



Hope & Glory

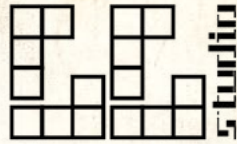
SKETCHES OF CHINA



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Hope & Glory



Sketches of China

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Sketches of China
Bonus Rules

Being a Psychic in the Heavenly Kingdom

Each culture has its own approach to the powers of the mind, and to the world of the spirit. In the Raj, the Society for Psychic Research and Development trains its gifted members through meditation and yogic practices. Russian psychics are few, powerful and dangerous, the product of Doctor Barchenko's most wild experiments. In the nations of the African Council, ancient shamanic traditions inform a community of independent talents. And nowhere like in China, under the Heavenly Peace, are psychics an integral part of the political machine.

The product of ancient Taoist "Internal Alchemy" and the iron mental discipline of the kung fu schools, Chinese psychics are a force to be reckoned with, and one of the Son of Heaven's most powerful and fearsome tools. For three generations, following the raise to power of the Tai Ping Regime, psychics have been trained in the House of Spirits in the Celestial Palace. No other training facility exists, and indeed independent psychics are hunted down and eliminated.

The House of Spirits also acts as research facility, experimenting various systems to enhance the powers of the psychics. "Psychic amplifiers" are currently being tested and deployed, but are not seen in a positive light by the old guard of traditional, "mind only" psychics.

Of all the young boys and girls selected for instruction in the House of Spirits, some 40% do not fulfill the promise, losing either their life or their mind during training. The survivors emerge as the New World's most powerful and focused psychics, and become part of the Tai Ping bureaucratic machine. Psychics find their way into the Heavenly Court, into the armed forces, and in law enforcement. Some act as couriers and spies. Rumors of a secret Thought Police that answers directly to the Heavenly Sons are rife, but have never been confirmed.

The most visible and feared expression of the Imperial psychic forces are the Judges, commonly known as The Eye of the Emperor, trained to seek out criminals and enemies of the Heavenly Son, and endowed with powers of investigator, judge and jury. Each judge is normally accompanied by his assistant/concubine/bodyguard, a fearful, lethal Hand of the Emperor.

Heavenly Court Politics

Eyes and Hands are, willy-nilly, part of the Heavenly Court, where political strife is common, and, in a place like Hope & Glory's China it is very easy to get in trouble with politics: a whisper in the wrong ear or a word of compliment to the right man can change the life of a character.

To represent this, any character in the Court, at the beginning of each scenario draws a card from the Action Deck. If the card drawn is a face card (Jack to Ace) something happened to their political situation, depending on the seed of the card. In case the hero was away from the court from a long time, check only when he comes back, and only consider Queen or higher cards.

- **Clubs** – A Secret Enemy. Unbeknownst to the character, someone is plotting against him, to orchestrate his fall! The character gains a secret Major Enemy, only known by the GM.
- **Spades** – Bad Reputation. Voices are dangerous in the Heavenly Courts and bad things are said on the character (they can be on his orthodoxy, on his social behavior or whatever the GM can plot). Until cleared, the character suffers -2 to Charisma. It immediately cancels any previously acquired Friend in High Places (see below).
- **Hearts** – Servant of the State. The character's deeds are becoming quite popular in the Court, and he seems to have the favor of the Emperor. He receives +2 to Charisma, but his actions are closely scrutinized from now on.
- **Diamonds** – A Friend in High Places. The character's actions, willingly or not, favored an important faction or person of the Court, which now is friendly towards the hero, granting him the Connections Edge for free. Note that being seen as ally of someone could also mean you share his enemies, too...
- **Joker** – Private Meeting with the Emperor! The character is invited to a private meeting with the Heavenly Son or some very high imperial functionary. The details of the meeting are secret and left to the GM, but the important fact is that the voice of it spreads wildly: during the next session any interaction with the Court and other authorities receives a random +4 or -4 (roll a die: if even is positive, otherwise it is negative). In addition the character permanently increases his Charisma by one.

New Edges

Eye of the Emperor (Background Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Notice d8+, Persuasion d8+, Psychic d8+, Spirit d8+, Streetwise d6+

The justice of the Heavenly Kingdom is firmly in the hands of the Eyes of the Emperor, commonly called Judges.

