

HALF-DAMNED: DHAMPYR



*A Sourcebook for Vampire: The Masquerade
and the World of the East*

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HALF-DAMNED DEAMPYR

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PRELUDE: THE GIFT OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Jing sat quietly in front of the TV as the video tape rewound. The static hiss of the snow-filled picture tube mixed with the whirring of the tape, forming a sort of white noise that drowned out everything else.

He could have faked it — all of it. It would be just like Lang to do that, too. But as Jing looked around the hotel room, the physical evidence was too overwhelming. The pictures that lay spread out on the table in front of her. The large bloodstain by the bed. The blood-encrusted knife that she had found in the garbage can when she rushed into the bathroom to vomit.

When she had first gotten the letter, she thought it was a hoax. Lang was dead. He had to be. It had been over seven years since he disappeared. *If he was still alive*, she had thought to herself, *he would have contacted me*. But there was always that little voice whispering in the back of her head, telling her Lang didn't give a shit about her. She'd long since learned to ignore it — but it was always there.

But then the letter had arrived. It was Lang's hand-writing, Lang's signature, and more than anything else, it just sounded like him. It hadn't said much, just some veiled references to "something incredible" that he had to tell her. That, and a room key to the hotel.

The packet accompanying the letter had been no great help either. She had dutifully read it as Lang requested, but hadn't been sure what to make of it. It was a bizarre piece of writing, not really a story but obviously fictional. Bodies rising from their graves and walking around? Entire courts of dead creatures secretly ruling the

night? Demons, devils and vengeful gods from the Thousand Hells? It read like the script to one of those ridiculous *wuxia* films that Hong Kong turned out every year.

And her brother expected her to believe it was all true. It was pretty clear from the video that he believed it, at least. The tape was so strange — impossible, even — but why would he lie now? Everything he said fit so well. She had always felt that there was something strange going on, but had never been able to put her finger on it....

Jing still faced the static-filled TV screen when the police ram drove the hotel room door out of its frame, slamming it open with a crash. The room was almost instantly filled with the hulking forms of police in full riot gear, armed with small but lethal automatic weapons.

"Get your hands up!" she screamed at her through his helmet's face mask. She complied meekly, rising to her feet, her hands on her head like she had always seen people do in movies. The cop moved in close and swept her feet out from under her, dropping Jing to the floor.

"What's going on?" she asked as the officer's knee pinned her down. No answer was forthcoming, but her hands were roughly pulled behind her back and secured with handcuffs. "You can't do this! I haven't done anything!" Her last words were cut off as a piece of duct tape was slapped over her mouth.

The pressure on her back relaxed as the police officers swept the room, communicating only with hand signals. Jing watched helplessly from her position on the floor as all signs of her presence in the room were removed. The

video tape, the bloody knife, her purse — the cops stowed it all in a duffel bag. One of the cops even pulled out a bottle of some sort of solvent and scrubbed the bloodstain from the carpet by the bed.

That completed, they hauled her to her feet and manhandled her out into the hallway. From there it was a rough trip down the back staircase, which ended in an alleyway behind the Kowloon Hilton. The sun was overhead, shining directly into the alley; Jing winced involuntarily as the light fell across her face. The open doors of a police paddy wagon awaited her. She was hustled inside, accompanied by six of the officers. The doors slammed shut, closing out the afternoon sky, and the other two officers climbed in front. With the screeching of tire rubber, the paddy wagon pulled out of the alleyway and onto the streets of Kowloon.

Jing sat sullenly on the hard bench in the back of the paddy wagon, sandwiched between two of the police officers. The vehicle was moving as fast as Kowloon's midday traffic allowed, siren howling. The passengers jerked back and forth as the driver swerved around other cars.

"Why did Zhuo have to drive?" one of the cops said wearily after about five minutes of herky-jerky travel. "I'm going to lose my lunch back here."

That seemed to break the ice among the officers, who began to relax. "I hate operations like this," one of them growled, pulling his helmet and gas mask off. "They never tell us a damn thing about what's going on."

The other officers similarly doffed their riot gear, wiping sweat from their faces.

"Liao Xi, the orders came straight from Beijing. You're better off not asking questions," replied a rangy cop as he pulled a bottle of water out of a cooler in the back of the wagon.

"I know," Liao Xi grumbled. "But look at her," he said, glancing over at Jing. She shot him an angry stare. "Does she look like a heroin smuggler to you?"

"And just what does a heroin smuggler look like, Liao Xi?" The other cops laughed.

Liao Xi didn't look convinced. "I just hate it when we have to be so secretive is all. I don't like secrets. I mean, taking her out to a safe-house instead of down to the station is pretty damn irregular."

"You think too much. We're just here to do a job, right?"



The cops lapsed into idle chitchat, and Jing tuned them out. What was she going to do? The police were taking her someplace — who knew where, or for what — and there didn't seem to be a damn thing she could do about it!

The driver slammed on the brakes, and the paddy wagon lurched first one way then the other. The whole world turned upside down as the van went into a violent roll. The sound of tearing metal and the screams of the cops filled her ears. Then it was over. The police officers groaned, all of them bruised and battered nearly to unconsciousness.

Jing landed hard on top of a burly officer, his body cushioning most of the blow. Sunlight streamed into the back of the van as the doors fell open, the force of the impact disabling the latch.

Jing crawled as best she could with her bound hands. She expected the pain of broken bones or strained muscles to stop her, but she'd come through the crash with barely a scratch. Too busy to count her blessings, she crawled out the back doors of the paddy wagon over the groaning cops. As she tumbled out into the light, she saw a familiar pair of feet. She looked up to the smiling face of her brother, gazing down at her with that incredibly smug look on his face.

"It's good to see you, Jing," he said, helping her to her feet. He seemed oblivious to the traffic surrounding them, the people scattering from their cars as the front end of the paddy wagon burst into flames. The vehicle had come to a crashing halt next to a filling station — from which the patrons were exiting quickly at the sight of the lanky man toting the automatic. Black smoke was billowing up from the paddy wagon and from the cars it had used as brake pads.

Lang reached into the open wagon and quickly stripped the handcuff keys off the officer near the door. Her hands free, Jing ripped the duct tape from her mouth as her brother led her toward the gas station, presumably to the alleyway beyond it. People screamed and scattered as he dragged her, and Lang fired a few shots into the air to keep them moving.

"What did you do to the van?" Jing managed to wheeze out as they crossed the parking lot.

"I didn't do anything," he said. "I just followed you and trusted that something *would* happen."

"What are you talking ab—"

Jing's question was cut short by a shout and a burst of automatic fire. Lang jerked as the bullets hit into his back. Even as he fell, Lang reached around and fired blindly. The police officer who had extricated himself from the back of the van and brought his SMG to bear spun around;

Jing's gorge rose as a red mist sprayed out the back of the cop's head to decorate the windshield of a nearby car. Lang collapsed.

"Lang!"

Jing dropped to her knees next to her brother. The smoke from the burning vehicles stung her eyes. She couldn't tell if she was actually crying or if it was just the smoke. Lang's breathing was ragged and wet. She hefted his shoulder, helping him sit up. She counted ten bullet exit wounds in his chest. He shouldn't even be breathing!

"Jing... you've gotta go. My luck's running low..." He coughed and spat blood on the pavement. He reached into a pocket of his bullet-riddled jacket and pulled out a white business card. "Gai Sen will have... will have all the answers you need," he wheezed, pressing the card into her hand. He smiled at her, his lips red with his own blood. "I hope you believe me now."

He cast a quick look over his shoulder at the smoldering wreck of the paddy wagon. His smile faded when the flashing lights of other police cars announced the arrival of reinforcements. He whipped his head around to stare at Jing. "Now go! Go, Jing! Run! You can't let father's people catch you!"

"But what about you? I can't just leave you!"

An unnatural glow came to her brother's eyes. "Go, Jing! I'll stall them! Don't make this all for nothing!" He shoved her away, and with a last look at her dying brother, Jing turned and headed toward the alleyway.

Kao Lang leaned up on one arm, gasping with pain as the cops moved through the black smoke. He laboriously brought his good arm up, holding the pistol steady. "All right, you dark fucker, I need you now. I'm yours. Just guide my hand," he whispered to himself. Something hot squirmed in his brain, and he felt unnatural vitality and strength filling him. The wounds on his chest closed with hellish speed. He struggled to his feet, his face a twisted sneer. As the first police officers came through the smoke, Lang casually raised his pistol and took aim at an undamaged car sitting right next to a fuel pump. He grinned and squeezed the trigger.

Jing didn't see the cloud of orange flame that blossomed behind her, but she heard the sound. She felt the heat. Running on some crazy instinct, she twisted herself into a ball as the shock wave picked her up and threw her down the alleyway, slamming her against a pile of crates.

She curled herself into a little ball, the heat of the fire intense even this far away. "Lang..."

Then everything went black.



INTRODUCTION: BABES AND UPSTARTS

"I'm sorry, my dear, but your father is dead... and has been for centuries."

Being the child of one of the Hungry Dead is not an easy experience. One (or even both) of your parents is quite literally an inhuman monster, returned from Hell, no less. Although you are blessed with some astonishing abilities, you are also cursed with a whispering Demon in your subconscious. You can expect to live for centuries, but that also means watching your friends die. You can accomplish great things, but you will always be compared to the devils who birthed you.

Some whisper that you have a greater destiny. Can you live up to it?

THE NATURE OF THE BEAST

Dhampyrs are the offspring of Kuei-jin who have become infused with excessive amounts of Yang Chi. Bursting with the energy of life, these vampires can mate with mortals or even other Yang-adedd Cathayans. Their unliving essence mixes with their mate's life-force to create a child with very special characteristics. These are the dhampyrs.

Their basic abilities are as follows:

- **Longevity:** Not immortal like their unliving parents, dhampyrs nevertheless can expect to live for several centuries.
- **The P'o:** Like their parents, dhampyrs have a writhing Demon soul within them. It is not as powerful as that of a Cathayan and cannot quite usurp control of the Shade Walker's body and mind, but it is always there, whispering and taunting.

- **Chi:** Dhampyrs may tap into the Yin and Yang Chi in their bodies. Like a Kuei-jin, they can use it for healing and to power certain Disciplines. They regain Chi through rest and meditation — or through cannibalism.

- **Disciplines:** Dhampyrs have access to some of the Disciplines used by their parents. Mostly they may use the initial levels of anyshintai or Demon Art. An elderly dhampyr, or one with a truly raging P'o, can access higher levels.

- **Joss:** Dhampyrs have tremendous *joss*. The very fact that they were born at all is so unlikely that they walk through their long lives with incredible luck. This allows them to take frightening risks and survive "certain" death,

BY ANY OTHER NAME

The children of the Kuei-jin have collected a plethora of names for themselves. The most traditional is "dhampyr," and most Kuei-jin consider it the technical term for their offspring. Less formal terms include "Shade Walkers" and "Twilight Children." The former is used most frequently by dhampyrs themselves, while Kuei-jin use the latter.

In Japan, the *gaki* call their children *maiko*, a term that usually simply means "lost child." The taint affecting the dragon lines of Japan, however, has increased the number of birth defects among dhampyrs there. The most twisted are called Makuro Hiko — the Black Sun Children.

but it also ensures that their lives are never quite stable — anything can happen. Some dhampyrs learn to tap into their joss to accomplish superhuman feats.

QUESTIONS OF STYLE

Half-Damned: Dhampyr is a bit of a departure from previous *Kindred of the East* material. Despite their parentage, Shade Walkers have not risen from Hell and do not have crimes to atone for. They have a dark side, but they are less horrific than the Hungry Dead themselves. Because of this, the elements of personal horror inherent in *Kindred of the East* are muted in this book (although not wholly absent).

THEME

Freedom is the thread that runs through *Half-Damned*. It is the call that resonates in most dhampyrs' hearts. Traditionally, Shade Walkers are servants — laboriously bred by their parents as agents and assistants, underestimated and overlooked by the Kuei-jin. Shackles of tradition and prejudice keep them down.

And yet, the times are changing. In Hong Kong and Singapore, more and more Shade Walkers are gathering. They operate largely free of the courts and have plans of their own. Some work with (or for) the Kuei-jin of the Bamboo Princes, trying to bring down the archaic mandarins of the Hungry Dead. Others operate strictly on their own, trying to find their place in the night or just enjoy their longevity.

In the twilight of the Fifth Age, the dhampyrs' freedom is meeting new and greater challenges. The Yama Kings, feeding off the discontent of the half-damned, promise them power in exchange for service. Not a few *akuma* are dhampyrs. Destiny also rears its head to shackle the Twilight Children. They have a role to play in the coming storm; whether they can embrace their fate remains to be seen.

MOOD

Dhampyrs can appear in chronicles with almost any mood, but they are most suited for stories with a cinematic, frenetic feel. They live in a swirl of wild coincidences and monsters from beyond the grave. They dive from buildings while firing twin handguns at Yakuza thugs; they bluff their way through encounters with demons from Yomi.

Maintaining a cinematic mood doesn't mean going completely over the top, however. Character interaction, intrigue and other "quiet moments" are all necessary and appropriate — things don't have to be exploding all the time. The key is to keep the stakes — and hence the tension — high. Start sessions with a burst of action and keep the prospect of more dangling in the background. The characters may be manipulating a politician to further the power of a Scarlet Screen, but if they know an *akuma* is out there gunning for them, their hands will never be far from their Sig Sauers.



THE POWER OF JOSS

The greatest blessing and curse of the Shade Walkers is their phenomenal joss. More than simply lucky, dhampyr are nexuses of coincidences and outrageous probabilities. They win in casinos and always seem to get away from pursuers. Those who study their own half-dead nature can even learn to focus this luck to accomplish amazing feats. Dhampyr lead high-speed lives of dazzle and excitement.

But it all has a price. *Joss* brings lucky breaks, but it also brings instability and danger. The half-damned are drawn into plots both human and Cathayan; they don't need to look for trouble because it finds them. Most Shade Walkers accept this "interesting life" and try to squeeze all the good out of it they can. They embrace instability and jump into the fray, determined to get as many thrills as they can.

Of course, deep inside them, their Demon soul pushes and prods. It's so easy for a thrill to become a sin, for luck to become abuse. That doleful whisper is always there, and all too many dhampyr eventually give in.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Half-Damned: Dhampyr is a complete sourcebook on the half-dead children of the Kuei-jin. It is intended both for players and Storytellers, although some of the material might best be withheld from players so as not to ruin any surprises. See "Chapter by Chapter," below, for indications as to which sections you might want to avoid or withhold.

The main function of **Half-Damned** is to sell dhampyr as characters for players. Hopefully the cinematic possibilities and their unique role in the Middle Kingdom will make you want to play them on a regular basis — or run a chronicle of dhampyr characters. But this sourcebook also gives you everything you need to use Shade Walkers as Storyteller characters. Certainly they can be servants and agents of the Kuei-jin, but they can also play all kinds of unique roles.

Use the half-damned as you see fit, but ignore them at your peril.

CHAPTER BY CHAPTER

Chapter One: Children of Light and Darkness is the heart of **Half-Damned**. It consists of a series of documents written by and about the Shade Walkers that uncovers their nature, their role in the Middle Kingdom and some far deeper secrets. Each document is more revelatory than the last, so Storytellers may wish to dole them out to their players one at a time as the chronicle dictates. The main documents are:

- *Kao Lang Addressing His Sister* (transcript of video tape): In a tie-in with "The Gift of Self-Knowledge" (**Half-Damned's** fiction prelude) Kao Lang lets his twin sister in on the truth of their parentage. Her life is never the same again. This document is ideal for a handout to a player starting a dhampyr character.

- *RE: The Half-Damned* (email): A member of the Bamboo Princes, an antiestablishment underground among the Kuei-jin, reports on the status of dhampyr across the Middle Kingdom and their potential as recruits. This text can serve as a handout once dhampyr characters get to know the courts or become involved with the Bamboo Princes. In a Kuei-jin chronicle, it can serve to introduce the half-damned. (For more on the Bamboo Princes, see *Shadow War*.)

- *The Final Testament of Jin Kai Wai* (letter): This letter from an elderly dhampyr to his fellow Shade Walkers reveals much about the secret history of his kind. The courts of the Kuei-jin actively suppress it. The letter serves best as a handout midway through a chronicle, raising the stakes considerably.

Chapter Two: Dead Alive is the "game speak" counterpart to Chapter One. It provides you with all the rules and advice you need to use dhampyr in your chronicle. Expanded and revised rules for character creation and many other systems appear in this section, as do details about several unique dhampyr offshoots introduced in Chapter One.

Chapter Three: Children of the Ten Thousand Demons provides you with a series of ready-to-play dhampyr templates. These can also serve as Storyteller characters or simple inspiration for your own Shade Walkers.

Appendix: Twilight Warriors details some of the most prominent dhampyr in the Middle Kingdom — for Storytellers only.



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OF
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CHAPTER ONE: CHILDREN OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS

Mao Li Wen,

Here are the documents we discussed during your visit to my humble home. They should answer many of the questions you have had about yourself and your role in the world. There are matters herein that I regret, but I hope you can help me make amends.

I look forward to your next visit.

— Li Feng

From Jun Yu Pai, Eastern Dawn of the Scarlet Night *au*, to Blood Ancestor Chang Li, in reference to the matter of declared akuma Kao Lang, son of Li Shang Liu, the Minister of Threefold Virtue.

The blessings of the August Personage of Jade upon you, your eminence.

As you have requested, I am sending you all of the documents of interest found in the hotel room until lately occupied by Kao Lang. We tracked his sister, Kao Jing to the Nookton Hilton, where she evidently thought she was going to meet him. She had been contacted by Kao Lang a little more than a week prior. This much we knew from the wiretap that the Minister of Threefold Virtue requested over two months ago.

The meeting was set to take place during the afternoon, so I was forced to rely on the competence of my minions rather than attending to the matter personally. As the girl was (I believed) unfamiliar with her own abilities and capacities, utterly unschooled in the ways of life and death, I determined that units of the Nookton Police Department with whom I have cultivated contacts would be sufficient. The officers were under orders to watch the hotel room before moving in, on the off chance that the akuma might show his face. He made no appearance. As per my relayed instructions, they moved in and secured the girl and all the room's contents.

Here is where my joys became quite mixed, honored ancestor. I firmly believed that Kao Lang would not have dared to show his face in Nookton again after the incident of three days ago. In this I was incorrect. While the girl was en route to a police facility, Kao Lang intervened most dramatically. I believe the incident may even have made the papers in Beijing. If not, I will forward the police report and some newspaper clippings detailing the events.

You will be most gratified to hear that we believe the akuma himself to be dead. The explosion that resulted from the rescue of his sister from police custody was surely too intense for even one as resilient as Kao Lang to survive. My contacts in the Nookton Police's coroner's office have orders to alert me as soon as they confirm that his remains were among the ashes of the gas station.

Less auspiciously, the girl escaped in the ensuing chaos. All members of my *au* as well as our Scarlet Screens are scouring Nookton as I write this, and I have no doubt we shall catch up with the akuma's sibling soon. We are proceeding with caution, both because of the continued chaos in the Flame Court of the city and since there is evidence that the girl's contact with her brother has given her some small grasp of her abilities. While she is doubtless unskilled in their use, her half-breed nature makes it more difficult for us to take her unharmed if she wishes to resist. I hope the Minister of Threefold Virtue will be understanding of Kao Jing if a bit bruised when she arrives in Beijing.

What follows is a transcript of a video tape that Kao Lang had left for the girl. As you will see, he had not intended this to fall into our hands. The contents of the tape are a bit — well, troubling, blessed ancestor. It would seem that Kao Lang was an apt student of Xue-jin culture and society, and has been making a study of his fellow dreamyrs. He seemed determined to educate his sister as extensively — and as quickly — as possible.

Much of what is suggested about the discontent of the Shade Walkers is somewhat laughable, of course. With his spiritually polluted sensibilities and limited time among the courts, Kao Lang simply does not fully understand the dreamyrs' mandated place under Heaven. Still, some parts of his discourse raise important questions about the trustworthiness and reliability of the dreamyrs in our midst, and I urge you to read this transcript thoroughly.

A few other documents were seized in the in the hotel room as well, including what can only be described as a primer on our kind. It detailed the structure and functioning of the Wan Xue, a general guide to the courts and those upstart fools the Bamboo Princes — nothing that we don't already know, unfortunately. The information was hardly detailed, but extensive enough to give the girl a working knowledge of her true parentage. It is safe to say that she knows quite a bit about us now.

(The actual document contained no information of interest, so this humble servant took it upon herself not to trouble your radiant light with such trivialities — especially considering the exceedingly unjust and unflattering things written about you in said document, blessed ancestor. I only regret that the akuma did not live long enough for me to personally express to him my displeasure at his disrespect.)

I must admit to being at a loss as to why events have played out as they have. I do not know what Kao Lang hoped to bring to pass by involving his sister, but as the evidence showed clear collusion with the self-styled "Bamboo Prince" Sai Sen, it can only be a bad thing.

It is, of course, not for this one to judge such matters. I can only advise you that this all seems to bear scrutiny and due consideration. I leave the final interpretation of the contents to you.

Your most humble servant,

Jun Yu Pai

TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEO TAPE RECOVERED FROM HONG KONG POLICE

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

Subject Kao Lang is sitting in the same hotel room from which the tape was retrieved, Room 405, Kowloon Hilton. He switches the camera on, then settles into a chair set directly in front of it.

Ahh, good, it's you. Long time no see, huh?

Hey, don't look so spooked. It's really me, okay? You look kind of pale — sit down. Have a drink. There's a bottle of your favorite Chardonnay in the little refrigerator. Don't worry. It's paid for.

"How does he know my favorite wine?" you're asking yourself. Well, because I've been watching you, sis. I look out for you.

I know what you're thinking: "This is impossible! He's dead! No one could've survived that fall."

No one normal could have, you're right about that. But I'm not a normal person, and neither are you. Have a cigarette if you like, by the way. There's a pack of Gitanes Blondes in the drawer of the bedside table along with a lighter. You sure like French shit, sis.

I'll wait.

Subject pauses, lighting a cigarette himself.

Back? Good. Look, Jing, it's me. I survived, okay? The phone call must have convinced you, or you wouldn't have come all the way down to this part of town. I disappeared seven years ago. So there were about 50 witnesses willing to attest that they saw "Lucky" Bao's men drag me out of a Hong Kong nightclub and stuff me into the trunk of a car. The police never found a body, did they? Please, just get it into your head that yes your brother the "master criminal" somehow managed to cheat death. If you listen to me long enough, I'll tell you how. Okay?

Good. Let's get down to business.

Now, you should have read the packet I sent you before you came. I hope you did, because I'm not going to repeat much of it here, and some of this stuff won't make a lot of sense unless you already know the basics. Well, to be honest a lot of it may not make sense in any case. But it's the best I can do given the circumstances. And while you may have thought that it made for a pretty entertaining read, you'd better take it seriously if you want to stay alive. It's no story. It's real.

You're probably yelling at the TV right now. Not a very productive thing to do, Jing. Just sit down, shut up and let me talk, okay? There's a lot to cover, and Mother would never forgive me if I didn't prepare you.

Lets start with the basics, shall we? You and I aren't like everyone else, Jing, and I think you know that. I think you can feel it. You know what I'm talking about. You used to tell me about it back when we were in school. How you had trouble talking to the other kids, felt like they were always watching you, making fun of you behind your back. I remember once you said you felt like you were some sort of alien, trapped in a human body. To a certain extent that's exactly right.

You see, you and I aren't completely human.

You read about the Hungry Dead already, I hope. Well, guess what? Way back in 1968, one of those walking corpses got a little too high on life, so to speak, and got our mother pregnant. After a few months — before we were born — he went on his merry way.

I can hear you laughing, you know.

This should shut you up. Look in the top drawer of the bureau. Careful, there will probably be a nice bloodstain on the carpet right there by the bed. We'll get to that in a few minutes. You see the envelope? Ignore the gun for now — we'll get to that later, too. The envelope is marked "photos," like this one.

Subject produces a manila envelope from beneath his chair.

Open it. That first picture there is that one Mother showed us of Father all the time. Hong Kong, 1968. Mother looks so happy....

Now look at the next picture. That one's taken in Beijing, 1962. And the next one, Shanghai, 1927. Beijing again, 1904. And that next to last one — that's not even a photograph, technically. It's called a daguerreotype. Kowloon, 1872. You see the man in each of the pictures? See how he looks?

Our father's name is Li Shang Lu. He was a dishonest merchant and con man, killed outside Beijing in 1335 by bandits. He came back and has been moving around Asia ever since. Want more proof? Look at that last picture. You recognize me, right? The other man is our father. That was taken in Taiwan, 1998. Doesn't that suit look great on me?

Subject pauses again, grinding out his cigarette. He lights another before he continues.

Here's the bottom line, Jing: Our father is what Westerners would call a vampire — but that's a clumsy and inaccurate term. A better term for him would be one of the Hungry Dead. He was killed over 600 years ago, but he couldn't leave well enough alone and came back. He'd say he had a karmic debt to fulfil; I say he was just a bad enough mother fucker that even Hell couldn't hold him.

He's one of the Ten Thousand Demons, magnificent monsters stalking the night and feeding on the living. On his positive side, he doesn't make apologies for what he is. He once said that his whole existence was already an apology for the misdeeds that brought him back from Hell. That was before he wanted me dead. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

As his children, you and I carry half of his essence in us. Our father is damned. You and I are half-damned. We're called dhampyrs, Shade Walkers, Twilight Children — and sometimes far less pleasant appellations, like half-breed.

Subject pauses, rubbing his eyes and forehead with his hands.

Ready? This is pretty fucked up.

Things like Father are sort of one step out the grave, stuck between life and complete death. To keep going they suck the life out of breathing folks, through their blood, their breath, or even by eating them outright. Yup, cannibal time.

Anyway, Father and his buddies are really into all that Taoist shit Mother used to spout. Now, don't look at me like that! You know I've never been religious. Anyway, Father says they suck "Chi" out of people and that it can be one of two flavors: black or red. The black stuff is cold and dark, all about decay and depression. When they chow down on it, they get even deader



than they already are — they even look like corpses. Creepy.

The red stuff — what Father calls “Yang” — is hot and alive. It's all about urges and action. When they drink that, they get sort of drunk and unpredictable. They also get almost alive: warm skin, flush cheeks, a beating heart, and well, quite the hard-on apparently.

Yup. Drunk on Yang, they get just enough life to do the deed and plant the seed. Maybe. If they're lucky — or unlucky. That's where the two of us come from: long odds and a horny vampire.

Yeah, I know I'm a crude bastard, but so what?

We dhampyrs are rare creatures, as I have found out — there are probably less than 1,000 of us in the world all told. I've met about 25 or 30 of our kind myself, and I've been running in circles in which they are considered relatively common. This is mostly due to the unusual circumstances of our births. A Yang bender isn't something that most Kuei-jin endure lightly. Obviously I've never experienced it myself, but Father told me that it is a precarious state, physically and mentally. Killer hangover, I guess.

The Kuei-jin parent in such a union is usually male, impregnating a female mortal. If you meet another dhampyr, it's probably safe to assume that their parentage is the same. I've only met a couple of us whose mothers were Hungry Dead.

I guess the reasons for this are pretty simple. As you should have figured from the notes I gave you, living in Kuei-jin society is sort of like being a shark: if you stop swimming, you sink to the bottom and drown. For male Wan Kuei — that's another word for the Hungry Dead — impregnating a mortal is no big deal. They can pretty much rut away without having to worry about the consequences of their actions. Most of the time, the pregnancy doesn't even take and the woman miscarries. No big deal to an immortal demon, right?

As always, women have it tougher. Pregnant Kuei-jin have to keep themselves filled with life-rich energy for the duration of the pregnancy or they miscarry. I mentioned how uncomfortable that's supposed to be, right? Well, mix that in with morning sickness and the like and you can believe that nine months of pregnancy lacks much appeal to the typical Wan Kuei. Not only is the situation uncomfortable, it can damage a Kuei-jin's place in society if she's laid up vomiting every evening instead of attending to the important maneuverings and plots that characterize a court of the Hungry Dead.

So you see, it's a rare Kuei-jin woman who's willing to carry a child to term. Based on those I've met, I'd guess no more about one in twenty of the total population of dhampyrs has an unliving mother. Even those willing to go through with it and bear the child sometimes get impatient. I met one dhampyr whose mother actually cut him out of her belly at six months — and he survived! He showed me the birthmark he has on his back. It seems his mother got a little careless and cut too deep.

