine flower with symbolic power. It is pure, even though it grows up from puddles of water and mud. Long ago, a master sought to bring such cleanliness to his fights. It was one thing to kill people, but they shouldn't leave such a mess behind! He created a style that poured all power into his enemies' internal organs, rather than cutting open their flesh from the outside. In this way, he could fight without worrying about spattering blood that could dirty his sleeves or beard.

Basic Technique:

1: Lotus Point

This insidious technique sends hairline fractures through the body of your opponent. While individually harmless, you can guide them to converge in a single point in his internal organs with careful aim. And with one more strike... a red flower blooms. For this reason, such minute fractures are called "petals" by students of this style.

- If your strike hits, inflict one petal on your opponent. You can use this technique after the defender rolls.
- Petals heal naturally after a day, and are usually undetectable. If somehow revealed or deduced, petals can be cured prematurely with a Fantastic (60) Medicine check in combat. A doctor who has time for a more thorough treatment only needs a Memorable (40) check. Each check removes a single petal.

Advanced Techniques:

2: Blossoming in Scarlet Soil

You direct the internal pressure towards bruising bones and joints or fraying tendons.

- If you force a Rippling roll to create an Injury Condition, you may expend petals to add one die to the roll per petal spent, as if they had been additional Ripples. Unlike true Ripples, these additional dice only count for this single roll, not later ones

2: Breaking the Depths

You can focus pressure on the internals of your opponent to directly deteriorate his health.

- If your Strike hits, you may expend petals to spontaneously create a Disrupt condition without the need for a Marvel. One petal makes the difficulty of curing the condition Moderate (20); each additional petal increases the difficulty by one step.

2: Breaking the Flow

You impose vertigo on your enemies by forcing spikes or lulls in their blood pressure.

- If your Strike hits, you may expend petals to spontaneously create a Disorient condition without the need for a Marvel. One petal makes the difficulty of curing the condition Moderate (20); each additional petal increases the difficulty by one step.

2: Lotus-Forged Needle

You project power from your weapon that darts through the air. Often, you seem to shoot a copy of your weapon, a gleaming blade composed of force and sharpness. What better method to avoid staining your clothes than to kill your enemies from ten paces away?

- You may make your attack against a target one zone away.

3: Lotus Field

This technique is a more advanced application of the style's basic principles. Rather than a single, thin fracture, this technique creates spreading networks of cracks, making bones fall into shards like glass.

- If your strike hits, inflict two petals on your opponent. You can use this technique after the defender rolls.

3: The Smaller Power

A sharp weapon has a great advantage over blunt ones because it can concentrate power over a smaller area. You master your weapon to make it focus their power even more tightly. A dull weapon can seem to cut, and an edged weapon becomes impossibly sharp.

- You have a +15 bonus to your Damage.

3: *The Unstained Flower*

With your control of force and momentum, you can disperse arrows and spears in all directions and negate their harm before they touch you.

- You have a +15 bonus to your Toughness.

4: *Lotus Breaks the Tiger*

You stress bones, organs, and muscle to their breaking point, but not beyond, and bring your enemy into a state of precarious balance. With one wrong move, their body fails and rips open, internal injuries cascading upon one another! This technique was invented so that defeated enemies can remove themselves from your eyesight before their deaths.

- Specify a physical trigger for the target such as drinking alcohol, jumping, or holding their breath for longer than a few seconds. The trigger should be something that can be avoided, but it doesn't have to be easy. The trigger can be removed with a Medicine check that scores higher than the Strike roll that placed it.
- If the specified condition comes to pass, the target gains two extra Ripples and suffers an immediate Rippling check. This check causes an Injury Condition, but ignores your Damage bonus. The target likewise ignores his Toughness bonus, as well as his armor's effect on his Chi Threshold.

4: *Lotus Seeds Lotus*

The natural cycle propagates plants endlessly. Energy is never lost, but merely transformed into different states. Your punishment is likewise relentless.

- If you force a Rippling roll to create an Injury Condition, your roll has one extra die for each petal present on the target. This doesn't expend the petals.

5: *A Thousand Flowers in Spring*

This is a supreme technique that firmly establishes your dominance over your enemies. You hold their lives in your hand, and you may snuff it out at your whim!

- If your strike hits, you inflict three petals on your opponent. You may boost this technique to create an additional petal per two points of Chi spent. You can use this technique after the defender rolls.

FORMLESS TECHNIQUES

The following techniques are called Formless, because they aren't part of a greater style. You can learn them by paying Destiny equal to their level without first needing to purchase prerequisites. In every other way, they act as internal kung fu techniques separated from their overarching structure. You activate them by spending Chi equal to their level, and any bonuses they grant count as internal kung fu bonuses.

Many of these Formless techniques have very basic utility like those of internal styles, but they're not quite as good. You can easily use them to alleviate any shortcomings in your fighting without dedicating yourself to mastering an entirely new style, but keep in mind that the techniques of full styles tend to be stronger.

Booming Deity's Voice

Level 1 Formless

Your Chi intensifies your voice so that it can be clearly heard for miles around. If you wish, you can make use of echoes and distortions to loudly speak to others while still keeping your exact location a secret. Use the normal Stealth vs. Awareness check to remain 'hidden'. Those who fail to beat your check obviously know somebody is there, but not where your voice is coming from.

Lashing Black Silk Wires

Level 1 Formless

This unusual technique requires you to have very long hair. Most practitioners grow a long mane or braid, although some men use the technique with their long beards or eyebrows instead. It strengthens human hair to the point where it becomes hard as steel yet retains its suppleness. This technique lasts for the entire round. You must choose one of two options when you activate it: either your hair functions as a Flexible Weapon on its own, or you can use the hair in conjunction with your regular weapon to make it function as if it were also a Paired Weapon.

Submissive Steel

Level 1 Formless

You can call your weapon to your hand within the same zone without needing of an action to do so. All that is required is an outstretched hand and a silent but willful command, and your weapon flies to you like a loyal falcon. The Sage can deny the effectiveness of this technique if the weapon is restrained, if there is no clear path towards you, or if your ownership over it is questionable.

Deadly Music

Level 2 Formless

When playing a musical instrument, you can use this technique to intensify the sound so that it's harmful to others. The technique lasts for the entire round. You may spend one Chi per round to extend the technique's duration another round; you must spend the Chi at the beginning of each new round. You must make a Perform skill check as a Minor Action at the start of each round you use this technique. The effectiveness of the technique depends on how well you play.

20: The technique lets you use music as if it were a Ranged weapon that automatically laughs at anyone who is capable of hearing.

40: As above, but the music is a special weapon that is Ranged and also one of Flexible, Massive, Saber, Spear, Staff, or Sword.

60: As above, plus you can make attacks into faraway zones without the need to flood a die from your River.



Drifting Cloud Step

Level 2 Formless

You may cover ground towards a zone that can't support you, such as the middle of a lake or up in the air. You can't use this technique two rounds in a row, so you should cover ground again next round to reach a destination you can normally stand on. Still, with a decent Footwork result (Hard (30) or better) you could balance on something like a reed or treetop.

Golden Skin

Level 2 Formless

You have a +5 bonus to Toughness.

Lunar Shadow Flash

Level 2 Formless

You have a +5 bonus to Speed.

Overwhelming Lightness

Level 2 Formless

You have a +5 bonus to Strike.

Sweeping Away Troubles

Level 2 Formless

You have a +5 bonus to Block.

Twisting Serpent

Level 2 Formless

Whenever you Dodge an attack, you have a +5 bonus to your Footwork.

Water Splitting Stone

Level 2 Formless

You have a +5 bonus to Damage.

Hundred Li Step

Level 3 Formless

You may cross two zones within a single Cover Ground result; after traveling to a new zone, treat the next adjacent zones as one difficulty step higher to reach – or 10 points higher in the cases where somebody used a Shaping Marvel to alter the difficulties. If your result is still high enough to reach a new zone, you may move there. You can't go further than that.

Rage of the Dragon Kings

Level 3 Formless

You can use water as a weapon by making it flow and shape according to your will. It crashes into your enemies like waves, or pierces them like lances. The technique lasts for the entire round. You may spend one Chi per round to extend the technique's duration another round; you must spend the Chi at the beginning of each new round. If there is available water you can create any special weapon, combining two weapon types into one. If there's only a very limited amount of water, you can't make a special weapon, just a normal one. You may alter the weapon each round by flowing the water into a new shape. The technique can't function if there isn't any water at all, but even a single drop of sweat is enough to make the technique function.

Bone-Splintering Force

Level 4 Formless

You have a +10 bonus to Damage.

Divine Jade Skill

Level 4 Formless

You have a +10 bonus to Strike.

Iron-Pushing Snap

Level 4 Formless

You have a +10 bonus to Block.

Mischievous Monkey

Level 4 Formless

You have a +10 bonus to your Footwork whenever you Dodge an attack.

Phantom in the Mist

Level 4 Formless

You have a +10 bonus to Toughness.

Universe Fold

Level 4 Formless

You have a +10 bonus to Speed.

Devil-Saint Apotheosis

Level 5 Corrupt Formless

This technique is the ultimate expression of nihilism. All strife and ideals are pointless and arbitrary, Heaven cares nothing for the state of the world, and for all humanity's struggles and boasting, there are no heroes left. This technique cuts away the delusions of skill and fate. Both your attack and its opposing defense are unaffected by joss; neither your Lake nor your opponent's are affected by them. Neither you nor your opponent may use the River during this attack; you can't float dice from your roll into the River, you can't flow from the River into the roll and you can't flood dice to activate abilities that call for it. Finally, if you hit your opponent and he's using a combat condition, you immediately Soothe it one level.

THE SECRET ARTS

The Doctor smells his patient's breath, and the wrinkles in his forehead deepen as he frowns.

"It is the Black Jade Dust poison", he declares. "It breaks down the joints of your body – in time, it will destroy your Kung Fu!"

He snaps his finger, and his medicinal back pack comes flying to his outstretched hand. "Our only hope is to fight the poison with another of equal strength!"

*

The Courtier waves his fan, a pained expression on his face: "Inauspicious! Knowingly straying as far from the roads of virtue, how can these men even dare to face tomorrow?! Merciful Heavens, allow them to strike me down so that I will no longer see the fate ahead for them – the tortures of the Avici Hell are too much for one mind to bear!"

With tears in his eyes, he begins kowtowing heavenward. "Please, listen to your most unworthy of servants – as I die, please forgive them this horrendous crime! Spare this inconsequential person from being the cause of eternities of suffering!"

The bandits shuffle their feet and slowly start to lower their sabers.

*

The Priest stops her pacing, her fingers still a blur as they form the proper ritual gestures. Her white hair is thrown about by a sudden wind. "Cleaning out the well will not help! This village has been poisoned by ill will – it is a curse born from hate. Someone bears a grudge against this village, the people in it... against the very soil on which it stands."

Her eyes narrow. Prayer strips take flight from her sleeves, covering the village gate. Her voluminous sleeves flare as she assumes the ritual stance.

"But no more!"

The Secret Arts are systems to reach out and impose your will on the world around you. They're often less overtly dramatic than kung fu styles, but the Arts are nevertheless a potent force for change. The Arts contained in this chapter vary wildly in origin and approach, but they use the same common system for creating and manipulating effects.

The Secret Arts are a system of influence, rather than outright control – you cannot force anyone to act in a certain manner, but you can pave the path with incentives to do so. This is intentional: the Secret Arts cannot override someone's character concept. A chaste monk can be affected by the sweet fragrance and soft words of the Jade Wing Brothel courtesan, but it is up to the player (or Sage, in the case of NPCs) if he falls for the temptations of the material universe, or sucks up the penalties for sticking by his convictions. If you want absolute control, beat someone up with kung fu!

The Secret Arts are known to relatively few because they take dedication, time and a discerning mind to learn and develop. Player characters, fortunately, tend to have an easy way of it, being members of the Wulin. Every character gets free access to, and gains Cultivation from, the Secret Arts of their Archetype. They can still use any other Secret Arts they learn.

CHI CONDITIONS AND FIVE ELEMENT THEORY

Daoist thought defines the world, the people in it, and all the forces defining and influencing it as part of the Wu Xing: the cycle of elements. In both Shen Zhou and these game rules, a symbolic device called the Five-Phase Wheel is used to understand the interactions of these elemental forces as applied to illness, emotions, and other states. Here are the basics:

Each Element Promotes Another Element

Nature moves in cycles, one element leading to another. The earlier element in the cycle gives life to the next one, which in turn replaces the old one. This is the Promotion Cycle.

Wood promotes Fire. *Wood nourishes the fire, giving it life. Fire burns Wood.*

Fire promotes Earth. *Fire creates ashes, which become earth. Earth smothers Fire.*

Earth promotes Metal. Metal is kept within Earth. Metal breaks up the Earth.

Metal promotes Water. *Water condenses on Metal. Water rusts Metal.*

Water promotes Wood. *Wood is nourished by water. Wood absorbs Water.*

When a Secret Artist uses techniques to turn one condition into another, it tends to change according to this natural cycle.

Each Element Controls Another Element

One element will tend to rise to balance another. On the Five-Phase Wheel, this is known as the Control Cycle, where one element overcomes another.

Wood controls Earth. *The roots from a tree part the solid ground. Planted trees prevent the earth from eroding.*

Earth controls Water. *A dam holds back the rising flood. Earth muddies and binds water.*

Water controls Fire. *The raging flames are put out by the rain.*

Fire controls Metal. *Fire melts metal, robbing it of solid form.*

Metal controls Wood. *An axe chops down a tree. Nails driven into wooden planks shape their form, creating new things.*

In the Secret Arts, one tends to exploit the Control Cycle by creating a corresponding Condition from an existing one through a *Yin-Yang Technique* (see the *Introduction to the Secret Arts Lore* on pg. 223).

Do I have to do homework?

At first look, it might seem like Chi Conditions are very esoteric and that every interaction with them requires deeper digging into traditional Daoist thought. Don't worry about this! These descriptions are here to add color and a ring of authenticity to the setting, not to give you gray hairs. If you're in doubt, ask the Sage to help you. If you are both in doubt, just pick something that looks vaguely similar to what you want and run with it. If it is important, you can always change it later. Every group decides for itself the degree of work that they want to put into the esoteric elements of the Arts and the Five-Element Theory – but it is intended to help out, not to be a hurdle to your action.

The Application of Five-Element Theory

These relationships describe the framework for how conditions are perceived in Shen Zhou. In the game world, the learned often use it to aid and visualize the relationships between all things – the changing weather, harmonious music, the stances of a combat style. They also describe how Chi Conditions work and interact within the game system. Many conditions can be placed within one of the Five Phases and change according to their relationships. What this means for you as a player is that you should familiarize yourself

somewhat with the type of Secret Art that is native to your Archetype and build a general understanding of what the different Phases mean. This does not mean that you must memorize everything, simply that it helps to be somewhat familiar with the concepts as presented.

CHI CONDITIONS AND THE SECRET ARTS

Discovering Chi Conditions

We will use the term “Discovery” a lot when it comes to Chi Conditions. It is an open term, and initially a misleading one. To clarify, while everyone who can learn Secret Arts can spot an existing Condition (like an existing Disadvantage, or something that the Sage has decided for an NPC) with a successful roll, the most important capability of the Secret Arts is the creation of new Conditions. This is where the in-character narrative diverges from the metagame; the character tends to discover and make use of existing Conditions, while the player does in fact create the Condition through dice rolls and more or less informed statements about the game world.

It works like this. A player with a Secret Artist character can decide to create a new Condition by having the character use the proper Discovery Lore and making a roll with a Difficulty based on how reasonable the existence of the Condition seems to the Sage. If they make the roll, their

The Art Lores - Important tools and terminology

Just as the various types of Secret Arts share a common framework of effects, strengths, and manipulations despite their diverse universal nature, so do they share a common set of relevant Lores and Skills that you will need to learn, utilize, and resist them.

Introduction Lore: This lore is a basic rundown on what an Art does and how it works. It describes how someone versed in your Art of choice sees the world, and the types of circumstances and hidden truths on which they base their decisions. Don't neglect to read this, as it is invaluable material to understand how your Art actually functions!

Discovery Lore: This is the Lore that details how you discover or create Chi Conditions, and the difficulties for doing so. In metagame mechanics, this usually involves “Discovering” (capital D) Conditions already in place and using those as a springboard for further development.

Toolset Lore: This Lore describes the tools and means by which a character puts their knowledge into practice, and a set of different methods by which the Artist interacts with their environment. (Courtiers, for example, use the Confucian virtues, while Daoist mystics can use spells or invocations.) You must use one of them to perform your Art. There might be additional Toolsets available as optional Lores; these provide new options and possibilities, from the intricate knowledge of accomplished scholars to the exotic techniques of hidden sects.

Manipulation Lore: This Lore details the ways in which the character may change, weaken, strengthen, and otherwise control an existing Condition. This is where you find the real meat of creative Secret Art use. This is how you spark a small flame of emotion into a raging inferno of passion, cure horrible diseases, or turn a curse in to an advantage!

Resist/Recover Skills: The Skill used to (voluntarily) resist your use of the Arts, or to recover from the Conditions they cause.

Default Conditions: Some effects are more common among some expressions of the Secret Arts than others; listed here are the most common of your Art. These are merely suggestions, not hard limitations, but they can help the wayward Sage or the confused player to come to a decision.

Other relevant passages: A list of sections of the book that are useful for this type of Secret Artist. This includes basic descriptions, detailed setting information about the Secret Art in question, and optional extras. Don't neglect these!



reasoning (and the one of the character, in the game world) is retroactively made truth; the Condition has been in existence for some time (and probably caused some of the effects that you observed to strengthen your case!) and your character only discovered its existence. In metagame terms, though, you only just made it up.

The Difficulty for the roll will vary depending on several factors, including the outrageousness of the Condition itself and the various Lore-specific circumstances for the type of Secret Art that you use. Arguing that Sword Bastard has a Passion keyed to Individuality will probably be easier than trying to arguing that he is Inspired towards Benevolence!

The steps for Discovering a Chi Condition are as follows:

1. Decide what type of Condition, in general, that you want to Discover.” A *Weakness* Passion linked to Joy” is a good example, as is “a Metal Influence keyed to Righteousness”. (Do some reading on the Five-Phase Wheel on pg. 223 as well as the Introduction Lore to your own personal Art to learn what these words mean!)
2. Check your Discovery Lore to determine the Difficulty of your roll.
3. Make a roll modified by the proper Toolset Lore for your Art.
4. If the target is unwilling, they can roll the appropriate Resistance/Recovery Skill to resist your roll. (They do not need to be aware of the Secret Artist’s work to do this.)
5. Read the result as proper to your Discovery Lore (pg. 224). If successful, you define the general parameters of the Condition and the type of bonus or penalty that it should grant; the Sage fills in the rest. Note that while the results can be flexible, specific Discovery Lores are better at creating *Weaknesses* than *Hyperactivities*, and vice versa.

In the Courtier’s Arts, for example, Passions are usually *Weaknesses* and Inspirations usually *Hyperactivities*. A standard success when Discovering a Passion can grant a Trivial *Weakness*, while a critical success allows you either a Minor *Weakness* or a Trivial *Hyperactivity*. This relationship is also echoed in Curses and Influences respectively for Daoist Sorcerers. Always look in the “Discovering X” part of the Discovery Lore to see what goes for you.

Ex. You manage to Discover that the famous swordsman Silver Eye Nan is in fact driven by a Fear Passion – he is deathly afraid of shaming his family by being less than an exemplar hero! The Critical Success allows you to make this into a Minor Fear Passion, and you state that this should force him to act very virtuously or suffer from Cultivation Penalty, preventing him from excelling as a warrior. The Sage hums sagely, as is his custom, and decides that Silver Eye must take every opportunity to act according to the Chivalrous Virtues – and to spend time explaining how his actions line up with them – or have 1 Destiny spent on Internal techniques and Secret Arts not count for the purposes of Cultivation each game session (ie. a Minor “Cultivation penalty” Weakness).

6. Note the Recovery Conditions for the Condition; these vary by Lore and are mentioned in the summaries below.
7. The Sage also sets up a circumstance or set of circumstances that will make the Condition resolve itself. In the case of an Anger Passion that helps you seek revenge against your enemy, for example, it might be when you forgive him, or when he finally dies.

The Role of the Sage

Note that you almost never design a Chi Condition all by yourself. While there are more focused Lores that invariably create a specific type of Condition, most Discovery is a cooperative effort between the player and the Wulin Sage. This means that the types of Conditions which are appropriate for a given Discoveries will differ between different campaigns, so make sure to bring the matter up with your Sage beforehand so you’ll be on the same page! It definitely means, though, that you cannot rely on custom-tailored effects for every situation..

The Effects of Chi Conditions

All Chi Conditions pick their effects from a set list. Remember that you can have multiple Chi conditions at once, but their effects don’t stack. While circumstances might be vastly different and require lots of creativity and innovation to describe, their actual mechanical effects are modeled in one of the following ways:

1. Action Utility/Penalty:

This directly influences your performance, i.e., your Lake rolls, and makes certain rolls easier or harder.

Minor Hyperactivities/Weaknesses give a +/-5 modifier to relevant rolls.

For *Major Conditions*, this bonus/penalty is increased to +/-10.

2. Breath Bonus/Penalty

These conditions influence your respiration of Chi, making it either easier or harder to cycle it through your body and vital organs. These Conditions affects your natural Chi, and in some advanced cases also developed Elemental Chi. They can never affect Corrupt or Enlightened; these two forces stand outside of the natural order!

A *Hyperactivity* grants additional Breath, i.e., Chi Points regained at the end of each turn. These additional points of Chi stack with any extra points you might gain from using the Focus on Breath action.

A *Minor Breath Bonus* grants +1 Breath to normal Chi.

A *Major Breath Bonus* either grants +2 Breath to normal Chi or grants +1 Breath to an existing Elemental Chi.

A *Weakness* causes a penalty. Your breath can be reduced to zero but not any lower - that is, you won't lose Chi Points at the end of the round. Keep in mind the option to Focus on Breath if you ever find your respiration is getting too low.

A *Minor Breath Penalty* reduces your normal Chi Breath by 1.

A *Major Breath Penalty* either reduces your normal Chi Breath by 2, or reduces your Breath in an existing Elemental Chi by 1.

3. Cultivation Bonus/Penalty

A *Hyperactivity* works in one of two possible ways: it is part of a training regimen set up to enhance your inner cultivation, or it is a less formal urge to act according to the Condition. In either case, you add 1 to your Cultivation when you act in accordance with the Condition. In the first case, this means submitting to the training regimen as set up by the Artist-mentor; in the other, you get the bonus point when acting in accordance with the Condition gets you into trouble. Adversity breeds strength!

Minor Cultivation Bonus: +1 Cultivation when your condition creates complications and gets you into trouble. This can grant you at most 1 Cultivation per Chapter from any number or combination of conditions.

Major Cultivation Bonus: As above, but there is no limit as to how much extra Cultivation you can get. It seems likely that you will live in interesting times!

A *Weakness* will instead serve to withhold Destiny from your Cultivation when you ignore the terms of the Condition. This means that Destiny spent does not count towards advancing your inner power!

Minor Cultivation Penalty: 1 point of spent Destiny per chapter does not count for Cultivation purposes.

Major Cultivation Penalty: As above, but up to 3 points of Destiny!

4. Elemental Conversion

A *Hyperactivity* allows you to temporarily convert points of regular Chi to Elemental Chi. If you are converting several points, these must be either from the same element or follow the promotion cycle in the Five-Phase Wheel. If you for example have a *Major Elemental Conversion Hyperactivity* linked to the Fire element, you can choose to convert 2 points of regular Chi to 2 Fire Chi, or to 1 Fire Chi and 1 Earth Chi. Any acquired points are subject to the normal rules for respiration of Elemental Chi. For all intents and purposes, your normal Chi is counted as lower and your elemental Chi as higher for the duration of this Condition.

Note that the requirements for the Condition must be maintained to keep the Chi “converted” – if you let up the furious rage that has made Wood Chi out of your regular Chi, for example, your Wood system ceases to be hyperactive and the Chi flows back into its normal shape.

Minor Elemental Conversion Hyperactivity: Convert 1 point of Chi into 1 point of Elemental Chi.

Major Elemental Conversion Hyperactivity: Convert 2 points of Chi into Elemental Chi.

A *Weakness* turns points of Elemental Chi into regular Chi, or shifts it into another Element (generally of the Sage’s choice).

Minor Elemental Conversion Weakness: Turn 1 point of Elemental Chi into regular Chi.

Major Elemental Conversion Weakness: Turn 2 points of Elemental Chi into regular Chi or shift 1 point into another Element.

5. Entanglement

These Conditions make your impact on the world around you larger. This can be very good for you, provided that it invites good circumstances and influential friends. If it is bad, you might find yourself hunted, hated, and a personal enemy of The Gallant Eagle!

Minor Entanglement Hyperactivity/Weakness: Gain 1 extra point of Entanglement whenever your Condition manifests. If this is a *Hyperactivity*, this is only spent on things that are obviously beneficial to you. If it is a *Weakness*, it creates enemies and other complications! In either case, the bonus is limited to 1 extra Entanglement per Chapter for any number of conditions.

Major Entanglement Hyperactivity/Weakness: As above, but the limit is 3 extra Entanglement per chapter. Whether a tale of triumph or sorrow, your legend will be extraordinary.

The Manipulation of Chi Conditions

Discovering Chi Conditions is all well and good, but a Secret Artist shows his true power by Manipulating them! You can use Manipulation to inflame Third Ox Brother’s hate for his father to epic proportions, to soothe the Red Devil Fever raging within your husband’s body, and to turn a terrible curse into a powerful blessing. Although the various different Secret Arts use different techniques in-setting, the rules for manipulating Chi Conditions are the same for each.

1. Inflaming and Soothing Conditions

This is how you work to make a Chi Condition either stronger or weaker. You must do this step by step; a Trivial Condition must be Inflamed to become a Minor one before you can attempt to further Inflame it to become a Major Condition. No skipping steps!

Inflaming or Soothing a Condition usually moves its Recovery Difficulty one step – so if the previous Recovery was 36 (the roll made to Discover it, in this case), and it is Inflamed, it is now 40. This means that the new recovery is always a round number, as usual with Difficulties!

- *Inflame:* roll your Manipulation Skill (plus Toolset bonuses) versus the Recovery of the Condition.
- *Soothe:* roll your Manipulation Skill (plus Toolset bonuses) versus the Recovery of the Condition.

2. Internal-External Technique

This creates a Curse from a Passion or an Influence from an Inspiration by making the emotions manifest as an external force. It’s usually a *Daoist Magic* art. With this, the Daoist can draw from an Anger Passion of resentment or enmity to craft a wily Curse, or pull from the son’s Propriety/Zhong Inspiration of filial piety to craft an Influence help him be stalwart when his virtue is tested.

The Difficulty of the Manipulation roll is usually equal to the Recovery of the Condition. If the roll succeeds, a new Condition (a Curse or an Influence) is created. This new Condition has the same severity, Duration, recovery and Interval as the Passion/Influence it was created from. You get to define the type of penalty or bonus for the new Condition, as well as the general nature of its requirement. (The Sage, as usual, fills in the details.)

3. Paired Condition technique

This Manipulation technique bypasses the Discovery Lore altogether. Instead, it creates two Conditions from scratch. Even from an in-game perspective, the Secret Artist *creates* the Condition. These two Chi Conditions are linked to each other, as the name implies: one *Weakness* and one *Hyperactivity*, and Inflaming or Soothing one of them automatically does the same to the other. They share the same relationship on the **Five-Phase Wheel** as a Ying-Yang pair—they they essentially are.

When you perform this technique, you get to define all the game mechanics for one Condition, the *Weakness* or the *Hyperactivity*, and the Sage defines the penalty or benefit for the other. In addition, you get to make a general definition of *one* of the Conditions, just as if you were Discovering it. (The Sage, as always, finalizes it.) If you roll a Critical success, however, you get to make a general description of both Conditions!

Difficulty	Recovery	Duration	Interval
Hard(30)	Hard (30)	1	1 hr(or less, if desired)
Memorable(40)	Memorable(40)	1-3	1 Chapter(“-“)
Fantastic (60)	Memorable (40)	2-5	1 Story (“-“)

4. Elemental progression Technique

An *Elemental Progression* drives a Condition forward through the cycle of elements - i.e., clockwise on the **Five-Phase Wheel**. Anger Passions, for example, progresses into Joy passions, because Anger is associated with Wood and Joy with Fire. Secret Artists use this to change Chi Conditions into something more fitting for their purposes, such as changing a *Weakness* into something more tolerable.

When you perform an Elemental Progression, *you do not create a new Condition*; you change an existing Condition into something different! However, you do get to define the penalty or bonus for this “new” Condition as if you had created it. Elemental Progression never changes the Severity of a Condition, nor can it change a *Weakness* into a *Hyperactivity* or vice versa. You can choose the general nature of the new Condition’s requirement, just like a freshly Discovered one. As long as it stays within the theme of its new domain on the Wheel, everything should be fine.

An Elementally Progressed Condition keeps the same severity, Recovery, Duration and Interval as it had before. The Difficulty of performing an Elemental Progression is Hard (30) for a Minor Condition and Memorable (40) for a Major Condition.

5. Yin-Yang Technique

This Manipulation technique *creates* (even from an in-game perspective) a new Condition that has a Yin-Yang relationship with an existing Chi Condition. If you base it on a *Hyperactivity*, it becomes a *Weakness*, and vice versa. Daoists use this to create Curses out of positive Inspirations, and a clever Courtier can use it to craft an Inspiration *Hyperactivity* out of his lord’s Passion *Weakness*. Wise advice can drive men ruled by emotions to seek out Virtue!

Look at the **Five-Phase Wheel** to see the Yin-Yang relationships for Conditions; e.g., you can see there that a Grief Passion will always Yin-Yang into a Benevolence Inspiration. (You could then perform an Elemental Progression on the new Inspiration to adjust it to your needs.)

This uses the same general systems and Difficulties as an Internal-External Condition.

6. Stealthy Work

In itself, Manipulation of Chi Conditions is pretty obvious: a Doctor diagnoses people by feeling their pressure points, a Courtier states his talking points, a Priest works the hand signs to put a curse on you, etc. In some cases, this isn’t acceptable. The Hidden Sickness Hand Society wouldn’t be very Hidden if they had to walk up to people and start massaging their temples to make their bodies produce painful poisons. However, because they have perfected techniques that allow them to hide their medicine, only the most perceptive manage to realize that a light brush is aimed to corrupt their meridians!

Buying *Stealthy Work* allows you to make a Minor Stealth action to hide the fact that you are working your Arts – anyone who wants to see through this ruse needs to counter with a Minor Awareness action of their own.

7. Quick Work

While the Secret Arts are usually used over the course of minutes, many Wulin learn how to apply their lessons and techniques on a more immediate arena: the field of combat. This technique is used to perform Secret Arts quickly, whether it’s a Courtier making an enemy lose their temper and drop their guard with a few well-placed admonitions, a Doctor reversing a blood-flows with a few acupressure stabs, or something stranger. For a full description, see “the Secret Arts in combat” on (pg. 185).

Buying *Quick Work* allows you to make use of the Tools of your Art as a combat technique.

Recovery from Chi Conditions

You roll your Recovery Skill to try to recover from a Chi Condition. There are three important stats that determines how hard this is to do:

- *Recovery*: This is, as the name implies, the Difficulty of the Recovery roll. For Discovered Conditions, this is usually equal to the Skill roll made to Discover it in the first place.
- *Duration*: How many successful Recovery rolls one must make before the Condition expires.
- *Interval*: How long one must wait after an unsuccessful roll to try again. (It’s possible to recover almost immediately

from a Chi Condition if you succeed at every Recovery roll, because the Interval never comes up. It's hard to make a Condition stick to a master!)

Always remember: whether it is beneficial or harmful, a Chi Condition is not *natural*. If it is allowed to persist, it is likely to cause harm. It *might* integrate itself in the essence of your being and become a natural state, but it's more likely that it will make life harder for you!

In game terms, a *Weakness* does not cause any additional effects. It's already working to make life difficult, and no one wants it! A *Hyperactivity*, on the other hand, is very tempting to leave untreated; if it strengthens your sword arm and spirit, who wants to listen to a tiresome doctor going on about how it causes an imbalance to your system?

The Effects of Prolonged Conditions

We already know how a Condition is defeated in game terms - enough rolls according to the proper *Interval* matching the *Recovery*, and it is weakened or gone. Trying to Recover isn't optional; nature always works to even out imbalances. The healthy Warrior easily throws off not only insidious poisons, but also the beneficial Drunken Warrior condition, the virtuous constable can't help but examine *weaknesses* and caveats in the philosophy that birthed the poem that keeps him Inspired towards his duty, and so on. The very qualities that allow you to stave off harmful effects also work to make hyperactivities short-lived. The *Recovery* roll is handled by the Sage, who adds appropriate modifiers. He can even use techniques the character knows that might help them to shake off the Condition more easily; this symbolizes the body and mind working to restore themselves, which is not a conscious action - unless you are skilled in very esoteric somatic arts!

There are ways around this. Secret Artists can maintain the Condition by using a Manipulation to Inflammate it; this is unsound according to the Natural Way, but otherwise harmless. If you don't know how to Manipulate your Condition, however, there is riskier way! You can take symbolic actions to reinforce your Condition, such as adopting the lifestyle of a drunkard to maintain your *Drunk Hyperactivity*, or having the aforementioned constable spend time reading the classics and debating other virtuous philosophers on matters of duty.

System:

Symbolic action can make the Recovery roll more difficult, or even make it fail automatically. This is not without risks, though. For each *Duration* that you handicap your *Recovery* rolls like this and fail - regardless of whether you would have failed either way - you either create (the first time) or Inflammate (subsequent times) a *Weakness* matching your *Hyperactivity*. Essentially, your *Hyperactivity* turns into a **Paired Condition** (see pg. 228). This new *Weakness* is created by the Sage, but should be appropriate to the condition, and possibly reflect some cosmic sense of balance and justice. The warrior who gains strength from drunkenness might find himself getting an action penalty whenever he isn't drunken and foolish as his body acclimatizes to his new lifestyle, or the constable might find himself more easily

manipulated by underhanded lies as he spends his time pondering higher ideals, etc.

This works like a Paired Condition in every way: i.e., the *Weakness* can not be Soothed below the level of the *Hyperactivity*. The character must choose: live with both of them, or with neither.

Exploiting Conditions

These rules clearly tell us that the best way to maintain beneficial Hyperactivities is to either be a Secret Artist or have a good relationship with one. This is sound in the metagame; Chi Conditions are the schtick of characters who invest in the Secret Arts, after all, and they want to get their Destiny's worth. At the same time, it's an obvious exploit to develop a plethora of Hyperactivities for every player character, and not even an interesting exploit.

As a rule of thumb, each Secret Artist PC should be able to maintain **one near-permanent beneficial Chi Condition per Rank level** without the Sage messing with it. Anything beyond that can be subject to unkind interpretations, somewhat unlikely happenstance that runs against the Condition, and so on. Just remember, keep it dramatic and fun! Few people particularly find that active harassment adds fun to their game

THE DOCTOR'S ART

Discovery Lore: A Doctor's Work (pg. 236),

Discovery skill(s): **Medicine**

Toolset Lore: Secret Art of Medicine (pg. 234)

Manipulation Lore(s): **Secret of Treatment** (pg. 236)

Manipulation Skill(s): **Medicine**

Resist/recover Skill(s): **Hardiness**

Default Conditions: **Breath bonus/penalty, Cultivation bonus/penalty**

Other relevant passages: *Basic Secret Arts package*

INTRODUCTION TO MEDICAL CONDITIONS

(A system topic)

Destiny cost: *(special)*

This Lore is free for everyone who has the Medicine Skill at +5 or more.

Over-fullness injures the spleen

Great rage injures the liver

Fatigue and dampness injure the kidneys

Cold food or drink injure the lungs

Grief injures the heart

Storms and extreme climate injure the body

Fear and indulgence injure the will.

- *Manuals of the Supreme Doctor Hsian*

As the name implies, the Secret Art of Medicine is used by Doctors, but the techniques have filtered down - some Courtiers have found it worth their while to learn a little something about poisons and sickness, for example, and more than one high-ranked Warrior has cultivated an interest for practical reasons.



This Secret Art is more direct in its approach than most others. Instead of discovering what is already there, the skillful Doctor applies his discipline to directly manipulate the state of a person's body. While it is definitely useful in diagnosing the imbalances that is already present, its most spectacular effects come from deliberate work to create specific imbalances to achieve a result. An unscrupulous Doctor may perform medical experiments on his patients, having them ingest poisons or other strange drugs, or forcing them to stand outside in the cold rain, so that they will develop sickness Conditions that he can manipulate!

For medical Conditions, *Weaknesses* tend to be the standard – Hyperactivities spring from some sort of special Ten-Generation Wine, deliberate surgery, or an odd sickness that makes you stronger even as you are feverish. Normally, they just give you aches and woes.

Important Chi Organs and Five-Element Theory

Each element on the **Five-Phase Wheel** has an associated organ system: one Yin and one Yang organ. Medical conditions are the direct result of imbalance in one of these elemental systems, either through debilitation or hyperactive Chi.

This means that all the actual effects of conditions come from the imbalances in these elemental systems. This is probably the biggest hurdle for players used to modern ideas about medicine – according to Daoist medical thought, the debilitating pain and dizziness you get after getting burned does not come from the gross physical effect; it is the result of your Fire system being overwhelmed, throwing its organs (the heart and small intestine) out of balance!

Conversely, a cold or flu is probably connected to the



Earth or Water organ systems – hyperactive kidneys or a weak spleen.

It might also be noted that physical and mental conditions tend to flow together – often, they might be considered one and the same. Unethical Doctors or Courtiers skilled in medical arts can use *Internal-External Techniques* to create physical manifestations of emotional troubles. Even if you are more scrupulous, you'd do well to note that physical illness can have a mental or emotional cause.

木 Wood System – liver and gallbladder

Classic symptoms: Dizziness, vertigo, acute vision, vision impairment or eye irritation, tendon spasms, hysterical strength, sexual issues, buzzing or ringing in ears, abdominal pains, breath issues (Increased Breath or Breath Penalties).

The liver is the blood reservoir for the body. It stores blood during rest, and releases it during exertion. Liver function regulates Chi flows and emotional activities. The gallbladder helps digestion, and fosters a general feeling of wellness. The liver meridian opens to the eye, and therefore vision is connected to liver function.

- Specifically prepared incense burnt before an archery competition grants you eagle-like vision.
- The intensity of the young scholar's passion for the beautiful Ten-Sword Princess causes dizziness and stomach-aches, but also grants him unexpected bouts of strength.

Don't worry!

The five-element system for Medical conditions is here to promote cool actions from Doctor characters, and to create interesting and engaging challenges for them from the Sage so that they can get to really work their special skills. They are not intended to stifle creativity, nor are you expected to memorize it all! If you find that you have a hard time fitting the Conditions that you want to create to a specific system, don't spend too much time worrying about it. Assign something that seems to fit into the vague general niche that you are aiming for, or decide if and when someone tries to change it. Pausing the whole game when you're flipping back and forth to try to decide if the Six-Venom Tonic grants an Earth or a Wood Weakness isn't much fun for anyone.

That said, it never hurts to read these sections an extra time between sessions to try to come up with cool stuff – the phases are meant to have actual impact on the types of conditions created from them!

火 Fire System – heart and small intestine

Classic symptoms: Insomnia, sleepiness, vivid dreams, poor memory, flashbacks, eidetic memory, lassitude, mania, aggression, stammering, eloquence, alertness, obsession, chest pains.

The Chi of your heart pumps blood through the body. A healthy heart makes the face rosy and the pulse strong. A sick heart leads to pale complexion and weak pulse. Blood connects the mind with the body – it controls sleep and awakening. It regulates thought, awareness, and memory.

- All the courtiers of the Spring Sun Palace covets the special brew made by the wise and powerful Yellow Beard Doctor. It gives a normal man the ability to speak with the confidence and vocal strength of a royal lion.
- The long, sweeping cuts dealt by the Gentle Knife Style makes a victim bleed profusely, causing their limbs to become as heavy as stone.

土 Earth System – spleen and stomach

Classic symptoms: Hunger, disinterest in food, withdrawal, outgoingness, digestive issues, Cultivation Bonuses/Penalties.

The spleen makes blood and Chi from food and water. It also regulates dryness and moisture. A healthy spleen gives long-term health, and is necessary for learning powerful kung fu and cultivating your Chi. The spleen meridian opens to mouth and lips – this affects taste and appetite. The luster of the lips reveals the state of the spleen, and the character's current potential for learning kung fu.

- Wan He Bao creates a rigorous herbal diet for the unwilling hero Mountain Ox, aiding her in Chi Cultivation in preparation for the upcoming tournament... if he can only get the hungry and impatient Warrior to go through with it!
- The craftsman entrenches himself in his work, unwilling to let it up even to eat. Locking himself into his workshop, he grows ever thinner.

金 Metal System – lungs and large intestine

Classic symptoms: Shortness of breath, coughing, weakness, chills, fever, headaches, hypersensitivity, worldly involvement, strong or weak relationships, resistance to poison.

This system is the gateway between the body and the world – as breath circulates between the two, so does your Chi. Properly functioning lungs do away with stale Chi and helps the body to draw strength from the world to accomplish great things. The lungs also help coordinate the body's defences against hostile influences by nourishing the hair, the skin and your protective Chi (such as your Chi Aura). The lung meridian opens to the nose – which means that lung troubles often cause issues with the sinuses and your sense of smell.

- The poison from the assassin's arrows make Ten-Sword Princess have to fight for every gasp of air! As shadows slip out of the darkness around her, she know that this battle might be her last...