Deeply respected and feared in all the country, an Eye is the terror of every criminal, because he can scope directly in one's mind, reading one's most secret thoughts.

Or, at least, this is the chant.

Eyes of the Emperor are almost always paired with a Hand, that acts as their bodyguard and field agent, and with whom they often develop a Bond (see sidebar).

An Eye of the Emperor is a highly trained psychic, his capacities, in particular are tuned to affect minds: they receive +2 to Skill rolls when using a Power with a telepathic trapping.

They can also trade the +2 with an increase of 50% of the range of the Power, or, when using a Power based on a Burst Template, they can trade the +2 with an increase of the template's Size by one step from Small to Medium, and from Medium to Large.

Finally, given their position of authority, Eyes receive +2 to Charisma while in China.

Hand of the Emperor (Background Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Agility d6+, Fighting d8+, Intimidation d6+, Notice d6+, Spirit d6+, Vigor d6+, Loyal Hindrance, must be female

One of the greatest honors a girl can attain in *Hope & Glory's* China is being chosen to become a Hand of the Emperor.

The selection is made very early, at the age of five, when the girl is taken from her family and brought in the House of Blades in the Celestial Palace, which will be her home for the next twelve years.

The path to become a Hand is hard and unforgiving, both on the physical and the mental side. The girls are implanted a set of razor-

sharp nails, which are the trademark of the caste, in place of their fingernails.

Hands are then assigned to Eyes (see above) to act as their bodyguards, torturers and field officers. These relationships tend to become permanent, with the development of a Bond (see sidebar). Rule-wise, a Hand of the Emperor has a number of benefits.

First, she receives the Razor Nails prosthetic for free (see below).

Second, years of training make Hands perfect killing machines. When unencumbered and fighting with their Razor Nails they can freely reroll any 1-2 on the Fighting die, as if they had spent a Bennie. They must stick with the second roll.

Third, a Hand can use the *speed* and *quickness* Powers, using Vigor as Arcane Skill. The Powers only last the base duration and cause a level of Fatigue to the Hand, which is recovered after an hour.

Last but not least, their terrible reputation grants them +2 to Intimidation rolls, but causes -2 to their Charisma in any non-threatening situation.

Psychic Bond (Power Edge)

Requirements: Seasoned, Psychic Link

The bond between the two characters is so deep they live almost in a mind communion. First, no concentration is required to activate the link, which is always on while in range.

Second, the psychic can freely tap from the mind energies of his companion (he receives a number of additional Power Points equal to his friend's Spirit die) and +1 to all Psychic rolls, while the non-psychic character chooses one Attribute of choice, which is permanently enhanced by two dice steps (as per the *boost trait* Power).

Note that the communion is very intimate and the bonded characters "share" the Wounds and Fatigue modifiers (they use the worst one suffered by the couple). In case one of the bonded heroes die, the other must immediately do a Vigor (-4) roll or suffer the same fate.

Psychic Link (Power Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Psychic d8+ (the psychic character), Spirit d8+ (the non-psychic character)

This Edge creates a deep and constant mind link between a psychic character and another, non-psychic one. Both characters must take the Edge, which allows basically two things.

First, the psychic, with an action, can perceive through the senses of the non-psychic hero.

Second, the psychic hero can use his Powers through the body of the non-psychic one (so he can calculate range from his companion, cast on them Powers with Range Self and so on).

This Edge has a very long range, and no roll is necessary to activate if the two characters are within 1 mile. Beyond that distance, a Psychic roll is necessary to create contact, which suffers -1 per each further mile (field tests demonstrated this Edge rarely works at greater distances than 5 miles).

Note that Psychic Link deeply bonds the minds of the two characters, so every time a member of the pair is Shaken, the other character must roll on Spirit to avoid being Shaken too.

New Gear

Razor Nails

Razor Nails are the trademark weapon of the feared Hands of the Emperor. This set of ten claws is implanted in place of the regular nails of the Hand, making them deadly opponents. Partly retractable, Razor Nails cannot be concealed or hidden, their nature and purpose being too blatant.

These weapons are made with a secret alloy of steel, making them incredibly sharp. When the Hand hits a raise, they deal d8 additional damage in place of the customary d6.

TYPE	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	COST	NOTES
Unarmed				
Razor Nails	Str+d4	-	Mil	AP 2, see notes