Now, the Hungry Dead don't only dally with the living. I heard that sometimes two Kuei-jin decide to indulge in a little mattress mambo and have a child. Apparently, this is incredibly rare. I can't even truly confirm that it happens — I heard this secondhand. Anyway, a child of two Kuei-jin would probably be significantly more in touch with his “dead” side than the rest of us.

By the way, I hope you remember that you are included when I say “us.” He's your father, just like he's mine. Get used to it.

By now you're probably wondering how I learned all of this stuff. Why, from Father of course. I told you I work — worked — for him. Let me tell you about our very first meeting.

You already know a little about what happened before I disappeared, right? Somehow Lucky Bao had gotten the idea that I was working both sides of the fence, playing him and that worm Su Shan against each other. That was all bullshit, of course. When I'm bought I stay bought, and I thought Bao knew that. I thought he trusted me. Ah, but what they say is true — no honor among thieves, especially not with degenerates like Bao.

Anyway, I figured I'd just get out of Hong Kong for a few months until Bao cooled off, but I decided to have one last night on the town before I left. Stupid me. Before I knew what was going on, ten of Bao's goons dragged me outside, shoved me in the trunk of a car and drove out to the hills. Bao's men yanked me out of the trunk, made me stand on the edge of the cliff, and shot me four times in the back.

When I went over the edge of that cliff, I thought I was dead for sure. I remember hitting the water, feeling the life ebbing from my body, sinking down below....

Kao Lang gets a little pale, wincing a bit. He pauses to compose himself, taking a drag on his cigarette.

You know, I still don't like swimming. In retrospect, it's fortunate for me that Lucky Bao has — had — a flair for the overly dramatic. If he'd just had his goons put a couple of bullets in my head, I might not be talking to you today. And Lucky might still be alive.

I blacked out after I hit the water, so I don't really remember what happened next. I washed up on a rocky beach a few hours later — well, I guess it was a few hours. I could have been in the water for a few years for all I knew. I dragged myself onto the beach, amazed that I was still alive. Then I passed out again.

The scene that greeted my eyes when I awoke was a lot different. I was in a small bedroom in a house — I had no idea where. I got to my feet pretty gingerly, expecting to be in a world of hurt — a reasonable expectation for a fall like that, don't you think?

Jing, there wasn't a mark on me. It was crazy. I thought I was dreaming.

The only window in the room was high up on the wall, too high for me to reach. I could hear city sounds — traffic, the occasional plane flying overhead, but it was way off in the distance. I was naked, but looking around, I found some clothes that fit me — they were exactly my size, in fact — draped over a chair. They weren't my usual stylish attire. In fact, the clothes looked like traditional Chinese court dress from several centuries ago. You would have laughed to see me, Jing; I looked like something out of the history books! It was either that or walk around naked, though. I may have had no idea where I was, but let me tell you, I was determined to get the hell out of there as soon as possible and go have a talk with old Lucky.

I didn't get too far. The only door out of my room led into a large chamber, lit by a small oil lamp. A man sat in the center of the room with his back to me. It looked like he was reading. Gauging how far it was to the nearest door, I figured I could make it past him undetected — just like sneaking out of the house when we were kids. Anyway, I had barely taken my first tentative step into the room when a voice stopped me in my tracks.

"Hello, Kao Lang," the guy said without looking up.

I think I jumped about three feet in the air. I was feeling pretty disturbed by that point — probably kind of like you feel right now, actually.

"How do you know my name?" I hissed at him. Still trying to seem cool, y'know.

"Because I am your father," he replied.

Well, that shut me up. And you know how hard that is to do.

Then he goes into this recitation about me, in this creepy-assed monotone. Like a teacher lecturing. "The other night on the cliffs above Hong Kong, you were shot four times in the back, two of those bullets severing your spinal cord. You then toppled from that cliff. It is now two days later, and you are walking around as if nothing had ever happened." I remember that he paused for a moment then, for effect. "I can explain how you survived and introduce you to a world beyond anything you have ever known."

He turned his head and fixed me with a stare I'll never forget. If ice burned, it would have been his eyes, Jing. And sure enough, even in the dim light I could make out the face from the old pictures — our father staring at me in the darkness.

I was seriously losing my cool, almost yelling. "What the hell are you talking about?" I was looking around the room, placing the exits and getting ready to make a break for it.

"You know nothing of Hell, Kao Lang. I have been there and returned. Do not speak lightly of things that you do not truly understand." We stared at each other for a long minute, then he looked back down at whatever he was reading. "If you really wish to forget everything that has happened, to go through the rest of your life walking among the squalid, teeming masses, playing out your pathetic little dance with death, then you may leave," he said to me, gesturing idly at the door. "If you wish to know who you really are, stay. It is your choice."

I thought about it. I stood there in the dark for a good five minutes. I stayed.

We talked almost until sunrise. To make a long story short, it turned out that Father had been keeping tabs on me — and you — for years, ever since he learned that we had been born. It seems that his little fling with Mother came during a period when he was "not quite himself," whatever that means. He never explained further. Lucky for me, his agents had dragged me off that beach and contacted him. I guess he decided that since everyone was bound to think me dead anyway, this was a good time to bring me into his

world. It turned out we were actually inside the Forbidden City in the heart of Beijing. That's the seat of the Blood Court, if you did your studying.

There will be a test, Jing.

Six long years I gave that bastard, Jing. Six years. Actually, now that I know what I know, it doesn't seem too bad — but I still tend to think in terms of having a normal life span. Those six years were the strangest time of my entire life — so far, at least.

I spent the whole first year learning about Father's world, the one that lurks behind what you and I grew up knowing. My education was like a college course in high weirdness. I learned about who the Kuei-jin are, where they come from, about Chi, the spirit worlds — yes, spirit worlds — and current events in Father's world — all the stuff that was in that packet I sent you. He had me recite names, titles, who ruled where, how long they had done so, on and on and on. And all of this before I even met another member of Father's people. At the time I hated it, but I have to say that almost everything I was taught came in handy. Whenever I complained about the constant study and drilling he just smiled and told me that I was on an accelerated program — the average time usually spent learning such things before entering Kuei-jin society was over a decade. That shut me up pretty quick.

Father also taught me all about Chi. How to tap mine, use it to heal myself, go days on end with sleep, food or drink. He taught me how to focus myself, to meditate to rebuild the life-force within me faster. He even told me of a quick and dirty method to rebuild my strength — but you don't want to hear about that. Not yet anyway.

You're laughing again, Jing. I can almost hear you as if you were here in front of me. Look, just take my word for it for now, and I'll prove it to you in a few minutes, okay?

I also learned that there were other things out there, too. Father calls them *shen* and they're a weird bunch. Goblin Spiders, ghosts, sorcerers and spirits. I had to memorize a bunch of names and titles, but I won't bore you with those now. Just keep in mind that there's a lot of whacked-out shit out there. Father paid a lot of attention to what he called Kin-jin, who are twisted and degenerate Western counterparts of the Kuei-jin. You remember those Dracula movies you and I used to love? That's them.

A year after my education began, I was finally formally introduced to Kuei-jin society. I won't bore you with the details of my presentation to the Blood Court and the Bestowed Ancestor of the Quincunx. You wouldn't believe me anyway. One day you'll be impressed. Trust me.

Once I was in with the court, I actually played a role in its functioning. Father familiarized me with the mortal resources that he controlled through various means — Scarlet Screens, he called them. The next thing I knew, I was Father's right hand man, at least as far as the mortal world went. I made sure that everything ran smoothly. As the years passed, and I began to understand the Hungry Dead, I was given more complex duties. I acted as a messenger and occasional spy between the courts, traveling to Shanghai, Changan — sorry, I mean Xi'an; Father always used the old name so I picked it up — and occasionally Japan or Korea and even once down to Laos in what's called the Golden Courts. Now, that was strange, even for the life I've been leading.

Five years passed in what seemed like an instant. And you know what? In all that time, I never really felt comfortable among the Kuei-jin. I was nominally part of their culture and society, but only through my connection to Father. I was treated with a dismissive air by the other Hungry Dead. I was beneath their notice. This was literally true more often than you'd think — I overheard a whole lot of conversations I probably shouldn't have just because none of the Kuei-jin noticed the "help." It was almost like being invisible.

At first I figured this was just because I was an outsider, not raised in the courts. But as I got to know the few other dampyrs of the Blood Court, I realized that this sort of treatment was almost universal there. It was just the way things were. Normal folks were basically ants to the Kuei-jin, and dampyrs were pets.

One odd thing I noticed: While most court members simply treated us with careless disregard at best, and contempt and scorn at worst, the few times I was with the real bigwigs — the court's ancestors and other "spiritually advanced" Kuei-jin — it was different. It's hard to put into words, and to the casual observer it probably seemed like nothing. But when I was around some of these older Wan Kuei, they gave me this look. It was more than just the casual contempt of the usual Kuei-jin. Their gaze held something more. Sometimes it was sadness, as if I reminded them of something or

someone long gone. Other times the look was one I was familiar with — pure, unbridled hate. Of course, I was never really in a position to actually question any of these “August Personages” as to why they were looking at me funny. I was a minnow swimming with sharks there, Jing.

As you can tell, I made a study of our kind, at least as much as I could within the confines of my duties to the Blood Court and Father. It wasn't easy. You'd think that the dhampyrs of a court would have a tendency to congregate together, right? Well, we had time to hang out together. It seemed to me that the Kuei-jin — Father included — did as much as possible to keep us from congregating. I never figured that one out.

Anyway, after five years, it all fell apart.

Here's how it happened: I managed to make this one close friend, a relatively young Kuei-jin named Gai Sen. He had only taken the Second Breath — that's a fancy way of saying “came back from the dead,” by the way — back in 1976. He had been student radical, and he probably knew right from the start that he was doomed as far as making a home for himself in Kuei-jin society. Still, he stuck it out for over 20 years — just to show them he could, I always thought. Sen was a troublemaker around the court — always skirting the edge of impropriety, making subtle jokes at the expense of some of the crustier mandarins — but he wasn't all fun and games. Sen's a good guy, and he treated me just like he treated everyone else.

Gai Sen had a serious side as well, one that clashed with the attitudes of the mandarins of Beijing. You and I grew up in Hong Kong, so Western stuff isn't anything new to us. We eat at McDonalds, we listen to rock music, we wear Levi's. Western culture is meeting the East whether we like it or not, right? Well, the “shadow world” of the Kuei-jin is the same way, except those ancient idiots that rule things — the mandarins — are fighting it, hard. Gai Sen insisted that unless the court made an effort to move with the times, it was going to be left behind in the wake of history. The worlds of the West and East are drawing closer every day, and the courts are placing the whole of Kuei-jin society in jeopardy.



The mandarins and the Bestowed Ancestor were sticking their heads in the sand, he said. As the years went by, Sen and I became better and better friends, and his rhetoric became more strident.

The next thing I know, Gai Sen was standing in my apartment in the middle of the night, telling me that Father and his buddies at the court have branded him *akuma*. That's very serious shit, Jing. *Akuma* are demons and demon worshippers, and the courts tend to put them to death in nasty ways. That they called Sen an *akuma* for political reasons just goes to show you that politics is politics, even if you're a vampire.

Anyway, I was pretty flabbergasted. I mean this is the one guy I sort of trust. Then he lets the other shoe drop: The mandarins tagged me as *akuma* too for consorting with Sen! Father could have spoken up for me, defended me to the other mandarins — but that would have threatened his prestige. By defending me he would have been seen as sympathetic to Gai Sen and his heretical ideas. He said nothing and hung me out to dry.

It was then that the reality of my situation hit home. I'd been used, Jing. I'd let Father manipulate me, feed my ego, flatter me, make me want to be his dutiful son. I've since figured out that he wouldn't actually have let me just walk out of that room back in the Forbidden City, but it sure was a great dramatic device. And I had bought it all.

I almost admire how he did it. Father is very good at manipulating people. Hell, he's been doing it for over 500 years. It was never really my choice whether I stayed; my only decision was under what circumstances. I was a tool to him, a piece in his little court games. And when the time came, he sacrificed me.

Gai Sen and I took off that night, abandoning the stagnant world of the courts.

That was just over a year ago, and I've made some interesting new friends since then. Friends who don't just want to meditate, have tea ceremonies and chart the paths of the stars in the heavens to ensure that whatever change is coming works out in their favor.

You see, Jing, there's a war going on. You can't see it most of the time, and the majority of the people fighting in it don't even know they are soldiers. On one side sits the Quincunx (that's Father and the rest of them), content to do things the old way, the traditional way. Well, I've had a taste of the "traditional way" and didn't much care for it, thank you. Filial piety is all well and good, but I can't just stand by and let Father and his kind send the entire world straight to hell. We're not going to make it through the period of troubles that's coming if those "enlightened" know-it-all eunuchs keep sitting on their ancient asses.

On the other side of this conflict are the Bamboo Princes. Those are the new friends I've made. They're Kuei-jin, but they look to the future rather than the past. Gai Sen was actually an agent for them, working inside the Blood Court. The sneaky bastard recruited me and was so subtle about it that I didn't even notice.

I should probably hate the Bamboo Princes, you know. After all, if it wasn't for them and their big ideas, I'd still be sitting comfortably at Father's side in Beijing, watching the Minister of the Jade Portal and the Mandarin of Clouds and Doves argue over whose mastery of calligraphy is more advanced.

But you see little sister, I have to back them. The stakes are much higher than just the control of a place or group. It's a fight for the future — a struggle to see whose ideas will dominate. The winner determines the fate of the Kuei-jin, the other *shen*, and ultimately everyone and everything in Asia.

Kao Lang pauses and lights another cigarette. For almost a minute, he looks into the camera without speaking.

Sorry, this is all pretty close to my heart these days. Didn't mean to get into too much rhetoric just yet. Let's get back to the subject at hand, shall we?

All right, now you know what we are and what kind of world we are connected to, whether we like it or not. By this time you either think I'm crazy or that I've come up with the most complex lie imaginable. I am now going to tell you — and show you — just what you and I are capable of.

First of all, we're going to live for a very long time, Jing. The blood of our father slows down the aging process enormously. Conservatively, you and I can expect to be drinking champagne together on New Year's Eve of 2299. I've been told this has some pretty harsh psychological effects as the years pass. I'm a little worried about that, but I must confess to only seeing the bright side of it at this point. Death sucks.

Secondly, we've always both felt that dark side that rages in us, right? I remember how angry and unreasonable we used to get when we were kids. Mom almost went broke paying the therapy bills. You told me once it was like there was a nasty little creature in your head, urging you toward anger, violence and the like. I understand all of it now, Jing. You were exactly right; there is a thing speaking to you, a part of your soul affectionately called the Demon, or the "P'o," to use Father's word. Once you know what it is, you can control it and even tap its power to do incredible things.

We can also tap into our life-force like the Kuei-jin. The fact that we are half human means we can't handle it as well as the Hungry Dead, but we can still pull off some amazing stuff. I'll show you how.

Now that I've stretched your credulity as far as possible, it's time for some proof. A little cold, hard reality that you can sink your teeth into. You might want to down a quick glass of that wine. This part is going to get rough.

The subject reaches beneath his chair and produces a large kitchen knife.

Ready? Here we go. Watch closely.

The subject carefully slits his left arm from wrist to elbow with the knife.

Yaaa! Damn, that hurts! Now, as you can see, I have just slashed myself very deeply and thoroughly. You know what they say — across for blood, down if you mean it.

Here, get a close look at this. Let me get in close to the camera. I want to make sure that you can see the wound. Let me spread it open here.... I've slashed all the way down to the bone, and I'm losing a lot of blood.

Subject glances down, off camera.

Yup, I wasn't lying about that bloodstain I mentioned earlier.

Pretty gruesome, eh? I'm not just doing this to gross you out, you know. I'm trying to prove a point here. Anyway, pay close attention to this next part. I want you to watch the whole process, because I'm not going to do this again.

There, it's starting. See the edges knitting together? Watch, Jing. This is Chi in action. Let me wipe the blood away here — man, the maids are going to hate me. See? All healed up. I thought about showing you one or two of the other tricks I've learned, but I figured you might think it was just some sort of special effect or something.

Whoa. Just had a head rush there. Takes a bit out of me to do that trick. Still pretty amazing, eh? You can do the same thing too. I can teach you how.

Well, I seem to have made a bit of a mess here. Stay right there while I clean up.

The subject reaches up and freezes the camera. When the tape starts again, he is wearing a clean shirt.

That's better. Luckily I have a lot of experience cleaning up blood.

I know you've never approved of what I do for a living. Is it my fault that killing is the only thing I'm really good at? Believe it or not, Jing, I've changed. I've found a cause. Aren't you proud of me? Well, don't be too proud. I'm still killing — but I'm not doing it for money any more. I'm done with that.

Well, that's it. You know what I am. You know what kind of world I've lived in for the last few years. You know what kind of world you live in, although you did not see it until now. I figure that sooner or later Father is going to contact you. He may have sacrificed me as a pawn, but I know he misses me, if only because I was useful. Only the fact that he is a raging sexist — as you might expect from a man born 600 years ago — has kept him from contacting you already. I won't let him manipulate you the way he did me. He saved my life, but only so he could possess it. If it hadn't been for Gai Sen, I'd be just as dead and our father may as well have pulled the trigger.

I've given you the only gift that will really help you right now, little sister: knowledge of yourself. Whether you like it or not, you're involved in a world beyond the perceptions of most people.

I want to meet with you. I want to show you all these things — to show you what you can do. But it has to be your choice. I won't draw you into all this unless your eyes are totally open about it. If you want to know more, meet me at our secret spot — you know, the one where we always used to hide when we wanted to drive Mother crazy. I'll be there at noon in three days. See you then.

Kao Lang stands up and turns off the video camera.

RE: THE HALF-DAMNED

To: Gai Sen <righteousfist@flamemail.com>

From: Lao Shang <BambooBoy@freenet.net>

Greetings, Gai Sen.

Sorry it took so long for me to put this report together, but I had to do some pretty extensive asking around to get the information you needed. The Man's eyes are everywhere in this town these days, so I had to be pretty careful.

Anyway, here it is: a full report on the Shade Walkers. I've covered the courts, the heimin, some pretty sketchy information on a few independents and some pretty disturbing information concerning the half-damned and the Yama Kings.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Read it all, and see what you think.

TABULA RASA

Normally, I'd start out with some historical background on dhampyrs. There's a problem, though: There is no dhampyr history. Oh sure, there are references to them in the texts, but they're pretty sketchy. They run along the lines of "so-and-so's son took part in this battle with the akuma and acquitted himself well," or "amongst the court at such and such time was the half-breed daughter of so and so." Dhampyrs seem to be a no more than a footnote in the history books.

Given what I've learned about the courts and the Shade Walkers, this doesn't surprise me in the least. It sort of sums up the "regard" in which the half-damned have been held since time immemorial.

BRINGING UP BABY

I don't have to explain to you how dhampyrs are created, I hope. It hasn't been that long since you took the Second Breath, has it? We may be dead, but the physical process of procreation is just the same. While conceiving a dhampyr child is easy, successfully bringing one to term is not. About half of all such pregnancies end in miscarriage. Female Kuei-jin who get pregnant have no such problem as long as they remain scarlet cycled for the entire pregnancy. Not easy, but possible.

Once the child is born, most Kuei-jin take at least some part in the dhampyr's upbringing. As carefully considered and planned as the birth is, the parent is unwilling to take a chance on the child going astray. How much control she exerts over the child varies just like in a normal parent-child relationship.

Some Kuei-jin raise their children with full knowledge of who and what they are — and even

bring them to their court and introduce them to their wu to inculcate them early. Others prefer to keep their children in the dark about what they are for a period of time, watching their upbringing from a distance. They usually act behind the scenes to keep their offspring out of trouble (or to guide them *into* it, in some cases) and only reveal themselves when they deem the child mature enough to handle it.

(Just as an aside here, maybe it's just because I only took the Second Breath a few years ago, but I can't remember any point when I was growing up that I would have been "ready" for my missing father to show up out of nowhere and tell me he was a unliving bloodsucking demon, and that I was half demon. My adolescence was screwed up enough as it was.)

The gist of all this is that dhampyrs raised under the wing of a Kuei-jin parent are often not the best socialized of people — at least not as far as the mortal world is concerned. Their parents see little value in monitoring their offspring's psychological well-being, except in as much as it affects the dhampyr's loyalty to his parent — and his ability to serve his parent's wishes.

Dhampyrs raised primarily by their human parent (or by human agents of their Kuei-jin one) socialize much more easily. Their souls are only half-damned after all. With a loving and healthy home environment, dhampyrs tend to grow up like normal — if a bit psychologically disturbed — children. The whisperings of a dhampyr's P'o, however stunted it may be in relation to the Demon lurking inside full Kuei-jin, can still make for a rather fucked-up childhood. Most normal people take a dim view of a child that tortures animals, vandalizes the neighborhood, commits petty theft and then claims that the voice in his head told him to do it. Needless to say, human-raised dhampyrs tend to see the inside of a lot of psychologists' offices (where such facilities are available, of course).

Anyway, one thing unites almost every dhampyr, no matter their upbringing: All of them end up feeling, to one extent or another, like outsiders. Let's face it, this feeling is well founded. As hard as they try and as well as they serve their parents, they will never truly be accepted in Kuei-jin society. And their monstrous nature, however restrained, must always come between them and the rest of humanity. When you have a habit of occasionally sliding into cannibalism, it kind of builds a wall between you and the rest of the world.

It's not as if they can even consort with their own kind easily. Court dhampyrs are kept pretty busy working in their parent's interests, so they

don't have much time to socialize. Human-raised or independent dhampyrs are lucky to run into another of their kind — if they even know about others. As far as I can tell, there are something like 900 dhampyrs in the Middle Kingdom, hardly enough to form local communities.

DHAMPYRS IN THE COURTS

So, lets talk about those dhampyrs raised in the courts of the Kuei-jin. Historical perspective here would be good, I know. But as I said earlier, it just doesn't exist. I'll just proceed to what I know about how things are today.

The average dhampyr (if there can be said to be such a thing) born in the last 150 years or so has been brought up with a foot in each world. After all, one of the primary reasons for going to all the trouble of breeding in the first place is to get yourself a trustworthy tool for interacting with mortals — and if you keep your child out of the mortal world for most of his life, he's going to stick out like a sore thumb when he tries to look after your interests. And while you may school him thoroughly in his spiritual and physical superiority to mortals, you have to ensure that you teach him to keep these feelings in check when dealing with them. It won't do at all to have your dhampyr son rip the head off of the leader of your most important Scarlet Screen because he was "disrespectful." While these dhampyrs still see themselves as above mortals, they're less obnoxious about it and can function in human society without flipping out and ripping someone limb from limb. They are familiar with the existence of the courts that they serve, but probably don't know much about the inner machinations and intrigues that riddle it.

In any case, a dhampyr brought up in the courts probably has a pretty good idea what Kuei-jin society is all about and is fully aware of what she is. She might have been taught how to harness her Chi for some limited access to the mysteries of theshintai or trained rigorously in more physical pursuits. That all depends on her parent.

I've heard a few stories of parents raising their offspring completely within the confines of Kuei-jin society, usually in some demented attempt at karmic redemption for a Kuei-jin who was a bad or abusive parent in life. It seems to me that this tactic is inherently flawed. No child raised completely in the confines of the courts is ever going to turn out normal. Hell, I was fully grown when I did my time there, and it sure warped me.

Dhampyrs brought up entirely in the courts are usually too dangerous to be trusted. But

some get so fed up that they can be pretty useful. It's a case-by-case judgement call.

MORALITY

More than a few of us (myself included) have a big problem with the very concept of creating dhampyrs. I mean, we're damned! We didn't hop back up out of our graves because we won a contest or anything! We are here to atone for our wrongs in life, and it seems pretty fucking irresponsible to go around breeding while we're at it. Although they are born without our karmic burden, the souls of the Twilight Children are imperiled right out of the womb. The whisperings of their shriveled P'o may seem insignificant to those of us who have to deal with a living, breathing Demon squirming inside our head, but remember that the dhampyrs are half mortal as well. Most of us had no trouble leading ourselves straight to Yomi without a little evil man in our heads. We are responsible for the (half) life we create, and if our children end up frying in the Hell of Boiling Oil when they finally pass on, it's our fault.

But let's face facts: Most of us are painfully pragmatic creatures. We can argue over the morality of creating dhampyrs for years if we wish. Meanwhile, some enterprising jina will be out impregnating a mortal and raising his own private agent in the mortal world. Dhampyrs can make invaluable tools, and it's hard for ambitious Gui Ren to resist the temptation to breed.

Creating a dhampyr deliberately is morally tenuous enough. Worse than that though, some of our brethren (especially those perpetually scarlet-cycled fools in the Golden Courts) seem to see the Second Breath as nothing but an excuse for a big damn orgy and don't think a thing about sowing their seed all over the Middle Kingdom. The resulting dhampyrs are often left to be raised by their mortal mothers and may never see their fathers again. When I get to the section on independent dhampyrs, I'll talk all about the perils of this. Just as a note, if you can't keep yourself from dropping your pants or hiking your robes for anything that walks into the field of view (and believe me, it's like that in the Golden Courts sometimes), then your whole unlife is one big act of blindness.

TOOLS OF THE MAN

All right, let's be blunt about why most dhampyrs are born: The Hungry Dead need servants. They need eyes and ears in the mortal realm, especially in the daylight world. They need people who know what's going on, to control their Scarlet Screens, gather intelligence on their enemies and watch their backs

for them. Who better than their own children? To many of the Gui Ren, dhampyrs are kind of like very sophisticated and intelligent chihmei. Okay, that's a big simplification, but there is a kernel of truth in it. Dhampyrs are not conceived out of love or a need to bring life into the world. They are created because a Kuei-jin needs a tool for a job.

I realize that I'm making a broad generalization here. There are certainly some mandarins who have children, love them, cherish them as they did (or perhaps didn't) in life and make them part of the family. But I guarantee you that for every one parent like that, there are five who consider their children to be just more strategic assets. (Kind of like we are considering them. Let's be honest, Sen.)

This would seem to be in direct violation of several of the precepts of the Great Principle developed by Grand Arhat Xue. For instance, take the Way of Lineage. "Heed well those who have come before you, and respect those that come after, for they are all part of the truth." Now, I can't find the part in that sentence where it says "this only applies to Kuei-jin, not their children." Then again, if the mandarins *read* the Great Principle instead of "interpreting" it all the time, the courts would probably be a lot more peaceful.

ALONE IN A CROWD

Becoming part of the courts does not assuage a dhampyr's feelings of being an outsider. In fact, the effect is often quite the opposite. Kuei-jin society, due to unexplained mandates from the mandarins, often takes pains to isolate dhampyrs from each other. Remember, they are fairly rare already, so this isn't really all that difficult.

When dhampyrs socialize with each other, how they interact is largely dependent on how they've been raised. Given that a dhampyr's Kuei-jin parent usually imposes his own jaundiced views on his half-damned offspring, you can imagine what this leads to. Most dhampyrs in the courts are arrogant bastards, convinced that their parent is destined to one day become the next Bestowed Ancestor. They're anxious to tear down any rivals — opposing dhampyrs as well. Kuei-jin whose wu-mates have dhampyr offspring might allow their children to interact with each other, but the scarcity of dhampyrs makes that a very rare case indeed.

While most dhampyrs are undeniably servants of their unliving parents, and never amount to anything more, a scant few have earned enough regard from individual Kuei-jin to be invited to join a wu. In cases where the

dhampyr still serves her parent, she must get the parent's permission to bind herself to the guanxi of a wu. Independent dhampyrs need no such permission — but they have to find a jina willing to perform the guanxi ceremony. An all-dhampyr wu is certainly theoretically possible, but the participating dhampyrs might be hard-pressed to find a patron willing to perform the bonding ritual. I found no evidence that one has ever been formed, at least not in Quincunx history.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING HEIMIN

We all know the important role that the heimin or "half-people" play in relations between the courts. Impartial couriers are essential; without them, all the different Kuei-jin factions would spend their time sending each other's damned souls screaming back to Yomi.

Heimin status offers a dhampyr the best opportunity to participate in Kuei-jin society and actually be appreciated for it. In many ways, the Shade Walkers are naturals for the job. They can easily move from place to place unhindered by sensitivity to the sun. They can blend in with the great masses of humanity. And yet they can usually hold their own against any threat that challenges them in the course of their heimin duties. All in all, pretty good qualifications — plus you can make an argument that from our perspective, they really *are* "half-people."

It's important to note that the status they receive is almost completely due to the positions they hold. The underlying feeling that a particular Kuei-jin has toward dhampyrs in general remains unchanged, but they sometimes "respect the uniform."