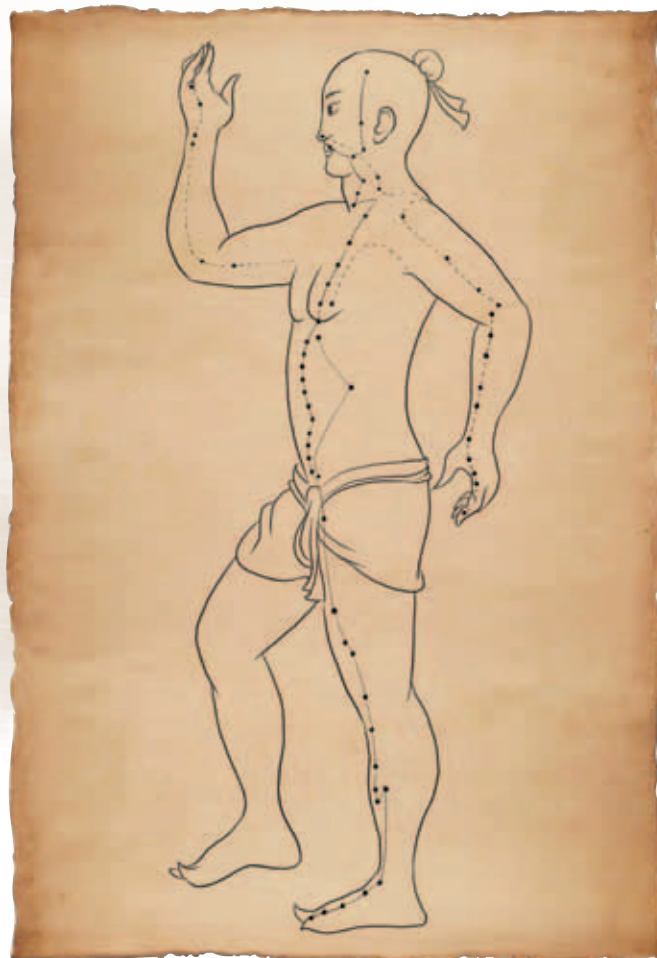
- Constable Iron Eye Nan's great dedication to propriety causes a Metal imbalance; although he is dedicated to his duty, he is waylaid by a *weakness* of his lungs. What a pity for a righteous constable to be seen coughing, wheezing and sniffing - constantly out of breath!

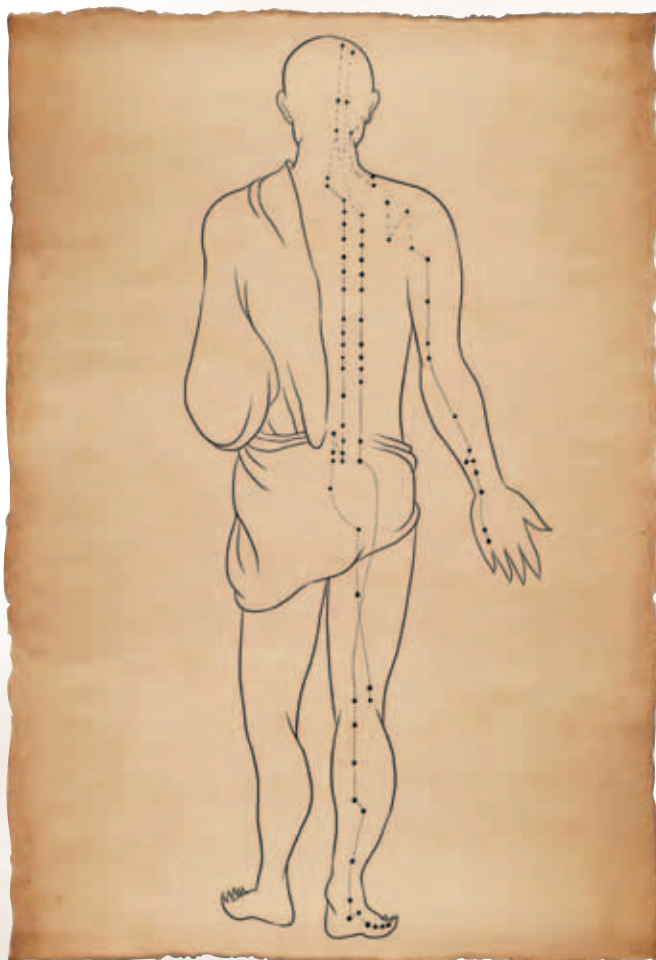
水 Water System – kidneys and bladder

Classic symptoms: Systemic *weakness/hyperactivity*, sexual/fertility issues, hearing issues, filial piety or impiety.

Your kidneys store the inherited life force of your parents. Together with the Chi that is drawn in through your lungs, and the Chi generated by your spleen, they form your own essential Chi. The kidneys also manage sexual energy and reproduction (nurturing themselves on your partner's Yin or Yang energy), and generate marrow and strong bones. Obviously, they are very important! Kidney meridians connect to the ear and the bladder.

- Invincible Sky's numerous liaisons starts to cost him his edge as his frivolous bedchamber habits starts to affect his kidneys – and his Water Chi, the key to his Ice Sutra spear art!
- Sudden disobedience by a favoured daughter makes Medicant Pei's blood boil! Is her behavior due to outside manipulations... or untreated illness leading to a Water imbalance?





Examples of Medical conditions

Sick

Minor/Major Water condition

Recovery 30, Duration 3, Interval 1 day

You are cold and hurting. You sniffle and shiver and need to rest to recuperate.

Weakness: You can not describe your actions as joyful, steady, or inspiring, and you must come up with appropriate excuses when you take actions that imply these states. You must slip in side actions that describe you sniffing, coughing, whining or trying to catch your breath. Ignoring these limitations causes a Breath penalty. Persist in ignoring your sorry state, and you might even be unable to make Focus Breath actions!

Hyperactivity: You are waterlogged, your body reacting to the severe imbalance in Chi but also giving you an abundance of Yin. Acting cold and miserable (as above) gives you a Breath Bonus.

The Arm of Iron Scar Nan

Major Fire/Wood condition

Recovery 40, Duration 1, Interval 1 Story

You are exposed to a strange medical experiment – your own arm, hacked off at the shoulder by the fearsome bandit Iron Scar Nan and his Heartless Saber Style, exchanged for that of the despicable bandit himself as he was gruesomely

dismembered by your vengeful companions! Regular treatments by a trusted Doctor are definitely recommended.

Weakness: Unless you indulge in the type of battle preferred by the bandit swordsman – excessive limb-cutting cruelty against anyone that stands against you – you get a -10 action penalty as the arm becomes sluggish and stiff.

Hyperactivity: When fighting using Nan's distinctive saber style, you get Improved Breath, regaining two extra Chi per turn!

Iron Beetle Poison

Major Metal condition

Recovery 40, Duration 3, Interval 5hrs

The poison from the exceedingly rare Iron Beetle, found in the western deserts of the lands of Yao, makes the skin and tissue extremely sensitive to sunlight. Blisters and wounds open, and smoke can even be seen to rise from the skin!

Weakness: You can not describe yourself acting in direct sunlight as if you were calm, collected, and otherwise unaffected by your Condition. Descriptions of screeching in pain as your skin smokes and of you running around with a cloth over your head, taking care to sprint from shadow to shadow, will suffice. Trying to be cool about it causes a -10 Action Penalty as you constantly have to focus on having the Chi of your body fight off the burning.

Hyperactivity: Every time the poison and your subsequent inability to function in sunlight causes you great trouble, you gain 1 point of Cultivation.

Diagnosing Medical Conditions

When trying to divine what type of illness or other imbalance ails a person, all knowledgeable people use the methods known as the Four Approaches.

- **Inspection** – Visually examining the patient for clues. (Color of skin or bodily secretions, coating on the tongue.)
- **Listening and Smelling** – Using other senses than sight, the Doctor examines the qualities of the patient's breath, voice and scent.
- **Inquiry** – A thorough doctor always takes the time to make inquiries of the patient (or someone close to them) of their own experiences of the condition. (Quality of chills and fevers, frequency and quality of sweating, location and intensity of any pain, etc.)
- **Palpation** – Feeling the six pulse points on each wrist. Two corresponds to the kidneys, the other four to heart, liver, lung and spleen. (A superficial pulse signifies the onset of sickness, a deep pulse an internal condition. Slow pulse indicates cold syndromes such as excess of hot yang/shortage of cold yin. A quick pulse indicates heat syndromes.)

It is up to the Sage to supply any pertinent information about the Condition, but it is also recommended to let the Doctor's player go wild when it comes to describing symptoms and the like within those parameters.



Healing Damage: Medical works

A skilled Doctor can be a good friend in the Wulin. His ministrations can help a body's Wood System to pull together to heal damage suffered from things such as cuts, bruises and direct Chi attacks. Anyone can use their Medicine Skill to provide assistance bonuses in their Hardiness Skill use, but someone skilled in the medicinal secret arts (i.e. someone with the *Secret Art of Medicine Lore*) can do more than that – they can work in parallel, allowing the subject to use the better result of the Doctor's and their own for trying to beat the Recovery. The Doctor uses the modifiers from his Toolset lore (the *Secrets of Diagnosis*) for the roll.

Example: Ten-Blade Princess has suffered a Major damage condition – crushed ribs – from her fight with Iron Scar Nan. The value of the Ripple roll that caused the condition was 43, so this is the Recovery. A regular doctor (i.e., anyone with a Medicine skill of +5 or more) can provide assistance to give her a +5 to her Hardiness roll to try to Soothe the condition. Since any normal damage condition has a Duration of 1, it means that one success will Soothe it down to a Minor one. She only rolls 32, though, so no success!

However, if her wounds were instead treated by the Secret Artist Doctor, Wan He Bao, she will not only get the bonus to her Hardiness roll, but Bao may also make a Medicine roll of his own (modified by his Doctor Toolset bonuses). They may pick the higher of these two results when trying to Soothe

her pain. The good Doctor's roll comes up at an impressive 49, which soothes it down to Minor. From there, they can continue her treatments.

Medicine

Medicine in Shen Zhou deals with people's natural balance – as a doctor, you can restore or distort it. Restoring the balance is the very heart of the skill of healing others. Distorting it is a series of secret skills with terrifying potential (detailed in the *Secret of Treatment Lore*).

The Skill includes practical treatments such as bandages, salves, and splints, and also the more esoteric Five Medicines:

- *Herbal remedies*, which relate to the element of Wood. The doctor chooses which herbs to use based on the energy balances of the plants. Ingesting these herbs introduces select influences into the patient's system.
- *Moxibustion*, which relates to the element of Fire. The doctor burns special herbs close to the patient's skin, taking care to remove them before she suffers injury. This fire draws out and feeds the patient's Yin fire, so it is generally used when it is lacking.
- *Surgery*, related to the element of Earth. The doctor cuts the patient open and makes changes to her body, using his knowledge of her Chi balance to keep her stable through the process.
- *Acupuncture*, related to the element of Metal. The doctor introduces needles into the meridians of the body, adjusting the Chi flows that runs through them.
- *Bodywork*, related to the element of Water. The newest of the Medicines, with barely a hundred years as a recognised method under its belt, it allows the doctor to use therapeutic massage to unlock and strengthen Chi flows.

Every doctor can use these methods to some extent, evaluating the energy and Chi flows in the patient's body and administering a holistic treatment to adjust these flows, but only the advanced Secret Artists can use the methods to unlock greater results.

The Secret Art of Medicine

(A system topic)

Toolset Lore (The Secret Arts of Medicine)

Destiny cost: 3 (Free for Doctors)

This is a Toolset Lore. You must use one of the provided Tools to be able to roll to spot Medical conditions.

While the basics of medicine are known throughout Shen Zhou, to gain deeper understanding of its secrets you have to consult ancient scrolls of knowledge or go into apprenticeship with its old masters; in both cases, this takes a lot of time and effort. When simply lower-case-d discovering a Condition that the Sage knows is already there, it is sufficient to roll Medicine and use one of the Four Approaches mentioned in the Introduction Lore. A Doctor really shines when they can put their own specialized medical procedures and techniques

to use, however; for this, they use the Five Medicines as detailed in this Lore. This is what they use to manipulate existing Conditions, or even to make up their own from scratch!

Each of the Medicines contains a set of Limitations, which are conditions that must be fulfilled to utilize it (e.g., a minimum time period that needs to be spent on it or special actions that must be performed.) If this is a big requirement, it might even add a toolset bonus to the skill roll.

The Five Medicines

Herbal remedies

The Doctor makes their patient ingest herbs to restore or upset the balance of the bodily system. They can be placed in food or drink, ingested as-is, breathed in, or (in some cases) applied to the skin as paste or powder so that they can be absorbed.

Limitations: The patient must ingest the chosen herbs.

Modifier: +0 ; +5 for rare and potent herbs (the result of a Memorable (40) Survival roll or higher).

Description: Nature has an abundance of medicinal herbs, each with their own associated energy balances. Knowing which to prepare and apply can make the difference between life and death... it is all up to the Doctor which influences to introduce. Preparing and applying medicinal herbs is all part of the Medicine skill, but collecting them might call for an extensive network of contacts or a Survival roll. This is generally the Tool to pick for using various wondrous drugs or prepared medicines, like using a poison to fight another poison.

Herbal remedies relate to the element of Wood.

Moxibustion

The Doctor burns herbs close to the patient's skin.

Limitations: Tools, access to the patient. Extended Action taking at least 15-20 minutes.

Modifier: +0; +5 for rare and potent herbs (the result of a Memorable (40) Survival roll or higher).

Description: The doctor burns special herbs close to the patients skin, taking care to remove them before she suffers injury. This fire draws out and feeds the patients Yang fire, so it is generally used when it is lacking – when someone needs the strength to be active, strong and forceful.

This method naturally relates to the element of Fire.

Surgery

The Doctor cuts the patient open and makes changes to their body.

Limitations: Tools, access to the patient. Extended, friendly action taking at least 1 hour. The patient needs to heal.

Modifier: +5 for Extended Action.

The doctor cuts the patient open and makes changes to her body, using his knowledge of her Chi balance to keep her stable through the process. This includes organ work, amputation or limb reattachment and other even more exotic and possibly gruesome procedures. To be able to do their work, the Doctor must first inflict a Damage Condition of the same intensity as the one that they wish to create – the patient will have to heal on their own or (hopefully!) with the Doctors help, making this the most radical and time-consuming of the Medicines. This is best handled in a carefully prepared environment, though there are rumors of a blade-wielding “Demon Doctor” who applies these procedures on the field of battle, forcibly using his sharp tools on the bodies of his opponents to make them “more pleasing”!

Surgery relates to the Element of Earth.

Acupuncture

The doctor introduces needles into the meridians of the body, adjusting the Chi flows that run through them.

Limitations: Tools.

Modifier: +0 (+5 for Quality Tools).

The number of acupuncture points are known by the initiated to be equal in number to the days of the year – three-hundred and sixty five, mapped to fourteen meridian lines (one along the spine, one along the abdomen and one for each of the twelve inner organs). Applying needles – or for especially skilled practitioners, fine-point pressure – to these points serves to open, close or reroute the flows of Chi. This can be an intricate ritual procedure, or a rain of thrown needles, depending on context.

The method is related to the element of Metal

Bodywork

Using massages and stretching exercises, the Doctor unlocks or strengthens Chi flows.

Limitations: Access to the patient. Extended actions usually take at least a few minutes.

Modifier: +0

This is the newest of the Medicines, with barely a hundred years as a recognised method under its belt. Originally from western foreign lands, it deals with massaging the muscles and stretching the joints to release pressures and thereby enhance Chi flows.

It is related to the element of Water.

The elemental connotations for the Medicines come into play when a Doctor wants to help someone with elementally-aligned Internal Cultivation; the appropriately-aligned Tool must be part of the training regimen for the effort to be effective.

DESTINY COST:

3 Victory: You discover a Quality manual of medicine or tool for one of the Five Medicines; when you are using this Tool, you gain a +5 toolset bonus to your Medicine rolls.

A Doctor's work

Difficulty

Simple(15)

Moderate(20)

Hard (30)

Memorable(40)

Fantastic (60)

Procedure

You are not so much creating the condition as confirming what is obviously already there.

Small extrapolations and a truly excessive amount of time, exotic tools and assistance.

Your work is inspired in the eyes of the Sage, and you extrapolate a reasonable effect from the proper procedures.

Difficult work. You can make a case for being able to produce the desired effects, but it does take some good will.

Extremely improbable – complete lack of tools, drunken and/or hostile assistants.

Legendary/Impossible (80/100)“Tell me again how stabbing him in the brain would cure his fever.”

- On a standard success to your roll, you have found a Trivial Weakness/Hyperactivity. If you have the Secrets of Treatment Lore, you can work to Inflammate it into something useful.
- On a Critical Success, you can Discover a Minor Weakness/Hyperactivity.
- You get to pick the Recovery of the Condition, either equal to the roll made to Discover it or a set number depending on its Intensity: Hard (30) for a Trivial Condition and Memorable (40) for a Minor or Major one.
- You can choose between [Duration 5, Interval 1 Scene] or [Duration 1, Interval 1 Story].
- As usual, the Sage stipulates one circumstance in which the Condition fades by itself.

A Doctor's Work

(A System Topic)

Discovery Lore (The Secret Arts of Medicine)

Destiny Cost: 3 (Free for Doctors)

The Doctor's arts are perhaps the least esoteric of them all. Even if it takes great skill, even if it can look like magic in the eyes of the common people, it deals in the realities of the body. It stands to reason that the ways by which the dedicated medical practitioner creates and maintains Conditions are also very direct.

Basically, it leans more towards actually and purposely *creating* Conditions through the application of tools and circumstance than by *discovering* what is already there. While Courtiers pick up on subtle cues of a person's buried desires and moral frameworks, and Priests ken the secret weave of natural and supernatural influences, Doctors simply decide what they want done and use their skills to make it happen.

Helping someone to fight better is probably the most common request made of Doctors in the Wulin, but there are many ways to go about it. One Doctor might decide to rouse a warrior's heart by drowning it in copious volumes of alcohol, giving them an action bonus at fighting for as long as they act like a proper drunken (and foolish) master. Others might decide to use surgery, or apply needles to their key points to stimulate their Chi Breath. A particularly spiteful Doctor might make them stay out in the cold rain, cultivating a harsh fever that makes them feel dizzy and nauseous unless they give their all in the arena of battle (since the kind of vigorous blood flow and balance of energy that comes with fighting temporarily staves off the symptoms).

Though these methods are more deliberate from an in-character perspective than the other Discovery Lores, it follows the same basic pattern: a Difficulty for the roll is derived from the outrageousness of the condition in the

person in question, the tools available to the Doctor, and circumstance. The player rolls his Discovery Skill (Medicine) to meet this, with the recipient rolling Hardiness to resist. They must also somehow be made to comply with the Doctor's wishes, but they can be forced or deceived to do so, such as by being kept prisoner, bullied into submission, or simply kept in the dark about the true nature of the “fertility medicine” that they are given every night.

This makes it more demanding for Doctors to be able to work to get results, but in return they can generally get more flexible results (as they are equally apt at creating *Weaknesses* and *Hyperactivities*).

Secrets of Treatment

(A system topic)

Manipulation Lore (The Secret Arts of Medicine)

Destiny Cost: 4 (Free for Doctors)

You must have the Secret Art of Medicine Lore to purchase this.

This secret art grants incomparable skill with the Five Medicines that vastly transcends ordinary work – a mundane scholar can but try to balance the essential Chi of the bodily organs, but for a truly skilled doctor a human body is as malleable as clay!

All these techniques require direct interaction with the target, since you still need to utilize the Five Medicines: you must give them a herbal remedy, or perform acupuncture, bodywork, moxibustion, or surgery upon them.

Inflaming and Soothing Conditions

Cost: 0 Destiny.(You get this for free when purchasing the Lore.)

This is a basic tools of advanced doctors – allowing them to reduce a bothersome condition to nothing or to make full use of a potentially helpful one.

They caught up with him in the narrow alleys near the West Central Gate; all moving with great skill through the walls and over the rooftops, emerging from hidden doors. It would seem that they were materializing from thin air, were he not aware of their approach. This was what gave the Seventh Palace Strike Force the nickname -Immortal Ghost Soldiers- among the common people of the city. It was a reputation that they cultivated to the best of their considerable abilities.

The barrel-chested Doctor stopped as a line of armored men blocked his way forward. He didn't need to glance over his shoulder to know that another group had taken position behind him, boxing him into a narrow space... a killing field, if it came to that. He adjusted his grip on the heavy wooden doctor's pack slung over his broad shoulder.

-Mendicant Wan He Bao.- The voice was deceptively light in tone for one that carried such an undertone of force, only just disturbing the refined surface. Bao's skin tingled from the concentrated killing intent.

-Gentleman Ping Zhen.-

The thin-limbed nobleman stepped forth, his lacquered armor barely more than a darker patch of shadow except where a stray beam of moonlight hit its polished surface.

-Useless, useless. Did you expect to run from us, Mendicant Bao? To escape the punishment for your crimes?-

-Crimes!- Bao sniffed and straightened up. Standing almost a head taller than most of the men around him, he made an impressive figure even when outnumbered. -Far from it. I made my examinations of your lord's illness just as I was asked to.- His eyes had a steely glint where they peered forth from the shadows under his wide-brimmed hat. -I found out more than I expected to, but perhaps faster than what was, in turn, expected of me.-

It was the nobleman's turn to sniff as his hand went to the handle of his blade. -Indeed?-

Bao took careful note of the shuffling soldiers; everyone was moving forward, so slowly that the box seemed to be shrinking by itself between one moment and the next. If he remembered correctly, he was about to be shown the "Twenty Blades, Six Directions Offense" maneuver that had been alluded to before.

-Indeed. Your lord is not suffering from illness, but from a rare poison. Perhaps whoever gave him the poison intended for me to stay there until I was the only suspect for your lord's sudden death. Perhaps they expected me to run, and for you to hunt me down and cut me to pieces.-

-That is indeed the usual punishment for assassins, Medicant Bao.- Zhen's smile was cruel. -At least, that tends to be the end of it.-

He flexed his shoulders slightly, suppressing an impulse to shuffle his feet. -They did not expect me to know of a cure. Your lord still lives, and he will keep doing so if I manage to collect the Five Element Ginseng Root from a cave not far from here. If not...- He shrugged.

Zhen's blade slid out of its scabbard, making a sound as slight as a whisper.

-Pathetic!- The nobleman's voice was dismissive. -Do you expect us to take you, a Doctor of suspicious repute, at your word when you claim that you have not practiced the poisoner's art?-

-Well, I didn't say that.- Bao's smile was thin, a razor cut across his broad face as the nobleman frowned. -I just said that I didn't poison your Lord!-

He raised his large hand, displaying a series of long and thin acupuncture needles protruding from between his meaty fingers. -You, on the other hand, honored gentleman Ping Zhen... When pondering your Lord's condition, I foresaw this tragic misunderstanding. Consequently, I made arrangements the last time that you chose to visit the Lord's chamber. The very same poison that courses through the Duke's veins, on the tips of these Seven Blessing Needles, the barest touch is enough.-

-You are an unrighteous criminal escaping justice,- said Zhen, the faintest of tremors in his voice. -It stands to reason that you would say such a thing.- The sword now pointed at Bao's throat.

-The poison enters through the blood and overwhelms your heart. You will feel a slight pain, some fever – just like the common illnesses of this season.- The doctor raised one finger. -As you know now, gentleman Zheng, this state will persist for a few days. After that, the poison has overwhelmed your fire system! From this state, your body will slip into a deep sleep while your mind stays awake. Just like the honored Duke, given continued interruptions to my journey, you will be able to feel the essential reflexes of your body lapse. After a while, you will cease to breathe and slowly suffocate.-

The nobleman had grown ashen; in the dim light, he looked like a real ghost.

-Now...- Bao continued with a hint of grim mirth in his voice: -Will you allow me to perform my work to the best of my abilities?-

Yin-Yang Technique

Cost: 3 Destiny.

You can use a *Weakness* to create a matching *Hyperactivity* or vice versa – the existing condition deciding what other system it has a Yin-Yang relationship to according to the *Five-Phase Wheel* (pg. 225).

Elemental Progression technique

Cost: 1 Destiny.

This allows you to move a physical condition on the *Five-Phase Wheel*, so that a Wood condition becomes a Fire Condition, Fire into Earth and so on.

Internal-External Technique

Cost: 2 *Destiny*.

This esoteric art allows you to create medical conditions from Passions and/or Inspirations (which you must have first surmised – or in the case of some especially astute doctors, Discovered through the use of the *Story of the Self* Lore. Refer to the Lores on Passions and Inspirations to see what kind of conditions that they can create.

Paired Condition technique

Cost: 5 *Destiny*.

As always, this creates two Conditions from *nothing* – completely sidestepping the Discovery phase. Refer to the *Five-Phase Wheel* to find the corresponding systems (for example, you could make someone's heart (a Fire organ) weak, and use the energy to strengthen the lungs or kidneys (being Metal and Water associated, respectively).

Stealthy Work

Cost: 3 *Destiny*

You can hide your use of these techniques by making a Minor Stealth Action opposed by your opponent's Minor Wu Wei or Awareness Action. In combat time, opponents that don't match your Stealth roll with their opposition cannot try to break this Wave.

Quick Work

Cost: 3 *Destiny*

This allows you to make use of your Secret Arts in combat; see the *Secret Arts in Combat* (pg. 185) for details.

Extraordinary Medical Techniques

(A system topic)

Destiny Cost: 1

This Lore is free if you have the Medicine Skill at +5 or more.

This is a collection of tricks and special techniques that work under the umbrella of the Secret Arts of Medicine. They are not as flexible as the full Art, but are highly useful in themselves and practiced both by accomplished scholars and many Wulin who are merely insightful in the workings of the body.

Each technique must be bought separately for the listed Destiny cost.

Closing the Five Gates (2)

(Augment)

Once an enemy's Chi is disturbed, the sagacious doctor with insight into its movement can close off its essential flows and make it harder for the victim to control his Chi; undisciplined, it goes to waste!

This allows you to use your Medicine skill to perform a Disorient Marvel that gives a direct penalty to Focusing on Breath. You can stack two separate applications of this Marvel for a total penalty of -10 to Focus Breath actions.

Augment – Changes how an existing action works.

Extended – works for actions taken outside of combat time, on a larger time scale.

Flood – a Flood action.

Minor Action – regular skill use, Minor Action

Wave – regular skill use, a Wave action

Cutting the Branch (2)

(Augment)

While it is common practice among the fierce and the tactically minded to deny their opponents the use of their limbs through the application of force, a Doctor knows how to exploit pressure points and damage to the joints to effectively cripple a warrior!

This technique lets you stack two Disrupt Marvels aiming to penalize Footwork. These Marvels can even be on the same turn if you are having a really good day with the dice. However, they must both use your Medicine skill.

Selective Application of Force Method (3)

(Extended/Wave/Flood)

The intense study of medical manuals and the bodies of your opponents grants an intricate, practical knowledge of the anatomy of the human body.

You can change a damage condition penalty from a Breath Penalty to an Action Penalty, or vice versa. As an Extended action, this is a Hard (30) Medicine roll. In combat, it is a Marvel using your Medicine bonus, which can be defended against without penalty by Dodge, Block or Hardiness.

Flesh-Sculpting Treatment (5)

(Extended)

The Doctor has learned the obscure and generally shady practice of surgically changing someone's appearance through one of many exotic techniques. The Western Devil Scholars, for example, exploit the flesh-knitting White-Ash Scarabs by inserting them into the patient's flesh, while the Daoist doctors of the Little Big Mountain School are said to use a set of one hundred and sixty different blades for the long and unpleasant procedure.

In any case, the procedure is always surgical, takes at least a week to complete, and causes a Major Damage Condition that must be healed normally afterwards. The difficulty of the Medicine roll depends on how dramatic a change is desired. Ensuring someone won't be recognized while keeping the same build is Memorable (40), and it goes straight up from there. The procedure can't perform completely functional sex changes - you can have sex, but won't gain any new powers of procreation - but you can make a damn good impression with a Fantastic (60) Difficulty procedure.



Should it be fitting for a story, players may spend Entanglement as a Victory to have their character transformed by this technique. This costs 2 to 4 Entanglement, depending on how plausible it is and what impact it will have on the game.

River Flows Upstream Technique (2) (Flood)

This intricate series of strikes works to reverse the natural flow of the body, making the victim's blood flow backwards!

You can Flood dice to create a Poison attack with a Damage bonus equal to your Medicine skill.

Vigorous Exercise Regimen (2) (Extended)

There are said to be as many manuals of proper living and exercise as there are stars in the sky; you had the good fortune to study one that actually works!

If you use two of the five medical methods (e.g., taking the pulse and burning fragrant herbs) you gain a +5 bonus to your next extended task with a direct physical component, such as endurance running, lifting the bronze bell that fell on your Sifu, and staying up all night to transcribe medical manuals.

Opening the Veins and Arteries (2) (Wave)

It is risky and massively unhealthy, but a quick series of acupressure strikes can open the flow of the veins and arteries of the body in a way that simulates the procedure internalized by someone with powerful internal cultivation. It is said that there exists a group of warriors who all had

their Cultivation ruined by grievous wounds inflicted as punishments for untold crimes, who now use this technique to practice their Internal Arts even as it slowly kills them!

With a Moderate (20) Medicine Wave, the Doctor can give temporary regular Chi to either himself or a willing target he can touch at the cost of Ripples. The beneficiary receives 2 Chi per Ripple that they are prepared to accept. (This can inflict no more Ripples than the Doctor's Rank level.) These points do not respire, nor do they remain after the combat. Characters without Cultivation, such as Lesser Legends or Unranked people, can use this technique exclusively to practice Internal Styles.

(Element)-Raising Infusions (4) (Extended/Wave)

This is a collection of techniques, at least one per element and associated organ/passion. For example, promoting the gall bladder with infusions of Wood Chi and select herbs can spur unrelenting fury! Conversely, manipulating the heart and small intestine can instill euphoria. It all depends on the moods and morality of the doctor. Techniques that promote love and desire are understandably popular; but never underestimate the utility of promoting prudence and contemplation.

You cannot purchase this technique unless you already know the Internal-External Technique for Medical conditions. With this technique, whenever you would have created a Medical condition, you can instead create a Passion condition. This condition has the same Intensity, Duration, and Interval that the Medical condition would have had.

THE WARRIOR'S ART

Discovery/Toolset/Manipulation Lore: The Secret Art of Batte

Discovery/Manipulation Skill: Tactics

Resist/Recover Skill(s): Tactics (or others, as applicable for Marvels)

Default Conditions: Action bonuses/penalties

Other relevant passages: Introduction to Chi Conditions and Secret Arts.

Combat Conditions

(A system topic)

Destiny cost: Free for anyone who has the Tactics Skill at +5 or more

(Introduction)

The Sword Buddha Temple

The moonlight poured down through the gaping holes of the ancient temple and cast an eerie glow over the main chamber. The massive cast-iron smile of the Amida Buddha statue was still visible even through many years of layered rust and growth. More than three hundred swords of all shapes and sizes were thrust in to the chamber floor in front of it, the points driven down into solid stone.

Two heroes faced off over this sea of blades. On the stone steps before the great Amida Buddha stood a man of ghostly complexion and a wicked grin splitting his pasty features. In his hands, a fifty-pound chain connected the bear traps dancing on its slowly spinning ends. Opposite him, a young white-haired woman wearing a silver fox mask. She seemed light as a feather as she stood positioned with her feet on theommel of two of the swords.

"A freak and a monster!" Her voice was slightly muffled by the mask, yet still melodious in tone. "Even the secret chambers of the Imperial Palace have lowered their standards."

"Psah!" The ghostly white man's voice was high-pitched and soft – the voice of a eunuch. "I am a humble servant of virtue. Those people were less than dirt, and fated to die; why should they not make themselves useful by filling my belly?"

The fox mask glittered knifelike in the moonlight, and she spoke. "Let me guess – you would be Flesh-Eating Tiger, peasant-murdering dog of Duke Lu."

The man chuckled and twisted his hands; the bear traps opened with a noise of grinding steel, gaping open like hungry jaws eager to snap bones. "What luck! Heaven smiles on me tonight! Not only do I get to meet the Silver Fox Bandit," he giggled, "But I get to feast twice in a day!" His nostrils flared. "I wonder... will you be salty or sweet?"

His hands barely twitched, and the iron jaws shot forward like starving dogs. They gave ghostly howls as the air passed between their teeth. The girl became a silvery image that blurred and split like a flock of birds; the jaws snapped at emptiness.

Flesh-Eating Tiger's eyes were wide. A roar passed over his bloodless lips as he yanked at the chains; the links clattered, and the ghastly weapons leapt back into his hands.

"How disappointing!" The fox-bandit's voice oozed disdain. Her formless image flickered into shape; she stood at the other end of the chamber, perched gracefully on the hilt of a mighty saber.

The pale assassin spat. "Do not get complacent, girl. My next technique will have my toys chew your hands off!"

"I doubt it." Fox Bandit's cane tapped a zhanmadao's hilt like an impatient teacher rapping a student's knuckles. "Your style has great power, and it is very accurate when you focus on your enemy. But you waste Chi with your excessive forms. You focus only on force and speed – your senses are blind to an opponent who masks their presence."

The eunuch began to snarl a reply, but stopped as he felt a sting. A red slit opened on his cheek.

Silver Fox Bandit's beautiful voice filled with menace: "You will have plenty of time to regret your murderous ways before I will allow you the mercy of death."

Open combat is seen as the purest state of being in the Wulin. Certainly, it is the one where a person is forced to transcend their limitations and pour their soul into the effort to realize their goals. In that aspect, it is more than a means to an end. Some would call it a goal in itself. It should come as no surprise that there are multitudes of approaches to the arts of combat, from the introspective and philosophical to the utilitarian and mundane. Whatever their position, everyone knows that combat is a medium for change. Regardless if it is for better or worse, few warriors ever emerge from a meaningful battle the way they entered it.

No one internalizes these positions and the lessons of battle more than the Warriors. This Secret Art coalesced as a collection of hard-won lessons about the nature and practice of conflict.

Combat Conditions manifest as *Hyperactivities* in the user that strengthen them in their approach and bring added focus. They have another collection of tricks and tactics to affect their enemies with *Weakness*-like Conditions, summarized in the *Extraordinary Warrior Arts*. These approaches focus on giving the individual Warrior an easier time.

Approaches and the individual Warrior

The Combat Conditions granted by the Five Battle Approaches give a definite edge to fighters who have studied the Warrior's Art. They also deepen a Warrior's relationship to his own martial arts, often working in tandem with Internal lessons and External stances to fully express a fighter's style. Each Warrior uses this in their own way. Some shift approaches depending on the situation. For others, their favored approach is an inseparable part of their kung fu and an expression of their fighting spirit; it's as much a part of their overall Style as their techniques or stances.

The Black Crane school of swordplay is an example of the former; they make connections between specific

combat approaches and the individual legends of Eight Legends swordplay, adjusting their Approach to the circumstances. Conversely, the odd version of Destiny Cloud Fist practiced by the reclusive Mud Hermit, Melancholy Palm, is an expression of his sorrow; the Water-tied approach that colors his style with this emptiness is the very heart of his powerful Kung Fu.

Combat Conditions and Five-Element Theory

The approaches to combat that give shape to Combat Conditions correspond to elemental positions on the Five-Phase Wheel. They are the elemental principles put into useful action; as such, they are inherently connected to emotions (i.e. Passions and Inspirations) which in turn influence the physical body (Medical Conditions) and the state of the world (Curses and Influences). This means that constant use makes it likely you'll develop long-term conditions. In most cases, this won't matter, but some clever people learn several different types of Secret Arts and practice exotic Internal/External techniques to let their appeals to Passion benefit from appropriate Combat Conditions and similar works.

Each Element has an associated approach, which describes their attitude to battle, and another element that it dominates. This nets them a +5 bonus to their Tactics rolls against the latter when it comes to Soothing the Combat Conditions belonging to the dominated element, or for defending against their Tactics-based Secret Art attacks.

All practitioners of the Warrior's Art can also try to Soothe any Combat Conditions that their enemies have active. This is made as a Minor Tactics action on your attack roll with a Difficulty equal to the Recovery of the Combat Condition. It should be properly described as attacking their combat approach by destroying its foundations or otherwise ruining it. This roll is subject to all the normal Laughs at/Fears bonuses or penalties one might expect, depending on which External Styles are used.

- A success Soothes the Condition one level – Major to Minor, Minor to Trivial, Trivial to gone.
- A Trivial Condition gives no applicable effects, but can be Inflamed back to its original level.
- To Inflame one of your own Conditions (to a maximum of its initial intensity), make a Hard (30) Tactics roll as a Minor Action on your Initiative roll.

You can only benefit from one Combat Condition at a time.



Combat Conditions: Special Requirements

Due to the immediate tactical aspect of the Warrior's Art, the Sage can at times judge that simply roleplaying out an approach is not enough to fulfill the terms of the Condition. In these cases, they might demand a Minor Action in addition to the principal actions taken, to symbolize the character's work to maintain their plans. This could simply be an appropriate Skill roll ("just roll Tactics at Difficulty 20"), or it could be direct actions that support your chosen approach. ("Yeah, smashing up the furniture as a Shaping Marvel to lock everyone into the room with you seems to be in line with your Furious Wood Style.")

木 Wood

Associated approach: Furious battle!

Controls: The approach of Earth – as your fury overwhelms its intricacies and deliberate approaches!

These conditions focus on the element of Wood, on emotions of Anger, and on a forceful, uncompromising stance in combat. Warriors utilizing the approach of Furious Battle must make efforts to overwhelm their enemies by sheer force; they are encouraged to let their aggressive emotions bleed into their combat style. Furious Warriors often use destructive Marvels to smash up the battlefield by toppling trees, crushing support beams and assailing their opponents with violent explosions of scenery.

- Wolf-Heart Bei lets his endless rage and immense strength speak for him! The swings of his massive weapons crumble walls and crush bone, always using maximum force, and he never fights a duel for sport – each of his strikes always goes for the kill.
- Ten Sword Princess is relentless in her assaults on her enemies, always moving forward, never retreating, exposing them to a rain of blades coming from all directions! Stop that forward movement and you've beaten her, but who dares even try?

火 Fire

Associated approach: The joy of battle!

Controls: The approach of Metal – as you are everywhere at once, casting a light through its shadows!

This approach focuses on battle as a meeting of Warriors. It is a place of conflict, but also intimacy. This joy is expressed in explosive action, quick movement and expressions of fiery Yang energy. The Joyful Warrior spends energy on excessive movement, showy maneuvers, playful (or biting) wit, and expressions of the joy of battle.

- The Silver Fox Bandit is known for her biting remarks. Her words cut as deep as blades as she dances around her opponents, belittling their prowess in battle, in hygiene, in business, in bed, and so on. Her worst enemy plots to take away all that she holds dear, and drown her joy in endless sorrow and regret.
- Bottomless Hu adopts the way of the Drunken Warrior. He's always stumbling around on the battlefield taking deep swigs from his bottle and shouting out slurred poems with wine on his breath, yet his chaotic movements make him nigh-unstoppable. When he's not drunk, he spends his time lazing about and refusing to fight unless someone buys him a cup.

土 Earth

Associated approach: Tactical battle

Controls: The approach of Water – as you have already surmised where it is going to strike, and made plans to counter it!

The Earth approach is one of introspection and conservation; it utilizes advantages already in place. Translated to the field of battle, it is the approach of the tactician. Warriors using this approach are aware of their environment and the strengths and *weaknesses* of fighting Styles. They ruminate on the tactical aspect of their actions, use feints and environmental factors to their advantage, or lecture their opponents on the flaws of their fighting styles.

- The Iron Marshal of Mount Wa is renowned for his teachings, as well as his unmatched staff style, and he tends to blend the two by making every battle into a lecture about the compability of Styles and the intricacies of battle. Groups of young Wulin have ambushed him just to partake of the reclusive master's teachings!
- The Five Branch school of Mohist fighters are never unprepared. They always take care to set up every situation and environment to their advantage! They are very reluctant to reveal their presence before they've had a few moments to measure their surroundings.

金 Metal

Associated approach: Battle in the shadows

Controls: The approach of Wood – as its fury spills like waves across the shore, unable to overwhelm what it cannot understand!

The Metal approach is mystery and obfuscation: hiding your motives and your actions, moving in literal or metaphorical shadow. Warriors who use this approach make

stealthy actions, use trickery that depends on misdirection and sleight of hand, and otherwise prevent opponents from understanding the truths of their fighting techniques.

- The appropriately named Warrior called Faceless takes every opportunity to mask their styles and intent by hiding the signature moves of each Style used and shifting effortlessly between External styles just when their opponent have started to see a pattern. They hide their face and body behind shapeless veils so that their nature and intentions beyond the immediate are a mystery.
- The “school” of techniques featured in the forbidden Caterpillar Manuscript describes a style based on “thirteen hidden weapons” – attacks designed to be masked by illusory attacks with the true strike hiding in the shadow of the visible blade. Practitioners of these arts (if there are any) use an intricate system of feints and despicable tactics to bring their foes down.

水 Water

Associated approach: Circling and waiting

Controls: Fire – as its Yang fire is swallowed by the Yin of your infinite patience!

Ever flowing, ever adapting – the Water approach is action via inaction. Fools rush in, but these Warriors bide their time. Waiting Warriors project cold Yin energy; they use flowing and circular movements, describe their combat style as waiting for the perfect opening, or hold back on excessive action in favor of the implacable nature of the attack that is yet to come.

- The disfigured assassin called Centipede lures his enemies to exhaust themselves by constantly falling back and circling, and changing to a relentless offense only when they have overextended.

Chipped Blade circles her enemies like a hungry wolf, making quick attacks to draw blood before resuming her pacing. Her victims know pain and fear very intimately before she defeats them.

Examples of Combat Conditions

Drunken Warrior Style

Minor Fire Combat Condition

Interval 1 Chapter

You have developed extraordinary drinking techniques by finding the truth at the bottom of the bottle! Where lesser Warriors are hindered by intoxication, you revel in it. You might act the drunken fool, but few want to go up against your wild swings and unpredictable, staggering movements!

You must have access to wine or other appropriate liquor to be able to enjoy the effects of this Condition.

You find your liquor inspiring; it fills your limbs with strength and your belly with warmth. As long as you act properly drunk (inserting adjectives such as “jovial”, “staggering” and “red-nosed” is recommended) you get a +5 Action Bonus, perhaps even a bonus to your Breath! All hail the Drunken Immortal!

The Lessons of Master Pei

Major Earth Combat Condition

Interval 1 Chapter

Your fighting techniques are based on the eight tactics and twenty-three variations taught by the Ultimate Tactician, Master Pei. You weigh every movement and every action, taking great care to exert just the right amount of force to bring your plans to fruition. Every field of battle has its tools, every style has its strengths and *weaknesses*, and you study them all.

You must take opportunities to study your opponent's style as well as your environment, ruminating about the tactical possibilities (if only in internal monologue), and execute sound plans. In addition to the roleplaying aspects, you should take opportunities to use Tactics to read your opponent and perform other reasonable system actions.

Going along with the lessons of the Master nets you a +10 Action Bonus, as everything falls neatly into place.

