

Weapons of the Gods

roleplaying game

Wuxia Action Series



神兵玄奇

神兵玄奇



Credits

Original Comic Concepts, Writing and Art: Tony Wong

Authors: R. Sean Borgstrom, Brad Elliott

Additional Contributions: Derek Feters, Mark Hughes, Donald Ide

Artists: Tony Wong, Trent Thynes

Developer: Brad Elliott

Cultural Consultant: Hsin Hong-Chen

Production Consultant: Aron Anderson

Editor: Matt Knight

Weapons of the Gods Rules Design: Rebecca Borgstrom

Layout, Typesetting, and Interior Page Design: Andis Blija

Maps: Monica Valdovinos

Playtesters: Rebecca Borgstrom, Hsin Chen, Brad Elliott, Mark Hughes, Derek Feters, Christopher Maikisch, Patrick Carrick, Bill Morse, Donald Ide, Brian Anderson, Christine Jonsson, Ean Oz Sager, Jason Johnson, Devin Binger.

Rebecca Borgstrom Thanks: R'ykandar Korra'ti, Sh'k'anna Korra'ti, Chrysoula Tzavelas, Kevin Maginn, Geoff Grabowski, Elizabeth McCoy, Cync Brantley, Jim Hermann, and Alexandra; for what was necessary to survive.

Brad Elliott Thanks: All four of my Parents - for all the obvious and unobvious reasons. All of my friends, for their love and support.

Andis Blija Thanks: Kai, Bolthy & Jen, Alex, Dan, Donny, and the huge army of friends for their support. Mom for understanding. Ben, Kath & Jer - for taking the time to talk and remind me why I do all of this in the first place.

Special Thanks To: Tony Wong, for creating the comics; Maryann Snyder and her Family for their invaluable support.

All Weapons of the Gods comics material - logos, illustrations, character concepts and story et al - copyright 2004 Jade Dynasty Publications Ltd. The Weapons of the Gods Roleplaying Game, all text, concepts, game mechanics and presentation copyright 2004 Eos Press LLC.

Reproduction without the written permission of the publisher is expressly forbidden, except for the purposes of reviews and for blank character sheets and specific Lore sheets, which may be reproduced for personal use only.

The mention or reference to any company or product in these pages is not a challenge to the trademark or copyright concerned.

This book uses fantastical and supernatural elements in its setting, for its characters, their abilities, and themes. All such elements are fiction and intended for entertainment purposes only. This book contains mature content and reader discretion is advised.

Printed in China.

Check out Eos Press Online at www.eos-press.com!

Table of Contents

Adventuring in the Land of the Gods:

Wuxia Heroes	23
Character Design Summary	24
Example of Character Creation	25
Step One: Concept	28
Step Two: Attributes	36
Step Three: Skills & Specialties	37
Step Four: Secondary Attributes	44
Step Five: Advantages and Disadvantages	44
Character Creation Summary Chart	53
The Social Organizations of Shen Zhou	55

Conflict in Shen Zhou: The art of Battle 67

Mobility	68
Combat Actions	69
Opposing Others' Actions	70
Hurting People	71
Being Hurt	71
Basic Combat Summary	73
Attack and Defense Modifiers	74
Equipment	77
Doing Deeds	80

Shen Zhou: The Land of the Gods 85

The Lore of Shen Zhou	85
The Origin of Shen Zhou	88
Pangu	88
Fire & Water	91
The Celestial Goddess	94
The Wulin	99
The Enchanted Demon	104
The Yellow Emperor	108
The History of Shen Zhou	111
The Wu Di	111
The Xia Dynasty	115
The Shang Dynasty	120
The Shou Dynasty	124
The Qin Dynasty	125
The Han Dynasty	129
The Time of Chaos	138
Shen Zhou:	
The Land of the Gods Philosophy	144
Buddhism	144
Confucianism	144
Daoism	147

Legalism	149
The Painter's Path	152
The North	152
The East	155
The South	157
The West	159

The Society of Shen Zhou 163

Courtiers	163
Parent and Child	164
Elder and Younger Brother	169
Clan and Family	175
A Woman's Life	179
Husband and Wife	188
Courtship	192
Daoist Sexual Basics	194
Male Homosexuality	200
Female Homosexuality	206
Ruler and Subject	212
Teacher and Student	215
Superior and Minion	218
Friendship	222
Admonitions for Girls	225
Daoist Sexual Techniques	226
Writing	227

Martial Arts in the Land of the Gods:

Kung Fu	229
The Five Elements	229
Uses of Chi	230
Kung Fu Use	232
Common Kung Fu Styles	233
Blizzard Fist	233
Cloud Mastery	234
Dragon Saber	234
Drunken Monkey	235
Eagle Claw	236
God of Wind Kick	236
Golden Temple Bells	237
Heart Breaking Blade	238
Heaven's Thunder	239
Holy Fire	240
Lightfoot	241
Lunar Darkness	242
Mental Summons	243



The Music of War	244	Secret Arts of Intrigue	305
Perfect Aim	245	Extraordinary Courtier Techniques	306
Swift-Striking Sash	246	Passions	307
Thousand Scythe Kick	246	Inspirations	309
Thunder Hammer	247	Controlling Passions	312
Universal Blow	247	Controlling Inspirations	314
Walking in Shadows	248	Daoist Magic	316
Waves Like Water	249	Extraordinary Daoist Techniques	317
Wisdom of the Seven Gates	249	Curse Spells	318
Uncommon Martial Arts	251	Influence Spells	321
Bloody Claws	251	Crafting Curses	323
Fist of Iron	251	Manipulating Influences	326
Five Sacred Elements	252	Manifesting Spirits	329
Heart Moves the Blade	253		
Hell's Disasters	255	Roleplaying in the Land of the Gods:	
Inexorable Doom	257	Gamemastering	331
Subtle Hand	257	On Being the Wulin Sage	331
Three Kings	259	Getting Started	331
Unfolding Glory	260	Keeping The Flow:	
Wind Sweeping Away the Clouds	262	Quick Campaign Generation	332
Wisdom Breath	263	Relationship Charts	336
Yellow River Sword	264	Character Advancement	338
Rare Forms of Kung Fu	265	The Rights of Rank	343
Disrespectful Sages	265	My Loyal Followers	345
Limitless Freedom	266	Poison Use in the Land of the Gods	346
One Man Legion	267	Wealth, Possessions and Treasures	348
Pangu Binding Edge	268	Advanced Lore	352
Purple Shield	269	Tiger Soul	352
Three Powers	269	The Way of the Wulin	353
		The Transformation of the World	353
The Secret Arts	273	Formless Techniques	353
Secret Arts	273	Slaughter and Sacrifice	356
Introduction to Medical Conditions	274	Designing Your Own God Weapons	357
Health and Sickness	276	The Weapons of the Gods	358
Changing Chi Conditions	279	Building a Reputation in Hell:	
Medicine	284	The Dark Side of Chi	367
Secrets of Diagnosis	285	Corrupt Chi	367
Physical Conditions	287	Black Void Treasures	369
Secrets of Treatment	289	Existence Hating Radiance	371
Predictionism	291	Canon Setting Characters	372
Secret Arts of Genius	293		
Secret Art of Prediction	294	Appendices	380
Tools of Divination	295		
Yin-Yang Theory	297		
Five-Element Cycle Theory	299		
Story of the Self	301		
Story of Fortune	303		



Introduction

Welcome to the Weapons of the Gods, the roleplaying game based on the popular Hong Kong comic book of the same name. A High-Fantasy wuxia action comic, it centers on the adventures of Tian Wen, an up-and-coming hero who is finding his way within the Martial Arts World, doing his part to help the people he loves.

Set in a fantasy version of Ancient China, the comic practically screams to be a roleplaying game. Each panel moves and plays out as if it were straight from a game in progress; it also has a nice mix of politics, relationships that affect the decision-making of the characters, and to top it all off, fantastic martial arts and nifty magical weapons.

The comic has been running weekly for years now, and as of this writing, is somewhere around Issue 90... while the Collected Volumes in English are probably only around Issue 24 of the first series! The comic is growing and changing constantly, with many little revelations and a fair number of large ones... such as what happens when the ultimate weapon Tiger Soul comes back; who the cold-hearted Ironheart Nan will choose for his first love or what becomes of Thunder Bei's overwhelming jealousy of Tian.

All of these questions will be answered in the comic series; but this roleplaying game has made other assumptions. Rather than set up your players to play out the comic, the comic has been recreated as a roleplaying world and setting; your players will determine their quests, or even choose to take Tian's place in the quest for the Ten True Weapons of the Gods. Your game master is called the Wulin Sage, the monitor and judge of righteousness of the Martial Arts World.

Though previous knowledge of the Weapons of the Gods comic series will certainly add an extra dimension to your game, such familiarity is by no means essential. This book contains all the information you will need to play.

What is a Roleplaying Game?

A Roleplaying Game is a game in which a number of people get together to collaborate in making a story. It's like theater improv, only with more support. It's "Let's Pretend", only with some rules to allow everyone to agree on basic principles and have a good time.

In Weapons of the Gods, you play characters who have decided to leave their homes and old lives behind to gain fame, respect, power, money... or even just to do the right thing. In our everyday lives, sometimes it's hard

to have clear-cut victories or even smashing defeats; in a roleplaying game, you can have either or both, and do it while socializing with your friends at the same time.

You'll need three to six people to play a Weapons of the Gods game, with one of them agreeing to take on the role of the so-called game master, also called the Wulin Sage. Why 'Wulin Sage'? Well, Wulin means the community of Martial Artists, or the 'Martial Arts World' as it's often called. The Wulin Sage is a figure of power and mystery that oversees the Martial Arts World and determines who is truly worthy of advancing themselves and their kung fu within the world at large; you can see why we've chosen it as the title of the referee for the game.

Like the comic it is derived from, Weapons of the Gods is a roleplaying game of fast and furious action. Games such as this are usually played every other week or so for four to six hours, and completion of a given storyline from start to finish can vary, but usually goes from six to twelve months.

What's In This Book

This book is divided into sections for ease of use. If you're a player, you don't have to read every bit of it (though you can if you want to). Each section may have further divisions to detail specific topics in closer focus.

Introduction

This section sets forth the structure of the book and gives you a dictionary of what the different game terms mean, and preps you for your entry into Shen Zhou. Given that the game takes place in another culture and time, it's best to ease in properly.

The Book of Wood – Righteous Heroes

Chapter One: Rules

Here's where you learn how the "Let's Pretend" aspects of the game work.

Chapter Two: Wuxia Heroes

This section is for the players, so they can create their own Martial Artists, ready to go out and try their hand at transforming the world. It's all step-by-step... and once it's done, the players will be good to go.

The Book of Fire – Struggle in the Land of the Gods

Chapter Three: Conflict

This chapter gives you the rest of what you need in the rules department. There's always conflict (not necessarily violent!) as you try to pursue your aims; this section details the rules for arbitrating and resolving it. You'll also find the tools for conflict, like weapons and other such, as well as the guidelines for achieving the Deeds of heroism that are every character's goal.



*The Book of Earth – The Land of the Gods**Chapter Four: Setting & Society*

This chapter brings you into the Land of the Gods, showing you its history, even back unto its creation! Just about everything you need to know about how people live in Shen Zhou and how it's put together is here, right out of the comics and Chinese myth.

*The Book of Metal – Martial Arts and Magic in the Land of the Gods**Chapter Five: Kung Fu*

This section details the fantastic martial arts practiced by the martial artists of Shen Zhou. They're sorted into three types, based on how easily they can be found and learned – Common, Uncommon, and Rare. Also included is a discussion of The Five Daoist Elements and how they relate to your Chi.

Chapter Six: Magic

Not everyone wants to fight with sword or empty hand; this section is for those who like some magic in their character. Whether it's the sorceries wielded by Daoist Magicians, the Secret Arts that allow one to manipulate the emotions and wills of others, or the potent Medicine that alters the balances of Yang and Yin, it's all here.

*The Book of Water – Watching Over the Land of the Gods**Chapter Seven: Scroll of the Sage*

Everything a Wulin Sage needs to help run a Weapons of the Gods game. Here's where you find material on how to resolve battles against great numbers of minions, Advanced Topics for the setting, and the fabled Weapons of the Gods themselves!

Chapter Eight: Friends, Rivals and Enemies

Here you'll find the characters from the comics – as Rivals, Love Interests, or Villains and Monsters to use in your own game.

Appendices

The inevitable - useful bits that help tie everything together.

The Time of Chaos

Weapons of the Gods is a game firmly set in its source material – which is more than just the comic book from which it derives its name. It is set in 325 CE, in a time period in Ancient China sometimes called the Era of Disunity, or as we prefer, the Time of Chaos. Is this historical China itself? Well, no. Though much research has been done in making this game a reality, it is not, nor has it ever been one of our goals to create any sort of realistic rendering of Chinese history. Instead, it's set in the China of Fantasy, influenced by the native mythology and the writings of

authors like Jin Yong (China's answer to JRR Tolkien) or Barry Hughart, who wrote the wondrous stories of Master Li Kao and Number Ten Ox. So while this game is based on the comic, it also includes as sources some of the same mythic tales that inspired the comic's writer and artist, Tony Wong. It's good stuff... and it's our ambition to let you create some of that same fun for yourself.

A few things you should know, though – this is an older China than some of the stories you've heard or seen. While there are Buddhist Monks wandering the land and helping people, there is no Shaolin Temple... yet. Almost two centuries will pass before it is built. Furthermore, this is not the 'Middle Kingdom'; that description for Ancient China has yet to come into common usage. The China of Weapons of the Gods is called Shen Zhou, or the "Land of the Gods". Though the Gods and Spirits of the Land are slowly receding, their time is not so long past that they are forgotten. They still leave marks of their existence on the Land for mortals to find, in the form of the Weapons of the Gods themselves.

So what's in this game for you? Well, epic adventures are the aim of this game. As heroes, you are out to make the world a better place, in addition to doing well by yourself along the way (some might have these the other way 'round). You must challenge injustices wherever you find them, claiming the fame and glory as you do so... if you survive.

To succeed, you'll need your wit, your strength, your kung fu... and because you're only starting out, your friends. When you're going up against corrupt martial artists more powerful than you, it's good to have people you can trust at your side.

Speaking of corrupt martial artists – they're out there. Quite a lot of them, really... it is the Time of Chaos, after all. There's an unrighteous emperor on the throne that has lost the mandate of heaven, which opens the door to disorder, selfish heroes, villains and monsters.

To open the door yet further, the rulers of the other fifteen States are often not much better. One of your aims as a wuxia hero is to reduce the chaos in Shen Zhou, which may even require you to challenge the rulers of the land!

Then there are the villains roaming the Land of the Gods – primarily the Hell Clan. More like a very large organized crime ring than a clan, it is ruled by Dominion, who is very well-named. Not only does he wield almost godlike kung fu, he is ably assisted by his Lords of the Earth and Sky, each a powerful Rank One Fighter in his own right. Generally speaking, if there's something not right going on in the Land, the Hell Clan can be counted on to have a part in it. About their only saving grace (as far as the player characters are concerned) is their contentious internal politics, as each Hell Clan member struggles with every other one. While Dominion does set policy, there's enough backbiting and one-upmanship to allow heroes to challenge the most powerful clan in Shen Zhou and survive - or even triumph! But all of that might change if Tiger Soul returns...

神兵玄奇



involved in the game, it is most important that the GM has a solid understanding of the rules presented in this book (though players who know this information will definitely make her job that much easier). The default pronoun for the GM is “she” or the gender-neutral “they,” but one expects about half of them to be male.

“Player Character” or “PC.” This term applies to your character and the other players’ avatars. The default pronoun for a player character is “he” or the gender-neutral “they,” but one expects about half of them to be female. (Most players play characters of their own gender, but this is by no means necessary.)

“Non-Player Character” or “NPC.” This term applies to all the characters designed and played by the GM. They’re not as important to the story — they’re antagonists, obstacles, mentors, associates, and romantic interests, not protagonists. Particularly unimportant NPCs are often called minions — whether faceless hordes of weak martial artists or friendly peasants without training in the martial arts. The default pronouns for NPCs are “he” and “they,” as above.

Skill Rolls

When you try to do something difficult in *Weapons of the Gods* — scale a terrifying cliff, cadge a promotion out of Emperor Hu, inspire courage in your faithful lackey, or pierce an enemy’s defenses — a *skill roll* determines whether you succeed.

Skill rolls use a small handful of ten-sided dice, often referred to as d10s or simply “dice.” The more skill you have at the task — or, strictly speaking, the more skill your character in the game possesses — the more dice you roll. This normally ranges from one to seven dice.

Basic Ideas

Game Language

“You.” These rules usually use the word “you” to refer either to you or to your avatar in the game — the character you play in games of *Weapons of the Gods*. When it’s useful to distinguish the two, your game avatar is “your character” and the actual human reader living in modern Earth is “the player” or “your player.” This convention is mostly to help build immersive identification with the character. It’s unlikely that you’re really a wuxia martial artist living in Shen Zhou, and if you are, you might want to use a different rules set that guarantees your victory.

“Game Master,” “GM,” or “Wulin Sage.” One person runs the game, designing the challenges that face everyone else. This is the GM. Of all the people

Sets

When you make a skill roll, a *set* is a collection of dice that all came up the same number. Each set has a value. The result of the roll is the best set — the set with the highest value.

A *single* is a set of just one die — for example, you roll exactly one eight. The value of a single is ten plus the number on the die, so you can read “one eight” as “eighteen.”

A *double* is a set of two dice — for example, you roll exactly two threes. The value of a double is twenty plus the number on the dice, so you can read “two threes” as “twenty-three” (note that you don’t add the threes together).

A *triple* is a set of three dice — for example, you roll exactly three sevens. The value of a triple is thirty plus the number on the dice, so you can read “three sevens” as “thirty-seven.”

Bigger sets can have more dice — for example, you roll exactly five nines. The value of bigger sets is ten times the size of the set, plus the number on the dice: so you read “five nines” as “fifty-nine.”

Every d10 has sides labeled 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. Some d10s have “10” as the last side. Some have “0”. Either way, read it as zero — “two tens” or “two zeroes” is “twenty.”

The following formula sums up the value of a set:

(number of occurrences in the roll [set size] * 10) + number on one die of that set (die value)

Using this formula for the previous examples, you can see that the *single* set is $(1 * 10) + 8$, or 18; the *double* is $(2 * 10) + 3$, or 23; and the *triple* is $(3 * 10) + 7$, or 37.

Picking Your Set

Suppose you roll 3, 7, 7, 7, 9, and 9 on six dice.

This has three sets: a single worth 13 (one three), a double worth 29 (two nines), and a triple worth 37 (three sevens). The larger the set, the better — so the result of the roll is 37.

If your best set is a single, that’s sometimes called an “Earthly roll.” If your best set is a double, that’s sometimes called a “Heavenly roll.”

If it’s a triple or a bigger set, that’s sometimes called a “Divine roll.” Special things can happen during the game to change your roll before you choose the best set, but once you get to this point, you have to choose the best set you can.

The River

Most characters in *Weapons of the Gods* keep a small stock of dice called “the River.” This is a reserve of skill, heart, and confidence that rises and falls during the game, the tide of fortune that flows when you’re in a conflict. Most beginning characters can keep (“float”) two dice in the River. These dice sit next to you on the table and retain their values between rolls.

In each round, you can do the following things with your River, always in this order:

Discarding. Before you pick your set, you can “wash” some or all of the dice out of your River. This discards them. Note that you can’t discard the first round of a scene (your River is empty at this point; see below).

Floating. If there’s room in the River, you can “float” dice from your roll. To float dice, take them out of any double, triple, or bigger set and put them in your River. You can float the whole set if you want.

Flowing. Finally, you can “flow” dice out of the River and add them into your roll. This happens last, after you’ve done any emptying or floating you want to do.

The River is always empty at the start of a scene and at the end of a scene; you can’t keep dice in your

River Strategy: Making the Best Rolls

Suppose you have a 2 and a 5 in your River. You roll 5, 5, 9, 9, and 7. You could:

- Discard the 2 in your River to make room;
- Float the 9; and
- Add the 5 to your roll.