Becoming heimin is not an easy process for a dhampyr. While Kuei-jin can declare themselves heimin, presenting their case to a court bigwig if there are any objections, the half-damned must first secure the sponsorship of a Kuei-jin. Usually this is their parent, but I have found a few instances where dhampyrs were sponsored by others — sometimes even above the objections of their parent.

DHARMAS AND DHAMPYRS

I think I've actually managed to discern one of the reasons that the half-damned stand so far apart from Kuei-jin society when they are in reality so close to us. The answer is the Dharmas.

Of all of the secrets of the Kuei-jin, the details of the different Dharmas are the most foreign to even the court-raised dhampyrs. The Dharmic paths are an intensely personal

thing to most of us, and we're unlikely to share the details with anyone — even our own progeny. Most dhampyrs pick up a working knowledge of the Dharmas (the orthodox ones at least) over the years, either through observation or study.

But to most Shade Walkers, learning about the Dharmas is sort of like studying someone else's religion. It may be interesting, but it doesn't really relate much to their own experience. The Dharmas aren't necessary for them, and they are incapable of deriving any real benefit from them anyway. The mandarins say that this is because dhampyrs are not spiritually advanced enough to understand the higher mysteries or insights into the Second Breath. Well, considering they don't even take the Second Breath, it's hardly unusual that they don't need spiritual insight into it. Most dhampyrs think of themselves as being too human to need such alien paths to enlightenment.

In any case, there is definitely a sort of spiritual prejudice toward the half-damned that keeps them from ever being fully accepted into Kuei-jin society. The fact that the dhampyrs can't interact freely with the Yin and Yang Worlds only

worsens Kuei-jin opinions of their children's spiritual development.

The thing that strikes me as being the most ironic is that, as concerned as they are with their own enlightenment, court Kuei-jin seem amazingly cavalier about the state of their own children's souls. I mean, the poor bastards already have a tendency toward the monstrous as a legacy of their heritage. What do their parents do about it? Why, *feed* it, of course.

The degree to which this is true varies from Dharma to Dhama. A righteous Resplendent Crane is likely much more concerned with his offspring's spiritual well-being than a mercurial Rootless Tree. Hell, the Whisper is as likely to kill his own offspring in the course of shedding an identity as he is to nurture it.

SCORN OF THE ELDERS

Dharmic prejudice doesn't fully explain the older Kuei-jin's erratic attitude toward dhampyrs. This seems to be applicable across the board, regardless of Dhama. The most elderly and "enlightened" of the Gui Ren seem to have an aversion bordering on the neurotic toward the Shade Walkers, and some refuse to deal with



them. Hatred doesn't seem to characterize the feeling exactly — it's more an extreme discomfort. Of course, the reaction of an uncomfortable mandarin is often indistinguishable from a mindless act of violence.

I've even heard rumors that the Bestowed Ancestor won't suffer a dhampyr to live in his sight unless she is fulfilling an official capacity. You remember that ugly incident in the Forbidden City two years ago, don't you? The dhampyr daughter of a Flesh Court mandarin took a wrong turn in the Imperial Palace and got her head ripped off for her trouble? They never did determine officially who did it, of course. My sources tell me that the blood trail led suspiciously close to the Bestowed Ancestor's chambers. If it hadn't been for the aid the Blood Court was funneling to the Silent Mandarins, it might have caused quite a rift between Beijing and Shanghai.

I have no idea why the elders are so twitchy around dhampyrs. It's probably the same reason there's no dhampyr history.

THE COURTS OF THE DEAD

Next up, I've prepared a court-by-court rundown on the conditions that dhampyrs face across the Middle Kingdom. It should give us a good idea where to start looking for sympathetic agents within the courts. While these generalizations on how the dhampyrs are treated hold true throughout most of the Quincunx, there are some regional variations in the roles that the dhampyrs are assigned. I've detailed these below. Let's start with how the Five August Courts deal with the Shade Walkers, since they are the Kuei-jin that most of us are familiar with.

THE BLOOD COURT

Would it surprise you to know that dhampyrs of the Blood Court most closely fit the generalizations I made above? Dhampyrs here are raised to respect and listen to their parents, are fed tales of their own superiority to mortals, and at the same time are treated with quiet disdain by the jina and mandarins.

But if a dhampyr hopes to become heimin, this is definitely the best place to be. As the seat of the Bestowed Ancestor of the whole damn Quincunx, the Blood Court gives dhampyrs the best shot at transcending their secondary role in Kuei-jin society and really getting to run with the movers and shakers (other than joining up with us and trying to tear the whole rotten bloated carcass of a society down, that is). The court needs messengers and the Bestowed Ancestor seems pretty happy to get the half-damned into roles where they're out of his sight.

Blood Court dhampyrs offer some pretty fertile ground for recruitment. The disaffected are always eager to turn on their oppressors.

THE FLAME COURT

This is going to sound really bad, but there are times when I do wish that the Kin-jin were still in charge of this place. At least it was a stable environment then, even if it was brimming with bad joss. Have you ever seen that American war film "Apocalypse Now"? There's this part in the middle of it where the main character and his companions get right up to the front of the fighting? Anyway, it's complete chaos — gunfire, artillery pouring down, flares all over the place, people dying. The hero stumbles around in the darkness, vainly trying to locate the command post and a ranking officer. It quickly becomes apparent that nobody is in charge. It's just a mess.

That's Hong Kong, as least as far as we're concerned.

Oh sure, the place is nominally under the control of the Quincunx, but damned if they can actually exert decisive influence. The two most powerful wu there, Victorious Whirlwind and the Righteous Devils, are at each other's throats half the time and the place is crawling with other shen, including a few stray Kin-jin who didn't get their filthy hides out of town when Hong Kong reverted to the People's Republic.

All this chaos makes Hong Kong a pretty good place for an independent dhampyr to escape notice, so it's no surprise that I've identified at least 10 of them operating in the city. Amusingly enough, at least half of them aren't even aware of what they are.

Dhampyrs working with either of the big Flame Court wu have proven very valuable for taking down some of the remaining Kin-jin that still infest the place.

THE FLESH COURT

Had they been given the luxury to do so, the Silent Mandarins of Shanghai would probably have regarded dhampyrs with the same subtle contempt that characterizes the treatment of the half-damned elsewhere. However, war dispenses with such frippery. Until very recently, if you could fight and were loyal to the Quincunx, you were welcome in Shanghai.

Quincunx dhampyrs in the Flesh Court ended up seeing a lot of action. As scouts, assassins, leaders of Scarlet Screens or whatever else came along, dhampyrs in Shanghai found fire-arm skills far more useful than all that calligraphy and diplomatic doublespeak that is so

essential in the more stable (or stagnant, if you prefer) courts.

Now that the Quincunx is back in control of Shanghai, the city's freewheeling days are over. There is still mopping up to do, of course. The Bestowed Ancestor wants every last gaki rooted out of Shanghai. But the Man is back in town, and dhampyrs walking Shanghai's streets had better start toeing the line — or move on to the free-fire zone that is Hong Kong.

THE BONE COURT

The Shade Walkers may be second-class citizens in most of the Quincunx, but that's a lot more regard than they find in the Bone Court. There are no half-damned in the Bone Court of Chongqing. Period. The ancestors of the Bone Court have forbidden the creation of — or even presence of — dhampyrs for as far back in history as I have been able to track — perhaps even back to when the Wan Xian were first cursed by the August Personage of Jade. Even heimin dhampyrs on business of the Quincunx are received poorly there.

The reasons for this prohibition are closely tied to the Bone Court's obsession with spiritual purity and Mount Meru. As you know, all efforts by Kuei-jin to return to the holy site have been thwarted by some strange force. (I once spoke to a Resplendent Crane jina who had tried to go there. He said the pain was so intense when he finally turned around, he felt as if his bones had turned to red-hot metal. Ech.) Ku Zu, the Bone Ancestor, backed by all of her mandarins, has declared that dhampyrs are spiritually unclean, polluted creatures created by weak Kuei-jin giving in to urges they should know better than to indulge. Of course, such base and corrupt creatures are not fit to be in the presence of the righteous descendants of the Court of the White Tiger, right? — much less be told the location of a place as sacred as Mount Meru.

This is all bullshit, of course. Along with the garden variety enmity that the older mandarins harbor for the dhampyrs, the fact is the Bone Ancestor and her toadies haven't tasted Yang in centuries. Dhampyrs remind them that they are desiccated corpses so they shoo them away.

This is patently stupid, if you ask me. If the ancestor of the Bone Court is really so fired up to know what's become of the Court of the White Tiger, why not send in someone who very well might be able to walk right up to the top of Mount Meru and ask? For all we know, the half-damned may not be subject to the same spiritual malaise that affects Kuei-jin attempting to return to the holy site. The

Bone Court mandarins' blind obsession with spiritual purity (or ego-driven sexual insecurity) may actually be costing the rest of us valuable knowledge about the fate of our lost brothers and sisters.

THE JADE COURT

There are few dhampyrs in the Jade Court, and those that are there are usually transplants. This is understandable given the spiritual bent of the court at Changan. Monks aren't known for going out and having kids... very often. Contempt isn't how I'd characterize the Jade Court's attitude toward the half-damned. It's more like condescension. While the court's movers and shakers recognize dhampyrs for their value in dealing with the mortal world (something that the bodhisattvas are notoriously bad at), they treat them like children when it comes to court policy. The Man politely listens to Shade Walker opinions and then discards them out of hand. After all, what could a young half-breed possibly know about court policy that a five-hundred-year-old monk wouldn't, right? Of course, these are the same "infallible" monks who turn to you and say things like "You mean they've invented electrical adding machines? How fascinating!"

What dhampyrs there are in the Jade Court are probably ripe for recruitment. At the very least we'll listen to their opinions about how things should be done.

CHILDREN OF THE GAKI

Well, if you think I had a hard time digging up information on the Quincunx, that was nothing compared to the hoops I had to jump through to get a straight answer out of my contacts among the gaki. But for you, anything.

Here's a brutal truth: Since the Burnings, no dhampyr sired by a Kuei-jin (gaki or not) who has fed off Japan's Chi has had a trouble-free birth. Some have been born with absolutely hideous deformities, and even those coming into the world physically intact are a little messed up in the head. For these reasons, the daimyos have forbidden the act of procreation until the Chi of Japan can be cleansed.

Mad Li Wen,

These deformed and corrupted dhampyrs, I believe, are the Makuro Hiko we have heard about. They are a dangerous trend that I humbly suggest requires your attention.

— *Ti Feng*

Well, they've *officially* forbidden it at least. More on that in a bit.

Among the Bishamon, the daimyos have historically kept a tight handle on the breeding habits of their subjects. Only unions with Japanese of pure blood were allowed. The Bishamon were determined to keep even their half-breeds as pure as possible. However, as long as a dhampyr — or maiko, to use the local term — comports himself to the wishes of his daimyo, there was no reason he couldn't rise in the eyes of the Bishamon. The gaki valued accomplished and heroic dhampyrs in their uji or others tied to the Bishamon — if not quite as much as their Kuei-jin counterparts.

The Genji really aren't coherent enough for me to truly define their attitudes toward dhampyrs, but I think it's a safe guess that this uji is willing to accept anyone into its ranks that can bolster its power — and keep it from getting annihilated by House Bishamon. These gaki are even willing to work with Kin-jin. I doubt that the steady gun arm of a dhampyr could really be refused.

But it's not just "freelance" dhampyrs that have a presence among the Genji. I've heard very reliable rumors that the embattled uji have been breeding with mortals quite a bit, despite — perhaps because of — the mutated nature of the offspring. Reportedly, these deformed dhampyrs' twisted Chi and corrupted bodies make them fearsome opponents. The Genji have restricted the use of these monstrosities to their fight with the Bishamon so far. Let's hope we don't see them showing up elsewhere in the Middle Kingdom anytime soon.

The Iga and Koga both have dhampyrs in their ranks. The ability of the half-damned to operate in daylight comes in handy to these supernatural security forces.

THE GREEN COURTS

Ah, scenic Korea. After that incident last year with that tainted dragon nest, I'll be happy not to go there for the next few decades.

My own feelings aside, I'll admit that if you have to be a dhampyr raised in one of the courts, you could do a lot worse than growing up here. The Kuei-jin of the Green Courts have their feet firmly planted in the Yin world, but not quite so much as in the Bone Court of the Quincunx. Few dhampyrs are born here, but that just makes the ones that are that much more valuable. The Green Courts' intense reverence for family means that these rare children play a much larger role in the courts. Korean Shade Walkers are a lot more loyal to their families, often viewing their parents al-

most as living gods. You can imagine that the local mandarins, with their typical "I wish it were still the Third Age" attitude, lap this reverence up. I think it says something pretty profound about the stagnation in Kuei-jin society that the Green Courts dhampyrs are so loyal, and it hasn't even occurred to the other courts to emulate our Korean brethren. If you're going to go to the trouble to have a child, you may as well treat him well, right?

Many dhampyrs of the Green Court are heavily involved in the Parallel Path, that series of supernatural safe-houses that their parents have set up. They run daylight security and the like, things that their parents just aren't willing to trust a Scarlet Screen to handle unsupervised. I suspect that the dhampyrs of the Green Courts would all be in favor of our cause — if it didn't involve disobeying their parents.

THE GOLDEN COURTS

I've been all over Asia, and the steamy jungles of southeast Asia I hate the most. This decadent hellhole is going to drag the rest of us back down to Yomi if we don't keep a close eye on it. Before I get into the local dhampyr "scene" I should warn you that it's hard to generalize about the Golden Courts. The penangallan queens in charge don't always agree with each other — each one rules her own roost in her own way. They *mostly* agree on how to deal with dhampyrs, but there must be patches of dissent. I just haven't found them, myself. Okay, enough hedging.

Most people think of the penangallan as the mistresses of the forces of Yang, so you might think that the jungles of southeast Asia would be crawling with dhampyric offspring. Not so. While the locals certainly indulge in the carnal pleasure of Yang with great enthusiasm, most of the queens of the Golden Courts are too busy killing demons and rooting out Yama King infiltration to carry a child to full term.

Actually, all the matriarchs I've met or heard of strictly control any sort of procreation activities on the part of their court subjects, male or female. This doesn't keep their male acolytes from fucking anything that moves, of course, and a good number of "stray" dhampyrs do crop up. Female Shade Walkers can look forward to being welcomed into the court with almost full status when they reach maturity here. The father is disposed of for his disobedience, of course. The raising of the dhampyr child is assigned to a female member of the court — usually one that has displeased the queen recently. Male Twilight Children are killed out of hand, along



with their disobedient fathers. Male dhampyrs lucky enough to survive to maturity usually get the hell out of the jungles at the first opportunity. Singapore offers some refuge for them. More on that in a moment.

Because of the akuma-infested nature of the whole area of the Golden Courts, dhampyrs are raised fully under the supervision of the courts. It would never do to have one's own child taken over by the enemy and used against you.

THE GOLDEN LION COURT

Finally, I can give you a firsthand account of a place outside the Quincunx. Singapore is swimming in dhampyrs. All right, I'm overstating the issue significantly, but there are more Shade Walkers per capita here than anywhere else in the Middle Kingdom. The reason why is an interesting one.

The Golden Lion Emperors seem to think that the best way to bolster their small numbers against the constant threat of the Golden Courts is to breed like crazy. I personally met at least 25 half-breeds when I was there — and they all came from just two families. I'm sure that was just a fraction of the population there. When you

figure how rare their kind usually is, it's pretty amazing to find that many in one place.

My guess is that the Golden Lions are birthing themselves an army, getting ready for the day they have to face the wrath of the Golden Courts, or the rumored plans of the Kin-jin to expand into the city. This has obviously been a long-term plan — dhampyrs don't just spring from the bellies of their mothers full-grown, after all. Additionally, "stray" dhampyrs escaping destruction at the hands of the queens of the Golden Courts find a warm reception in Singapore. The Golden Lion Emperors offer a safe haven and the companionship of a dhampyr's own kind, and all they ask is unquestioning loyalty. That's a small price to pay when the alternative is death.

Personally, I don't know who the emperors think they're fooling. If the penanggalan decided to swoop down on Singapore tomorrow night, the emperors would all be staked out on the beach the next morning when the Eye of Heaven slipped over the horizon. They could have an army of day-walking dhampyrs and it still wouldn't be enough to stave off destruction.

In any case, the dhampyrs of Singapore are obviously regarded a little better than in some

other places. However, the inherent paranoia caused by the Golden Lions' precarious situation makes it difficult to appeal to the dhampyrs there. They're too busy running around taking care of their parents' business to have time for revolutionary talk. However, properly applied graft and corruption? *Very* effective.

I'm not sure it's really worth infiltrating Singapore anyway. The Golden Lions are too preoccupied with the penanggalan to cause us any trouble, and they can usually be dealt with by appealing to their baser senses — money, power, that sort of thing. Still, I'm all for anything that irritates the established order.

THE INDEPENDENTS

Most of the dhampyrs out there are in some way associated with one of the courts. Most of them. But not all. There are some lone wolves out there in the Middle Kingdom — and in other parts of the world, I suppose. Nothing — other than a little sunburn perhaps — keeps them from just picking up and going wherever they see fit.

Most of the independent dhampyrs are refugees from one of the courts. Some just get fed up, some get bored, some are forced into exile by political maneuvering. Hopefully by now you can see that there're plenty of ways for a dhampyr to get on the wrong side of his court.

On rare occasions, dhampyrs grow up with no knowledge whatsoever of who or what they are. These are by far the most unpredictable and thankfully the most rare. These are usually the result of a scarlet-cycled Kuei-jin drinking a bit too deeply of the well of life. A surfeit of Yang in the body can easily lead to multiple sexual indiscretions, and Kuei-jin aren't exactly known for practicing safe sex.

The years wear a lot more heavily on the independents I've talked to. After all, they usually have no social structure to back them up or help them deal with the fact that they outlive everyone they know (and the children of everyone they know). Some go crazy and end it all prematurely — an action that, in a touch of pure irony, could bring them hopping right back up out of their graves as Kuei-jin.

Okay, that last bit is pure speculation, I'll admit. But it *could* happen, couldn't it?

The independent ones that stick around for any length of time are the most skilled — and dangerous — of the Shade Walkers. They have to be. After all, they can't go running for daddy and his wu whenever they're in trouble.

OTHER SHEN

Most shen view dhampyrs as lackeys of their unliving parents. If a dhampyr is connected to the courts, most of the other shen give him the same treatment they give any Kuei-jin's servant. For some, that's a wide berth. For others, a little brutality and bloodshed is on the agenda. Still, Shade Walkers often get more respect from the other denizens of the Middle Kingdom than they do from their own court.

I'd like to take this opportunity to confirm definitively that there is a dhampyr working with those crazy monk "demon hunters" in the Shih. We suspected this for many years due to some overly efficient exterminations of a few rogue Kuei-jin — including Wu Kwok Chow last year. We got lucky there, actually. If the Shih hadn't sensed his corruption and taken him down, it could have made our reputation even worse. I've actually seen this elusive dhampyr, although I can't say we've really met. I observed her, read her aura, and I'm positive she's a Shade Walker. I pity her next target.

You haven't gone completely unnoticed, apparently.

The Kin-jin still don't fully understand the truth of the dhampyrs. They believe them to be some strange variation on their own "ghouling" process. Ahh, if I had an ounce of jade for everything the Kin-jin don't understand...

WHY DO WE CARE?

You're already familiar with my reasons for considering the half-damned a viable strategic asset, but I suppose I should present them here anyway for the benefit of anyone you show this to who doesn't know me.

The first thing that the Shade Walkers are useful for is daylight operations that require a little more finesse and intelligence than our Scarlet Screens can provide. Sunlight, deadly to even the strongest of us, is merely uncomfortable to them. If we can expand the number of dhampyrs on our side, we can expand our operations into the daytime, when the Man is weak.

Second, they make ideal spies. As I mentioned earlier in this report, nobody notices the half-damned in most of the courts. They're heimlich at best, servants and lackeys at worst, beneath the notice of the Man. And those ancient fossils running the courts have a *very* hard time even conceiving that their offspring could betray them. The poor treatment that

dhampyr's get often makes them quite willing to work against their parents, and for us.

Third, they're often more mentally open and flexible than their parents. Most of them spend at least some time in the real world, and this puts them more in tune with what is really going on out here. Even dhampyr's who've been raised their entire life in the courts can be made to see the justness and rightness of our methods.

Finally, they're good luck. I don't mean that in any sort of flip way, I mean they are lucky. They have *really* good joss. Talk to any dhampyr, and he's sure to have a raft of stories about how amazingly lucky he's been throughout his life. A few of them even talk about "focusing their joss," tuning their luck to specific tasks. I don't know exactly what to make of it, but I have seen dhampyr's take absolutely ridiculous chances and live to tell about it. The stories are pretty persuasive.

Maybe you think I'm turning into one of those spirit-addled eunuchs in Beijing, but I'm all for good luck charms — especially if they carry automatic weapons.

WEAKNESSES

I should probably appraise you of the limitations of the dhampyr's while I'm at it. If we are actually viewing them as a useful asset, it's important that we don't use them in inappropriate situations.

Dhampyr's shouldn't be used for direct confrontations with Kuei-jin — at least not with any expectation of them succeeding at taking a Hungry Dead down. As formidable as some of them are (and trust me, some are absolutely deadly), most dhampyr's are just going to end up as bloody chunks if they go toe-to-toe with a Kuei-jin. I suppose this could serve as a distraction or delaying tactic, but such ends can be fulfilled much more effectively and with less potential waste by just using one of our Scarlet Screens.

It's also best to confine most operations using Shade Walkers to the material world, since dhampyr's need assistance to access the Yin and Yang Worlds. They *can* walk in the crab's footsteps to get to the Mirror Lands, but that's about it. They can't imbue jade or see dragon tracks, so they tend to get lost in the spirit worlds. You know me — I think they're better off without all of that stuff — but it can be a tactical liability.

It's also best to ensure you give dhampyr's operatives time to recuperate between missions. They recover far faster than any mortal ever could, but their partially mortal shells are still more fragile than our own.

PAWNS OF EVIL?

I hate to say it, but we're not the only ones interested in currying the dhampyr's favor (or covertly controlling them — but you know how I hate the language of oppression). The same things that make the dhampyr's such an attractive resource for us have also brought them to the attention of the Yama Kings.

This all came to mind because of something that happened way back when I was him, before I realized that the stagnant ways of the Blood Court weren't sitting too well with me. One of the mandarins was discovered consorting with that fat bastard Mikaboshi. After a little "persuasion" at the hands of the Black Iron Talons, the akuma revealed that his son had been the vehicle of his corruption. When the Talons got finished with that particular Shade Walker, there wasn't even enough left to bury. Very nasty business.

Anyway, I decided to investigate this a bit further, and I discovered something distressing: Out of 35 confirmed Yama King incursions into the courts, I determined that almost a third of those subverted had dhampyr offspring as close assistants. When you figure how rare dhampyr's are, that figure becomes much more significant.

As I described above, a lot of the half-damned get more than a little bitter as the decades pass and they fully realize their second-class status isn't going to change. It's easy to see why the whispered lies and promises of the lords and ladies of the Thousand Hells could prove attractive. Think about it. You've been working in the family business for over 100 years and your father *still* won't give you your own key to the office toilet.

Now, to what extent the Yama Kings have succeeded at subverting Shade Walkers, I don't know. All I can say is that the danger is there. This makes recruiting dhampyr's to our cause that much more dangerous, but as I detailed above, the risks are justified.

We just have to be vigilant. As always.

IN CLOSING...

I think that about covers everything I could come up with. I hope it's useful to you.

By the way, I heard about what happened to Kao Lang. My condolences. Still, I heard his sister got away. I hope we can locate her. If she's anything like Lang, we could really use her.

—
Lao Shang
BambooBoy@freenet.net

This letter is my responsibility and may have been a mistake, but it is time that you all know the truth. I hope it serves us well.

THE FINAL TESTAMENT OF JIN KAI WAI

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

You will forgive me for addressing you en masse and in such a familiar way, but my time is short. Some of you may not know me personally, but you will certainly have heard my name. I am Jin Kai Wai, son of Jin Yuar. Like you, I am one of the Shade Walkers, probably the oldest of our kind.

I am dying. It's only natural, I know, but it still feels strange to finally say it after 434 years. I am dying. I've been trotting around this world far too long — and now, on the very cusp of the next millennium (at least by the reckoning of the Western world), my time draws to a close.

I had expected to live my declining years in quiet contemplation and study. Some of you will laugh at that, but when the vitality begins to fade from your limbs, you too will find comfort in more cerebral pursuits. I had no intention of causing controversy of any kind, and my loyalty to my father was unquestioned.

Until one year ago this very night.

On that night I was visited by a man who revealed the truth to me — the truth of what I am, of what we all are. It changed everything for me, as I believe it will for you.

And so as I await the final breath to leave my body, I have transcribed this, the greatest secret of the half-damned. So that the knowledge will not die with me, I have sent it to as many of you as I could locate without alerting my father. It is fortunate indeed that I am so trusted. Read my words and heed them. The Age of Sorrow is coming, and we too have our part to play.

NO SHADOWS IN TWILIGHT

As you know, the official history of our kind is a sparse one. Our parents' historical records make few references to us, even though we all know that dhampyre have accompanied Kasi-jin for millennia. The history of the dhampyre is inextricably intertwined with that of our fathers the War Kasi. After all, without the parent, there would not be the child. While the roles that we dhampyre play in the courts today are important ones — intermediaries, intelligence gatherers, couriers and even assassins — we are forever overlooked by the courts we serve.

In dealing with your parents' peers you must have noticed that we dhampyre seem to make Kuei-jin vaguely uncomfortable, especially the mandarine and ancestors, and even the lauded bookish traitor. Most of the younger Kuei-jin don't even know why our presence makes a small chill run up their spines, why the gaze of something so insignificant as a Shade Walker can make their dead blood run cold. But I know why.

SINS OF THE FATHERS: THE THIRD AGE

Thousands of years ago, during the Age of Legends, everything was in its proper and auspicious place in the world. The Wan Xian — the Ten Thousand Immortals — were the guardians of the mortal peoples. The minions of the Yama Kings were kept in check, and the Wan Xian ensured that all was properly ordered under Heaven. It was a beautiful time.

From time to time one of the Immortals took a human lover, and sometimes a child was born of the union. They were called the Jin Hai, the Golden Children. Remember that name, for we are the Jin Hai's successors. While these children of the Wan Xian were mortal, their half-immortal blood could sustain them for untold centuries, and they were blessed with powerful *ji*. The Golden Children were heroes to the people, even more so than the Wan Xian in some ways. They were mortals after all, and walked among the people, not above them.

The Golden Children were appalled by the behavior of their divine parents as the Yama Kings' corrupting influence began to affect them toward the end of the Third Age. They looked on in horror as their parents taught themselves to rip *Chi* from the souls of living creatures, rather than taking it in moderation from the world around them as the August Personage of Jade had intended. They watched the ego and bloodlust of the Wan Xian grow like cancers.

At first the Golden Children attempted to voice their concerns to their parents, but the Wan Xian did not listen to the pleas of their "lowly offspring." Were they not nearly gods? The Wan Xian were intoxicated by their newfound existence, and the protests of their children fell upon deaf ears. The Golden Children could see their parents' downfall coming, and they could do little about it, except try to repair the damage the Immortals wrought. A direct confrontation seemed impossible. What were the powers of the Jin Hai against beings that were virtual deities themselves?

THE CHILDREN'S REVOLT

The corrupt and despicable behavior of the Wan Xian continued throughout the Third Age. As the depredations of the *Chi*-hungry Immortals grew worse, the Jin Hai could no longer simply try to clean up after their parents' depredations. Word spread among the Golden Children, and they held a secret meeting in a sacred cave at the base of Mount Meru. There, the assembled Children decided that the time had come to directly confront the Wan Xian with their dishonor in the face of Heaven. The Children of the Ten Thousand Immortals would confront the mandarine of the Court of Meru, and if they could not make their parents listen to one last plea for reason and honor, then the Jin Hai would oppose the Wan Xian.

It must have been an incredible sight: the grandeur of ancient Meru, the mandarine of the court, confronted by hundreds of their enraged offspring outfitted for war. But all did not go as planned. Blinded by rage at this open defiance by their very own children, the Wan Xian did the

unepeakable. Right there, in the sight of the August Personage of Jade, the Immortals flew their children and feasted on their Chi. As blessed by Heaven as they were, the Jin Hai's righteous fury was no match for the bloodlust of their dread parents. The blood of the Golden Children stained the tiles of the palace of Meru red forevermore.