Detection

Everyone with this Lore can recognize an existing Combat Condition by making a Tactics roll at the urging of the Sage while out of combat, and as a deliberate Tactics Minor Action inside of it. The Difficulty is set by the Sage, but the benchmarks should be 30 for a Minor Condition and only 20 to recognize a Major one. The target can oppose this with Stealth or Tactics.

The Secret Art of Battle

(A System Topic)

Discovery/Toolset/Manipulation Lore (The Warrior's Art)

Destiny Cost: 10

This Lore is free for Warriors.

This is the art through which Warriors apply Combat Conditions to themselves by adopting specific approaches.

The Persistence of Combat Conditions

For a battle style to be strong enough to create a Combat Condition, it must influence your entire approach to combat; it is not a plan to discard at a moment's notice! By default, they have a Duration of one Chapter.

To prolong an existing Condition, or to change it into another elemental aspect, you need a scene of training. If it takes place during downtime when nothing exciting is happening, you are free to narrate it however you want. (A training montage is a classic.) Otherwise, you're constrained to whatever time and props you have at hand. In-character, you go through a set of training exercises to re-evaluate and change the way you approach battle. As a player, you are technically making a Discovery, so the Sage shouldn't make excessive time demands that wouldn't be made of other Secret Art practitioners that create new Conditions.

As long as you have a few moments for yourself to practice your techniques and approaches, a self-inflicted Combat Condition can be assumed to last indefinitely.

Adopting an approach

Creating a Combat Condition though an adopted approach takes a personal training session, as mentioned before. You don't need a trainer or partner for this; practicing your own techniques is enough. This training session is an Extended Tactics action at Hard (30) Difficulty. The Sage can add to this Difficulty if circumstances are at work making it harder for you, such as trying to practice within the close confines of a noodle-stand in a crowded market. If you want to hide what you are doing, you use the same Lake roll to make a Minor Action/Stealth with which to resist the Awareness rolls of onlookers trying to deduce your true intent.

Combat Conditions are always Minor Conditions unless you have the Extraordinary Unassailable Battle Saint Technique.

Effects of Combat Conditions

Combat Conditions are immediately focused on the flow of battle; they can give Action or Breath bonuses. They do not have access to Cultivation bonuses, Elemental Conversions, or Entanglement; if those types of effects exist within Combat Conditions at all, they would require some really odd Extraordinary Techniques to access.

Extraordinary Warrior Techniques

(Secret Arts)

Destiny cost: 1

This Lore is free if you have the Tactics skill at +5 or more.

These are techniques that flow from an understanding of the Warrior's Art – though not part of specific Styles, they might be considered Formless Techniques for Externals. They are based on a deeper insight of the lessons of the Five Combat Approaches as applied on the field of battle – being universally applicable, there are almost as many variants and individual expressions of these techniques as there are practitioners.

Augment – Changes how an existing action works.

Extended – works for actions taken outside of combat time, on a larger time scale.

Flood – a Flood action.

Minor Action – regular skill use, Minor Action

Wave – regular skill use, a Wave action

Controlling Inner Force (3)

(Flood)

Whether through pressure points, cruel cuts, or a deeper understanding of Wu Wei, the Warrior breaks the equilibrium of their opponent.

When you achieve a critical success on a Disorient Marvel, you can Flood a die from your River to increase the penalty to -10.

Controlling Outer Force (3)**(Flood)**

The Style of your opponent flows in an unbroken stream from hard-won lessons to the expression of techniques. Disrupt that stream, and you deny them the tools of combat.

When you achieve a critical success on a Disrupt Marvel, you can Flood a die from your River to increase the penalty to -10.

Gardener Shapes the Sapling Technique (5)**(Extended/Augment)**

The Warrior can also be a teacher; their advice serves as a sharp and balanced weapon in their pupil's hands. As the gardener cultivates his plants from seedlings, you shape your students to grow and prosper.

You can spend 1 Joss to use a scene of training to confer an Approach to someone else, until the end of the next combat. You and the Sage decide on the details of this particular training, as well as the outlines of the Battle Condition; your pupil can only choose whether to obey their master!

Mirror Reflection Technique (3 or 8)**(Flood)**

You not only excel at reading the intricacies of your opponent's style, but spend long hours training to copy it, unconsciously modeling your Chi to match their movements and shifting your own muscle tension to mimic theirs. Using the conflict itself as your training ground, you assume the hidden strengths of your enemy.

After witnessing an opponent in combat and Detecting their chosen Combat Condition with the usual Tactics roll, you can Flood two dice from your River to instantly assume their approach and the associated Combat Condition.

There are whispers of an ultimate form of this technique that allows a Warrior to flow through forms to instinctively assume a superior tactic in response to his enemy. For every action, there is an appropriate reaction, and these legendary warriors have internalized the forms of battle.

For an additional 5 Destiny, you learn the ultimate form of this technique: instead of copying your opponent's form, you assume an approach that controls his! You describe the generalities of the approach, and the Sage determines the details.

Quality Evaluation Technique (3)**(Augment)**

There exists a multitude of techniques to gauge an opponent's worthiness and the vital components of their Styles. Some note the development of muscles and ligaments; others read the eyes and their movement. More utilitarian approaches include sneaking a look at their opponents while they train! Whatever your approach, you excel at weighing their strengths and weaknesses.

You get +10 to Tactics rolls made to evaluate the qualities of an opponent's External Style.

Spring Follows Winter Technique (5)**(Wave)**

Learning when to let go might be the hardest lesson to learn; one way or the other, you've mastered it. When others stubbornly refuse to move, you flow and shift. It is in the nature of things to change.

Make a Hard (30) Tactics Wave – if this is successful, you are allowed to spend 2 Joss to shift your Approach at the end of this turn. The Difficulty rises to Memorable (40) if you are trying to shift to the Approach that Controls your current one.



Stance-Breaking Force technique (3) (Augment)

Having internalized the lessons of Five-Element combat theory and the tactical Classics, you easily wield the strengths of your Approach.

Increase the bonus to Tactics rolls against an opponent's approach that your approach Controls to +10.

Ten-Direction Movement Approach (2) (Flood)

Trap the foot. Close the gate. Block the way. Prevent your opponent from moving as they want, and remove any obstacles to your own path. Mastery of the field is the first step to victory.

When you achieve a critical success on a Shaping Marvel, you can Flood to add +5 to the final result per die flooded.

Unassailable Battle Saint Technique (5) (Augment)

You are an enlightened warrior, having reached the deeper secrets of the Five-Element Approach to battle.

You can spend 1 Joss when you roll a Critical Success to create a Combat Condition for yourself to make it a Major Condition.

THE COURTIER'S ART



Discovery Lore: **Secret of the Self** (pg. 248),
Discovery skill(s): **Awareness**
Toolset Lore: **Secret Art of Intrigue**(pg. 249)
Manipulation Lore(s): **Controlling Passions**
(pg.251), **Controlling Inspirations** (pg. 251)
Manipulation Skill(s): **Inspire**
Resist/recover Skill(s): **Confidence**
Default Conditions: Action utility/penalty,
Cultivation bonus/penalty
Other relevant passages: Basic Secret Arts
package

Passions and Inspirations

(A system topic)

Destiny Cost: *Free for anyone who has the Inspire Skill at +5 or greater.*

People are a passionate lot; from the farmer toiling at his field struggling to make ends meet, to the general who declares war on another country to possess the wife its ruler, their actions are dictated by emotion. However, they are also a principled lot; from the bureaucrat who lives by the

ordinances handed down by the Emperor, to the warrior who conquers his fear and doubt to defend an uncaring, selfish lord against an army of assailants because it is the proper thing to do, they are guided by their higher principles.

In moderation, these elements are like an artist's paint: they blend together to create a harmonious whole, a functional human being. Out of control, they can manifest in dramatic ways! When emotion runs unchecked, it becomes a Passion: a Chi Condition that drives and influences. It clouds reason and promotes strife! A Passion usually creates a *Weakness*, which forces you to behave in certain ways and punishes you if you try to pace yourself.

When principles are sufficiently elevated in one's mind, they become Inspirations, which call you to a higher duty and push you to ever greater heights of principled action. This is generally a good thing, since most Inspirations demand that you make yourself better than you are. An Inspiration is still a kind of sickness, however, just like a Passion. It usually manifests as a *Hyperactivity*, making it easier for you to strive to embody your principles.

Whether they're a help or a hindrance, your unbalanced emotions will eventually destroy you if you give in to them for too long! (Of course, this might be so dramatically appropriate that the player doesn't mind.)

Passions, Inspirations and Five-Element Theory

Emotions drive Passions, and the different virtues shape Inspirations. Each element is associated with an emotion and a principle. The emotion is the Yin of that element in the human mind, and the principle is the Yang. In members of the Wulin, Passions tend to run a lot stronger and virtues are filtered through the lens of their particular viewpoint.

All things in body and soul which follow the fivefold symmetry (as shown on the Five-Phase Wheel) are linked, so an excessive Passion can be harmful to its associated bodily organs! However, you usually don't have to worry about that. It's for the benefit of Doctors or other Secret Artists that practice exotic Internal/External techniques that create medically induced Passions or passion-induced medical Conditions.

木 Wood

Associated emotion: **Anger**

Associated principle: **Worldliness**

Anger causes the Chi to rise, causing dizziness and flushed cheeks. It's detrimental to the liver. It also wears on the patience and health of people around you! People afflicted with Anger have a hard time ignoring opportunities to vent their rage and must find time to fight, scheme, and/or rant bitterly. This condition is common among warriors of all stripes, who tend to have fragile egos to go with their short fuses. Anger Passions might influence you to:

- constantly seek revenge against the enemy that crippled your brother!
- make up for the great loss of your Clan – to make sure that no one laughs at you ever again!
- to interpret every remark that your so-called “sworn brother” makes as a veiled insult.

Worldliness is the Inspiration that calls a person to care about the world and all within it. Ideally, this means they show goodwill and help people out. Unfortunately, it could also mean focusing on greed and materialism, coveting precious possessions, and filling your purse. Worldliness Inspirations might influence you to:

- go out into the ruined city to help the people rebuild after the barbarian attack without letting up, as long as there are strength in your limbs.

- engage in wrangling and penny-pinching, hoarding your wealth like a miser.
- helping a freshly-arrived and charming Courtier to find his way in the city, whether because it feels right or because he seems to be affluent enough to be worth befriending!

火 Fire

Associated emotion: **Joy**

Associated principle: **Propriety**

Joy is associated with happiness and euphoric states, whether love, attraction, an opium high, or plain old drunkenness. People who suffer from these passions have a hard time ignoring opportunities to express their joy, and must take every opportunity to do so. This can include:

- expressing your love for someone, and telling everyone who looks half inclined to listen!
- to indulge in heavy drinking, always accepting a cup when it is offered – regardless of the fact that you are supposed to stand guard!
- giving in to the seductive arts of the Fragrant Mistress of the Mahogany House.

Propriety is the Inspiration that calls the ordinary citizen to behave according ritual and custom, and calls members of the Wulin to push on against adversity. At its most Chivalrous, it drives you to ignore costs to yourself; at its most Corrupt, to ignore costs to others. These can include:

- escorting the caravan belonging to the hero that defeated you to the distant desert cities, standing in for the guards in his employ that you killed when you tried to rob it.
- hardening your heart and cutting down all who oppose you in your quest to possess the last Imperial Seal.
- honoring the pact of sworn brotherhood of the Five Crossing Roads Hero Alliance.

土 Earth

Associated emotion: **Contemplation**

Associated principle: **Fidelity**

Contemplation Passions involve excessive focus. This is harmful to your spleen, even if you focus on something positive. These Passions are common among monks and ministers, whose virtue does not stem from spiritual calm as much as compulsive worrying about proper behavior. They cannot ignore opportunities to express their fixation and must regularly waste time fretting about it or discussing it with others. Conditions might include:

- obsessing on finding the “truth of a warrior's heart”, even though your ruminations are a clear distraction to your mission.
- self-righteously lecturing strangers on the proper forms of behavior and/or the infinite wisdom of the Buddha at every opportunity.
- spending sleepless nights going over your plans again and again in excruciating detail, obsessing over the fatal flaw that you just know is there for you to find... the flaw that will undo everything that you have worked for.



Fidelity Inspirations call the common man to honesty, but call the Wulin to violence – fighting is the ultimate form of truthful communication for the martial brotherhood! The amount of cruelty involved varies with the person and the Inspiration, but limits and restraint do not play a part.

Conditions might be:

- taking up arms against the bandits that roam Mount Huzu, vowing to show them, and everyone who can see the mountain from a distance, the true power of your Ultimate Dragon Saber!
- testing yourself against every prominent Wulin you meet in battle, seeking the perfected harmony of an opponent to match your skill – or possibly a glorious loss.

金 Metal

Associated emotion: **Grief**

Associated principle: **Perseverance**

Grief Passions are about regret, and the pain of loss. They are detrimental to your lungs. Characters suffering from these Passions cannot ignore reminders of their grief and must spend time sulking, wallowing in sorrow, and/or trying to recapture what was lost. Conditions might include:

- dressing in accoutrements of mourning, and regularly expressing your sorrow and loss after the death of your husband. You refuse to remarry or to stop dwelling on his absence.
- after being cast into exile, you obsess over regaining your former status and glory to the exclusion of being able to enjoy new things, or even the good ones still remaining.

Perseverance Inspirations focus on the fulfillment of duty, whether that of a farmer or of a glorious hero. At best, they drive you to fulfill the duties that have been entrusted in you by your position or confidence. A corrupt individual focuses only on the duties that they personally prize. This might entail:

- striving to be an upright and honorable constable in the city of Only Six Devils, even if this means a lonely existence with enemies at every turn.
- after being defeated in battle by the Golden Sword Saint, you swear an oath to take up the tradition of your opponent – protecting his ideals as your own.
- as the only Daoist priest in the valley, you accept that it is your duty to keep harmony and to protect its inhabitants from harmful influences.

水 Water

Associated emotion: **Fear**

Associated principle: **Balance**

Fear Passions, whether justified or delusional, wound your kidneys by drawing the Chi of the body sluggishly downwards. It paralyzes people when they have to face the object of their fears; when they don't, it forces them to waste time worrying about it or making ineffectual plans to escape it. This might include:

- continuously watching for enemies, making plans to assassinate everyone that might suspect that you came into your position by the poisoner's art.
- refusing to travel on waterways regardless of the delays, obsessing over the memory of the alligator that took your sword hand.
- strive to be a righteous individual, not out of personal dedication, but out of the fear of what will happen if Ghost Li returns to fulfill the promise that he made last time you met!

Balance Inspirations strengthen the character of an ordinary person, inspiring humane behavior and a strong moral compass. For Wulin, matters of right and wrong are more dire: Balance urges people either towards bloody justice or vicious revenge! The difference between a Chivalrous and a Selfish individual's expressions is one of motivation.

The former strives to correct matters that offends them on a philosophical level. The latter strives to adjust what offends on a personal level. As one might imagine, even Chivalrous heroes tend to stray.

Conditions might be:

- dispassionately seeing justice meted out in a Sect trial, even though the accused are your sworn siblings.
- finding and killing every merchant in town that is involved with the Black Lotus Society as revenge for the death of the one slave girl whose song reached your heart.
- patrolling the night-time streets of the Jade Phoenix District, protecting the virtuous by meting out immediate justice to the scum who preys upon them.

Examples of emotional conditions:

The burden of the avenging child

Minor Water condition (Inspiration)

Recovery 30, Duration 2, Interval 1 Story

Your father is dead. You have sought to make peace with it, you have consulted the classical manuals – but the words of your late parent’s advisor rings true: you are of his blood, and though you may wish different it is your duty to grant his spirit rest by avenging his death!

Weakness: You must remain focused on seeking revenge for your father’s death – either by acting directly against his killer (if their identity is known!) or by trying to gain indirect advantage. If you want to let something else take priority, you must either obsessively rationalize this as furthering your purpose of revenge or describe yourself as losing sleep, being burdened with guilt and begging your father’s spirit for forgiveness for setting your true duty aside. (Note that you don’t actually have to harbor any personal ill will against your enemy – burning hate would probably work better as a Passion!) If you fail to abide by these requirements, you suffer an Action Penalty!

Hyperactivity: You gain an Action Bonus for all actions taken, directly or indirectly, towards bringing the killer close to bloody-handed justice! You must still abide with the requirements above to keep this bonus.

Love blossoms in spring

Major Fire condition (Passion)

Recovery 40, Duration 3, Interval 1 Chapter

You are in love! Your heart beats faster whenever the object of your passions are close – in body or in thought – and you have a hard time gathering your wits about you.

Weakness: You must describe yourself as energetic and overjoyed whenever the subject of your love comes up, and even more so when they show up in person. You blush, stammer and giggle. You must spend time daydreaming about them or trying to win their affection – you might even start to compose poetry! Being Wulin, it is acceptable and traditional to use your great kung fu to inscribe these words on cliff sides. Much like when being drunk, you suffer when you try to act

level-headed and composed, or when you are forced to focus on other things without spending time pestering everyone with details about your infinite passion – this manifests as a Breath Penalty as well as inability to make Focus Breath actions!

Hyperactivity: Your love (as above) instead serves as a well of strength – though some might snigger or roll their eyes at your unbridled emotions, there’s no denying the vigorous amounts of Chi they help produce! This does, of course, manifest as a Breath Bonus.

Detection and Recovery

Everyone with this Lore can recognize existing Passions and Inspirations by making an *Awareness* roll at the urging of, and at a Difficulty set by, the Sage. The Difficulty is usually 40 for a Trivial Condition, 30 for a Minor one, and only 20 to recognize a Major Condition (which usually aren’t subtle at all).

The target can oppose this with *Stealth* or *Confidence*.

You recover from and defend against these conditions by rolling your Confidence.

The Story of Self

(A System Topic)

Discovery Lore (The Courtier’s Art)

This Lore is free for Courtiers; Priests can choose to start out with it or the Story of Fortune.

Destiny Cost: 3

This is the art that provides insight into the motivations of others – both individuals and social groups. A Courtier can spy the motivations of a man by the subtle cues of conversation, as well as the hidden plans of the Emperor by studying the seemingly spurious actions of the members of the court. It is a sibling to the Predictionist art – it too builds a working understanding of the world. However, it does not reach its full potential unless used by someone who can exploit the information gleaned through its use through the Arts of Intrigue or Daoist Magic.

This Lore helps in spotting subtle Chi Conditions, as described in Introduction to Chi Conditions. Instead of forcing the player to try to spot usefully exploitable personality traits in play, the player is allowed to state his own conclusions and have their character make a roll at a Difficulty based on how well the diagnosis matches up to obvious, observable behavior in play.

Spotting Passions

Courtiers can create Passions, should they make the effort, but people are quite capable of developing imbalanced emotions on their own. When people have unresolved desires, it unbalances their Chi. This means that characters in the game can suffer from Chi Conditions even before the Sage or players explicitly creates them – if an emotion is too strong and it fits an established pattern of behavior it only stands to reason that the character is suffering from a Passion!

If you have this Lore, and you notice an interesting pattern of emotional behavior, you can make an Awareness roll to discover (ie. declare) that it is a Passion. You can only make this roll once for any given set of observations – if you fail, you have to wait for more displays of emotion before you can try again. If others have tried this roll before, you automatically make a roll to oppose it, as usual for Discoveries. If Wise-Eyed Mandarin Ling has already studied the target and found no passion, it is doubtful any lesser Courtiers would succeed!

Difficulty	Procedure
Simple(10)	The Sage – and anyone who cares to look – already knows that the Condition is there; this merely confirms it.
Moderate(20)	The Sage might not have decided the existence of the Condition in beforehand, but it is a pretty obvious reading of the situation.
Hard (30)	You make a reasonable explanation, and the Sage finds it an entertaining proposition.
Memorable(40)	Difficult; there might be a case for your interpretation, but it is far from a straightforward reading of evidence.
Fantastic (60)	You're just making stuff up now.
Legendary/Impossible (80/100)	"So... the Sword Bastard is Inspired towards altruism and universal love?"

- On a standard success on your roll, you have found a Trivial *Weakness*. If you have the Controlling Passions Lore, you can work to Inflame it into something useful.
- On a Critical Success, you can Discover a Minor *Weakness* or a Trivial *Hyperactivity*.
- The Recovery for this Condition equals the value of the roll made to Discover it.
- You can choose between [Duration 5, Interval 1 Scene] or [Duration 1, Interval 1 Story].
- As usual, the Sage stipulates one circumstance in which the Condition fades by itself.

Spotting Inspirations

Just as with Passions, Inspirations can be created by Courtiers or develop spontaneously in people who focus a lot on duty and codes of behavior. This uses the same detection mechanics as discovering Passions, with Difficulties modified by the chart below:

- The character has a rating of 0 in the associated Virtue: +10
- The character has a rating of 1-2 in the associated Virtue: 0
- The character has a rating of 3-4 in the associated Virtue: -10
- The character has a rating of 5 in the associated Virtue and/or the Sage has already decided that there is at least a Minor Condition there: -15
- On a normal success, you Discover a Trivial *Hyperactivity*.

This doesn't do much in itself but can be Inflamed with the proper Secret Arts, or used as a base to create other Conditions (such as Daoist Influences, using the Internal-External Transformation method).

- On a Critical Success, you Discover a Minor *Hyperactivity* or a Trivial *Weakness*.
- You get to pick the Recovery of the Condition – either equal to the roll made to Discover it or a set number depending on its Intensity – Hard (30) for a Trivial Condition and Memorable (40) for a Minor or Major one.
- You can choose between [Duration 5, Interval 1 Scene] or [Duration 1, Interval 1 Story].
- As usual, the Sage stipulates one circumstance in which the Condition fades by itself.

Discovery: An Example

In the shattered remains of the Serene West Heaven Tea House, Zhen Xui Li sheathes her saber as she desperately eyes her friend and ally Scholar Zhong for signs of a love (technically Joy) Passion. Arguing that he always stands by her but also that he “protests way too much”, her player convinces the Sage to set the Difficulty to Hard (30). She flows some dice from her River, which was filled up recently in the interactions with the boorish assassins who completely ruined what was supposed to be a nice, romantic cup of tea. (The Sage allows her to keep those dice for this specific use, since the combat was finished just recently – otherwise, they'd have been gone by now.) Along with her Lake roll, this produces a pleasing result of 45! Zhong's player fumbles with the dice and only manages to achieve a Confidence result of 33 – too bad, Scholar. Li's roll is enough to Discover a Minor *Weakness*! She chooses a Duration of 5 and a 1-scene interval – though he was unlucky this time, Zhong has a high Confidence, and she wants to make sure to prolong the Condition as far as possible. The Sage stipulates that the Condition will fade by itself if Li chooses to reject Zhong, not that this seems too likely...

The Secret Art of Intrigue

(A System Topic)

Toolset Lore (The Courtier's Art)

Destiny Cost: 3

This Lore is free for Courtiers.

Unlocks: Controlling Passions, Controlling Inspirations

This is a Toolset Lore. You must use one of the provided Tools to be able to manipulate Passions or Inspirations.

“Have I been disloyal?

Have I been untrustworthy?

Have I failed to practice as I preach?

*Where a superior man walks, all things come into harmony.
He does not waste energy.
He is not timid or reckless.
He is polite on all occasions.
In this fashion he brings the world into accord.
Am I courteous?
Am I generous?
Am I honest?
Am I persistent?
Am I kind?
I have slain the dragon and the tiger.
The faces of the slain turn towards me as I pass, and say,
'The world hails you as a superior man.'* ”
- Meditations of Mao Yen-Shou

The Secret Arts of Intrigue are the natural outgrowth of government and society. They grow from the soil of Confucianism, Legalism and even Daoism – whenever great minds developed a philosophy of government, the Secret Art blossomed. These are techniques of good governance and proper relationships, but also their dark mirrors – the ways of ruthless manipulations who undermine the harmonious order.

Throughout the Land of the Gods, in the courts as well as the Jiang Hu, Courtiers have applied themselves to fully understanding the consequences of the prevailing social philosophies. They have codified their insights into secret techniques for manipulating society and the world around them. Some of these tricks are contained in the Classics, manuscripts of philosophical thought. Most of them remained in the hands of their creators, special courtier's magic only surrendered in return for the most meaningful favors.

The Confucian Virtues

"Is virtue a thing remote? I wish to be virtuous and lo! Virtue is at hand."-Confucius

As the Great Gentleman himself pointed out, these virtues are the key to government and social influence. Courtiers know this to be the truth: to let your actions flow through them is to influence the world around you and shaping it to your liking. These Five Methods follow in description. A Courtier wishing to utilize the Secret Arts to manipulate Passions or Inspirations must use at least one of these methods or a Secret Art of Intrigue method acquired via some other Lore. Some of these methods give bonuses to the Secret Art-related Skill Rolls.

Benevolence

Courtiers express benevolence by thinking of others.

Limitation: Must show helpfulness.

Modifier: +0

Description: You demonstrate your helpfulness and your benevolent intentions to the target. This cannot be obviously hypocritical – such as declaring your intention to help and aid someone as you are trying to cut off their head in battle – but can be sneaky and underhanded. In harsh situations, you might be required to actually help someone out before you can be said to meet the limitation, while positive wishes might be enough for a relaxed scene.

Propriety

Courtiers express propriety by behaving according to the proper forms.

Limitation: Uses one hand and a Minor action (Trivial Difficulty) per turn.

Modifier: +0

Description: You behave in all manners according to the proper fashion. There is a propriety for all things, even the Wulin! With the proper behavior, you can align yourself with the fundamental governing spirit of humanity. Acting with propriety takes up one trivial (10) Wave Action per turn. It also requires a free hand. (This is a simplified game description of the physical limitations that the proper forms impose). Quality clothing or manuals of propriety could be considered fitting Tools to grant bonuses to this Method.

Fidelity

Courtiers express fidelity by keeping their word and living up to the principles that they have espoused.

Limitation: Promises must be made in advance.

Modifier: +0 (+5 for a formal agreement).

Description: When you act to fulfill your agreements, you show that your words are reliable. You promise to accomplish some difficult or at least time-consuming task (subject to Sage approval) – deciding on a use for the Secret Arts at the time of that promise. When it is fulfilled, and the target learns of this, you make the appropriate Skill Roll. You must interact with the target when making the promise, but not when making the roll; the mere confirmation of your fidelity is enough. If the target voluntarily accepts the promise, makes a deal with you, or expresses honest gratitude for the offer, the bonus is increased to +5.

Righteousness

Courtiers express their attention to righteousness by citing the Classics.

Limitation: Jargon

Modifier: +0 or +5

Description: Simply namedropping Confucius or some other reference to classic philosophers and wisdom helps ground your statements in authority and tradition. The simplest way to do this is to mention Confucius, Mencius, the Book of Odes, or the Book of History in support of your argument. It doesn't have to be a real reference; making something up is fine as long as it sounds fairly authentic. ("Confucius says: boot to the head!" probably won't bring you those bonuses.) Legalist Courtiers might want to quote Han Feizi also.

Don't worry about actually reading the texts if it feels like homework. Just adding a somber air and "Confucius said" does wonders. Interesting or evocative citations, accurate or not, get a +5 bonus.

Wisdom

Courtiers express their Wisdom through the lessons of combat.

Limitation: Must force your opponent into a Rippling in combat.

Modifier: (special)

If your kung fu is weak, how can you be a superior person? If your philosophy prevails through a martial demonstration, how could an opponent assail your argument? Courtiers, especially in the Wulin, must be prepared to demonstrate their arguments in battle. That is why a person of wisdom has strong kung fu; they bolster their inner character with hard work, discipline and exercise!

This is the direct method of using kung fu to prove your arguments. It allows you to spend 1 Chi for a +5 Damage bonus to a Ripple roll caused by use of the Courtier's Art in combat. If you manage to ruminate of the meaning of this martial lesson in a particularly impressive way, the Sage may decide to increase this bonus to +10.

Controlling Passions

(Secret Arts)

Manipulation Lore (The Courtier's Art)

Destiny Cost: 4

This Lore requires "The Secret Art of Intrigue"

This Secret Art uses well-chosen words and a keen understanding of human nature to unlock hidden desires. The liver always strives to regulate and balance emotion – but not even the strongest liver can stand against a Courtier deeply versed in the Classics!

This Secret Art uses the *Inspire* Skill. Characters use *Confidence* when trying to resist it. The rules for Passions are found in the *Introduction to Passions and Inspirations* Lore. The Courtier must use at least one of the Methods of the Secret Arts of Intrigue (e.g. Fidelity).

Inflaming and Soothing Passions

Cost: 0 Destiny (You get this for free when purchasing the Lore.)

The basic tool of Passion manipulators, used to boost gainful Passions or weaken bothersome ones.

Yin-Yang Technique

Cost: 3 Destiny

This lets you use a Passion to create an Inspiration. Refer to the Five-Phase Wheel (pg. 225) to see what type of Inspiration each Passion can fuel; e.g., an Anger (Wood) Passion can feed a violent Fidelity (Earth) Inspiration! Note: the two Conditions do not need to exist in the same person! You can use a Passion in one person to create an Inspiration in another, but you have to interact with both of them and they have to interact with each other – normally a three-way conversation. You can also use a Passionate person to incite an Inspiration in yourself!

Elemental Progression Technique

Cost: 3 Destiny

This allows you to transform a Passion along the Five-Phase Wheel: anger into joy, joy into contemplation, contemplation into grief, grief into fear and fear into joy. You cannot skip

steps, nor move in the other direction. You must interact with the target: a conversation is standard, but a battle or a series of letters can suffice.

Paired Passion Technique

Cost: 5 Destiny

This allows you to create two matching Passions from nothing, one *Weakness* and one *Hyperactivity*. (See the Introduction to Chi Conditions Lore for details). If you have both this Lore and Controlling Inspirations, you can make one of them a Passion and the other an Inspiration; if not, they are both Passions.

Stealthy Work

Cost: 1 Destiny

You can hide your use of these techniques by making a Minor Stealth Action opposed by your opponent's Minor Wu Wei or Awareness Action. In combat time, opponents that don't match your Stealth roll with their opposition cannot try to break this Wave.

Quick Work

Cost: 3 Destiny

You can use your Secret Art as a combat technique directly applied in combat, as per the Secret Arts in Combat Lore on pg. 185. This technique only has to be bought once for the Courtier's Art: if you also have the Controlling Inspirations Lore, you can freely assign Inspirations as well as Passions as a result of mid-combat Ripple rolls.

Controlling Inspirations

(Secret Arts)

Manipulation Lore (The Courtier's Art)

Destiny Cost: 4

This Lore requires "The Secret Art of Intrigue"

This Secret Art uses traditional and modern wisdom to lead other on the path of virtue. The lungs, governing the transfer of Chi between the self and the world, control a person's inclinations towards virtue, but the power of breath can not compare to the traditional wisdom of Confucius!

This Secret Art uses the *Inspire* Skill. Characters use *Confidence* when trying to resist it. The rules for Inspirations are found in the *Introduction to Passions and Inspirations* Lore. The Courtier must use at least one of the Methods of the Secret Arts of Intrigue (ex. Fidelity).

Inflaming and Soothing Inspirations

Cost: 0 Destiny (You get this for free when purchasing the Lore.)

This is used to Inflame useful Inspirations or to weaken or even remove harmful ones.

Yin-Yang Technique

Cost: 3 Destiny

This lets you use an Inspiration to create a Passion. Refer to the Five-Phase Wheel (pg. 225) to see what type of Passion each Inspiration can fuel – e.g., a virtuous Balance Inspiration would incite a tumultuous Joy Passion. You can use an Inspiration in one person to create a Passion in another, but you have to interact with both of them and they have to interact with each other – normally a three-way conversation. You can also use an Inspired person to incite a Passion in yourself.

Elemental Progression Technique

Cost: 3 Destiny

This allows you to transform an Inspiration along the Five-Phase Wheel: benevolence to propriety, propriety to fidelity, fidelity to righteousness, righteousness to balance and balance to benevolence. You can't skip steps, nor move in the other direction. You must interact with the target: a conversation is standard, but a battle or a series of letters can suffice.

Paired Inspiration Technique

Cost: 5 Destiny

This allows you to create two matching Inspirations from nothing – one *Weakness* and one *Hyperactivity* (see the Introduction to Chi Conditions Lore for details). If you have both this Lore and Controlling Passions, you can make one of them a Passion and the other an Inspiration; if not, they are both Inspirations.

Stealthy Work

Cost: 1 Destiny

You can hide your use of these techniques by making a Minor Stealth Action opposed by your opponent's Minor Wu Wei or Awareness Action. In combat time, opponents that don't match your Stealth roll with their opposition cannot try to break this Wave.

Quick Work

Cost: 3 Destiny

You can use your Secret Art as a combat technique directly applied in combat, as per the Secret Arts in Combat Lore on pg. 185. This technique only has to be bought once for the Courtier's Art – if you also have the Controlling Passions Lore, you can freely assign Passions as well as Inspirations as a result of mid-combat Ripple rolls.

Extraordinary Courtier Techniques

(Secret Arts)

Destiny Cost: 1

This Lore is free if you have Inspire +5 or higher.

These are techniques that exist separately from the Divination/Manipulation Lores – secret tricks passed down through the generations that allows Courtiers to adapt and excel in new situations! Many of them work according to

the normal Secret Art rules but are more reliable (granting the same result each time) even as they are less flexible. Others are entirely new and more comparable to Formless techniques of Kung Fu.

Augment – Changes how an existing action works.

Extended – works for actions taken outside of combat time, on a larger time scale.

Flood – a Flood action.

Minor Action – regular skill use, Minor Action

Wave – regular skill use, a Wave action

The Proper Forms of Conflict (2)

(Flood)

A proper warrior does not lose their sense of propriety in the heat of combat. Rather, they integrate their lessons with the flow of battle - the better to educate their opponents.

Flood dice to make a secondary Secret Arts-based attack using Inspire, defended with Confidence. This attack has all the normal requirements for an attack made using the Courtier's Art - i.e., it must use one of the Tools - but it has no Chi cost.

Instant Inspiration Technique (2)

(Extended)

When you behave virtuously, everything goes your way.

You can use any two courtier's tools (such as Righteousness and Benevolence) to gain a +5 modifier to your next action; e.g., you might declare good intentions and recite Confucius before scaling a cliff. Depending on how you present this, you might look pompous, ridiculous, austere, dedicated, insane, or simply startlingly traditional.

Fear-Inspiring Technique (3)

(Flood)

The Courtier knows that Man is prone to fear and superstition; with posture, gaze, or a few barbed words, he can inflame it in his enemy.

Make a Flood+Inspire action, resisted by the target's Confidence. This creates a temporary Chi Condition that is soothed with Confidence or treated with Inspire, should someone else want to soothe it on the terrified character's behalf. The victim suffers a -5 when directly opposing you or when Blocking your attacks, unless they weave their excessive fear into the action without simply making it an act of defiance. (Dodging does not suffer this penalty – it only makes sense to try to get out of your reach!)

Heart-Breaking Words Technique (5)

(Augment)

It is said that it is easier to break the body of one of the Wulin than it is to break their spirits! That said, if you truly know

the secrets of the heart, you can destroy it utterly. Whether you can cause fear so intense as to turn hair white and freeze breath in the lungs, or wield words which sap conviction from someone so as to leave them without the will to even lift their arm, your Arts can bring a swift end to conflict.

You can Take Out an opponent by Inflaming a Passion or Inspiration beyond Major intensity through the use of Ripples, or by rolling triple their Chi Threshold on a Rippling check.

Truth as Weapon Technique (3)

(Augment)

These are techniques used to apply the lessons of the Confucian Virtues to conflict. Variants of these techniques are frequently reinvented, so different sects and societies master their own versions. Some dedicated Courtiers have independently arrived at these lessons via thorough studies of the meaning of the Classics as applied to the ways of the Wulin. Regardless, actual adherence to Truth seems to be optional.

When you use the Wisdom Tool to increase the Damage of Secret Arts used in combat, you may spend up to your Rank level additional Chi for +5 to Damage per Chi spent for one Rippling roll.

Cordial, Upright, Courteous, Temperate, and Complaisant Technique (5)

(Extended)

Tsu Chin asked Tsu Kung, "Shortly after arriving in a country, Confucius always seems to know everything about it. Does he have a secret technique for gathering information?"

Tsu Kung answered: "He is cordial, upright, courteous, temperate and complaisant. If this is a secret technique, we all should practice it!

Who can fail to be accommodating to a perfect gentleman? By talking to someone for a full scene while observing proper forms, you automatically learn an interesting secret about them or the organization that they represent. No matter how guarded they are, they have to let something slip.

Distracting Conundrum Technique (3)

(Extended, Flood)

The world is full of puzzling questions and enigmas to distract the mind. The Courtier is particularly apt at making suggestions that dig in and demand to be pondered like tenacious weeds!

Flood (in combat) or roll (out of combat) an Inspire action, resisted by the target's Confidence roll. If successful, you

cause a Contemplation *Weakness*! This *Weakness* requires them to either make a Hard (30) Minor Confidence Action on their Initiative, or act according to the conundrum you posed while pondering it aloud. If they do not or cannot, they suffer -5 to all Skill bonuses for the remainder of the scene as doubts gnaw at their mind.

Protection through Humility Technique (5)

(Wave)

True humility drains aggression and promotes civilized behavior. Excessive humility can be practiced to perfection, shaming proud warriors to leave you alone.

Make a Hard (30) Inspire Wave to attain some measure of protection through debasing yourself! You seem like such an inconsequentially harmless opponent that anyone who treats you as a credible threat – such as by picking you over other opponents, or taking security precautions against you – suffers a -2 Breath penalty. This lasts for the remainder of the combat, or until you get caught doing something significant. (If you use Stealthy Work, maybe they won't notice your manipulations.)

Anyone who can beat your Inspire roll with a Minor Confidence Action on their Initiative or Attack can ignore this trick for the rest of combat. The technique also fails to work if, prior to debasing yourself, you've proven that you are not in fact worthless and/or humble.

Holy men use a similar technique, which banishes aggression with the force of their obvious piety.

Auspicious Navigation of Courts Technique (3)

(Augment)

A refined courtier knows how to measure the ebbs and flows of the chambers of power – regardless of the exact nature of those chambers and the people passing through them, a bureaucracy will always possess certain essential qualities. Properly applied, this knowledge allows you to set up seemingly coincidental meetings, exploit barely-known protocols and open almost every door.

You are exceedingly practiced at navigating bureaucracies and similarly complex organizations; spending Joss to set up lucky coincidences is much enhanced in these circumstances. One Joss will allow you to approach the right person for a task with effortless grace, "coincidentally" run into someone you are trying to get an audience with, and so on. The Sage may demand some Politics or Stealth rolls for exceedingly unlikely or outrageous requests, or completely veto farcial requests, but you should be able to cut through red tape with ostentatious ease.

THE SCHOLAR'S ART

Discovery Lore: Understanding the World (pg. 255)

Discovery Skills: Wu Wei, Tactics, Politics, Survival, Learning (and possibly others)

Toolset Lore: Secret Art of Prediction (pg. 256)

Resist/Recover Skills: Wu Wei

INTRODUCTION TO PREDICTIONISM

(A system topic)

Destiny cost: 0

This Lore is free for anyone with cultivated Chi.

The round-faced old man bowed respectfully with hands held out before him, and the handsome Scholar seated across him at the low table mirrored the gesture. The veiled woman beside the old man barely moved, but her poise and the slight fragrance of flowers spoke of her noble nature.

Behind them, a doorway opened up to show the Scholar's exquisite gardens. The torrential spring rains drummed down on the roof above, a pleasant backdrop to the conversation.

"Most respected Scholar Zhao!" The older man's cheeks were flushed. "My lady has put her utmost trust in your enlightened personage – but the hour is late! Days have passed! My lady is worried! Please, reassure us all by stating that you have found out who..." The words choked him. "Who..."

"- Who wants to see your young lady dead?" Zhao fanned himself lightly as the old servant's complexion grew redder still. He smiled. "Unfortunately not. But," he continued, as the servant gasped for words and the young, veiled lady shifted uncomfortably, "I have performed all the readings. They are very clear!" Here, he shifted his gaze to look at the young noblewoman. "There is one very auspicious time for making underhanded attempts at your life."

"Please, Enlightened Scholar Zhao." The young woman's voice was low but firm; there was more steel in her than her bumbling servant. "Do enlighten us."

"Why, of course." Zhao smiled. "It is tonight. Just now, in fact."

The servant sputtered. "But – Scholar Zhao! You have called my lady here, away from the safety of the house, at the time when she is most vulnerable?! She must return at once!"

"It's far too late, I am afraid." Zhao's fan stopped moving. "But – do listen."

There was a moment of silence, broken only by the rain – and then a thin, high note rung through the air. Thin and clear, the song of metal.

"Ah!" Zhao smiled. "That would be my associate Bright Snow handling a would-be assassin. Soon, all things will reveal themselves." His smile grew wider as he looked back to the young woman. "I always say that hard, righteous work should be balanced with some relaxation. May I offer to pour you some tea?"

All of the Secret Arts assume an understanding of the workings of an aspect of the world and using it to your advantage. Predictionism, on the other hand, is about understanding the tapestry of the world itself. It is about your character using various tools: reading the stars, observing the movement of crowds, throwing out stalks and picking out the trigrams they create – to gain knowledge of the workings of Heaven and Earth. In a sense, she gains access to the story that is the world and the secrets through which to nudge it into an auspicious shape.

This is not an inherently magical discipline. Much of its workings seem supernatural and mystical to us, but in the context of the setting, they merely reflect the hard work and discipline to observe the world, to ponder what is observed and to come up with a reasonable model of what happens next. It is the art of the insightful genius – Judge Dee, Master Li Kao, and Sherlock Holmes. In the modern day, a good predictionist would be a polymath with degrees in many of the sciences; in Shen Zhou, she is often well-versed in Yin-Yang and Five-Element Theory.

The Nature of a Prediction

A Prediction is a very special type of Chi Condition – once introduced into the world by a Predictionist (through the *Understanding the World* Lore), it is ubiquitous and cannot be avoided without actively avoiding the subject it details. If the wise Master Xuo has predicted the fall of the Eagle Clan, you'd best avoid doing anything to or for the Clan if you want to avoid the effects of the Condition. If you are of the Clan, you are probably out of luck!

It works like this: every successful Prediction carries a *Weakness* or a *Hyperactivity*. These are usually Minor in scope, but the most powerful and sagacious Predictionists (with the *Ultimate Prediction Technique*) can create Major ones now and then. Anyone who fights against it does so under the influence of the *Weakness* Condition. Anyone who works for it gains the benefit of the *Hyperactivity*. The only way to remedy this is to oppose the Predictionist's roll with one of your own, modified by the appropriate *Resistance Skill*.