Now your roll is 2, 5, 5, 5, and 7 and you have a 9 in your River. Three fives makes thirty-five instead of twenty-nine.

River Strategy: Putting Dice Aside for Later

You might want to delay gratification — instead of getting the best possible roll now, you might want really good River dice for use with a lucky roll later. So you could also:

- Discard both the 2 and the 5;
- Float both 9s into your River; and
- Add nothing to your roll.

Now your roll is 5, 5, 7, and your River has two nines. Two fives makes twenty-five instead of twenty-nine — and the next time you roll a set of 9s, you can flow both River nines into your roll!

River Strategy: Mixed Dice

You might like floating different dice in your River — so that you have the best chance of improving a roll later. In this case, 2 and 5 isn’t bad. It’s a matter of taste whether you want to float low or high dice. It’s useful to float an 8 or 9 if you can — it lets you guarantee a minimum roll of 18 (“one eight”) or 19 (“one nine”), which is enough to accomplish some relatively straightforward tasks.



River from scene to scene. Note that you cannot move dice **into** the River from Style rolls... but you definitely can use the River **on** Style rolls if you so choose.

See the accompanying sidebar for a few examples of using the River.

Joss

If your best set is a set of 0s (10s), that's a lucky roll. It earns you *joss* — the word for “luck” in Shen Zhou.

If you succeed on a roll with a set of 0s, you do so smoothly and beautifully. Heaven approves of your actions, and you earn a point of Xia Joss — special good luck that will help you succeed on other rolls later.

If you fail on a roll with a set of 0s, you make a heroic effort, and then fail in a particularly tragic or comedic fashion. Either way, you earn a point of Corrupt Joss — special evil luck that makes your enemies fail too.

It's okay to use the River or special kung fu powers to make sure that your best set is a set of 0s.

Xia Joss can be used at any time on Skill Rolls only (not damage). Corrupt Joss may only be used on an opponent before that opponent rolls.

Difficulty

Many skill rolls are *unopposed* — you don't have an enemy making things actively more difficult. When you're making an unopposed skill roll, your Game Master decides the basic difficulty of the task. This gives a task difficulty number. You need to get at least this number with the value of your highest set to succeed.

Difficulty	Difficulty Number
Trivial task	5 or 10
Simple task	15
Everyday task	18
Moderate task	20
Hard task	30
Legendary task	40
Impossible task	60

Trivial tasks aren't normally worth rolling for. They include things like talking, walking, and (for literate characters) reading. Characters can only fail trivial tasks if something gets in the way — a gag makes it harder to talk, for instance, and a mortal wound makes walking difficult.

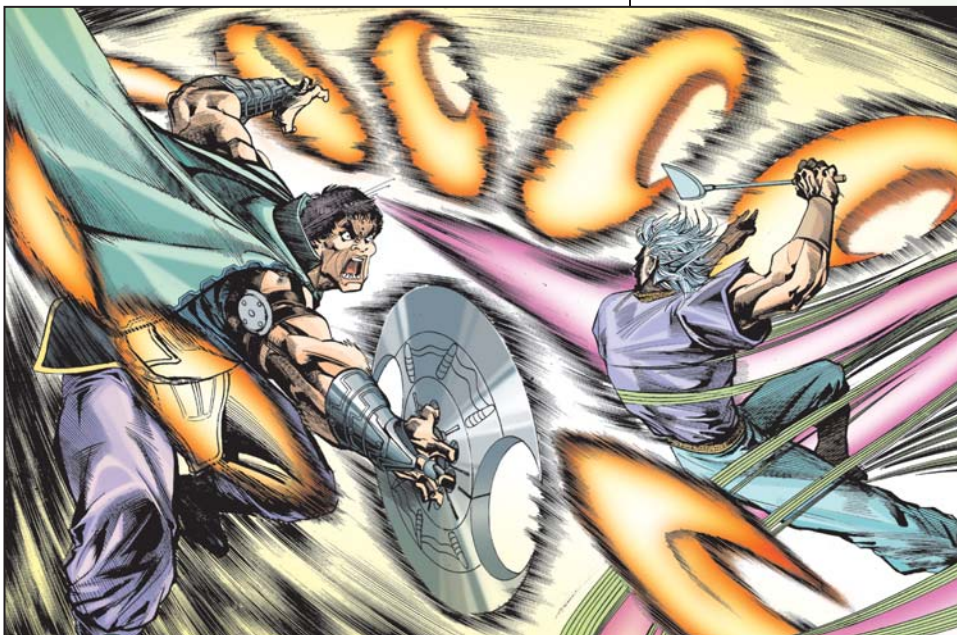
Simple tasks are things that completely unskilled heroes can accomplish half the time — making friends with an irascible cat, grabbing a runaway chicken indoors, standing on one's head, basic math, and so forth.

Everyday tasks are complex — you need a working knowledge of the relevant skill to accomplish them routinely. Treating broken bones, performing complex dances, and breaking a wild horse are everyday tasks.

Moderate tasks have a twist to them that the unskilled cannot normally handle. Where you could theoretically set a bone without medical knowledge, prescribing the right herbal remedy needs a doctor's touch. Dancing or playing an instrument to the satisfaction of a connoisseur requires genuine skill — luck and pluck do not suffice. Breaking a wild horse is everyday, but recognizing that the horse in question is irascible because of a slightly wounded foot requires someone who knows horses. This kind of twist makes a moderate task.

Hard tasks require substantial skill or favorable circumstances even to attempt them. Forging a magnificent sword, swaying a self-interested bureaucrat, luring a wild animal into one's arms, and climbing a treacherous cliff are all hard tasks.

Legendary tasks are just within the reach of the most heroic characters. Even the greatest masters' raw skills can accomplish a legendary task at most one time in twenty. Since you have access to joss, tools, favorable circumstances, and the River, you can expect to accomplish legendary tasks now and then. Forging



神兵玄奇

an alliance of Great Clans, taming a dragon, shattering a boulder with one punch, and writing a poem pure enough for circulation in Heaven are legendary tasks. Seducing the emperor to avoid execution, stealing his Seal and crown in the bedchamber, and convincing the guards to seal the bedroom door behind you because a dangerous imposter inside has assumed the Emperor's identity — that's a collection of legendary tasks. Great skill, joss, the River, and a combination of kung fu and magic bring it within some characters' reach.

Impossible tasks defy the laws of Heaven and Earth — they represent the pinnacle of potential accomplishment. These tasks cover all the things that characters basically just can't do, but where the Game Master thinks success would be neat. In other words, breaking a mountain with one punch so that its peak slides down to crush an enemy below is an Impossible task if the GM thinks it's cool — but if the GM thinks it's out of genre, it's just impossible. Convincing the Emperor to *give* you the Seal and the crown, shouting loud enough to break the sky, and inspiring an army to conquer the entire world — these can all qualify as Impossible tasks, if the GM thinks you should try them. It usually takes a suitable Weapon of the Gods, powerful kung fu, or magnificent sorcery to bring this sort of accomplishment into reach. First rank fighters, scholars, and courtiers can sometimes build up a set in their River that makes Impossible tasks feasible.

Margins of Success

Whenever you succeed by a margin of 10 or more, you earn a *critical success*. In some situations, the rules provide a special benefit for critical success. In others, the GM may offer you improved results. Even if critical success doesn't offer you anything in particular on a given roll, you have the right to feel cool about rolling one.

Weapons of the Gods also has a concept of "critical failure." If you make a shockingly poor roll, and it's dramatically appropriate, the GM can offer you a deal — an unfairly horrible failure in exchange for a bribe such as a point of Destiny, a point of a Virtue, or starting the next combat scene with a pair of 9s in your River. This kind of critical failure accounts for where a stealthy hero, creeping along atop a fortress wall, missteps and kicks a pebble onto a sleeping guard, who wakes with a nightmare-inspired scream, setting the dogs of the courtyard barking, and suddenly the whole fortress is alert just as the sun breaks through the clouds and casts the character into full silhouette. Critical failures are optional — they rely on the GM having an idea for something that amusingly ruins your plans without ruining the player's fun.

For some ideas and possibilities for Critical Failures, see pg. 331, *On Being the Wulin Sage*.

Complex Skill Rolls

Sometimes a single skill roll has multiple task difficulty numbers. For example, a character might give a speech before Emperor Hu and his court. Impressing his faceless courtiers might be a Moderate task; impressing Hu himself, a Legendary one. The character only makes one skill roll for the speech — a 20 or better impresses the courtiers with the character's eloquence, and a 40 or better impresses the Emperor.

Calculate critical success and even critical failure based on the individual targets. As an extreme example, suppose one of the courtiers is swooning over the character. Impressing *that* courtier only takes a 15. If the character rolls a 15 on seven dice, it's reasonable to consider that speech a wild success with the lovestruck courtier — and a critical failure when it comes to convincing Emperor Hu. Similarly, a 30 is a critical success when impressing the remaining courtiers (in addition to the "swooner"), but it won't move the Emperor at all.

A very common example of complex skill rolls are unusual attacks in combat. Making a good solid attack on someone with a sword is trivial — a task with difficulty number 10. Actually hitting them means that you also have to beat their defense — and the difficulty for *that* ranges from 10 to 60+. This means you can make a good attack but still miss. Jumping up and hewing through a stalactite with your sword so that it falls on your enemy is Hard — difficulty 30. Even if the enemy does nothing to dodge, you have to roll a 30 or you just can't pull off the attack.

You only make one roll for each skill roll, no matter how many difficulty numbers you have to beat. This does mean that if you're attacking a well-defended foe, you might as well do fancy attacks. If getting past the monstrous Earth Lord's defense needs a 30 *anyway*, go ahead and drop a stalactite on him.

Opposed Skill Rolls

In an *opposed* roll, your skill comes into direct conflict with an enemy's. For example, attacking someone pits your combat skill against theirs. Your social skills go up against those of the person you're trying to con. Racing your horse past a swordsman barring your way pits your horse skill against his sword skill.

The task difficulty to overcome an opponent equals the value of the highest set they roll. In an opposed roll, the "active" participant is the character taking the action on their own turn. The "passive" participants are reacting. The active participant makes the skill roll first and wins ties.

For example, hitting Earth Lord with a falling stalactite (as above) won't usually have only one target of exactly 30. First, you roll your attack. If you roll a 37, you've severed the stalactite and successfully attacked him. Now he can try to dodge. If he only rolls a 37, he loses the contest and you hit him — that's your edge in this contest. He

also has an edge — you don't know yet if 37 is good enough to hit him, but he knows that if he can use the River and other tools to get a 38, he'll dodge you.

Defeating the Hapless

Rolling opposed tests for minor characters often wastes time. GMs can ignore the opposed tests and assign a basic task difficulty for overcoming the resistance of minions, ordinary citizens, and faceless mobs, based on their relevant dice pool.

Dice Pool	"Opposed" Test Difficulty	Difficulty Target Number
1 die	Simple	15
2-3 dice	Everyday	18
4 dice	Moderate	20
5 dice	—	22
6 dice	—	24
7 dice	—	25

Assume that the minor character rolls the number listed.

Style Rolls

Not every task demands a roll. Some tasks are so simple that you shouldn't ever fail them. Some demand skills or resources you just don't have. Sometimes, the possibility of failure exists but it's not an interesting option.

For such tasks, the player can still roll, and the Game Master can even ask for a roll, but it's not a roll to determine success — the value of your roll determines how stylishly you succeed or fail. Style rolls never earn joss, and you can't float dice from them into your River, but you *can* spend joss or flow dice from the River into your roll. This kind of style roll has very few practical effects on the game, but sometimes it's fun to roll dice.

Style	Value
Mortifying	15
Embarrassing	18
Competent	20
Impressive	25
Stunning	30
Jaw-dropping	35
Legendary	40

For example, the Game Master might want you to decipher a manuscript from distant India in order to find the location of a lost Weapon of the Gods. If you're a skilled scholar and linguist, this is well within your abilities, and besides, it's part of the story's plot. Instead of rolling to succeed, you roll to measure style.

You can usually choose whether to describe your own results for style rolls or let the Game Master do it. A

mortifying result might have you stalking to a nearby stone, declaring, "It's *here!*", and kicking the stone over — to reveal dirt. Then, after double-checking the manuscript, you figure out the truth. Stunning style might mean glancing casually at the manuscript and saying, "Oh, old Balalaika's handwriting. Well, if *he* wrote this, the Weapon's in . . ." And then the Game Master fills in the location.

Game Masters can also call for style rolls to simplify unimportant scenes. For example, the player characters might have a practice of entering martial arts tournaments every time they encounter one. That doesn't necessarily mean that playing out every fight is fun — just that that's the kind of people the characters are. If the players are okay with the possibility of failure and sorrow based on a single roll, the GM can resolve negotiations, fights, wars, side adventures, and even years of a character's life based on style rolls from each participant. It's rude to kill or permanently weaken player characters based on a style roll — unless the player suggests or recommends that result — but almost anything else goes.

I Failed My 'Get Out of Bed' Roll!

Players should only make skill rolls when there's a meaningful chance of failure, a meaningful chance of success, and both options are interesting. Otherwise, make it a style roll, or don't have them roll at all. If characters are rolling for everything they do, then it's too easy to fill up the River and get joss; also, people will fail or succeed when it's not interesting that they do so.

Good Game Play and Joss

Describing a style roll's results is an opportunity for good game play. Mortifying or embarrassing results are an opportunity to make the other players laugh. Stunning, jaw-dropping, and better results give you a chance to impress them with wuxia-style coolness. Good game play — doing things that enhance the atmosphere and fun of the game — gives you the chance to pick up Joss points, which have various mechanical uses. Once per session, each player can award another player's character a Joss point for doing something cool, whether it's a full *Deed* (qv) or just something supportive and fun. (This is an award, not a transfer — you don't lose anything by doing so.) The GM can award an unlimited number of Joss points, but should expect to give out one to five a session on similar grounds. For more details on Joss, see pg. 331, *Conflict*.

神兵玄奇



Too Many Cooks?

Sometimes, just throwing a bunch of people at a problem doesn't help---particularly when it's a mental or social problem. When five characters make independent attempts to persuade Zheng Bei of something, five doctors prescribe independent cures, or five musicians perform on the same street corner, it does not breed a higher chance of success---it only brings chaos.

GMs can invoke the "too many cooks" rule in such cases. Each new skill roll is automatically opposed by those characters who have tried and failed before. This doesn't take an action---it just means that previous efforts have soured the stew. The fifth doctor who tries to cure a given illness is opposed by all four who came before. If that doctor is not qualitatively better, he has no chance of success.

Modifiers

Circumstances and tools can modify the result of your roll. They always add or subtract from rolls in multiples of five — you never have a modifier like +7 or -3.

Each roll has up to one positive and one negative modifier (but not always both). Only use the biggest modifier for each. If you have fifteen different +5 modifiers and five +10s, it's still just +10. The system is scaled this way for faster play — rather than hunting down every possible advantage, just find your best edge or worst hindrance and make the roll.

Apply modifiers to the roll after choosing the best set and before comparing the result to the relevant task difficulty numbers.

What Modifiers Mean: +5

In unopposed rolls, a character with a +5 modifier automatically succeeds at Simple tasks. Even with one or two dice, a +5 modifier makes it easy to succeed at Everyday and Moderate tasks. It makes otherwise Hard and Legendary tasks approachable.

There are three standard ways for a character to get a +5 modifier (see below). In addition, characters can pick up a +5 modifier whenever circumstances make things easier for them — for example, it's easier to intimidate peasantry if the local crime boss has declared his support for you, even if you look meek and mild on your own.

Declaring and making an
overzealous or
superlative

effort sometimes gives a +5 modifier. This usually takes extra time, planning, and work. Characters can get +5 on the style or task roll to cook a meal by hunting down special ingredients, dedicating an afternoon to it, and so forth. Climbing a cliff with neurotic care doubles or triples the time requirement. If the hero has the necessary endurance to handle the extended effort and exposure, the GM can give a +5.

Quality tools for everyday applications also give a +5 modifier. Using fine rope and pitons helps a character climb; insightful reference manuals of local etiquette and customs help a character blend into a region; fine tack, sturdy saddle, and shining apples keep a horse in good spirits; and so forth.

Assistance from one or more characters usually gives a +5 modifier. This comes into play when the others' help is obviously useful — helping someone cook, looming next to a friend as they attempt to intimidate others, or standing in front of someone trying to pocket a piece of jade. Entertainingly described assistance is a good opportunity to develop the Virtue *Sun* (altruism).

Summary: A +5 modifier makes standard activities meaningfully easier.

What Modifiers Mean: +10

In unopposed rolls, a character with a +10 modifier automatically succeeds at Simple, Everyday, and Moderate tasks. Hard and Legendary tasks are significantly easier.

Characters can get a +10 modifier on most rolls if they have all the time and resources that the task needs. A reference library and a few dedicated months gives a +10 on most Learning rolls. There's a traditional story of an old man who got a +10 on the Lift roll to move a mountain by declaring that his family would keep moving stones and dirt from the mountain to the sea, every day, for as many generations as it took.

Perfect tools or extraordinarily favorable circumstances also give a +10 modifier. Most perfect tools are legendary or supernatural — Earth Lord, for instance, has a massive garden of stone tablets containing deep medical lore. This reference work, giving a +10 modifier on Medicine rolls, is unique in Shen Zhou.

Summary: A +10 modifier makes otherwise difficult activities viable.

What Modifiers Mean: +15

In unopposed rolls, a character with a +15 modifier automatically succeeds at Simple, Everyday, and Moderate tasks. Hard tasks are very easy, and Legendary tasks only require a pair of 5s. Characters with five to seven dice and a +15 modifier sometimes accomplish Impossible tasks.

Cardinal Rule of Modifiers:

Only use the biggest positive and the biggest negative modifier.



These modifiers typically come from supernatural effects.

Summary: A +15 modifier makes otherwise difficult activities simple.

What Modifiers Mean: +20

In unopposed rolls, a character with a +20 modifier automatically succeeds at Simple, Everyday, Moderate, and Hard tasks. Legendary tasks only require a double. Impossible tasks still require a set of four dice.

These modifiers typically come from supernatural effects.

Summary: A +20 modifier makes legendary success almost commonplace.

What Modifiers Mean: -5

In unopposed rolls, a -5 modifier is significant. Even the simplest task requires at least a double to accomplish. Everyday and Moderate tasks require a good double, Hard tasks a good triple, and so forth.

There are four normal ways for a character to get a -5 modifier. In addition, characters can pick up a -5 modifier whenever circumstances make things especially difficult for them — it's harder to terrify the monstrous Earth Lord's followers with your powerful kung fu when said

monstrous Earth Lord is standing right next to you.

Making a particularly cursory effort often gives a -5 modifier. If the situation really calls for time, planning, and labor, and you just whip off a hurried solution, you might pick up a -5.

Not having the tools you need — particularly for Moderate and harder tasks — often gives a -5. Opening an Everyday lock without picks might just take some rattling and twisting; opening the vault of the Bei Clan calls for burglar's tools or a Chi-powered kick.

Active interference from another character often gives a -5 modifier. Heckling a courtier's speech or shoving an athlete during a jump are standard examples. Entertainingly described interference is a good opportunity for the troublemaker to develop the Corrupt Virtue *Si* (selfishness or individualism; for more on Virtues, Xia and Corrupt, see pg. 80).

Finally, serious wounds and disabilities sometimes deliver a -5 modifier to specific tasks or to every task the character attempts.

Summary: A -5 modifier makes even routine daily activities difficult.

What Modifiers Mean: -10

In unopposed rolls, a -10 modifier is a deadly penalty. It effectively subtracts one die from all your sets, making even the simplest tasks terribly difficult.

Summary: A -10 modifier is a crippling circumstance that makes ordinary tasks challenging.

How Many Dice Do You Roll?

Characters have *Skills* that range from zero to five. All skill rolls are based on one of these skills, and start with a number of dice equal to the skill.

Characters can also have *Specialties* that make them better at specific uses of one skill. These add one or two dice to specific rolls related to that focused skill. (Note: this will be explained in greater depth later.)

Finally, characters have raw talent in the form of *Attributes* — things like Might, Speed, and Presence. These raw abilities are normally rated from one to five, but they can go even higher for powerful characters.