Heaven and Earth wept for the Children. Their parents did not.

Soon after, the August Personage of Jade finally unleashed his fury upon the errant Wan Xian. But it was too late for the Jin Hai. Only a few who were unable to come to the sacred cave and attend the confrontation were spared, and many of them were so shocked by what had happened that they wished they had died that day with their cousins. Those last few went into hiding, afraid for their lives even after the August Personage had punished the Wan Xian. The precursors of the dhampyre passed into the mists of legend.

LIVING IN THE SHADOWS: THE FOURTH AND FIFTH AGES

The August Personage of Jade's curse transformed the Wan Xian into the Wan Kwei — the Ten Thousand Demone. The Kwei-jin were born. No longer did they walk in the sunlight and breathe deeply of the Chi of the world. Now they were locked in rotting corpses, forced to steal the Chi of others to sustain themselves.

The first dhampyre was born early in the Fourth Age. No one knows its name or sex. Its Kwei-jin mother was so revolted by the child that she killed it. But it was not the fact that the baby was half Kwei-jin that so repulsed her — it was the soul she saw within it. It was familiar to her, the soul of the child she had borne while still blessed by Heaven, the Golden Child she had brutally slain in a fit of bloodlust.

This unsettling experience repeated itself time after time throughout the following centuries, as child after child was born with the soul of one of the slain Jin Hai within it. After repeated births, the mandarin forbade the creation of children until the situation was resolved.

It was long after the curse was lifted before a child was allowed to survive to adulthood. Gradually, as they grew farther and farther removed from their formerly blessed existence, the Wan Kwei lost the ability to recognize the souls of their dead children. Only a few knew of the secret of the rebirths to begin with, and even they began to think that the reincarnations had stopped.

But they didn't stop. The mandarin just stopped being able to see it.

Each dhampyre born down through the years has borne the soul of a Golden Child within him. Each dhampyre's soul is actually that of one of his predecessors, reborn in a half-dead body. Over and over the souls have cycled through, mandated by Heaven to return and accompany their parents.

This is the root of the Kwei-jin's disdain for dhampyre. The oldest of the bodhisattvas remember the Jin Hai, and though they cannot see the souls of the children they callously destroyed, they haven't trusted the dhampyre since. Perhaps they still see the Golden Children in their dreams as they collapse on the floor of the palace of Meru — visions of their own depravity haunting them for eternity.

I believe our parents are occasionally granted glimpses of what is within us as well. They do not know what it is about us that disturbs them. They do not understand why our stares seem so accusatory. They cannot fathom why they sometimes fear us.

Why has Heaven dictated that we shall return millennium after millennium? Perhaps we, the Shade Walkers, represent a message from the August Personage of Jade. "You destroyed your own children before and shall be confronted with the consequences of that mistake over and over again." Perhaps our souls are necessary in some unknown way for the workings of the Age of Sorrow. It is an undeniable truth that there are more dhampyre alive today than at any other time in our history. Is that truly a meaningless statistic?

SLIPPING THROUGH HISTORY

In China, dhampyre helped with the scribbling during the Shang Dynasty. We fled the fall of that dynasty with our parents. We fought the minions of the demon hunter Qi, yet realized the righteousness of his cause and ultimately stood aside. That is why we can still withstand the gaze of the Eye of Heaven while our parents cannot. Yet the memory of our betrayal makes the sunlight uncomfortable to us.

Shade Walkers tried to smooth over relations between the courts during the Han Dynasty. We rode with Ghengis Khan and the Mongols. We watched as the Western powers made their first moves into Asia, sometimes acting as scouts and spies for our masters. We walked the Long March with Mao.

Wherever the Kwei-jin have been, the half-damned have been as well. We stand in the shadow of our parents, our only sin that of being born. We are a constant reminder of the Kwei-jin's weakness. We are too valuable to kill, too much of a reminder to acknowledge.

OUR LEGACY

Where does this leave us?

As I said, a year ago this very night I was visited by one who knows all about us, because he has accompanied us down through the ages. I will not say his name, but he will doubtless visit others of you in the years to come. He has watched, and waited, and decided that it is time for us to know what time has denied us: who we are. Our parents cannot tell us and would not if they could.

And so I leave my last testament, so that you, my brothers and sisters, may know what we truly are. We are not just the half-damned, we are also the half-blessed. We are the children of the Wan Xian as well as the Wan Kwei. Our parents are not just monsters, but fallen souls who need to be guided back home. It is our duty not to serve our parents but to guide them, to help them in their own redemption.

As I pass beyond this life and return to the Great Cycle — and hopefully avoid the scourges of the Qomí world, I leave this, my last gift to those Twilight Children who come after me.

I cannot give you power. I cannot give you peace. But I can give you truth.

Jin Kai Wal

Beijing, 18 June 1999

Sin Yuan,

It will come as no surprise to you that I write concerning the matter of your son Sin Kai Wai's deathbed letter. In the months since your child's death that damnable text has spread far and wide, and has fallen into the hands of many who should never have seen it. When I say the Bestowed Ancestor is angered by this turn of events, I am exercising the most advanced form of understatement. Until this matter is resolved, I advise you to stay far away from the Blood Court and guard your daylight havens well.

Do not fail to act, however. Your complacency allowed you to miss the treachery of your very own son as it festered within your house. You will be held accountable; your actions now determine what form justice takes in this case. You are quite fortunate that there is no time for recriminations now.

My agents in lands beyond the August Courts report that Sin Kai Wai's crazed ramblings have found a receptive ear among the mad and the inodent. Apparently, several of the so-called maiko among the Genji of Japan have referred to it in intercepted communication. I also have it on good authority that the letter has found its way to the Golden Lion Court, which swarms with Twilight Children.

In Hong Kong, the situation is most grave. As you know, the Flame Court is still unstable despite efforts to eliminate the Kirin once and for all. The recent problems with the aluma Kao Lang might well have something to do with your son's own transgressions. The Bestowed Ancestor has made it very clear that we can ill afford to see our children and servants disrupted in such uncertain times.

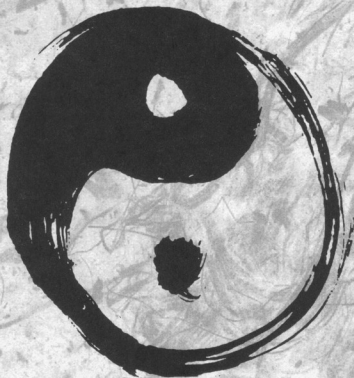
We must deal with the situation with the utmost dispatch. The assertions of your mad child only serve to poison our children against us. All copies of this letter must be found and destroyed, along with any who have read it. This heresy must be stopped. You must be at the forefront of these reparations if you hope to survive another year. Certainly, your actions now determine whether or not I am inclined to speak on your behalf to the ancestors.

Do not compound your dishonor by failing me. To do so would seal your fate.

— Li Xia Fu, Eastern Wave of the Eternal Storm, III



CHAPTER TWO: DEAD ALIVE



This chapter covers all of the special rules for running dhampyrs in your *Kindred of the East* chronicle, including details on character creation and the special loss that pervades the daily existence of the dhampyr. This chapter uses the material on dhampyrs previously presented in the *Kindred of the East Companion* as its basis, repeating and expanding on those few pages here for convenience. Keep in mind that the *Kindred of the East Companion* rules are the “quick and dirty” ones, while the information presented here is considerably more detailed.

MAKING A DHAMPYR

The character creation process for dhampyrs roughly parallels that of Cathayans, but the Shade Walkers human half makes for some interesting differences. The table on pages 40-41 summarizes the entire process and the following section provides you with all the salient details. When dhampyr creation doesn't differ from that for a Kuei-jin (or when the differences are only minor) we only address those stages briefly.

Dhampyrs are assumed to be between 25 and 50 years old when created. If you want to make an older dhampyr, you need to buy the Age Background (see p. 57).

CHARACTER CREATION PROCESS

• Step One: Concept

Develop character concept, choose Nature, P'o Nature and Demeanor

• Step Two: Attributes

Prioritize and assign dots in the three categories: Physical, Social, Mental (7/5/3). Your character automatically has one dot in each Attribute.

• Step Three: Abilities

Prioritize and assign dots in the three categories: Talents, Skills, Knowledge (13/9/5). No Ability higher than 3 at this time.

• Step Four: Advantages

Choose a Discipline (one Demon Art, shintai, Tzu Wei or Feng Shui), Backgrounds (any 5), and rate Virtues (7). Your character automatically starts with the Passive Joss special ability and one free point in each Virtue. You may choose to have no Disciplines in exchange for additional freebie points (see below).

• Step Five: Finishing Touches

Record P'o score (1), Humanity (Conscience + Self-Control), Joss (Humanity), starting Chi (Yin = Self-Control, Yang = Courage) and Will-power (Courage).

Spend freebie points (15). You can spend 25 freebie points if you have no Disciplines.

Purchase Merits and Flaws (optional).

Maximum Humanity is equal to 10 - (P'o + Age Background).

P'O ARCHETYPES

- **The Bandit:** Your P'o is a rampaging, savage monster — but a cold and calculating one.
- **The Barbarian:** Your P'o rejects the true way in favor of those of the decadent West.
- **The Deceiver:** Your P'o undermines your Humanity through lies and treachery.
- **The Demon:** Your P'o is a grotesque monster who lives only to destroy.
- **The Fool:** Your P'o distracts you from the true path in favor of the easier way.
- **The Legalist:** Your P'o insists on rigid obedience and even more rigid punishments.
- **The Monkey:** Your P'o is a capricious creature bent on preventing inner harmony.
- **The Slave:** Your P'o seeks to abase you before your "superiors."

DISCIPLINES

SHINTAI DISCIPLINES

Your maximum rating in a shintai is limited by your character's age (age in years/100, rounded up).

- **Blood Shintai:** Control the body's humors to gain extraordinary power.
- **Bone Shintai:** Use the half-dead form as a cold receptacle for Yin and death.
- **Jade Shintai:** Place the body in harmony with the earth and bend it to your will.
- **Flesh Shintai:** Make the body as pliable and mutable as the humors that govern it.
- **Flame Shintai:** Release the power of Chi as raging fire.
- **Ghost-Flame Shintai:** Conjuring the shade-time flame of the spirit world.
- **Beast Shintai:** Assume control over the wild things of the night.
- **Smoke Shintai:** Move like wisps of smoke — subtle and cloying.
- **Storm Shintai:** Summon the fury of the heavens.

DEMON ARTS

- **Black Wind:** Gain speed and precision from the Demon's fury.
- **Demon Shintai:** Take on the demon form and conquer all enemies.
- **Iron Mountain:** Shrug off pain and injury thanks to the immortal Demon soul.
- **Kiai:** Unleash the Demon's anger in a devastating scream.

OTHER DISCIPLINES

- **Feng Shui:** Learn to manipulate the flow of Chi across the world.
- **Tzu Wei:** Read and manipulate the Joss that surrounds you.

JOSS

- **Passive Joss:** Let the forces of luck that surround you at all times protect you from harm.
- **Active Joss:** Focus your Passive Joss at particular moments.
- **Joss Binding:** Tie your Joss to a particular Talent or Skill.

BACKGROUNDS

- **Age:** You are graced with age and experience — and quite possibly great power.

- **Allies:** You have confederates and helpers whom you can trust.
- **Contacts:** You have information sources of many different sorts.
- **Face:** Unlike your brethren, you have the respect of some of your parents' people.
- **Fame:** You are a celebrity among mortals, recognized in some circles at least.
- **Influence:** You have sway in mortal affairs.
- **Jade Talisman:** You possess a Chi-storing talisman.
- **Magic Artifact:** You possess one or more magical devices.
- **Mentor:** An older dhampyr or a Kuei-jin watches over and advises you.
- **Nushi:** A guardian spirit protects you.
- **Resources:** You have access to wealth and power.
- **Retainers:** Agents of various sorts are in your employ.
- **Rites:** You have knowledge of the social rituals of the Kuei-jin.

VIRTUES

- **Self-Control:** Your ability to restrain yourself from following the urges of others — and your own dark side. Self-Control determines Yin Chi.
- **Conscience:** The voice of reason, tolerance and mercy within you.
- **Courage:** Your capacity to face your fears and overcome them. Courage determines Yang Chi.

FREEBIE POINTS

Trait	Cost
Attribute	5 per dot
Ability	2 per dot
Discipline	10 per dot
Virtue	2 per dot
Humanity	1 per dot
Willpower	1 per dot
Active Joss	10 points
Joss Binding	10 points



GROUP DYNAMICS

Dhampyrs are usually loners, but for play purposes they need to be able to operate within a group of characters. There are two basic options when playing a dhampyr character: a mixed *wu* or an all-dhampyr group. The Storyteller should decide, but each option has different implications for the dhampyr character(s):

- **Option 1: One Among the Hungry Dead:** Let's be honest — if you are playing a dhampyr in a group of Kuei-jin, you probably have the weakest character in the group as far as raw power goes. That's just a fact. There are a few ways around this, such as judicious buying of the Age Background, but in the end, the Kuei-jin are just more powerful. Hopefully that shouldn't mean much. Dhampyrs are not meant to be all-out combat machines — although they can still give lesser opponents a right pasting — and have lots of social benefits.

Playing a dhampyr in a *wu* of Kuei-jin is a leap of faith, and the Storyteller should respect that. The player accepts the fact that his character will be less powerful when the Chi starts to fly — with the understanding that he'll be able to shine at other times. The Storyteller — and the other players — must allow this to happen, providing moments when daylight activities, being “beneath notice” and better contacts in the human world actually provide a distinct advantage. Chronicles about chasing spirits through the Yang World just do not suit dhampyr characters. In fact, if the chronicle is heading for an extended stay in the Mirror Lands or the Thousand Hells, the Storyteller might want to encourage a dhampyr's player to give that character a hiatus until things return to the material world.

With that consideration out of the way, getting a dhampyr into a Kuei-jin chronicle is not all that difficult. Even though they aren't as powerful as full Kuei-jin when it comes to Chi powers, their *joss* makes it possible for Shade Walkers to try stuff that makes even the Gui Ren blanche (or would, were that possible). Properly played, a dhampyr can inject a great element of action and unpredictability into a game that might be getting a little stodgy.

For instance, if your dhampyr has the Mentor Background, maybe one of the other players in the *wu* is his patron. Or perhaps he has been assigned to the *wu* as an assistant by the mandarins of the court — or as a spy to ensure that the Kuei-jin have not strayed from their path.

Or, if your Storyteller is willing to go to the effort, your dhampyr can be a free agent who just happens to keep getting mixed up in the Kuei-jin *wu*'s business. Remember, a high *joss* rating ensures your life will be “interesting,” so it's not that much of a stretch for your Shade Walker to keep falling into situations that bring her in contact with the rest of the group.

- **Option 2: Five Halves Make a Whole:** In terms of balance, an all-dhampyr group is easy to handle. Everyone has the same basic capabilities, but using the Age Background, Disciplines and *Joss*, you can still end up with a wide variety of abilities (and personalities, of course). The big hurdle here is the reason the group exists at all: such groupings are very rare in the Middle Kingdom.

The easiest option is to start such a chronicle in either Hong Kong or Singapore. These are the two hotspots of dhampyr activity, with far more than their fair share of the half-damned. It would be very easy for a few local dhampyrs to cooperate toward some common goal. With the Golden Lion Emperors trying to use Shade Walkers against the *penagallan* of the Golden Courts, and the Quincunx still fighting over the fate of Hong Kong's Flame Court, there are plenty of conflicts for such a group to become involved in.

In more traditional areas, dhampyrs could congregate among the servants of a court or the Scarlet Screens of the local vampires. As long as the characters are subtle about their association, they should escape notice — such is their lot, after all. But if the Kuei-jin catch sight of their “organizing,” the dhampyrs are likely to be reprimanded or recruited into another battle altogether.

One unique possibility for a dhampyr group exists: a family. Although such a situation would be exceptional, it isn't inconceivable for an especially Yang-aded Kuei-jin to have sired (or even given birth to) several children over the last few centuries. As long as a few players purchase levels in Age, a group of half-siblings is very possible.

STEP ONE'S CONCEPT

A clear concept for your dhampyr is absolutely crucial for shaping her into a rounded individual. Since dhampyrs are not fully at the mercy of their half-damned nature, you have to define them a bit more clearly than you would a normal Kuei-jin character. Without the guiding framework of the Dharmas and directions to give shape to a dhampyr, it can sometimes be hard to get a grasp on a Shade Walker's personality.

How your dhampyr was brought up shapes her life. Whether the dhampyr's unnatural parent played a large part in his upbringing molds her attitudes and prejudices. It also affects how she sees herself — whether she is a mortal with a demon half or a demon who is half mortal.

Next, consider the dhampyr's current relationship with Kuei-jin society. Is she a loyal servant of his parent, carrying out her wishes without question? Has he seen the wisdom of the Bamboo Princes and joined them? Has he

turned his back on the courts entirely and put his talents to use in the mortal world? Or perhaps he has taken the middle path, becoming one of the heimin, independent in action, but still tied to the courts.

Most dhampyrs, even those functioning as part of a court, tend to be loners. Neither human enough for the mortal realm nor fully damned like their parents, the Shade Walkers usually find themselves caught between two worlds.

NATURE AND Demeanor

You can choose from the full range of Natures and Demeanors for a dhampyr character, but the inherent "misfit" status of the half-damned makes some Natures more likely than others. Their phenomenal luck tends to make even relatively conservative dhampyrs a bit reckless deep down. Remember that although they are mortal, they are only half human.

Very few dhampyrs are Traditionalists unless their parents have dominated nearly every moment of their upbringing, and the P'o that seethes in a Shade Walker's heart rebels against the passive nature of the Conformist. The dead half of their souls usually keeps them from indulging in the hedonistic lifestyle of the Bon Vivant (or at least suffer inner turmoil about it), and not very many dhampyrs are in touch enough with their human side to be true Caregivers.

Dhampyrs of the courts are more likely to be concerned with control and power. Autocrat, Director and Judge are common Natures for such characters. More iconoclastic Shade Walkers — those that are independent, serve as heimin, or who are unaware of what they are — are much more likely to be Visionaries, Rebels, Loners or Rogues.

The Demeanor of a dhampyr — her public persona — is completely up to you. Over their long life spans, most dhampyrs wear many faces.

P'o NATURE

You must also choose a Nature for your character's Demon soul, her P'o. This is done just as with a Kuei-jin character, although the implications are slightly different. The "Conditions for Takeover" listed with every P'o Nature (see *Kindred of the East*, pp. 92–93) won't come into play with a dhampyr, since shadow soul is only possible on the brink of death. You (and your Storyteller) should pay attention to these conditions, however, for roleplaying hints. When these situations come up, the P'o writhes, screams or whispers in the dhampyr's mind. This has no concrete game effect, but it can be very disconcerting psychologically.

STEP TWO: ATTRIBUTES

Dhampyrs' supernatural parentage usually ensures that they are exceptional in some way. To reflect that, you get 7/5/3 dots to spend on your character's primary, secondary and

tertiary Attributes. As with any other character, you get one free dot in each Attribute. A human body can get only so developed, though; dhampyrs are limited to a maximum of five dots in any Attribute, just like other mortals.

STEP THREE: ABILITIES

One thing dhampyrs have in abundance is time. Time to learn things, time to hone skills, time to develop latent talents. A dhampyr that looks like she's in her mid-twenties might easily have skills that only the very old and experienced mortal have time to develop.

You get 13/9/5 dots to spend on the dhampyr's Talents, Skills and Knowledges. They are subject to the usual limitations, of course. No more than three dots can be assigned to any Ability during this step, although you can use freebie points to exceed this limit later on. No Ability can be raised higher than five dots.

STEP FOUR: ADVANTAGES

DISCIPLINES

As mentioned before, learning Disciplines is tough for dhampyrs. You may start with one level in any Demon Art (except Hellweaving, which is the domain of *akuma* alone) or shintai at character creation. You can also use freebie points to buy additional Disciplines or levels at a cost of 10 points per level. Remember that unless you buy the Age Background, you are limited to level 1 in any shintai; like a Kuei-jin, a dhampyr can't have a Demon Art higher than her P'o rating.

Choose your character's starting Discipline carefully. It's very expensive to raise them later. When considering which one to choose, just look at the lower levels of the Discipline and see how they could enhance the type of character you have in mind. A subtle dhampyr looking to blend in with mortal society might want to pick up a Discipline like Smoke Shintai. Those less concerned with subtlety and more concerned with kicking butt should look at Flesh or Bone Shintai.

For sheer combat power, Demon Arts obviously offer the biggest bang for the buck, but smart dhampyrs are wary of their lure. They offer the easiest road to power, but the use of Demon Chi always risks fire soul — and the possible strengthening of the P'o. Excessive reliance on a Demon Art is a good way to end up fully damned.

Dhampyrs can also learn Feng Shui and Tzu Wei, detailed in the *Kindred of the East Companion*. These Disciplines are extensions of mortal mystic practices, and dhampyrs can be quite skilled at them; the half-damned can learn these arts up to level 5 just like a Kuei-jin. Note that Tzu Wei can have unique effects on the dhampyrs' inherent joss (see p. 56).

Some dhampyrs concentrate on honing their skills and physique instead of learning the ways of Chi. Your character can forgo having training in any Disciplines if you wish. If you take this option, you may spend an additional 10 freebie points. In this case, you obviously

can't use freebie points to buy Disciplines, unless other Traits (usually Attributes or Abilities).

BACKGROUNDS

The life of the half-damned is seldom even vaguely normal. The influence of a supernatural parent or parents can shape the entire course of a dhampyr's long life — for good, ill or both. You can purchase all of the Backgrounds available for Cathayan characters, with the exception of Hotoscope (since dhampyrs have neither direction nor Dharma, it would do them little good anyway). The Nushi and Rites Backgrounds also have some limitations for dhampyrs (see below). All Backgrounds off-limits to Kuei-jin are similarly unavailable to dhampyr characters. Dhampyrs have the normal 5 points to spend on Backgrounds and have access to two unique Backgrounds: Age and Face (see pp. 57-58).

The Mentor Background is especially appropriate and useful for dhampyrs in mostly Kuei-jin groups. They need all the backing they can get if they are going to be lurking around Kuei-jin society.

- **Nushi:** Dhampyrs are perfectly capable of taking part in *guanxi* (however rare it is that the Shade Walkers are invited to join a *wu*), so they too can contribute to their *wu*'s Nushi Background. The points that dhampyrs contribute, however, count as only half the normal points (round up), reflecting their tenuous bond with the spirit world. Any spiritual bond is invaluable to a Shade Walker who wants to survive in the courts, however.

- **Rites:** Dhampyrs cannot enact mystical rites because they lack the Kuei-jin's inherent connection to Chi and the spirit realms. They can however participate in social rites and ceremonies. You may purchase the Rites Background as normal but can only choose primarily social rites, such as The Way of the Lone Walker (very common for heimin characters) or Embrace the Spirit's Change (common for elder dhampyrs in the courts).

THE P'Ō

A dhampyr character starts out with a single dot in P'Ō. You can't buy more with freebie points. Only the Strong P'Ō Flaw can modify your P'Ō rating (see p. 59).

VIRTUES

Dhampyrs have mortal Virtues rather than those of their Kuei-jin parents. A starting half-damned character gets one free dot in Conscience, Self-Control and Courage, and seven points to distribute among them. Additional points can be bought with freebie points as normal.

Keep in mind that the Virtues determine both your character's Chi levels and Humanity (which in turn determines her Joss).

HUMANITY & WILLPOWER

A dhampyr's starting Humanity is equal to the total of her Self-Control and Courage Virtues up to a maximum of (10 - [P'Ō + Age]). Additional points can be purchased at a cost of one freebie point per dot.

A dhampyr's starting Willpower is equal to his Courage rating and can be raised in the normal manner. Unlike Kuei-jin, dhampyrs can start play with a Willpower lower than 5.

STEP FIVE: FINISHING TOUCHES

The last step involves recording various derived ratings, spending freebie points and determining Merits and Flaws (if your troupe is using them). The table on page 41 provides the costs for freebie points.

Joss

A dhampyr character has a Joss Trait tied to her Humanity. It is a pool of points based on Humanity, in the same way Demon Chi is based on the P'Ō Trait.

For more on the uses of Joss, see pages 54-57.

MERITS AND FLAWS

The ups and downs of dhampyr lives are different from those of the Hungry Dead, although they obviously share some things in common. You have to adhere to the same list of disallowed Merits and Flaws with dhampyr and Kuei-jin characters (see *Kindred of the East*, p. 94). The following Merits and Flaws from *Vampire: The Masquerade* are also off-limits to Dhampyrs: Blush of Health, Can't Cross Running Water, Cast No Reflection, Child, Conspicuous Consumption, Disease Carrier, Grip of the Damned, Repelled By Crosses, Touch of Frost or Unbondable. Dhampyr characters also cannot take the Defiled, Different Body or Vengeful Ancestors Flaws from *Kindred of the East*. Illiterate is a pretty rare flaw among dhampyrs, since the whole reason they are conceived is often as a liaison for their parents with the mortal world. The Akuma Flaw is also rare, simply because dhampyrs branded as traitors seldom live very long.

Most of the recommended Merits and Flaws (*Kindred of the East*, p. 94) apply to Shade Walkers as well. The half-damned's close relationship with their personal luck makes Superstitious, Daredevil and Nine Lives especially good choices for them.

Dhampyrs also have some problems and advantages directly related to their half-dead state. You may also choose from the Merits and Flaws listed on pages 58-60.

THE PRELUDE: SPARK OF HALF-LIFE

Now that you have assigned all of the numbers that define what your character can do, it's time to consider all the little things that really bring her to life.

What does your character look like? How does she dress? Does she stand out in a crowd of normal mortals or blend in with them? What are her likes and dislikes? Any details you can come up with will help you portray your character. Here are a few questions to consider during the prelude:

- How old were you when you "came of age?" How old are you now? What was your first brush with the supernatural?

When a dhampyr comes of age determines how they eventually turn out. Have you just entered the world of

KUEI-JIN PARENTS

Every once in a while, a dhampyr is born of the union of two Kuei-jin instead of a Cathayan and a mortal. This is a rare occurrence, as implied in the previous chapter of this book, but it does happen.

Dhampyrs with two Kuei-jin parents usually lead more sheltered lives than their brethren, but are often much more in touch with the higher goings on of the courts. Such dhampyrs may also possess a somewhat stronger connection to the supernatural world. This sort of upbringing raises all sorts of interesting questions for the character's prelude. Did her parents get along? Does she feel superior to other dhampyrs because she is the child of two Kuei-jin? Think about these things and take a look at the suggested Merits, Flaws and Backgrounds when making your dhampyr:

Suggested Merits: Chi Aptitude, Dharmic Schooling

Suggested Flaws: Sheltered Upbringing, Strong P'o, Sun Allergy

Suggested Backgrounds: Age, Face, Mentor, Rites

the Kuei-jin, or were you raised within it? How long has your dhampyr been alive? Has he lived beyond a normal life span without realizing who and what he is?

• **What role did your Kuei-jin parent(s) play in your upbringing?**

Not all Kuei-jin take a large part in their offspring's upbringing. Some leave the dhampyr to trusted Scarlet Screens or mortals held loyal with the chains of Obligation. Others don't even know about their children, allowing the dhampyr to grow up in a fairly normal environment. Did your Kuei-jin parent raise you at all? Do you even know who he (or she) is? If so, has he acknowledged you? How do you feel about a parent who is a bloodsucking monster?

• **How has your experience with your P'o shaped you?**

Every dhampyr grows up with a little voice in her head, telling her she's not good enough, that no one really loves her, urging her toward horrible deeds and actions. Most dhampyrs resist the urges of the P'o, but that doesn't mean there aren't profound psychological effects. (The P'o resists Virtue rolls, remember, which means the dhampyr's impulse control is less than perfect.)

What is your relationship with your P'o like? How have you come to terms with the Demon in your head? Do you occasionally give in to it to keep it quiet? Or have you suppressed it as much as possible, watching all your own actions for signs of the beast's influence? Do you see the P'o as a part of you or as an outside influence? Have you been through therapy? Has your relationship with your P'o affected the way you relate to others?