It is important to understand this: the world does not generally "recover" from a Prediction. You only overcome their effects momentarily, or they become obsolete. They are limited in that really ambitious Predictionist attempts (such as the eternal *weakness* in the defense of the Jin Empire) can be attempted only once by any individual unless circumstances change dramatically. However, the Prediction itself will not go away once introduced with anything less than an epic feat that changes the whole circumstance of the prediction as it was introduced. In the example of the Jin Empire, having a new Emperor ascend and proclaim this to be the start of a new dynasty could do it. Lesser feats would be powerless to overcome such a curse.

You might think that this makes Predictionism the ultimate tool for shaping fields of conflict. It is! Predictions are better for large, sweeping declarations than other Secret Arts. That's why they cost Joss. You can use them for short-term, personal objectives, but that is using a very big gun on

a very small target, and costs resources that other Arts do not.

Predictionism does not have a direct application as combat techniques. It cannot directly cause Ripples and associated rolls, but it can indirectly make them much more likely!.

Examples of Predictions

The fall of the House of Yu

Recovery 48, Major Hyperactivity or Weakness Prediction

The learned White Eyes Lei stated, "The governance of the House of Yu is corrupted by the reprehensible deeds of their ancestors, like a fresh mountain stream is polluted by waste from a privy! How can such a house remain, when it is built upon such fetid soil? Surely, every sin will be repaid tenfold."

As a Weakness: The House of Yu and all who aid it suffer a -10 Action Penalty to their actions when they try to maintain the House, increase its influence, or defend themselves from their enemies, unless they can justify it as balancing out some sin from your house's past, or maintain an elaborate show of righteousness while doing so.

As a Hyperactivity: Even the most steadfast of allies of the House feel the inherent unrighteousness of its actions; they gain Breath Bonus when they meaningfully oppose the Yu and their goals. They breathe easy, knowing that they are doing the right thing!

UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD

(A System Topic)

Discovery Lore (The Secret Art of Prediction, The Secret Art of Genius)

Destiny Cost: 5 (free for Scholars)

Making Predictions

When a character with one of these arts wants to make a prediction, they must select the proper Toolset Lore and any specific tools that they wish to use, such as the I Ching. Tools for Predictionism are more elaborate than those used in the other types of Secret Arts, so it is not uncommon for a Predictionist to go without them. Observation and insight

are the only methods that make sense for some expressions of the Arts. The sagacious politician composes a letter on the inevitability of rebellion after observing the movement of crowds through the market from his balcony. The tactician surmises that the correct time for invading the Three Towns of Hu is in the fall only after he studies the maps and the land.

The next step is what kind of prediction they want, such determining a *weakness* in a kingdom's defenses, an auspicious time to look for a new wife, or the like. This should include possible effects of a successful prediction. The Sage should consider the stated and implicit goals of the player when deciding on these effects!

If you pick a modest scope for your Prediction, you leave room for new predictions when circumstances shift. If you fail to Predict that this is a good season to attack the Blade Dog lair, you can try again next season. If you fail to Predict that "the Blade Dogs are doomed to fall in battle against our mighty Society!", you can't ever try again!

There are probably ten thousand predictions about things your life by Scholars you'll never meet, but almost all of them are irrelevant. If someone who matters has made a prediction that contradicts yours, however, they automatically oppose you with a Skill roll of their own using appropriate bonuses. They do not need to be aware of your Prediction: this opposition symbolizes the truth about which one of you was the greater Predictionist in this case.

The Prediction roll is normally Extended, and takes about a scene of game time to make. You can reduce the time required to ten turns if you take a -10 penalty to your roll, and to five turns with a -20. This is not rush work!

After this, it works as follows:

- The Sage fills in the details of the Prediction as usual – it should follow your outline, but they choose the actual direct effects.
- You get to choose whether the Prediction comes with a Minor *Weakness* or a Minor *Hyperactivity* Condition.
- If you roll a Critical Success, you may choose the penalty or benefit tied to the Condition instead of the Sage.

Difficulty	Fortune
Simple (15)	There is already a similar Prediction out there, and it is associated with a Major weakness or hyperactivity.
Moderate (20)	As above, but a Minor Prediction.
Hard (30)	It is an obvious and straightforward reading of the facts (even if you have to fill in some holes).
Memorable(40)	There are some indications that your interpretation could be the correct one, but it doesn't really say "most sensible reading of evidence".
Fantastic (60)	You could make a case for your reading, but you would have to squint quite a lot to make it work.
Legendary/Impossible (80/100)	There is already evidence in the world – known to one of the players or absolutely certain in the Sage's mind – that your prediction is wrong.

If you fail the Divination roll, nothing really happens. In-character, you can choose to let your predictionist realize that it was a bad idea, or stubbornly cling to the prediction. It might still come true, but not with any special help from a Chi Condition.

Example:

Lu Lai, Master of the Four Leaves Trading House, stroked his chin; his forehead showed deep furrows. "It is doubtful that the East River Pirates will strike if we set sail right now," he concluded. "Their leader is still burdened by sorrow after losing his son at the hands of Heartless Devil-Flower."

Lu Lai uses the Secret Art of Prediction, and rolls Politics because it is the Skill that governs knowledge of how large-scale groups (such as pirate families) behave. The Sage considers his divination plausible enough for Difficulty 30. He rolls 39 - a success - and spends a point of Xia Joss to create the Prediction, declaring that it will inflict a Minor Weakness on those who oppose it.

One-Eye Li, first mate under the feared pirate lord Zhu Long, bowed before his master.

"We have information that the Four Leaves Trading House is moving, my lord. Their ships are surely within our reach - just give the word, and we will catch them!"

One-Eye Li rolls his Wu Wei; he heroically defies the Prediction with a roll of 41! However, Zhu Long does not: he rolls 32.

The pirate king's eyes were hollow as he stroked his graying beard. "What good does it do a man to strive for

gold and glory," his heavy voice bemoaned, "if the trees in his garden are bare and barren?"

One-Eye Li raised his eyebrows. Zhu Long paused, sensing that something was missing from his retort. "Shut your mouth," he added, "Or I will cut off your arms and feed them to the sharks."

The pirate king's player (probably the Sage) still has to decide whether he wants to make the attack. If he does, he must either take the Condition's penalties or "accept the reality" of the Condition by weaving his mourning and apathy in to his attack in a way the players find plausible. In this case, however, they decide not to. The penalty could make all the difference, and showing *weakness* in front of his men might be unacceptable behavior!

THE SECRET ART OF PREDICTION

(A System Topic)

Toolset Lore

Destiny Cost: 5 (free for Scholars)

This is the style of predictionism suitable for those who actively look into the future - Scholars of the I Ching, Daoist Priests, and Courtiers who try to predict the political landscape of Shen Zhou. Anyone can speculate about the future and make plans for tomorrow, but this Art allows you to see the path that destiny wants to take. Your character's words gain an amount of objective plot relevance, because his predictions tend to have mechanical weight.



Prediction Skills

This Art does not have one Skill to default to for all purposes, but varies with the field in which you wish to make a proper prediction:

- **Wu Wei** helps you judge how individuals will behave.
- **Politics** helps you in predicting how social groups (clans, sects, families, cities, marriages) will behave.
- **Tactics** gives you insight in military matters, including clever battle plans.
- **Survival** helps you predict the workings of nature – auspicious travel routes or the best time for a harvest.

At the Sage's discretion, other Skills might be useful for specific tasks.

If you succeed in your Divination roll, you must pay 1 Joss of either type to create the Prediction Chi Condition. This is because a Prediction is so much more powerful than a regular Condition. Don't think of it as depleting your luck: it is your luck.

Secrets of Destiny: The Secret Art of Prediction

The Story of the I Ching

The Book of Changes defines the marvelous divinations of the I Ching, which bring Heaven and Earth together in infinite wisdom. When using the I Ching, chance and destiny provide six choices: a broken line, an unbroken line, or a line in one state that is transitioning into the other. Three lines combine to form a trigram; two trigrams combine to form a hexagram. The eight trigrams are the symbols of wind, sun, earth, thunder, marsh, mountain, moon and heaven. The sixty-four hexagrams are the messages of Heaven.

Individual lines can transition from one state to the other, so trigrams and hexagrams also contain transition. Every I Ching reading shows both the world as it is and the world after any impending changes.

Destiny Cost:

3 Secret: You learn to use the I Ching as a tool to support your predictive techniques. You can use your Learning Skill for all predictions where you use the I Ching.

2 Fortune: You acquire an extraordinary copy of the I Ching; using it gives you a +5 bonus for predictions.

Extraordinary Scholar Techniques

(Secret Arts)

Destiny Cost: 2

This Lore is free if you have the Secret Art of Predictionism Lore or if you have Tactics, Wu Wei, Politics or Survival at +10.

These are techniques that serve to enhance your predictive skill.

Augment – Changes how an existing action works.

Extended – works for actions taken outside of combat time, on a larger time scale.

Flood – a Flood action.

Minor Action – regular skill use, Minor Action

Wave – regular skill use, a Wave action

Passion and Inspiration Technique (3 Destiny)

(Augment)

You can use your knowledge of an existing Passion or Inspiration as a predictive tool. You extrapolate it in an Internal-External fashion, seeing how the condition in one person is but an expression of how it affects a whole group. When you make a reasonable reference to your knowledge of that condition during a prediction attempt that uses Politics, your Skill Modifier is increased by +5.

Ultimate Prediction Technique (5 Destiny)

(Augment)

You can make powerful predictions! If you roll a critical success when making a prediction roll, you may create a Major instead of a Minor Condition. You can only do this once per session, but you can choose to do so after rolling the critical success.





THE PRIEST'S ART

Discovery Lore: Story of Fortune (pg. 262), *Secret of the Self* (pg. 248)

Discovery skill(s): Wu Wei

Toolset Lore: Secret Art of Intrigue (pg. 249)

Manipulation Lore(s): Controlling Passions (pg. 251),

Controlling Inspirations (pg. 251)

Manipulation Skill(s): Learning

Resist/recover Skill(s): Wu Wei

Default Conditions: Cultivation bonus/penalty, Entanglement

Other relevant passages: Basic Secret Arts package

Curses and Influences

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 0

This Lore is free for anyone with the Wu Wei Skill at +5 or higher

The Secret Arts of Daoist sorcery practiced by Priests concern the use of Curses and Influences – conditions imposed by the world in response to the actions of humanity. The existence of curses, blessings and the like seem occult and arbitrary to normal people, but the wise Daoist knows that they follow a predictable chain of cause and effect. They are merely expressions of the workings of the world. Unseen forces rise to influence all things, and the Priest knows it. They can trace the sickness of a plagued swordsman to a curse created from the spite of the people he has dishonorably killed. They can see how the spirits influences a good luck spell, granting fortune and riches to a young merchant.

They know how these forces interact, as well as how to manipulate them.

A Curse means that something in your life is broken: everything is not as it should be, and you are not getting everything that Heaven has planned for you. In some cases this might seem like a good thing; after all, Heaven might plan for you to suffer from a spat of incredibly bad luck! Then again, mere humans can rarely second-guess the workings of the divine. Maybe that bad luck was needed somehow, and it would have led to a better life in the end. The Curse means that events cannot unfold as they should. As a human, you should strive to succeed in life and prove your worthiness to Heaven, not to be led around by the nose by someone else's power!

Curses normally cause *Weaknesses*, although some can be *Hyperactive* conditions. In either case, they disrupt the natural processes of your life.

An Influence, on the other hand, is a powerful energy in your life which is not native to your Chi. It is powerful, but precarious, like being a close friend of the Emperor or wielding the power of Divine Kung Fu. If you have

the wisdom, balance and discipline to be in control of the situation you will benefit. If not, it could consume you.

Most Influences are *Hyperactive* conditions, but some are *Weaknesses*. In any case, their net effect is to help you achieve something.

Five-Element Theory: Internal-External Relationships

Curses and Influences are both external expressions of inner turmoil, imbalances in the inner system reflected on a larger scale. Curses have this type of relationship to *Passions*, while Influences are fueled by *Inspirations*. The specific types of relationships can be easily cross-referenced on the **Five-Phase Wheel**. For example, *Metal Curses* are linked to *Grief Passions*, as they both occupy the same phase of the Wheel.

What this means in practice is that:

- Daoists can use *Passions* to fuel (ie. consciously create) Curses.
- Daoists can use *Inspirations* to fuel *Influences*.

It also means that Curses and Influences discovered through means such as the Story of Fortune, or created from nothing using the *Paired Condition technique*, are assumed to have spawned from their fueling emotion or principle. There is no such thing as a Curse without a Passion that fuels it! This means that it is based in a human desire, although there exist rarer cases where Curses and Influences reflect Passions in the natural world.

Whenever a Daoist character creates a Curse or an Influence, the Sage should give some thought to the emotion or principle that feedings it. For example, suppose the runaway clan princess Phoenix Maiden is nurturing an Anger Passion of hate against Third Dog Brother for killing her Sifu in a duel. Her emotions have given rise to a Wood Curse which makes him experience bouts of nauseating pain that deny him rest or peace. In this case, the internal condition (ie. the Passion) controls the ebbs and flows of the external condition (the Curse) like this:

- If the person afflicted by the Passion/Inspiration violates the edicts of their condition, the Curse/Influence fades for one scene. (*The Maiden forces herself to greet and treat Third Dog Brother kindly during the Wulin summit, violating the requirements of her hateful Passion condition; his pain momentarily fades.*)
- The Passionate/Inspired person must interact in some way, even indirectly, with the focus of their condition to fuel it, or the Curse/Influence condition will fade. (*The Phoenix Maiden sets off on a grand quest to breach the Ice Fortress of Mount Wa. If this takes her focus off revenge for too long, so that she stops striking deals with others who wish Third Dog Brother's death and stops sending threatening letters to his resting places, her Passion might fade. When it goes, the Curse goes too..*)
- If the governing Passion or Inspiration is placated for a full story, the Daoist condition is broken. (*The Phoenix Maiden*

finally forgives Third Dog brother for slaying her Sifu, which causes her Anger Passion to fade – and with it, the Curse that has been bringing him pain for the last seven years.)

Each Passion or Inspiration can only fuel one Curse or Influence.

There are times when the fueling conditions can be very hard to placate; if someone wants you dead, it is impractical to accommodate them! In cases like these, clever Daoists recommends faking your own death and laying low for a while.

Curse spells: Descriptions

Curse spells transforms passion and desire into bad fortune.

Common associations: Yin, the element of Fire, bitter tastes.

Common signs of Curse spells: Poor health, good fortune, disasters and unusual fates.

Here are descriptions of the different type of Curses. Listed along with the descriptions are the types of emotions that feed them, what people or things are usually beset by such Curses, and examples of how the Curses manifest. Some types of Curses look entirely coincidental; others show a clear connection to the supernatural. These are only examples, however, to enhance play and make decisions easier. They should be inspiration, not constraints. Adjust the subtlety or obvious supernatural influence to match the tone of your characters and game.

木 Wood Curses – the will to hurt

Created from: Anger.

Fall upon: The target of that Anger.

Manifestation: Natural catastrophes and “mundane” fates. Wood curses are almost never overtly supernatural.

Sometimes, the balance of the world requires that someone gets hurt. Wood curses are detrimental to the target’s health; they can make the target sick, or somehow bring them to physical harm. Examples include:

- The hate of abused peasants for their unrighteous lord draws him towards his fate. As his sword drew their blood, so do the blades of his enemies seek his.
- The hate of a hermit exiled for his crimes slowly poisons a whole village – the well becomes corrupt, children are born sick and wounds heal badly.

火 Fire Curses – the will to make things easy

Created from: Joy

Fall upon: The target of the Joyful benevolence

Manifestation: Sudden fortunate events or expressions of luck. These might strain credulity, but stay superficially mundane. They often manifest internally, as you notice things that you would otherwise have missed, auspiciously try a new way of shaking the dice, or the like. Since it technically encourages good fortune, this is often a *Hyperactivity* rather than a *Weakness*, (Spiritually, it weakens your character by making them lazy.)

- The infatuation of the peasant girl that you saved from bandits manifests as a curse keeping you from harm by

making you miss opportunities for fights - you’ll oversleep at the day of the duel and lose your sword just as you’re about to storm the lair of the Blade Dogs.

- The drunkard’s joy for his wine manifests as a Curse making his life easy – he always finds a meal, somewhere to sit, and someone to buy him another cup... as long as he keeps drinking his life away.
- A young courtier is cursed by good luck. He wins money that makes his friends envy him, the King’s concubines flutter their eyelashes at him, and his lord consider making him one of his eunuchs. A thousand and one good fortunes alienates him from life at the court, driving him out on the road as a penniless (but well-fed!) beggar.

土 Earth Curses – the will to folly

Created from: Obsession, excessive dedication – the will to inflate importance.

Fall upon: Either the obsessed character or the target of their obsession.

Manifestation: External scenes and situations that promote a certain behavior: people approach you offering opportunities, you are forced to travel by a route that takes you somewhere unexpected, etc.

Sometimes, the world shows a will to arrange circumstances and situations to make someone focus on the wrong things. It is easy and comfortable to mistake this for the will of Heaven, but a wise Priest knows better!

- As his engagement draws close, a young courtier finds himself beset by female beauty at every turn! Is he getting cold feet, or is someone’s obsession with this marriage causing an Earth Curse?
- An old, repentant killer tries to put her blades away, only to be dragged back into a killer’s life as old enemies and allies alike keep seeking her out despite all of her precautions.

金 Metal Curses – the will to fill an absence

Created from: Grief.

Fall upon: The person grieving, or someone who can abate it.

Manifestation: Elements of the supernatural – murders of ravens deciding to attack every time you have a meal, dark rain clouds always following you around etc.

Life is hard, and sometimes things get broken. Something precious is lost, and sadness follows. When this happens, the world rearranges itself around that feeling of loss to repair the gap between what is, and what should be. It can be very hard to try to figure out the cause of Metal curses, as they can force you into seemingly arbitrary states and patterns of behavior .

- The loss and emptiness you feel after losing your wife manifests as a Curse driving you into the arms of the woman that used to be your mortal enemy, making you see new qualities in her and run into her at the oddest times.
- Snakes and insects come to live in your hair, clearing your mind and your Chi as long as you do not try to get rid of them. (Metal Curses are a great excuse when you want to subject people to strange, seemingly random fates like this!)

水 Water Curses – the will to separate two things

Created from: Fear, the will to escape terrible situations.

Fall upon: The object of the Fear, preventing them from doing that which is feared.

Manifestation: Tends towards subtlety, but also implacability and cruelty.

Sometimes, it is imperative that two things be kept separated. Be they things, places, or people, in all cases, their separation is the domain of the Water Curse. When you are being stopped from going somewhere, doing something, or meeting someone, you might be beset by this Curse.

- Your sister's fear of losing you as a wandering companion keeps you separated from your love by disrupting your engagement, drawing you to travel different paths, and sowing your path with terrible misunderstandings.
- Misfortunes follow you as you wander the earth, forcing you to stay on the road and preventing you from settling down in any place.

Influence Spells: Descriptions

When one of a person's elements becomes agitated, it exerts a greater influence over their life. They are encouraged to go from the present state towards another. This is what is known among the learned as an *Influence Spell*.

Common associations: Yang, the element of Metal, pungent tastes.

Common signs of Influence spells: Spontaneous new plans, excessive vigor, unusual focus, absence of worry, the abandoning of old habits and tools.

木 Wood Influences – new activities

Created from: Benevolence.

Fall upon: The Inspired person or a target of their interest.

When someone comes under a *Wood Influence*, they are urged to start feeling or doing something. Some of these Influences help you start new projects or activities, others spur new emotions. Examples include:

- The general realizes his true destiny: rather than simply languishing at his garrison, he'll build a mighty fortress at the place where the three rivers meet!
- As his newfound friends take him in, the scarred wanderer starts to take note of scenes of happiness and contentment in the world around him that he never noticed before; step by step, he starts to allow himself to love and be loved.
- The sagacious Daoist crafts a talisman that makes the wealthy merchant inclined to spend heaps of money at the village market.

火 Fire Influences – excess, vigor and inspiration

Created from: Righteousness

Fall upon: The righteous person.

When a character comes under a *Fire Influence*, they are encouraged to be themselves and keep doing what they are doing – only *more* so. *Much* more so.

These Influences provide extremely strong motivation, but only to preexisting projects or emotions. They never birth

something new, but merely strengthens what is, and usually too much. They help a character in performing over-the-top actions or punishes them for trying to act with subtlety.

- The Silver Fox Bandit has a vision – rather than stealing and redistributing money from the Duke's tax men, she'll face wickedness at the source and steal the Emperor's secret treasures!
- The Sword Bastard decides that the proper gesture to signal his entry into the Wulin is eradicating the river boat fortresses of the Black Lotus Sect!
- Raven Scholar Lin cleverly creates an Influence Spell, causing the gossiping court eunuch to run his mouth even more on subjects that interest her – such as the palace... and its secret gardens... and the rumors of a hidden entrance.

土 Earth Influences – dedication

Created from: Fidelity

Fall upon: Those who are faithful.

Earth is implacable but slow to move – its *Influence* encourages you to go forth with dedication, but also to do so with great care and careful planning. Like Earth Curses, it focuses the mind. Unlike them, it does not encourage careless action or lack of discipline. These Influences make people vulnerable to specific things – ideas, philosophies, concepts – but encourages wisdom in their pursuit.

- Uncle Wu is simply a wandering monk, but still always seem to get involved in complex mysteries. Whether the poisoning of a simple street girl, or the theft of a precious temple relic, his slow and methodical mind approaches each situation with a discipline that makes the unrighteous shiver.
- Cursing her wounds and terrible luck at storming the lair of the bandits, even with the superior numbers under her command, the Warleader Pei grits her teeth and consults her advisors.

金 Metal Influences – languor, scaling back, consolidation

Created from: Propriety

Fall upon: The one who is proper.

Under the Influence of elemental Metal, a person is filled with the atmosphere of autumn – withering, decay, harvest and introspection. The mirror image of Fire, it encourages you to act understated, to be careful, to not burn too much energy, to protect what you already have. This can cause conditions such as:

- Trusting in the Way, satisfied with the few things in his possession, the Mud Hermit never wants for food or shelter.
- The skilled but unscrupulous Raven Scholar uses some Influence work to urge a guard captain to lazily neglect his duties, while she helps herself to the fortress vaults.
- When Raven Scholar is forced to seek shelter in that same fortress against oncoming barbarian hordes, she uses the same type of Influence to heighten the captain's attentiveness to threats!

水 Water Influences – discouraging behaviors

Created from: Balance

Fall upon: The person who is creating the imbalance that needs to be corrected.

A *Water Influence* fills someone with the essence of Yin – encouraging inaction, stillness, calm and quiet. Of all the Influences, these are the ones that most strongly resemble Curses since they encourage negative action; they encourage you to set aside a behavior. This can be done either by helping you survive without the behavior or by punishing you for clinging to it.

- A warrior is inspired to impose a handicap on himself, wearing a blindfold as he fights duels.
- Facing misfortune after misfortune as the result of his *weakness* for wine, the drunkard is finally inspired to give up the bottle.
- As payback for help in the Three Powers Monastery, Raven Scholar Lin uses Influence work to give nightmares of the thousand hells to a merciless magistrate - causing him to pardon the imprisoned friend of Ghost Li and Scholar Zhong.

Examples of Daoist Conditions

Immortal Monkey Guidance

Minor Wood Influence

Recovery 30, Duration 1, Interval 1 Chapter

The Heavens have seen fit to send you a Daoist Immortal to instruct and inspire you towards new heights of greatness and see new possibilities! Or possibly you have just found a monkey that you decided to carry around and call “master”. Life is what you make of it!

Hyperactivity: As long as you make a point of listening to your new Sifu, treating it with respect and dignity, and follow its advice (which requires creative translation but usually involves trying out new solutions, challenges, and trades), you gain a bonus to your Cultivation!

Weakness: If you resist the teachings of your Sifu by refusing to treat it with the respect (and to provide ample wine in appropriately-sized cups) that such an advanced enlightened being deserves, you find it harder to proceed! Suffer a Cultivation Penalty until you either cancel out the Condition or make amends for your transgressions.

Treasonous Tongue Curse

Major Fire Curse

Recovery 45, Duration 5, Interval 1 Scene

The world is cruel to you. No matter how much you try to restrain yourself, you can’t seem to stop blurting out secrets to anyone who shows the slightest bit of interest! Did the Joy that you normally feel for conversation cause this unfortunate curse, or is it the work of someone that wants to see you killed?

Hyperactivity: Every time that your tendency to blurt out secrets that can bring you substantial trouble if revealed – and they will! – you get a +1 bonus to your Cultivation.

Weakness: In any meaningful conversation, you have to let slip some unfortunate secret or hidden piece of

information that you’d normally keep private, and you can’t resist talking about specific secrets if urged to do so! Opposing this compulsion without ‘accepting the reality’ by making a huge fuss about making excuses to run away, acting flustered, or biting your tongue (to added embarrassment) grants you a -10 Action Penalty!

Detection and Recovery

Everyone who has this Lore can recognize existing Curses and Influences by making a Wu Wei roll at the urging of the Sage, who also sets the Difficulty. As a benchmark, it would be 40 for a Trivial Condition, 30 for a Minor, and only 20 to recognize a Major Condition. If the character trying to spot the Condition has the *Story of Fortune* Lore (pg. 262), use those lower Difficulties instead – it pays off to learn the intricacies!

The target can oppose this with *Stealth* or *Wu Wei*.

You recover from and defend against these conditions by rolling your Wu Wei – if you are in balance and at one with the world, misfortune and afflictions can melt away like snow under the sun.

The Story of Fortune

Discovery Lore (Daoism)

Destiny Cost: 3

Priests get either this Lore or the Story of the Self (pg. 248) for free.

This is one of the ways in which Priests go about Discovering Daoist Conditions in people – by observing patterns of good or bad luck, they make conclusions about Curses and Influences at work. From a player perspective, this means that they can make “Discovery” assumptions based on in-game events as well as the luck of the dice. (Clearly, the dice represent the character’s fortune!).

The other way works from the other side of the Internal-External relationship: the Priest discovers active Passions and Inspirations by using the Story of the Self Lore, and then uses them as bases for crafting spells. While this Lore depends a lot on retroactive reasoning and discovery of what is already there, the use of Story of the Self almost always implies the deliberate creation of Daoist Conditions from an in-character perspective.

Discovering Curses and Influences

Daoist Conditions are part of the complex system of the natural world, and aren’t always crafted by humans. Strong emotion can be enough to cause a reaction leading to a Curse or Influence. It is safe to say that the Wulin are characterized by strong emotions, so every character of note is a prime target for this kind of Condition! Similarly, good fortune (such as a winning streak with the dice) can often be attributed to a hitherto unexplored Influence. Trust in the wise Priest to stare at the shifting currents of the world and divine a pattern!

This means that each time you note an interesting pattern of good or bad luck, you can make a case for a Curse or an Influence through the use of this Lore. This can be based in story events, such as a Magistrate who loses everything when the bandits raze his city, but can also be based in game mechanics, such as a streak of bad dice rolls whenever a character tries to sneak. To someone else this would be coincidence or random chance, but you can give your observation mechanical and narrative weight as easily as making a Wu Wei roll.

Just as with other types of Discovery Arts, you can only make one roll per discrete set of observations. Any subsequent attempts made after someone failed a roll must be resisted by all characters who failed before them (using the same types of modifiers as for the original roll). This does not symbolize active resistance so much as it does reflect the mystical effort already made – when you try to make a declaration that is contradictory to the Artists that came before you, you’re setting your own wisdom and interpretive Arts above theirs. The roll tells us whether you’re right, or assuming a little bit too much.

Consult the Difficulty chart and make a *Wu Wei* roll.

- On a standard success, you can find a Trivial Curse *Weakness* or a Trivial *Hyperactivity* Influence. (You will have to Inflammate these before they have any measurable effect.)
- On a critical success, you find a Minor *Weakness* Curse, a Trivial *Hyperactivity* Curse, a Minor *Hyperactivity* Influence, or a Trivial *Weakness* Influence.
- You pick the associated element of the Condition as well as generalized effects (see the Introduction to the Secret Arts for details). The Sage chooses the specific effects in line with your intentions.
- You pick the Recovery of the Condition. It's either equal to the roll that Discovered it, or a set number depending on its Intensity: Hard (30) for a Trivial Condition, or Memorable (40) for a Minor or Major Condition.
- You get to pick between [Duration 5, Interval One Scene] or [Duration 1, Interval One Story] for the Condition.
- As usual, the Sage stipulates one circumstance in which the Condition fades by itself.

The Secret Art of Daoist Magic

Toolset lore: The Daoist's Art

Destiny Cost: 3 (free for Priests)

Unlocks: Crafting Curses, Manipulating Influences

This is a Toolset Lore. You must use one of the provided Tools to be able to manipulate Curses or Influences.

Knowledge of Daoist magic is contained within registers – secret mystical books describing the five methods and four practises of Daoism. Normally, it takes membership in a Daoist sect (such as the **Dragon Well Sect**, who are renowned for their great reservoirs of knowledge) to understand the secrets of a register. Of course, there are always exceptions to the rule: legends mention registers carved upon the surface of mountains and hidden in the language of nature itself, and of self-taught Daoist sorcerers who have achieved enlightenment by unlocking these secrets.

The Five Methods

Characters with this Lore have learned the arts of Daoist Sorcery, and perform them through these Methods. They serve as a way to interact with the greater forces of the natural world. You must use one of the Five Methods to perform acts of sorcery, or use alternative Tools (generally Secrets) appropriated from special Loreshets that offer this opportunity.

Each of the Methods contains a set of Limitations, which are conditions that must be fulfilled (such as a minimum time period that needs to be spent on it or special actions that must be performed) to utilize it. If this is a big requirement, it might add a toolset bonus to the skill roll.

Incantations

These are spoken orders to the natural world.

Limitation: Jargon

Modifier: +0 (or +5)

Description: Incantations command the spirits according to the traditional methods. Most of them end with “in accordance with the statutes and ordinances”, explaining to the spirits that they will suffer harsh penalties for disobedience. The player should supply the actual words of the incantation, which can be as simple as “I bid evil spirits to gather around this sad creature who has offended my sight!” or “I command the fire element

Difficulty	Fortune
Simple(10)	The Sage already knows that there is an active spell, and it has a Major Weakness or Hyperactivity condition.
Moderate(20)	The Sage already knows that there is a Minor or Trivial spell.
Hard (30)	The streak of (bad?) luck is notable and kind of impressive.
Memorable (40)	While you can technically build a case for a spell, it is really probably just a few (un)lucky rolls or coincidences.
Fantastic (60)	If there is a spell involved, it is pretty subtle – you could expect this person to do better or worse, but that is all.
Legendary/Impossible (80/100)	So, uh... the Emperor is fated to suffer poverty and ill reputation?

to withdraw,” but interestingly embroidered descriptions could earn a +5 modifier.

Finger Gestures

These are the ritual hand gestures of Daoism.

Limitation: Uses one hand and a Minor Action of trivial (10) Difficulty each turn.

Modifier: +0 (+5 with a Quality Tool)

Description: Finger gestures are ritual motions that attune the Daoist to the world and establish their mastery over the processes of Earth and Heaven. This includes “calculating the odds” by counting out factors on your fingers, or the traditional “tip of thumb meets tip of index finger” healing gesture. Daoists sometimes use ribbons, swords and other tools used to enhance ritual action and gestures as Quality tools. Tool bonuses for ritual weapons that apply to Daoist ritual does not also cross-apply to martial use.

Talismans

Talismans are written orders to the natural world.

Limitation: Talismans are fragile, and must be drawn in advance.

Modifier: +5 (+10 for Quality talisman).

Description: Talismans use special “cloud writing” techniques to call to the magic inherent in the Shen Zhou characters and the natural world. Each talisman is both a spirit, a physical object (usually a piece of paper) and a spell. Preparing it takes minutes to hours. Once prepared, the Daoist can invoke its effects later. Talismans are one-time use. For talisman preparation, it is proper to cultivate your Learning (and possibly Crafting) Skill. Crafting a Quality Talisman is a Learning roll of Memorable (40) difficulty that takes at least several hours.

Breath Sorcery

Limitation: Chi cost

Modifier: +0 to +10

Description: Breath Sorcery expels the Daoist’s Chi and brings their breath forth from their body to power their arts. 2 points of Chi spent allows the performance of effects at no modifier. 5 points of Chi allows a +5 modifier, and 10 points a +10. These return at the normal rate when used for Wave, Marvel, or Flood actions, but for Extended actions, they are considered spent for the scene, because the work is still active. The more Chi spent, the more spectacular the visual effects tend to be. At low levels, they are hardly noticeable; higher up, you might see winds (or other expressions of the elements) or even stranger effects like glowing talismans, manifest symbolic pictures, and daoist script written on the air.

This is not the same Chi manipulation used for kung fu techniques, but it draws from the same reserves.

Pacing The Constellations

Limitation: Cannot cover ground while using this method – the Daoist can only move within a narrowly defined area and can therefore not cross Place borders.

Modifier: +5

Description: This method relies on pacing out ritual patterns. In metaphor and spirit, the Daoist flies through the nine Heavens and patrols the nine regions of the Earth, subduing evil and commanding righteousness.

The Four Practices

The “four practices” of Daoism are minor arts that do not have a direct effect on Secret Art work but who might be reflected in roleplaying and Extraordinary Techniques. They are *prayers*, *exorcism*, *divination* and *self-cultivation*.

Prayers and Exorcism refer to the Daoist’s capabilities to command spirits and the natural world – this is generally folded into working with *Curses* and *Influences*. Since *Legends of the Wulin* as a setting does not feature overt spiritual manifestations or other high-profile expressions of the supernatural world, these interactions tend to be subtle and laden with ambiguity. Spirits manifest their will through Influences, not through materialization or direct communication.

Divination lets the Daoist determine auspicious and inauspicious things, again mostly expressed through Secret Arts work. In the cases where they are genuinely predicting the future, their player is encouraged to invest in the *Predictionist’s Art*.

Self-Cultivation refers to the cultivation of Chi (and to some extent, Skills). In-character, this tends to happen through deep meditations, exercises, and intense cultivation rituals. In the game, the player just spends Destiny.

Crafting Curses

Manipulation Lore (the Daoist’s Art)

Destiny Cost: 4 (*Priests get this or Manipulating Influences for free*)

Requires the Daoist Magic Lore

This magic uses Daoist prayers and exorcisms to control, cure or inflict Curses. The passionate heart creates bad fortune!

These techniques use the *Learning Skill*. They are resisted by *Wu Wei*.

The rules for Curses are found in the *The Priest’s Art* (pg. 259)

They must utilize at least one of the Five Methods from the Daoist Sorcery Lore (or a supplementary one).

Inflaming and Soothing Curses

Cost: 0 Destiny (*You get this for free when purchasing the Lore.*)

This increases or decreases the effects of a Curse condition.

Internal-External Technique

Cost: 3 Destiny

This creates a Curse from someone's Passion. The details on what type of emotion creates what type of Curse, and what person they fall upon, are explained in the description of Curse Spells in the Introduction to the Daoist's Art Lore.

Yin-Yang Technique

Cost: 1 Destiny

This uses a Curse to create an Influence. The types of Influence that can be created by a Curse are listed on (pg. 259).

Elemental Progression technique

Cost: 1 Destiny

This moves a Curse along the Five Phase Wheel: Wood becomes Fire, Fire becomes Earth, Earth becomes metal and Metal becomes Wood.

Paired Curse Technique

Cost: 5 destiny

This creates two Curses – one *Weakness* and one *Hyperactivity* – from nothing (see details in the Introduction to the Secret Arts). You can only create a Curse/Influence pair if you have this technique for both Curses and Influences.

Stealthy Work

Cost: 1 Destiny

You can hide your use of these techniques by making a Minor Stealth Action opposed by your opponent's Minor Wu Wei or Awareness Action. In combat time, opponents that don't match your Stealth roll with their opposition cannot try to break this Wave.

Quick Work

Cost: 3 Destiny

You can use your Secret Art as a combat technique directly applied in combat, as per the Secret Arts in Combat on pg. 185. This technique only has to be bought once for the Daoist's Art – if you also have the Manipulating Influences Lore, you can freely assign Influences as well as Curses as a result of Ripple rolls.

Manipulating Influences

(Secret Arts)

Manipulation Lore (the Daoist's Art)

Destiny Cost: 4 (Priests get this or Crafting Curses for free)

Requires the Daoist Magic Lore

This magic uses Daoist prayer and exorcisms to control, dissipate or bestow Influences. The virtuous spleen raises the power of the elements!



These techniques use the *Learning Skill*. They are resisted by *Wu Wei*.

The rules for Influences are found in the *The Priest's Art* (pg. 259)

They must utilize at least one of the Five Methods from the *Daoist Sorcery Lore* (or a supplementary one).

Daoist work is normally used outside of combat time due to the complicated calculations and demanding prayer action – scaling this down to five turns imposes a -10 modifier!

Inflaming and Soothing Influences

Cost: 0 Destiny (You get this for free when purchasing the Lore.)

This increases or decreases the effects of an Influence condition.

Internal-External Technique

Cost: 3 Destiny

This creates an Influence from someone's Inspiration. Details on what type of emotion creates what type of Curse and what person they fall upon are explained in the description of Influence Spells in the *Introduction to the Daoist's Art Lore*.

Yin-Yang Technique

Cost: 1 Destiny

This uses an Influence to create a Curse. The types of Influence that can be created by a Curse are listed on (pg. 259).

Elemental Progression technique

Cost: 1 Destiny

This moves an Influence along the **Five Phase Wheel** – Wood becomes Fire, Fire becomes Earth, Earth becomes metal and Metal becomes Wood.

Paired Curse Technique

Cost: 5 destiny

This creates two Influences – one *Weakness* and one *Hyperactivity* – from nothing, as described in the *Introduction to the Secret Arts*. You can only create a Curse/Influence pair if you have this technique for both Curses and Influences.

Stealthy Work

Cost: 1 Destiny

You can hide your use of these techniques by making a Minor Stealth Action opposed by your opponent's Minor Wu Wei or Awareness Action. In combat time, opponents that don't match your Stealth roll with their opposition cannot try to break this Wave.

Quick Work

Cost: 3 Destiny

You can use your Secret Art as a combat technique directly applied in combat, as per the Secret Arts in Combat (pg. 185). This technique only has to be bought once for the Daoist's Art – if you also have the Crafting Curses Lore, you can freely assign Curses as well as Influences with Ripple rolls.

Extraordinary Daoist Techniques

(Secret Arts)

Destiny cost: 1

This Lore is free if you have the Wu Wei skill at +5 or more.

These are techniques that exist separately from the Divination/Manipulation Lores – secret tricks passed down through the generations that gives a Daoist access to secret spells and powers! Many of them work according to the normal Secret Art rules but are more reliable (granting the same result each time) even as they are less flexible. Others are entirely new, and more comparable to Formless techniques of kung fu.

Augment – Changes how an existing action works.

Extended – works for actions taken outside of combat time, on a larger time scale.

Flood – a Flood action.

Minor Action – regular skill use, Minor Action

Wave – regular skill use, a Wave action

Bad Fortune Talisman (3)

(Extended)

Through exquisite calligraphy and one thousand and eighty incantations of the mantra of the Enlightened Sage, the daoist creates a talisman to ward off ill will and bad fortune.

Make a Memorable (40) Learning roll as an extended action to craft a talisman; you may have only one such talisman in effect at any time. The talisman will ward off the use of Corrupt Joss – one Joss by default, plus one additional Joss per extra difficulty level you make on the Learning roll, to a max of (your Rank level) extra Joss. One point of Chivalrous Joss must be spent to make the talisman. The charges are spent as they serve to ward off Joss; when they are expended, the talisman is burned out, often literally.

Dancing Metal Intercession (6)

(Extended/Wave/Flood)

Rigorous study of ritual manuals or deep meditation in the wilderness has granted you the terrifying power to command the base elements and move them without a touch.

You have the power to move objects at a distance using the daoist tools. Use Wu Wei like Might to determine how much and how well you can lift.

- As an Extended action, you may lift objects no more than a Zone away as long as you can see them; this gives a +5 bonus to tasks that really benefit from an extended reach.
- An unbroken Trivial (10) Wave adds the Ranged tag to your weapon for a turn as you wield it telekinetically; if it already had two tags, replace one.
- As a Flood+Wu Wei action, it can act as a roll for any of the Marvels, or a defense set counting as a Block.

Fox-Warding Talisman (2)

(Extended)

This technique is probably the most common reason for people to seek out reclusive daoists hiding away in mountains or forest huts: protection against the will of the world to hurt them. It is not uncommon to grant such a request, but it seldom comes without obligation.

Three hours of ritual work and a Hard (30) Learning roll creates a one-time talisman that protects the wearer from Curses. The wearer may use your Wu Wei bonus and appropriate specialties instead of their own when they defend against Curses. The wearer can expend the talisman to get a +10 bonus to their Chi Threshold in response to a Rippling roll to cause a mystical *Weakness* condition, whether Curse or Influence.

Geomantic Formation – Water (4) (Extended/Wave)

Through study of geomantic formations, you acquired the power to command the dragon lines to align with the element of water – focusing a curse of separation on your opponent. Locking them into place or forcing them to move as you will; all is within the daoist's power!

You can lock someone into a geomantic pattern with a Hard (30) Wu Wei action; appropriate specialties apply.

- As an Extended action, you can force an individual or a company into losing their way or getting locked into moving in circles. (A company is as many as could be called a discrete unit, at Sage's discretion. A trading caravan might suffice, but you might only be able to waylay one part of a marching army.)
- As a Wave action, you can use the pattern on one opponent.

Either way, the effect can be as subtle as always picking up the wrong trail or as overt as trees and boulders moving in place and the rivers shifting to block their passage! This is a unique Curse Condition with [Recovery = Wu Wei roll, Interval 1 Scene, Duration 1].

As long as the Curse is active, you may make a reflexive Wu Wei roll to contest any Footwork actions (or Survival/Ride for travel) made by your opponent. A success blocks their movement; a critical success lets you pick another Zone for them to move into, so long as their original roll would have let them reach it.

Legends speak of other geomantic patterns – some of them brought to Shen Zhou long ago in Sanskrit script from far-off Bharata – available to the most knowledgeable of Priests, but few know the truth to these rumors.