If your Attribute matches or exceeds your Skill plus your Specialty bonus, you have raw talent that enhances your ability. This lets you add an extra die for your roll. Since Attributes are never negative, you can always roll at least one die. For example, Lift is based on the Might Attribute. As long as your Might matches or exceeds your Lift skill, your raw talent adds an extra die to Lift rolls.

Example Skill Roll: Lift

If you have Might 3, then you roll the following number of dice:

- Lift 0 gives you 1 die (0 skill + 1 raw talent), because $3 \geq 0$.
- Lift 1 gives you 2 dice (1 skill + 1 raw talent), because $3 \geq 1$.
- Lift 2 gives you 3 dice (2 skill + 1 raw talent), because $3 \geq 2$.
- Lift 3 gives you 4 dice (3 skill + 1 raw talent), because $3 \geq 3$.
- Lift 4 gives you 4 dice (4 skill + 0 raw talent).
- Lift 5 gives you 5 dice (5 skill + 0 raw talent), and so on.

Example Specialized Skill Roll: Lifting Heavy Weapons

Suppose you have a Lift specialty in “Lifting Heavy Weapons” — probably taken because your favored weapon weighs a few hundred pounds. This specialty gives an extra die. So when you pick up really heavy weapons:

- Lift 0 plus specialty gives you 2 dice (0 skill + 1 specialty + 1 raw talent), because $3 \geq 1$.
- Lift 1 plus specialty gives you 3 dice (1 skill + 1 specialty + 1 raw talent), because $3 \geq 2$.
- Lift 2 plus specialty gives you 4 dice (2 skill + 1 specialty + 1 raw talent), because $3 \geq 3$.
- Lift 3 plus specialty gives you 4 dice (3 skill + 1 specialty + 0 raw talent).
- Lift 4 plus specialty gives you 5 dice (4 skill + 1 specialty + 0 raw talent).
- Lift 5 plus specialty gives you 6 dice (5 skill + 1 specialty = 0 raw talent), and so on.

The “Lost Die”

Skills and skill/specialty combinations higher than your Attribute are less efficient. When you increase your (Skill + Specialty) total to one point higher than your Attribute, it doesn't give you any new benefits. The die you would normally purchase by increasing your skill or specialty is lost.

This isn't a new rule, by the way. It's just a consequence of the rules described above. You're really losing the “raw talent” die you'd been getting up until now, and that loss cancels out the new skill or specialty point you've gained. Notice in the “Specialized Skill Roll” example above that a player with the given stats rolls the same number of dice for Lift 2 as he does for Lift 3. He has to pump his skill up two levels (from 2 to 4) before he notices an improvement!

To avoid the lost die, it's most efficient — in terms of dice — to limit your skills to the relevant Attribute, or to raise them much higher. A clever player with an Attribute of 2 will keep most of his skills in the 0-2 range, but can afford to pump a skill to 5 dice (6-7 with specialties) if that skill is a core character trait.

Skill Rolls Summary

Each skill roll involves the following steps.

1. Determine your dice pool.
 - a. You have one die for each point of the relevant Skill.
 - b. Add one or two dice if you have applicable specialties.
 - c. Add one die if the relevant Attribute $\geq$ the Skill + Specialty total.
2. Roll the dice.
 - a. Note that Corrupt Joss must be spent *before* your opponent rolls.
3. Optionally, use the River:
 - a. Discard any unwanted River dice.
 - b. Float dice from your roll to the River if you want to keep them.
 - c. Flow dice into your roll from your River if you want to use them.
4. Use any special powers that affect the roll (kung fu, etc.)
 - a. Can include spending Xia Joss to roll additional dice.
5. Pick the highest-valued set:
 - a. A single is worth 10 + the die value. ("one eight" is worth 18.)
 - b. A double is worth 20 + the die value. ("two twos" is worth 22.)
 - c. A triple is worth 30 + the die value. ("three zeroes" is worth 30.)
 - d. Bigger sets are worth (set size * 10) + the die value. ("six ones" is worth 61.)
 - e. Count 10s as 0s if your dice are numbered 1-10 instead of 0-9.
6. Add the biggest positive modifier, if any, and the biggest negative modifier, if any.
7. Compare to the difficulty of the task. If the number you rolled was the same or bigger, you succeed! If it was at least 10 bigger, you earn a critical success.
8. If your highest-valued set was 0s, collect a point of joss — Xia Joss if you succeeded, and Corrupt Joss if you did not. If the task had multiple difficulties, and you succeed at some and not at others, pick the type of joss that seems most appropriate to the results.

Style Rolls Summary

Each style roll involves the following steps.

1. Determine your dice pool, as for skill rolls.
2. Roll the dice.
3. Optionally, use the River:
 - a. Flow dice into your roll from your River if you want to use them.
4. Use any special powers that affect the roll.
5. Pick the highest-valued set, as for skill rolls.
6. Add the biggest positive modifier, if any, and the biggest negative modifier, if any.
7. The GM's already told you whether you've succeeded or failed. Look up the result on the style rolls chart to see how cool your success or failure was.

Opposed Rolls Summary

Each opposed roll involves the following steps.

1. Roll normally.
2. The opponent rolls normally.
3. The opponent's roll represents the task difficulty number to avoid their defense.

Time and Distance

Weapons of the Gods usually measures time and distance in "dramatic time". It does not count time in minutes or hours, but in the events and actions that characters take. It does not measure distance in *li*, *chi*, miles, kilometers, or feet, but in the time that it takes for a person or weapon to cross that distance.

Dramatic time focuses on the linear examination of events that make up a story. Suppose that two characters have simultaneous, separate adventures. The players need not play both out simultaneously. Nor is it terribly important to synchronize the course of events.



神兵玄奇

The Game Master runs one adventure, and then the next, or flips back and forth between them as dramatically appropriate. Similarly, history is not fixed — while players can set their character histories in stone, they do not need to. Like in comics and movies, history is set in stone only when it appears in a flashback or an honest witness' informed evaluation.

Dramatic time does not measure the hours of the day. It determines whether a hero can reach the hidden temple before their nemesis does; whether a bodyguard — flung over a cliff — can return in time to save their ward from the Hell Clan; and whether a messenger racing to warn the Bei Clan arrives before the enemy army.

Rounds

A round is enough time for every character present in a fight to act. It usually corresponds to three seconds. Characters can travel 10 yards (25 *chi*) in a round.

The ranges for distance weapons like bows and thrown weapons are defined based on rounds of distance.

Short Range	The target is one round away.
Medium Range	The target is up to five rounds away.
Long Range	The target is up to ten rounds away.

Scenes

Scenes are enough time for a series of related events. Meetings and conversations are scenes; breaking into someone's fortress is a scene; each combat is a scene; and typical romantic encounters are scenes. Each scene has a premise describing what's going on, some exploration of that premise, and then a logical conclusion or an unexpected transition to another scene.

For example, if you and other characters decide to attend a martial arts contest at the Bei Clan headquarters, then the opening of the contest is usually its own scene. The Game Master describes the arena and the contest. Zheng Bei, head of Bei Clan, might give a speech. You might have a chance to study the other martial artists and perhaps intimidate them or otherwise put them off their game. If Earth Lord unexpectedly chooses that moment to attack Bei Clan, the scene ends with an unexpected transition. If not, then it closes when it loses interest value, and the GM moves on to the fights — one or more combat scenes taking place simultaneously.

Game play occurs in units of scenes — from the moment that interesting things start happening to the moment the Game Master moves the story forward to another location or event. Sometimes, the characters' lives are temporarily boring, particularly when traveling. You don't have to play out scenes where nothing interesting happens, but they're still scenes for purposes of timekeeping.

Scenes can range from a few rounds of combat to a long day's chase. The "default" time and distance for a scene is two hours and 10 miles (30 *li*).

Session (Chapter)

The events that take place on a single day of real-life game play, whether the game lasts one hour or fifteen, usually correspond to one session. This is also called a "chapter." For purposes of dramatic time, Game Masters can sometimes treat a single day's play as anywhere from half a session to two sessions — sometimes the day's gaming is extended or cut short.

Story

Each coherent plotline — complete with premise and resolution — forms a story. Some GMs run stories one at a time; others interweave stories one amidst the other.

Downtime

Long collections of less interesting scenes form *downtime* — a series of events that the GM glosses over in play or with a single style roll. Most martial arts training occurs in downtime.



Game Terms



Action. Deliberate maneuvers taken in combat. You can take up to one full action and two free actions every round. For more information on actions and how they work, see *Conflict*, pg. 69.

Archetype. A broadly-defined character type. In *Weapons of the Gods*, there are three Archetypes. The most common archetype is the Warrior, a glorious student of the martial arts. The second-most-common archetype is the Courtier, a student of intrigue. Finally, Scholars master the secret lore of Shen Zhou. Powerful characters eventually blend two or three of these archetypes.

Area Attack. When kung fu allows you to make an Area Attack, a single attack affects multiple opponents within a technique-defined area. Apply the attack against each target, allowing them to defend individually.

Artful. Artful weapons and kung fu are speed-based techniques, usually involving edged weapons.

Attribute. Attributes measure your innate capabilities: your Might, Speed, Presence, Genius, and “Wu Wei” (harmony with the world). Attributes are rated 1-5 for starting characters. They have no mechanical upper limit, but in practice, even the greatest fighters in history tended to peak at 12.

Baneful. Disorderly, defiant, and loathsome to Heaven. Baneful warriors reject Heaven’s order and undermine the civilization of Shen Zhou. Most are arrogant rather than malicious — both heroes and corrupt monsters follow the baneful path.

Battered. Someone who has taken less than their Health in damage.

Brutal. Brutal weapons and kung fu are power-based techniques, usually for barehanded or blunt weapon combat.

Chapter. The events of one session of game play.

Chi. Your Chi represents the power and vigor of your body and mind. Becoming a great warrior, scholar, or even courtier is often referred to as “cultivating your Chi.” In Shen Zhou, characters with powerful Chi can accomplish effectively supernatural results. The Chi of the body and mind is divided into five colors, each corresponding to a Daoist element: Jade Chi, Crimson Chi, Gold Chi, White Chi, and Silver Chi. You can also cultivate Demon Chi and Void Chi, but it’s not really healthy to do so. Kung fu techniques require you to spend points of colored Chi, and you get back one Chi of each color each round.

Chi Aura. Every character has 0-5 points of Chi aura. You can spend points from your Chi aura to defend against attack or improve rolls made with your Archetype’s key skill — Dodge, for warriors; Confidence, for courtiers; and Awareness skill, for scholars. Every round, you get back every point of Chi aura that you’ve spent.

Chi Condition. What you have when you’re sick or injured in an unusual fashion; or if your Chi balance is imbalanced on purpose, through Medicine or even Curses (qv.)

Chi Flow Loss. Whenever you take serious wounds, you suffer chi flow loss in one color — one color per each level of Health damaged below Battered. You no longer get a point of that Chi color back each round. Healing those wounds restores your chi flow, allowing normal recovery.

Combat Effects. Special effects of certain attacks, including Blinding, Burning, Disarming, Disorienting, Downing, Embarrassing, Entangling, Grappling, Knocking Back, Maiming, Poisoning, and Stunning.

Courtier. An archetypal character who focuses on influencing others. Courtiers specialize in Genius and Presence skills, and have access to the Secret Arts of Intrigue.

Corrupt. Detrimental and unrighteous. Corrupt warriors follow the ways of the demons, seeking through cruelty and ambition to dominate the established order of Shen Zhou.

Cursory Effort. Giving a skill roll less time, effort, and resources than it really needs earns a -5 modifier.

Critical Failure. Accepting the GM’s bribe to have something horrible happen when you roll very poorly.

Critical Success. Succeeding by a margin of 10 or more against a given task difficulty.

Damage. A numerical rating of the injury effected on someone by a weapon or attack.

Deed. A virtuous action in harmony with either the xia virtues or the corrupt virtues.

Defense. Opposing an enemy’s action is sometimes called a “defense.” You can defend against an attack by blocking or parrying it, and against a con job by seeing through the con artist’s lies. Defending does not usually require an action.

Destiny. A trait you can accumulate over the course of play and spend to make your character more powerful.

Difficulty. The difficulty or task difficulty for a skill roll is the number you have to roll on the dice to succeed.

Divine Roll. A skill roll where your best set has three or more dice.

Downtime. Events that take up a lot of time in the world of Shen Zhou but are glossed over in a few seconds or minutes of play.

Earthly Roll. A skill roll where your best set is a single.



Everyday Task. A task with difficulty 18 — something that untrained people can accomplish, but which needs training to accomplish reliably.

Favored Chi. The color of Chi you have the highest rating in; if you have two that are highest, one that you choose.

Filial Piety. An incredibly important concept in China; codified by Confucius, Filial Piety is having reverence for your parents and their interests, because were it not for them, you wouldn't even exist! This is also the concept behind the 'Mandate of Heaven' that underlies the authority of Emperors; Humanity is the Child of Heaven, and the Emperor is Heaven's representative on Earth. Sometimes referred to by its Chinese name, *Xiao*, filial piety is generally not observed much by wuxia heroes; this lends them a certain shocking rebel mystique, as their good deeds are done outside of the context of the usual 'Way of Things'.

Formless Technique. A kung fu technique that does not belong to any specific style. Formless techniques are one of the hidden treasures of the Martial Arts World. They can offer fantastic powers that even martial artists envy, but a notable minority of these techniques are secretly corrupt and poison you with their dark chi.

Free Action. A small, simple action. You can take two in each combat round.

Full Action. An action requiring some effort — at least in combat time. (Getting to one's feet takes effort in a fight, for instance, but is pretty easy out of combat.) You can take one in each combat round.

Hard Task. A task with difficulty 30 — difficult even for experts.

Health. The amount of damage you can take before becoming meaningfully injured. You can take five times your Health in damage before you actually die. Your Health is 10 at 5th rank, then is equal to your Chi Ratings added up thereafter.

Healthy. Someone who has taken no damage. This is a rules term, rarely used, and can be somewhat ironic in the case of the perpetually ill.

Heavenly Roll. A skill roll where your best set is a double.

Impossible Task. A task that you need the GM's permission to attempt and a roll of 60 or better to accomplish.

Initiative. Characters roll the Initiative skill to determine the order of actions in combat. This is modified by the Speed of any weapons they hold.

Injured. Someone who has taken at least their Health and less than twice their Health in damage.

Joss. Xia Joss is special good luck. You can spend a point of Xia Joss and retroactively add a die to a roll. Corrupt Joss is evil luck. When you can oppose someone else's roll, you can afflict them with your corrupt joss, subtracting one of their dice before they roll. They can (if they wish) spend any Xia Joss they have on hand to keep their roll the way it is.

Kung Fu. "Hard Work" or intensive training. In *Weapons of the Gods*, Kung Fu techniques draw on your Chi to achieve quasi-supernatural combat effects — supernatural by real-world standards, but natural, repeatable results of effort and training according to the metaphysics of Shen Zhou.

Last Legs. Someone on their last legs has taken more than four times their Health in damage.

Legendary Task. A task with difficulty 40 — something requiring great power to accomplish with any reliability.

Magic. Magic draws on secret lore and understanding to accomplish quasi-supernatural effects. Standard forms of magic include Daoist Sorcery, Medicine, and the Secret Arts of Intrigue.

Martial Arts. The art and practice of disciplined physical combat. Kung Fu, Martial Arts, Styles, and Forms are all synonymous terms in *Weapons of the Gods*.

Modifier. A positive or negative modifier affects the result of a skill roll. You can have up to one positive and one negative modifier on each roll.

Moderate Task. A task with difficulty 20 — something that needs at least minimal skill even to attempt, and remains at least mildly difficult even for masters.

Morale Attack. An attack on the enemy's nerve; usually inflicts a temporary penalty on a named character's rolls, or actively drives them off in the case of Followers.

Opposed Roll. A skill roll where the enemy's defense — the total of an enemy's skill roll — is one of the difficulty targets.

Perfect. Perfect things are legendary and unique treasures. The default effect for Perfect tools is a +10 modifier on appropriate rolls.

Profound. Profound effects inflict or heal permanent damage. Such damage is not curable by the three standard medical techniques: spending Jade Chi to heal, using Hardiness to heal over time, and using Medicine to heal oneself or others.

Quality. Quality objects are rare treasures of craftsmanship. The sages say that there are 10,000 things of quality in all Shen Zhou. The default effect for Quality objects is a +5 modifier on appropriate rolls. There are some exceptions. Armor is expensive-bordering-on-rare in Shen Zhou, and every functional suit of armor is a Quality object. Weapons have their own rules for Quality.



Rank. A key character trait measuring your progress through the Wulin. The weakest trained fighters are 5th rank; starting characters are 4th rank; the greatest heroes and villains are 1st rank.

Ranged. Ranged weapons and kung fu are techniques for attacking at range, usually based on Wu Wei.

Reply. A counterattack. Some defensive kung fu techniques allow the defender to Reply if they get a critical success on a defense. Replies are automatically successful — just invert the defense and attack rolls, which means doing one die of damage plus one die for each 5 points of the original defender's margin.

Result. Some effects use the “result” or “result dice” of an attack — one die, plus one die for each 5 points of margin for which it exceeded the target difficulty number.

River. A small collection of dice that one keeps between rolls, representing your ability to profit from the ebb and flow of conflict.

Round. Enough time for everyone present at a combat to act. It usually requires three seconds, but the GM can increase or decrease this to change how over-the-top game combat is without affecting any other rules.

Scene. Enough time for a series of related events.

Scholar. An archetypal character that focuses on knowledge and understanding. Scholars specialize in Genius and Wu Wei skills. Scholars have access to Daoist Magic.

Session. The events of one session of game play.

Set. A collection of dice that rolled the same number.

Simple Task. A task with difficulty 15 — something that even untrained peasants can accomplish half the time.

Skill. An ability that improves with training. Skills are rated 0-5, and default to 0.

Skill Basis. In reference to Martial Arts, the skill the Kung Fu operates through. For example, Lightfoot operates through Athletics, so all techniques act on that skill.

Specialty. Some aspect of a skill that you specialize in, letting you roll 1-2 extra dice on appropriate rolls. You can only buy a Specialty for an existing already-bought skill.

Speed. One of the five core stats for people, and also the Initiative bonus that weapons bestow.

Staggering. Someone who has taken at least three times their Health and less than four times their Health in damage.

Story. A collection of events, taking place over the course of several sessions, with a coherent beginning, plotline, and end.

Strike. This is a weapon's raw power and leverage, usually proportional to its mass. Strike is a modifier to attack and defense rolls using a given weapon.

Style Roll. A skill roll where success or failure is either predetermined or irrelevant, and the roll just determines how cool you are.

Superlative Effort. Putting superlative, overzealous effort towards a skill roll — usually requiring extra time and resources — earns a +5 modifier.

Tactical Opposition. In combat, you can use your full action to prepare tactical opposition. Until your next action, this lets you “defend” against enemy rolls that would not normally give you a defense.

Technique. A special, named kung fu maneuver. Once you learn a kung fu technique, you can always execute it flawlessly... as long as you have the chi to power it.

Trivial Task. A task with difficulty 5 or 10. Since it's impossible to roll less than 10 on a skill roll unless you have a negative modifier, trivial tasks are only worth rolling for when you have such a penalty.

Virtue. Your player's good game play and your character's heroic deeds let you accumulate Xia Virtue. Corrupt deeds and well-played villainy let you accumulate Corrupt Virtue.

Warrior. An archetypal character that focuses on overcoming enemies in combat. Warriors specialize in Might and Speed skills. Warriors can take Uncommon Martial Arts at character creation.

Wounded. Someone who has taken at least twice their Health and less than three times their Health in damage.

Wu Wei. Flow, harmony, perception, and inaction (or subtle action). Characters with a high rating in Wu Wei are very much in tune with the world.

Wulin. The Martial Arts World. This is the greater community of contenders for power, respect, and fame in Shen Zhou. Heaven created the Wulin so that humans could improve themselves without endangering universal order.

Wulin Sage (or just Sage). Within the game, the ultimate arbiter of merit and rank in the Martial Arts World. Outside the game, the Game Master.