• **What part has your amazing joss (both good and bad) played in your life?**

Joss can be a double-edged sword. While it usually means good fortune for your dhampyr, it also means that peace and quiet are hard commodities to come by. How do you perceive your joss — if you perceive it at all? Are the forces of fortune a palpable part of your life, or do you just take them for granted as part of the way the world works? If you have the Tainted Joss Flaw (see p. 59), what kind of terrible things have happened to the people around you as a consequence of your own good fortune? Do you sometimes look at your "good" luck as a curse?

• **Do you align yourself more closely with the mortal or the supernatural world?**

Dhampyrs are decidedly caught between two worlds. Most of the time, one of their parents is a normal human while the other is a supernatural monstrosity. At some point in their upbringing, most dhampyrs decide (consciously or not) which side they align themselves with most. Do you see yourself as a monster with a human half or a human with a monstrous half? Do you try to emulate the world of mortals as much as you can even as you stalk the night with the Kuei-jin? Have you turned your back on your humanity altogether, embracing the Demon in your soul and treating humans as nothing more than sources of cheap, fast Chi?

DHAMPYR PARENTAGE

Kuei-jin can only viably mate with humans or other Kuei-jin. While it may be possible (if rather repellent) for Kuei-jin to have sex with other *shen*, only pairings with mortals or other Hungry Dead produce offspring.

Basically, dhampyrs are dhampyrs regardless of any special parentage. The power of the Kuei-jin blood either overwhelms any other inherited spiritual component or kills the child in the womb. So mortals touched by other supernatural creatures — ghouls, kinfolk and the rest of the menagerie — can usually have a child with a Cathayan, but that child is a "normal" dhampyr. No extra perks, except perhaps for some unwanted attention from a powerful grandparent.

Dhampyrs can only have children with normal humans — even other dhampyrs won't do. Shade Walkers need the life-force of a fully living partner if they want to be fruitful and multiply.

While the child of a dhampyr is fully mortal, they tend to have some pretty strange luck. In game terms, such mortals have limited access to the joss that most dhampyrs possess. See page 55 for more details.

BODIES AND SOULS

Even though they are undetectable to normal science, there is a lot more to the half-damned than meets the eye. Below are the system details on what separates the Shade Walkers from the rest of humanity, as well as some notes on how this affects the way that the half-damned interact with others.

HEALTH AND DAMAGE

At their most basic level, dhampyrs are (at least half) human. They need to sleep, eat, breathe — all of the normal mortal necessities. A doctor examining a dhampyr doesn't notice any difference between the patient and any other human being. Still, dhampyrs are almost always impressive physical specimens, and have keen senses and sharp intellects. Even if they aren't born with these characteristics, the potential is there. The half-damned's inhuman vitality makes it far easier for them to develop their bodies and minds.

Dhampyrs have the same number of health levels as normal mortals and take damage normally from bashing attacks. They can stand up to a lot more physical punishment than a human being; in addition to soaking bashing damage, dhampyrs can also try to soak lethal damage. Firearms cause lethal damage to a dhampyr, not bashing damage (as for a Cathayan). Especially old dhampyrs are physically weaker and have fewer health levels (see the Age Background on page 57).

Another byproduct of the dhampyr's strange physiology is a complete immunity to all normal diseases. A dhampyr could mainline the Ebola virus and it wouldn't do a thing to her. Any bacteria or viruses entering the dhampyr's body are either killed by their immune system or are unable to infect the half-dead tissue. Dhampyrs cannot be carriers of disease.

Poisons affect dhampyrs just like mortals, but the dhampyr can soak the damage just like any other lethal damage.

DEATH... ALMOST

As with mortals, massive blood loss, trauma and shock can kill dhampyrs. However, they are half-dead already and are therefore less likely to let go of what life they have. If a dhampyr is reduced below the Incapacitated health level by lethal damage, the player should immediately make a Stamina roll (difficulty 9). Failure means the half-damned departs the mortal coil just like a normal human would. If the roll is successful, the dhampyr manages to keep a steely grip on life and remains Incapacitated. Further lethal damage provokes another such test, but any aggravated damage beyond Incapacitated kills a dhampyr without such a test.

HEALING

When it comes to healing damage, a dhampyr gets the best of both worlds. Half-damned heal normally like mortals, but can also spend Chi to heal wounds just like their

Kuei-jin parents. One point of Chi heals one level of regular damage, while it costs five Chi points to repair aggravated damage. Keep in mind that when repairing aggravated damage, the dhampyr still suffers the bashing damage for spending more than two points of Chi (see below). This may seem harsh, but it's better to pass out than to die.

KUK'S CHILD

Most people don't remember their birth. I do.

I felt the cold steel of the knife as it slid down beside me as I slept warm and safe inside my mother's belly. I felt the hot river of my mother's blood flowing as it hemorrhaged from her ruptured womb. I felt her cold, salty tears spatter my tiny face as she cradled me in her long-nailed hands. I felt the bones in my neck grind and break against each other, snapping as she twisted. I felt the cold earth cover my skin as she piled it over me. She wanted me dead and gone.

But I didn't die.

I felt all of it. The years have not dimmed the memories. I remember every sound, every movement, every instant of my first minutes in the world.

I've learned a lot in the years since. I've learned of the secret courts, of Demon souls, of the "Great Principle." But all of it means nothing to me. It's not my world.

One day I'll stand in front of my mother and I'll ask her why she did what she did.

She'll give me an answer. This I swear.

SPECIAL VULNERABILITIES

As tough as they are, there are downsides to being a dhampyr. The Shade Walkers' vampiric heritage leaves them just as vulnerable to magic- and fire-based damage as their Cathayan parents. Damage from both sources is aggravated to dhampyrs and can't be soaked without special Disciplines.

While the sun is positively deadly to Kuei-jin, it's a lot more forgiving for their half-damned children. Dhampyrs don't get drowsy during the day and take no damage from exposure to the sun beyond perhaps a sunburn. This doesn't mean that dhampyrs like the sun, though — they don't call them Shade Walkers for nothing. To the eyes of a dhampyr, a sunlit day seems painfully bright, the Eye of Heaven glaring down at them almost vindictively. The rays of the sun make a dhampyr's skin crawl and stomach roil as the bestial P'o squirms in her mind, its whispers growing louder and more insistent.

As result, the half-damned are at a disadvantage when in sunlight. Dhampyrs bathing in the rays of the Eye of Heaven suffer Humanity limits to all their dice pools just like Kin-jin operating during daylight hours — their maximum dice pool is equal to their Humanity. This only applies to actually standing in the direct rays of the sun. Even standing under the shaded eaves of a porch are

enough to eliminate this penalty. Some rare dhampyrs manifest a bit more of a reaction to the sun, their skin blistering and peeling under its rays. Obviously, dhampyrs operate normally at night, and most prefer to see stars in the sky rather than the flaming Eye of Heaven.

LIFE SPAN

Dhampyrs are not immortal creatures. They are born, they live their lives and they die—eventually. One benefit (or disadvantage) of the dhampyr's half-breed heritage, however, is a greatly extended life span. The average Shade Walker easily outlives everyone he knows, all of those people's children, and all of their children's children.

The half-dead blood flowing through a dhampyr's body retards the aging process. For every five years of actual time that passes, a dhampyr physically ages one year. Dhampyrs suffer the effects of age appropriate to their body's physical age. Of course, most elderly dhampyrs have developed enough Disciplines and skills to compensate for a few creaky joints.

COMING OF AGE

A dhampyr's unnatural metabolism usually kicks in during his early twenties. Barring accidental (or intentional) death or dismemberment, the half-damned can look forward to 300 or 400 years of activity and health. Occasionally the aging process doesn't slow until much later in the normal mortal span. This shortens the dhampyr's life expectancy significantly.

The few Kuei-jin bothering to study the half-damned over the years have found that it is possible to determine when a dhampyr child will come of age (in the supernatural sense) by studying the astrological conditions of her birth. Those few using this knowledge have been able to contact their offspring at especially auspicious moments and forge a strong relationship with them.

Previous to this coming of age, dhampyrs can't access any powers that require conscious use. Active uses of Chi and Joss just aren't possible. The unconscious aspects of the dhampyr's powers—Passive Joss, unconscious use of Chi for healing and so on—still function normally, however.

A starting dhampyr character is assumed to have already come of age, so aging really won't have much effect on her, other than limiting how proficient with Kuei-jin Disciplines she can become (see below). For more details on the effects of age on the half-damned, see the Age Background (p. 57).

THE RAVAGES OF TIME

Compared to humans, dhampyrs live a long time—and they tend to get a little erratic as the decades pass. To be honest, not many make it to their later years: A dhampyr's phenomenal luck often leads him into a high-velocity lifestyle—which often comes to a fatal end when his luck runs out.

Dhampyrs making it beyond their 250th year tend to become more and more obsessed with their own mortality. While they are still incredibly vital and active, they can feel their half-mortal shells gradually fading away as

HALF-DAMNED OR JUST DAMNED?

The circumstances of a dhampyr's birth raise all kinds of questions about the state of his soul. Does his half-dead blood carry the sins of his mother or father? Is he doomed to Yomi right out of the womb?

Well, not quite. Dhampyrs are as capable of transcending their dark halves as anyone else, but they do face much greater temptations toward inhuman behavior. The P'o is a dhampyr's constant companion—even though this dark soul cannot dictate her actions, the P'o is always there, whispering, leading, tempting the Shade Walker to more and more horrific acts.

Kuei-jin have no choice about what they do when their P'o jumps in the drivers' seat. But dhampyrs *always* have a choice. The P'o does not control them; it can only point the way. It is the half-damned's choice whether they listen to their human or Demon half.

Unlike most mortals, dhampyrs are aware of the dark side of themselves at all times. They feel the P'o writhe and grow inside them, and are keenly aware of the extent of their own spiritual pollution. They may even know when they have allowed the beast to grow fat enough to damn them to Yomi. Fully damned dhampyrs are among the most dangerous of their kind. Reckless and progressively more inhuman, they often end up in the service of the Yama Kings. Some hope (in vain) for leniency when they finally arrive in the Thousand Hells, while others just want to leave some sort of a mark—even a horrific one—on the Middle Kingdom.

When you get right down to it, dhampyrs are in much the same boat as regular mortals. Their soul's final fate is largely up to them. They have powers far beyond those of normal people and face greater temptations in the course of their long lives. But in the end, the only thing that truly damns a Shade Walker is that most implacable of enemies, himself.

they age. Many consume great amounts of their free time researching ways to extend their already long lives. Fear of physical harm becomes very common—especially fear of aggravated damage from magic and fire. Additionally, aged dhampyrs quite often become dependent (at least psychologically) on their Chi to protect and sustain them.

Elderly dhampyrs are quite powerful (perhaps even more so than a starting Kuei-jin!), but are often self-serving cowards. They have to be cajoled or threatened into taking any action that puts them in direct personal danger. This can make for some entertaining roleplaying situations.

It's possible to play an older dhampyr if you buy the Age Background described on page 57.

VIRTUES

While dhampyrs are saddled with a P'o, they are close enough to their humanity that they retain the normal mortal Virtues of Conscience, Self-Control and Courage.

A full description of these Traits' psychological meaning appears in *Vampire: The Masquerade* (pp. 133-134), but they have a larger significance for dhampyrs.

Conscience is the closest thing to a Kuei-jin's Hun soul and dhampyrs' players should roll Conscience for any check that would require a Hun roll for a Kuei-jin character. Similarly, the other Virtues serve the dhampyr when using Chi or other aspects of their Kuei-jin nature: Use Self-Control for any check that would require a Kuei-jin to make a Yin roll, and Courage for any check that would require a Kuei-jin to make a Yang roll. Self-Control and Courage also determine the dhampyr's access to Chi to fuel Disciplines or healing (see "Dhampyrs and Chi," p. 50).

Dhampyrs do bear the P'o of their Kuei-jin parents. Among other things, the P'o weakens the dhampyr's resolve. Whenever the player must make a Conscience, Self-Control or Courage roll, the roll is resisted by the P'o. This makes Virtue rolls very uncertain for dhampyrs, although they are still more stable than the Hungry Dead.

See "The Devil Inside" below, for a full discussion of the half-damned's Demon soul.

HUMANITY

While true Cathayans are divorced from most moral concerns, dhampyrs are not so "lucky." The half-damned have to abide by the dictates of their human consciences, growing closer to their human side through human actions and estranged from it through monstrous ones. Dhampyrs need to make Humanity tests just like mortals or Kin-jin, and are subject to all of the social consequences of low Humanity (see *Vampire: The Masquerade*, pp. 134-136). Also, like other mortals, dhampyrs can never lose their last point of Humanity.

A dhampyr's Humanity also limits how much access she has to her personal *joss*. The farther the Shade Walker strays from her human heritage, the less the forces of fortune smile upon her. See pages 54-57 for the lowdown on dhampyr *joss*.

The dhampyr's half-Cathayan blood prevents her from ever being fully in touch with her human side. Each point of permanent P'o subtracts 1 from the dhampyr's maximum Humanity. Therefore, a dhampyr's Humanity can never be greater than 9 (10 - 1 point of P'o).

THE DEVIL INSIDE

The dhampyr's P'o is a poor cousin to the beast that dwells within each Kuei-jin. Where a Cathayan's P'o is a constant presence waiting to seize control at any opportunity, a dhampyr's P'o is a voice in the back of his head, egging the Shade Walker on to horrible deeds. The presence of the P'o is part of what makes the dhampyr who he is. In game terms, every dhampyr starts with a P'o of at least one, possibly more depending on what Flaws the player chooses during character creation.

Because of the weakness of the P'o, dhampyrs are resistant to many of its effects — but perhaps not as fully as their parents may have raised them to believe. The Kuei-

COMING BACK

Dhampyrs die. It takes a lot more damage or time to do the job, but it does happen. Assuming the dhampyr hasn't been feeding her P'o in life, death takes its normal course. The dhampyr is no more or less likely to end up in Yomi or take the Second Breath than a human: Their own sins, resolve and depravity determine that.

On the other hand, if a dhampyr's P'o has grown and prospered, then death isn't all it's cracked up to be. The souls of dhampyrs dying with a P'o score of three or more are likely to attract the Yama Kings through their wickedness and ride straight down to the Yomi World for a leisurely period of hellish torment. These swollen P'o souls, however, may well be strong enough to claw themselves back out of Hell and take the Second Breath.

If a dhampyr has a P'o score of 3 or 4 when she dies, the player should make a P'o check (difficulty 8). Willpower can't be spent on the roll (after all, the character is dead). Success grants another life as one of the Hungry Dead. If the character's P'o score has reached level 5, don't even bother to roll. The soul is definitely on the expressway back to the Middle Kingdom.

The dhampyr's previous experience really doesn't cushion her for the return journey, though. Shade Walkers have to go through the *chih-mei* stage and all the rest of the unpleasantness associated with taking the Second Breath. In game terms, Nature and De-monor can shift, but P'o Nature remains the same. What's more, the returned Shade Walker is cut off from the *joss* that served her in life. She retains some measure of the Disciplines she developed but the trip to Yomi scars the soul. Subtract one dot from each Discipline to reflect the spiritual disruption of the trip. If this reduces an ability to zero, so be it. Death's a bitch.

jin, used to battling the fierce beasts inside them, find it hard to believe that the withered Demon inside their children could ever constitute a real threat. Most of the time they are correct and an attentive and disciplined Shade Walker has little to fear from her P'o. But the P'o of a Twilight Child is capable of taking control under very rare circumstances. See "Shadow Soul" (p. 49), for details.

The P'o can still drive a dhampyr to either wave or fire soul as with Kuei-jin, but Shade Walkers don't have to worry about "harnessing" the P'o when they invoke Demon Arts. The very fact that the dhampyr has a P'o means that they can tap into its powers, however. Dhampyrs can use most of the same P'o abilities that Kuei-jin can, including invoking a berserk rage, resisting magical mind control, growing fangs and using Demon Chi. They can only spend one point of Demon Chi per turn, however.

Even though it is (usually) incapable of taking control of the dhampyr's body, the sinister voice of the P'o

does have its say. Whenever a Shade Walker attempts a Virtue check, the P'o is right there opposing it. It whispers of fear when Courage is called for, of unbridled indulgence in the face of Self-Control, of thoughtless action instead of heeding Conscience. If the dhampyr gives in and listens to the P'o, the results can be spiritually devastating.

In games terms, the P'o soul opposes any Virtue roll that the dhampyr has to make. The Storyteller rolls the dhampyr's P'o rating (difficulty 6). Each success that the P'o garners removes one of the dhampyr's successes. If the dhampyr doesn't get any successes, then she loses a point of Willpower as the hissing voice of the P'o erodes her confidence. (Note that soul state rolls are already contests between the P'o and one of the Virtues and aren't any different for dhampyrs — the P'o does not get two rolls.)

If a dhampyr strays too far from her human heritage, the Demon within her grows stronger. If the dhampyr gives in to the impulses of the P'o, it becomes more powerful, eventually damning the dhampyr to return as one of the Hungry Dead. Any time a dhampyr botches a Conscience roll, she gains a point of P'o. This also lowers her maximum Humanity (and by extension, her Joss rating). A dhampyr with three or more dots of P'o when he dies has a pretty good chance of coming back as a full Kuei-jin.

A dhampyr still needs to pick a Nature for her P'o, which should determine the content of P'o's whispers. It can also help determine how the dhampyr's demon form looks if she learns Demon Shintai.

WILLPOWER

Dhampyrs use Willpower just like Kuei-jin, whether they're powering Disciplines, resisting mental or magical control, or pushing themselves to the peak of half-human performance. A Shade Walker's starting Willpower is equal to his Courage.

The half-dead blood of the dhampyrs also makes them resistant to any effect or power that is less effective against supernatural targets.

SOUL STATES

Dhampyrs are subject to the same soul states as their unliving parents — although their weak P'o usually means they have less trouble retaining control of themselves. Wind soul is the default state for dhampyrs, as it is with Kuei-jin. The dhampyr is fully in control of herself, mistress of her passions and fears and not the subject of them while in wind soul.

FIRE SOUL

A sufficiently threatened, humiliated, hungry, passionate or just plain pissed-off dhampyr can lapse into the mindless and brutal rage of fire soul just like a Kuei-jin. All of the things that could provoke a Kuei-jin into fire soul can also provoke a dhampyr.

Dhampyrs resist fire soul with their Self-Control rather than their Yin. Other than that, treat dhampyrs exactly like full Kuei-jin (*Kindred of the East*, p. 150).

WAVE SOUL

Dhampyrs are also subject to the flip side of fire soul, the overwhelming terror of wave soul. Fire can provoke wave soul in dhampyrs just as in Kuei-jin, as can the presence of a strong demonic force such as a Yama King. A sufficiently powerful Kuei-jin might be able to provoke wave soul in a half-damned as well — especially if the dhampyr was raised outside of the courts. Elderly dhampyrs are often more vulnerable to wave soul than their younger cousins (see p. 58).

The gaze of the Eye of Heaven does not provoke wave soul for the Shade Walkers. They may not be at their best under the sun's gaze (as mentioned before), but since its rays don't rot them to pieces inside a few minutes, they don't fear it like their unliving parents do.

Wave soul is resisted with Courage rather than Yang. Other than that, treat dhampyrs exactly like full Kuei-jin (*Kindred of the East*, p. 150).

SHADOW SOUL

The weak P'o of the dhampyr makes them immune to the effects of shadow soul — most of the time. There is one circumstance in which the dhampyr's P'o can actually take control, and that's when a Shade Walker is at death's door. As the dhampyr's soul reeters on the brink of death, the P'o promises revenge on those who have harmed him. All the dhampyr has to do is resist the siren song of death and embrace the Demon.

Whenever a dhampyr is wounded beyond incapacitated by lethal damage, there is a chance to give up control to the P'o. When this occurs, the P'o's voice becomes crystal clear and offers the dhampyr a way out (ideally, this little drama should be roleplayed). The offer occurs before the dhampyr's last-ditch healing attempt, which represents the Shade Walker relying on her inherent *joss* instead of her Demon soul. If she refuses the P'o's offer, then carry out the last ditch healing attempt (see p. 46).

If the dhampyr chooses to embrace the Demon, the dhampyr's P'o score immediately jumps one point, and the baleful energy of the P'o's growth heals the Shade Walker back to Crippled (this healing affects lethal and aggravated damage alike). The dhampyr also slips into a special brand of shadow soul, more terrifying even than that of a Kuei-jin: She suffers no wound penalties as if she were in fire soul; she may also freely spend Chi to heal damage (as a reflexive action without having to be inactive and ignoring the standard one-per-turn cap on Chi expenditure). The dhampyr also raises her Black Wind Discipline to a level equal to her P'o score for the duration of the frenzy — if she doesn't have Black Wind, she gains it temporarily.

This aggravated state remains in effect for a full scene; with the P'o first seeking immediate retribution against those who nearly killed its host and then pursuing its own twisted goals. At the end of the scene, the special benefits of this state subside, and

the dhampyr can attempt to regain control. To do so, she rolls Self-Control, opposed by the (now stronger) P'o as usual (wound penalties affect neither side for this roll). The difficulty for this roll is 6. If the P'o gets successes equal to or greater than the dhampyr's, the P'o remains in control of the body for a number of hours equal to its level.

Shadow soul can be a shattering experience for a dhampyr, especially as they are given little preparation in their upbringing for what can happen when the Demon takes control. As Kuei-jin, all dhampyrs gain a Derangement in the wake of submersion in shadow soul.

THE DHARMAS

Dhampyrs cannot gain any spiritual benefit from the Dharmic paths, even if they somehow become familiar with their precepts and methods. This isn't because of any sort of failing on the dhampyrs' part; the fact is that the Shade Walkers don't need Dharmas. Their souls are their own, free of the karmic taint that damns their parents.

This fact is lost on most Kuei-jin — as well as on a good deal of dhampyrs.

DHAMPYRS AND CHI

In terms of Chi, dhampyrs share a lot more with enlightened mortals like the Shih than with their Kuei-

jin parents. As most mortals do, dhampyrs have a total of 10 Chi points in their body, 5 Yin and 5 Yang. However, they can't access all of it like Kuei-jin can. As with the Shih, the amount of personal Chi that a dhampyr can access is determined by her Virtues. A dhampyr's Self-Control determines the amount of Yin Chi accessible, and Courage determines Yang Chi.

A dhampyr's human soul keeps her from being able to channel Chi as fully as a Kuei-jin. Dhampyrs can only call on a single point of Chi (of any type) per turn. Chi powers requiring more than one point of Chi can still be used, but the dhampyr has to spread the Chi cost out across multiple rounds. The power takes effect when the final point of Chi is spent. Some powers, like Demon Shintai, already take multiple rounds to take effect. These function as normal for dhampyrs. In case there is a discrepancy between the number of turns a power takes to activate and the number of turns it would take a dhampyr to spend that Chi, use the longer of the two.

While dhampyrs are quite a bit more resilient than mortals, using Chi still takes a lot out of them. For every two points of Chi (of any type) a dhampyr expends in a scene, she takes one level of bashing damage. This can be soaked as normal.

Dhampyrs can convert one type of Chi into another at a cost of two to one. This is the only safe way that a



dhampyr can end up spending more of a particular type of Chi than their Virtues allow (for an unsafe way, see below). Remember that a dhampyr can only spend one point of Chi per turn, so it takes two turns to produce one point of converted Chi.

Chi in excess of her Virtue ratings is sometimes accessible to a dhampyr, but the cost can be very high. Drawing on those reserves takes a Stamina roll (difficulty 9), with each success garnering an additional point of Chi, up to a maximum of 5 - the appropriate Virtue. Botching the Stamina roll results in a nasty Chi backlash. The dhampyr takes a number health levels of lethal damage equal to 5 - the appropriate Virtue; these *cannot* soaked. Play with fire and get burned.

DEMON CHI

A dhampyr's P'o also gives him access to Demon Chi, as mentioned before. Demon Chi functions for dhampyrs exactly as for Kuei-jin, subject to the Chi channeling restrictions mentioned above.

Because of the weakness of their P'o, desperate dhampyrs can also attempt the rather perilous task of converting either Yin or Yang Chi into Demon Chi, effectively feeding the energy to the P'o. Yin and Yang Chi convert to Demon Chi at the normal rate of two to

one. When a Shade Walker does this, make a Conscience roll. Failure results in a loss of Humanity, and a botch results in gaining a P'o point.

REGAINING CHI

Dhampyrs can regain Chi just like other mortals, by resting. For every hour of complete rest — that means no strenuous activity, physical or mental — a dhampyr regains one point of Chi. Unlike normal mortals, dhampyrs can choose which type of Chi they wish to regain, up to the maximums dictated by their Virtues. This time spent resting counts toward healing damage as well.

Meditation can speed up the process of Chi regeneration for a dhampyr. All that's required for this is some peace and quiet and a Stamina + Meditation roll (difficulty 6). If the player gets even a single success, the dhampyr regains Chi at double the normal speed (two points per hour instead of just one).

Dhampyrs also regain Demon Chi, but they get it back more slowly than Kuei-jin. Rather than rolling the character's entire P'o at sundown, a dhampyr's player only rolls a single die (difficulty 6). If he succeeds, the dhampyr regains a single point of Demon Chi. If not, he has to wait until the next sundown and hope for better luck. Meditation doesn't help regain Demon Chi.

A MOVABLE FEAST

Ah yes, power through cannibalism. While the effects of gaining Chi from mortal flesh are pretty straightforward, what about consuming the flesh of other *shen*?

To begin with, a dhampyr is even less likely to take a bite out of another *shen* than out of a mortal. Few *shen* are likely to hold still and let a dhampyr chow down, and the very idea of it is pretty repugnant to the average dhampyr. It's also all the more likely to get them branded *akuma*. Even mandarins that might overlook a Shade Walker's occasional indiscretion with a human victim is hard pressed to look the other way when a *shen* is the victim. That understood, if a dhampyr should somehow find himself in a situation where a feast of *shen* flesh (alive or otherwise) is available, here's how it all works out:

The various demon hunters — Shih, Strike Force Zero agents, imbued characters from **Hunter: The Reckoning** — are just as edible as any other mortal, although they often have a lot more to say about the issue than regular people do.

Eating a hengeyokai's flesh garners as much Chi as eating a normal human's does, but the dhampyr can only absorb Yang Chi from the body. This is because of the changer's close bond to the forces of life. A dhampyr might as well make a rug out of a cold hengeyokai corpse, for all the Chi it's going to give her.

The flesh of *hsien* provides nothing to a hungry dhampyr. Yugen is too rarefied a substance for dhampyrs to handle. That's probably fortunate for them.

Consuming Kin-jin flesh — an even more repugnant activity than eating other *shen* — doesn't net any Chi for the dhampyr. All of a Kin-jin's Chi is concentrated in his blood, however, so drinking vitae can restore Chi to dhampyrs. This is the only case in which dhampyrs can absorb Chi from blood. Dhampyrs drinking vitae never have to worry about being blood bound and cannot become ghouls. Dhampyrs also can't be Embraced. If they are drained of all their blood, they simply die.

Consuming a body that is corrupted in some fashion, like the flesh of a Kumo werespider, a true *akuma*, or hengeyokai consumed by the Centipede (the Wurm) is pretty unpleasant. The dhampyr gains no Chi, and she takes one level of aggravated damage per health level of the creature eaten (corruption is hard on the digestion).

The rude Chi digestion of the dhampyrs can't absorb the ephemeral life-force of Embodied wraiths or the Risen. Such beings offer nothing to the hungry dhampyr — but they do taste like chicken.

CONSUMING PASSION

Dhampyrs serving the Quincunx or the other courts are pretty unlikely to chow down on human flesh. Most would probably rather gnaw their own arms off than stoop to the level of *chih-mei* just to get some fast and easy Chi. In some of the more reactionary courts (like the demon-hunting Golden Courts), eating flesh might even be enough to get them branded *akuma*.

Independent dhampyrs can be less discriminating. Most don't even know that it's possible to regain Chi by eating human flesh — but when they find out, all too many are anxious for their first taste.

Dhampyrs corrupted by the Yama Kings have absolutely no problem eating their own. In fact, these *akuma* probably prefer to regain Chi in this manner.

Unlike the Shih, dhampyrs cannot regain Chi by fulfilling their Natures (see **World of Darkness: Demon Hunter X**). However, they can regain Joss by doing so. See page 57 for more details.

A-TASTE FOR MORTALS

There is another much more gruesome method for the half-damned to regain Chi. Although the dhampyrs are too “spiritually stunted” (they prefer to phrase “too human”) to absorb Chi from blood, breath or the world around them, they can gain it from the most basic source: mortal flesh. Each health level eaten from a victim restores one point of Chi, along with one level of any unhealed bashing damage stemming from Chi use.