Hungry Curse Technique (2) (Augment)

Assailing a priest can be a horrible duty, as a thousand ill fortunes befall you and your own luck fails. Interesting times indeed...

When someone fails an attack, Marvel, or comparable combat action against you, you can spend a point of Joss to make them suffer through Interesting Times. (They don't get Joss.) They can resist this by spending Joss of any type to neutralize your own; this bidding can continue until someone folds, runs out of Joss, or reaches the Rank-based limit on Joss spent per turn.

Instant Influence Technique (3) (Extended)

There are a multitude of talismans, incantations, and rituals to promote successful living. With these, the daoist commands the elements; it stands to reason they benefit in life!

The daoist may use any two of the daoist tools, such as finger gestures and incantations, to get a +5 bonus to any mundane skill roll. They can extend this bonus to another character as long as they're allowed to perform unhindered (even if this means they need to hide their actions through Stealthy Work).



Moon-Sun Fortune Reversal Method (2) ***(Extended/Wave)***

By using intricate knowledge of the working of the world, the daoist accepts misfortune to build fortune. Weaving prayers and offering ritualized words of thanks to the forces of Heaven and Earth makes the world strive to please you!

The daoist sees the ebbs and flows of Heaven's approval and displeasure, and subtly transforms it. By making a Moderate (20) Learning Wave, the character can convert one or more Joss from Malicious to Chivalrous. For each level of Difficulty the skill roll passes above Moderate (Hard 30, Memorable 40 and so on), the character can choose to convert an additional point. Outside of combat, they can convert Joss at will. (Rumors suggest an unwholesome ritual called the Dog Barks, Swallows Sun Method, which does the reverse; if these rumors are true, it has the same mechanics and cost.)

Rising Flame Intercession (5) ***(Minor Action)***

Fire rises upwards! You have learned to utilize the secret of this elemental association to grant further mastery to your Lightfoot techniques.

As a Minor Learning Action of Trivial (10) Difficulty on the Initiative roll, use any two of the daoist tools, such as finger gestures and incantations. For the rest of the turn, you double the bonus from Lightfoot and other techniques whose main effects are to enhance your movement, e.g., the Formless technique Drifting Cloud Step.

Sheltering Water Intercession (4 Destiny) ***(Extended/Minor Action)***

A properly applied protection spell – a talisman is most common, but there are almost as many variations on this as there are practicing daoists – can utilize the principle of Water to make you become as nothing in the eyes of the world, sheltering your presence in the depths of your Yin.

Make a Hard (30) Minor Learning Action on your Initiative roll. None may look upon you for your Rank Level in rounds. If someone beats the Learning roll with an Minor Awareness Action on their Initiative roll, they ignore the effect for the rest of its duration. Attacking someone you

can't look directly upon applies a -10 penalty to all attack or Marvel rolls except Area Attacks.

Outside combat, the daoist may substitute Learning for Stealth at will, but this raises the difficulty to Hard (30) if it was lower and they must still beat opposing rolls.

Six-Devil Curse Spell (4) ***(Augment)***

The eponymous curse spell is only the most common of its kind – there are as many variants as there are shady practitioners of sorcery with a tendency for open conflict. Common to them all are the capability of causing great misfortunes to anyone who dares to raise their weapons against you. Swiftly, swiftly – in accordance with the statutes and ordinances.

When you force a Rippling roll with a Learning-based Secret Arts attack, you can spend Chi to add a Damage modifier of +5 per 1 Chi spent. You can spend no more Chi than your Rank level.

Tiger-Warding Wood Inflection (2) ***(Extended)***

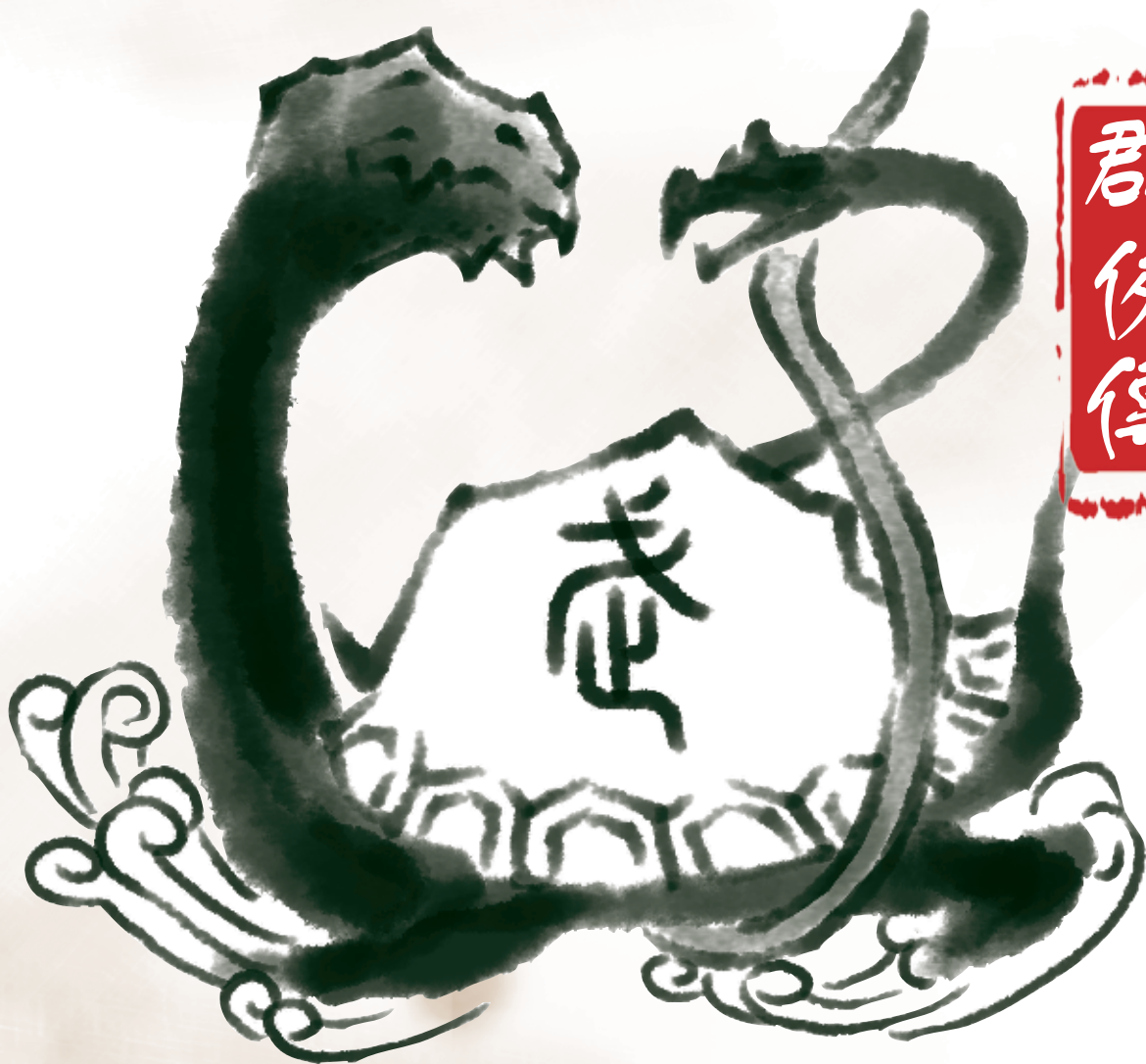
Many daoists live outside the needless complexity of cities and villages, within the endless garden of nature. Yet, they go unharmed – the mountain hut never suffers from attacks from four-legged or two-legged dogs! Likewise, the blessings of nature ensure that the Priest stomach never goes empty. This is a collection of various charms, blessings and protections that become part of the hermit Priest's daily life.

The daoist may reduce the Difficulty of Survival rolls by one level (Hard to Moderate, Moderate to Trivial, etc) so long as they can use two of the Daoist Tools in response.

Waning Metal Protection Spell (2) ***(Minor Action)***

Commanding the element of Metal, the daoist averts the paths of weapons intent on harming his person.

Make a Hard (30) Minor Learning Action on your Initiative to use your Wu Wei in place of your Dodge or Block bonus for one round. This applies against weapon attacks (even nonmetallic weapons), but not unarmed attacks.



群俠傳

THE BOOK OF WATER

EPILOGUE: LAUGHING ACROSS THE JIANG HU

Xiao Yu blocked the pressure points in **Moon Devil's** back to stop the blood flow, at least for the moment. She sighed in relief, as the danger had passed and the swordswoman lay exhausted over the old mattress in **Shooting Star** cave.

She looked at the one who had become her friend and protector, and now her teacher. When they first met, she'd been terrified of Moon Devil; when they first met the hero had been masquerading as a man, a sinister and devilish man at that.

Xiao Yu smiled. She had to give it to herself, that she had noted something unusual about the disguised heroine. It was

the walk; she could not hide her gender or her upbringing in her walk, and despite a lifetime as a man in the Jiang Hu, she could not hide away the memories that had taken root on her body. She had watched the male heroes of the Wulin, and imitated them perfectly, even down to outward expressions of chi; only one thing marred her manhood, and that was her walk.

Once upon a time Moon Devil had been like her, the daughter of a noble family living a life of privileges but one with no freedom. The cruel death of her family drove her to the Wulin. She adopted a male persona in order to be filial, as she was bound to show respect to his father even in the afterlife. She'd tried to become the rightful son he always wanted, and took on life as swordsman.

This life made her strong and willful; she would not bow down to anyone, and lived on her own terms. She had power enough to make her own rules and avenge her family, yet it also made her melancholic and bitter, a defiant devil who would laugh at the world that hurt her so much. None conquered her art, but she'd let her regrets conquer her spirit.

Now that Xiao Yu had started to walk the path of the Wulin, she wondered if she would end like Moon Devil. For one, she would not hide her identity; she did not want to dress as a man. That seemed so troublesome, and besides her mother had not dressed as a man, and that elegant matriarch had stormed the Martial Arts World as *Shooting Star*.

Her whole life changed when she discovered the letters. Not only her future but her past was thrown asunder. Her real mother had been a powerful heroine of the Wulin who fell in love with young Lieutenant Cheng; they even were married and she was born out of that union, yet the enemies of Shooting Star were many and they hunted her relentlessly.

They kept their union a secret, and one day she ran away in order to protect them. In her farewell letter she asked her husband never to reveal the truth to their daughter, so she would live a peaceful life and never enter the Jiang Hu. Eventually Cheng remarried and she was raised as his second wife's daughter...yet secrets have a way of coming afloat in the Rivers and Lakes.

Now that she knew the truth, there was no turning back. The **Vile Rain Cult** had probably murdered her mother, and they'd hurt her teacher and attempted to kill her. Now that the cat was out of the bag, they were bound to go after her father and Master Liu in their mission to destroy all those who were close to Shooting Star.

Xiao Yu picked up her slender sword, a gift from Moon Devil; she had named her blade *Moon Pearl Sword* and it was a magnificent weapon. What adventures awaited them? No matter what the world threw at her, she would smile. She was a proud wanderer of the Wulin, and she would not let her enemies conquer her, body or spirit.



SCROLLS OF THE SAGE

FIRST SCROLL: LIFE IN SHEN ZHOU

The farmer toils in the fields; the merchants peddle their wares; the academics vie for government posts; the eunuchs plot within their secret chambers; the nobles in their privileged hedonism; all the way to the young Emperor sitting on the Dragon Throne, with the weight of All Under Heaven on his shoulders.

All of these people endure the meddling of those of the Jiang Hu: criminals, courtesans, gamblers, holy men, and the stalwarts of the Martial Brotherhood. Heroes and villains alike are moved by legendary passions and possess extraordinary kung fu and Secret Arts.

Will the farmer cast aside his farming tools to take up the sword and cultivate his chi? Will the merchant come under a terrible curse, fueled by his ambition? Will the daughter of the noble lord escape from a life of empty luxury and disguised servitude to become the Evil Conquering Princess, taking the Wulin by storm? Shall the young Emperor bring glory and prosperity to Shen Zhou, regardless of the many plots and perils that besiege him, or, worse, will he become a terrible tyrant, bringing chaos and disaster to the Land of the Gods?

This, my friends is up to you! We have given you Shen Zhou, the Land of the Gods, to create your own legends.

Shen Zhou is more than just grand adventure, of course. People live there. We've painted the big picture of the Wulin and its many factions and conflicts, and we have told you about the Emperor, the capital and the Five Corners, but what will you have for lunch at the teahouse? What is a tea-house? How ought one properly address their elders or revere their ancestors?

Culture Shock

What was life really like during the Jin Dynasty? We don't really know, but what is presented here is probably very different from reality. Shen Zhou assumes that everyone speaks the same dialect of Chinese (or rather, English dubbing), while historical China had many different dialects and today contains many more. The symbols and costumes we expect to see in modern wuxia media probably didn't even exist back then, but this isn't a history book.

The Land of the Gods we present in this chapter tries to be culturally faithful and respectful, but historical accuracy is not our goal. Our goal is to provide you with cultural detail that's true to the traditions of wuxia fiction and, above all, beneficial to your game!

Family Relationships

In Shen Zhou, your family name comes first. You are not John Smith, but Smith John. It is taboo to refer to an elder family member by their given name; they are referred to by position in the family, such as Second Uncle, Third Aunt, or Seventh Brother.

This extends beyond the family. It is respectful and affectionate to refer to people of similar age as younger or older Brothers and Sisters, and to refer to people of the previous generation as Uncles and Aunts, and to elders as Grandfather or Grandmother, even if they are unrelated. This is very common in Shen Zhou! It is never considered impolite, or too familiar, unless you are referring to someone with a significant title or position.

Family comes first in names because family comes first in everything.

Respecting your Elders

Shen Zhou holds loyalty to the family - filial piety - as the foremost virtue. It is the basis of all societal bonds! All juniors owe obedience and fealty to their parents and elders. Heaven and Earth are the Father and Mother of all humankind, and the Emperor is the father of the whole Tian Xia, so all people owe him obedience.

The entire extended family is afforded this same respect; in most households, the whole family tree lives in one compound. Whether rich, poor, noble, or peasant, it is normal to live surrounded by aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins.

Respect for elders is not limited to parents, but includes all elders. The older the elder, the more respect and obeisance they deserve, especially if they belong to the same family. In Shen Zhou, the young are to bow down to the old, wait their turn, and pay their dues before they can demand respect. The old are to be listened to and cared for, and live with ease as a reward for the hardships of life. It is considered a corrupt, baneful thing to mistreat or disrespect an elder, regardless of who they are. Disrespecting or mistreating one's own parents, teachers, or martial elders is a sin against Heaven itself; only the most corrupt or baneful would do it!

Children

Children are good investments; they provide for their parents in old age. Obeisance to the parents does not end with adulthood. Children are always bound to mind their wishes: to respect them as long as they live and to honor them as revered ancestors after they die. Young married couples are urged to have children quickly. All people are encouraged to have many children, regardless of their standing and wealth!

Normally, male children are more valued, as they pass on the family name and are better able to take on work and provide for their parents in their old age. Girls are

considered outsiders to the household, as they will marry and become part of the husband's family, but they do present the opportunity for alliances and wealth due to a good marriage. Despite tradition and economic reality, many parents still value their boys and girls equally.

The great majority of people see having children not only as a blessing, but as their duty. Passing on their names and creating a legacy is not only dutiful to their ancestors, but to Heaven, as it will help all Shen Zhou. As such, infertility is one of the worst maladies that can affect someone. Infertile women are worthless by the standards of normal society; for men, it is the disgraceful end of their bloodline. Infertility is usually attributed to terrible curses from Heaven.

In the Wulin, however, this does not apply. Heroes live on through their deeds and legends, and pass on their legacies by teaching students just as much as by having virtuous children.

It is a great tragedy to be an orphan or bastard when family is so important. With no past, such children have an uncertain future; they can't easily fit into normal society. If they aren't adopted into a family, they often join the Wulin so they can build their future without worrying about their past.

It is a very serious insult to call someone a bastard. Incidentally, if someone calls you "turtle", "son of a turtle", or "turtle egg", they're calling you a bastard; turtles don't know their parents when they are born from their eggs. Don't take that sort of thing lightly.

The State as Family

Society is seen as an extension of the family. People of a higher class are considered to be elders, and people of lower class are considered younger. The Emperor, regardless of his age, is considered the father of all Shen Zhou. Even so, it would reflect poorly upon him if he was to treat his elders with disrespect.

It is proper and expected for the junior to inherit their elder's debts, friends, and enemies, and to avenge slights against them. Likewise, it is proper and expected for a ruler to execute not only their opponents, but their entire families, to preempt them from seeking revenge. Really, it would be insulting to presume that their juniors could be dissuaded from avenging their elder; best just to kill them and cut the whole cycle of violence short. The gravity of the offense can range from killing everyone from father to grandson (Execution of the Three Kindred) to, rarely, killing all from great-great-grandfather to great-great-grandson (Nine Kindred).

(The particularly cruel emperor Jin Shi Hu said, upon ordering the family of one of his treacherous generals executed, "Nine generations? Why not round it off?" This was the only case of Execution of the Ten Kindred in the whole history of Shen Zhou.)

This doctrine of inherited revenge applies also to the Wulin's student-teacher relationships as well. Heroes are expected to honor their sifu, avenge slights against them, and to honor and respect the former masters of their martial legacy. Bloody feuds can thus echo down martial lineages, from teacher to student, for generations.

Village Life and City Life

The village is considered an extension of the family. In a small village, most people will be related in one way or another anyway, through blood or marriage, but even those who aren't are treated as relatives. All the children are watched after and cared for by everyone like their own.

In the same manner, the village elders are respected as if they were everyone's parents, aunts, uncles, or grandparents; they usually constitute the leadership of the village. Normally, there will be a single elder serving as village chief, who acts as the father and ruler of the entire village. According to the concept of Tian Xia, the power of the leader of even the most insignificant village in Shen Zhou flows from the emperor and Heaven itself.

Village life is harsh, as the work load is heavy and they are at the mercy of the seasons. Local lords, bandits, wandering heroes, or the Empire itself could impose upon them at any time. Still, it can also be peaceful and satisfying for those content with a simple lot. It's definitely not something for most heroes of the Wulin, but many yet long to return to it, or aspire to reach it once they can get away from the many conflicts of the Martial Arts World.

Villages are mostly self-sufficient; they rely on their own farming to live! Their goods are shared just as the work is shared, but villagers do barter among themselves. Most villages engage in trade and commerce with other settlements, but there are many villages dotting the Land of the Gods that are completely secluded, owing nothing and receiving nothing.

People in villages can be distrustful and resentful of strangers, especially heroes of the Wulin, even if the strangers are overtly friendly and hospitable. Even helpful strangers are going to get the cold shoulder if they overstay their welcome and won't adapt to village customs and aid with the farming.

Just as big family groups expand into villages, big villages grow into towns! The familial relationship between inhabitants dilutes; although it may remain strong, people care about their own families more than their neighbors, the prosperity of the town depends on commerce and trade more than farming, and craftsmen and merchants become as important as farmers.

Townsfolk are more accustomed to outsiders. They want visitors to spend money and not destroy the town, rather than to start farming or leave! A government might be appointed by a state or the empire, or local nobles might control the place.

Most people in Shen Zhou either live in a village or town, or were born in one. Heroes traveling the countryside will often find themselves involved in the affairs of these places, whether they're just stopping by for a rest or trying to defend them from bandits or tyrannical rulers! The locals see the heroes of the Wulin with a mix of awe and fear, gratitude and resentment.

There are a few important cities in Shen Zhou. A few are true metropolises, like Thrashing Minister and the Imperial



Capital. These huge, cosmopolitan places hide every treasure, pleasure, and danger imaginable! Visiting is an overwhelming experience for visitors from the countryside.

Cities are a perfect place to start a career in the Wulin for those who thirst for adventure and a chance to make a name for themselves, learn new things, and meet new people. Still, the Jiang Hu is associated with the Great Outside beyond the cities for a reason. The strict laws and customs of cities often prove suffocating for Wulin heroes.

The economy and society in cities is very complex, as there are often many conflicting groups fighting overtly and covertly for power and influence, such as the bureaucracy, the military, the merchants, the nobles, and the Jiang Hu underworld.

It is very common for people from the same region and those who share the same surname to band together on the belief that down the line they share common ancestry. They form associations to support each other and do business together; these pseudo-filial organizations are similar in organization and status to trade guilds.

Most people in Shen Zhou never do leave their birthplace. Most of those who do leave will never travel more than a few miles from their hometown! It's normal for people to have a strong sense of loyalty to their homeland; they'll consider the people from their region to be more righteous, their food more delicious, and so on. The concept of Tian Xia - of the whole of Shen Zhou as a single country with a great, all-encompassing culture - sometimes eludes the simple man who sees it as a lofty ideal for princes, philosophers and heroes.

People in different regions and even different towns will have their own accent, and sometimes communication may be difficult. People in especially remote regions may not speak the common dialect!

One of the greatest achievements of first emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi, was to unify the written language: even if it sounds different, the written form will always be the same! Of course, most of the population in Shen Zhou is illiterate, so this may not always be helpful... Roads, weight, and distance measurements were also standardized by the first Emperor. This, along with a standard currency imposed by each dynasty, facilitates trade, commerce, travel, and communication all across the vast and diverse Land of the Gods.

Cuisine

Food is a very important part of culture for the people of Shen Zhou. "Have you eaten?" is a more common greeting than "Hello" after the acknowledgement of names, and serves much the same purpose.

Every region of Shen Zhou has its own unique brand of cuisine, as do each towns and city. Most people will swear by the food of their homeland, be it a dish cooked by their mother, that small inn in that town, or the Imperial Chef, and will sing praises proclaiming their fare to be the finest. In the west, spicy flavors are common, and food is heavily seasoned with chilies, garlic and a special form of peppercorn that has a pleasant numbing effect on the tongue. In the east, fowl and pork are preferred, and people consume a great deal of vegetables and egg products. Southern fare prefers softer, sweeter tastes, and favors all forms of seafood. Northern cuisine features plenty of mutton and beef, with potatoes, bread, and noodles, the people preferring heavier, richer tastes. Cereals such as rice are staples across all Shen Zhou.

Food is usually served communally: several dishes are presented on the table, shared among all present. Each guest has their own bowl of steamed rice or millet, and they draw from the different dishes with their chopsticks to eat alongside.

(Chopsticks should never be placed vertically in a bowl of rice. It looks like an offering of incense to the dead on a bowl of ashes; it's a bad omen, unless the rice is actually an offering to the dead. If someone serves you your rice like this, they're sending you a message!)

Hot-pot cooking, where a boiling pot of soup is placed at the center of the table as a communal feast, has become very popular since the beginning of the Jin Dynasty. It originated when the Jin were still nomads, where it was a method of communal cooking using whatever ingredients they could find available that could keep them warm in cold climates. Many in Shen Zhou still consider it barbaric and unrefined, but it has gained popularity in autumn and winter. Hot-pot stalls and restaurants can be found most everywhere. Eating hot-pot is best done with friends and copious amounts of wine; it usually serves as the prelude to, or conclusion of, a night of drinking.

Occasionally, people join the Wulin just for the opportunity to travel abroad and taste the food of distant lands. Whether they're hungry gourmards or master chefs, they seek to know the cuisine of all Shen Zhou, eating enough exotic food to acquire Chi Conditions. Even now, great heroes are busy finding new dishes that could have satisfied the ferocious, capricious appetite of former emperor Jin Shi Hu!

Tea and Wine

The most common drink in the Land of the Gods is tea. It comes in thousands of varieties depending on what plant it's brewed from; tea for commoners, tea for Emperors, tea for doctors and tea for parties. One can drink tea as a leisure activity alone or with friends, so there is an abundance of teahouses across Shen Zhou. They are places to meet, share meals, get drunk, watch a performance, or gamble, so the Jiang Hu regularly get up to trouble within them.

Teahouses can be anything from simple, local establishments that only serve tea and simple snacks like peanuts and seeds to large houses of entertainment that mix teahouse with theater, tavern, restaurant and inn. It's rude to start fights in them, yet somehow it always happens.

All Shen Zhou alcohol is called wine, whether distilled from rice, corn, wheat, or fermented from peach, apricots, or plums. At eastern seaports, one might find luxurious Persian grape wine! Wine is drunk from teacups or bowls, and stored in jars or gourds sealed with paper or wax.

It is appropriate to drink wine at every important occasion, from wedding to funerals, and it is always appropriate to sacrifice wine to your ancestors at their grave. In the Wulin, sworn brothers will drink with each other, and the student offers wine to their teacher when making their loyalty vows.

Declining a cup of wine you're offered is rude without a good excuse. At social gatherings, it is common to raise a toast for most anything with the cry, 'Gambei!' meaning 'Bottoms up!' You're expected to drain your cup after a toast, so partiers can get drunk in a hurry.

Different types of wines have different mystical or

medicinal properties; it's very common to find special tonic wines that have added certain animal parts or entire animals to the liquor, such as snakes, spiders, scorpions and crows. Consuming such exotic wines is usually reserved for the very brave. Most of this is just superstition, but some wines really can cause Chi Conditions, or aid in cultivating your chi! Such wines are rare treasures in the Jiang Hu; brewing them requires rare Secret Arts. The best place to find such wines is the southern Stone Drunk Town.

Drunkenness is associated with joy and melancholy, with intense passion and deep inspiration, with poets, philosophers, dreamers, immortals and heroes. Perhaps it is because of this that so many heroes of the Wulin find secrets of solace and insight at the bottom of their winecups. They turn their intoxication from bane to boon so that their drunken foolery becomes drunken mastery.

Entertainment

There are many forms of entertainment all across Shen Zhou, countless styles of music, performances and acrobatics, and traveling troupes of artists are very common and usually well received. Common venues for entertaining are wine shops, teahouses and inns, where people gather, so there will always be an opera show, musician, or raconteur to be found.

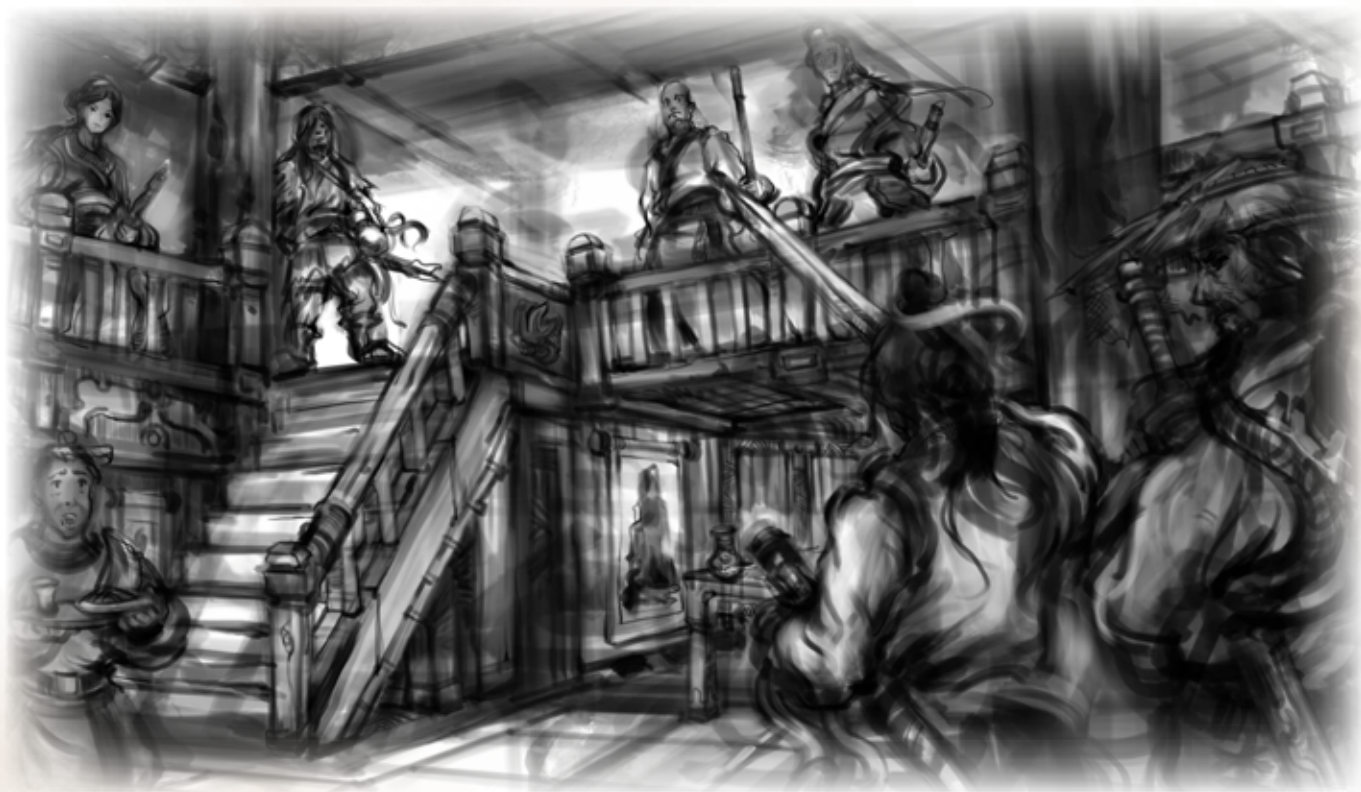
Gambling is a common pastime (although frowned upon) from the simple peasant to the eunuchs in the Imperial Palace. Gamblers can be found everywhere, and there can be bets and games of chance going on at any time. People could bet on anything from dice games to duels among the Wulin, or on even larger conflicts between factions and states! Gambling may be a game of fools, and there are bound to be more losers than winners, but it appeals to many devil-may-care Wulin for just these reasons. Secret Artists can turn their manipulations to the mahjong table, and great fighters can wager their sword, or their lives.

Pleasure houses are accepted, but they keep their own part of town, so-called 'willow districts'. Large cities have very elaborate pleasure districts, finely decorated with beautiful rooms and gardens, while smaller towns will have no more than a handful of brothels.

(Wine shops and pleasure houses are good places to find secrets; such things slip out from lips drunk on wine or beauty.)

The professionals range from simple prostitutes to full fledged courtesans known not only for their beauty but their mastery of arts. While many prostitutes might be miserable slaves, full fledged courtesans enjoy luxury and privilege, choose their own clients, and develop long term relationships. That is why many brothels are owned by the wicked Black Lotus Society, and many high-level willow houses are managed by the respected Resplendent Phoenix Society. Such are the extremes found in the Jiang Hu!

Inns are places where outsiders congregate, places for travelers and strangers that often double as teahouses, wine shops, or even pleasure houses as well as a place to find



lodging and food. Because most normal people will never travel far from their home, most people at an inn are of the Jiang Hu, and a few will be of the Wulin. Whether it is Fourth Rank Straw Hat Li, or the esteemed Gallant Eagle himself, if they are passing through No-Name Town and there is only one inn, they will both stay there.

Because of this, inns are the best places to find out about the comings and goings of the Martial World. Even normal innkeepers can be experts in the Rivers and Lakes! This also means that owning an inn in Shen Zhou is a dangerous business even when business is good - maybe especially then. If Wulin factions collide in the inn, it might end up completely destroyed!

Opera, combining music with acting, costumes and acrobatics, is a well-loved entertainment. Every region has its own opera style; just as with food, every region claims theirs is the best. In the Central Plains, opera is considered to be an affectation of the cultured and sophisticated, and thus is mostly appreciated by the upper class. Music and dialogue play the most important part in an opera, but the theatre consists mostly of comedies and dramas based on everyday life; it heavy in irony and wordplay, it usually pokes fun at social conventions and current events. In the north and south, opera is a much grander affair, with elaborate costumes, complex choreographies, acrobatics and martial arts, and epic plots that narrate stories from myth and history, such as the legends of the handsome Monkey King and the Three Kingdom period. It's mostly aimed at common people. In the west, there is a special form of opera where the main performer has layer upon layer of masks on his face. He changes them during the show, expressing different emotions

or characters with amazing speed and dexterity.

Most performers, whether opera actors or acrobats, are trained from a very early age. It is the only life they know, the troupe their only family. Traditionally, actors always perform the same type of role: hero, villain, comedic, or woman. Many will specialize in the same character all their lives, and become famous for it.

(Male performers play female roles as well! They're usually identified by white make up with a touch of rouge across the eyes.)

Performers with cultivated Chi tend to develop Chi Conditions based on the characters they play; a player of a hero could develop a Yang Hyperactivity, while the player of a female character could develop a Ying Hyperactivity. Their skin truly becomes red or white, and they are be compelled to act as their opera characters in daily life in order to sustain their Chi and maintain cultivation.

Artists and performers are usually considered part of the Jiang Hu because they travel, have unusual skills, keep close ties with their own kind, and are isolated from the rest of society. Many expand their talents by cultivating their chi, or develop them into kung fu or Secret Arts to join the Wulin.

The Shen Zhou Home

The traditional method of construction in the Land of the Gods consists of four buildings placed along the north-south and east-west axis and built around a courtyard. This is used not only for private homes, but for temples, monasteries, government buildings, and most types of building construction.

When used as a living space, they usually house a large extended family. Construction is based on the five element theory and the Confucian relationships to follow the same model in which the entire universe is ordered. As such, the gate is always positioned in the southeast corner (considered the wind corner), and the main house is always situated on the north (the direction associated with water) in order to prevent fires.

The northern main building usually serves as the living room and bedroom for the head of the family, as it receives the higher amount of sunshine, while the eastern and western buildings, which receive less, are for the children. The southern building, which will receive the least amount of sunshine, will be used as a study, recreation space, or a house for servants. The backside building will be for unmarried daughters and female servants; traditionally, they remain isolated from the public.

The buildings will be connected by decorated hallways that serve to provide shade during the day and a pleasant space to appreciate the courtyard, which will often be well kept and decorated, with wealthy families having gardens, ponds or pavilions.

A great part of the family life takes place outdoors around the courtyard, especially when weather permits. While most wealthy people have indoor kitchens and dining areas, the humble people do their cooking outside and take meals in the courtyard.

Villas of wealthy people consist of several interconnected courtyard complexes, and have a family shrine in the north, reception rooms and studies in the south, and servant areas in the back side.

The entrance gate is usually painted vermilion with copper door knockers, sometimes made to look like lion heads. There are usually stone guardian lions at the sides of the gates, or at least pictures of guardian deities painted or pasted on the doors. There is always a step at the entrance which forces the person entering to lower their head to cross, in order to show respect to the house. The more important the building, the higher the step!

At the entrance of the house, there will always be screens - a small, opaque free-standing wall. This is partly to protect the privacy of those inside, but also because inauspicious spirits can only travel in a straight line and can't get around them. This screen will often be decorated with paintings of nature, such as trees and birds.

Whether rich or poor, the typical house in Shen Zhou is designed to be spacious and comfortable. It should offer a comfortable and pleasant atmosphere and encourage communication between the residents as well as provide security.

Costumes and Festivals

Colors are associated with meanings and elements. Red is associated with happiness and joy; it is the paramount color for celebrations, such as weddings or the new years day. Gifts of money are delivered inside red envelopes.

Green and yellow are also auspicious colors. One is

associated with the element of wood, life, and growth, and the other is associated with the element of earth, balance, and the Emperor. For the most part, only royalty will be seen dressed completely in yellow; the Emperor always uses his full yellow regalia in public.

White is associated with death. If someone in your family has died recently, it's appropriate to wear a white headband. It is inauspicious to dress in white on joyous occasions, or to give white flowers.

(Some morbid girls like that sort of thing, though.)

Weddings are very important occasions! The celebration begins with the groom traveling to the bride's home dressed in red, with a big bow on his chest. A retinue follows him and plays music, detonates firecrackers, and makes a ruckus. After the groom pays his respects to his wife's family, porters carry the bride off in a sedan chair and join the groom, her own retinue joining the parade. They travel to the groom's house, where both of them bow down to his parents and offer wine to them, to their ancestors, and to Heaven. The bride has officially taken on the lineage of her new husband at this point; it's too late to stop a wedding by then. However, because a marriage may take place between a groom and bride from different towns or different regions, the procession to the bride's family is a perfect moment to attack the groom. The procession back is a perfect moment to abduct the bride.

Because wedding processions are often filled with random merrymakers, fleeing heroes commonly take refuge within them by pretending to be members of the party. Many a wedding day has been ruined (or "made more interesting") by unexpected Wulin conflicts.

Wedding celebrations can last for several days of eating, gambling and merriment. At the wedding night, guests encourage the couple to have children soon. Often, they will demand to have proof that the marriage has been consummated and that the bride was a virgin, especially in important alliance marriages. This is usually certified by a doctor's inspection for the highborn and a bloody sheet on the wedding night for the low. Beyond the point of honor, some families look past any evidence against the proof of consummation; the saying that horse riding takes a bride's maidenhood long before the groom does have some merit, but it's often best to simply look past the truth in favor of peace.

Funerals are complex affairs. Regardless of when the deceased died, a proper date for the burial must be decided by a priest or scholar. Usually, it is within three days of the death. There are different degrees of mourning according to the importance of the person in society and the household; these indicate everything from the length of the mourning period to how many layers of coffins should be used or where the coffin should be positioned in the house.

The most important funeral is the funeral of the head of a household. In the Martial Arts World, this means the funeral of the head of a society, or the most important master of a chapter of an organization. The funeral rites are conducted by the male descendants; female descendants and partners of the deceased have lesser parts in the funerary rites.

The eldest son or senior disciple acts as a master of ceremonies for the whole funeral. It usually takes several days, especially for important people who will have travelers coming from afar to pay their respects. It is of *utmost* importance that the date for the burial be auspicious.

If there are no male direct descendants, second degree male descendants such as nephews conduct the ceremonies. In the Wulin, the ceremonies are conducted by the eldest or most accomplished disciple, and gender doesn't matter (unless that society has a particular bias, such as the Little Forest Sect or the Resplendent Phoenix Society).

Mourners pay their respect by bowing three times and burning joss sticks placed on an urn near the coffin.

While the eldest male descendant or disciple takes care of the social affairs, there will be a priest, monk, or scholar tending to the spiritual ones, as the deceased has to pass from being a person to becoming an ancestor, someone honored and venerated by his descendants like a god or saint, and who would watch over them and protect them alongside all his lineage.

The most important festival in Shen Zhou is the beginning of the Lunar New Year, also known as Spring Festival. This takes place between the months of (January) and (February); preparations for the celebration start around the eighth day of the last lunar month and completely finish on the fifteen of the first lunar month.

This is a date to be with your family, whether blood or by honor; travelers abroad in far corners of Shen Zhou return home to reunite. Just as those in the ordinary world seek to unite with their blood relatives, many in the Wulin will join their factions or their martial brothers and sisters for this celebration.

On the last day of the Chinese New Year, the Lantern Festival is a veritable carnival. People march the streets with lanterns of all shapes; illuminated dragons, luminescent lions, and glowing lotuses bob down the walkways. They compete for space with stilt-walkers, amidst the smells of cooking meat and delicious treats. In ancient times, spirits and gods interacted with the world; they could be seen floating in the sky. Now, the lanterns are only reminders of those days.

The Spring Festival involves many days of eating, drinking and merriment. Firecrackers explode and fireworks light the sky, while fearsome painted paper beasts march through the streets to scare away the evil spirits and bring a new year full of fortune and prosperity.

The second most important festival is the Mid-Autumn Festival. It is celebrated in the fall, when the moon is full and at its zenith. It is a moment to drink and sing with family and friends, to contemplate the moon and think that, even if one is far from home, far from friends and loved ones, all are under the same celestial body.

Last is Tomb Sweeping Day, when people clean and care for the tombs of their ancestors; they bring offerings of the deceased's favorite food and drink, and sacrifice paper money by fire (it becomes real cash in the underworld, or so the

belief goes). This is not only a day to honor the deceased, but a day to return to one's roots. Those who have emigrated from the lands of their ancestors often return for a time, to look back on the places and people they left behind, and the ancestors that preceded them.

SECOND SCROLL: WUXIA THEMES AND TROPES

Here we present some of the themes and tropes common in wuxia fiction. We wrote the setting and Loes with them in mind, and designed the mechanics of the game to emulate them. We present these tropes based on how they appear in wuxia fiction, but players and Sages should emphasize the elements that work for their games and suppress or ignore those that don't!

Ashes of Time

Wuxia stories often lack a clear beginning or ending. Much has happened before the protagonists entered the story, and more will happen after they've left it. Heroes stumble into long-standing feuds between Wulin factions, or wars between states and nations that have involved generations of their elders. The history before their time is important to the present, and their actions will be important to how the conflict plays out in later generations even if they don't resolve it.

This theme can be fun for generational stories where the characters will grow old and become major players in the game world. In a later game, the players could take on the role of descendants, disciples, or other characters entangled in their legacies of the original characters, confronting the consequences of past adventures.

Heaven Sword and Dragon Saber

Wuxia stories are full of treasures that heroes and factions quest to obtain or fight to steal from other people who obtained it first. The most common examples are kung fu manuals with Secret Techniques or Legendary Weapons with extraordinary magical properties, but it might be something more symbolic, such as an Imperial seal or a historical document proving the legitimacy of an heir.

Usually, these plot devices ("Macguffins" to borrow a Western term) are not fully understood by those who seek them. Their properties shrouded in exaggerated rumor and convoluted history. Once found, they may prove to be more problematic than expected: the kung fu manual is written in the language of a distant land, the sword is embedded in a slab of jade, or the heir is an inbred idiot. Victories lead to more struggles! The story is less about the object's worth than what people will do to achieve it.

Kung Fu Cult Master

In wuxia stories, where and how you learned your kung fu skills is as important as the skills themselves. Wulin fighting techniques and Secret Arts are passed from master to student in an unbroken chain of inheritance, tying every new student of a style into the family of those who came before him. Even self-taught heroes are rare and noteworthy; they'll be confronted with many would-be students or new rivals eager to test a tried-and-true martial legacy against an upstart.

Heroes simply can't escape the chain of associations and factions created by the study of martial secrets; all they can hope to do is choose a company they're happy with.

Children of Shaolin

Wuxia stories often start with the protagonists in their youth. Through the trials and tribulations of the story, they mature and become powerful in the ways of kung fu, striving as adults to make their own place in the world. Their growth is internal as much as external. They begin as students, but end up becoming masters.

Even if they aren't literally children, their power and knowledge they have of the world could be limited at the beginning of the story. Challenges not only to test their power, but force them to confront their beliefs, to test their ideals, and to make them grow as people. Life in the Rivers and Lakes can help children grow to the people they want to be - or need to be.