Xia. The heroes of the Martial Arts World are the xia (swordsmen and swordswomen). Xia are simultaneously rebels and exemplars of virtue — they deviate from the social order of Shen Zhou and they don't show proper respect in their pursuit of justice. Many xia also get nasty when provoked, but otherwise they pursue admirable goals and try to help people. People with cultivated Chi are either xia, corrupt, or baneful.



Adventuring in the Land of the Gods: Wuxia Heroes

What is Wu-xia?

Weapons of the Gods, both the game and comic, are firmly set in the Chinese 'Wu-xia' genre. So what does this word mean? A two-character phrase in Chinese, it can be roughly translated as "Chivalrous Warrior"; in modern times, it has become identified with Swords and Sorcery, Chinese-style; it is this tradition that the comic (and this game) *Weapons of the Gods* hails from.

However, it's important to note the differences from western fantasy; wuxia stories take place in Ancient China, which has different cultural assumptions than the West. Perhaps cardinal of those assumptions is reverence for societal order, and one's place in it. In Ancient China, you know where you belong in the scheme of things, and that the greatest good comes from supporting your culture.

Weapons of the Gods is not about such people. It's a game about being larger than life, to leave your village (or wherever you come from) and seek your destiny out in the world. You didn't leave to be good. You left to be the *best*. The Gods look down from the Heavens, and those who do well in their eyes gain more and more power, take on greater and greater challenges. It's not for the timid, nor for those who accept things as they are as the way they always should be.

To seek your Destiny, to leave your place and seek something better, for yourself and others – that is the goal of the Wuxia Hero, and that's what you play in this game – a person of quality and virtue who seeks to challenge himself and the world!

Your Wuxia Hero is your alter ego in the game; the role you take to explore the world and your place in it. It all starts with one question: what moved your character to join the Martial Arts World?

It's All About the Challenge

Weapons of the Gods is about going beyond the bounds of where you started in life, to not accept the role you happened to be born into, but to exceed it... in other words, to be a Wuxia Hero, you love the **challenge**. So what challenges you? In this game, we codify the three major challenges that motivate people to step outside of their original role in life... each challenge has its corresponding **Archetype**.

An Archetype is not a template for your character – it's more like a broad path, giving you guidance as you take your first steps into the *Wulin*, or the Martial Arts World. The *Wulin* is more than a lifestyle, it's a community; it is a refuge for humans who are not satisfied with

what they're given in life, in ways that will support the world and please the eyes of Heaven (that, and keeping humanity from becoming extinct, but you'll read about that... later).

Selecting an Archetype is not a big deal – simply choose a challenge that interests you, and you're off. Each of the three will give you hints and guidance, both in character generation for the here and now, but also in your character's past... because your ancestors and their illustrious (or infamous) deeds of the past have echoes into the present day. Each Archetype has its roots in Chinese literature, fantasy and otherwise, and no, they're not mutually exclusive--though you'll start a beginning game with only one.

Let's look at the three challenges, and which might appeal to you most. Are you resolute and willing to take on the world for what's right... and do it with style? Then maybe you should look into creating a Warrior as your Wuxia Hero, for your Challenge is **Struggle**. The benefit of being a **Warrior** is greater access to the Martial Arts, for your kung fu is stronger (at least to start with!) than the other two Archetypes.

If you're the kind of person who enjoys working with (or just working) people, then **Courtier** is the Archetype for you – you're all about the deals and allies you can make (don't sweat the enemies – they'll choose *you*.) Your Challenge, the thrill that motivates you, is **Influence**. The benefit that Courtiers enjoy is access to the Secret Arts of Intrigue, the knowledge of how to manipulate others, both directly and indirectly.

The final Archetype, and the least common, is for those who live for the Challenge of **Knowledge**. Are you into collecting information and understanding the secrets of the world? Then you should look at designing a **Scholar**, for this Archetype knows the hidden workings of the world and usually knows some Daoist Magic.

Once you have some idea of which of the three Archetypes you're interested in, go ahead and read the Character Design Summary and get a feel for what comes next. Given the range of options (never mind the kung fu or other fun stuff!), it's good to have an idea of the process involved. It'll take a while (once you get used to it, it usually takes maybe half an hour at most), but it'll be worth it, as it's all in aid of creating entertaining and textured stories.

Weapons of the Gods uses a point-buy system; you'll end up with a character that will be capable, but will definitely need friends at the outset, if only to handle threats tougher than yourself... and there are plenty of those in the Land of the Gods!

神兵玄奇

神兵玄奇



Step This is just an overview; it's all covered in detail in this section, but this is a good place to start!

Step One: Concept (Starts on Page 28)

Choose Archetype –

Note that you can only have a maximum of three in any Skill in a beginning campaign; this includes Kung Fu.

- **Warrior:** Combat-Oriented. You can use your Chi Aura to enhance your Dodge Skill. Your primary skills are usually Might & Speed Skills.
- **Courtier:** Interaction-Oriented. You can use your Chi Aura to enhance your Confidence Skill. Your primary skills are usually Genius & Presence Skills.
- **Scholar:** Knowledge-Oriented. You can use your Chi Aura to enhance your Awareness Skill. Your primary skills are usually Genius & Wu Wei Skills.

Choose Origin, Name and Passion –

- Pick an Origin – where you come from in the Land of the Gods, and who you were before you started seeking your Destiny, as well as your place in the social order of things.
- Create a name – Chinese names are usually descriptive, often a adjective-noun, a noun-noun or even a noun-adjective.
- Pick a Passion – roll a die and have your Sage consult the result on the Wheel of Karma (on page 333), and choose one of the two emotions in the red area on the Wheel.

Step Two: Attributes (Starts on Page 36)

Distribute 15 points among the five Attributes, from 1 to 5:

- *Might* is a measure of physical vitality and controlled power.
- *Speed* is a measure of physical dexterity and grace.
- *Presence* is a measure of charisma and force of personality.
- *Genius* is a measure of education and intelligence.
- *Wu Wei* is a measure of awareness, sense acuity, and harmony with the world.

Devote at least one point to each Attribute, with no more than a single Attribute at 5.

Step Three: Skills & Specializations (Starts on Page 37)

Purchase skills using 30 points — it's good to spend about 15 on your archetype's primary Skills and 15 on miscellaneous Skills picked up from your Origin.

Your Skills cannot exceed 3 in a starting game.

Skills cost one point per die, or one point for two Specialties, which must be placed on two separate skills (no Double Specializations at game start, and Specialties can only be bought for existing skills).

Step Four: Secondary Attributes (Starts on Page 44)

Note your Secondary Attributes.

- **Health** – add up your Chi ratings to arrive at your Health.
- **Joss** – you have three points of Joss, distributed as you like between Xia Joss and Corrupt Joss.



- River — you can fit two dice in your River, assuming the GM starts the game at 4th rank.

Step Five: Advantages and Disadvantages (Starts on Page 44)

This is where you buy the Advantages and Disadvantages that round out your character; Advantages are perks and helpful things that empower your character (like Martial Arts or Daoist Magic). Disadvantages make your character's life more difficult in exchange for more Destiny during play.

Beginning characters usually start with 50 Destiny points to customize their characters, buying their Martial Arts, any special equipment they want to have, Backgrounds, and the Lores that are their ties to the history and the world of *Weapons of the Gods*.

Example of Character Creation

What kind of character do you want to play? As earlier noted in the book, it's all about the Challenge. Do you want to become one of the Axe Immortals, or be a righteous courtier who deposes Emperor Hu? Decide which Archetype suits you best, and work out a brief sketch of your character. When done, your Sage may have suggestions for you concerning what will and what will not work well in the campaign she is going to run. Knowing what kind of character you want to play and what you want to do with that character, the GM should be able to work in the campaign elements that will let you progress toward accomplishing those things.

It's worth repeating at this point that you don't need any previous familiarity with the *Weapons of the Gods* comics to make a character and play this game. Just draw on anything you *do* know about the setting—or similar settings you've encountered in literature, film, or other media—and discuss your ideas with the GM. She will try her best to give you all the information you need to flesh out a character you'll enjoy playing.

By the way, if you have read the comics and there is a particular subplot, location, or other aspect that grabbed your attention, by all means mention it to the GM so she can do her best to work with you. The *Weapons of the Gods* game was designed to take place within the setting detailed in the comics, but it's not meant to follow exactly the same storyline with the same cast of characters. So if there's a particular Weapon of the Gods that you like and want to try to acquire, but one of the comic's main characters already possesses it, don't let that stop you. As you'll see in the following chapters, the game mechanics are set up so you can become involved with major plot elements that appeal to you.

Megan wants to create a character that will follow in her beloved Father's footsteps; she is the last of the line and her mother is dead. Determined to make him as proud as any son (truly, she has filial piety!), she dons a man's clothes and a man's life, and trains as a Warrior of the Jung Clan. Megan devises and writes down her goals: in the short-term, she wants to gain status for herself in her Clan; her long-term goals are to return the Jung Clan to its former glory, so she in turn may sit at the right hand of the Emperor!

Now, this is no mean feat — for her Clan to rise from exile to a place of prominence in the Jin Empire is definitely a Transformation of her World... which utterly follows the focus of *Weapons of the Gods*. On top of that, her goals do not clash with those of her fellow players; her Sage, Rebecca, notes that gaining fame and renown is acquiring a power in and of itself, with which to approach the Emperor. If Megan's character succeeds, she may sufficiently impress the Emperor, who is well known for granting favors to Warriors that pledge fealty to him... favors on the order of restoring her Clan and its place at his side. Rebecca nods and makes a few notes, along with the notes she's collected on the other players. Glancing at the character concept, Rebecca asks Megan if she'd be willing to spend the six Destiny points to link her Warrior's Destiny to the Lore of Parent and Child, specifically to the Great Secrets of Kung Fu Destiny. This would work very well with Megan's Warrior; a Righteous Hero is one thing, but one that shows Filial Piety? That can only impress the Emperor, who sets great store by the Virtue of *Xiao* (all emperors derive their Mandate from Heaven, which is the parent of humanity) — something that most Wuxia Heroes are clearly lacking! After reading the Lore sheet, she agrees, and then goes on to fill out the statistics for her character (remembering to do this in pencil).

Referring to Kate Monk's Onomastikon online at www.gaminggeeks.org/Resources/KateMonk Megan chooses the birth name Xi-Lan (her character's female name), then her alias as a male — Xiang-Ling, and finally adds her Clan name to the end. She then fills in that Xi-Lan is a Rank 4 Warrior (with 50 Destiny to spend) from the Country of Yang (the place of her Clan's exile).

Using a piece of scratch paper to keep track of her point expenditure, Meg moves on to her Skills. She has a firm picture of Xi-Lan as a capable and dangerous mounted warrior; hence she chooses her 30 points of Skills first, remembering that she can't go above 3 in any single skill. On top of that, she wants to have some Specializations, so she sets aside 2 of those points for later, leaving her 28 to spend now.

Looking over the Skill Lists, paying close attention to her Archetype Skill Groups



(Might and Speed), she immediately goes for 2s in Athletics, Fight, Hardiness, Dodge and Finesse (10 points total). Initiative, Melee and Ride, all crucial to her character concept, get 3 points each; 9 more points, for a total of 19 points spent on Archetype skills.

For her non-Archetype skills, she chooses a Confidence of 2, as you need confidence to lead others (it helps to keep your own cool as well), and a Tactics of 2 to lead troops. Considering her Wu Wei Skills, she goes for Awareness and Ranged (the former to prevent ambushes, the latter to throw her Spear... not that she likes the thought of throwing her favorite weapon, but she figures she has to know how) at 2 each. This all adds up to 8 points. She has one point left, and decides to throw it into Learning so she can be literate, like a noble should be.

Megan decides it's time to spend those two banked skill points on Specializations; each point yields two specializations, but she can only spend one on a given skill for a Fourth Rank character. She decides to spend her Specializations, one apiece, on: Melee (Spear), Ride (My Own Horse), Confidence (Valorous) and Tactics (Mounted).

Turning to the rest of her character, she decides to wait on buying her Attributes until after determining her Kung Fu, since they define her Chi ratings, which must have certain values depending on the kung fu chosen. With her 50 Destiny in mind, she looks at her character's Advantages, and starts scanning for kung fu that appeals to her. What leaps out at her is 'Heart-Breaking Blade'. Intrigued by the name, she reads the loresheet for it and discovers it's a fast and brutal kung fu, meant to incapacitate opponents before they really know what's happening. She buys that one up to its max of 3 (spending 5 Destiny to buy into the style, then six more points for the techniques [1+2+3], for a total of 11), then looks further, wanting a Style that offers some defensive options. She finds Cloud Mastery, a style that offers greater Initiative! She checks to see if the bonuses will stack; nope, this game won't permit that. Then again, she notes that Heart-Breaking Blade only works for edged weapons, and it would be good to have a booster for Initiative in case she gets caught weaponless. On top of that, the second level technique makes it harder for her to be hit by the bad guys; she likes that, and decides it must be hers, up through Level 2 (5 points to buy in, then three more for the techniques [1+2], for a total of 8.) Lastly, she spends a couple of points on her Lightfoot so she can make great leaps and run faster, and that's all. So she's spent a total of 21 of her Destiny points on her Martial Arts.

Megan muses on the rest of the Advantages, seeing what appeals to her. Considering her background, she spends 2 points on Affiliation: Jung Clan (being that it's not terribly influential), then 2 more points on Wealth (funds from her father), and a whopping 9 points on a Quality Warhorse (also a gift from her father). She

names the horse "Peach Branches" (he eats them every chance he gets), and he gives her a +5 on all rolls having to do with her Ride skill. Remembering the Lore sheet that Rebecca mentioned to her earlier, she goes back and reads it, and sees that not only does it make her cooler (through showing Filial Piety), it also might give her eventual access to clan treasure troves... Given that her clan was once big, she really likes the idea; she spends the 6 points to get the Lore for Parent & Child: Great Secrets of Kung Fu, making it a little cheaper by restricting it to her only showing filial piety to her father, not to any other superiors.

She has 10 Destiny left, and muses. She *could* buy the basics of another martial art; that would make her more powerful in combat. But given that she'll have some politics in her future, she decides to be a bit more well rounded, and spends 2 points on the Politics skill (she wants to restore her clan... try that without having political knowledge!), and then 2 more points on the Grace skill, since she's a noble and has to have good manners. Thinking a bit further on those lines, she drops one last point in Persuade. She has 5 Destiny left; she saves it in case she wants to boost an Attribute, since it costs five points to up an Attribute (and its Chi!) by one.

Finally, Megan looks at her Attributes. She notes that an Attribute at least equal to the rating of a skill grants a bonus of one die to that skill, and she carefully starts allocating her 15 Attribute points. She spends 3 on Might (so she'll have 3 Jade Chi to spend on her Cloud Mastery), 5 on her Speed (giving her 5 Crimson Chi to spend on her Heart-breaking Blade kung fu), 3 points on her Presence (to boost her Confidence), 2 points on her Genius (to boost her Learning... though not her Tactics; her specialization makes it too high for that), and 2 on Wu Wei (boosting her Awareness and Ranged skills). She looks over her Attributes, and remembers the Rule of Thumb for Chi – always have your Chi be two points higher than the kung fu that uses it! Her Cloud Mastery is 2, but her Jade Chi (Might) is only 3; she spends her last five Destiny and ups it to 4.

Meg looks at Passions – each wuxia hero has some overriding emotion, a Passion, that drives them – for her it's easy: Obsession with returning her family to prominence! She thinks about it often, so it's definitely a Passion for her; in fact, she thinks, it should be a Disadvantage – an Overwhelming Passion! She likes that, and writes it in. Not only will it make it easier for her to earn extra Destiny in play (by being so focused that she makes mistakes), it'll also make her life interesting if she meets any Courtiers (either helpful or... otherwise). For more information how Passions work, see pg. 307, *Secret Arts*.

Meg fills in all the last little details on her sheet, like weapon stats, her River and Chi Aura. She totals up her Chi Ratings for her Health points per level and notes them all down. She has 3 Joss, picking 1 Xia and 2 Corrupt—she sometimes does the most expedient thing, rather than the right thing! Then she writes her techniques with the relevant details on the back of her sheet, and that's it! She's done, and now hands her finished character to Rebecca for review.



①**Name & Origin** – Create a name based on a two or three word adjective/noun combination, but see Appendix X for help with Chinese names. This has all the obvious stuff like height and so forth, but also things like rank and destiny... the latter is the points you spend to customize your character.

①**Joss** – This is the good luck and fortune that surrounds the hero. Xia Joss is good luck for the character (which adds a die for each point spent), while Corrupt Joss is bad luck for your enemies (which removes a dice from an enemy's pool, but must be spent before the enemy actually rolls).

②**Attributes** – These circles are where your most basic qualities are recorded. In *Weapons of the Gods*, our Attributes are based on the strengths of the Five Daoist Elements within your body – Might is the Element of Wood, Speed is the Element of Fire, Presence is the Element of Earth, Genius is the Element of Metal, and Wu Wei is the Element of Water. Each determines your raw ability and your Chi Scores.

③**Chi Scores** – This is where you track your chi use. Chi is the lifeblood of the universe, its very breath. It's also the fuel for your martial arts – without chi, you can't wield your kung fu at all! The Five Vital Energies, or Chi, are: Jade (or Green), Crimson, Golden, White and Silver.

④**Skills** – Your Skills are recorded here. These are what you roll to ascertain your chances when you attempt something that might fail... or succeed. You roll as many dice as the number indicates; if you have an asterisk, that shows you have a specialization in a particular application of that skill, and can roll an additional die. One indicates a starting specialization; two show an advanced Specialization. The second number on the right shows your Skill boosted by your Attribute, if the skill+specialization is equal to or less than the Attribute rating.

⑤**Advantages** – Advantages are anything that helps your character or marks his (or her!) position in the world. Given that you're a hero, this is where you record things like your Kung Fu, your social position, or Advantages like Tough as Nails. You also put Disadvantages on the last line, like whether or not you're as Thick as a Brick.

⑥**Kung Fu** – What sets your character apart from your average peasant; the training that allows you to perform great feats of athleticism or combat. Your Lightfoot is always listed

first; every martial arts warrior has it, and indeed, who would want to play a hero who couldn't leap the length of a clearing, run up walls, or even bound as high as the clouds? The rest of your Kung Fu knowledge follows, with the name and then the number of dice in the skill, which also must be as high as the highest technique you want to have. Kung Fu Styles are Advantages, but since they're so central, are set apart from the others, usually on the left side of the page. Magic would also go over here, as well.

⑦**An Advantage** – This is a good example of a possible advantage you might have. Megan's character has the Lore: Parent & Child – Great Secrets of Kung Fu. This means she can do Deeds to directly glorify her family, which is unusual. If she earns enough of the Virtue of Family, she can gain access to clan treasure troves!

⑧**Weapons** – Tools that are designed to hurt villains, or just people in your way. A weapon is described by three ratings: its Speed - what it adds to your Initiative; its Strike - how much leverage and mass and damaging potential it adds to your Attack Roll; and Damage - how many points of damage it adds, if any, to the result dice you roll for a successful attack.

⑨**Passion** – Every wuxia character is a passionate person; cultivating one's chi requires a heart of fire, not a heart of stone. Without passion, there is no motivation to excel, to leave one's place in life and enter the Wulin. Megan's Passion is an Obsession of Ambition – Return her family to prominence! This is a Gold Passion that is strong enough to rate being a Disadvantage, "Overwhelming Passion".

⑩**Health** – Here's where you keep track of your character's overall state of being; each health level marks a progressively worse state (and hampered ability to move). You derive your Health from adding all your Chi scores together; then each level has that number of points. All together this makes up your character's Wound Scheme.

Step One: Concept

It's one thing to have a roleplaying game and another to know what you want to play in its fictional world... that's where concept comes in. In *Weapons of the Gods*, we approach concept from the direction of what interests you the most to play; in *The Land of the Gods* (as stated above), all adventuring is based on the idea of what challenges you.

Shen Zhou is a country and time that values order above just about everything else. When you enter the World of Martial Artists, you're doing it because whatever you started with isn't enough for you; you left to pursue something *more*. If you're a hero in *Weapons of the Gods*, you're there for the challenge, however it presents itself.