The dhampyr's less sophisticated ability to process Chi limits what kind they can absorb from a victim, however. Living victims only offer up Yang Chi to a dhampyr, while cold corpses only offer Yin. Only a freshly dead (less than four hours old) corpse offers a dhampyr a choice of what Chi he wants to ingest.

Players whose dhampyrs regain Chi in this manner must succeed on make a Conscience roll (difficulty 8) or cough up a point of Humanity. Don't forget that the half-damned's P'o rolls against them in this test. If the player botches the Conscience roll, her character immediately picks up a point of P'o as the beast within revels in cannibalistic depravity.

THE HUNGER

Running low on Chi is a dangerous proposition for a dhampyr, even more so than for a Kuei-jin. The P'o's whispers gain power and focus, driving the Shade Walker to seek out an easy source of Chi. The delicious odor of raw flesh causes a terrible hunger in the half-damned belly.

When a dhampyr has three or fewer points of non-Demon Chi (Yin + Yang) left in her body, she becomes subject to a driving hunger for flesh. The player must pass

a Conscience roll every time the dhampyr enters a situation where a mortal is available for eating. The difficulty is equal to 7 - remaining Chi + Age Background. The P'o resists this roll as usual (difficulty 6). If the difficulty of the Conscience roll drops below 6, the dhampyr feels the call of cannibalism but resists automatically. If the difficulty rises above 9, she gives in and searches for a mortal to feast upon. The Storyteller may adjust the difficulty to reflect the ease with which the Shade Walker could feast without attracting undue attention. Those who have eaten flesh during the last month also suffer a +1 difficulty penalty — the rush of eating Chi is addictive.

THE USES OF CHI

Chi plays a vital role in the lives of most dhampyrs, strengthening them and lending them amazing powers. Unfortunately, dhampyrs cannot perceive Chi in the same way their parents can. Dragon lines and nests are invisible to them, and they cannot use either Ghostsight or Lifesight to see the energies roiling around them. While the Shade Walkers can't channel Chi as easily as the Hungry Dead, they can still put the forces of Yin and Yang to good use.

The most common use of Chi among the Shade Walkers is to heal damage (see p. 46). Although this requires calm and inactivity, it is a largely unconscious process for the dhampyr — even one who hasn't come of age can use this ability, often without ever realizing it. Dhampyrs may also use Chi to power any Kuei-jin Disciplines that they know, and can also channel Chi to boost their physical capabilities if they have the appropriate shintai.

Kuei-jin have to spend a point of Chi each evening to animate their unliving bodies, but dhampyrs have no such need. Dhampyrs can spend a point of Chi to avoid having to sleep or eat for 24 hours, however. The type of Chi spent to do this does not aspect a dhampyr as it does a Kuei-jin. However, the Chi type can affect the dhampyr's mood for that period. Yang produces a feeling of euphoria and makes the Shade Walker prone to aggressive tendencies and reckless acts. Yin Chi makes a dhampyr more introspective and thoughtful and produces vague feelings of ennui. Neither of these involves an actual game effect.

DHAMPYRS AND DISCIPLINES

Dhampyrs are capable of learning some Kuei-jin Disciplines, although their very nature prevents them from ever truly mastering them.

The mysteries of the Soul and Chi Arts are beyond the ken of dhampyrs. They are far too tied to the mortal world to access them. The two exceptions to this are Feng Shui and Tzu Wei, since any normal mortal can learn these with enough time. Time is one thing the half-damned have in abundance, so many elder Shade Walkers are quite skilled at these arts. Demon Arts and shintai are easier for younger half-damned.

OTHER POWERS

Many of the Kuei-jin powers dealing with the perception of the forces of Chi are off-limits to dhampyrs. As mentioned before, they can't use Ghostsight or Lifesight. The half-damned also cannot access the supernatural benefits of Kuei-jin rites (although they can partake in them for social reasons). They simply lack the strong bond with Chi needed to manipulate it in this manner.

The Qiao powers of the Shih are off-limits to dhampyrs, although they could conceivably learn Mo Chi Kung Fu. Of course, they'd have to convince a Shih to teach it to them. Strike Force Zero cybernetics are also a definite no-no for dhampyrs. The half-dead tissue of their bodies doesn't respond well to implants. Dhampyrs can learn sorcery, but their Avatars are tied up in their half-dead state, so they are incapable of Awakened magic.

In any case, a dhampyr character can't start with any of these powers, and it's up to the Storyteller whether she has any possibility of picking them up during play.

SHINTAI DISCIPLINES

Even though they can learn the various shintai, dhampyrs aren't as well equipped to handle the tremendous strain of manipulating Chi as their fully damned parents. Over time, a dhampyr's body hardens itself, but it's a process that takes centuries. The maximum level that a dhampyr can have in any shintai is equal to her age in centuries, rounded up. So, a dhampyr that's been around for 175 years could learn up to two levels in the permitted powers. Few dhampyrs ever learn more than one level in any given shintai, but a few elder half-damned have struggled to level 2 or 3. Other than this limitation, the shintai function normally for dhampyrs, including the Chi attunements.

DEMON ARTS

Dhampyrs may learn and use as many levels in Demon Arts as their P'o permits — subject to the restrictions for spending Chi. They offer a seductive path since dhampyrs are not subject to shadow soul and so can use Demon Arts more easily. The Demon Arts are still perilous to use, however. Every time a dhampyr invokes them, he must make a Conscience roll (difficulty 6, opposed by the P'o) or lose a point of Humanity. Botching the roll adds a point to the dhampyr's P'o as normal.

Most Shade Walkers who have contact with Kuei-jin society know better than to screw around with the Demon Arts. They've heard stories of the Yomi World (or traveled to it with Kuei-jin companions) and are not anxious to pay the Thousand Hells a visit.

Iron Mountain, Kiai and Hellweaving function for dhampyrs just as they do for Kuei-jin. The other two Demon Arts require slight alterations, however:

LUCK OF THE HALF-DAMNED

A dhampyr's *joss* tends to cut down on the many minor misfortunes of life. Powerfully "jossed" Shade Walkers are seldom the targets of pickpockets, and they don't get very many parking tickets. They do pretty well on the stock market and are amazingly successful in romantic endeavors (at least in the short term). They win big at cards, taxis are always there waiting for them and so on. The higher a dhampyr's *Joss*, the more fortune she is blessed with.

These "ambient *joss*" effects are hardly even noticed by dhampyrs. It's all just part of ordinary life to them. Their companions may wonder at the incredible coincidences that pepper their lives, but the Shade Walkers just take it for granted.

There is a price for this luck, and that price is an interesting life. As roiling vortices of fortune, both good and bad, the children of the Wan Kuei are true weirdness magnets. Dhampyrs get mistaken for other people (like a secret agent's contact, a drug runner for the mob, or a member of a terrorist organization), have their bags mistakenly switched for ones with more interesting contents (like a million dollars in drug money or a couple of severed heads), receive threatening phone calls intended for others ("You can't stop us! Tomorrow we execute the ambassador!"), accidentally overhear conversations about plots and schemes ("The ancestor must die, and we must make it look like the *penanggalan* were responsible!"), and generally find themselves embroiled in all sorts of trouble, whether they like it or not.

Even the good luck of the Twilight Children tends to come with odd strings attached. A dhampyr may win an impossible wager at a casino, only to draw the attention of the local Yakuza boss who "could use a man like him." The cab conveniently waiting for a Twilight Child as he leaves the opera may be driven by a man who unaccountably decides to trust him with the story of how he is haunted by the ghost of his wife. The higher the dhampyr's *Joss*, the more interesting his life becomes.

The table below should give you a good idea of the kinds of effects that surround a dhampyr, depending on her *Joss* level. Incidentally, when a dhampyr "binds" his *Joss* to a particular Ability (see p. 56), it reduces the ambient *joss* effects accordingly.

Unbound <i>Joss</i>	Effects
1-2 dots	You win at cards more often than not. You'll never be audited.
3-4 dots	You regularly find money lying in your path. Your friends call you crazy for some of the risks you take without even thinking about it.
5-6 dots	The Irish have nothing on you. Bank errors happen in your favor monthly.
7-8 dots	You can't remember the last time you had to stop at a traffic light. You are regularly banned from casinos.
9 dots	Chow Yun Fat in <i>God of Gamblers</i> .

- **Black Wind:** Because of their weakened P'o, dhampyrs can actually control this state slightly better than even Kuei-jin. Dhampyrs using Black Wind can tap the P'o to aim ranged attacks with inhuman precision. Dhampyrs can add automatic successes for a ranged attack's damage pool, as well as Melee or Brawl damage pools. The dhampyr still has to roll each round to avoid fire soul, of course.

- **Demon Shintai:** In terms of game mechanics, this Demon Art functions as it does for Kuei-jin. However, the half-damned's weaker P'o means their demon form is much less inhuman than that of a true Cathayan. Instead of a distorted monster, the Shade Walker becomes a terrible warrior — larger, faster and more majestic than in his mortal form. Those few who know of such things claim that the dhampyric demon form resembles the true form of the ancient Jin Hai.

UNIQUE TRAITS

JOSS POWERS

The strange interaction of dhampyrs' living and dead halves cuts them off from many of the higher mysteries of Chi. With all of the unlikely factors that had to come together for them to even be born, however, Shade Walkers are creatures of powerful luck. By correctly tapping into and manipulating their personal joss, dhampyrs can take chances that no sane person (or vampire) would ever think of.

The dhampyrs' close connection to joss is one of the things that makes them interesting and fun to play. Their tremendous luck allows them to take incredible chances and survive. It also gives players a limited ability to manipulate the environment so they can exploit their characters' combat strengths.

Shade Walkers often come to rely on their luck. After a while they take it for granted that their luggage never gets lost when they travel, the weather is always good when they want to go golfing and they can always find a parking space right next to the club. Games of chance are pretty popular pastimes for dhampyrs, since they tend to win — a lot.

A dhampyr's Joss Trait is tied to her Humanity in the same way a Kuei-jin's Demon Chi is tied to his P'o. If the Shade Walker's Humanity goes up, her maximum Joss goes up. If it goes down, maximum Joss goes down. Like Demon Chi, Joss will rise and fall in play as it is spent and regained. When a dhampyr's Joss is drained to 0, her luck has quite literally run out. A Shade Walker in tune with her joss feels a chilling sensation, requiring her player to make an immediate check for wave soul. Bad things happen to luckless dhampyrs. See "When Good Luck Goes Bad" a little later in this chapter for more details.

There are three methods of using the Joss Trait: passively, actively and by binding joss.

PASSIVE JOSS

The first use of the Joss Trait is the most common one. The forces of luck can be just left hanging around, waiting for something to happen to the dhampyr. This kind of luck is called Passive Joss, and it can save a dhampyr's butt. Passive Joss is the luck that allows a Shade Walker to fall from a window on the 15th floor and walk away without a scratch or have an entire clip from an Uzi unloaded at her while she remains miraculously unharmed.

Passive Joss protects a dhampyr from physical damage. A dhampyr does not have to be aware of an attack for Passive Joss to block it, but she does need a few Joss points. When a dhampyr is attacked (but before a soak roll is made), the player makes a Humanity roll (difficulty 8). If she gets even a single success, all of the damage from that attack is blocked. Passive Joss only works against lethal or aggravated damage. Bashing damage is beneath fortune's notice. A blocked lethal attack costs the half-damned 1 point of Joss. The Joss cost for blocking an aggravated attack is much higher: 3 points.

Each separate attack has to be dealt with and paid for on its own, even if they hit the half-damned in the same round. Deal with the attacks in the order that they occur. If a dhampyr runs out of Joss in the middle of a combat turn, subsequent attacks affect him as normal. Damage from area-effect attacks can also be blocked, but this costs 1 additional Joss point. It's much harder to "luckily" avoid a flamethrower than a bullet. Botching the Humanity roll forces the player to make an immediate check for wave soul as the dhampyr feels his joss fail him.

The passive expenditure of Joss to block damage is a completely unconscious activity; the dhampyr can't actually control it or suppress it. Unexpected attacks can play hell with a dhampyr who's relying on joss to save his ass later.

The damage that is stopped doesn't dissipate like it hit an Eightfold Yin Mantle, events just conspire so that the dhampyr comes out of the situation unhurt. A jumping and weaving Shade Walker amazingly dives through a hail of flying lead unharmed. A cigarette case just happens to intercept a sniper's bullet aimed at the heart. A BMW wraps itself around a telephone pole and the driver climbs out miraculously unharmed. A fog horn breaks a mandarin's concentration just as he's about to unleash a torrent of Ghost-Flame down on an unlucky Shade Walker's head. The ways of joss are many and mysterious.

For Example: "Lucky" Liao is looking the wrong way when a Cantarilla assassin decides to put a bullet in his brain. The Storyteller rolls for the assassin, inflicting 5 health levels of lethal damage to Liao. Or so it would seem. Liao's Joss is currently 4, so when the bullet speeds toward him, his player makes a Humanity roll. He easily gets one success and, marking off a point of Joss on his character sheet, breathes a sigh of relief. Liao hunches down to light a cigarette just in time to avoid a hefty case of lead poisoning. Of course, this leaves Liao just a bit less lucky...

The mortal children of dhampyrs have access to Passive Joss equal to their Courage Virtue. They can never learn to use Active Joss or Joss Binding, however.

ACTIVE JOSS

Dhampyrs who study their joss can learn to focus it actively, not only relying on it for last-ditch protection, but using it to accomplish specific goals. Characters who have learned the Active Joss ability can burn off some of the random possibilities that constantly surround them and refocus that luck. The dhampyr must concentrate and things suddenly (and sometimes spectacularly) go his way. Impossible shots hit; the dhampyr just happens to find a weapon when he needs one; a guard turns away at just the right time for the Shade Walker to sneak by.

Observers marvel at the sheer luck of it all — the dhampyr doesn't appear terribly skilled, just incredibly fortunate. For the Shade Walker herself, using Active Joss is an invigorating experience, a moment of control in a topsy-turvy world of random occurrences. She remains aware that she is burning off some of her joss in the process, however, which may leave her tired at the end of the scene.

System: The dhampyr must concentrate for a turn to use Active Joss. The player then rolls Humanity against a difficulty of 7. Every success on this roll becomes an

automatic success the player can apply to the action she wishes to be lucky. Applying each success costs a point of Joss, so the player cannot buy more successes than she has unbound points of Joss, even if she gets more on the Humanity roll. These automatic successes work in the same manner as those purchased with Willpower, although multiple ones can be applied to a single roll (and yes, they can be combined with an extra success from Willpower).

The action to which the extra successes are applied must come soon after the Humanity roll, but not necessarily in the next turn. They must be used within a few turns and the player must announce how many successes she'll spend and how they will be used immediately after the Humanity roll. The successes can be split between multiple actions if they are related, but that must be declared immediately.

The Joss points are spent immediately and do not linger for passive purposes between the Humanity roll and the time when successes are used.

For Example: The Shade Walker "Red Amy" Lu is pinned down on a rooftop by a bunch of thugs with automatic weapons. Hunkering down behind a bit of masonry, she's safe — but only for a few seconds. She concentrates on her joss and hopes to get out of this trap. Amy's player rolls her Humanity and gets four successes. The player decides to take all four successes (she had 6 remaining Joss) and split them between



two actions: avoiding gunfire as she crosses the roof and smashing open the door to the emergency stairs. The Storyteller okay's it and the player marks off four points of Joss. Amy's player then rolls Dexterity + Athletics and gets two successes. With the two automatic successes, that gives her four, enough for Amy to sprint across the roof in a single turn. She burns another point of Joss to avoid a lucky shot from one of the assailants (Passive Joss). Amy gets to the door leading to safety and rams into it. Breaking the door requires a Strength of 5 and Amy has only 3. The player rolls Willpower to boost her power and gets no successes — the two automatic successes do apply, however, and raise Amy's effective Strength to 5. The door comes off its rusty hinges (how lucky!) and Amy slips down the stairs to safety.

Failing the Humanity roll costs the dhampyr some of his luck and burns off a single point of Joss. Botching the roll is a much more grave affair: All the dhampyr's remaining unbound Joss burns off and he runs out of luck (see below).

Dhampyrs may invoke Active Joss only once per scene.

JOSS BINDING

This use is an extrapolation of Active Joss. Instead of suddenly focusing the forces of luck into a specific action or event, the dhampyr binds them around an activity. Whenever she undertakes that activity — be it driving a car, firing a gun, or almost anything else — the flow of joss conspires to help her succeed. By combining legitimate skill with such bound joss, the dhampyr can achieve an truly frightening level of accomplishment.

Binding joss is an arduous process, requiring long hours of meditation and preparation. The Shade Walker must be familiar with his own mental condition and the forces of joss if he is to bind the two together with precision. As such, the Joss Binding ability requires Meditation ••• and either Enigmas • or Occult •. The dhampyr must also have the Active Joss ability to have Joss Binding.

The concrete effect of Joss Binding is a higher effective Ability rating, but the apparent effect is more a manifestation of luck than skill. Targets hold still at just the right time. A dhampyr's punch just happens to hit a thug in his old war injury. Guards are distracted at just the right moment for a silent figure to slip by.

System: To bind points of Joss, the dhampyr must meditate in silence. No roll is necessary, however; for every hour the dhampyr meditates, the player can bind, unbind or reassign a point of Joss. Bound points of Joss cannot be used passively or actively.

Each point of Joss bound to a Talent or Skill acts as an additional dot in the appropriate Ability. The maximum level to which a Talent or Skill can be raised is equal to a dhampyr's Humanity. Joss can only be bound into Talents or Skills, not Knowledges or any other type of Trait.

Attacks doing lethal damage using an Ability with joss bound to it also have one other special effect: They do aggravated damage against supernatural targets — just like the claws of a hengeyokai. This applies to firearms as

well as melee and brawling attacks (although few of the latter do lethal damage).

Bound Joss is not lost unless the player botches a roll using the augmented Ability. If this happens, all the Joss points bound to the Ability in question are immediately gone, and the dhampyr has to check for wave soul as if his Joss had dropped to 0 (it doesn't, though, only the bound points are burnt). The Talent or Skill also botches in an extremely spectacular way, and the dhampyr has to roll to see if her P'o torments her in her moment of doubt.

WHEN GOOD LUCK GOES BAD

The P'o thrives on reversals of fortune. When a dhampyr's substantial luck fails her, it reaches out to punish her. This isn't shadow soul; the Demon doesn't actually take control of the dhampyr's body. Instead, it takes the opportunity to put the dhampyr through a little mental torment. The P'o seizes the moment of self-doubt caused by the failure of joss and fills the dhampyr's head with visions of horror. The exact nature of the visions depends on the P'o Nature of the Shade Walker, but whatever they are, they are often strong enough to permanently damage the dhampyr's psyche. A dhampyr whose

TZU WEI AND JOSS

The Kuei-jin Discipline of Tzu Wei — accessible to mortals and dhampyrs alike — deals with the interpretation and manipulation of joss. Unlike the Shade Walker's joss abilities, Tzu Wei is based on an intellectual understanding of joss, a study of fate. Dhampyric abilities, even those that require conscious thought to invoke, are more instinctive, a tapping of an internal force, while Tzu Wei brings both mind and soul to the study of joss.

Practitioners of Tzu Wei who use it on dhampyrs can cause some special effects, whether or not they are half-damned themselves. The practitioner doing so automatically notices the unusual joss of the dhampyr and Kuei-jin practitioners recognize the subject as half-damned.

Certain Tzu Wei techniques affect dhampyrs in special ways (all others function as described in the *Kindred of the East Companion*, pp. 90-91):

Fate of the One, Fate of the Wu and Fate of the Court: Instead of the dhampyr gaining the Horoscope Background, he gets a -1 difficulty bonus to all Joss-related Humanity rolls at the appointed lucky day and time.

Joss Weaving: This technique can restore a point of burnt Joss — or burn a new one, in the case of a curse.

Realigning the Stars and Substitution of the Twelve: For every dot of Horoscope a Kuei-jin would get, the dhampyr gains a -1 difficulty bonus on Joss-related Humanity rolls. This bonus cannot be made permanent through Substitution of the Twelve.

STORYTELLING, JOSS AND STYLE

Let's be honest: The *joss* powers of dhampyrs are very cinematic. These abilities function best in a chronicle with a high-action style, full of guns and gruesome enemies. In other styles of play, weaving through bullets, jumping in a cab that just happens to be there and shooting a sniper through his own telescopic sight may not be appropriate at all. You can use dhampyrs in many sorts of chronicles, but you may wish to adjust some of their abilities — or the way you portray them. Some options:

- **No Joss:** In a gritty or horrific chronicle, *joss* may not be appropriate at all. Simply ignore these rules and have the dhampyrs deal with half-life with only what few Disciplines they can learn. This is the best option when dhampyrs appear only as secondary characters in a Kuei-jin chronicle or if you want to keep things very human indeed.

- **Toned Down Joss:** If you want dhampyrs to still have an edge but need things to be more realistic in style, tone down the effects of *joss*. Passive Joss should work as is, but limit the ambient nature of the dhampyr's luck. When he is going to get seriously hurt, the Shade Walker's luck kicks in, but he doesn't live in a swirl of coincidences. You may even want to rule that Passive Joss only eliminates damage past the first health level from an attack — the character is wounded instead of killed. Active Joss and Joss Binding can be eliminated altogether or made very rare.

- **Darker Joss:** Dhampyrs lead eventful lives, but they can become tragic very quickly. Those around the dhampyr might suffer for his fortune — a buddy taking a bullet for the Shade Walker — or the fortune might be very mixed indeed — the dhampyr's new love becomes the target of an *akama*. Joss can become a source of horror and paranoia instead of reckless abandon, as the Shade Walkers must wander from place to place lest the chaos that tracks them swallow them whole.

P'o Nature is the Slave might see herself in chains, made into the plaything of her greatest enemy — be that a Yakuza boss or Yama King.

Whenever a dhampyr's player burns all her unbound Joss, botches a *joss*-related Humanity roll or botches while using an Ability enhanced through Joss Binding, the Demon comes out to play. The dhampyr's player makes an immediate check for wave soul, but with especially dangerous implications. If the player succeeds, the dhampyr resists wave soul but suffers flashes of horrific emotions during the contest with the P'o. This has no lasting game effect, but the Storyteller may have the images crop up at other times. If the player fails, the dhampyr enters a very serious form of wave soul — the P'o's torments overcome her, and she remains in wave soul for a number of hours equal to the P'o's total successes. When she finally emerges,

her Courage rating drops by one point (to a minimum of 1). If the player is so unlucky as to botch this check, the P'o surges and grows in strength. The dhampyr is subject to all of the effects of failing the check, plus she gains another dot in P'o.

These periods of wave soul are extremely traumatic, almost akin to shadow soul. Instead of acting out the Demon's wishes, however, the dhampyr hallucinates its fondest wish while cowering or running. At the Storyteller's discretion, a dhampyr whose Courage drops to 1 may gain a Derangement from the psychological trauma.

REGAINING JOSS

Luck is a precious commodity, and it doesn't return quickly. Spent or lost Joss returns at the rate of 1 point per day, at sunrise.

Dhampyrs can also regain lost Joss by overcoming opposition. When a dhampyr succeeds in any conflict involving opposition that is at least as skilled or strong as he is, the Storyteller may allow the player to make a Courage roll (difficulty 6). Each success restores a single Joss point, up to the dhampyr's maximum. Excess successes are wasted.

"Conflict" does not necessarily mean a fight, although combat certainly qualifies. Defeating an opponent in a game of chance, a race, or even a verbal conflict qualifies as well. Basically, a dhampyr's success in an endeavor strengthens his confidence in his own Joss, and this faith is rewarded.

Finally, a dhampyr can regain Joss points by being true to himself. Luck is an inescapable part of their identity and by living up to it, he invites fortune in. Whenever a dhampyr is eligible to regain Willpower by obeying his Nature, the player should also roll Humanity (difficulty 9). Each success refreshes a point of spent Joss.

BACKGROUNDS

The following two Backgrounds are unique to dhampyrs. The Age Background presented here should not be confused with the one used to represent truly elder Camites in *Vampire: The Masquerade* (see *Vampire Storytellers Handbook*, p. 36). The Face Background might be applied to a *shen* who somehow has achieved informal status among the courts of the Hungry Dead.

AGE

You have spent years devoting yourself to the development of your Chi powers at the expense of almost anything else in your life. The decades of fanatical practice and study have paid off, but you have little regard for your human side. And since you are not immortal like your Kuei-jin parent, the ravages of time extract a heavy price.

Each dot in this Background lowers your maximum Humanity by 1 and raises your difficulty to resist cannibalistic hunger (see page 52). Age has a variety of other

effects, summarized below. You also can't buy the Ignorance of Self Flow.

Note that Age often provides immediate benefits in exchange for a lower maximum Humanity and some physical degradation, so it may be tempting to players. Players should consider their reduced *joss* before taking high levels of Age, and the Storyteller may wish to impose age limits on the characters.

- 101 to 150 years old: Your Shintai Discipline maximum is 2.
- 151 to 200 years old: Your Shintai Discipline maximum is 2; you start with a free point in any Demon Art.
- 201 to 250 years old: Your Shintai Discipline maximum is 3; you start with a free point in a Demon Art; you have one fewer point for Physical Attributes.
- 251 to 300 years old: As Age ••• except that you gain an additional point for Disciplines (beyond the standard one) but lose your Bruised health level. Tests for wave soul caused by sources of aggravated damage are also at + 1 difficulty.
- 301+ years old: Your Shintai Discipline maximum is 4; you start two free points in Demon Arts and an additional point for Disciplines; you lose your Bruised and Mauled health levels and have three fewer points for Physical Attributes. Tests for wave soul caused by sources of aggravated damage are also at + 2 difficulty.

FACE

Most of the time, a dhampyr's interactions with Kuei-jin other than his parent are strained at best. For formal purposes, the courts consider them on par with *him*, so Storytellers can impose a debilitating - 4 penalty to their social dice pools (as outlined on the Dharma Reference Chart, *Kindred of the East*, p. 54).

The Face Background provides your dhampyr the best opportunity for actual status in the courts of the Hungry Dead. It denotes informal recognition of the character's abilities and worth compared to other "nonpersons," not an official position at court (although dhampyrs with high Face may be granted some positions). This reputation can come from a variety of sources — the status of a Kuei-jin parent or a notable act or period of service to the court. You should work out the details with the Storyteller as part of your prelude.

Face reduces your character's social penalties as described below:

- - 3 penalty to social dice pools. You might hold a very minor position at your local court or be recognized by a few of Kuei-jin, but are still better off seen than heard.
- - 2 penalty to social dice pools. You probably have some menial, but noticeable job (like first assistant to

a mandarin's secretary) or have a parent of influence; the local court knows your name... most of the time.

- - 1 penalty to social dice pools. You hold a significant position for one of your ilk, being a heimin messenger or responsible for a powerful Scarlet Screen. You get a modicum of respect from your "betters."
- no penalty to social dice pools. You not only have some official capacity at court, but have done your job well enough to actually be noticed and even respected. You are granted the same status as a young Kuei-jin disciple.
- no penalty to social dice pools. Your reputation has spread through multiple courts even if you are not an official messenger, and some notable Kuei-jin even call you a friend and ally.

MERITS & FLAWS

DHARMIC SCHOOLING (1 OR 2 PT. MERIT)

Most dhampyr's knowledge of the Dharmic paths only extends as far as "My father is a Resplendent Crane" or "Angry Devil-Tigers are very dangerous." At some point in your half-life, you have become much more familiar with the principles and precepts of the Kuei-jin Dharmas. While this doesn't actually help your own spiritual development, you understand how to interact with the Hungry Dead.

If you can discern the correct Dharmic path of a particular Kuei-jin you can phrase requests, make statements and suggest ideas to them in a much more appealing way. Figuring out a Kuei-jin's Dharma requires rolling Perception + Etiquette, with a difficulty equal to the observed Hungry Dead's current Willpower. If the roll is successful, lower by 1 the difficulty of any social roll involving Kuei-jin. You can also produce the opposite effect, irritating the Kuei-jin immensely and even causing them to test for fire soul (a dangerous tactic indeed).

The one-point version of this Merit grants the dhampyr knowledge of the orthodox Dharmic paths. The two-point version includes all of the heretical Dharmas.

CHI ATTUNEMENT (3 PT. MERIT)

Your bond to one of the two basic types of Chi (Yin or Yang) is especially strong. You regain this type of Chi at twice the normal rate (two per hour of rest, four per hour of meditation), but regain the other type at half the normal rate. A Demon Chi Attunement is not possible.