The East is Red

Wuxia stories can be nationalistic, exalting Chinese values and culture, and defending Chinese sovereignty. This may not appeal to Western players, but it does offer many interesting hooks.

Heroes of the martial world tend to be apolitical; "all are equal in the Wulin." The Jiang Hu is considered a world apart from states and kingdoms, but shares a nationality that transcends state borders, ethnicities and even dynasties. The whole of Shen Zhou is their home. Its culture is their culture. They protect and fight to improve them. Betraying Shen Zhou for wealth and worldly power is a sin as terrible as betraying a sifu.

When the land is in chaos, corrupt heroes benefit, and seek to maintain the status quo. Chivalrous ones seek to overthrow them and bring back order and harmony under Heaven. In times when the land is stable, Chivalrous heroes may seek to maintain that order and protect its representatives, while corrupt ones may seek to manipulate it to their own interests or overthrow the current government. When the Land of the Gods faces foreign invasion (or worse, occupation) heroes of all traditions and factions put aside their differences to repel the invaders.

Crouching Tigers, Hidden Dragon

There is a saying: the Jiang Hu is full of Crouching Tigers and Hidden Dragons. Dangers can be hidden anywhere.

The Wulin credits itself with being an honorable society. Regardless, many within it hide their true nature, and in most stories heroes should rely more on their wits and intuition than on their senses when living in the Rivers and Lakes. They must always try to see deeper: the stern swordsman may be a woman in disguise, or the beggar a hidden noble. The studious young girl may be the real master, the elder just an ordinary old man. The defenseless victim may be an assassin.

Wuxia fiction is full of mysteries and mistaken identities. A hero can discover that their most beloved friends or trusted masters keep secrets that make them the hero's greatest enemies, such as the adopted orphan student of a great kung fu master who discovers that his teacher killed his parents. Filial piety demands revenge against the man who raised him for people he never met; who can endure such conflicted loyalty?

Be wary of over-using this trope. Players betrayed too often get gun-shy and turn their characters into loners. Save it for special occasions, and be mindful of the feelings of your players!

Handsome Siblings

Wuxia fiction is fiction, and sometimes it runs on soap opera logic: where events are more dictated by dramatic necessity than any sense of realism.

Heroes and villains can survive fates that should have surely killed them, if it's more interesting to keep them in the story. When they return, they might even be more powerful! If someone falls off a cliff to what must be their death, perhaps they'll land in a cave where an eccentric hermit lives. The hermit, of course, just happens to be a kung fu master who has been itching for a new student. It happens all the time!

Romantic or familial relationships can spring up between the most unlikely people. A villain might fall in love with a hero and save them from captivity; an assassin, seeking to kill the local lord, may discover herself to be his daughter! Your arch-rival is actually your long-lost twin, separated at birth. Why not?

While these might seem absurd, they serve a purpose by keeping every character in the drama linked to other characters by bonds of loyalty. This nest of alliances ensures that exciting conflicts have lots of opportunity to escalate in to drama and sustain themselves for generations on unexpected consequences. The Rivers and Lakes are constantly in a state of change, with every squabble echoing through it like a wave rippling across the water's surface.

All Men are Brothers

Life in the Jiang Hu is never solitary. Sure, there are always swordsmen who roam the land trying to play at being lone wolves, but they usually fail miserably and entangle themselves in a spiderweb of relationships. Good luck trying to be one in the midst of the other players.

Heroes owe their loyalty to their masters, their faction peers, their sworn brothers, those who have done them favors and are owed favors in return and even their families and nations. Friendships are strong as iron, driving them to epic lengths to assist friends in need. Rival heroes might seek to become more powerful than ever, purely motivated by the need to defeat their opposite number.

Like familial debts, bonds of rivalry and friendship are passed down from parent to child or from master to student; sometimes, these inherited bonds can conflict with someone's personal feelings. How tragic it is to discover that your lover is actually the student of your master's arch-rival, or that you despise your appointed sworn brothers beyond measure!

(Incidentally, this ties into the “Ashes of Time” and “Children of Shaolin” tropes, above; more than one master has coerced a group of young heroes into defeating his now-evil sworn brother. Add in “Crouching Tigers, Hidden Dragons” and the sworn brother is actually the virtuous master!)

This web of ties never goes away, even after a legend of the Wulin seeks a quiet retirement. When your rivals provoke you or your old friends need you, you could find yourself pulled back in to the Rivers and Lakes once again. Such is life in the Martial Arts World.

The Sword of Many Loves

Romance is an important part of Wuxia stories, but never simple romances. Their love interest probably isn't going to be the stay-at-home, waiting-for-the-hero type; more likely, they're members of the Wulin busily getting in to all sorts of trouble. It's likely they'll also be a sworn brother or a rival. Further, Wulin heroes don't fall in convenient love; they fall for the worst people at the worst times! Some appropriately disastrous options include the spouse of a close ally, a member of an enemy faction, and someone who simply cannot love them back for whatever reason.

Wuxia heroes are going to have potential suitors competing for them. It's hard to keep people from swooning over you when you spend so much time publicly performing incredible feats of kung fu and generally being an amazingly cool person all the time. Of course, their new suitors aren't likely to be any more convenient than the people they fall in love with. If the man who killed your parents falls in love with you, you probably won't appreciate their advances.

In Wuxia fiction, characters are likely to end up trapped in love-triangles, -squares, and even -pentagons, just to make their lives more filled with entertaining angst and conflict.

Romantic Sword Melancholic Swordsman

Life in the Jiang Hu is glorious and filled with adventure, but it is often a melancholic existence. So many fighters enter the Martial Circle motivated by tragedy, or by a need to fight the wrongs of the world..

The path of martial excellence is so demanding that practitioners can be consumed by it. There is room for nothing else in their lives; they lack any place in the normal world. A respected elder in the Wulin could lack any kind of status or place in regular society. You might need to sacrifice the very things you fought for in order to advance in the Wulin.

Those who reach the loftiest peaks of achievement in the Fighting Community find out how lonely it is at the top. They yearn to be understood, but they now they belong to a rare, unique kind. They desperately seek a worthy foe when they feel they have nothing else to achieve, because the only thing that could make them feel alive again is defeat.

Some heroes may realize that their foes are the only ones that can understand them, but they are forced to stand against each other. At the moment of victory, they endure dismay and guilt as they destroy one of the few people who could they could truly call a peer.

Drunken Master

On the other side of melancholy, we find humor and comedy, be it subtle or zany. There are always heroes with an irrepressible character and a devil-may-care attitude, moved by intense joy and a search for the pleasures of life. Whether they are fighting other heroes, getting caught up in mistaken-identity hijinks or falling in love with wild abandon, these characters can offer comic relief and balance the more serious, brooding characters.

Wuxia, especially in its cinematic incarnation, is meant to be a balanced form of entertainment which runs the whole gamut of emotion from intense drama to passionate romance, so don't be afraid to switch tones if it seems appropriate. A good dose of humor can always be a good addition to a game.

If Sages and players are inclined to a game where humor is a main ingredient, there are many zany wuxia comedies out there for inspiration. You can usually get a laugh with anachronisms - things that don't fit in ancient China, like chewing gum or sunglasses - or by subverting the tropes and stereotypes of the genre for comedic effect.

Demigods and Semidevils

All in all, heroes in Wuxia are meant to be characters bigger-than-life, moved by amazing passions, capable of great joys and immense melancholy. Emotions should be intense and exaggerated. Love and hatred are capable of crushing mountains; friendships and obligations are followed unto death.

When heroes are happy, they should be really happy, with an irrepressible joy. When they are sad, they should be so despondent that it transforms the nature of their power. Their anger should threaten to shake Heaven and Earth; their loyalties are the stuff of legends, told generations after they are gone.

Don't be afraid to go big.

Heroes in wuxia are grander than life.

THIRD SCROLL: RECOMMENDED SOURCES

Books

Very, very few wuxia novels have been published in English. There are three novels by Jin Yong and one by Gu Long that have been officially translated, and are available for purchase online.

Jin Yong

Also known as Louis Cha, Jin Yong is probably the most respected and renowned author in the genre. His stories are true epics, seamlessly blending history with fiction. His heroes get involved in historical events, crossing paths with real figures from China's past. Great care is put into historical and cultural details, and one may learn a lot about China's history by reading his novels. The lines between right and wrong are clearly defined in his works. Three of his novels have been published in English:

The Book and the Sword (1 Volume) Oxford University Press USA – His first novel, featuring tribes of nomads in the harsh lands of northwest China, a princess that smells like flowers, and a lost city guarded by packs of wolves.

Fox Volant of the Snowy Mountain (1 Volume) The Chinese University Press – This tale, told in a disconnected fashion by different characters who tell their own version of the same story, is similar in style to that of movies like **Rashomon** and **Hero**.

The Deer and Cauldron (3 Volumes) Oxford University Press USA – His last novel; the great master breaks all the rules he created himself, and introduces us to one of the most beloved anti-heroes of Chinese fiction, Wei Xiao Bao: an opportunistic, womanizing rascal with a heart of gold, who (despite being completely useless at kung fu) still manages to triumph by using his wit and charisma. It provides excellent inspiration for mischievous courtiers!

Gu Long

If Jin Yong is the respected and venerable master in the mountain, then Gu Long is the brash hero who challenges conventions and breaks the rules! His style is very poetic

and lyrical; his characters are anti-heroes who love wine and women (just as their creator did) and would often lose themselves in reflections and memories.

Gu Long paints a more general picture of Mythic, rather than ancient, China; he does not concern himself with historical accuracy, and in his stories the affairs of the normal world seldom cross into the Jiang Hu.

His stories often involve conflicts and hidden agendas within the Wulin, showcasing plot elements of mystery and intrigue. The lines between good and evil are often grey in his novels; those who are revered as great heroes have terrible secrets, while those who are disregarded as rogues have a noble heart. So far only one of his novels has been officially released in English.

The Eleventh Son (1 Volume) Homa & Sekey Books – The story of an infamous bandit who falls in love with the greatest beauty of the Wulin, a woman married to a respected and (apparently) Chivalrous hero. Their forbidden love forms the foil to a villain that has the face of an angel and the heart of a devil.

English Authors

Dream of the Dragon Pool (1 Volume) Pleasure Boat Studio– Albert A Dalia gives us what may very well be the first original wuxia novel in the English language: a dreamy story of the adventures of historical poet Li Bo, who travels by river with his faithful Xia companion, encountering ghosts, immortals, monsters, and an albino swordsman who can enter dreams to kill his targets along the way. A great source of inspiration for those who like a touch of the supernatural within their wuxia.

Internet

Unfortunately, not a lot of wuxia has been officially translated in English; but there are still sites that feature useful novel translations, discussions, and articles explaining the genre. And then there's fan fiction!

A few good sites are:

www.wuxiapedia.com

www.wuxiasociety.org

www.spcnet.tv

www.lovehkcinema.com

www.thedragongateinn.com

Comics

...or *manhua* as they are called in Hong Kong, kung fu comics are a great inspiration on this game, both in the visual style and their long, far-out stories.

The company that used to publish most *manhua* in English, has, unfortunately, gone under, but some are still able to be tracked down on the Internet or through certain stores.

Two very good series currently being published:

The Four Constables by Andy Seto – The tale of four incredible martial artists who work for the Imperial government, hunting criminals and solving mysteries. Great inspiration for the Liquid Metal Delegates and for group dynamics.

Chinese Hero: Tales of the Blood Sword by Wing Shing Ma – A very long story, spanning generations, Tales is the saga of a man called Hero and his family, taking place between China and America in the middle of the twentieth century. The work is full of strange martial artists, not all of them Chinese. Excellent inspiration for an alternate setting or modern campaign.

Other good series that may be hard to track down are:

Weapons of the Gods by Tony Wong – The inspiration of our previous game mixes wuxia with mythology and fantasy for an epic tale of heroes, gods and demons.

Storm Riders by Wing Shing Ma – Probably the best-known and longest-running wuxia manhua, it has already inspired two high budget live-action movies and an animation; it features beautiful artwork, iconic characters and an amazing story line.

Cinema

Wuxia became a part of cinema as soon as the Chinese started making movies. There are far too many great films to be mentioned in this book, though we'll describe some of the classics. Wuxia originated in the mainland, though it's come mostly out from Hong Kong for most of its history. Recently the genre has expanded, not only within the Chinese-speaking world like mainland China and Taiwan, but also to other countries like Korea (with the great *Shadowless Sword*, among others) and even non-Asian countries like Finland, which produced wuxia adaptation of national myth *The Kalevala* called *Jade Warrior*.

Classic Era

Most movies that can be now considered “classic wuxia cinema” were produced mainly by **Shaw Brothers Studio** during the 60s and 70s. Most of the actors and actresses really practiced kung fu, and although the sets and costumes may seem cheap and kitschy by some modern lights, the fight choreographies remain amazing.

These movies relied more in the actual skill of the performers, using special effects to complement them but not supplant them. Plots of these movies usually involved conflicts between Jiang Hu factions, revenge, mysteries and rebellions against the government. Supernatural kung fu (such as high-level lightfoot or internal energy) were part of the plot, but usually reserved for the villain or the secret master or the climatic fight.

Some movies of note from this era are:

A Touch of Zen (1971)

Come Drink with Me (1966)

Dragon Gate Inn (1967)

By director King Hu, these feature themes of Buddhism-inspired spirituality and feature strong, beautiful heroines, like those played by actress Chang Pei Pei.

The One Armed Swordsman (1967)

Golden Swallow (1968) (a sequel to *Come Drink with Me*)

The Five Venoms (1978)

By director Chang Chen, more masculine and violent than King Hu's. These movies feature hard-suffering heroes and devious plots, bringing stars like Jimmy Wang Yu to the forefront.

The New Wave

During the 80s and 90s, the wuxia genre had a renaissance in Hong Kong cinema with director/producer Tsui Hark (who had studied cinema in the United States) and pioneered special effects at the forefront.

Movies in this period have fantasy and high-flying action, and while many of the performers are still accomplished martial artists (like Jet Li), special effects and wire-fu become more important than actual skills. Everyone is flying around and creating explosions with their internal power.

Plots of this period will be convoluted and fantastic, and feature such elements as the search for lost manuals, forbidden and corrupt techniques, evil cults and gender-bending characters. You'll also see other genres mixed with wuxia, such as comedy, fantasy and horror.

This period has many amazing movies to mention, but some of the basics are:

Swordsman II (1992)

The New Dragon Gate Inn (1992)

Zu Warriors of the Magic Mountain (1983)

By Tsui Hark, acting as director/producer and usually in conjunction with director/action choreographer Ching Sui Tung.

Other movies of note in this period are:

Bride with White Hair (Ronnie Yu) (1993)

Kung Fu Cult Master (Wong Jin) (1993)

Iron Monkey (Yuen Woo Ping) (1993)

A great number of these movies feature Brigitte Lin Ching Hsia playing a demonic/godlike heroine and/or an androgynous, gender-bender character. A truly amazing actress, she's considered one of the queens of wuxia.

Art House Wuxia

For most of its history, wuxia cinema has been considered nothing more than pop culture entertainment, with little or no high culture value. Yet from the 90s forward many directors considered art house creators have taken to the genre, bringing wuxia to the forefront of the art cinema circles and giving it world-wide recognition.

The characteristics of the art house wuxia current involve elaborate set pieces, lavish costumes, ballet-like choreographies, and stories and plots focusing on personal relationships and the melancholic, lonely life of heroes.

A few examples of this current are:

Ashes of Time (Wong Kar Wai) (1994)

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (Ang Lee) (2000)

Hero (Zhang Yimou) (2002)

House of the Flying Daggers (Zhang Yimou) (2004)

The Promise (Chang Kaige) (2005)

The Banquet (Feng Xiaogang) (1991)

Manhua Wuxia

At the end of the 90s and the beginning of the 21st century, there was short but strong wave of fantastic wuxia films coming from Hong Kong. Mostly directed by Andrew Lau Wai Keung, these films used computer effects to create high-flying heroes, sword energy, symbolic auras and internal energy attacks. Most of these movies were based on Hong Kong manhua.

Storm Riders (1998)

A Man Called Hero (1999)

The Duel (2000)

All of these movies featured actor Ekin Cheng as the ultimate brooding swordsman: handsome and with hair falling over his eyes. These movies are a good inspiration on what the most over-the-top and powerful kung fu effects may look like.

Video Games

Though slow at first, the Western world has gradually come to realize the grace and emotion inherent within the wuxia genre.

Jade Empire (2005) – Published by Bioware, one of the leaders of Western role-playing games, the game adapts a Western paradigm to wuxia. The story is one of complexity, intrigue and action, and features a unique martial philosophy that could easily be adopted by any faction of the Wulin. Indeed, any one of the highly memorable characters in the game could easily be ported into your Jiang Hu, and the variety of martial arts in the game is easily emulated.

Heavenly Sword (2007) – A young girl struggles to protect her home, wielding a weapon from the gods that is slowly killing her, in exchange for the power to defeat a corrupt empire. Though rightfully criticized for being short, the game is still very long on atmosphere and inspiration.

TV Series

Flipping through Chinese television, one is bound to find a wuxia series. Some are quite bad, but some are really very good! The best are usually adaptations of novels, featuring beautiful actresses and handsome actors in lavish sets and costumes with CGI-enhanced kung fu.

Some of the series that can be found on DVD, with English subtitles:

The Return of the Condor Heroes (2006) (Based on the Jin Yong novel)

The Heaven Sword and Dragon Saber (2009) (Based on the Jin Yong novel)

Seven Swords (2006) (Based on the Liang Yusheng novel *7 Swordsmen of Mount Heaven*)

Laughing in the Wind (2001) (Based on the Jin Yong novel, *The Proud Smiling Wanderer*)

Chinese Paladin (2005) (Based on Chinese video game RPG)

FOURTH SCROLL: RELATIONSHIP CHART AND QUICK CAMPAIGN GENERATION

As described in the **Power Relationships of Shen Zhou Lore** (pg. 151), all important interactions in Shen Zhou are guided by the primary and derivative relationships. Furthermore, everyone who is *anyone* connects to various other people through bonds of authority and deference, anger and love. This is doubly true within the Wulin, as heroes with cultivated Chi tend to harbor strong feelings and opinions about *everything*.

These relationships express themselves as emotions (which might blossom into Passions) and principles (which can in turn develop into Inspirations). The relationships, together with these various motivational forces, are the bread and butter of the *Courtier's Art* – but are also highly relevant to everyone, since you can be sure that most adventures and accomplishments have their base there. Why does a great hero strive to prove his strength to the world? They want to impress someone, or conquer the grief in their heart. Why does a great lord rebel against their Emperor and start a civil war with no end in sight? They covet another's spouse, or they are convinced that the current rulers are corrupt and (only reluctantly) puts on the warlord's mantle. And so on.

All of these factors are tracked on what we call a **Relationship Chart**. At the most basic level, this is a chart filled with squares that symbolize prominent players – player characters, important NPCs, organisations and even places – with lines and arrow that symbolize the specific types of relationships and dominant Passions/Inspirations.

The chart tends to start out fairly basic at the beginning of a campaign – the PCs, a few power players, some basic relationships. After a few stories, though, they tend to blossom into labyrinthine constructs of hidden motivations, complex relationships and the results of many, many Deeds. This is as it should be! Being a visual representation of the game world, the Relationship Chart is a boon to both players and Sages.

In the first case, it reminds a player of where their character stands and what motivates them (especially in the face of shifting loyalties and circumstances) and serves as a tool for accomplishments and social manipulations (“To whom do we turn if we want Master Wu to listen to us?”). For Sages, they are whole sessions of adventures that simply

write themselves! Furthermore, it serves as a basis for plots that are all about the repercussions and results of the actions of the PCs – enemies that they have made or converted to their cause, allies or relatives that have become estranged, clan leaders that may have lost or gained influence. Just connect the dots, and you have your next adventure. This is also incredibly genre-appropriate; most of the greatest wuxia stories unfurl from very basic human motivations magnified through webs of obligation and enmity.

Relationships: Basic Setup

In the middle of a piece of paper (or computer document, or whatever medium you like the best), draw a square – this symbolizes the group of player characters. Coming up with a collective name (such as “The Five Pugilists of Yan” or “The Central Crossroads Gentlemen”) is both encouraged and appropriate to genre. Around it, draw one square for each of the PCs, and mark it with their name. Optionally, draw an arrow from each PC to the others with some short note on defining character or emotion for their relationship (usually, just a word or short phrase). If you want to hold off on this until a dynamic establishes in play, that’s cool – but you should have at least an inkling beforehand.

Now check the important characteristics of each PC – taking special note of Status, Entanglements and any appropriate Disadvantages. Take either the highest Status rating minus one or the total number of player characters – whichever is higher – and draw that number of circles on the sheet. These are what we call **main plotters**, people who will influence the game and probably be the main antagonists and motivators for adventure. Also draw in circles for each important **Entanglement** (such as spouses, allies and rivals added in from the *Power relationships* Lore) and for **Disadvantages** such as “Enemy” or “Hated Rival”. Some of these already have clear and defined relationships to the various player characters; fill them in with arrows as well.

Each circle (defined and hitherto face and nameless plotters) also needs a defining emotion (**Passion**) and drive (**Inspiration**), as well as an **Archetype**. If you already have ideas for these, great! Just note them down right next to the circle. If not, you can refer to the random charts below and fill in the details when you see how they go together.

Now, each player gets to add up to three circles for his character – these should be defining relationships such as those you have with your sifu, family or such. These help to add color and secondary relationships – it is not uncommon for an antagonist to have a pre-established relationship with your master, for example, he still might not even know about you. It is encouraged for player characters to share at least one secondary relationship with each other; having overlapping social spheres help to establish the characters as belonging to the same world, and makes it easier on the Sage to motivate them for adventures.

Now, decide on the **Ranks** of the plotters. This is where you should start to decide if you want several different

plotters with their own allegiances (generally making for a more complex story) or one **main Plotter** and his “lieutenants” (which might be literal or simply a convenient shorthand to describe their relationship). For a Main Plotter (or several of them) to be able to provide a proper level of antagonism (and, by extension, to compensate for the tendency of player characters to sensibly gang up on a superior threat), one or two levels above the characters is about right.

Repeat this process for each of the **Lieutenants** – for them, equal-level (or perhaps one above) the PCs is more appropriate, since they are by their nature lower-level threats. Draw lines between each Plotter and their Lieutenants that summarize their relationship (most commonly Superior/Minion) and a general emotion (which might be different for each of them).

Finalize the relationships. Make up names, genders and other pertinent details for the Main Plotters, and decide how their emotions and drives interact. Try to make sure that the PCs will have ways to find out about these relationships in the game, as well as trigger them or mess them up! Choose general natures and affiliations; give them a place in the world. If they have pre-established relationships to a PC or have one through their secondary relationships (and it is recommended that at least one of them have this, to get the story started), draw an arrow with a short description of that relationship.

Relationship Chart Basic Setup – Summary

- Add one central square (The PC group). Make up a name.
- Add one square around it for each PC. Add relationships between PC:s. Add dominating emotions and drives for the PC:s.
- Take the highest number of (highest Status among PC:s-1) or (number of PC:s). Draw that many circles – these are Main Plotters.
- Add one circle per important Entanglement or pertinent Disadvantage. Add in names, relationships and motivational forces.
- Summarize: roll up emotion, drive and Archetype for each unassigned Circle. Assign prominent relationships.
- Decide on several different plotters, one plotter with several Lieutenants or a mix thereof.
- Establish relationships between Plotters and between Plotters and their Lieutenants.
- Finalize all character details – names, genders, physical appearances and affiliations.

Now, you should have a great start for any adventure! **Use the Relationship Chart** in conjunction with the Lore Sheets that each player has bought for their character to set a tone for the adventure or fledgling campaign. The established relationships will also matter a lot for plenty of in-game questions – the social networks and passions that influence a Courtier’s Art, for example, or the personal drives that give cause to the emergence of World Conditions such as Curses (and whom they will benefit or hinder).

The Relationship Chart should be modified or added to in response to what happens in the game – the most

straightforward of which would be how Deeds create new Entanglements, which are recorded on the chart as new relationships (the people you just saved, the duke that you made an enemy of, the bandit princess who is now a romantic interest... the list goes on!). A great influence is also the use of the Secret Arts – since the various Discovery Lores gives a player mandate (assuming a successful roll of the dice) to dictate new relationships or emotions as “real” and pre-established, they might cause changes to the Relationship Charts not unlike rocks thrown into a pool of water – ripples spreading outward to affect everything.

A villain previously thought to be motivated only by his own greed is suddenly Discovered to be driven by secret and unrequited love for his enemy! The Sage can but raise an eyebrow, start to modify the chart and remind themselves to hand out some Joss! Treasure these moments for what they are – the story taking on an unexpected life of its own, the players adding something of their own to make it even grander.

Random charts:

Motivations (Inspirations)

1d10	Inspiration
1	Honor
2	Obsession
3	Benevolence
4	Individualism
5	Loyalty
6	Ruthlessness
7	Force
8	Ferocity
9	Righteousness
10	Revenge

Emotions (Passions)

1d10	Passion
1-2	Fear (or defiance)
3-4	Anger (or drive)
5-6	Joy (or love/foolishness)
7-8	Contemplation (or obsession)
9-0	Grief (or nostalgia)

Archetype

1d10	Archetype
1-2	Doctor
3-4	Warrior
5-6	Courtier
7-8	Scholar
9-0	Priest

Example Campaign Generation

The newly-minted Sage sits down to ponder her campaign. The PCs are Bright Snow, Wan He Bao and Uncle Wu – the players have decided that the group is called the *Tea Road Gentlemen*, because none of the PCs really qualify as “gentlemen” and they find it amusing.

The Sage jots down a central square for the group, and three surrounding squares for the PCs.

The highest Status in the group is a tie between Bright Snow (Status 5: Second daughter of House Yao) and Uncle Wu (Status 5: renowned heretic Buddhist!). This looks to be fun.

She jots down four big circles – the Main Plotters.

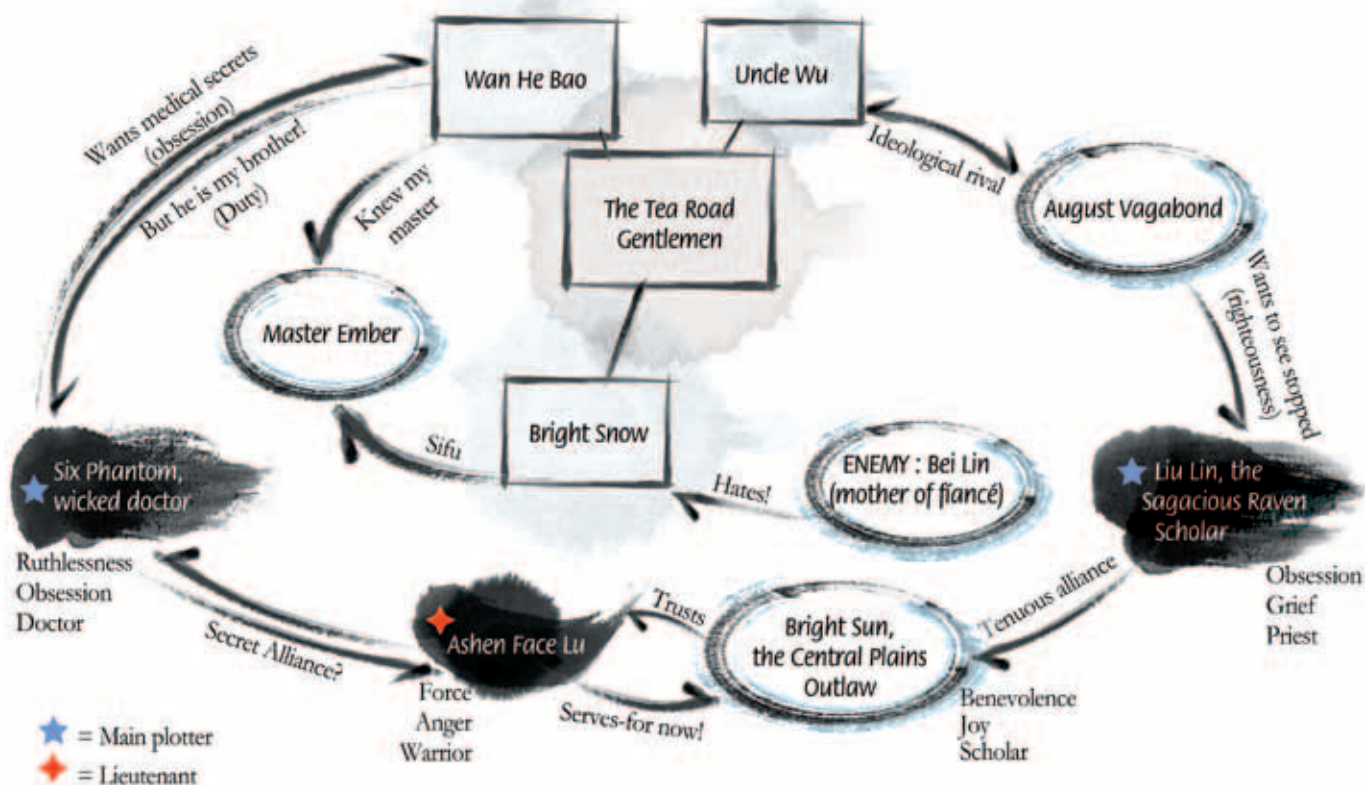
The Sage doesn't have many ideas yet, so she rolls for the auspices of these Plotters to see if something interesting comes to mind while the players think about adding their own circles. The first rolls come up as 6,7,1 – a Ruthlessness Inspiration, a Contemplation Passion and... the Doctor Archetype. This doctor is extremely focused on something and will stop at nothing to get it! At the same time, the Sage notes that Wan He Bao has an Enemy – his brother-in-discipline, who murdered their master because he thought that Bao was taught medical secrets that were denied him. The pieces fall into place – the brother (Six Phantom) becomes a main plotter! Still obsessed with finding medical secrets that rightfully belong to him, he plots and schemes and uses his medicinal skills in wicked ways!

Six Phantom is jotted down in one of the Main Plotter circles, and his drives noted. The Sage also draws an arrow from him to Wan He Bao, noting the relationship as “Wants medical secrets (obsession)”. Wan He Bao keeps the relationship to Phantom as indicated by his Enemy flaw, “But he is my brother! (Duty)”, which notes his conflicted feelings; he made a promise to his old master to try to make Six Phantom change his ways even as he sees how this might be way too late.

She continues to make some more rolls to add Plotters while the players add circles from their own Drawbacks and Lore options – bit by bit, the map evolves... a Plotter curiously motivated by Benevolence and Joy becomes the Central Plains Outlaw, a fairly-righteous rebel who works to overthrow the local government... and who as a Scholar is a master of plots and plans. Who knows how this struggle will complicate the character's lives? A grief-driven and Obsessed Priest becomes Liu Lin, the heretic Daoist who simply strives to destroy the Empire together, the bloodier the better! The Sage sees possibilities for alliances and double-crosses between her and the Outlaw, given that they both oppose the government (although with very differing end goals).

Plotter circles for the Outlaw and the Raven Scholar. The Sage notes “tenuous alliance” as their mutual relationship.

It feels like the plot is really thick by now, so the Sage decided that the last Plotter will be a lieutenant. Fittingly enough, the dice provides her with an Angry Warrior using Force to do what he wants. He becomes Ashen Face Lu, a second-in-command and old friend to the Outlaw who has gotten quite used to taking what he wants, if ostensibly for a higher goal. He works as the Outlaw's right hand for now, but will use more violence than is needed – providing a nice first foil for a bunch of PCs! Meanwhile, the players have added some more circles – a sifu for Bright Snow (a free addition, but one that makes sense), an ideological rival to Uncle Wu (a Drawback – the August Vagabond will try to score points against Wu and is not above placing him in difficult situations



to do so). Wan He Bao's player adds a relationship between Snow's sifu and himself – he and Bao's master were old friends, so he has been introduced. The Sage also expands some other inter-character relationships – adding how Wu's rival is out to stop Liu Lin (and will probably therefore spur Wu to try to outdo him!) and how Ashen Face Lu has started to fall under the influence of Six Phantom, who is well in need of some violent bandits to do his dirty work.

Adding in some final lines to the chart to finish up the process – “Wants stopped (righteousness) for August Vagabond vs Liu Lin, a “Secret Alliance?” between Lu and Phantom to keep it an open option.

Given half an hour or so of prep time, the group will be ready for their first game!

FIFTH SCROLL: SECRETS OF THE SAGE

Minions

Opponents who are no match for you alone but pose a threat as a mass are called minions. A group of **minions** is called a unit of minions. Gangsters, bandits, cultists, soldiers, and others can all be minions. They aren't intended to be powerful enough to kill a ranked fighter, but they can tip the balance in

a larger confrontation by delaying and distracting him. You might be able to kill an evil kung fu master, but can you also defeat him when his disciples are around to help?

Under these rules, units of minions never fight other units; the rules aren't built for that and they won't produce good results. If two mobs come to blows, determine the result based on your intuition or the needs of your story.

Units have a Rank between Fifth and First, like Wulin fighters; several of their traits vary by Rank, as seen in the boxed text. The classification pertains to the unit, not its parts. A Fifth Rank unit might be a mob of peasants with poor equipment, while a First Rank unit might be the emperor's team of elite assassins, but that doesn't mean that each individual assassin poses any kind of threat to you in a fight even if you're far below First Rank. The unit's Rank does serve as a good guideline for what Rank of fighter they typically challenge or serve.

Units have a Lake score which they use for actions as if they were a single Ranked fighter. They don't have a River, Joss, chi, kung fu, Lightfoot, or Chi Aura. They have skills depending on their Rank (see below).

Each round, a unit can either attack or create a wave.

- If they attack, they don't roll initiative; all units of Minions in a fight always act last, at the same time. At the end of the round, they make a single attack against all ranked opponents within their zone, as selective area attack. This attack can only inflict Ripples; it never forces an immediate Rippling check, and can't create Marvels.

- If they create a wave, like a Shaping marvel, they roll the most suitable skill for the action at the start of the round. They still act last, giving everyone in the battle the chance to break their wave.

Minions can be attacked and defeated. They don't suffer Injury Conditions. Instead, they are defeated when you inflict sufficient Ripples on them; the unit suffers too many casualties, their weapons break, they despair of defeating you, or a combination of all three. The Ripples required to defeat a unit depends on its Rank, but the Wulin Sage can adjust this number by one point if circumstances warrant it. A group of soldiers that deep down knows their commanders are corrupt will give up the fight slightly sooner, while those fighting for the lives of their wives and children will go above and beyond their duties.

Units can suffer from combat effects just like a Ranked fighter. Area Attacks are particularly effective against minions: they inflict one additional Ripple with each successful attack.

If a unit of minions is led by a Wulin fighter, they may use the leader's Tactics skill as their Strike, Block, and Footwork bonus. If they have no leader or their leader is unable to lead, they must use the default modifier for a unit of their Rank. Additionally, they can endure one additional Ripple for each level of the leader's Inspire skill; defeating a mob's leader is a serious blow to morale and can rout a unit immediately!



Fifth-Rank Minions

Lake: 6
Default modifier: -5
Ripples: 6
Skill: A single skill at +5

Fourth-Rank Minions

Lake: 7
Default modifier: +0
Ripples: 7
Skill: One skill at +5 and one at +10

Third-Rank Minions

Lake: 8
Default modifier: +5
Ripples: 8
Skill: Two skills at +5, one at +10 and one at +15

Second-Rank Minions

Lake: 9
Default modifier: +10
Ripples: 9
Skill: Two skills +10, one at +15 and one at +20

First-Rank Minions

Lake: 10
Default modifier: +15
Ripples: 10
Skill: Two skills at +15, one at +20 and one at +25

Lesser Legends

Between the heroes and villains and the petty minions stand the Lesser Legends. Their skill deserves recognition, even if they're not quite important or impressive enough to be worth an entire character sheet. Some examples of Lesser Legends are the scheming old minister who knows enough kung fu to defend himself, the crazy hermit used to be a powerful warrior before he lost his mind and most of his secret techniques, or an infamous highwayman who once learned a move or two from some half-forgotten kung fu and now leads a unit of bandit Minions.

Lesser Legends are individuals who single-handedly perform as well as an entire unit of minions of the same rank - e.g, a Third Rank Lesser Legend has Lake 8 and can usually suffer that many Ripples before being defeated. Unlike minions, they do use actual weapons, External Kung Fu Styles, and the River, but they still don't use Joss or chi. Lesser Legends can force immediate Rippling rolls, don't benefit from a leader, and Area Attacks are not more effective against them.

Lesser Legends roll their Lake at the start of each turn, but not for Initiative. They act after the Ranked fighters, but before minions. Instead, they use the roll to recover from negative conditions, initiate waves, or just to fill their River.

Lesser Legends usually know some kung fu, Secret Arts, or Skills. They begin with a single external style

Example Lesser Legends

Assassin

Lesser Warrior

Skills: Stealth +10 (+15 due to One with Shadows), Finesse +5, Inspire +5

External Style: Murderous Shadows (*Gliding Shadow, One with Shadows, Shadows Cast by All Things* [Sword])

Weapon: Sword

Footwork: +5. Strike: +15 Damage: +10 Block: +5

Bandit Leader

Lesser Warrior

Skills: Tactics +10, Stealth +5, Survival +5

External Style: Bone-Fed Wolf Fang (*March Towards Hell, Rainfall at Night*)

Weapon: Saber

Footwork: +5 Strike: +10 Damage: +15 Block: +5

(Strike +15 if the target is Disoriented or Disrupted)

Beggar Fraternity Wandering Hero

Lesser Warrior

Skills: Hardiness +10, Survival +5

External Style: Eight Legends (*Golden Flash, Miracle Strike*)

Weapon: Staff

Footwork: +5 Strike: +20 Damage: +10 Block: +10

Buddhist Monk

Lesser Priest

Skills: Awareness +5, Confidence +5 (resisting passions), Wu Wei +10

External Style: Subtle Force (*Correct Approach* [1], *Fighting Without Fighting, Heart-Cutting Strike*)

Weapon: Unarmed

Footwork: +15 Strike: +10 Damage: +0 Block: +5

Doctor-hermit

Lesser Doctor

Skills: Medicine +10, Survival +5

Secrets of Treatment: *Inflaming and Soothing Conditions, Elemental Progression Technique, Paired Condition Technique*

External Style: Subtle Force

Weapon: Unarmed

Footwork: +15 Strike: +10 Damage: +0 Block: +5

Eagle Talons Escort

Lesser Warrior

Skills: Tactics +10, Awareness +5

External Style: Destiny Cloud Fist (*Heavenly Warrior, Windy Cloud Force*)

Weapon: Eagle Claw (Unarmed & Saber per *the Eagle Talons* Loreshet)

Footwork: +20 Strike: +15 Damage: +10 Block: +5

Falling Leaves Society Historian

Lesser Scholar

Skills: Learning +10, Politics +5, Tactics +5, Wu Wei +5

Secrets of Prediction (Can make one prediction for story, even without Joss)

External Style: Divine Pattern Long-Strokes (*Damming Off Fortune, Sweeping to All Sides*)

Weapon: Judge's Brush (Flexible weapon)

Footwork: +0 Strike: +15 Damage: +5 Block: +10

Heaven Sword Alliance Young Hero

Lesser Warrior

Skills: Wu Wei +10, Tactics +5

External Style: Eight Legends (*Legendary Force, Miracle Strike*)

Weapon: Sword

Footwork: +5 Strike: +20 Damage: +10 Block: +15

Jade Dragon Well Priest

Lesser Priest

Skills: Learning +10, Wu Wei +10

Manipulating Influences: *Inflaming and Soothing Influences*External Style: Flowing Universe (*Contained Water Sphere*)

Weapon: Judge's Brush (Flexible weapon)

Footwork: +5 Strike: +10 Damage: +0 Block: +10

Resplendent Phoenix Courtesan

Lesser Courtier

Skills: Inspire +10, Awareness +5, Confidence +5

Controlling Passions & Inspirations: *Inflaming and Soothing Passions & Inspirations*

External Style: Graceful Crane Style

Weapon: Unarmed

Footwork: +20 Strike: +5 Damage: +0 Block: +5

Soldier

Lesser Warrior

Skills: Hardiness +10, Might +5, Tactics +5

External Style: Bone-Fed Wolf Fang (*Fighting With Fire, March towards Hell*)

Weapon: Saber

Footwork: +5 Strike: +10 Damage: +15 Block: +5

(+10 Dodge or Block against Disrupted or Disoriented target)

Small Forest Sect Warrior-Monk

Lesser Warrior

Skills: Hardiness +10, Might +5 (breaking things)

External Style: Blossom Harvest (*Nine Mountains Great Strength, No Vermin in the World*)Weapon: Iron Palms (Massive & Unarmed, per the *Little Forest Sect* Loreshet)

Footwork: +5 Strike: +10 Damage: +15 Block: +5

Town Constable

Lesser Warrior

Skills: Awareness +10, Tactics +5

External Style: Eight Legends (*Golden Flash, Legendary Force*)

Weapon: Sword

Footwork: +5 Strike: +15 Damage: +10 Block: +15

Yun Clan Horseman

Lesser Warrior

Skill: Ride +10, Hardiness +5

External Style: Divine Pattern Long-Strokes (*Forbidden Gate of Heaven, Hell-Pattern Judgment*)

Weapon: Spear

Footwork: +0 Strike: +10 Damage: +10 Block: +15

and the starting Secret Arts of their Archetype, plus up to 5 Destiny to purchase kung fu, extra skills, or Secret Art techniques with per Rank level. Lesser Legends usually don't have Loreshoots; give them whatever status, reputation, or followers they require for their role in the story.

Example Lesser Legends

Above are examples of Fourth Rank Lesser Legends, ready to be inserted into the game or as the basis for your own characters. You can easily create higher Ranked Lesser Legends by advancing these in Rank, increasing their Lake and River sizes, adding skills, and spending up to five additional Destiny per extra Rank. In this manner, you can upgrade a common soldier into an accomplished general or a junior clansman into a respected elder.



LEGENDARY WEAPONS

Heaven Sword, Dragon Saber, Green Destiny, and Tiger Soul; these are but a few of the potent and legendary weapons found in wuxia fiction. These optional rules let you include such weapons in your game. Be advised that these rules delegate unarmed fighters to a secondary role, unless appropriate Transcendent Techniques (pg. 293) are in play. If your game centers on the quest to recover the powerful Twelve Arms of the Zodiac, that won't be a problem, but if it's a more subdued story about kung fu monks beating up rice-stealing thugs with their bare hands, it's not a good fit. Consider carefully before using these rules!