Think about your Archetype carefully; it's likely to affect just about everything about your character, not only in character creation but also during play. See the Archetype Guidesheets below for more detail, starting on the page 31. Each Guidesheet gives suggestions and ideas to create your character from, given that the Land of the Gods is not the China of ancient history or even the one we know. It's very rich in history, and trying to read all the background at once might be a bit much to take at once (though there are those who will, not that that's a problem).

Next, decide where you started and who you were before you entered the Martial Arts World - this is your Origin. For the profession you followed before you stepped into the Martial Arts World, see the Archetype Guidesheets that start on the next page. Your Origin could be most anything; whether you start out as an uneducated peasant farmer to a spoiled child of privilege who has lost his inheritance, it's also important to have an idea of where you come from (for a list of sample Origins, see page 36. After all, once you enter the *Wulin*, the Martial Arts World, it's only your will and your adherence to the *Xia* virtues that will determine your fate, as you work to transform the world. If you choose an *Affiliation* (the Advantage; see below), then turn to pg. 55 and read about the possible political affiliations you can have in *The Social Organizations of Shen Zhou*.

Once you choose your Origin, your gender and your name, it's a good idea to think about how big a settlement you hail from; the larger will be worldly and experienced, while those who come from a small clan will probably have less social Advantages.

Finally, it's useful to think about your **Passion** - the dominant emotion that drives you and motivates you, and your **Hooks** - specific bits of your character's personality, history, or ongoing story that make your character interesting. You want your Challenge, your Passion and your Hooks to define your character to the point where you won't have much trouble coming up with interesting responses to events in the first few sessions. For this reason, "brooding loner" is a bad Hook; "brooding loner drawn unwillingly into events by *compassion* (your driving Passion)" is okay, since you can usually find a reason to involve yourself in the story. Note that

Weapons of the Gods is a story of heroic action and wuxia; characters are often reluctant to involve themselves in major events, but *always* involve themselves in what's going on around them. If your character concept gets in the way of participation in the game, first talk to the GM; if the GM doesn't have immediately useful advice or plans, the second step is changing your character concept.

The Archetype Guidesheets

Detailed below are the Archetype Guidesheets - easy collections complete with page references to the various bits of character creation, so you can get a quick look at what interests you... and then look up only the bits relevant to your character. Choose one and look it over; it'll supply an overview of useful things to get a character concept going for *Weapons of the Gods*.

Of course, later on you'll probably just read the book - but even so, these pages will eventually be useful when you need to know quickly where the bit about the Warriors who use those neat divining rods to find the enemies of Heaven are, and what page number they're on, and how many points it costs to play one of those guys.

Archetypes, Schmarketypes; or, "I Just Want To Kick Ass".

We here at Eos Press are well aware that there are people out there who couldn't give a rat's whisker for this archetype crap - they're going to want to get some kung fu fighters and go kick ass as fast as lightning!

We applaud those people.

The game's set up so you can do just that. Speaking as somebody (the game developer, excuse me) who grew up watching Shaw Brothers flicks on every Sunday's "Black Belt Theater", I think that's a fine thing - if you want to make a group of Warriors and throw down with the world, do it!

But a roleplaying game is more than just a system to escape reality in a particular way ('ass-kicking', for instance); it's also about having a world to explore, with different kinds of bad-assitude to go out and have fun with... hence the three Archetypes. They're not classes; they're too broad for that. They're simply starting points for both players and Wulin Sages to start from. An Archetype is a quick reference for both motivation and method for a given character, and they're not rigid - China's fiction and history abound with Warrior-Scholars and the like! The whole point of *Weapons of the Gods*, both the comic and the roleplaying game, is to bring the world of Chinese Fantasy to life... and we hope we've done just that.

With lots and lots of ass-kicking.

So here they are - they're arranged by how common they are in the Land of the Gods. Naturally, as they're the most commonly found, we'll start off with the Warriors. Then after that are the Courtiers - because everybody can use a savvy debater and information merchant who, if he doesn't have a clue, knows where to find somebody who does. Finally, there are the Scholars - they usually have the clues (they collect them, after all), but don't always have a sense of where the clues should go.

One final note - in each Guidesheet, you'll notice a recap of the **Challenge** that drives that particular Archetype... and the **Archetype Skill**. These last are important. Every character has a Chi Aura, a "protective air." Characters usually spend points of their Chi Aura to resist damage, but you can also use it to add dice to your Archetype Skill for one roll.



武者

(A System Topic) Destiny Cost: 0

Almost three quarters of all martial artists are devoted to struggle within the Wulin; Warriors by any other name. A Warrior longs to test herself (or himself) against any and all struggles, defeating all challenges with their skill and unquenchable spirit, receiving the fortune, fame and acclaim their excellence deserves. Warriors can come from any background, no matter how modest or gifted – and many are women. All are equal in the Wulin; only the skill and the courage to wield it is what matters. Warriors have access to martial arts beyond their counterparts, able to spend more Destiny at the outset on their Kung Fu, being able to take an Uncommon Art at Character creation.

Challenge: *Struggle*. Archetype Skill: *Dodge*.

Places to Come From: Any Territory.

Likely Clans: Any Great or Small Clan (Hell only with Sage's permission); Any Secret Society or any Faction.

Possible Professions: Beggar, Convoy Escort, Disgraced Wife, Dispossessed Foppish Noble, Farmer, Former Bandit, Gangster Gone Straight, Proud Prince, Righteous Rebel, Soldier.

Likely Lores & Destinies

Wu Mengda	pg. 98
Divine Kung Fu	pg. 103
Xia Yu Di	pg. 119
Ta Ji	pg. 123
The Martial King	pg. 124
Ying Zheng (The First Emperor)	pg. 129
Hui Xi	pg. 137
Wild Swan	pg. 137
Ancestral Prestige	pg. 178
Clan Reputation	pg. 178
Great Secrets of Kung Fu	pg. 168

Favored Skills

Warrior Skills	Other Skills
Athletics	Awareness
Dodge	Confidence
Fight	Ride
Hardiness	Senses
Melee	Tactics

Favored Martial Arts

Dragon Saber	pg. 234
Eagle Claw	pg. 236
Heart-Breaking Blade	pg. 238
Heaven's Thunder	pg. 239
Holy Fire	pg. 240
Universal Blow	pg. 247
Waves Like Water	pg. 249

Starting Gear

Warriors can start out the game with: a large frame backpack (tall flag with your name on it optional), a water skin and some provisions (in the pack), a set of rather scruffy clothes (which you're wearing), a set of Light Armor (cloth), sandals, a rain hat, a knife and any three weapons of your choice (Better equipment has to be bought through the Possession Advantage).

Advantages & Disadvantages

Affiliation	Black-hearted
Blessed by the Gods	Hated Foe
Fast	Hunted
Followers	Missing Extremity
Healthy as an Ox	Onerous Obligation
Mentor	Rival
Possessions	Temperamental
Robust	Thick as a Brick
Status	
Tough as Nails	

神兵玄奇



文生 Courtiers

(A System Topic) Destiny Cost: 0

Courtiers are fascinated with power. Oh, make no mistake: they love the power of kung fu, and try to learn all they can. But their first love is for the power that defines the world – power over people. In aid of that, Courtiers often have knowledge of the Secret Arts of Intrigue; they account for maybe fifteen to twenty percent of the Martial Arts World. Their motivations for wanting such power over others vary, for Courtiers are people with their own needs and drives, just like everyone else. When you want to know who's important or who has influence, ask a courtier... but beware the price.

Challenge: *Influence.* **Archetype Skill:** *Confidence.*

Places to Come From: East and West Territories

Likely Clans: Dong or Nan Clans; Any Small Clan; Any Secret Society or any Faction.

Possible Professions: Censor, Circuit Judge, Constable, Lady of the Court, Monk or Nun, Imperial Courtier, Merchant, Minister, Noble House Member, Tax Collector.

Likely Lores & Destinies

Guan-Long Feng	pg. 118
Xia Yi	pg. 119
Bi Gan	pg. 122
Shang Wu Yi	pg. 123
Duke of Zhou	pg. 124
The Cultured King	pg. 124
Chang Chi'en	pg. 136
Chao Tuo	pg. 136
Fang-Head Wu	pg. 136
Secret Arts of Intrigue	pg. 305

Favored Skills

Courtier Skills	Other Skills
Confidence	<i>Athletics</i>
Grace	<i>Dodge</i>
Inspire	<i>Ranged</i>
Persuade	<i>Senses</i>
Politics	<i>Stealth</i>

Favored Martial Arts

Drunken Monkey Style	pg. 235
Golden Temple Bells	pg. 237
Mental Summons	pg. 243
Music of War	pg. 244
Perfect Aim	pg. 245
Thousand Scythe Kick	pg. 246
Walking in Shadows	pg. 248

Starting Gear

Courtiers can start out the game with two sets of clothes (one less nice and usually worn; the other very nice for those special appearances to work people in social settings), a nice hat for court and a rainhat for the rest of the time, a haversack with some food, a waterskin, two sets of sandals (like the clothes), and two weapons of your choice. (Better equipment has to be bought through the Possession Advantage).

Advantages & Disadvantages

Diplomat	Chronically Unlucky
Followers	Coward
Friends	Dependent
Good Looks	Family Curse
Information Broker	Hated Foe
Mentor	Lazy
Possessions	Rival
Secret Arts	
Status	
Wealth	

神兵玄奇



法師 Scholars

(A System Topic) Destiny Cost: 0

Scholars seek to understand the world in depth... in all its beauty and majesty. A Scholar knows that knowledge is power, and thus wants more. Whether it's occult knowledge like ancient artifacts, or mundane historical knowledge like family lineages, the Scholar wants it all. Scholars usually acquire some magical skill along the way in the course of their search, but it is important to remember they are members of the Wulin, and always know some martial arts.

Challenge: *Knowledge.* **Archetype Skill:** *Awareness.*

Places to Come From: Anywhere, but typically born in a city.

Likely Clans: Any Great or Small Clans; Any Secret Society or any Faction.

Possible Professions: Buddhist Sage, Court Philosopher, Daoist Sorcerer-Apprentice, Imperial Advisor, Poet, Retired Craftsman, Student of the Classics, Village Predictionist, Wandering Monk, Wise but Annoying Kung Fu Master.

Likely Lore & Destinies

Pangu	pg. 88
Battle Poetry of the Celestial Goddess	pg. 106
Huangti	pg. 114
Yu Shun	pg. 115
Meng Li	pg. 128
Confucianism	pg. 144
Daoism	pg. 147
Legalism	pg. 149
Great Secrets of Kung Fu	pg. 168

Favored Skills

Scholarly Skills	Other Skills
Awareness	Confidence
Crafting	Fight
Investigation	Grace
Learning	Persuade
Medicine	Senses

Favored Martial Arts

Blizzard Fist	pg. 233
Cloud Mastery	pg. 234
God of Wind Kick	pg. 236
Lunar Darkness	pg. 242
Thousand Scythe Kick	pg. 246
Walking in Shadows	pg. 248
Wisdom of Seven Gates	pg. 249

Starting Gear

Scholars start out the game with: a large haversack with some food and a gourd of water, some bamboo scroll books of the Classics and notes on research projects; a set of clothes (that you're wearing), any relevant items if you're a Daoist Magician, and a single weapon of your choice (most scholars like fans).

Advantages & Disadvantages

Animal Speech	Egotistical
Common Sense	Family Curse
Dreams	Obsession
Inventive	Painfully Honest
Mentor	Rival
Possessions	
Secret Arts (Daoist Magic or Medicine)	
Status	
Warning of Evil	

神兵玄奇

Origin

Origin, quite simply, is the where, what and how of where you come from – the Archetype Guidesheets give some ideas, but it's important to make that easier with some easy-to-look-things-up lists. Be sure to also check out pg. 55, The Social Organizations of the Shen Zhou. Below are listed the Sixteen States of Shen Zhou, with a sampling of named leaders, along with Cities of Note. Given that this is hardly an exhaustive list, you're encouraged to make up your own!

Bei Clan Territories

Zhao

1. Molten Serenity (Bei Stronghold)
2. Passing Cloud

Xia (The Iron Shadow Warlord)

1. Six Devil City (aka Only Six Devils)

Northern Yang

1. Noble City of Honesty

Eastern Qin

1. Waiting Branch

Western Qin

1. Snow Gift

Dong Clan Territories

Yang (King Yue Guan)

1. Bohai Palace (Dong Stronghold)
2. Brown Place
3. Thrashing Minister
4. Heaven's Hand
5. Bird Progress

Eastern Liang (Righteous Sparrow King)

1. Best Spice Town
2. Sword Looks Up
3. Characteristic Philosophy

Southern Liang

1. Notably Picturesque
2. Bandit Pile
3. Orchid Tea City

Northern Liang

1. Dao Min Territory
2. Auspicious City
3. Broken Jaw

Hell Clan Territory

Hanzhao (Dominion, Master of Hell)

1. Perpetual Peace (Hell Clan Stronghold)
2. Stumbled Glory

Nan Clan Territory

The Jin Empire (Emperor Shi Hu)

1. Jiankang: Imperial Capital
2. Thousand Sword Palace (Nan Stronghold)
3. Red Day
4. Many Brides
5. Ink
6. Dragon's Benison

Xi Clan Territories

Chenghan (Lord and Master Ho Xi)

1. Fang and Gold Mountain (Xi Stronghold)
2. Hungry Pillars

Western Yang (Syndic Cai Ying-Ping)

1. Mating Butterflies

Southern Yang (King Wang Murong)

1. Gao

Western Liang

1. Moon Mirror

Southern Qin

1. Not a Fox Town

Step Two: Attributes

Everyone has their most basic capabilities – things that describe them before factoring in their training. We call those basic capabilities Attributes – the base parameters for how we compare people to one another. There are five Attributes to measure a character's basic capabilities in *Weapons of the Gods*.

Might

Might is the power of the Ox. It's raw strength. It's raw health. It's vigor. It's vitality. It's the power of the young and the martial artists, who can use their body freely and easily.

Might helps with skill rolls that need raw physical power. Its defining skill is Athletics, and you should use Athletics when you're not sure what Might skill might apply. Might also applies to Climb, Fight, Hardiness, and Lift skill rolls, determines your Jade Chi (pg. 229), and relates to the element of wood and the lesser yang energy.

Speed

Speed is the power of the Tiger. It lets you act and react more quickly. It lets you get more done, and more complicated things done, in less time.

Speed helps with skill rolls that need speed or physical precision. Its defining skill is Initiative, and you should use Initiative when you're not sure what Speed skill might apply. Speed also applies to Dodge, Finesse,

Melee, and Ride skill rolls, determines your Crimson Chi (pg. 229), and relates to the element of fire and the utmost yang energy.

Presence

Presence is the power of the Courtier. Charm, magnetism, and force of personality flow from a powerful centered heart. Together they form the character's Presence. Presence is the power of monks, war leaders, courtesans, and gods.

Presence helps with skill rolls that influence other people. Its defining skill is Confidence, and you should use Confidence when you're not sure what Presence skill might apply. Presence also applies to Grace, Inspire, Perform, and Persuade skill rolls, determines your Gold Chi (pg. 229), and relates to the element of earth.

Genius

Genius is the power of the Scholar. It determines intelligence, knowledge, memory, and the speed of one's thoughts. It is the power of the learned, who dominate the world through understanding its principles.

Genius helps with skill rolls for learned skills — such as acupuncture, tactics, and writing. Its defining skill is Learning, and you should use Learning when you're not sure what intellectual skill might apply. Genius also applies to Crafting, Medicine, Politics, and Tactics skill rolls, determines your White Chi (pg. 229), and relates to the element of metal and the lesser yin energy.

Wu Wei

Wu Wei is the power of the Daoist Sage. It is not a fullness but an emptiness. When pursuing knowledge, one acquires new things each day. When pursuing the Dao, one empties oneself — and in that emptiness discovers accord with all things and understanding of the world. To master the Dao is to see the world plainly and humbly.

Wu Wei — “inaction”, “peace”, “stillness”, or “harmony with nature” — allows the character observe the world and make sense of those observations. Because it governs perception, it also helps with ranged combat. Its defining skill is Awareness, and you should use Awareness when you're not sure what Wu Wei skill might apply. Wu Wei also applies to Investigation, Ranged Weapons, Sense, and Stealth skill rolls, determines your Silver Chi (pg. 229), and relates to the element of water and the utmost yin energy.

Attribute Samples

Here are a couple examples using characters from the comics to give you an idea of where the top of the scale lies with regard to your character's Attributes.

Might – Snow Bei (2), Tian Wen (7).

Speed – Tian Wen (5), Earth Lord (10)

Wu Wei – Ironheart (8)

Genius – Great Oak (1), Thunder Bei (4)

Presence – Hong Dong (6)

Attribute Scores

Each of these Attributes is rated on a starting scale from 1 to 5. Think of this as equivalent to a five-star restaurant rating, or an inflated grade point average, or whatnot. A rating of 1 is minimal, 2 is human average, and 5 is the limit of normal mortal development — although those who cultivate their Chi can achieve higher ratings in time. Characters receive 15 free points of

Attributes, and have to put at least one point into each. You can put a maximum of 5 in any single Attribute, and should bear in mind your Attribute ratings when you choose your Martial Arts, as they determine the relevant Chi ratings that your kung fu will use.

Step Three: Skills & Specialties

Your mundane abilities are represented by Skills. Skills have ratings from 0 to 5. The higher your Skill, the more dice you can roll when doing that kind of thing. More dice make it easier to accomplish difficult tasks, perform easy tasks with style, and fill your River with good dice early in a scene.

The skills in *Weapons of the Gods* are pretty broad — just 25 skills cover every field of human activity. For example, the Melee skill allows you to fight with any weapon, and you roll the Learning skill for all forms of scholarship.

Skill + Specialty

Meaning

0	You have not practiced this skill and must rely on raw talent.
1	You have some basic training or practice with the skill.
2	You're good at this, but are used to meeting people who are better.
3	You have solid professional competence.
4	You have impressive professional competence.
5	You've mastered the skill.
6	Incredible focused skill.
7	Legendary focused skill.



神兵玄奇

Specialties give a one-die bonus for specific tasks. You could take a Melee specialty in swordfighting, representing special training with the sword, or a Learning specialty in calligraphy, representing a particularly fine hand. You can take as many specialties per skill as you like, and in particular you can take the same specialty twice — but no matter how many specialties apply to a certain task, you never add more than two dice to any single roll (but you can add two skill dice plus one ‘raw talent’ die, if applicable).

Characters receive 30 points of skills for free, and can trade any number of skill points for 2 specialties each, though you have to put them on existing skills. *Weapons of the Gods* recommends spending at least half of your skill points on Archetype skills (Might & Speed skills for warriors, Presence & Genius skills for courtiers, and Genius & Wu Wei skills for scholars). Starting characters cannot buy skills above level 3, and may only buy one-die specializations at the start of game play.

A complete list of the skills available in *Weapons of the Gods* can be found on p. 53. You may also wish to consult the starting Archetype Templates starting on p. 31.

Skills and Specialties

The following Skills and common Specialties are available in *Weapons of the Gods*.

Might Skills

Athletics

This skill covers physical feats, including breaking down doors, ripping out of chains, running, jumping, and swimming. Note that wuxia characters are unnaturally good at covering ground and supernaturally good at jumping.

Jumping Distance	Difficulty
4 yards vertical	Trivial (difficulty number 5, and a free action)
8 yards horizontal	Trivial (difficulty number 5, and a free action)
8 yards vertical	Everyday (18)
10 yards horizontal	Everyday (18)
10 yards vertical	Moderate (20)
20 yards (either)	Hard (30)
30 yards (either)	Legendary (40)
Covering Ground	Difficulty
10 yards in a turn	Trivial (difficulty number 5, and a free action)
20 yards in a turn	Moderate (20)
30 yards in a turn	Hard (30)
50 yards in a turn	Legendary (40)



Critical Success on most Athletics rolls uses a free action rather than a full action.

Specialties: Looking Strong, Running, Jumping, Swimming, Smashing Stuff



Climb

One might assume that this skill is a subset of Athletics – but think. The muscle groups used in climbing are different, and the others don't generally involve plummeting to your death if you make a mistake. This skill measures your confidence and speed going up surfaces. Generally speaking, most martial artists are going to ignore Climb and use Lightfoot... but then, Climb Skill doesn't cost any chi, and runs less risk of detection via Awareness.