Beyond the game effects above, Chi Attunement influences your general disposition and appearance, much like balance and aspect do for a Kuei-jin. If you are attuned to Yang, you appear vital, sensual and short-tempered; to Yin, you seem morose, reserved and analytical. Yang-attuned dhampyrs often have the Vivophage Flaw, while the Yin-attuned often have Sun Allergy.

VIVOPHAGE (1 PT. FLAW)

Something in your half-dead makeup cannot process the Yin Chi that a cold corpse provides. Should you stoop to the dishonorable practice of consuming human flesh for Chi (you shame your family!), you can only absorb Chi by consuming the flesh of the living or the recently (less than four hours) dead. You can still absorb Yin Chi as normal from a recently dead corpse, however.

SHELTERED UPBRINGING (2 PT. FLAW)

You were brought up among the Kuei-jin since birth, schooled in the ways of intrigue and politics that rule the courts of the Hungry Dead. You know a whole lot about the Kuei-jin but not much about the rest of the world.

You suffer a +1 difficulty penalty on any social rolls that involve interacting with mundane society and any rolls requiring knowledge of modern technology like cars or computers.

SUN ALLERGY (3 PT. FLAW)

The blood of your Kuei-jin parents runs stronger in you than normal, and you have a much more adversarial relationship with the Eye of Heaven. Where other dhampyrs can walk around in the sun with only a few evil urges as a consequence, your skin and eyes are much more sensitive. You are hardly ever seen outside without a pair of dark glasses (the rays of the sun give you a splitting headache), and your skin burns and peels like an albino's with too much exposure to the sun.

You take one level of bashing damage for every 30 minutes spent in the direct rays of the sun. Heavy clothing and sunglasses can slow this process to one level per hour, but that's all. You must succeed on a Conscience roll when you take this damage (opposed by the P'o as the beast within rages against the sun). Failing the check means you lose a point of Humanity. On a botch, you also gain a point of P'o and lapse immediately into fire soul.

TAINTED JOSS (3 PT. FLAW)

Your natural luck has a darker side to it than most dhampyrs' — especially for those who spend any time with you. Although joss still saves you from harm and allows you to perform amazing feats, the background of coincidences in your life is distinctly dangerous. You are always crossing paths with *akuma* and Yakuza killers, becoming involved in terrorist plots and other dangerous events. Kidnappers and assassins frequently target your friends.

This has no concrete game effect, but the Storyteller should endeavor to have stories reflecting this constant bad luck.

IGNORANCE OF SELF (4 PT. FLAW)

For some reason, you have grown up with absolutely no idea of what you are. Perhaps, against all odds, your Kuei-jin parent knows nothing of your existence (and is therefore probably male). Your parent may have simply decided to leave you as a "sleeper" — a secret resource to be called upon in time of need. Whatever the reason, you know little,

DHAMPYR EXPERIENCE CHART

Trait	Experience Cost
New Ability	3
New Discipline	20
Passive Joss	15
Active Joss	20
Joss Binding	20
Attribute	Current Rating x4
*Abilities	Current Rating x2
Disciplines	Current Rating x15
Virtues	Current Rating x2
Humanity	Current Rating x2
Willpower	Current Rating x2

if anything, about the supernatural aspects of the Middle Kingdom and are completely unaware that you are anything but a normal mortal — albeit a lucky one.

You may not start with any Kuei-jin Disciplines, any supernatural Backgrounds, Active Joss or Joss Binding. You may still use Passive Joss and heal yourself with your Chi however — you do those things instinctively.

STRONG P'O (4 PT. FLAW)

Sometimes a dhampir inherits a bit more of his parent's spirit than he might have wanted. The beast that seethes in your head still can't take control of you, but it sure does yell a whole lot louder. You were nothing but trouble growing up, and have probably done at least some time in prison or a juvenile home. To say you have a bad attitude is an understatement.

Your starting P'o is 2 instead of 1.

POISON JOSS (6 PT. FLAW)

A much more brutal form of Tainted Joss, above, this Flaw indicates that you were born under inauspicious circumstances indeed. Your joss is harder to tap and very dangerous, for you and your friends.

Passive Joss always costs you one extra point of Joss to use — so 2 points to cancel a lethal attack and 4 to cancel an aggravated one. Also, it has a nasty tendency to do so at the expense of others — especially those near and dear to you. Your good fortune always comes at their expense. For instance, you might be saved from an assassin's bullet by your best friend stumbling at just the wrong moment and taking it for you. When using Passive Joss, you must roll a 10 on your Humanity roll for it to function normally (although at the added expense). If you succeed but don't get a 10, someone nearby whom you care about takes damage in your stead. Your ally doesn't take all the damage, however: If the attack was lethal, she suffers bashing damage; if it was aggravated, she suffers lethal. An ally cannot take more than 2 health levels of damage from a single attack in this manner.

Think carefully before you take this Flaw. It significantly weakens the Joss of a dhampyr, and for beings that are already often dwarfed in power by those they walk among, that can be a fatal condition. It may also alienate other characters.

Poison Joss also includes all the effects of Tainted Joss. It has no effect on Active Joss or Joss-Binding.

EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT

Character development for a dhampyr functions in basically the same way as for other characters, using the modified experience chart below. There are some matters that require special attention beyond spending points, however.

TRAITS OF THE SOUL

The various Traits that reflect parts of the half-damned soul — Virtues, Humanity, Willpower, P'o — can't be raised by merely spending experience points. These are reflections of fundamental aspects of the character. Changes come as a result of events, not as the result of the player's whim between game sessions. As such, the Storyteller should allow experience points to be spent on these Traits only if they have been tested during play or the player has roleplayed the effort to improve in that area. There's no need to be draconian in applying this rule, but a Shade Walker who repeatedly turns tail and runs shouldn't suddenly get a rise in Courage because her player has points to spend. If that same dhampyr stood her ground just once, however, the increase would be wholly justified.

VIRTUES

Players can increase their Virtues if their characters have gone through experiences likely to change that part of their personality or are actively trying to change that behavior. Increasing a Virtue does not change the character's Humanity or Willpower; those Traits are only derived from Virtues during character creation. However, increasing Courage or Self-Control does increase available Yang or Yin Chi. Simply using the relevant type of Chi does not qualify the Virtue for an increase — it is the dhampyr's personality that releases Chi, not the other way around.

HUMANITY AND P'O

Dhampyrs can increase their Humanity in the same way as Cainites: by acting more human (and by their players then spending the appropriate experience points). Experience cannot overcome the dhampyr's maximum Humanity, however — the player can never raise the Trait higher than $(10 - [P'o + \text{Age Background}])$. Increasing Humanity increases available Joss, but simply spending Joss does not qualify the character for a Humanity increase.

Dhampyrs can also beat the Demon down (and players reduce the P'o rating) given discipline and dedication, but it's not easy. The Twilight Child must commit some act that denies the P'o and connects him more than ever to his human side. Ultimately, it's up to the Storyteller to

judge if an act is sufficient to justify a loss of P'o. Even after the appropriate deed has been done, the player must pay experience points equal to the amount necessary to raise the dhampyr's Humanity above its current level, and instead lower the P'o by one. This does not give the dhampyr a free Humanity point. It just lowers the P'o.

The burning flame of the devil inside can never be fully extinguished, of course. A dhampyr always has at least one point of P'o.

JOSS POWERS

Almost all dhampyrs start play with the Passive Joss power. Acquiring additional joss powers — Active Joss or Joss-Binding — not only costs substantial experience points but requires exotic training. The dhampyr must have become aware of his nature to acquire a new joss power and then must find a suitable mentor. The ideal teacher is an elder dhampyr who has the power in question. Learning Passive Joss (if the dhampyr somehow doesn't have it) takes three weeks of full-time study, and each of the other powers take two months of full-time study. Note that Joss-Binding also requires Active Joss, Meditation ••• and either Enigmas • or Occult • to learn. If a dhampyr is unavailable as a teacher, a master of *tz'u wei* (Tzu Wei •••••) can serve in his stead.

Although they take time to learn, Joss powers do not have levels.

DISCIPLINES

Learning or raising shintai, Feng Shui or Tzu Wei requires a teacher who has the Discipline in question at a higher level than the student. Training times are up to the Storyteller, but a number of hours equal to five times the experience cost is appropriate. The Storyteller may forgo the necessity of a teacher if raising an existing Discipline, although training time could double.

Demon Arts can be learned in the same manner as other Disciplines, but the Storyteller may also allow the P'o to act as the teacher. In this way, an isolated dhampyr can develop the powers of her Demon soul. The Storyteller may impose a Conscience or Self-Control roll when the period of training is complete, to see if the dhampyr can maintain her moral center given her dark education.

VARIATIONS ON (HALF) DAMNATION

For the most part, a dhampyr is a dhampyr. Regardless of who birthed them and under what circumstances, the half-damned have essentially the same abilities and weaknesses. The circumstances of their upbringing determine how they go about their prolonged and eventful lives.

There are, however, some creatures who are not quite dhampyrs in the traditional sense, but are related to them. These "cousins" to the Shade Walkers are rare birds indeed, especially in the case of the mythical Jin Hai. They serve as reminders of

the dhampyrs' roots and as warnings of their possible fate, and can fill such roles in a Shade Walker chronicle.

The following information is intended for the Storyteller as the Jin Hai and Makuro Hiko are primarily antagonists and contacts for dhampyrs. Players may wish to stop reading here so as not to spoil any secrets.

JIN HAI, CHILDREN OF THE GODS

Eons ago, in the Age of Legends, the mighty Ten Thousand Immortals walked the lands. Answering the mandate of Heaven, they built great cities and fought mighty beasts. The mountains laughed with their joy and the skies cried with their sadness. They were the Wan Xian, and they were wondrous indeed.

The Immortals loved with the passion of the storms, and children were born of their unions with the mortals whom they guarded. At times, these children became Wan Xian themselves — guided through the tests left by the August Personage for this very purpose. At other times, these offspring remained mortal but still had a spark of the divine. These were the Golden Children, standing between man and god — the Jin Hai.

DEATH OF THE CHILDREN

In the twilight of the Third Age, the Wan Xian indulged in depraved acts for their own glory and forgot their duties. The Golden Children confronted their de-based parents in the hopes of reversing the damage. The Immortals of Meru listened with amusement as mere babes talked of the turning of the Ages, the dire consequences of stealing Chi from the world and the responsibilities of the Wan Xian. They slaughtered the assembled Jin Hai in an orgy of blood and outrage. The screams of the Children mingled with the laughter of their parents.

But the Jin Hai were right. The Wan Xian fell from grace, the Age turned and the world cried out in pain.

SOULS AND SURVIVORS

The slaughter of the Golden Children offended the Scarlet Queen most of all. Products of life and passion, the Jin Hai had been her gift to the Wan Xian. Unlike the August Personage, she did not completely turn her back on the Immortals. Instead, she created a way to remind the Immortals of their most terrible crimes and the reasons for their curse. Her instrument was the Golden Children.



The Scarlet Queen ventured into the realms of Yin and Yomi — at great risk to herself — and collected the souls of the murdered Children. She then wove them into the pattern of Yang, blessing (or cursing) the fallen Immortals (now the Wan Kuei) with the ability to have children. Each dhampyr was born with the soul of a Golden Child, a reminder of the crimes of the Third Age. The urge to procreate ensured that Yang-addled Wan Kuei always produced some half-damned reminders.

But not all the Jin Hai died at Meru. A few refused to confront their parents — through misplaced loyalty, cowardice or the realization that such a plan was doomed. They hid in distant lands and were spared the brunt of the August Personage's curse. Never truly immortal like their parents, they still had life spans measured in millennia; baring injury, they could survive to see the world crumble around them.

Only a handful of Jin Hai remained after the slaughter, and the hardships of the Fourth and Fifth Ages have claimed most of those survivors. Some committed suicide rather than watch the world die, and others have found peace in distant realms. There are *maybe* three or four Jin Hai still remotely active in the Middle Kingdom. But they have a plan.

THE TURNING AGE

The Golden Children believe that the Scarlet Queen had greater plans for their siblings than to be simple reminders of past crimes. Dhampyrs are the brave Jin Hai who saw the turning of the Ages coming and tried to warn their parents. They failed once, but the surviving Jin Hai believe they have a second chance.

The Sixth Age, worst of all the stops of the Great Wheel, is on the horizon. The Kuei-jin rage against this fate in typical fashion, by scrambling for shelter or power. It is up to the half-damned to lead the struggle to either avert the Age of Sorrow or lessen the suffering to come.

So the Jin Hai try to organize the half-damned and show them their higher purpose. The Golden Child Ti Feng is the most active, having revealed himself to the Shade Walker Jin Kai Wai who then sent his infamous letter to his brethren (see pages 33-36). He currently makes his home in Hong Kong. Other Jin Hai are operating in Singapore and anywhere else the half-damned congregate.

STORYTELLING

The Jin Hai are meant to be legendary figures, mythical remnants of a more glorious past. They can serve to push a physical, visceral chronicle of the half-damned into more spiritual matters. To portray the surviving Golden Children in the right light, keep the following elements in mind:

- **You Don't Need to Use Them:** The Jin Hai don't have a place in every chronicle featuring dhampyrs. They add a legendary level to play that might not be welcome. Even if you use the revelation that dhampyrs have Jin Hai souls, you can easily rule that all the Golden Children died at the end of the Third Age. Use them as much or as

JIN HAI POWERS

In the hallowed Third Age, the Golden Children had many powers. The few who still survive retain only a shadow of their former glory — most of their energy has been spent merely on the job of surviving the centuries.

The specific abilities of a living Jin Hai are up to the Storyteller — these are unique characters who have developed idiosyncratic abilities. In general, however, they are physically quite frail: Any substantial attack is likely to make them suffer the equivalent of the Little Death or even Final Death. They are, however, extremely learned and typically have superhuman (6+) ratings in many Knowledges. In terms of supernatural powers, Jin Hai know a great number of rites and rituals and may have the equivalent of various Kuei-jin Disciplines; Tau Wei, Feng Shui and Yang Prana are likely choices. If you have access to **World of Darkness: Blood and Silk**, you might consider giving them some of the shintai from the Fourth Age.

Jin Hai did not suffer the curse of their parents. They do not fear the sun and can absorb Chi through osmosis.

little as you like. If you're feeling especially nasty, the whole Golden Children story might be a trick by an especially skilled Yama King...

- **Age Has Its Price:** The surviving Jin Hai are among the oldest creatures in the World of Darkness. Although they are still around, they are hardly immensely powerful. Most of whatever "world-shaking" power they might have had has been spent keeping themselves alive. They are very knowledgeable and have some fantastic abilities (see sidebar), but they are basically old men and women — wise but frail.

- **Mystery Is Keys:** Reveal the truth slowly. The nature of the dhampyr's souls and the survival of a few Jin Hai are secrets that should take time to uncover. Let players slowly peel back the layers of mystery around their characters. Don't let the truth stand out too much — have other possibilities floating around. Tou Mu might be behind it all, no?

- **They Motivate Instead of Acting:** The Jin Hai do not believe they can save the world; they believe that dhampyrs can. As such, they act as distant mentors, trying to guide the Shade Walkers toward their destiny. Your chronicle is about the players' characters, not about ancient demigods. Let the characters change the world; the Jin Hai missed their chance ages ago.

THE MAKURO HIKO, LEGACY OF THE BURNING

If the Jin Hai are echoes of the heroic past, then the Makuro Hiko — the "Black Sun Children" — are portents

of the horrific taints to come. The atomic weapons that destroyed the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 also tainted the island nation's Chi — permanently, perhaps. For 55 years, the *gaki* (Japan's Kuei-jin) and other local *shen* have struggled against the effects of the dark energy that flows through their home's dragon tracks. Everything from chaos among the *uji* to the rise of powerful *akuma* has been blamed on the tainted Chi.

Among the problems blamed on the Burning is the twisted condition of Japanese dhampyrs, or *maiko*. *Gaki* who mate with humans while gorged on tainted Yang Chi have an even smaller chance of conceiving a child, and birth defects are a certainty. Japanese dhampyrs who survive bear the scars of their taint, ranging from simple deformities to outright monstrosities.

The Bishamon *uji* decided years ago that it was best to suspend all procreation until the poisoned dragon nests of Hiroshima and Nagasaki could be cleansed. Bishamon *gaki* competition to be allowed to create a dhampyr, but must go through a cleansing ceremony and travel to foreign lands to drink of untainted Chi. Few have made the petition, and Japanese dhampyrs under the age of 60 are rare.

At least among the Bishamon. The Genji have a very different — and very secret — opinion. Over the last 30 years, Genji Devil-Tigers have been intentionally breeding dhampyrs tainted by the Burning. They gorge themselves on corrupted Yang and mate multiple times, trying to create the most monstrous offspring they can. Their experiments have achieved some truly horrific results — the Makuro Hiko.

Most Devil-Tigers do not create dhampyrs and prefer to raise Ban Ren Guei instead. These "half-demon people"

PLAYING THE FREAKS

Playing a *maiko*, a tainted Japanese dhampyr, is a fairly straightforward process. Use the standard character creation system in this chapter, although you cannot take the Age Background (or else your birth would predate the Burnings), and you must take at least one Flaw to represent a physical or psychological deformity. The Strong P'o and Tainted Joss Flaws are good choices. In terms of your character's prelude remember that the Bishamon consider you *persona non grata*.

The Makuro Hiko are not intended for players to portray. But if you want to indulge in a little savage play, they can be fun. Create a dhampyr in the typical fashion, but start with a P'o of 3 and choose one bakemono power or Demon Shintai characteristic for each dot of P'o. Your character will also have an increased difficulty to resist fire soul (see p. 64).

Players and Storytellers who enjoy deranged monsters may want to consult *Freak Legion: A Players Guide to Fomor*.

are the offspring of bakemono and mortals and serve as the Celestial Devils' aids in punishing the unrighteous (see **Dharma Book: Devil-Tigers** for more). The Genji experimentation with the Makuro Hiko, however, is starting to attract attention across the Dharma.

Some of the other Japanese *uji* also quietly disregard the Bishamon ban on dhampyrs. Their children bear deformities but are rarely as monstrous as the results of intentional Genji experimentation.

MARKS OF THE BURNINGS

Most Japanese Shade Walkers not bred by the Genji only display a few deformities. They may be blind, have a twisted limb or bear other physical problems. They have the same basic abilities as other Shade Walkers. In addition to physical deformities, they often have more developed Demon souls.

Genji Makuro Hiko are more distinctive. Their parents — both mortal and Kuei-jin — are ritually infused with tainted Chi; they are typically conceived and born in dragon nests in Hiroshima or Nagasaki. They are subjected to tortures to enrage the P'o. Their living side is eroded in the interests of raising devils.

Joss flows around the Makuro Hiko in a twisted and more savage manner. "Lucky" events still seem to protect them from harm, but usually at the expense of those around them: Being the friend of such a creature is to walk with a karmic target on your back. This tainted joss guarantees that a Black Sun Child, already twisted physically and mentally, cannot build lasting relationships. The Makuro Hiko have almost universally become bitter, alienated loners — angry at the world and happy to listen to their Demon souls. Genji Devil-Tigers watch them, trying to direct them to righteous acts — like the torment of the wicked — with limited success.

Many of the Makuro Hiko bear physical deformities that grant them advantages in combat, similar in many ways to the twisted endowments of bakemono or the Demon Shintai form. Coupled with their rage, this makes the Black Sun Children savage fighters indeed.

SOULS AND CONFLICTS

As far as the Genji Devil-Tigers who created them are concerned, the 20 or so Black Sun Children they have already raised are simply promising experiments. The Genji hope to use these Shade Walkers as weapons against the Bishamon or other enemies. If the fury of the Makuro Hiko cannot be tamed, they may just be released in enemy courts to wreck havoc.

The few who know of the dhampyrs' past lives realize that these experiments are a far more serious matter. The Genji are intentionally twisting the souls of Jin Hai and in all likelihood damning them to Yomi. For the Golden Children who believe dhampyrs have a role to play in the Sixth Age, this is a grave matter indeed — one that might require the destruction of the Black Sun Children altogether.

Two Makuro Hiko have already fallen to a demon hunter of the Shih, guided there by the Jin Hai, Ti Feng.

BY THE NUMBERS

Following are statistics for a Makuro Hiko. Some of their mutations come in the form of bakemono powers (see *Kindred of the East*, pp. 219-220).

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 5, Dodge 3, Intimidation 4, Melee 2

Disciplines/Powers: Passive Joss, Flesh Shintai 1, Armor, Claws & Fangs, Extra Limb (tail)

Virtues: Conscience 1, Self-Control 2, Courage 5, P'o 3, Humanity 3

Willpower: 6

Merits & Flaws: Tainted Joss

Notes: Makuro Hiko suffer a +1 difficulty penalty to resist fire soul.

WELCOME TO THE LION CITY

The island city-state of Singapore, just off the southern tip of Malaya, stands as a beacon of economic prosperity and rigid social control in Southeast Asia. In the shadows of the Middle Kingdom, the towering edifices of the city shelter the Golden Lion Court, a holdout against the powers of the Kuei-jin *penangallan* queens who rule the region. For the Hungry Dead, the court is something of a joke, a citadel that continues to exist at the pleasure of the fractious queens of the surrounding jungles. For dhampyrs, however, the city is a rare gathering point, where they are made welcome and can plan for the future.

Storytellers who wish to run chronicles with a group of half-damned characters can use Singapore as a starting point. This brief overview of the court should give you enough material to kick-start your own imagination and set a chronicle in motion. From Singapore, a group of dhampyrs could easily head to other locales — such as the other dhampyric gathering point in Hong Kong or even the Californian front of the Great Leap Outward.

DAMNED AND HALF-DAMNED

The warm reception Twilight Children receive in Singapore is due to the efforts of Chan Jiangu, one of the Golden Lion Emperors who has been in the city for over a century. During the period of British rule, when various Kin-jin thought they owned the Singaporean night, Chan was building Scarlet Screens among the Chinese population to prepare the way for a takeover of the island — nominally on the behalf of the *penangallan* of the Golden Courts. A follower of the Way of the Resplendent Crane, Chan nevertheless had a taste for Yang and knew the benefits of loyal offspring. Among his most prominent children were Sarah Tzu, who was at various times a mistress and secretary to several British officials, and Chan Luwan, who has served as president of the Trans-China Shipping Company since 1975.

Chan Jiangu has not only spawned almost dozen children of his own, but encourages his allies among the emperors to do so as well. His hope is to slowly build a powerful group of underlings with which he can eventually ensure the true independence of the Golden Lion Court from the courts of the *penangallan*. His closest allies believe that he has always harbored desires for power independent from the jungle queens, but that his ambitions truly took shape during WWII. At that time, the queens of the Golden Courts sanctioned the *gaki* of the Bishamon *uji* to take over Singapore under cover of the Japanese occupation. The Golden Queens hoped the Bishamon would hunt down British and other Kin-jin lurking in the city (which they did) and were happy to overlook the destruction of Chinese Kuei-jin and dhampyrs in the city. Chan — who barely escaped the *gaki* — has never forgiven the *penangallan*.

Singapore's other ancestors generally support the idea of eventually separating themselves from the jungle queens, but many fear Chan may move too quickly. They also wonder whether he is using his dhampyric offspring to create power for himself at their expense. Over the last 35 years or so, a dhampyric arms race of sorts has developed, with various Singaporean Kuei-jin breeding or welcoming half-damned refugees. Over the last decade, the fruits of much of this breeding have come to age, and the population of dhampyrs in the city has swollen to several score.

Some of the more prominent half-damned residents of the Lion City include the following:

LU "CRAZY LARRY" CHIN, BUSINESS MAGNATE

The son of Chan Jiangu's rival Dahari Sublai, Larry Chin is the president of the Singapore International Investment Corporation, a major player in the financial shenanigans of the island nation. Crazy Larry got his moniker right after he took over the reigns of SIIC in the early 1980s and led it through a series of risky investments, all of which paid off despite the predictions of doom coming from analysts across the globe. The SIIC corporate headquarters — called Chin's Folly by some — is now an indelible part of the Singapore skyline.

SIIC and all its holdings form a potent Scarlet Screen for Dahari Sublai and his *wu*, the Fire Lotus Brothers, and they accord Larry Chin a level of respect that would shock most members of the Quincunx. But Larry is well aware that he is merely a favored pet of the Fire Lotus despite all he has done for them. He never passes on the opportunity to establish his own avenues of power. As such, he is a major player in the development of the dhampyr community in the city. He also spends some days at the Lexicon Club, well aware of its Yomi-spawned atmosphere. Perhaps foolishly, he believes that his *joss* will guide him safely through any deals he has to make with Mikaboshi.

MAYA SURITA, ADVISOR TO THE EMPEROR

As far as Chan Jiangu is concerned, Maya Surita is the half-damned child of a *penangallan* who died at the hands of the Kin-jin several centuries ago. Not especially power-

ful in any physical way, this slight Malay woman is a fortuneteller and astrologer without compare. Combining the arts of *tuwei*, several other schools of sorcerous practice and a natural connection to the ways of *joss*, she advises those she deems worthy. Her counsel has helped Chan, once a lowly jina in a Resplendent Crane temple near the Gulf of Tonkin, rise to power in Singapore. Her warnings allowed him to survive the *gala* purges in the 1940s and to stave off his enemies since then. He is totally unaware that he is but a pawn in her own plans for the Sixth Age.

Maya Surita is in fact a Jin Hai, one of the Golden Children who escaped the slaughter at Mount Meru in the Third Age and has awaited a time to atone for her cowardice. Now, as the world lurches into the Age of Darkness, she has engineered a haven for her spiritual kin, the dhampyrs. Chan's dreams of an independent Golden Lion Court are only a distraction in her plan to build a society of dhampyrs who can act to push the world back into the light.

ALINA CHAN, HEIR APPARENT

One of the daughters of Chan Jiangu, Alina came of age almost a decade ago and only emerged fully into the society of the Golden Lion Court last year. The intervening years were spent training with her father and Maya Surita, an elderly dhampyr who has long advised him. Still young, Alina nevertheless has the aura of great things about her. Her father has arranged for her to become a police inspector, a position of great authority in the climate of law and order that dominates Singapore. That women rarely hold such positions just emphasizes her exceptional nature and the power of her political connections — both mortal and immortal.

Alina is loyal to her damned father, but not blindly so. She recently became a liaison to Lao Shang, an agent of the Bamboo Princes who visited Singapore and expressed an interest in the half-damned. Emperor Chan wanted his daughter to sound out the Kuei-jin revolutionary to see if a covert alliance against the *penangallan* might be possible. Alina did so, but she also took some of Lao's political rhetoric to heart. His message of acting to shake off the domination of the ancients somehow resonated with the lessons of self-reliance taught to her by her tutor Maya Surita. She has begun spending time at Café Omani, an Arab Quarter haunt for dhampyrs in the city.

Alina just might find her destiny there.

PLACES TO GO, PEOPLE TO SEE

Singapore is a blend of peoples and styles. A port city that grew to modern heights in colonial days, it has attracted a mixed population including (among others) Malay, Chinese, Arabs and Indians. As a legacy of divide-and-rule policies, ethnic communities still have their traditional neighborhoods that reflect unique styles and architecture. Mosques, Hindu temples and British-era hotels all mark the city's heritage. The rise of the modern economic miracle of Singapore has added a veneer of high finance to the trading port.

In the shadows, the unliving players of the Middle Kingdom stake out their havens: The Kuei-jin are the preeminent power in the city, but the large number of dhampyrs gives the half-damned some special status. Places frequented by the Shade Walkers of Singapore include:

CAFÉ OMANI

Down Victoria Street from the Malabar Mosque in the Arab Quarter is the small Café Omani. One of many Middle Eastern coffee houses in the colorful Muslim neighborhood, the Omani is operated by Jamal Ibn-Nasir, a dhampyr of almost one hundred years whose Malay father had established several Scarlet Screens among the Muslims of the city. Jamal saw his immortal father killed during the Japanese occupation and has been a free agent ever since. Mostly loyal to the Golden Lion Emperors in their struggles against the Kin-jin and the *penangallan*, he is primarily interested in assuring his own future and that of the Islamic population — which he considers his private concern. In recent decades, as the number of dhampyrs has swollen, he has seen the potential of organizing the half-damned.

For the last five years, Café Omani has served as a neutral ground for the city's dhampyrs. It has seen the sons and daughters of immortal rivals meet to settle arguments. It has seen refugees from the jungles of southeast Asia seek shelter from the *penangallan*. Visitors from as far away as Hong Kong and Tokyo have come to stand with their kind. Maya Surita has a room upstairs in the hotel that surmounts the café; special guests may consult with her.