Acquiring a Legendary Weapon costs 10 Destiny points, or 13 if it uses a Special weapon for its baseline. Some Loreshoots offer a discount of 1-2 points; e.g., Buddhists naturally find their



fates entwined with peaceful weapons, and an imperial assassin more quickly stumbles upon weapons that seek to enforce law upon the world at all costs.

Practically speaking, Legendary Weapons are nigh-magical weapons. From destiny's point of view, they're characters in their own right. They have a past, a story, a fated future, and fame. You may consider yourself fortunate to wield the *Golden Tiger Saber*, but when the tale of that weapon is told, you're just one chapter among many!

All Weapons have a fate of their own. This is like a goal or desire; they can be open-ended, but should be specific and tailored towards the weapon, not the wielder. Good examples are "Endless Slaughter," "Oppose Tyranny," and "Destroy the Clan Responsible for Murdering My Creator." Bad examples would be "Do Whatever My Wielder Wants" or "Kick Ass and Take Names." Although a weapon has a fate, it doesn't have a mind or a heart. Your weapon isn't your friend and it won't return to you out of loyalty if it's stolen!

Legendary Weapons have their own stories and destinies. When they are fated for great things, they shine, but when they are left obscure and without praise, their true potential slumbers; it can take some time before a Weapon fully awakens after it's first drawn from the bottom of some hidden well.

All Legendary Weapon have a Glory score which varies from 0 and 50. This score is usually 0 when you first acquire it, but a Weapon already in the hands of a hero might have a higher score, making it that much harder to steal. Any time you perform an act in line with the Weapon's fate, the Glory score increases by 5 points. This works like a Deed, using the Weapon's fate as a virtue, but you receive no Destiny, nor any other benefit except the warm feeling of knowing your weapon is pleased with its new partner. Whenever you

perform a Deed of your own, you can choose to give any of the Destiny to your weapon's Glory instead of your own Entanglement. If the Weapon contributed to accomplishing the Deed, you must devote at least one point of destiny to its Glory.

Your weapon is powerful, but it distracts you from your own story and fate by subsuming you into its own story. At the end of any chapter where it received no Glory, its Glory diminishes by 1. If you ever take an action that directly contradicts its fate, its Glory drops by 5!

The statistics of Legendary Weapons are identical to those of their baseline weapon, but as their Glory grows, so do their powers. The benefits of Glory are set when a Legendary Weapon is newly created, although the character wielding it, or even their player, doesn't necessarily know what the Weapon will grow into.

The Weapon can increase its Speed, Strike, Block, or Damage by 5 points for 5 Glory, with no more than 10 Glory per trait. Most Weapons devote 10 to 25 points of Glory to traits.

Glory can also awaken magical properties within the Weapon. These are activated by channeling Chi through the weapon, but otherwise function like Internal Style techniques with the same Chi cost. (You can copy kung fu techniques directly, or just use them for inspiration.) For 5 points of Glory, the power is roughly equivalent to a first level technique, for 10 points of Glory, you get a second level technique, and so on. Most Weapons devote 25 to 40 Glory to powers.

Rarely, they have powers similar to external kung fu techniques. These function like techniques costing 1 Destiny per 5 points of Glory they cost.

Golden Tiger Saber

This saber is a heavy, slightly curved blade made from dark iron. Stripes of a hardened gold alloy resembling a tiger's fur run along the entire length. The edge is composed of the same metal; it is incomparably sharper than steel. No one alive recalls the true origins of this weapon, but many know it by reputation. This saber is powerful and fearless, and often finds itself in the hands of young heroes who wish to fight against evil. Needless to say, this weapon has changed hands many times.

Baseline Weapon: Saber

Fate: Avenge all wrongs!

Glory:

5: +10 Confidence to stay free from fear, doubts, contemplation and the like.

10: +5 Strike.

20: Perfect Golden Cleave: Channel 2 Chi for a +10 Damage bonus.

25: +5 Speed.

40: Ferocious Rending Tiger: Channel 3 Chi for a Secondary Strike.

45: +5 Strike increases to +10 Strike.

50: +5 Damage.

Total stats when fully awakened:

- +5 Speed
- +15 Strike
- +10 Damage
- +10 Confidence to stay free from fear, doubts, contemplation and the like.
- You may Flood one die from the River to force an immediate Rippling check if the Strike exceeds the defense by 5 or more points instead of 10. You may do this after the defender rolls. (This doesn't apply to other attack forms, such as Secret Arts or energy attacks.)
- Channel 2 Chi for a +10 Damage bonus.
- Channel 3 Chi for a Secondary Strike.

Greater Virtue Sword

This weapon is known by many other names. "Flying Iron Minister", "The First's Attendant" and "Dragon's Claw" are just the most infamous. It is a large, well-crafted sword covered in fine engravings. It was wielded by the first emperor during his wars to unify all the Great Plains under one single banner. Although the emperor is long gone, the sword still seeks to crush rebellion and bring all quarrelling factions to heel.

Baseline Weapon: Massive Sword

Fate: Unify the world.

Glory:

5: +5 Strike.

10: +5 Block.

15: +5 Damage

30: All Under Heaven: Whenever this weapon inflicts a wound condition, you may choose to instead inflict an Inspiration towards values that stress the importance of unification, such as instilling Propriety into a government official so that he uses his powers as the emperor intended him to, or Benevolence to assist people suffering from foreign invaders. You can also Inflammate such conditions.

35: +5 Strike increases to +10 Strike.

40: +5 Block increases to +10 Block.

50: Sovereign Power: You have a +10 bonus to any check made to resist or recover from a Passion, Curse, or Influence. This effect applies even if you're not wielding the sword, but it must be nearby so that its presence can strengthen you.

Total stats when fully awakened:

- +10 Strike
- +10 Block
- +10 Damage
- You may Flood one die from the River while you make the attack. If you do and cause a Rippling roll, any Chi Aura used to protect against this damage costs 2 Chi points per die to purchase.
- If an attack with this weapon is described in such a way that it is best Dodged instead of Blocked, the penalty to Block is -10 instead of -5.
- You may Flood one die from the River while you make the attack to ignore the target's armor on any resulting Rippling roll.
- Whenever this weapon inflicts a wound condition, you may choose to instead inflict an Inspiration towards values that stress the importance of unification, such as instilling Propriety into a government official so that he uses his powers as the emperor intended him to, or Benevolence to assist people suffering from foreign invaders. You can also Inflammate such conditions.
- You have a +10 bonus to any check made to resist or recover from a Passion, Curse or Influence. This effect applies even if you're not wielding the sword, although it should be nearby so that its presence can strengthen you.

Snowstorm

This elegant blue and white saber is as old and respectable as the Yun Clan, which forged it long ago and is still inexorably connected to it. Traditionally, a leader or great hero of the Clan is given the weapon as proof of their power and loyalty. Recent developments have somewhat diminished the respect it commands from the Yun; many clansmen covet a new prize, the Glacier Heart Style. Time will tell whether or not the Yun will be torn apart between the traditional symbol of Snowstorm and the new promises of Glacier Heart...

Baseline Weapon: Saber

Fate: Brings greatness to the Yun Clan. Snowstorm Saber considers the transcendent Glacier Heart Style to be a sickness that harms the Clan.

Glory:

10: Edge of Winter: When you make a Freeze attack, you may add the weapon's Strike bonus to the result. You may use physical attacks with this saber to inflame Injury Conditions from Freeze attacks.

15: +5 Damage.

20: Blizzard King: You have a +10 bonus to Chi Aura when rolling to protect against Freeze damage.

25: +5 Block.

30: +5 Strike.

40: Gust of Frozen Wind: Whenever you use a technique that lets you use the Freeze effect, you may spend 1 point of Chi to extend the attack into an adjacent zone by projecting a path of ice and cold towards the target.

45: +5 Speed.

50: +5 Damage increases to +10 Damage.

Total stats when fully awakened:

- +5 Speed
- +10 Strike
- +15 Damage
- +5 Block
- You have a +10 bonus to Chi Aura when rolling to protect against Freeze damage.
- You may Flood one die from the River to force an immediate Rippling check if the Strike exceeds the defense by 5 points or more points, instead of 10. You may do this after the defender rolled. (This doesn't apply to other attack forms, such as Secret Arts or energy attacks.)
- When you make a Freeze attack, you may add the weapon's Strike bonus to the result. Also, you may use the physical attacks with this saber to inflame the severity of Frozen wound conditions.
- Whenever you use a technique that lets you use the Freeze effect, you may spend 1 point of Chi to extend the attack into an adjacent zone by projecting a path of ice and cold towards the target.

Dog-Beating Stick

This is the famed weapon of the founder of the Beggar Fraternity, the original staff that he used to perform his greatest heroics. His many deeds have awakened the weapon, and instilled it with a great sense of benevolence. It wants to protect the helpless, and teach manners to those who would prey upon them. Naturally, all the special techniques of the Beggar Fraternity are named after aspects of this weapon.

Baseline Weapon: Staff

Fate: Help the weak, and punish the wicked.

Glory:

5: +5 Speed.

15: Lessons in Humility: Channel 2 Chi for a +10 bonus to a Disrupt or Knockback Marvel.

20: +5 Strike.

25: Old Immortal Rascal: Channel 1 Chi to give a -10 penalty to all opponents who try to break your waves for the rest of the round.

30: +5 Block.

45: World without Dogs: Channel 3 Chi to make an Area attack that is automatically selective.

50: +5 Damage.

Total stats when fully awakened:

- +5 Speed
- +10 Strike
- +5 Damage
- +10 Block
- You may Flood one die from the River to extend an attack into an adjacent zone.
- You may Flood one die from the River while you make a Block. If you do, you may exploit your weapon's superior reach. For this defense, you Laugh at your opponent and do not Fear him, unless he can claim a similar long reach (such as from using a spear or a ranged weapon).
- Channel 1 Chi to give a -10 penalty to all opponents who try to break your waves for the rest of the round.
- Channel 2 Chi for a +10 bonus to a Disrupt or Knockback Marvel.
- Channel 3 Chi to make an Area attack that is automatically selective.

Black Dragon Slayer

Once upon a time, an emperor fell under the influence of a conspiracy. He was but a figurehead to the corrupt powers behind the throne. The heroes of the land rebelled, and set out to expose the corruption and restore righteousness to the land. However, in the chaos of the battle, one selfish hero sought to avenge his father, who had been killed by imperial agents. Just as others convinced the emperor of their noble intentions, he stabbed the emperor in the back, and slew him. His sword was cursed, having tasted the blood of the Son of Heaven, and locked away.

It was brought to the Ocean Unbound Monastery, which lies on a small island near Birds Progress. There, it hangs suspended from chains attached to a hundred statues of the Buddha, which slowly dissolve the evil stain and restore purity to the weapon. The process has reached a critical point: the sword should be safe in another hundred years, but will the times be peaceful enough to resist using it before then? If you remove the sword from the vault now, there's no telling if it is good or evil. Perhaps it will try to atone for its misdeeds, but perhaps it will seek to slake its thirst for royal blood once more. Will it be thankful to its jailer monks, or avenge itself for centuries of imprisonment? The temptation, and the risks, are great...

Baseline weapon: Sword

Fate: Unknown.

Glory:

Unknown. If the weapon is evil, it will have powers that improve Strike and Damage. If it is purified, then it will have powers that improve Speed and Block. Perhaps it has both evil and noble aspects, blending the two together.

TRANSCENDENT TECHNIQUES

Transcendent techniques function like Legendary Weapons, except they aren't a weapon that upgrades as you awaken it. The Transcendent techniques upgrade you. They're like the Nine Yin Manual from the Condor Trilogy: a special piece of training that seems to make you better at everything you do. Transcendent techniques usually improve your unarmed fighting, just like Legendary Weapons improve your armed fighting, but some of their aspects apply universally. These are also more costly than normal unarmed-only aspects.

Transcendent techniques don't have a Fate like Legendary Weapons. Instead, they have a Way. The Way works like a weapon's Fate does: it requires certain behavior in exchange for increased power. Similarly, their Glory score is called Mastery. The distinction is mostly flavor text; adhere to the Way and you will Master the technique more fully as it matures inside you. Despite these different names, the rules are identical to the Fate and Glory of Legendary Weapons.



Buddha's Palm

(Enlightened, 8 destiny, requires you to have the Buddhism Loreshet)

This is a supreme unarmed fighting method, so powerful and yet merciful that it is said to be of the Buddha himself. When you use it, your hands blur and glow, omnipresent and irresistible. It is known and taught only by a few old masters of the Small Forest Sect.

Way: Buddhism. Each time you earn a Buddhist Deed (as defined in the Buddhism Loreshet), this technique's Mastery increases by 5.

Mastery:

5 +5 unarmed Block.

10 +5 unarmed Strike.

15 +5 unarmed Damage.

20 Unarmed Block increases from +5 to +10.

25 Unarmed Strike increases from +5 to +10.

50 **Hand of Buddha:** Channel 5 Chi for an unarmed selective Area attack with +10 Strike and Damage. This damage can Take Out people, but never by killing them.

Eyes of the Fiery Raptor

(Corrupt)

The only person said to know this powerful technique of dubious origin is Gallant Eagle, leader of the Eagle Talons. When you use it, your eyes turn bright scarlet and your expression becomes haughty, regarding the world only in terms of weaknesses and unworthy opponents.

Way: Supremacy. Each time you utterly crush your opposition and make a humiliating example out of them, this technique's Mastery increases by 5.

Mastery:

10: **Sacrifice – Soaring Raptor:** You may voluntarily suffer one Ripple for a +10 Speed bonus.

20: **Sacrifice – Swift Raptor:** You may voluntarily suffer one Ripple for a +10 Footwork bonus.

30: **Sacrifice – Blood-soaked Raptor:** You may voluntarily suffer one Ripple for a +10 Strike bonus.

40: **Sacrifice – Golden Raptor:** You may voluntarily suffer one Ripple for a +10 Toughness bonus.

50: **Sacrifice – Fiery Raptor:** You may voluntarily suffer one Ripple for a +10 Damage bonus.

Glacier Heart

(Corrupt)

This is the technique said to be known only to the Glacier Maiden of the Snow Dragon mountains. It is a merciless, cold style that cuts away all warmth from the body and soul.

Way: Coldness. Each time you perform an act that leaves the world with less warmth in it and significantly bleaker, this technique's Mastery increases by 5. You will probably never be truly satisfied until the entire world is frozen, and returns to the Void...

Mastery:

5: +10 Confidence when rolling to resist or cure Passions and Inspirations.

15: **Void Ice Shards:** Channel 2 Chi to make a Freeze effect as a minor action on your attack with a +10 bonus. If you know Ice Sutra, you treat it as a Corrupt Water style, meaning Ice Sutra can cultivate your Corrupt Chi or your Water chi.

25: +5 Toughness at all times.

35: +5 Damage at all times.

40: **Heart of Bitter Ice:** If you can make Freeze effects as a Minor Action, you may now do so with a single die instead of needing a set.

50: **Frozen Starless Night:** If you inflict an Injury Condition with a Freeze, the penalty doesn't only apply to breath and River slots, but also to the maximum amount of joss that the target can spend each turn

Thousand Phoenix

The Resplendent Phoenix Society guards a secret manual that details one of their most prized techniques, the Thousand Phoenix transformation. Those who learn it are infused with benevolent yin energy, soothing their excesses and bestowing a great spiritual power.

Way: Yin. Each time when you are greatly challenged and you act markedly soft, diffuse, feminine, or in a way related to the moon or darkness, this technique's Mastery increases by 5.

Mastery:

10: +5 Dodge.

30: **Boundless Cycle:** Whenever you force an immediate Rippling roll with an attack made with a sword, a flexible weapon, or unarmed, you may drain one point of Chi from that target. The target loses this point from his reserves, and you may add it to your own. You can only drain normal chi. If the target doesn't have any normal Chi to take, you gain nothing.

40: **Principle of Yin:** You may now devote any cultivation you gain towards normal Chi towards cultivating Metal or Water Chi instead, if you choose to.

50: **Regrowth from Nothingness:** You have a special store of two points of chi. These are normal Chi points, except that they don't count for your Chi threshold, and they can't be replenished by any means whatsoever except a full night of sleep.

Jade Water

(Enlightened, 8 destiny, requires you to have the Daoism Loreshet)

This special water can only be found in the Dragon Well, guarded over by the Dragon Well Sect. It has miraculous healing properties and can bring long health to whoever drinks from it. It also bestows great power that makes your hands like a dragon's talons and your force like that of a crashing wave.

Way: Clarity. Each time when you are greatly challenged and you act markedly direct, honest, decisive and without doubts or hesitations, this technique's Mastery increases by 5.

Mastery:

5: Purity: Treat your total Chi as if it were 3 points higher for the purposes of determining your Chi threshold.

10: +10 Hardiness when resisting poison or disease.

15: +5 unarmed Strike.

20: +5 unarmed Block.

30: +5 Toughness at all times.

35: +5 unarmed Damage.

50: **Jade Immortality:** Channel 3 Chi when a Rippling roll is made against you to reduce the amount of dice in the roll by two.

Pillar of Heaven

(Enlightened, 8 destiny, requires you to have the Confucianism Loreshet)

The Falling Leaves society knows a very mysterious power: the Pillar of Heaven. All things are made orderly and proper when it moves in accordance with the will of Heaven; this technique is unquestionable proof of that.

Way: Chivalry. Whenever you perform a Chivalrous Deed and your score in that virtue is 3 or higher, this technique's Mastery increases by 5.

Mastery:

5: **Star Crown of the Morning:** Whenever you perform a Chivalrous Deed, you gain one point of Cultivation towards your Enlightened chi.

15: **Heaven-Reliant Gentleman's Way:** You may spend one point of Chivalrous joss beyond your normal joss limits.

30: **Infinite Xia:** Whenever you perform a Chivalrous Deed, you may fill your entire River with 9's.

40: **Heaven Smiles:** Whenever you need to flood a die to activate an ability, you may spend a point of Chivalrous joss instead.

50: **Bountiful Blessings:** Whenever you are awarded Chivalrous joss for performing a Deed, you gain one additional point.

STARTING AT DIFFERENT RANKS

Starting at 5th Rank

Starting the game at 5th Rank can be a good way to introduce the plot and setting to new players, particularly if they all start the game as junior students of the same teacher. This Rank can make it difficult to fully experience what *Legends of the Wulin* has to offer, due to the low power of the characters, so we recommend you ignore the standard rules for advancement and only stay 5th Rank for a few sessions. This introductory period can serve to establish the characters and their place in the world, and to foreshadow their destinies. After this period, you should skip ahead a few years to mature them from children or teenagers to capable young adults of 4th Rank.

Characters of 5th Rank are created as follows:

- Start with 8 Chi.
- No free kung fu styles.
- They have an archetype, but they have no free access to their Secret Arts.

- They start with a weapon and light armor only if the Sage deems it appropriate to the story and the ages of the characters.
- Spend 10 points of Destiny on skills.
- Start with normal virtues.
- Spend additional 15 points of Destiny on extra things like kung fu, more skills, Secret Arts, etc.

Starting at higher than 4th Rank

It's possible to start the game at higher Rank than 4th. Perhaps the Sage feels like skipping *Crouching Tiger* and wants to dive straight into *Storm Warriors*, or maybe your experienced character died tragically, and you're making a new character of the same Rank. (You have our deepest sympathies for your loss.)

It's easy to start the game at 3rd Rank: make a 4th Rank character, and add another 30 points of Destiny. With the 20 points you start the game with, you'll have 50 points total, which is enough to advance one Rank. Each higher Rank requires you to add 50 extra Destiny points per Rank you need.

If spending that many points is daunting, the Sage can

allow you to keep about half of them in reserve. They're not free points; they're considered to have been spent already. It's just not yet revealed what you spent them on. Whenever a relevant situation comes up, you can spend them on a new feature immediately and assume your new character learned it in their off-screen history. After all, your highly experienced character hasn't actually had much time at the table yet, so his past and personality won't be well defined. Who's to say you didn't wander the desert for a few years when you suddenly turn out to have a +20 skill in Survival? Feel free to throw in a brief flashback to explaining your newfound powers.

Entanglement is the last concern. Characters perform Deeds and obtain all manner of Loreshoots and related benefits as they progress in play, but if you let a person select whatever benefits they want all at once, their character will be very different from what would develop through play. Some entanglements come unwanted; others provided you with favors or benefits that only lasted for a certain amount of time, and so wouldn't show up anymore on a more advanced character. We recommend you take 30 points of entangled Destiny per Rank above 4th, and work with the Sage to spend them. You could each spend half, or you could collaborate on spending the entire budget.

THE COUNTLESS STYLE MANUAL

The styles provided in this book are those most commonly practiced. Each style has dozens of variations. Sometimes these are little more than cosmetic changes and a different name, the result of individual teacher's personal styles and preferences. Styles don't stay static over the generations; they slowly shift and change. Still, some variations are powerful, closely guarded secrets of martial factions.

What follows are guidelines to creating your own custom kung fu style. Often, the Sage might want to add a unique twist to a character or faction by giving them a new, unknown kung fu style. In many cases, they can simply adjust a style already exists, either with a special Loreshoot Secret that modifies existing techniques, changing the style's name and description, or making a variation on a style by replacing a technique or two.

Players might also want to use the Manual to create their character's personal style. This is perfectly admissible if the Sage is fine with it. The time this requires varies by the expected length of the campaign and the needs of the group. If you play in a 'Trilogy' game that's spread out over many years, you could declare an entire season of downtime during which the character studies, trains and tests his creation. By contrast, in a 'Movie' game, a single new insight or realization might invoke a moment of enlightenment, allowing the character to instantly devise a new style through perfect understanding what this fighting method should be.

External Styles

All external styles have the following characteristics in common:

They all provide modifiers to the six combat statistics, no lower than +0, which sum to +35. The bonus to a single statistic can't go higher than +15, even with techniques that upgrade it. (The bonus to a single statistic can go as high as +20 against units of minions; the key is that it can't go higher than +15 against opponents who truly *matter*.)

All styles have 20 Destiny worth of upgrade techniques. Increasing a combat statistic by +5 is worth five Destiny, but it might be worth only four or three points depending on how conditional the bonus is. A +5 bonus is better than a +5 bonus that only applies while on a horse, for example.

The existing styles should be a good guide to what cost goes with what kind of benefit. It's important to keep in mind that styles aren't built as a collection of isolated techniques, but as a cohesive, contextual whole. A style that relies purely on dodging to defend shouldn't need a technique that gives +5 Block, but if it had one for some reason, it would not be worth five Destiny. The style simply doesn't benefit as much from such a technique as another style might.

People familiar with the Weapons of the Gods game might wonder why we chose to tackle the subject in this manner rather than build another 'Million Style Manual'. The main reason is that kung fu is built very differently now. Styles used to be a set progression of techniques with clear-cut effects.

Now there are external styles that are meant to synergize their own techniques. The sensitivity to context makes it impossible to apply a universal price tag. If you read the styles, you'll spot certain effects and costs that keep repeating, but you'll also see many times when we broke the pattern.

Internal styles are more like templates now. One master might teach a certain variation, while another might teach something quite different, even though they both use the same style from a mechanical perspective. Again, context is so important here that giving a standard cost would be problematic. Does it cost three 'maneuver points' to ignore up to 15 points of an enemy's armor? What if there is also a lower level technique in the same style that ignores up to 10 points of armor? Is the higher level technique still as useful (that is, still costing the same amount of 'maneuver points'), knowing that most people wear only light armor?

Last, we have faith in our players – in you – to come up with cool, unexpected effects that the game hasn't seen before. You are creative and you are legion, and providing you with a framework that can't account for your novel ideas can hinder as much as it can help.

Internal Styles

All internal styles in this book start with one basic technique and then branch out into four 2nd level techniques, three 3rd level ones, two 4th level ones and finally a single 5th level technique.

It's ok if a new Internal Style has fewer techniques than this. The styles in this book represent old styles with dozens

of variations and lookalikes. If a new style is only taught by a single wise master in the entire world, it only needs one technique of every level – the techniques that the master knows, and can teach to others.

Most techniques provide a +5 bonus per level. Starting at around the third or fourth level, they often have an additional small benefit on top of that due to their high cost. A technique that comes with a limitation or drawback can provide benefits as if it were one level higher.

Formless techniques work like regular internal techniques, but they are always slightly less powerful than you'd expect of their level to make up for the fact that they can be quickly and directly learned without first needing to progress through an entire style.

Transcendent Techniques

Sages are encouraged to invent their own rare and potent transcendent techniques; they're a good way to inject some personal flavor to the campaign. The struggles to learn or suppress such a technique can be the basis of an entire story or the entire campaign! Discovering the weaknesses of these techniques can be the key to defeating a villain who otherwise seems invincible.

Due to their impact on the development of a character's story and growth, it's recommended that players don't invent their own transcendent techniques except in strict cooperation with the Sage. Even then, it should be an ultimate accomplishment, the reward after bringing together esoteric secrets and experiencing unusual things. No one can create a Transcendent technique just on a whim!

These techniques are created with the same guidelines as legendary weapons are, with the obvious exception that a transcendent technique doesn't use a normal weapon for its baseline.



EXAMPLE CHARACTERS

Ask-me-Not, Minister and Spider Judge

Ask-Me-not is a courtly eunuch, a minister of somewhat obscure and therefore flexible function.

More importantly, he is an acting agent of the Spider Judges. Seemingly frail and unassuming, he is quite spry for his age...and capable of dispassionately fulfilling the orders of the Spider Court, no matter what is needed to secure the integrity of the Imperial institution!

Visual: Ask-Me-Not is slender and looks old and frail; he is pale and walks with a slight limp. He tends to dress in dark, drab colors, emphasizing function and the somber nature of duty.



Rank	4 th		
Archetype	Courtier		
Chi	12		
Lake	7		
River/Aura	2		
Chi Threshold	12 Trivial, 24 Minor, 36 Major. With Armor: 17 Trivial, 34 minor, 51 Major.		
Virtues	Benevolence	1	Ferocity 3
	Force	2	Individualism 1
	Honor	1	Obsession 3
	Loyalty	4	Revenge 3
	Righteous	2	Ruthlessness 5
Speed	+10	Damage	+10
Footwork	+5	Block	+0
Strike	+15	Toughness	+0
Awareness	+10	Confidence	+5
Crafting	-	Finesse	+5
Hardiness	-	Inspire	+10
Learning	-	Medicine	-
Might	-	Perform	-
Politics	+5	Ride	-
Stealth	+10	Survival	-
Tactics	-	Wu Wei	+5

GEAR

Light Armor Increase Chi threshold by 5 for damage purposes

Throwing Knives +5 Strike

You can attack into adjacent zones.

You may Flood one die from the River to extend an attack into a further away zone.

Kung Fu

Murderous Shadows Ghostly Presence (4), One Murder per Heartbeat (2)

Nine Sun Birds 1: Cry of the Golden Crow, 2: Dipping Crow, 3: Flight of the Golden Crow

Courtier's Art

Controlling Passions; Stealthy Work;

Cordial, Upright, Courteous, Temperate and Complaisant Technique

Blue Octopus Li, Wizened Revolutionary

Everyone assumes that Blue Octopus earned his nickname because he has contacts and spies everywhere – that there is nothing that the corrupt nobles of Shen Zhou can do to hide their secrets. In truth, the Duke of Lao named him after the octopus that swims certain reaches of the Yellow River – small and poisonous, causing irritable rashes on your skin if touched. Octopus dubs himself a leader of a noble band of rebels fighting the corrupt Emperor. The practice of this somehow manages to closely resemble a small criminal syndicate dedicated to smuggling and theft.

Visual: Blue Octopus is in his early sixties, and is nearly bald except for two wild tufts of white hair around his ears – he looks like a mangy old dog, far from threatening. He tends to dress unassumingly, gracefully managing to appear as a hapless vagabond with a fondness for the bottle. His hair always seems to stay on end – possibly a result of his long training in Heaven's Lightning techniques.



Rank	4 th		
Archetype	Warrior		
Chi	11		
Earth Chi	2 (Deviation: Blue Octopus' hair always stands on end, and he continuously emits little shocks when he touches someone or something.)		
Lake	7		
River/Aura	2		
Chi Threshold	13 Trivial, 26 Minor, 39 Major. With Armor, 18 Trivial, 36 Minor, 54 Major.		
Virtues	Benevolence	3	Ferocity 1
	Force	2	Individualism 1
	Honor	3	Obsession 3
	Loyalty	2	Revenge 3
	Righteous	4	Ruthlessness 3
Speed	+10	Damage	+5
Footwork	+20	Block	+5
Strike	+10	Toughness	+5
Awareness	+5	Confidence	+5
Crafting	-	Finesse	-
Hardiness	+5	Inspire	+5
Learning	-	Medicine	-
Might	+5	Perform	-
Politics	+5	Ride	-
Stealth	+5	Survival	+5
Tactics	+5	Wu Wei	+5
GEAR			
Light Armor	Increase Chi threshold by 5 for damage purposes		
Unarmed	+5 Speed		
	+5 Footwork		
	Focus on Breath with only one die.		
Kung Fu			
Destiny Cloud Fist	Heavenly Warrior (5), Windy Cloud Force (5)		
Heaven's Lightning	1: Yin and Yang Rotation, 2: Yin and Yang Separation, 3: Holding Yin and Yang, 4: Dragon Chi		

Bright Snow, Invincible Sword Princess

Bright Snow is a young swordswoman who has just taken her first steps into the Wulin – bright and quick to act, her prodigal kung fu talents are often necessary to solve the situations that her hot temper and impulsive nature drags her into. An escapee from an arranged marriage, she is determined to experience the most of what the world has to offer and write a glorious legend for herself.

Visual: Bright Snow is tomboyish and pretty – dressing in fairly simple (but elegantly tailored) clothing. She always carries her beautiful jian. She does her best to try to be neat and proper, but always manages to smudge her clothes or have her hair come loose in battle.



Rank	4 th			
Archetype	Warrior			
Chi	12			
Lake	7			
River/Aura	2			
Chi Threshold	12 Trivial, 24 Minor, 36 Major. With Armor: 17 Trivial, 34 Minor, 51 Major.			
Virtues	Benevolence	2	Ferocity	3
	Force	4	Individualism	4
	Honor	3	Obsession	2
	Loyalty	1	Revenge	2
	Righteous	2	Ruthlessness	2
Speed	+5	Damage	+10	
Footwork	+5	Block	+15	
Strike	+20	Toughness	+5	
Awareness	-	Confidence	+10 (fearless)	
Crafting	-	Finesse	+5	
Hardiness	+5	Inspire	-	
Learning	+5	Medicine	-	
Might	+10 (breaking things)	Perform	+5	
Politics	-	Ride	-	
Stealth	+5	Survival	-	
Tactics	-	Wu Wei	-	
GEAR				
<i>Light Armor</i>	Increase Chi threshold by 5 for damage purposes			
<i>Jian</i>	+5 Strike			
	+5 Block			
	Flood one die to double opponent Chi aura cost			
Kung Fu				
<i>Eight Legends</i>	Golden Flash (5), Legendary Force (5), Miracle Strike (5)			
<i>Nine Sun Birds</i>	1: Cry of the Golden Crow, 2: Hou Yi’s Arrows,			
	3: Scattering the Golden Feathers			

Broken Cup, Daoist Bushman

A Daoist hermit living far out from civilization, Broken Cup only wanders off his mountain when there is work to be done – mighty curses bringing despair to the people and other unwholesome influences. What he lacks in social graces he makes up for in esoteric knowledge and the occasional drunken sing-and-dance routine! Though his mutterings can be hard to decipher and though he is prone to long bouts of erratic behavior – mostly having to do with speaking to himself or to inanimate objects (claiming to have conversations with the spirits of nature) – there’s no doubting the depths of his skill and wisdom.

Visual: Broken Cup’s face is covered in a huge beard and whiskers. He wears layer upon layer of rags and looks like he hasn’t shaved or combed his hair in a thousand years. Strapped to his back, along with various pouches, is a quite beautiful jian – the only thing about him that does not look like it has been repeatedly dragged through the underbrush.



Rank	4 th		
Archetype	Priest		
Chi	11		
Earth Chi	2 (Deviation: Cup must remain impartial and detached.)		
Lake	7		
River/Aura	2		
Chi Threshold	13 Trivial, 26 Minor, 39 Major. With Armor: 18 Trivial, 36 Minor, 54 Major.		
Virtues	Benevolence 1	Ferocity 4	
	Force 2	Individualism 5	
	Honor 2	Obsession 3	
	Loyalty 1	Revenge 2	
	Righteous 3	Ruthlessness 2	
Speed	+10	Damage	+10
Footwork	+5	Block	+5
Strike	+10	Toughness	+5
Awareness	+5	Confidence	+5
Crafting	-	Finesse	-
Hardiness	+5	Inspire	-
Learning	+10	Medicine	+5
Might	-	Perform	-
Politics	-	Ride	-
Stealth	-	Survival	+10
Tactics	-	Wu Wei	+10

GEAR

Light Armor Increase Chi threshold by 5 for damage purposes
Jian +5 Strike
+5 Block
Flood one die to double opponent Chi aura cost

Kung Fu

Great Ultimate Dragon Dragon Stance (0), Permeating Presence (3), Supreme Strength (4)

Heaven’s Lightning 1: Yin and Yang Rotation, 2: Bringing Together Heaven and Earth, 3: Lightning Strike

Priest’s Art

Crafting Curses; Inflaming and Soothing Curses;
Manipulating Influences; Inflaming and Soothing Influences

Chipped Blade, Repentant Bandit

Chipped Blade was born poor into the horse people of the mountains. She grew up to ride with them and her kung fu proved strong enough to make her their leader. Her life was violent, her reign ruthless – and her gang grew into a small army before they met a loss, lured into a trap by the Emperor's men. Crawling away from the killing field with several arrows in her back, Chipped Blade barely survived but was slowly nursed back to health by a Daoist mountain hermit.

Deciding that enough was enough and that this was a sign as sure as any, she retired from her old life. She purchased a house on a mountainside above a small village, where she has tried to live as a craftswoman. Unfortunately, her bloodstained past doesn't seem to be done with her...

Visual: Chipped Blade wears neat clothing in earthy colors and tries to downplay her former viciousness – like the crossed facial scars that bear violent testament to another life. She is lean and thin, like an aging wolf; hair streaked with gray, eyes that have seen too much violence and a mouth unused to smiles.



Rank	4 th		
Archetype	Warrior		
Chi	11		
Demon Chi	1 (Deviation: Chipped Blade exudes an aura of dread. People who meet her are sure to be plagued by nightmares that very night. She will be remembered, but not loved.)		
Lake	7		
River/Aura	2		
Chi Threshold	12 Trivial, 24 Minor, 36 Major. With Armor: 17 Trivial, 34 minor, 51 Major.		
Virtues	Benevolence 3	Ferocity 3	
	Force 2	Individualism 3	
	Honor 3	Obsession 2	
	Loyalty 2	Revenge 3	
	Righteous 1	Ruthlessness 3	
Speed	+15	Damage	+10
Footwork	+5	Block	+0
Strike	+15	Toughness	+5
Awareness	+5	Confidence	+5
Crafting	+5	Finesse	-
Hardiness	+5	Inspire	+5
Learning	-	Medicine	-
Might	+5	Perform	-
Politics	-	Ride	+5
Stealth	+5	Survival	+5
Tactics	+5	Wu Wei	-
GEAR			
Light Armor	Increase Chi threshold by 5 for damage purposes		
Saber	+5 Strike		
	+5 Damage		
	You may Flood one die from the River to force an immediate Rippling check if the Strike exceeds the defense by 5 points or more points, instead of 10. You may do this after the defender rolled. (This doesn't apply to other attack forms, such as Secret Arts or energy attacks.)		
Kung Fu			
Storm God's Fury	Lightning Flash (5), Storm Burst (5)		
Thousand Venoms	1: Cobra Strike, 2: Power-Dissolving Radiance, 3: Iron Blood Strike, 4: Transformation of Dark Jade		

Fragrant Jasmine, Graceful Courtier

Jasmine was the valued Fourth Wife of a prominent nobleman – now, she is simply his fourth widow. She wields her considerable political and social skills to wage a shadow war against the scheming Second Wife, who conspires to do away with the eldest children and make room for her own son as heir. Having no children of her own – her husband was very old when she was married to him – Jasmine sees it as her duty to uphold his will, protecting the eldest siblings (a brother and a sister who is nearly as old as herself) from machinations, as well as harden them into proper heirs.

Visual: Fragrant Jasmine looks every part the exquisite noblewoman - made up like royalty in layer upon layer of decorated robes and exquisite makeup. She is pale and graceful, but her delicate exterior hides a complex mind with wisdom far surpassing her age; few have managed to match her sense of tactics and mastery of the proper forms.



Rank	4 th
Archetype	Courtier
Chi	12
Lake	7
River/Aura	2
Chi Threshold	12 Trivial, 24 Minor, 36 Major. With Armor: 17 Trivial, 34 Minor, 51 Major.

Virtues	Benevolence	3	Ferocity	3
	Force	2	Individualism	1
	Honor	2	Obsession	2
	Loyalty	5	Revenge	2
	Righteous	3	Ruthlessness	1

Speed	+5	Damage	+5
Footwork	+5	Block	+10
Strike	+15	Toughness	+0
Awareness	+5	Confidence	+5
Crafting	-	Finesse	-
Hardiness	-	Inspire	+10
Learning	+5	Medicine	-
Might	-	Perform	+5
Politics	+10	Ride	-
Stealth	+5	Survival	-
Tactics	-	Wu Wei	+5

GEAR

Light Armor Increase Chi threshold by 5 for damage purposes

Long Sleeves +5 Strike

If an attack with a Flexible weapon is described in such a way that it is best Blocked instead of Dodged, the penalty to Dodge is -10 instead of -5.

You may Flood one die from the River to extend an attack into an adjacent zone.

Kung Fu

Flying Red Silk Thousand Streaming Rivers (5)

Unstained Lotus 1: Lotus Point, 2: Blossoming in Scarlet Soil, 3: The Smaller Power

Courtier's Art

Controlling Inspirations; Inflaming and Soothing Inspirations; Elemental Progression Technique; Stealthy Work; The Proper Forms of Conflict

Ghost Li, Vengeful Swordsman

A lifetime ago, Li was an officer in a nobleman's army. He was proud and righteous, wholly dedicated to his service... until he lost everything. The greed and corruption of men of power were his downfall – he was swiftly betrayed, stabbed in the back and left for dead. The man now occupying the mortal shell of Officer Li is a shadow of his former self, wholly dedicated to rooting out corrupt officer and officials and bringing them to swift and immediate justice.

Visual: Ghost Li is your archetypal wandering swordsman in a wide-brimmed rice hat, robes, and a long braid falling down his back. He is always somber and serious – he is a man who has lost everything, and who has only the bright fires of justice and vengeance keeping him alive.



Rank	4 th		
Archetype	Warrior		
Chi	11		
Metal Chi	2 (Deviation: Aspire to eradicate corrupt military officers and eventually become a righteous general.)		
Lake	7		
River/Aura	2		
Chi Threshold	13 Trivial, 26 Minor, 39 Major. With Armor: 23 Trivial, 46 Minor, 69 Major.		
Virtues	Benevolence 2	Ferocity 3	
	Force 3	Individualism 2	
	Honor 3	Obsession 2	
	Loyalty 2	Revenge 4	
	Righteous 2	Ruthlessness 2	
Speed	+5	Damage	+15
Footwork	+5	Block	+5
Strike	+10	Toughness	+5
Awareness	+5	Confidence	+5
Crafting	-	Finesse	-
Hardiness	+10	Inspire	-
Learning	-	Medicine	-
Might	+5	Perform	-
Politics	-	Ride	+5
Stealth	+5	Survival	+5
Tactics	+10	Wu Wei	-

GEAR

Medium Armor Saber

Increase Chi threshold by 10 for damage purposes, -5 to Speed and Footwork
+5 Strike
+5 Damage

You may Flood one die from the River to force an immediate Rippling check if the Strike exceeds the defense by 5 points or more points, instead of 10. You may do this after the defender rolled. (This doesn't apply to other attack forms, such as Secret Arts or energy attacks.)

Kung Fu

Bone-Fed Wolf Fang Iron Body Skill

March Towards Hell (4), Wolves Devour the Lion (4)
1: Iron Power, 2: Humble Man's Stern Rebuke,
3: Swaying Branches Surround Willow

Warrior's Art

Controlling Inner Force; Controlling Outer Force

Golden Dervish King, Fire Doctrine Priest

Golden Dervish King is said to be a protégé of Fire God – the truth of this is unknown, but his mastery of the Fire Sutra techniques cannot be questioned. The stories about him tend to diverge wildly – some claiming that he is terrible but enlightened, others that he is remorseless and only too eager to burn his enemies to cinders. They may all be right.

Visual: Golden Dervish King is in his fifties, and is a strange blend of Indian and Chinese cultural influences. He dresses in layer upon layer of orange and red robes, and wears golden rings on his fingers, in his ears (which have elongated lobes) and on his arms. The rings all glow red hot when he is using his Fire Sutra techniques, which doesn't seem to bother him. His skin is very dark; his eyes are merely white milky spheres, like those of a blind man. The hair on his head is shaven into strange patterns close to his skull and his forehead is marked with odd series of ritual dots of Bharatan origin.



Rank	4 th		
Archetype	Warrior		
Chi	11		
Fire Chi	2 (Deviation: The Golden Dervish King has jet black skin, milky white eyes and smells of smoke.)		
Lake	7		
River/Aura	2		
Chi Threshold	13 Trivial, 26 Minor, 39 Major. With Armor: 18 Minor, 36 Major, 54 Major.		
Virtues	Benevolence 3	Ferocity 5	
	Force 2	Individualism 2	
	Honor 3	Obsession 2	
	Loyalty 2	Revenge 2	
	Righteous 2	Ruthlessness 2	
Speed	+10	Damage	+10
Footwork	+15	Block	+0
Strike	+10	Toughness	+5
Awareness	-	Confidence	+10
Crafting	-	Finesse	-
Hardiness	+10	Inspire	-
Learning	+5	Medicine	+5
Might	+5	Perform	-
Politics	-	Ride	+5
Stealth	-	Survival	-
Tactics	+5	Wu Wei	+5
GEAR			
Light Armor	Increase Chi threshold by 5 for damage purposes		
Saber	+5 Strike		
	+5 Damage		
	You may Flood one die from the River to force an immediate Rippling check if the Strike exceeds the defense by 5 points or more points, instead of 10. You may do this after the defender rolled. (This doesn't apply to other attack forms, such as Secret Arts or energy attacks.)		
Kung Fu			
Shadow Catching	Exceeding the Shadow (5)		
Fire Sutra	1: Thought of Flame, 2: Fusing Flames, 3: Elusive Desert Being		
Loresheets			
Fire Doctrine; Thousand Miles of Light			

Iron Eye Nan, Righteous Constable

Iron Eye has the thankless task of trying to be the only righteous constable in a city of decidedly less righteous ones – and, at the same time, trying to balance this with being born into the Wulin! Standing with one foot in each world, the River and Lakes grinds uncomfortably against the Forests and Mountains.