230), and is how warriors can push themselves to regain their chi quickly in a pinch.

Specialties: Enduring Torture, Staying Awake, Against Starvation, Disease Recovery, Poison Resistance, Regaining Chi (Warriors).

Lift

This is the skill of Toting Barge. Whether it's carrying stuff as a porter, moving manure as a peasant, or large amounts of goods

you're smuggling, Lift allows you to exceed your usual strength's limits. Peasants will usually have this skill to some degree or another, needless to say.

As a rule, if you can lift something, you can throw it. Throwing something out to

short range has the

same difficulty as lifting it. Throwing it to medium range has the next higher difficulty.

Climbing Distance	Surface	Difficulty
10 yards	Easy (knotted rope, steep hill)	Trivial (difficulty number 5, and a free action)
20 yards	Easy (knotted rope, steep hill)	Moderate (20)
30 yards	Easy (knotted rope, steep hill)	Hard (30)
50 yards	Easy (knotted rope, steep hill)	Legendary (40)
10 yards	Hard (rock climbing, rough wall)	Everyday (18)
20 yards	Hard (rock climbing, rough wall)	Hard (30)
30 yards	Hard (rock climbing, rough wall)	Legendary (40)
10 yards	Awful (slick wall, minimal handholds)	Moderate (20)
20 yards	Awful (slick wall, minimal handholds)	Legendary (40)

Critical Success on most Climb rolls uses a free action rather than a full action.

Specialties: Without Gear, Slick Surfaces, At Night, Carrying Heavy Loads.

Fight

This is the skill involving you using your body's strength and natural power to put the hurt on someone. It's brawling rough-and-tumble, relying more on brute force to overwhelm the enemy; this skill does include weapon use, but only weapons where their operation is based on brutalizing the enemy (usually blunt weapons) and are obvious in operation. Don't expect to use exotic or missile weapons via Fight; that's not what this skill is about.

Critical Success on most Fight rolls inflicts a combat effect (**Knocking Back**, see page 75).

Specialties: Specific Weapon, Bare Hands, Anything Handy.

Hardiness

This skill represents being hardened to the stresses and strains of heavy exertion and hard living; it's all about resisting privation, hunger, disease, as well as how easily you can endure long work shifts or effort.

Finally, it is of great importance regarding your chi - it determines how hard you can push your system in instances like Healing (see "Jade Chi and Healing", page

Difficulty	Weight to Lift or Throw	Weight to Throw to Medium Range
Trivial (10)	30-60 lbs.	< 30 lbs.
Simple (15)	61-120 lbs.	30-60 lbs.
Everyday (18)	121-250 lbs.	61-120 lbs.
Moderate (20)	251-400 lbs.	121-250 lbs.
Hard (30)	401-1200 lbs.	251-400 lbs.
Legendary (40)	1201-3000 lbs.	401-1200 lbs.
Impossible (60)	3001+ lbs.	1201+ lbs.

Critical Success on most Lift rolls uses a free action rather than a full action. This never applies to attacking someone with thrown objects.

Specialties: Large Amounts, Careful Carry, Livestock, Dead Bodies, Throwing.

Speed Skills

Initiative

Short for “seizing the initiative,” the Initiative skill lets you act before your enemies. Initiative also covers timing — if it’s not clear whether you can do something “in time” or “with perfect timing,” roll Initiative. Catching someone’s hand as they fall off a cliff is an Initiative task, as is showing up at a fight at the perfect dramatic moment. Characters make Initiative skill rolls to determine the order of combat actions. Using Initiative is not considered an action when determining how much you can do in a round, but the actions you take with it are.

Difficulty	Initiative Use
Trivial (5)	The GM thinks you can or should get there in time.
Simple (15)	The GM doesn’t have an opinion on whether you should get there in time.
Everyday (18)	You need to have good timing, but not impressively good timing.
Moderate (20)	Getting there on time is flashy but plausible.
Hard (30)	It’s surprising and dramatic to get there in time, but believable.
Legendary (40)	You shouldn’t have been able to get there in time — but you did.

Specialties: Combat Initiative, Dramatic Entrance, Reliable Cavalry, Fast When It Counts

Dodge

Possibly the first combat skill devised after “Bashing Your Enemy With A Rock”, Dodging is about getting out of the way of things that might hurt you and finding cover. You can only ever use it to protect yourself. Generally only people who fight for a living train in this skill, but some peasants have a bit — if only to avoid the local magistrate’s horsemen, who rarely slow down for people of insufficient worth. Dodge is the Archetype Skill for Warriors.

Critical Success on a Dodge roll lets you leap one round’s distance (10 yards) in a sensible but GM-chosen direction.

Specialties: Diving for Cover, Projectiles, Swords, Blunt Instruments.

Finesse

The art of graceful, delicate movement. The Finesse skill covers acrobatics, legerdemain, fine coordination, and escapes — in short, any physical act requiring more in the way of finesse than raw power. The greater your Finesse, the more slippery and elegant your movements. In Shen Zhou, most thieves are thugs or sneaks, but the rogues of the Wulin — able to walk in and out of jail cells, cheat at dice with one hand while picking pockets with the other, and tie someone’s hands behind their back while strolling past — use Finesse.

Specialties: Acrobatics, Cheating, Escapes, Fine Manipulation, Sleight of Hand, Theft.



Melee

The sophisticated and coordinated counterpart to Fight, this skill allows for fast, precise control of weapons, usually edged. This is generally the province of well-trained warriors. In the Time of Chaos, the Land of the Gods is *not* a peaceful place to live. Everybody’s armed with knives and sharper things to defend (or offend others) with.

Critical Success on most Melee rolls inflicts a combat effect (Knocking Back, see page 75).

Specialties: Swords, Spears (wielded, not thrown), Axes, Sabers.

Ride

In the enormous Land of the Gods, the only real way to get around quickly is to ride a fast horse (the preferred beast to be ridden). While you can learn to ride other beasts (witness Earth Lord and his giant trained bat), that's usually the purview of specialties and Advantages. This skill is both about staying on the animal as well as controlling it. Just about everybody who's anybody knows how to ride a horse... even if it's not very well.

Ride *replaces* the Athletics and Initiative skills when you are mounted. You can optionally roll Ride instead of Dodge or Melee when mounted. Quality horses give a +5 modifier to Athletics rolls to "cover ground," but only when you ride them. Use the critical success benefits, if any, for the skill you replace.

Specialties: Specific Breed of Horse, Giant Bats, Oxen and other creatures that you take the time to train.

Presence Skills

Confidence

This is the skill of projecting your self-assurance. People with Confidence project their self-belief and authority and always seem to know what they're doing (even when they don't). Having this skill, your very presence reassures others and keeps their morale high and their movements coordinated. (See "My Loyal Followers" pg. 345, for more details about how Confidence is used.) Confidence is the Archetype Skill for Courtiers, and is how they can push themselves to regain their chi quickly in a pinch.

Specialties: Military Authority, Regal Surety, Regaining Chi (Courtiers).

Grace

This is your social awareness and comportment; you have lovely manners, know how to offer and receive compliments graciously (as well as insults). With this skill, you know how to behave in court, how to look at funerals and weddings, be witty at dinner and how to accept (or decline) an imperial gift in high style. Grace is also useful for impressing a mentor or potential mentor.

Specialties: Small Town, City, Parties, Imperial.

Inspire

This skill is about how good you are at bringing forth specific emotions in people... you know how to make people cry, dance,

sing or run away from you in terror. It's the skill of getting people to feel what you feel (or appear to feel, if you're the devious sort). As such, this skill is something no courtier should be without, though of course warriors love it for intimidation purposes. If you dedicate your full action to inspiring an emotion, you can usually oppose their skill rolls — it's harder to fight, run, exude confidence, or do anything at all when someone's stirring the wrong emotions in your heart.

Specialties: Fear, Love, Sorrow (any specific emotion you wish to practice in, like Beggars specializing in Inspiring Pity).

Perform

With this skill, you can entrance crowds through some amazing talent. Note that this is not the same as Inspire; this is about spellbinding people through some artistic or creative skill, not working a crowd. Perform covers music, acting, storytelling, puppetry, painting, and other arts. Most performers have a two-die specialty in their style of choice. If you just want to be a flautist, puppeteer, painter, or some other specific sort of artist, you can voluntarily fail or reduce your dice on other kinds of Perform rolls.



Specialties: Acting, Classic Performances, Improvised Performances, Opera, Painting, Puppetry, Music

Persuade

This is the skill for bringing others around to your point of view. By wit, cleverness, word-choice and skillful observation of the cues from your listener, you carefully get them to consider seeing things a brand new way... your way. Unlike Inspire, which changes feelings in the short term, Persuade can work long-term changes in how people feel and think. Courtiers specialize in this skill, but Scholars frequently practice it as well.

Specialties: Big Lies, Clever Debate, Honest Speeches, Steady Indoctrination.

Genius Skills

Learning

You're educated. You can read and write; the higher your Learning, the more beautiful your calligraphy is (very important in the Land of the Gods) and the more characters you know. You're knowledgeable in legends, history, folk tales, the great myths — you've studied it all. Given that the people in Shen Zhou don't usually separate "fiction" from "history" from "mystic allegory," you may have trouble sorting out exactly how your knowledge is meant to be understood. Note that Learning is distinct from Lore (see pg. 85); Lore is hidden knowledge, whereas Learning is available to anyone who gets an education.

Specialties: Philosophy, History, Calligraphy, the Classics.

Crafting

With this skill, you can put your order to the world — you can build, forge, assemble, and create things that withstand the test of time. Crafting is used to make swords, baskets, armor, clothing, and dolls; it's also the skill Huangti used to forge Shen Zhou. Most professional crafters have a one- or two-die specialty in their craft of choice. If you just want to be a blacksmith, weaver, or have the gift of organizing people into lasting hierarchies, you can voluntarily fail or reduce your dice on other kinds of Crafting rolls. Crafting is also the skill used to incite chaos or find things' weaknesses — a smith knows the weaknesses of metal, and a great organizer knows the weaknesses in the human soul.

Critical success on a crafting roll lets you create a Quality object. You or the client

commissioning the object must spend 3 Destiny (pg. 341) for this result.

Specialties: Armor, Chaos, Cloth, Engineering, Social Order, Weapons.

Medicine

This is the mundane ability to do acupuncture, clean wounds, apply bandages, compound herbal remedies that actually work, and even do minor surgery. The skill of helping people's bodies repair themselves generally makes you popular with your fellow human beings, particularly if you help without being asked or charging high prices. Medicine is also important in that it is how scholars can push themselves to regain their chi quickly in a tight spot. Not only that, but Medicine doesn't cost chi like Kung Fu healing techniques do. For more details, see pg. 284, *Medicine*.

Critical success on a roll to treat someone's wounds lets them recover two Wound Levels instead of the normal result (one).

Specialties: Diseases, Injuries, Infections, Poisons, Regaining Chi (Scholars).

Politics

In a realm as large and as old as Shen Zhou, knowing the political lay of the land is a field of knowledge in its own right. With this skill, you know who's supposed to be in charge... and who really is. Knowledge of Politics is essential if you're going to be taken seriously in the courts of the mighty and powerful, and you'd better have Grace as well if you want to make a good impression... never mind a bit of Persuade.

Specialties: Specific Country, City, Village, Faction, Clan.

Tactics

You know how to allocate military force. You know when a frontal assault is a bad idea, you can construct a pincer movement, and you're familiar with the false-fallback counterattack. If you want to command any sort of force, you have to have this skill, as it allows you to protect and marshal large groups of people to their best effect (See "My Loyal Followers" pg. 345, for more details about how Tactics is used). Tactics is also useful for making smart tactical moves in personal combat.

Specialties: Small Unit, Large Scale, Personal Combat



Wu Wei Skills

Awareness

This skill measures your mindfulness of your environment. Use awareness to extract subtle details from impressions of the world around you — to see the lie in a courtier's face, to predict the weather from the details of the sky, to sense the use of Chi and its user's Rank within one round's distance, to recognize danger, to differentiate the footfall of a hungry tiger from a full and languid one, and to track a deer or an fugitive by bent blades of grass. Awareness is the Archetype Skill for Scholars.

Specialties: Ambushes and Danger, Chi, Tracking, Understanding Animals, Understanding People, Weather Prediction

Investigation

You're observant, able to spot interesting details and know how to ask questions to elicit useful information. Where Awareness lets you see truths in the world, Investigation tells you which truths are important. Characters with high Awareness can look at the face of a disloyal man and see the bitterness and resentment that breeds that treachery — but it takes Investigation to determine whether he's actually betrayed his superiors, and, if so, how. A favorite of both Courtiers and Scholars, this skill is always useful, because you just can't have too much information.

Specialties: Lore (old or lost knowledge) and Hidden Secrets (dirt and leverage on individuals).

Ranged

This is the combat skill of hitting things that you throw or fire — it's all about a steady eye, a steady hand and knowing how to get the most out of your depth perception. This skill isn't much good for defending — you want Dodge, Fight, or Melee for that.

Critical Success on most Ranged rolls inflicts a combat effect (see page 74).

Specialties: Needles, Crossbows, Archery, Spears, Knives.

Sense

This skill governs the senses. The higher your Sense skill, the more raw sensory detail you pick up. Sense skill lets you see, hear, smell, taste, and feel subtle details you might otherwise miss entirely. Sense can spot intruders, while Awareness can deduce their intentions.

Specialties: Hearing, Sight, Smell, Taste, Touch.

Stealth

The Art of Subtle Movement, this skill is a must for would-be spies, adulterers, and of course the omnipresent burglars. It's all about quiet movement, avoiding lines of sight, keeping to shadows, and generally getting into places you're not welcome. Strangely enough, Courtiers seem to like this skill; some of them quite like to sneak about and listen in on conversations that really aren't their business.

Specialties: At Night, In the Day, Skulking, Eavesdropping.

The Missing Skill?

Expertise

This is the skill you won't find on your character sheet — it's the catchall for any very specialized talent or knowledge. For example, the local wise-woman might only have a considerable knowledge of midwifery, but know only the barest rudiments of herbal lore (Medicine I). So instead of giving her Learning (she's illiterate, so that makes no sense!), instead she would have Expertise: Midwifery 3 (Genius), meaning she's very knowledgeable about that one topic. When selecting an Expertise Skill, you must always specify which Attribute it is allied with, so as to receive the innate talent bonus (+1 die if the skill is less than or equal the Attribute it's under).

Critical Successes should be worked out with your Sage.

Specialties: depends on the particular expertise.



Step Four: Secondary Attributes

Health

Characters in *Weapons of the Gods* live in a dangerous world, and often get hurt. Health measures a character's overall level of vitality and wellness. Every character has five Wound Levels, from Healthy/Battered to Last Legs (Dying). These are explained on pg. 71. Each Wound Level can absorb damage equal to your character's Health, so your Health times five is how many points of damage you can take before dying. Your character's starting Health is equal to your Chi ratings added together — 15 for most starting characters.

Joss

Joss Points are one of the things that define Wuxia Heroes as heroes. They represent the fortunate things and circumstances that surround key characters. Lucky breaks, cheating death, derring-do — these are all Joss Points in action. Functionally, each *xia* joss point represents a single additional die you can add to a skill roll. Each *corrupt* joss point represents one negative die — this is a die you can subtract from an opponent's skill roll when opposing them.

Joss Points are expended when they are used, and must be regained through play. Once you've used one, it's gone until you earn more. Because of the way they are recovered, make sure to keep track of how many you spend and how you spend them. Wuxia Heroes begin with three Joss Points (of either or both flavors).

River

The River represents your ability to come back after a series of failures — it tracks the ebb and flow of battle. You have one die in your River, plus one for each level of achieved rank — so a starting character's River usually holds two dice. The River is always empty at the start of a scene and at the end of a scene; you can't carry dice from one battle to the next, unless they're both in the same scene.

Step Five: Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages and Disadvantages are miscellaneous accomplishments and flaws that help you out in your life in Shen Zhou. Some provide bonuses or penalties to Tests in specific circumstances, while others simply provide story effects and flavor.

Advantages are helpful things that reflect either social position (like all that Wealth your father left you), or rare and prized knowledge (like your kung fu). Advantages are always helpful, though they may have slight drawbacks (Wealth, for example, is hard to keep hidden). They're good to have and usually sought over the course of the game. The actual Weapons of the Gods, for example, are huge advantages to have, and universally craved by anyone in the Wulin. You purchase Advantages with Destiny, and the list (including costs) begins on page 46. Beginning player characters in *Weapons of the Gods* start out at Fourth Rank, and have 50 Destiny to spend (if you would like to start a game with significantly weaker or stronger characters, whether from wanting to have a 'Kung-Fu School' campaign or playing veterans, see Appendix B, *Other Starting Points for a Campaign of Weapons of the Gods*).

Advantages — See listings; prices can vary, and Advantages can be any number of helpful things;

both Lores and Kung Fu Styles are Advantages, but see below.

Increase Attribute — 5 points per each point raised (Max 5 in any single Attribute for starting characters) — your Chi ratings are always equal to your Attributes. You may want to wait until after you choose your Kung Fu, however; some styles require greater amounts of chi to use than others.

Increase a Skill — 1 point per each die bought (Maximum level of 3 in any skill at game start).

Specialize in a Skill — You may buy two specialties at game start for 1 point, in different skills (in other words, each Specialty costs half a destiny point). Starting characters can only buy a specific specialty once; you'll have to wait until you've experienced a few adventures before you take a second level in the same one.

Lores can take many forms; for a complete list with definitions, see pg. 85. The best way to summarize Lores is that they're ways a player can tie their character directly into the setting in some fashion, whether with a piece of History, a good Fortune, or an opportunity to entangle your Destiny with a powerful Weapon of the Gods.

Kung Fu Styles are Lores, but handled separately, as they're so central to the game. You start with Lightfoot I (including the first technique!) for free. To buy additional styles, consult below. Note that you may not buy above Level 3; furthermore, only Warriors may buy Uncommon

神兵玄奇



Arts at the beginning of a campaign.

Each kung fu style has a buy-in cost, which is how much Destiny you must pay to have it be part of your character's background; for example, a Common Style has a buy-in of 5 Destiny. Once you have it as part of your background, you must also buy Techniques (the actual maneuvers), each of which costs successively more points; specifically, they cost their listed price, *per level for each technique*. In other words, you may not buy the first three techniques in, say, Holy Fire for only three points. Instead, it's 1+2+3 for those first three techniques, or six points total. For full detail on Martial Arts Styles, see pg. 229, *Kung Fu*.

Disadvantages are the ways in which your character is handicapped or inconvenienced by flaws, personal attributes or mishaps. Disadvantages, when they come into play (and make your life difficult), gain you an additional point of Destiny. While you can bid for them to come into play, your Sage will usually determine if they kick in or not... and they usually do so at the worst time possible!

When you're picking your Advantages and Disadvantages, be sure to use your common sense --

Don't choose Advantages and Disadvantages that cancel each other out. Certain Advantages and Disadvantages may be chosen multiple times, and are marked with an asterisk (*) — the description explains what this means. If you want to have a trait that would classify as Advantage or Disadvantage, but is not listed here, work with your Game Master to create a new one, using the examples here as guidelines. You may choose up to two Disadvantages in a starting campaign.

Advantages

Affiliation (I-5): Having this Advantage means you have spent the time and effort necessary (or just had the right family connections!) to become part of one of Shen Zhou's many social organizations. Regardless of size, all organizations in Shen Zhou require some investment; the chart below shows how much of your Destiny is tied to the organization (at least at the outset of your career). For more information on *The Social Organizations of Shen Zhou*, see pg. 55.

Point Cost

- 1 A Gang, or some organization only known by name.
- 2 A Faction, or a merely influential noble family.
- 3 A Secret Society, or a highly influential noble family.
- 4 A Clan, or one of the Sixteen States (besides the Jin Empire).
- 5 One of the Five Great Clans or the Jin Empire.