LEXICON CLUB

A warehouse in the crowded port area of Singapore hides the darker reflection of the Café Omani. The mortal and immortal powers that be in Singapore have created a strict regime of law and order that drives a variety of sins into the shadows — the Lexicon Club is the darkest of these shadows. Every kind of illegal pleasure can be had at the club, all under the watchful eye of a Thousand Whisper jina named Salek Nadir.

Dhampyrs are welcome in the Lexicon Club and can find several pleasures hard to come by elsewhere. Most infamous is the Red Room, a chamber deep in the warehouse where dhampyrs and Kuei-jin alike are free to practice debased cannibalism. Salek Nadir assigned his daughter Samia to the task of running the Red Room, intending it to be a service for quietly feeding him who could not yet extract Chi from blood.

Many Devil Tigers and other inquisitors of the unliving have thought that Salek Nadir might be an *akuma*. But in fact he is damned only by his ignorance. He believes the Lexicon Club to be an important outlet for dark urges in a city ruled with strict morality. He is unaware that his daughter long ago gave herself to Mikaboshi, the Yama King of the Wicked City. With every innocent orphan or imprisoned drug peddler who joins the menu of the Red Room, one more inch of Singapore merges with the urban hell of Yomi.



CHAPTER THREE: CHILDREN OF THE TEN THOUSAND DEMONS

ALL DHAMPYRS STRUGGLE TO FIND A PLACE IN A WORLD IN WHICH THEY CAN NEVER FULLY BELONG. SOME LIVE AMONG THE HUNGRY DEAD, ACTING AS COURTIERS, MESSENGERS OR AGENTS FOR THEIR VAMPIRIC PARENTS, BUT THE KUEI-JIN NEVER QUITE ACCEPT THEM AS EQUALS. THEY ARE ONLY HALF-DAMNED, AFTER ALL. OTHER SHADE WALKERS TRY TO LIVE HUMAN LIVES, BUT THE RAGE OF THE DEMON SOUL WITHIN THEM, AND THEIR WILD JOSS, MAKES THAT EQUALLY DIFFICULT. THE TWILIGHT CHILDREN FOREVER HAVE ONE FOOT IN THE GRAVE AND THE OTHER ON THE ACCELERATOR.

THE FOLLOWING FOUR CHARACTER TEMPLATES ILLUSTRATE THE POSSIBILITIES AND CONTRADICTIONS OF HALF-DAMNED EXISTENCE. EACH CHARACTER IS FIGHTING TO FIND HIS OWN SPACE, WHETHER HE KNOWS IT OR NOT. THESE TEMPLATES ARE READY TO PLAY AS STARTING CHARACTERS OR CAN SERVE AS QUICK STORYTELLER CHARACTERS. USE THEM AS YOU SEE FIT.

CRUSTY OLD COURTIER

Prelude: You were born way back in the 1700s, raised in a time when the Hungry Dead didn't have to deal with the decadent and foul Westerners. Brought up by your father in the splendor of the Blood Court, you saw the wonders of the Wan Kuei. You were proud to serve your father, managing his resources in the mortal realm, being his eyes and ears in the sunlit world. You learned much of the ways of Chi — and even discovered a little about manipulating your personal luck.

But as the years passed, it became obvious that your loyal service went unnoticed. Even as you carried out his every order, tended to his every whim, committed acts that would curdle the soul of a normal man, he still denied you the acknowledgment that you craved. Even after all these years, the Kuei-jin treat you with the casual contempt they reserve for those too useful for them to kill, but too far beneath them to be accorded respect.

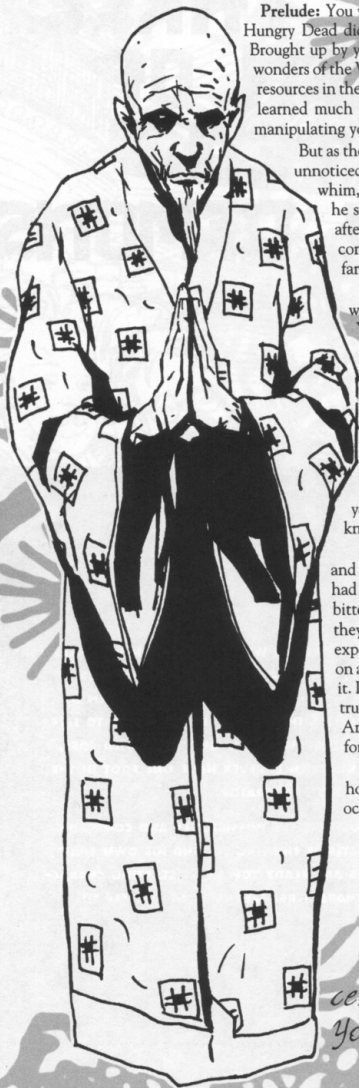
Now, after two and a half centuries, you've begun to see what little regard your father and his compatriots have for you. You are a tool to them, nothing more. You're not quite prepared to betray your father and his court to the Bamboo Princes or the Yama Kings — yet — but if your contributions continue to go unheralded, you may just decide to take some sort of rash action.

Concept: You go through the motions that you know so well. You organize your father's Scarlet Screens. You file his records. You hide the bodies he leaves behind. But now you are taking notes, watching and waiting for the chance to show your ungrateful parent just what a "mere child" can do. You know a great deal, and that can be very valuable.

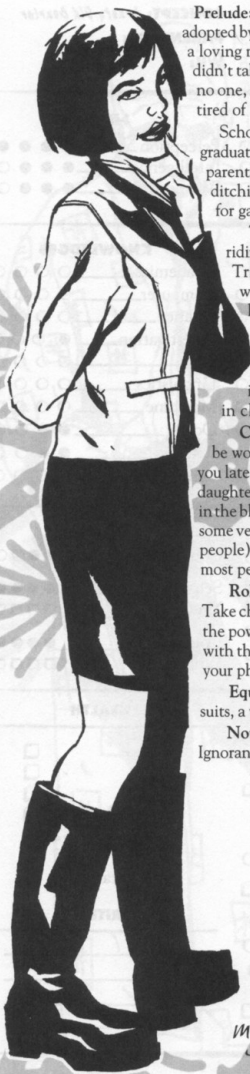
Roleplaying Hints: You've been the servant of you parent and the courts for as long as you can remember, and you've about had it. Due to an ego bruised by slights across the centuries, you are bitter and recalcitrant, giving your superiors as much respect as they are due — and not a hair more. You are far older and more experienced than many of the *hin* that you are forced to deal with on a daily basis, and you take every opportunity to let them know it. Laugh at their mistakes, but correct them and show them the true way. After all, it's the best way to show them you are superior. And when you are crossed, make sure you satisfy your P'o's cries for vengeance.

Equipment: An apartment in the city as well as a country house, a small pistol, a room filled with meditation aids and occult paraphernalia

Quote: *Of course, blessed ancestor. As you command. (whispered) You imperious old bastard....*



DEMIGOD OF GAMBLERS



Prelude: Your life was a pretty normal one, all things considered. Born to — well, adopted by, as you found out later — a middle class family in Taiwan, you grew up with a loving mother and father, a kid sister and an attitude. You were a sharp kid, and it didn't take you long to figure out how good you were at games of chance. Pretty soon, no one, not even your own mother and father, would play games with you. They got tired of losing.

School was a breeze for you even though you didn't pay much attention, and you graduated without a problem. From there it was on to the university, just like your parents wanted. But as much as you applied yourself, it wasn't long before you were ditching class to hang out in the gambling halls near the campus. Here your affinity for games of chance blossomed into a full-blown talent for gambling.

Then the bottom fell out. You remember it so well. Over a million US dollars riding on one die roll, and you won. Too bad the gambling hall belonged to that Triad boss. His thugs interrogated you a day later, looking for the money you'd won, and when they couldn't get you to talk, they put a bullet in your head and left you in the trunk of a car near the airport.

Somehow you survived. The Triad's money (which you had wired to a secret Swiss bank account) allowed you to establish yourself in Hong Kong. You learned how to defend yourself in case your skills ever got you in trouble again, and your incredible luck and a bluff or two have kept you in clover ever since.

Concept: Now you're the toast of the Hong Kong gambling scene. Life would be wonderful — if it wasn't for all the weird things that have been happening to you lately. First you ended up getting dragged into that thing with the Ambassador's daughter. And then the odd business with that serial killer. And just who is that man in the black trench coat who keeps watching you? Over the last year you've witnessed some very strange things and met some very strange people (at least you think they're people), and you're starting to get the idea that there is more going on in the city than most people see.

Roleplaying Hints: You are the epitome of the thrill-seeking gambler. Live fast. Take chances. Your incredible luck has made you overconfident in the extreme, but the power of your *joss* always sees you through. You may have a tough time dealing with the supernatural world that you now begin to see all around you, but hopefully your phenomenal luck will hold out long enough for you to get acclimated.

Equipment: A penthouse condominium, a closet full of impeccably tailored suits, a wide selection of intimidating firearms, enough attitude for 10 normal men

Note: If you are using the Merits and Flaws system, this character has the Ignorance of Self Flaw and 4 extra freebie points to spend.

Quote: Luck has nothing to do with it, my friend.

HEIMIN MESSENGER

Prelude: You were born to a Kuei-jin mother over two centuries ago, a rare event indeed, as those of her Dharma are not usually given to be scarlet cycled voluntarily. You mother gradually introduced you to the world of the Gui Ren throughout your teenage years, but made sure that you had enough contact with the mortal world that it was not strange to you. Even then she was grooming you for your true purpose: to be her intermediary with the sunlit world. Eventually you stood by her side, her honored child (or so you felt).

But your mother was a harsh taskmistress and did not suffer even the slightest failure easily. You chafed under her heavy hand. After a century of taking care of things for her, you were ready for a little more autonomy. When you saw a chance to break free of her, you did. You declared yourself heimin and, once you had approval from the ancestors, became an intermediary and spy for the Quincunx. It's been over 50 years since that day, and you're still not sure if your mother has forgiven you yet.

Your life was a fascinating and eventful one for many years, and you did not doubt that your new position was all that you needed for happiness. Then, last year, you received a letter from Jin Kai Wai shortly before his death. You had never met your fellow Shade Walker, but the truths that burned in that simple piece of paper changed everything for you. Fortunately, you were able to destroy the letter before any of the investigators got around to questioning you.

Concept: You've spent the last year wondering what you should do. Constant meditation and contemplation have yet to reveal the answer to you. One thing is for sure: Now that you know your soul's heritage, you can't really stay on the sidelines any longer. The Kuei-jin you serve are definitely not on the Road Back, and it's up to you to do what you can to point the direction for them.

Roleplaying Hints: You relish your outsider status, as it allows you the freedom to go almost anywhere in the Middle Kingdom—as long as you have some business there. When you don't have business for your court, you're pretty much left to yourself. Of course, everything you own is provided for you by the Quincunx, so you pretty much have to jump when they say so.

You're convinced yourself that your heimin status puts you in a safe position for the coming crisis. But with your new self-knowledge, you know you have to take an active part in the world, or the Age of Sorrow will be disastrous indeed.

Equipment: Large but sparsely furnished apartment, BMW X5 SAV, pump-action shotgun, large caliber pistol, passports from 13 different countries, \$1,000 in traveling cash, letter of transit from the Blood Court, a ton of frequent flier miles

Quote: Keep your hands off of me! I have a message for your master from the Revered Ancestor himself!





NAME:
PLAYER:
CHRONICLE:

NATURE: *Martyr*
P'O NATURE: *The Monkey*
DEMEANOR: *Lonor*

CONCEPT: *Haimin Messenger*
PARENTAGE:
WU:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL		SOCIAL		MENTAL	
Strength	● ● ● ● ●	Charisma	● ● ● ● ●	Perception	● ● ● ● ●
Dexterity	● ● ● ● ●	Manipulation	● ● ● ● ●	Intelligence	● ● ● ● ●
Stamina	● ● ● ● ●	Appearance	● ● ● ● ●	Wits	● ● ● ● ●

ABILITIES

TALENTS		SKILLS		KNOWLEDGES	
Alertness	● ● ● ● ●	Animal Ken	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Academics	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Athletics	● ● ● ● ●	Drive	● ● ● ● ●	Computer	● ● ● ● ●
Brawl	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Etiquette	● ● ● ● ●	Finance	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Dodge	● ● ● ● ●	Firearms	● ● ● ● ●	Investigation	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Empathy	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Martial Arts	● ● ● ● ●	Law	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Expression	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Melee	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Linguistics	● ● ● ● ●
Intimidation	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Performance	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Medicine	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Leadership	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Security	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Occult	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Streetwise	● ● ● ● ●	Stealth	● ● ● ● ●	Politics	● ● ● ● ●
Subterfuge	● ● ● ● ●	Survival	● ● ● ● ●	Science	○ ○ ○ ○ ○

ADVANTAGES

SPECIAL ABILITIES		BACKGROUNDS		VIRTUES	
<i>Passive Tone</i>	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	<i>Age</i>	● ● ● ● ●	Conscience	● ● ● ● ●
<i>Black Wind</i>	● ● ● ● ●	<i>Contracts</i>	● ● ● ● ●	Self-Control	● ● ● ● ●
<i>Bone Shiver</i>	● ● ● ● ●	<i>Fate</i>	● ● ● ● ●	Yin Chi	□ □ □ □ □
_____	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	_____	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Courage	● ● ● ● ●
_____	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	_____	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Yang Chi	□ □ □ □ □

OTHER TRAITS

_____	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
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HUMANITY

● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

JOSS

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

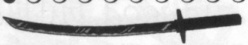
WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

P'O

● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○



□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

DEMON CHI

HEALTH

Bruised	□
Hurt	-1 □
Injured	-1 □
Wounded	-2 □
Mauled	-2 □
Crippled	-5 □
Incapacitated	□

rites

TWILIGHT BAMBOO WARRIOR



Prelude: You grew up in rural China, inculcated with the ideology of Chairman Mao at a young age. You embraced the party philosophy and purged with the best of them during the Cultural Revolution. But the often savage brutality of the revolution (which that strange little voice in your head often urged you to participate in) soured you on the Communists, and even though you had risen to a considerable rank in the party, you were beginning to wonder where your life was heading.

Then you met your father.

He introduced you to a secret and corrupt world of mysterious power and decadent pleasure — and you were taken in by it. For years you were no longer one of the masses but one of the oppressors, overseeing a little corner of your father's secret world.

But your revolutionary spirit could not be quenched forever. It took you a few decades to figure out how things really worked in the courts of the Wan Kuei. Once your father's tales of power and immortality became repetitive, you awoke from the moral torpor that you had been lulled into.

As you looked around, you realized that patterns of dominance and oppression were evident everywhere — and you were at the bottom of the social food chain. So, when you were contacted by the self-styled “Bamboo Prince” Gai Sen, it was a simple choice to start working for him.

Concept: You've since transcended the shackles of corrupt Communist thought, and have graduated to being a full-time anarchist. Aligned with a much more egalitarian group bent on smashing the entrenched power structure, you feel totally at home for the first time in your life. And while you try to keep a serious attitude, in your heart of hearts you're laughing your head off as you stick it to the Man.

Roleplaying Hints: You were a revolutionary before you were contacted by the Bamboo Princes, and you have applied yourself to their cause with a burning fervor in the years since. When working in a Bamboo Prince *wu*, pursue your duties to the utmost of your ability. You may even be more fanatical about smashing the steely grip of the mandarins than your Kuei-jin compatriots. When undercover, make sure your companions underestimate you. The less they think of you, the more they will talk — and allow you to overhear information you can pass on to your revolutionary brothers.

Equipment: A sparsely furnished apartment in a run-down part of town, a selection of easily concealed firearms, a laptop with all the trimmings, a secure satellite phone, four or five different sets of forged identification papers, a library of revolutionary literature

Quote: Filial piety is all well and good, but the Age of Sorrow is coming, and I'm not letting

YIN-YANG

NAME:
PLAYER:
CHRONICLE:

NATURE: *Bravo*
P/O NATURE: *The Dancer*
DEMEANOR: *Vigilant*

CONCEPT: *Twilight Bamboo Warrior*
PARENTAGE:
WU:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

Strength _____ ●●○○○
Dexterity _____ ●●●○○
Stamina _____ ●●●○○

SOCIAL

Charisma _____ ●●○○○
Manipulation _____ ●●○○○
Appearance _____ ●●○○○

MENTAL

Perception _____ ●●●○○
Intelligence _____ ●●●○○
Wits _____ ●●●○○

ABILITIES

TALENTS

Alertness _____ ●●○○○
Athletics _____ ●○○○○
Brawl _____ ●●○○○
Dodge _____ ●●●○○
Empathy _____ ○○○○○
Expression _____ ○○○○○
Intimidation _____ ○○○○○
Leadership _____ ○○○○○
Streetwise _____ ●●○○○
Subterfuge _____ ○○○○○

SKILLS

Animal Ken _____ ○○○○○
Drive _____ ●●○○○
Etiquette _____ ○○○○○
Firearms _____ ●●○○○
Martial Arts _____ ○○○○○
Melee _____ ●●●○○
Performance _____ ○○○○○
Security _____ ○○○○○
Stealth _____ ●●○○○
Survival _____ ○○○○○

KNOWLEDGES

Academics _____ ○○○○○
Computer _____ ●●●○○
Finance _____ ●●○○○
Investigation _____ ●●○○○
Law _____ ●●○○○
Linguistics _____ ○○○○○
Medicine _____ ●●○○○
Occult _____ ○○○○○
Politics _____ ●●○○○
Science _____ ○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Passive Tree _____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○

BACKGROUNDS

Ally _____ ●●○○○
Contact _____ ●●●○○
Master _____ ●●○○○
Resource _____ ●○○○○
_____ ○○○○○

VIRTUES

Conscience _____ ●●●●○
Self-Control _____ ●●●●○
Yin Chi _____ □□□□□
Courage _____ ●●○○○
Yang Chi _____ □□□□□

OTHER TRAITS

_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
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HUMANITY

_____ ●●●○○○○

JOSS

_____ □□□□□□□□□□

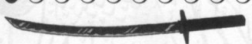
WILLPOWER

_____ ●●●○○○○

_____ □□□□□□□□□□

P/O

_____ ●○○○○○○○



DEMON CHI

_____ □□□□□□□□□□

HEALTH

Bruised _____ □
Hurt -1 _____ □
Injured -1 _____ □
Wounded -2 _____ □
Mauled -2 _____ □
Crippled -5 _____ □
Incapacitated _____ □

RISES



APPENDIX: TWILIGHT WARRIORS

The half-damned do not yet have a truly large-scale organization. Thanks in large part to the machinations of their Kuei-jin parents, most Twilight Children go through their long lives without building a network of contacts among their own kind. A similar trend has kept many dhampyrs from ever attaining any sort of fame among the *shen* of the Middle Kingdom.

But times are changing. The world lurches toward the Sixth Age, and the dhampyrs have a role to play. The following three characters are, all in their own way, bringing the half-damned to center stage in the World of Darkness.

TI FENG, CHILD OF THE AGES

Off the coast of Hong Kong, far from the waters traveled frequently by modern people, there is a small rocky island. On this island, in a wooden shack, lives a little old man.

Nobody knows much about him — in fact, only a very few people know that he exists at all. Occasionally a fisherman sails by and sees the tiny figure moving about on the rocks down by the waters, pulling in his nets. Or a hiker on one of the neighboring islands might spot a distant lantern moving about in the darkness. When someone actually sets foot on the island, the fisherman always greets them cordially, introduces himself as Ti Feng and offers them the hospitality of his tiny cabin. Visitors find him an engaging but simple conversationalist, given to great rumination on the wind, the water and the fish.

But the old man has a secret. Ti Feng is much more than an impoverished fisherman, contemplating the nature of the universe on his rocky atoll. He is one of the last remaining Golden Children, the offspring of the Wan Xian.

Feng was born in what is now mainland China in the Age of Legends, the product of the union of a Wan Xian father and a mortal mother. Feng was a hero in his time, walking proudly beside his Immortal parent. His exploits were the stuff of mythology — defeating horrible monsters, making and fulfilling outrageous wagers, and engaging in numerous amorous exploits. The world was his playground, and Ti Feng played with gusto.

Then came the terrible sickness that afflicted his father and the other Wan Xian. Arrogance. Insatiable

hunger for power. Total contempt for the celestial harmony. Ti Feng watched it, agonizing over his father's behavior, but did nothing. Unable to face the degeneration of the man he loved any longer, Ti Feng traveled far to the north, trying to escape his nagging conscience in the solitude of the steppes of Asia. While he ran, most of the other Golden Children confronted their parents — and paid with their lives. It was a choice he has regretted for millennia.

Even far from the courts, Ti Feng felt it when the mandate of Heaven was withdrawn from the Ten Thousand Immortals. He returned to the courts in secret, observing the twisted monsters that the Wan Kuei had become and learning the fate of his fellow Golden Children. Ti Feng turned his back on his father's people and struck out into the world on his own.

The following millennia were long ones. Ti Feng traveled from one end of the earth to the other, seeking solitude and peace from the horror of his memories. As much as he has traveled, he has found little solace.

It was only a hundred years ago that Ti Feng finally returned to the Middle Kingdom — and encountered a dhampyr for the very first time. When he looked at the offspring of the Wan Kuei, he saw a soul that was familiar to him within the Shade Walker's half-dead body. It was the soul of a Golden Child.

In the years since, Ti Feng has studied the Shade Walkers as intently as possible without revealing himself to either the dhampyrs or their parents. He now knows more about the Twilight Children than anyone and has confirmed that each dhampyr carries within him a soul of one of the original children of the Wan Xian. As the signs of the impending Age of Sorrow become obvious, Ti Feng has realized that it is time for him to apply some of the knowledge that he has gathered.

His first attempt was a mitigated success. He contacted an elder dhampyr — Jin Kai Wai — and informed him of the truth of his history. While he had intended to use Jin Kai Wai to subtly spread the truth of the spirits within the Shade Walkers, the dying dhampyr's "bulk mailing" technique drew far more attention than Ti Feng intended. He is now laying low until the mandarins calm down.

Ti Feng knows that if the dhampyrs are to play their proper role in the upcoming time of troubles, they must be told the truth about their souls. His latest candidate for instruction is Mao Li Wen, a dhampyr who serves among the Shih demon hunters.

MAO LI WEN, HALF-DEMON OF THE SHIH

Mao Li Wen's childhood was an ordinary enough one for Kowloon in the 1920s. Her father worked nights and slept all day, so Wen didn't see much of him, but he was loving enough when she did, and her mother more than made up for it. She went to school



and grew into her teens, all without knowing anything was out of the ordinary.

Then came that horrible night. As she watched through the cracked doorway of the basement, she saw her beloved father butcher her mother like a piece of livestock, the blood from her body evaporating into a red mist. The horrified teenager covered in her hiding place as her father pledged his soul to Hell right before her eyes.

As far as she was concerned, her father died then and there.

While her father slept the next day, the girl packed up a few prized possessions, gathered together as much money as she could and left — but not before setting the house in which she had been raised on fire. She stayed long enough to be sure that nothing could have survived, then disappeared.

Nothing more was heard of Mao Li Wen for over twenty years. No one knows exactly what happened during those two decades, but at some point Mao Li Wen was inducted into the brotherhood of demon hunters known as the Shih. While the Shih are notoriously paranoid about whom they allow to join their ranks, Mao Li Wen's actions in regard to her father evidently convinced them of her dedication. She spent the next decade in hiding, training herself for her new career. Mao Li Wen, the dutiful daughter, was gone, burned away in the fires of shame. What remains now is Mao Li Wen, the Shih warrior, Keeper of the Balance and Glorious Devil Hunter.

Mao Li Wen is an unconfirmed rumor, as far as most Kuei-jin are concerned. Those who have crossed her path usually see her as an upstart or a traitor, one with a significant number of Kuei-jin kills under her belt (more than any other Shih, if the rumors are true). A few young *wu* actively hunt her in hopes of gaining status by presenting her head to an ancestor; they've had little luck tracking her down, however. Mostly this has to do with her own skills at evading pursuit, but she also has some important allies.

Several members of the *akuma*-hunting Black Iron Talon sect of the Devil-Tigers admire Mao Li Wen's dedication to her cause and have funneled information about some highly placed *akuma* to the demon hunter. Mao Li Wen's outsider status and deadly skills allow her to efficiently bring the Final Death to *akuma* too well connected for the Devils of Heaven to touch. She returns this respect, but has assured even the Hungry Dead that if they set one foot beyond the boundaries defined for them under Heaven, she'll pay them a visit as well.

Several *penanggalan* queens in the Golden Courts also informally admire Mao Li Wen, both for her fervor and her gender. A few times when things have gotten a little too hot for her in other parts of the Middle Kingdom, the Golden Courts have offered her a safe haven. She is uncomfortable with this support, but accepts it to further her mission.

The Yama Kings are none too pleased about an upstart half-breed interfering with their plans for crowning the Demon Emperor. Mikaboshi has taken a special dislike of

this Shih (probably due to her Kuei-jin heritage) and has hatched many a convoluted plan for Mao Li Wen's destruction. It remains to be seen if the canny dhampyr can survive the focused attentions of the Lord of the Wicked City.

Mao Li Wen is not the most powerful opponent that an *akuma* might face, but she is among the most versatile. In addition to her innate *joss* and the Chi manipulation powers she apparently learned during her disappearance, she has mastered the deadly Shih martial art of Mo Chi Kung Fu. She fights with a controlled rage, each blow struck an attempt to atone for her father's weakness — and her mother's death.

Mao Li Wen's latest targets are very close to home: the so-called Black Sun Children of Japan. Guided by an old fisherman from Hong Kong, she has uncovered these twisted Shade Walkers and started to hunt them.

PROFILE

Nature: Perfectionist

P'o Nature: The Demon

Demeanor: Fanatic

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Investigation 3, Martial Arts 5, Medicine 2, Meditation 3, Melee 5, Occult 3, Stealth 4, Streetwise 3, Survival 2

Special Abilities: Passive Joss, Black Wind 1, Mo Chi Kung Fu

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Mentor 4

Conscience: 4, Self-Control: 4, Courage: 5

Humanity: 8, Willpower: 8, P'o: 1



HUANG MO, THE HIDDEN MAN

To the mandarins of the Blood Court, Huang Mo is a model dhampyr. He keeps out of the way, speaks only when he is spoken to and obeys his father's orders without question. He is the archetype of what a dhampyr should be in the Quincunx.

Few would guess the black heart that slumbers within Huang Mo's unassuming body. Some of this darkness can be attributed to an accident of birth — Huang's father was poisoned by a bakemono shortly before conceiving his son, and his Chi was corrupted to the extent that his son's P'o was much stronger than normal. Huang Mo was pulling the wings off flies and torturing cats almost before he could walk.

The boy's capacity for evil made him fit in quite nicely in the courts, and few within the Blood Court have questioned the enthusiasm with which he has pursued even the most brutal tasks assigned him by his father. At most, his behavior inspires envy among those few jina with dhampyr children of their own. "Why can't you be more like Huang Mo?"

They'd change their tune if they knew what the young (by dhampyr standards) man was really up to. The Yama Kings didn't even have to come looking for Huang Mo: He went looking for them. Before his fiftieth year had passed, he pledged his soul to Mikaboshi's service. Since that black day, he has been the Lord of the Wicked City's eyes and ears in the Blood Court. Few Kuei-jin even take notice of Huang Mo, making him an ideal spy.

The beast within chafes at such subtle maneuvering sometimes, and Huang Mo dreams of the day when Mikaboshi is crowned the Demon Emperor, and he can personally cast the writhing souls of the mandarins of the Blood Court — his father included — into Yomi for an eternity of torment.

For now, Huang Mo keeps a low profile, a slumbering serpent in the heart of the Blood Court. His eyes are always open for inexperienced *him* that can be turned to his dark master's cause, and he gathers his strength for the day the Mikaboshi gives him the word to strike.

PROFILE

Nature: Monster

P'o Nature: The Slave

Demeanor: Conformist

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3, Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Academics 2, Alertness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 3, Etiquette 3, Expression 4, Leadership 2, Linguistics 4, Meditation 1, Occult 3, Politics 3, Security 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 5

Special Abilities: Passive Joss (Tainted), Jade Shintai 1, Hellweaving 5

Backgrounds: Mentor 4, Face 5, Retainers 3

Conscience: 2, **Self-Control:** 5, **Courage:** 5

Humanity: 4, **Willpower:** 4, **P'o:** 5