Visual: Iron Eye is in his mid- to late-thirties – dressed in the official garb of a constable, he is proper and handsome. He has a well-trimmed beard and tends to look concentrated and slightly worried (as he is pondering his duties).



Rank	4 th		
Archetype	Warrior		
Chi	11		
Lake	7		
River/Aura	2		
Chi Threshold	11 Trivial, 22 Minor, 33 Major. With Armor: 16 Trivial, 32 Minor, 48 Major.		
Virtues	Benevolence	3	Ferocity 2
	Force	3	Individualism 1
	Honor	3	Obsession 1
	Loyalty	3	Revenge 3
	Righteous	5	Ruthlessness 1
Speed	+5	Damage	+5
Footwork	+5	Block	+15
Strike	+20	Toughness	+5
Awareness	+10 (sight)	Confidence	+5
Crafting	-	Finesse	-
Hardiness	+5(regaining chi)	Inspire	+5
Learning	+5	Medicine	-
Might	+5	Perform	-
Politics	-	Ride	-
Stealth	-	Survival	-
Tactics	+5	Wu Wei	+5

GEAR

Light Armor	Increase Chi threshold by 5 for damage purposes
Jian	+5 Strike
	+5 Block
	Flood one die to double opponent Chi aura cost

Kung Fu

Eight Legends	Legendary Force (5), Miracle Strike (5)
Jade Spirit Sword	1: Sword-Heaven, 2: Dragon in Flight, 3: Flawless Blade, 4: Tenfold Steel Guard

Formless Techniques

Booming Deity's Voice (1)

Little Sparrow, Magnificent Peasant Heroine

Little Sparrow has worked her entire life. When she has not been working the field (or occasionally shirking her duties), she has practiced kung fu – usually by beating up brigands, braggart wandering heroes and others who make trouble for her surprisingly disaster-prone village. Although her Sifu has tried to push her to set out on her own, she has still chosen to stay with her parents and multitude of siblings. Little Sparrow has a hard time resisting a challenge to her strength or skills, especially if this involves facing off against a warrior using combat techniques that she hasn't seen before; this has less to do with pride or viciousness than it has a genuine joy for fighting.

Visual: Little Sparrow has rather short hair, usually kept back from her face by a hat or bandana. She dresses very simply, like the peasant that she is. She has a certain fierce, tomboyish attractiveness to her, but she is far from a classical beauty. Everything about her oozes strength, power and confidence – as well as the cockiness so common to young martial artists.



Rank	4 th		
Archetype	Warrior		
Chi	10		
Metal Chi	2 (Deviation: Little Sparrow will immediately fall asleep when the sun goes down and not before, and she will wake at dawn but no sooner. If she forces herself to break this cycle, then she regains no metal Chi until her sleeping pattern is restored.)		
Lake	7		
River/Aura	2		
Chi Threshold	12 Trivial, 24 Minor, 36 Major. With Armor: 17 Trivial, 34 Minor, 51 Major.		
Virtues	Benevolence	2	Ferocity 3
	Force	4	Individualism 3
	Honor	2	Obsession 2
	Loyalty	1	Revenge 3
	Righteous	4	Ruthlessness 1
Speed	+10	Damage	+10
Footwork	+15	Block	+5
Strike	+5	Toughness	+5
Awareness	+5	Confidence	+10 (fearless)
Crafting	-	Finesse	+5
Hardiness	+10	Inspire	-
Learning	-	Medicine	-
Might	+10	Perform	-
Politics	-	Ride	-
Stealth	-	Survival	+5
Tactics	+5	Wu Wei	-
GEAR			
Light Armor	Increase Chi threshold by 5 for damage purposes		
Iron Palms	+5 Speed		
	+5 Footwork		
	+5 Damage		
	Focus on Breath with only one die.		
	If an attack with a Massive weapon is described in such a way that it is best Dodged instead of Blocked, the penalty to Block is -10 instead of -5.		
	You may Flood one die from the River while you make the attack to ignore the target's armor on any resulting Rippling roll.		
Kung Fu			
Destiny Cloud Fist	The Impermanence of Clouds (7)		
Iron Body Skill	1: Iron Power, 2: Humble Man's Stern Rebuke, 3: Fierce Dragon Breaks Bones		
Loresheets			
Little Forest Sect; Iron Palms			

Liu Lin, the Sagacious Raven Scholar:

The young woman bearing the nickname of Sagacious Raven Scholar is a Daoist witch and curse mistress. The last surviving member of a secret society of Daoist radicals called “The Raven Scholars” or “The Infinite Black Ocean”, she seeks to fulfill their mission of purging Shen Zhou by cleaning out the source of its corruption – the unrighteous Jin Dynasty. The doctrine is simple: since corruption flows from the top down, everything must be cleansed! The feng shui of the land must be realigned to allow virtue to flow. Normally, this means breaking dams, burning down fortresses and killing a whole lot of Imperial soldiers.

Visual: Liu Lin is an unnerving sight – despite her young years she looks like a witch of legend. Tangled hair reaching well down below her waist; woven into this mess long, scarlet ribbons that flow freely in the wind. She wears tattered and dusty clothing along with a wide-brimmed rice hat that leaves much of her face in shadow. Her complexion is yellowish

and unwholesome – in fact, she looks very ill. Under her voluminous robes, bandages cover up a constantly seeping chest wound from where a government spear pierced her heart but failed to kill her. She’s alive, but unable to feel joy or love. She carries an old guqin (using its plucked notes as a weapon) and tends to be followed by a flock of black carrion birds.



Rank	4 th		
Archetype	Priest		
Chi	12		
Lake	7		
River/Aura	2		
Chi Threshold	12 Trivial, 24 Minor, 36 Major. With Armor: 17 Trivial, 34 Minor, 51 Major.		
Virtues	Benevolence	3	Ferocity 3
	Force	2	Individualism 2
	Honor	2	Obsession 4
	Loyalty	1	Revenge 2
	Righteous	2	Ruthlessness 4
Speed	+5	Damage	+10
Footwork	+10	Block	+0
Strike	+5	Toughness	+5
Awareness	+5	Confidence	-
Crafting	-	Finesse	-
Hardiness	+5	Inspire	-
Learning	+10(inflaming curses)	Medicine	-
Might	-	Perform	+10 (Deadly Music)
Politics	+5	Ride	-
Stealth	-	Survival	-
Tactics	-	Wu Wei	+10

GEAR

Light Armor Increase Chi threshold by 5 for damage purposes

Deadly Music (base) +5 Strike

You can make attacks against targets in adjacent Zones.

You may Flood one die from the River to make an attack against targets further away, up to the limit that the Sage feels is reasonable.

Kung Fu

Ravenous Wings Meat-Gorged Murder (4), Sated Crow Takes Flight (4)

Removing Concepts 1: Calm Heart skill, 2: Spontaneous Effort, 3: Impassive Existence

Formless Techniques 2: Deadly Music

Priest's Art

Crafting Curses; Inflaming and Soothing Curses; Elemental Progression Technique (Curses)

Scholar Zhong

Scholar Zhong is a gentleman of taste, renowned for his wit and predictive skills. He has a weakness for excitement and adventure but finds violence inherently distasteful (not to mention lacking in propriety!). Consequently, he prefers to set up complex schemes and/or interacting socially with his enemies - thus minimizing bloodshed. On the other hand, he can rarely resist an opportunity to test his wits against a worthy opponent. He is rumored to be a supporter of the Fallen Leaves Society.

Visual: A distinguished gentlemen with a fan – usually held in hand, lightly fanning himself or tucked in his sash. He dresses in tasteful finery and always seems to wear a smile on his face. Every bit the Confucian gentleman, he is courteous and proper. On the rare occasions where combat is unavoidable, he wields a Judge's Brush along with his fan and the flowing stances of his Flowing Universe kung fu.



Rank	4 th		
Archetype	Scholar		
Chi	12		
Lake	7		
River/Aura	2		
Chi Threshold	12 Trivial, 24 Minor, 36 Major. With Armor: 17 Trivial, 34 Minor, 51 Major.		
Virtues	Benevolence	3	Ferocity 1
	Force	2	Individualism 2
	Honor	4	Obsession 2
	Loyalty	3	Revenge 2
	Righteous	2	Ruthlessness 1
Speed	+5	Damage	+0
Footwork	+5	Block	+10
Strike	+10	Toughness	+10
Awareness	+5	Confidence	+5
Crafting	-	Finesse	-
Hardiness	-	Inspire	+5
Learning	+10	Medicine	-
Might	-	Perform	+5
Politics	+5	Ride	-
Stealth	-	Survival	-
Tactics	+5	Wu Wei	+10

GEAR

Light Armor Increase Chi threshold by 5 for damage purposes

Judge's Brush +5 Strike

If an attack with a Flexible weapon is described in such a way that it is best Blocked instead of Dodged, the penalty to Dodge is -10 instead of -5.

You may Flood one die from the River to extend an attack into an adjacent zone.

Kung Fu

Flowing Universe Contained Water Sphere (4), Universal Flowing Form (3)

Removing Concepts 1: Calm Heart skill, 2: The Instant Now, 3: Clarity in Openness

Scholar's Art

Ultimate Prediction Technique;

The Story of the I Ching (Secret: Use I Ching for Predictions with Learning)

Silver Fox Bandit, Righteous Outlaw

The Silver Fox Bandit is an outlaw, but also a persona assumed by a young woman of humble origin, fighting against unrighteous rulers who bleed the common people dry. Deciding that the greater virtue lies in supporting people in need, she defies Imperial law to steal from the rich and the corrupt and use the theft-begotten means to feed the poor. Needless to say, this has brought her plenty of admirers as well as powerful enemies, but so far, she has escaped every trap and defeated every assassin sent her way. As far as the common people are concerned she is a benevolent spirit – she cannot be caught anymore than one could tie down a moonbeam!

Visual: She is slender, almost rail-thin and dresses in simple robes; the outfit of a beggar or farmer. Aside from the highly stylized silver fox mask that covers her whole face and hides her identity, her long, snow white hair is her most noticeable trait. Usually kept loose and flowing, it adds to the ethereal quality of her appearance (adding to the rumors which paint her out as a spirit in human form!). She fights with a simple wooden cane. Lighting quick and graceful, she tends to mock her enemies before beating them or running away with their belongings.



Rank	4 th		
Archetype	Warrior		
Chi	12		
Lake	7		
River/Aura	2		
Chi Threshold	12 Trivial, 24 Minor, 36 Major. With Armor: 17 Trivial, 34 Minor, 51 Major.		
Virtues	Benevolence	5	Ferocity 2
	Force	3	Individualism 3
	Honor	4	Obsession 2
	Loyalty	1	Revenge 1
	Righteous	2	Ruthlessness 2
Speed	+10	Damage	+10
Footwork	+5	Block	+5
Strike	+15	Toughness	+0
Awareness	+5	Confidence	+5
Crafting	-	Finesse	+10
Hardiness	-	Inspire	+5
Learning	-	Medicine	-
Might	-	Perform	+5
Politics	-	Ride	-
Stealth	+10	Survival	+5
Tactics	+5	Wu Wei	-

GEAR

Light Armor Increase Chi threshold by 5 for damage purposes
Staff +5 Strike
+5 Block
You can Flood a die or set of dice from the River as the basis for a Secondary Attack.

Kung Fu

Murderous Shadows Gliding Shadows (4), Hidden Execution Strike (3),
One with Shadow (2), Shadows Cast by All Things (Staff) (2)

Fox-Spirit Song 1: Fox Leaves no Tracks, 2: Parting the Grass, 3: Dispersing Like Songs,
4: Leading Astray the Innocent

Two Silver Saint, Graceful Daoist

Hailing from a prestigious bloodline of Daoist priests dedicated to personal cultivation and meditating on the deeper truths of the natural world, Two Silver Saint is something of a rebel. Despite the urgings of his elders, he claims to follow a spirit quest of his own that urges him into contact with civilized society. Only time will tell if he was right to abandon the solitude of the mountain peaks for the world of the Jiang Hu.

Visual: Young and extremely handsome, Two Silver Saint usually keeps his prematurely graying hair loose. He wears long, somber dark robes and keeps a long sword with an exotic handle and beautifully detailed scabbard strapped to his back. Although he tends to use it for rituals, he never seems to unsheathe it.



Rank	4 th		
Archetype	Priest		
Chi	12		
Lake	7		
River/Aura	2		
Chi Threshold	12 Trivial, 24 Minor, 36 Major. With Armor: 17 Trivial, 34 Minor, 51 Major.		
Virtues	Benevolence	4	Ferocity 2
	Force	3	Individualism 2
	Honor	2	Obsession 2
	Loyalty	2	Revenge 2
	Righteous	4	Ruthlessness 2
Speed	+5	Damage	+5
Footwork	+5	Block	+15
Strike	+15	Toughness	+0
Awareness	+10	Confidence	+5
Crafting	-	Finesse	+5
Hardiness	-	Inspire	-
Learning	+5	Medicine	+5
Might	-	Perform	-
Politics	+5	Ride	-
Stealth	-	Survival	+5
Tactics	-	Wu Wei	+10

GEAR

Light Armor	Increase Chi threshold by 5 for damage purposes
Jian	+5 Strike
	+5 Block
	Flood one die to double opponent Chi aura cost

Kung Fu

Flying Red Silk	Looking through Destiny
Jade Spirit Sword	1: Sword-Heaven, 2: Soaring Phoenix, 3: Iron Heart Clarity, 4: Scything Moonlight Cut

Priest's Art

*Manipulating Influences; Inflaming and Soothing Influences;
Yin-Yang Technique; Elemental Progression Technique*

Formless Techniques

1: Submissive Steel

Uncle Wu, Wandering Buddhist Monk and Busybody

Uncle Wu gets involved in everything. His brilliance is perhaps the one thing holding him back from becoming Enlightened – because he just can't resist a problem or conondrum, especially if it is a righteous matter that will help and assist innocents. The problem is that he enjoys solving them so much he more or less spends his time looking for trouble – no matter how much he denies it to himself. He takes much joy in matching wits with a brilliant opponent, whether a mysterious criminal that supposedly leaves no tracks or the best Go player in Notably Pictoresque!

Visual: Uncle Wu is an old, wandering Buddhist monk – shaven head, but a long, white and stringy beard and eyebrows. Rather than a peaceful expression, he is prone to sardonic smiles. He is brilliant and extremely aware of his surroundings, and his Chi cultivation has ensured him strength, speed and health even in his advanced age (he's at least sixty years old). He dresses like a beggar monk and carries a staff that he only uses in combat is absolutely pressed to do so.



Rank	4 th		
Archetype	Courtier		
Chi	11		
Wood Chi	2 (Deviation: must always promote growth through adversity and new beginnings)		
Lake	7		
River/Aura	2		
Chi Threshold	13 Trivial, 26 Minor, 39 Major. With Armor: 18 Trivial, 36 Minor, 52 Major.		
Virtues	Benevolence 3	Ferocity 1	
	Force 2	Individualism 3	
	Honor 4	Obsession 4	
	Loyalty 2	Revenge 1	
	Righteous 3	Ruthlessness 2	

Speed	+5	Damage	+5
Footwork	+0	Block	+20
Strike	+15	Toughness	+5
Awareness	+10	Confidence	+10
Crafting	-	Finesse	-
Hardiness	+5	Inspire	+10
Learning	+5	Medicine	-
Might	-	Perform	-
Politics	+5	Ride	-
Stealth	-	Survival	+5
Tactics	-	Wu Wei	+5

GEAR

Light Armor Increase Chi threshold by 5 for damage purposes

Staff +5 Strike

+5 Block

You can Flood a die or set of dice from the River as the basis for a Secondary Attack.

Kung Fu

Divine Pattern Long-Strokes

Forbidden Gate of Heaven (5)

Boundless Prosperity

1: Retain Balanced Nature, 2: Understand What You See,

3: Reflexes like Lightning

Courtier's Art

Controlling Passions; Inflaming and Soothing Passions;

Controlling Inspirations; Inflaming and Soothing Inspirations

Wan He Bao, Doctor

Wan He Bao is often mistaken for a strongman or warrior; coming from a hearty rural stock, his massive frame tends to overpower most of the people around him. Contrary to first impressions, he is both intelligent and peaceful, as well as a hugely talented doctor. He harbors a great love of helping out those without means to do so themselves and a comparable hate for those who use their strength influence to hurt the former. Because of these feelings, he often gets involved with helping out the poor and the dispossessed, curing them of ailments and wounds – and when that is not enough, he pulls up his sleeves and administers some righteous violence upon the disgraceful persons who deign to hurt them!

Visual: Wan He Bao is large – barrel-chested and broad-shouldered, he is usually mistaken for a Warrior. He wears simple traveler's clothing, the only testament to his profession being the huge medicinal backpack strapped to his back.



Rank	4 th		
Archetype	Doctor		
Chi	11		
Wood Chi	2 (deviation: Wan He Bao has grown unusually large, a towering giant)		
Lake	7		
River/Aura	2		
Chi Threshold	13 Trivial, 26 Minor, 39 Major. With Armor: 18 Trivial, 36 Minor, 54 Major.		
Virtues	Benevolence 5	Ferocity 1	
	Force 3	Individualism 3	
	Honor 4	Obsession 2	
	Loyalty 2	Revenge 2	
	Righteous 2	Ruthlessness 1	
Speed	+10	Damage	+10
Footwork	+5	Block	+5
Strike	+5	Toughness	+15
Awareness	-	Confidence	+5
Crafting	-	Finesse	-
Hardiness	+5	Inspire	+5
Learning	+5	Medicine	+10 (digestive tract)
Might	+5	Perform	-
Politics	-	Ride	-
Stealth	-	Survival	+5 (finding herbs)
Tactics	-	Wu Wei	+5

GEAR

Light Armor Increase Chi threshold by 5 for damage purposes

Unarmed +5 Speed
+5 Footwork

Focus on Breath with only one die.

Kung Fu

Blossom Harvest Iron Skin (9)

Boundless Prosperity 1: Retain Balanced Nature, 2: Act Without Resistance

Doctor's Art

Secrets of Treatment; Paired Condition Technique

ESTABLISHED NPCS

Hawk, Younger Son of Gallant Eagle

Hawk was born to Gallant Eagle's only official wife, and as such, he is the obvious one to ascend towards the position as Eagle Head after his father retires (although Zhou Ma and her supporters would beg to differ). Hawk has inherited a lot of his father's ferocity and strength – a highly proficient warrior, his martial excellence has won high praise. He is headstrong and extremely single-minded when he dedicates himself to something – willing to fight and die for what he believes or protect the things that he cherishes. On the flipside, this single-mindedness has gotten him into trouble more than once, and earned him a reputation of being less than entirely bright.

Visual: Hawk dresses like a warrior, his simple yet beautiful armor accentuated with the crimson colors of the



house banner. He has inherited the sharp features of his father – the sharp, beakish nose, high cheekbones and powerful jaw of an Eagle Head! He carries a heavy but exquisite twelve-ringed saber, although he rarely ever uses it, preferring to trust instead in his barehanded Eagle Claw.

Rank	4 th		
Archetype	Warrior		
Chi	12		
Lake	7		
River/Aura	2		
Chi Threshold	12 Trivial, 24 minor, 36 Major. With Armor: 17 Trivial, 34 Minor, 51 Major.		
Virtues	Benevolence	2	Ferocity 3
	Force	3	Individualism 3
	Honor	2	Obsession 2
	Loyalty	2	Revenge 3
	Righteous	3	Ruthlessness 2
Speed	+10	Damage	+15
Footwork	+10	Block	+5
Strike	+10	Toughness	+5
Awareness	+5	Confidence	+5
Crafting	-	Finesse	+5
Hardiness	+10	Inspire	+5
Learning	-	Medicine	-
Might	+10	Perform	-
Politics	-	Ride	+5
Stealth	-	Survival	+5
Tactics	+5	Wu Wei	-
GEAR			
Light Armor	Increase Chi threshold by 5 for damage purposes		
Eagle Claw	+5 Speed		
	+5 Footwork		
	+5 Strike		
	+5 Damage		
	Focus on Breath with only one die.		
	Flood a die to force a Rippling roll if you exceed defense by 5		
Kung Fu			
Bone-Fed Wolf Fang	Fighting with Fire (4), March Towards Hell (4), Rainfall at Night (4), Wolves Devour the Lion (4)		
Nine Sun Birds	1: Cry of the Golden Crow, 2: Hou Yi's Arrows, 3: Lashing Flurry		
Loresheets			
Eagle Talons (Eagle Claw)			
Heavenly General			

Zhou Ma, First Daughter of Gallant Eagle

Zhou Ma is the first daughter of Gallant Eagle, born to a concubine from the kingdom of Tsubo. Her mother is whispered to have been Eagle's one true love. Regardless of the truth of that rumor, his first daughter seems to have inherited the better parts of his drive and personality – though she lacks the overt ferocity of her father, she still possesses a powerful personality and strong leadership skills. Even more notable is her tactical acumen; more than one higher-up expects her to be the one to lead the Eagle Clan to higher peaks of greatness. This is an idea that fits Zhou Ma just fine; although she respects her father, she also has her eyes set on the position of Eagle Head. This is complicated, as Hawk

stands in her way...but she has always treasured a challenge.

Visual: Zhou Ma dresses in the Tsubo fashion with long flowing clothes in blues and whites, as well as earrings, collars and other decorations as a concession to her high status. She has the white skin and striking features of her mother, with the penetrating eyes and aquiline nose of her father. Despite her noble appearance, she carries herself as a leader of men and never as a princess and people tends to just naturally respond to her will. Her long ink-black hair is usually worn braided in the style of her maternal homeland, and her clothing is reinforced with leather armor when appropriate.

Rank	4 th		
Archetype	Scholar		
Chi	14		
Lake	7		
River/Aura	2		
Chi Threshold	14 Trivial, 28 Minor, 42 Major. With Armor: 19 Trivial, 38 minor, 57 Major.		
Virtues	Benevolence 2	Ferocity 2	
	Force 3	Individualism 2	
	Honor 2	Obsession 2	
	Loyalty 3	Revenge 3	
	Righteous 3	Ruthlessness 3	
Speed	+15	Damage	+10
Footwork	+15	Block	+0
Strike	+10	Toughness	+5
Awareness	+10	Confidence	+5
Crafting	-	Finesse	-
Hardiness	+5	Inspire	+10
Learning	+10	Medicine	-
Might	-	Perform	-
Politics	+10	Ride	+5
Stealth	-	Survival	+5
Tactics	+10	Wu Wei	+10
GEAR			
Light Armor	Increase Chi threshold by 5 for damage purposes		
"Razor Chain",	+5 Strike		
a sectional saber	+5 Damage		
	If an attack with a Flexible weapon is described in such a way that it is best Blocked instead of Dodged, the penalty to Dodge is -10 instead of -5.		
	You may Flood one die from the River to extend an attack into an adjacent zone.		
	You may Flood one die from the River to force an immediate Rippling check if the Strike exceeds the defense by 5 points or more points, instead of 10. You may do this after the defender rolled. (This doesn't apply to other attack forms, such as Secret Arts or energy attacks.)		
Kung Fu			
Shadow Catching	Exceeding the Shadow (5), Reflecting on Freedom (5), Three Visions Reunion (4), World-Arranging Sweep (2)		
Nine Sun Birds	1: Cry of the Golden Crow, 2: Dipping Crow, 2: Light Diffused by Clouds, 3: Flight of the Golden Crow		
Removing Concepts	1: Calm Heart skill, 2: The Instant Now, 3: The Force of Lightness		
Scholar's Art			
Loresheets			
Eagle Talons; Diving Eagle Spirit			

Third Dragon Princess

Third Dragon Princess is every bit the pirate noblewoman – she has the bearing of nobility as well as quick wit and a good head on her shoulders. She was also (much to the chagrin of her older siblings) the first daughter to commandeer a ship of her own, single-handedly liberating it from a overly ambitious mercenary captain that trespassed on Southern Dragon waters. Personality-wise, she is still rather immature; spoiled by nature, she has a hard time abiding not getting her way from the start, or making do with anything

but the best things of life. Underneath it all, she still has the basic potential to become a good and responsible person, but this would take challenges that bring her away from the life to which she has grown accustomed.

Visual: Hair black as ink, eyes like glistening emeralds, decked out in the finery of a thousand plundered ships from all the corners of the world – Third Dragon princess is nothing if not striking! She is strong and beautiful and knows it; she rarely gives heed or respect to anyone who does not keep up.

Rank	4 th		
Archetype	Warrior		
Chi	14		
Lake	7		
River/Aura	2		
Chi Threshold	14 Trivial, 28 Minor, 42 Major. With Armor: 19 Trivial, 38 Minor, 57 Major.		
Virtues	Benevolence	2	Ferocity 3
	Force	3	Individualism 4
	Honor	3	Obsession 2
	Loyalty	2	Revenge 3
	Righteous	1	Ruthlessness 2
Speed	+15	Damage	+10
Footwork	+5	Block	+10
Strike	+10	Toughness	+5
Awareness	+10	Confidence	+10
Crafting	-	Finesse	+10
Hardiness	+5	Inspire	+5
Learning	-	Medicine	-
Might	+5	Perform	-
Politics	-	Ride	-
Stealth	-	Survival	-
Tactics	+5	Wu Wei	+5
GEAR			
Light Armor	Increase Chi threshold by 5 for damage purposes		
“Dragon’s Talon”,	+5 Strike		
long-handled saber.	+5 Damage		
(Special Sword/Saber)	+5 Block		
	You may Flood one die from the River to force an immediate Rippling check if the Strike exceeds the defense by 5 points or more points, instead of 10. You may do this after the defender rolled. (This doesn’t apply to other attack forms, such as Secret Arts or energy attacks.)		
	You may Flood one die from the River while you make the attack. If you do and cause a Rippling roll, any Chi Aura used to protect against this damage costs 2 Chi points per die to purchase.		
Kung Fu			
Great Ultimate Dragon	Dragon Stance (0), Permeating Presence (3), Supreme Strength (4), Ultimate Expression of Motion and Stillness (5)		
Fox-Spirit Song	1: Fox Leaves No Tracks, 2: Mirthful Fox Plays with her Shadow, 3: Songs of Mystery		
Jade Spirit Sword	1: Sword-Heaven, 2: Dragon in Flight, 3: Flawless Blade, 4: Tenfold Steel Guard		
Loresheets			
Southern Dragon Pirates			

Fourth Dragon Princess

Fourth Dragon Princess is the quiet, mysterious one – in a cadre of siblings as headstrong and colorful as her sisters, she practically blends into the background. Although raised like the others, she has always had a natural curiosity and a nature that made her want to explore other horizons and see new sights. Consequently, she often sneaks off to have adventures of her own, then rarely speaks about them. She has become especially fascinated with the Wulin at large and wants very much to explore more of it, to see the sights of rumored faraway Clans and Sects. She also tends to swim by herself,

braving the depths of uncharted waters to seek out the strange sights of sunken ships and ancient submerged structures. Like most of her experiences, she keeps these close to her heart.

Visual: Fourth Dragon Princess has hair the color of deep emerald, like the waters she so favors. Though she has the beautiful features inherited from her striking parents, hers seem somewhat more subdued than her sisters', and she almost never smiles; indeed, she almost always seems distant from her surroundings, like she is not entirely here. Her eyes are dark pools in her face – always fascinating, but showing nothing but your own reflection.

Rank	4 th			
Archetype	Priest			
Chi	14			
Lake	7			
River/Aura	2			
Chi Threshold	14 Trivial, 28 Minor, 42 Major. With Armor: 19 Trivial, 38 Minor, 57 Major.			
Virtues	Benevolence	2	Ferocity	2
	Force	2	Individualism	4
	Honor	3	Obsession	3
	Loyalty	4	Revenge	2
	Righteous	2	Ruthlessness	1
Speed	+10	Damage	+0	
Footwork	+5	Block	+10	
Strike	+5	Toughness	+10	
(The above stats don't include any weapon, as she fights with the ever-changing Rage of the Dragon Kings.)				
Awareness	+10	Confidence	+5	
Crafting	-	Finesse	+10	
Hardiness	+5	Inspire	+5	
Learning	+5	Medicine	-	
Might	-	Perform	-	
Politics	+5	Ride	-	
Stealth	+10	Survival	+5	
Tactics	+10	Wu Wei	+10	
GEAR				
Light Armor	Increase Chi threshold by 5 for damage purposes			
Kung Fu				
Flowing Universe	Contained Water Sphere (7), Dragging Currents (5), Universal Flowing Form (3)			
Fox-Spirit Song	1: Fox Leaves no Tracks, 2: Flicking Tail Lashings			
Formless Techniques	3: Rage of the Dragon Kings, 4: Iron-Pushing Snap			
Priest's Art				
Crafting Curses; Inflaming and Soothing Curses; Geomantic Formation – Water; Sheltering Water Intercession				
Loresheets				
Southern Dragon Pirates (Blood in the Water)				

Yun Xiao Lan, Eldest Son of Snow Leopard

On the surface, the rightful heir to the Yun Clan is everything that could be expected of an eldest son – strong and handsome, a prodigal martial artist and accomplished hunter! Yet Xiao Lan's mind tends towards more earthly pursuits than throwing himself into his father's wicked mind games and the intrigue of the Clan meetings. He's a heavy drinker, a passionate womanizer and an impulsive adventurer! Feeling suffocated with the expectations of the Clan holdings, he

left his family behind to wander the Jiang Hu as the Wolf Swordsman. Quick to laugh as well to waxing melancholy, he simply wants to live his life on his own terms. He is bound to be a wanderer, his heart and blade never staying still.

Visual: Xiao Lan is tall but lean – a roguish young warrior with a cockiness in his step. Distancing himself from the expectations of his family, he dresses like a wandering blade of the Central provinces – loose-fitting pants and shirt, with a cloaked robe brushed to the side over the handles of the Saber carried on his back.

Rank	4 th		
Archetype	Warrior		
Chi	13		
Water Chi	3 (deviation: Remain unbound and free, without responsibilities or duties.)		
Lake	7		
River/Aura	2		
Chi Threshold	16 Trivial, 32 Minor, 48 Major. With Armor: 21 Trivial, 42 Minor, 63 Major.		
Virtues	Benevolence 2	Ferocity 2	
	Force 4	Individualism 4	
	Honor 3	Obsession 3	
	Loyalty 2	Revenge 1	
	Righteous 2	Ruthlessness 2	
Speed	+15	Damage	+10
Footwork	+5	Block	+0
Strike	+15	Toughness	+5
Awareness	+5	Confidence	+10
Crafting	-	Finesse	+5
Hardiness	+10	Inspire	+5
Learning	+5	Medicine	-
Might	+5	Perform	+5
Politics	+5	Ride	+5
Stealth	-	Survival	+5
Tactics	+10	Wu Wei	+5

GEAR

Light Armor Increase Chi threshold by 5 for damage purposes

Saber +5 Strike

+5 Damage

You may Flood one die from the River to force an immediate Rippling check if the Strike exceeds the defense by 5 points or more points, instead of 10. You may do this after the defender rolled. (This doesn't apply to other attack forms, such as Secret Arts or energy attacks.)

Kung Fu

Storm God's Fury Lightning Flash (5), Storm Burst (5), Tempest Step (4)

Ice Sutra 1: Moment of Cold, 2: Ice Cracking the Willow, 2: Snow-Carrying Clouds, 3: Frozen Shadow, 3: Mantra of Winter, 4: Devastation of Black Ice

Nine Sun Birds 1: Cry of the Golden Crow, 2: Hou Yi's Arrows

Formless Techniques 1: Submissive Steel, 2: Twisting Serpent

Warrior's Art

Spring Follows Winter Technique; Unassailable Battle Saint Technique

Loresheets

Yun Clan Sheet (White North Wind)

Yun Xi Feng, Youngest Son of Snow Leopard

Being the youngest son of Snow Leopard, and born of a fourth wife, Xi Feng has always had to fight tooth and nail for his place in the Clan at his father's side. Spurred on to prove his worth, he has mastered all of the arts expected of a young noble and become a renowned young hero in the Wulin – yet Snow Leopard has little but scorn to offer his youngest. This only spurs the boy to try even harder – to be a shining example, to increase the power and glory of the Yun Clan and maybe, finally, earn the respect of his father. Lately, Xi Feng has become very worried at Snow Leopard's darker moods and begun to suspect the depths of his obsessions with

the Glacier Maiden. Torn between his desire to prove himself and his wish to try to prevent his father from giving in to the darkness of his heart, the youngest Yun prince is heading towards a difficult choice.

Visual: Xi Feng tries to be everything that he feels that a Yun Clan prince should be – consequently, he emphasizes his heritage in everything he wears. His radiant blue hair is worn in the intricate braids of the Clan fashions, and he often favors white furs (including a voluminous cloak). He is an expert spearman, and often carries an exquisite spear with a crystal blade that looks as if it were carved from deep blue ice. The prince is young – barely out of his teens – but radiant and strong. His melancholy is written clearly in his eyes.

Rank	4 th		
Archetype	Courtier		
Chi	12		
Water Chi	2 (deviation: Yun Xi Feng's skin, eyes and hair are all an icy white.)		
Lake	7		
River/Aura	2		
Chi Threshold	14 Trivial, 28 Minor, 42 Major. With Armor: 19 Trivial, 38 Minor, 57 Major.		
Virtues	Benevolence 4	Ferocity 1	
	Force 2	Individualism 1	
	Honor 3	Obsession 3	
	Loyalty 5	Revenge 1	
	Righteous 3	Ruthlessness 2	
Speed	+5	Damage	+10
Footwork	+0	Block	+15
Strike	+10	Toughness	+5
Awareness	+10	Confidence	+10
Crafting	-	Finesse	-
Hardiness	+5	Inspire	+10
Learning	+5	Medicine	-
Might	+5	Perform	+5
Politics	+10	Ride	+5
Stealth	-	Survival	+5
Tactics	-	Wu Wei	+5

GEAR

Light Armor

Spear

Increase Chi threshold by 5 for damage purposes

+5 Damage

You may Flood one die from the River to extend an attack into an adjacent zone.

You may Flood one die from the River while you make a Block. If you do, you may exploit your weapon's superior reach. For this defense you Laugh at your opponent and do not Fear him, unless he can claim a similar long reach (such as from using a spear or a ranged weapon).

Kung Fu

Divine Pattern Long-Strokes

Divine Iron Web (4), Forbidden Gate of Heaven (5),
Hell-Pattern Judgment (5), Sweeping to All Sides (3)

Ice Sutra

1: Moment of Cold, 2: Ice Cracking the Willow, 3: Frozen Shadow

Courtier's Art

Controlling Passions; Inflaming and Soothing Passions

Controlling Inspirations; Inflaming and Soothing Inspirations

Elemental Progression Technique

Loresheets

Yun Clan Sheet (Plains Scouring Blizzard Lance)

GLOSSARY

A note on pronunciation:

Chinese is a tonal language, and the purpose of this book is not to teach the language. But to help you pronounce diegetic words with a little more comfort, here is a “quick and dirty” pronunciation guide:

ia (as in “Xia”) sounds like “ee.a”
iang (as in “Jiang”), sounds like “ee.ang”
ian (as in “tian”, “jian”) sounds like “ee.an”
wu sounds like “woo”
zhou sounds like the man’s name “Joe”
ei (as in wu-wei) sounds like “way”
ke sounds like “cut”, without the “t”
ce sounds like “tsu”, the “u” sound as in “cut”
ao (as in “dao”, “bao”) sounds like “ow”
iao (as in “xiao”) sounds like “ee.ow”
x sounds sort of like “sh” (as in “shoe”)
q (as in “qiang”) sounds sort of like “ch” (ch. ee. ang)

Ba (霸): Force

Bao (暴): Force or Ferocity

Ch’an (禪): Buddhism or meditation

Chan (讒): Obsession or to slander; to backbite

Chi (氣): Energy or life-force.

Chou(仇): Revenge

Cike (刺客): Secret assassin. Literally “stabbing guest”.

Dao (刀): Sabers that are single-edged blades, including everything from kitchen knives to giant crescent shaped saber-swords. Most sabers emphasize forceful, devastating cuts (often from horse-back) although some sabers are straighter and can be used in a fencing sword (Jian) style.

Dao (道): “The Way”. Also the name of Taoism, both a religion and a philosophy that originated in China during the Warring States Period. The first book work of Taoism is called the DaoDeJing, by Laozi. The word “Dao” also means “method” or “path”; Jiandao means “The Way of the Sword”

Guandao (關刀): Essentially, a saber-like blade on a very long handle.

Gun (棍): Staves and rod-like weapons.

Hen (狠): Cruel or Ruthlessness

Jian (劍): Double sided swords. Typically slim and flexible, they are fierce fencing weapons.

Jiang Hu (江湖): literally meaning Rivers and Lakes. The Jian Hu is the lands and “spaces” outside of, yet alongside, regular society.

Junzi (君子): a gentleman or a person of noble character and integrity (in Confucian tradition)

Kuan (寬): Altruism or Benevolence

Li (裏): Measurement unit of length roughly 500 meters long.

Nüwa (女媧): A goddess in Chinese mythology

Pangu (盤古): Creator of the universe in Chinese mythology

Qiang (槍): Spears and pole-arms primarily used in a stabling / piercing fashion.

Ren (仁): Universal Care and Benevolence; the one-word catch phrase of classical Confucian ideal.

Shen Zhou (神州): The Land of the Gods, vast and bountiful, strong and powerful, majestic mountains piercing Heaven, roaring rivers telling countless tales as they rush to meet the ocean.

Si (私): Individualism

Sifu (師傅): a master, or teacher.

Tian Xia (天下): The concept of Tian Xia or “All Under Heaven” is a very important one in Shen Zhou.

Wu (武): meaning Martial, as in related to the military or the martial arts.

Wu Wei (無爲): This skill is the act of ‘not-doing’, an important philosophical concept of tranquility and effortlessness.

Wulin (武林): literally meaning Martial Forest, but translated as The Fighting Community or The Martial Brotherhood.

Wulin Mengzhu (武林盟主): a person who is a Wulin Supreme

Wuxia (武俠): a fiction genre about romantic martial-arts heroes

Xia (俠): a) Heroic knight, itinerant hero. b) Noble ethos which knights should follow. It is a Chinese counter-part to the Chivalrous Code of Europe, and of the Bushido Code of Japan.

Xia (俠): Justice

Xiao (孝): Filial Piety

Xiaoren (小人): a base (or mean) person, a villain or a “Small Person”

Xin (信): Honor or trustworthiness

Yi (義): Righteousness

Zhong (忠): Loyalty

Wuxia Action Series

CHARACTER NAME: _____ PLAYER NAME: _____

ARCHETYPE: _____ DESTINY (Total/Spent): _____

RANK: _____ CONCEPT: _____ CHI THRESHOLD: _____ / _____
Armored/Unarmored

SKILLS

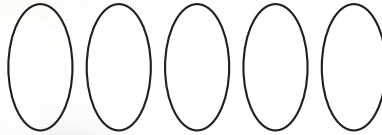
Specialties

Awareness: _____
Confidence: _____
Crafting: _____
Finesse: _____
Hardiness: _____
Inspire: _____
Learning: _____
Medicine: _____
Might: _____
Perform: _____
Politics: _____
Ride: _____
Stealth: _____
Survival: _____
Tactics: _____
Wu Wei: _____

LAKE



RIVER



1st: Wash-Empty River
2nd: Float-dice into River
3rd: Flow-Flood dice from River



CHI

Cultivation

General

Max _____



Wood



Fire



Earth



Water



Metal



Enlightened



Demon



COMBAT STATS

Style: _____ Style: _____

Speed: _____ / _____ Speed: _____ / _____

Footwork: _____ / _____ Footwork: _____ / _____

Strike: _____ / _____ Strike: _____ / _____

Block: _____ / _____ Block: _____ / _____

Damage: _____ / _____ Damage: _____ / _____

Toughness: _____ / _____
(basic / modified) Toughness: _____ / _____
(basic / modified)

EQUIPMENT

WEAPON: (stats) _____

ARMOR (stats) _____

Wuxia Action Series

CONDITIONS

Severity/Recovery/Interval Hyperactivity/Weakness

[illegible]

EXTERNAL KUNG FU

Destiny Cost

INTERNAL KUNG FU

Style / Tech / Chi Cost

Chivalrous ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Honor Benevolence Righteousness Loyalty Force

VIRTUES

	仇	私	暴	狠	纏
Selfish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Revenge	Individualism	Obsession	Ruthlessness	Ferocity

DISADVANTAGES

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Chi Deviations

SECRET ARTS/Extraordinary techniques

SECRET ARTS/Extraordinary techniques

[illegible]



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LEGENDS OF THE WULIN

You who have dreamed of finding the love worth fighting for, the friends worth fighting with, and the secrets of the martial arts: dream no longer.

Welcome to Shen Zhou: a China that never was, a land of mysteries and adventures, appearing for the first time in the *Legends of the Wulin* Role Playing Game.

Welcome to the Wulin itself — to the "world of martial arts," where the dreams and ambitions of heroes collide.

Become a wuxia hero, with a grander-than-life personality, capable of great joy and overwhelming melancholy. Step outside the accepted order of things: it cannot contain the immense passions and inspirations that move you. Take up your blade and join your martial brothers. Master an array of new and powerful kung fu styles and learn the deep mysteries of the secret arts.

It's time to become a legend.

Guard the Sun and Moon. Weave the Divine Iron Web. Invoke the Hell-Pattern Judgment. Practice the Hidden Execution Strike. Recite the Mantra of Immolation. Call upon the Iron Buddha's Disapproval. Fly like the Golden Crow. Wield the Lotus-Forged Needles. Master medicine, confound your enemies with the secret arts of intrigue, and read from the sacred registers. Inflict curses and blessings. Practice extraordinary Daoist techniques. Carry the lightning of Heaven hidden in your hand.

Legends of the Wulin