Animal Speech (3): No, you don't sound like an animal, you can just talk to them. While animals aren't stunning conversationalists, they will often know things... and they are sometimes willing to perform favors that fall within their limited comprehension. Simple communication is automatic; any attempt to get an animal to do something is governed by a Persuade roll with your Gold Chi Modifier added.

Archetype Gift* (10): You've branched out from your original focus, and learned new wide-ranging skills. Rather than focusing on a single Archetype, you've now acquired another. This means you now can divert your Chi Aura to boost another skill, and gained access to that Archetype's special benefits, whether it be Daoist magic or Secret Arts. This Advantage is only available starting at Third Rank, and you have to spend considerable Downtime in order to justify acquiring it. Chinese literature has any number of Warrior-Scholars, and the First Emperor himself was a Warrior-Courtier.

Blessed by the Gods (8): The gods take special effort to keep you alive. As long as you entertain them by facing bizarre peril after bizarre peril — something the player and GM can both help arrange — you can in turn escape those travails. When you're just trying to run away and escape the danger facing you, you don't suffer negative skill roll modifiers from wounds.

Common Sense (3): You have **Quality Common Sense**. You have a +5 modifier on Tactics rolls. In addition, any time the GM recommends or suggests a course of action, you can ask if it's common sense; if so, then you can pick up a +5 by following the recommendation or suggestion.

Diplomat (3): You have **Quality Negotiation Skills**. This gives you a +5 modifier on skill rolls for social climbing or bargaining, both with individuals and with large organizations.

Dreams (1): The Dao speaks to you in your dreams. You will have odd symbolic dreams once every few sessions, that will impart some important clue the GM wants you to have. It'll be your job to interpret it, of course.

Empathic (3): You have **Quality Empathy**. Your knack for reading and understanding the emotions of individuals gives you a +5 modifier in one-on-one and small group interactions.

Fast (4): You have **Quality Reaction Time**, giving a +5 bonus on Initiative and Athletics checks where raw speed counts.

Followers (I-5): You have a bunch of loyal retainers who follow you around and take your orders. In return, you have to look to their upkeep... in other words, have at least as much Wealth equal to the number of Minions you're supporting. Note that this chart goes much higher, but as a hero, you're unlikely to start your campaign with an entire army. (See pg. 345, *My Loyal Followers*, for more information on Minions, as well as the distinction

LEVEL OF MINION

Point Cost	Mob	Gang	Faction
1	5	2	1-
2	10	5	2
3	20	10	5
4	30	15	10
5	40	20	15

between the levels of Followers and what they mean).

Friends (1-5): You have allies who sometimes help you out. When you purchase this advantage, describe a few of your more important friends — the people you turn to for political or personal support. To decide whether your friends can help in a given situation, make a skill roll. Roll one die for each point spent on Friends, and apply the following modifiers:

Modifier	Situation
+5	Overzealous or superlative effort to win the friend's aid.
-5	You haven't made an effort lately to repay your friends for their time and trouble.
-5	You don't have an established local friend or ally with relevant expertise, and have to make up a new ally for the roll.
-10	You have a recent habit of outright refusing your friends in their own times of need.
Difficulty	Request
Trivial (10)	Get food, a place to stay, an introduction.
Simple (15)	Get help with something minor (a broken sword, a small debt).
Everyday (18)	Get help with a life problem (e.g., an arranged marriage, a mentor's scorn).
Moderate (20)	Get help opposing a significant enemy.
Hard (30)	Get help opposing a high-Power organization (Great Clan, Hell Clan)
Legendary (40)	Get useful help in opposing a demon or god.

On a success, you can look up a friend willing and able to help. They offer minor assistance — they can give you advice, cheap aid, a discount, a friendly hand, a

useful clue, or throw some non-definitive influence at the problem. On a critical success, your friend's assistance is significant and their help is a meaningful part of the story's evolution.

Good Looks (3 or 6): For 3 Destiny, you have **Quality Beauty**. You gain a +5 modifier on skill rolls where your appearance is an important factor — that is to say, most social rolls. For 6 Destiny, you can instead have **Perfect Beauty**. This increases the modifier to +10 for rolls where you specifically want to attract others' attention, interest, and admiration, and changes it to a -5 modifier on skill rolls to fade into the background or drive others away. Gender and sexual preference affects how others respond to your beauty — but Quality Beauty is more about being a shining, inspirational hero or diabolically inspiring villain than about being an object of others' attraction.

Healthy as an Ox (3): You have a **Quality Constitution**. You're good at fighting off illness and disease. You have a +5 modifier to resist the effects of sickness.



Information Broker (1-5): The Information Broker Advantage means that you've established relationships with people in various organizations who can occasionally provide you with information about their organization. Such organizations include your own, a major clan, the local royalty, secret society, or

神
兵
玄
奇

any other. When you purchase this advantage, work with your Game Master to develop a few key contacts, the positions they hold, and the relationship you have with them. Your contacts aren't really your friends, and they do not actively help you — they provide inside information, usually asking for information in return. Your GM decides exactly how much information your contacts can and will provide. In addition to the Information Broker Advantage, you can purchase a **Quality Contact** — single individuals in specific organizations who have especially useful information — for 3 Destiny each.

To decide whether your contact has the information you want, make a skill roll. Roll one die for each point spent on the Contact, and apply the following modifiers:

Modifier	Situation
+5	Quality Contact (costs +3 Destiny)
-5	You haven't made an effort lately to repay your contacts for their time and trouble.
-5	You don't have an established contact in the organization with relevant expertise, and have to make up a new contact for the roll.
-10	As above, but the organization is small.
Difficulty	Request
Trivial (10)	Access to trivial information and internal rumors.
Simple (15)	Access to practical information.
Everyday (18)	Access to detailed information.
Moderate (20)	Access to sensitive information.
Hard (30)	Access to very sensitive information.
Legendary (40)	Access to crucial secrets.

Inventive (3): You have **Quality Cunning** — you're as clever as a fox! You get a +5 modifier on non-combat skill rolls where cleverness and cunning play a role.

Iron Fists* (3): You have **Quality Fists** (or feet, or teeth). One of your natural attacks is a Quality weapon, with the accordant benefits. You can take this Advantage separately for fists, feet, and teeth, choosing different Quality weapon benefits each time. This Advantage also allows you to block with your Iron

Fists without automatically suffering the two Health points and Maiming result that usually comes from blocking unarmed. The GM must approve benefits other than increased Speed, Strike, or Damage.

Lucky* (3): Heaven smiles on you and bestows good fortune. You receive a free point of Xia Joss at the beginning of each chapter. You may purchase the Luck Advantage up to three times.

Mentor (1-5): You're fortunate in that someone finds you interesting (or useful) enough to cultivate. While this could be a martial arts teacher, it could also represent a devious parent, an employer, or simply a person to whom you've become useful.

To decide whether your mentor can lend meaningful assistance in a given situation, make a skill roll. Roll one die for each point spent on Mentor, and apply the following modifiers:

Success means your mentor can help — often by training you and providing you with the skills you need to

Modifier	Situation
+5	The mentor thinks you're overmatched.
+5	Overzealous or superlative effort to flatter your mentor.
-5	You haven't made an effort lately to repay your mentor for their time and trouble.
-5	Your mentor lacks the relevant expertise.
-10	You've a recent habit of shaming your mentor with defiance and troublemaking.
Difficulty	Request
Trivial (10)	Get food, a place to stay, an introduction.
Simple (15)	Get help with something minor (a broken sword, a small debt).
Everyday (18)	Get help with a life problem (e.g., an arranged marriage, a friend's scorn).
Moderate (20)	Get help opposing a significant enemy.
Hard (30)	Get help opposing a high-Power organization (Great Clan, Hell Clan)
Legendary (40)	Get useful help in opposing a demon or god.



triumph. On a critical success, if desirable, your mentor actually gets involved.

The Mentor Advantage functions essentially like the Friends advantage, but there are two key differences: first, a mentor is a single person, with limited abilities. Second, mentors have a teacher-student relationship with you, which makes it reasonable to ask them to teach you secret techniques.

Possession (Varies): You have an important and useful item, such as armor or a fine warhorse. It's an important part of your character, and, for this reason alone, your GM will not arbitrarily destroy it or take it away. If you lose it, the GM will replace the item or return the Destiny investment sometime within the next story. In short, a Possession has

limited plot immunity and will not easily disappear from the storyline, given that it's a part of your character's story.

To find the cost for a Possession, check out the price list for various

items. It starts out on page 350. Find the type of item you want (or something you and your GM can agree is roughly of equal value). Look at the lowest Wealth level it can cost; that's the cost of the Possession advantage. Add 3 Destiny to the cost of an item to make it a Quality item; add 6 Destiny, with GM permission, to make it a Perfect item.

Robust (8): You recover from wounds more quickly than most. You can recover two Health points for each point of Jade Chi you spend, and doctors have a +5 modifier when treating your wounds.

Secret Arts (Special): Knowledge of the generalities of the Secret Arts is available for free to Scholars at Fifth Rank, Courtiers at Fourth Rank, and Warriors at Third. However, you need the Advantage Archetype Gift in order to gain full access to the Secret Arts of Intrigue as Courtiers can, or the Daoist Magics available to Scholars.

Special Mount (1): You are trained to Ride an unusual mount, such as a giant bat. Without this training, you suffer a -10 modifier when riding such creatures.

Status (1-6): You have status in an organization. If your status is public, then people can make a Politics roll to recognize you and know something about you. If your status is private (such as membership in a secret society or department of a government, then the relevant task difficulty is two degrees higher.

This Advantage doesn't actually grant you the perquisites of such a position – you have to purchase Wealth, Followers, Allies, et cetera and like that to enjoy all the benefits of such a status. Otherwise, you're just yet another dispossessed noble wandering about moaning about what you've lost and how someday

Cost	Difficulty to Recognize You	Examples
1	Impossible (60)	Village Warden, local craftsman, Ordinary Clan Member.
2	Legendary (40)	Town Warden, accomplished craftsman, Trusted Clan Member.
3	Hard (30)	Lesser Clan Leader's Chosen Successor, District Judge, Head of a large merchant clan, Minor Nobles, one of the 'bottom five' of the Ten Great Young Heroes, Esteemed Clan Members.
4	Moderate (20)	Provincial Magistrates, Influential Nobles, one of the 'top five' of the Ten Great Young Heroes, Leader of a Lesser Clan, Master Artificer, Chief of Clan Members.
5	Everyday (18)	Leader of one of the Sixteen States, Master Martial Arts Warriors (First Rank), Clan Leader's Chosen Successor/Right or Left Hand,
6	Simple (15)	One of the Five Great Clan Leaders, The Jin Emperor

you'll have your revenge.

Superior Specialty (3): You have a *Quality Specialty*. You gain a +5 modifier on skill rolls involving one particular specialty.

Tough as Nails (3 or 6): You have *Quality Toughness*. You gain a +5 modifier on skill rolls to resist pain and any rolls where wounds impose a negative modifier. For 6 Destiny, you can have *Perfect Toughness*. This gives a +10 modifier on skill rolls whenever wounds impose a -10 modifier or worse.

Warning of Evil (5): This is the "Ah! An evil feeling!" advantage: it alerts you to something bad going down (as determined by your Sage). Note that this is not a 'danger sense', at least not for *you*. Instead, it warns you that something is happening to someone you care about, whether near or far. Whether you can get there in time or save your friends or family is up to you and your *joss*.



Wealth (1-5): Individuals in Shen Zhou have an abstract rating to reflect how much they command in terms of assets and spendable cash; they can only have a Wealth level of up to 5 (for more on why, see *Wealth and Possessions* on pg. 348). Note that Wealth may *not* be used during character creation to make purchases; while you will receive certain items (according to your Archetype) for free, anything else must be purchased as a Possession (see above).

0 – Poor: You have enough to get by and that's about it. In game terms this means your character doesn't own much beyond her Starting Gear. You wear ragged hemp clothing and straw shoes, if you have shoes at all. You may not have a permanent residence, or a landlord owns the hovel you call home. Poor professions may include: Beggar, Buddhist Sage, Daoist, Disgraced Wife, Dispossessed Noble, Monk or Nun, and Student.

1 – Adequate: Your character has some savings that he replenishes through occasional odd jobs. You don't starve, but your meals are of the millet and vegetable variety (or lack thereof). You can buy hemp clothing on a regular basis, before they become raggedy. You may live in a one-room structure, hut in a village, or apartment in the city. Adequate professions may include: Farmer, Righteous Rebel, Soldier, Dispossessed Noble, Merchant, Tax Collector, Poet, and Village Predictionist.

2 – Comfortable: Your character has some income, either from a decent paying occupation or support from a family, clan, or patron. You can afford some cotton clothes, some decent shoes, and a meal with beef and rice. You may own that little village hovel or rent a nice apartment in the city. Comfortable professions may include Convoy Escort, Farmer, Former Bandit, Gangster Gone Straight, Righteous Rebel, Soldier, Censor, Tax Collector, and Craftsman.

3 – Well-Off: You've got some cash, some property and are doing all right for yourself. You can afford cotton clothing, as well as meals with rice, pork, and seafood. Your home houses three generations of your family and a servant or two. It's quite possible you have a farm in the country, which supports your home in the city. Well-Off professions may include: Convoy Escort, Dispossessed Noble*, Former Bandit*, Gangster Gone Straight*, Circuit Judge, Constable, Lady of the Court, Merchant, and Tax Collector.

**Assuming you've kept some of the wealth from your previous profession.*

4 – Affluent: You've got gobs of cash and silver. You've got a few houses filled with plush furnishings and a decent staff on hand. You eat fine meals with rice wine. You even, on

occasion, dress in silk. Affluent possessions may include: Proud Prince, Lady of the Court, Imperial Courtier, Imperial Eunuch, Merchant, Minister, Noble House Member, Imperial Advisor.

5 – Wealthy: You are truly financially independent, your wealth most likely the result of being some kind of landed noble. That is, others use the resources of your land to make you money, either through farming, mining, or housing. You may, instead, be a very successful merchant. You own a posh manor, fully staffed and filled with fine furnishings and artifacts. No one in your family wants for anything as they are always dressed in the finest silks, and feasting on the finest foods. Wealthy professions may include: Proud Prince, Lady of the Court, Imperial Courtier, Imperial Eunuch, Merchant, Minister, Noble House Member, Imperial Advisor.

Weapon Training (I): You are trained in the use of an unusual weapon, such as the rope dart, which requires special techniques to use.

Disadvantages

Black-hearted: This Disadvantage does not mean your character is evil; instead it refers to an arrogant and anger-filled soul, driven to dominate and overcome others. When you have this Disadvantage (and it is recommended that *at most* one PC takes it!), you are reckless and liable to pursue your egotism without thinking about the consequences. Every time you must be restrained by your fellow players from plunging into some pointless duel or something overtly egotistical, ill-advised or rage-driven, your player gains an additional Destiny point. If you try to invoke this Disadvantage too often, your friends are less likely to restrain you, with predictable results.

Chronically Unlucky: Once per session, the GM can amend your roll — *after* you roll and count your best set — to a 10. You cannot appeal or re-roll, even with Advantages or techniques that might permit such. Each time your Sage does so, you gain an additional Destiny point (even if you have to heal for a long time afterwards).

Cowardly: Your character hates risks and conflict of any kind. Unless you've got numbers on your side or you're forced up against the wall, you'll seek out diplomatic or downright craven solutions to the question of violence. You suffer an automatic -5 modifier when someone Inspires Fear. Every time you rabbit or avoid combat and let others handle the fighting for you, you gain an additional Destiny point.

Egotistical: Your character is smug, arrogant, and annoyingly superior. People dislike you, and on skill rolls where that matters — principally Grace and Persuade rolls — this imposes a -5 modifier. When your tendency to alienate people genuinely gets in your way, you gain an additional Destiny.



Family Curse: At some point in the past, either you or your family angered the gods or a powerful sorcerer. There's something wrong with you — you have a nasty Chi Condition (page 276). When it makes your life horrible, you get an additional Destiny point.

Hated Foe: Someone hates your character, for real or imagined reasons. You probably hate them back. This enemy wishes nothing more than to ruin you, gloat over your misery, and possibly even kill you. Maybe you know who it is, maybe you don't. Whenever this enemy acts against you and their acts inconvenience or harm you, you get an additional Destiny point. Depending upon the power of the Foe, their plans may be elaborate. You should work together with your Game Master to determine the specifics of your character's Foe and why this situation exists.

Hunted: Whereas the Hated Foe Disadvantage describes your character's personal enemies, the Hunted Disadvantage means that you're being pursued by an organization with some resources at its disposal. Perhaps you're a criminal, or a traitor to your clan, or maybe you just angered the wrong secret society. If you're caught by the organization that hunts you, you may face prosecution, incarceration, torture or even death. The likelihood for the Hunted Disadvantage to come into play against you is dependent upon the power and resources of the organization that's hunting you — pick (or let your GM pick!) the kind of enemy you want from the chart below.

Enemy's Reach Meaning

- 1 The organization is small and has a limited reach. For example, you've angered a small bandit gang. You'll only see them maybe once every three chapters, and the threat will not be great.
- 2 The organization is medium-sized, and has a decent array of resources at its disposal. For example, you've angered a large and widespread bandit gang or a Secret Society. You'll see them every couple of chapters, but the threat will be enough to derail or retard your current plans.
- 3 The organization is powerful and has a lot of resources. One of the Factions or a small Clan is after you. You'll be harassed at least every other chapter.
- 4 The organization is powerful and has a long reach. You've angered one of the Sixteen States, or a large organization such as the Flame Cult. You will see some sign or be harassed at least every chapter, though the threat may not be enough to warrant a Destiny award.
- 5 The organization is extremely powerful and has influence over all of Shen Zhou — such as one of the Five Great Clans or the Jin Empire. Expect to be hounded and possibly have a significantly shorter lifespan; you'll see some sort of significant presence of your enemy every chapter, and assassins will definitely be hunting you and making regular attempts on your life. (It's good to consult with your fellow players before taking this level of Hunted!)

Each time you meet significant peril or endanger your associates because of this Disadvantage, you gain a Destiny point. It's interesting to note that wandering bands of heroes will often acquire this Disadvantage (sometimes multiple times) at some point in their careers!

Lazy: Your character wants to do as little as possible and puts as little effort as possible into everything. Every time this Disadvantage is so well played that you hamper your own aims through sheer laziness, you gain an additional Destiny point.

Missing Body Part: You're missing some significant part of what you were born with. Consult with your GM; it should be obvious from whatever you're missing what the penalties might be.

Obviously, if you're missing your Eyes, you're Blind on a permanent basis; work it out with your Sage. You gain the Destiny award when your handicap works against you in some big way (no getting Destiny for finding it hard to close your fly with one hand after going to the outhouse). For example, if you're missing an arm, you'll never use a weapon that requires two hands.

Narcolepsy: Whenever you get stressed, this Disadvantage will kick in some time soon after. You're fine in the middle of combat and other stressful situations, but the moment things slow down, you fall asleep. Not napping, but deep heavy sleep, wherein you won't wake for hours. You can easily see how this might be dangerous to your continued health. Every time you fall asleep after a battle and your friends have to fight for you while you're sleeping, you gain a Destiny point.

Onerous Obligation: You have some responsibility that you simply must fulfill, no matter what. Whenever fulfilling this obligation interferes with your own plans (as determined by your GM), you gain one Destiny. (This flaw is ideal if you'll miss sessions of a game occasionally, as the GM can simply invoke this flaw when you fail to show up for a game. Your character is 'off working', and is also an ideal way to introduce new plot threads.)

Overwhelming Passion: Members of the Wulin, the Martial Arts World, are generally passionate people — but you're more so than most! The Passion you chose at character creation is not of Trivial strength but is instead a Major Condition — the emotion you've chosen rules a part of your thoughts always! Great Oak of the Xi Clan has a Gold Passion of Obsession over his love for Princess Snow of the Bei Clan — he can't stop thinking about her! Every time he makes a stupid decision based on his obsession, he earns an Extra Destiny, even though he's doing the wrong thing! Such passions are also easily noted (or even used!) by Courtiers and Scholars — and every time your passion interferes with your self-interest, you gain a Destiny point.

Painfully Honest: Painfully honest people just can't lie — they

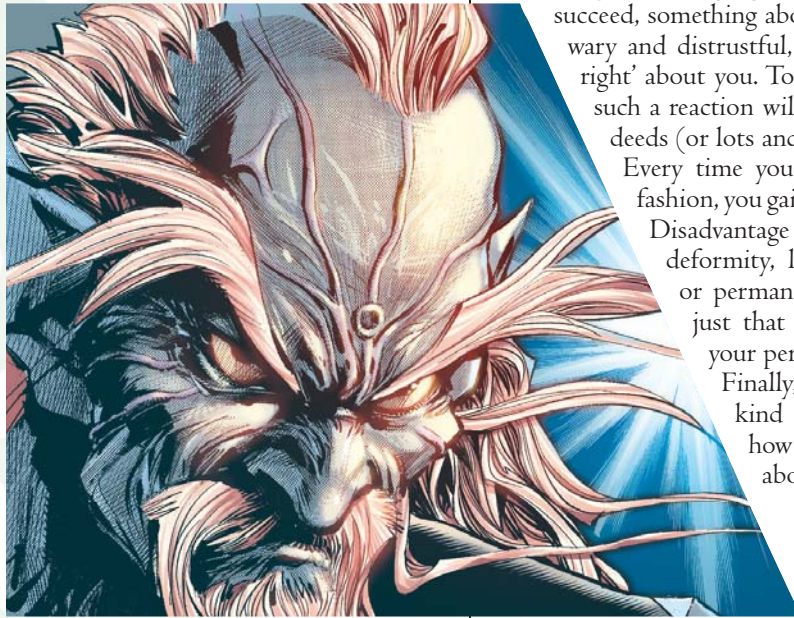
are either horrible at it (flushing, trembling) or have no interest in attempting to lie. Regardless, Painfully Honest people receive a -5 modifier when they attempt to lie – only the most superficial observers can't spot it. Every time you fail a lie attempt and it sets you back in some serious fashion, you gain an additional Destiny point.

Rival: You have a rival, of approximately equal ability, who shares a similar goal, be it a certain role in an organization, a romantic interest, or the like. The rival will do their best to win, making your life as miserable as possible in the interim. Whenever possible, the rival will try to overshadow you through charm, intellect or physical prowess. Note that while your rival will go to many extremes, rivals do not wish you real harm as foes do; they only wish to win (and make you look bad). You should work with your Game Master to determine the specifics of this rivalry. Every time your Rival inconveniences you, reaches the prize first or makes you look like a fool, you earn an additional Destiny.

Temperamental: You have a bad temper. Whenever you get frustrated or someone upsets you, you must succeed at a Moderate (20) Awareness task to keep your cool. (Awareness is the defining skill for Wu Wei, the Attribute of inaction and harmony.) If you fail the roll, you fly into a rage, shouting, hitting things, or possibly issuing a violent attack. You usually break a lot of things and have trouble keeping non-codependent lovers. Every time this occurs and ruins things for you in some way, gain an additional Destiny. Sages might want to limit this to once per gaming session.

Thick as a Brick: Your character is stupid. Skill rolls treat your Genius as 0. Worse, it's obvious that you're not pulling with a full team of oxen, or that you're as dumb as one. Every time your obvious density interferes in your interactions with others in a major way or gets you in serious trouble, you gain an additional Destiny point.

Unwholesome: The first time you meet someone, they attempt an Everyday (18) Awareness task. If they succeed, something about you just makes them feel wary and distrustful, that something's 'not quite right' about you. To gain somebody's trust after such a reaction will take time, effort and good deeds (or lots and lots of bribes and flattery). Every time you put somebody off in this fashion, you gain an additional Destiny. This Disadvantage could be the result of some deformity, like a huge pink birthmark or permanent scarring; or it could be just that you have a nasty streak in your personality that people can see. Finally, it can also just reflect some kind of rampant prejudice, like how the Five Great Clans feel about the Yellow River Rebels.



Create your Character Story

First choose what your character was before he stepped into the Martial Arts World, and where he came from (his Origin). Then write out a short story, underlining things that sound like they define your character, whether in attributes, skills, lores or kung fu.

Choose your Archetype

Your Archetype describes the challenge that drives your character to make his mark on the Land of the Gods.

See the relevant Guidesheet for more information.

Warrior

Challenge: Struggle. Archetype Skill: Dodge.

Focus: Might and Speed Skills.

Courtier

Challenge: Influence. Archetype Skill: Confidence.

Focus: Genius and Presence Skills.

Scholar

Challenge: Knowledge. Archetype Skill: Awareness.

Focus: Genius and Wu Wei Skills.

Choose your Skills

Spend 30 points, guided by your Archetype and considering your character's Origin. No rating can exceed 3.

You can spend Skill points to buy Specializations 1 Skill point per 2 Specializations, but cannot 'stack' them – they must be on different skills.

Attributes

Divide 15 points between your five Attributes (Might, Speed, Presence, Wu-Wei and Genius). You may not go above 5 in any Attribute in a beginning campaign, and must devote at least 1 point to each. Note that your Chi scores will equal your Attributes at the beginning of the campaign.

Advantages

You have 50 Destiny points to spend. Distribute points based on events in your story. Or, just look over Advantages and Kung Fu Paths and choose according to your whim.

Advantages and Lores – Prices vary; see listings.

Disadvantages – May choose up to two.

Increase Attribute/Chi – 5 points per each point raised (Max 5). You may want to wait until after you choose your Kung Fu.

Increase a Skill – 1 point per each die bought (Max Lvl. 3).

Kung Fu

You start with Lightfoot I (including the first technique!) for free. To buy additional styles, consult below; note that you may not buy above Level 3; furthermore, only Warriors may buy Uncommon Arts.

Each kung fu style has a buy-in cost, which is how much Destiny you must pay to have it be part of your character's background. Once you have it as part of your background, you must also buy Techniques (the actual maneuvers), each of which costs successively more points; in other words, they cost their listed price, per level for each technique. For example, you may not buy the first three techniques in, say, Holy Fire for only three points. Instead, it's 1+2+3 for those first three techniques, or six points total.

Secondary Characteristics

- Your Chi Scores start off equal to your Attributes.
- Your Chi Aura is 1 die for each level of Rank achieved; for example, 4th Rank Fighters start with two.
- Your total Health is equal to all of your Chi scores added together, times five.
- Your River starts at two for a beginning character.

Skill List**Might Skills**

Athletics
Climb
Fight
Hardiness
Lift

Speed Skills

Initiative
Dodge
Finesse
Melee
Ride

Presence Skills

Confidence
Grace
Inspire
Perform
Persuade

Genius Skills

Learning
Crafting
Medicine
Politics
Tactics

Wu Wei Skills

Awareness
Investigation
Ranged
Senses
Stealth

Italics indicate the Defining Skill for that Attribute; it's what you use

when you're not sure what skill applies. Note that you cannot gain any Critical Successes with a Defining Skill used in this way.

Kung Fu Styles Common

Blizzard Fist
Cloud Mastery
Dragon Saber
Drunken Monkey
Eagle Claw
God of Wind Kick
Golden Temple Bells
Heart-Breaking Blade
Heaven's Thunder
Holy Fire
Lightfoot
Lunar Darkness
Mental Summons
Music of War
Perfect Aim
Swift-Striking Sash
Thousand Scythe Kick
Thunder Hammer
Universal Blow
Walks in Shadow
Waves like Water
Wisdom of the Seven Gates

Uncommon

Bloody Claws (Mao-Shan)
First of Iron (Bei)
Five Sacred Elements (Dali)
Heart Sword (Nan)
Hell's Disasters (Hell)
Inexorable Doom (Dong)
Subtle Hand (Zan Monks)
Three Kings (Falling Wren)
Unfolding Glory
(Jade Dragon Society)
Wind Sweeps Clouds (Xi)
Wisdom Breath
(Wen Ling)
Yellow River
(Yellow River Society)

Rare

Disrespectful Sages
(Fire Mantis)
Limitless Freedom (Bei)
One Man Legion (Dong)
Pangu Binding Edge
(Axe Immortals)
Purple Shield (Mao-Shan)
Three Powers
(Three Powers Sage)

Possible Professions / Backgrounds

Bandit, Black Marketeer, Censor, Caravan Escort, Clan Member, Clan Princess (or Prince), Constable, Craftsperson, Clerk of the Magistrate, Court Secretary, Dispossessed, Mercenary, Merchant, Middleman, Monk (or Nun), Peasant, Servant, Soldier, Storyteller, Tax Collector, Thug, Wandering Player (Actor, Puppeteer)





Clans & Organizations

Great Clans (Influence groups of States)

Bei	Xia	North
Dong	Xia	East
Hell	Corrupt	Center
Nan	Xia	South
Xi	Xia	West

Factions (Widespread, Organized, Political)

Membership of more than 30.

Five-Spirit Sect	Xia	North
Flame Cult	Corrupt	Mobile
Hundred-Poison Faction	Corrupt	South
Sublime Doctrine Sect	Xia	West
Yellow River Faction	Xia	East
Zan Brotherhood	Xia	South

Secret Societies (Small, Organized and Political)

Membership of 30 or less.

Axe Immortals	Xia	Anywhere
Blue Jade Ink	Xia	Jin
Demon Scholar	Corrupt	Chenghan
Dirty Water	Corrupt	Anywhere
Falling Wren	Xia	S. Liang
Fire Mantis	Xia	Zhao
Horse-Hair Cult	Corrupt	Hanzhao
Jade Dragon Society	Xia	E. Liang
Metal Liquid Delegates	Xia	Anywhere
Thunder Cult	Corrupt	S. Qin

Minor Clans (Influence within a Single State)

Black Jade	Corrupt	Yang
Dali	Xia	N. Liang
Gaibang	Xia	W. Qin
Green Mountain	Xia	E. Liang
Heaven Sword	Xia	Yang
Kong Tong	Xia	W. Yang
Mao-Shan	Corrupt (?)	Jin Empire
Omei	Xia	S. Yang
Qi	Xia	S. Liang
Qichao	Xia	N. Yang
Qing Cheng	Corrupt	Chenghan
Tang	Corrupt	E. Qin

Gangs (Large, Decentralized and Apolitical)

Cell Structure, 60 or more members.

Red Sparrows	Corrupt	South
Green Dragons	Corrupt	East
Obsidian Warriors	Corrupt	North
White Tigers	Xia	West

Archetype Gifts

Your Archetype expresses your singular focus when you first begin your Martial Arts career, when you step from your ordinary life into the Wulin. Later in your career (ask your GM as to when), you can learn to focus your will to allow you to attain the other Archetypes, starting at Second Rank.

Warriors may Focus their Chi Aura into their Dodge Skill.

Courtiers may Focus their Chi Aura into their Confidence Skill.

Scholars may Focus their Chi Aura into their Awareness Skill.

Advantages

Affiliation (1-5)	Inventive (3)
Animal Speech (3)	Iron Fists*(3)
Archetype Gift (10)	Lucky (Var.)
Blessed by the Gods (8)	Mentor (1-5)
Common Sense (3)	Possession (Var.)
Diplomat (3)	Robust (8)
Dreams (1)	Secret Arts* (Var.)
Empathic (3)	Special Mount (1)
Fast (4)	Status (Var.)
Followers (1-5)	Superior Specialty (3)
Friends (1-5)	Tough as Nails (4)
Good Looks (1-3)	Warning of Evil (3)
Healthy as an Ox (3)	Wealth (Var.)
Information Broker (1-5)	Weapon Training (1)

Disadvantages

*Black-hearted	Narcolepsy
Chronically Unlucky	*Onerous Obligation
Cowardly	Overwhelming Passion
Egotistical	Painfully Honest
Family Curse	*Rival
*Hated Foe	Temperamental
*Hunted	Thick as a Brick
Lazy	Unwholesome
Missing Body Part	

Places to Come From

The Sixteen States

Bei Clan Territories

Eastern Qin
Western Qin
Xia
Northern Yang
Zhao

Nan Clan Territory
The Jin Empire

Xi Clan Territories

Chenghan
Western Liang
Southern Qin
Southern Yang
Western Yang

Dong Clan Territories

Eastern Liang
Northern Liang
Southern Liang
Yang

Hell Clan Territory

Hanzhao

Destinies

Wu Mengda	<i>Vision of the Lake</i>
Divine Kung-Fu	<i>Vision of the Gathering</i>
Ten Greatest Sinners	<i>Vision of the Lake</i>
Wulin Cooking	<i>Vision of the Northern Fire</i>
Battle-Poetry of the Celestial Goddess	
Huangti	
Yu Shun	<i>Vision of the Tree</i>
Guan-Long Feng	<i>Vision of the Gate</i>
Xia Yi	<i>Vision of the Wind Maiden</i>
Xia Yu Di	
Bi Gan	<i>Vision of the Mirror of Light</i>
Shang Wu Yi	<i>Deng Li's Vision</i>
Ta Ji	<i>Vision of the Kettle</i>
Duke of Zhou	
The Cultured King	<i>Vision of the Monster</i>
The Martial King	<i>Vision of Heaven and Earth</i>
Meng Li	<i>Vision of Treasure</i>
Secret Arts of Intrigue	
Ying Zheng	Fang-Head Wu
Banchao	Hui Xi
Chang Chi'en	Wild Swan
Chao Tuo	

Clans, Secret Societies, and Empires: The Social Organizations of Shen Zhou

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 0

Wandering bands of heroes. Secret Societies. Factions. Gangs. Clans. States. Empires. Whatever you call them, they're all organizations... groups of people formed to pursue a common end (or ends). Remember the 'Affiliation' Advantage on pg. 46? It simply means that you belong to one of these social organizations.

The little list above is actually the kinds of social organizations you find in Shen Zhou, only ranged by size. Your character can belong to any of them, but some organizations only permit one affiliation at a time... unless you're a two-timing devious weasel, of course! Generally, a starting character can only start with one formal affiliation; speak to your Sage if you want to ask for an exception.

Wandering Bands don't usually have an agenda beyond seeking fame and maybe doing good... and don't usually exceed five to six people. This is where most young heroes start out – in groups of other starting warriors, banded together for mutual support. Sure, you don't have any fancy houses as headquarters (unless you're lucky!), but you do have your friends to back you up. *Examples: Northside Four Ghosts.*

Secret Societies are always of small to moderate size, organized and have a political agenda, whether of a secular or religious nature. The funny thing is, a lot of the time these aren't so secret – often their names are open knowledge. Of course, knowing their name is not the same as finding them! *Examples: the Axe Immortals, Blue Jade Ink Society, Sublime Doctrine Sect, Jade Dragon Society.*

Factions are widespread organizations of over forty people, generally organized towards a specific political agenda. Factions usually operate in a cell system, but can work in large groups as well. Factions are more active and volatile, and are generally more radical than Minor Clans, which they otherwise might resemble. *Examples: the Flame Cult, Yellow River Society, Zan Brotherhood.*

Gangs are widespread organizations of over forty people, but are generally apolitical – they only care about what they can take from people, and usually have no politics beyond simple greed. Sometimes they'll work as mercenaries, but they're not very good ones. Gangs never have their own prized styles of kung fu, though their leaders usually know some martial arts. *Examples: the Tiger Gang.*

Clans are like their larger namesakes, only they are limited in influence within a single State. Their numbers can vary widely, and are marked by a familial style of

organization, which makes for greater solidarity and better organization in the field. Generally speaking, minor clans don't dominate large areas, but often have their own prized kung fu, much like Secret Societies and Factions. *Examples: Mao-Shan, Qichao, Qing-Cheng, Heaven Sword.*

Major Clans influence entire groups of States across Shen Zhou. They have considerable resources and large numbers of followers, and always have at least one major pursuit that characterizes them, ie. the Bei Clan's weapon manufacture, the Dong's interest in trade, the Nan's excellence in security escorting and so on. They operate by requiring a tithe from their clients, but offer defense from outside invasion in return, along with kung fu training. The Clans do engage in politics, but not nearly to the same extent the Sixteen States do. *Examples: Bei, Dong, Hell, Nan, Xi.*

States are the largest social organizations found in Shen Zhou. Each covers a vast amount of land and is a single political entity with a unified hierarchical system, generally based upon the old Qin Empire standards. Magistrates and constables and ministers manage areas, but receive commands from a capital. States are organized and centralized in a way that Clans are not. Whereas Clans are scattered and only organized in a limited fashion, States characteristically set their stamp over entire populations; Clans influence, but States rule.

There is usually only one **Empire**, which is supposed to have the descent line that has the *Mandate of Heaven*. The Jin Empire—the current empire in the game setting—is ruled by the nefarious and terrifying Shi Hu (otherwise known as “The Tiger”). It pales next to the greatness that was Qin – but it remains powerful nonetheless. Its shadow leans over the rest of the Fifteen States, but its Emperor seems more interested in debauchery than expansion. However, this is not expected to last forever...

Here's a list of the current Social Organizations of Shen Zhou. It's hardly exhaustive. While the Five Great Clans are fully described, only a few of each of the smaller categories are detailed (they're underlined); the rest may be detailed by your Sage as she wills, though the upcoming *Weapons of the Gods Companion* from Eos Press will provide a wealth of Clans and other organizations for the game.

Note: Orientation is the organization's general stance in reference to the xia virtues; see Xia Virtues (see pg. 81), while Corrupt organizations follow the Corrupt Virtues (see pg. 83).

神兵玄奇

The Five Great Clans (Influence groups of States)

Name	Orientation	Headquartered In
<u>Bei</u>	Xia	North
<u>Dong</u>	Xia	East
<u>Hell</u>	Corrupt	Center
<u>Nan</u>	Xia	South
<u>Xi</u>	Xia	West

Factions

(Widespread, Organized, Political)

Name	Orientation	Headquartered In
Five-Spirit Sect	Xia	North
<u>Flame Cult</u>	Corrupt	Mobile
Hundred-Poison Faction	Corrupt	South
Li Tradition (<i>Daoist Sect</i>)	Xia	Center
Sublime Doctrine Sect	Xia	West

<u>Yellow River Society</u>	Xia	East
Zan Brotherhood	Xia	South

Clans

(Influence within a Single State)

Name	Orientation	Headquartered In
Black Jade	Corrupt	Yang
<u>Dali</u> (<i>Daoist Sect</i>)	Xia	N. Liang
<u>Eight-Way Union</u>	Xia	Yang
Emei (<i>Daoist Sect</i>) ^F	Xia	Chenghan
Gaibang	Xia	W. Qin
Green Mountain	Xia	E. Liang
Kong Tong	Xia	W. Yang
<u>Mao-Shan</u> ^F	Corrupt (?)	Jin
Qi	Xia	S. Liang
Qichao	Xia	N. Yang
Qing Cheng	Corrupt	Chenghan
Tang	Corrupt	E. Qin

Secret Societies

(Small, Organized and Political)

Name	Orientation	Headquarters
Axe Immortals	Xia	Anywhere
Blue Jade Ink	Xia	Jin
Demon Scholars (<i>Daoist Sect</i>)	Corrupt	Chenghan
Dirty Water Cult	Corrupt	Anywhere
<u>Falling Wren</u>	Xia	Yang
<u>Fire Mantis</u> (<i>Daoist Sect</i>)	Xia	S. Liang
Horse-Hair Cult	Corrupt	Hanzhao
<u>Jade Dragon</u> <u>Society</u> ^F	Xia	E. Liang
Lingering Radiance Cult (<i>Daoist Sect</i>)	Corrupt	N. Liang
Metal Liquid Delegates	Xia (?)	Anywhere
Thunder Cult	Corrupt	S. Qin

Gangs

(Large, Decentralized and Apolitical)

Name	Orientation	Headquartered In
Red Sparrow	Corrupt	South
Green Dragon	Corrupt	East
Obsidian Warrior	Corrupt	North
White Tiger	Xia	West

^F = an organization with primarily female leadership or membership.

Measuring Organizations

Social groups are ranked against one another in three main ways and one major one –

Solidarity, Membership and Resources; and the final



distinction, **Power**. The first three are measured on a basic 1-15 scale, though Membership can go up as far as 25 for truly impressive and powerful groups.

Solidarity is a measurement of two factors – both the commitment of the individual members, and the strength/internal consistency of the ideology that the organization follows. The greater the Solidarity, the more organized and ‘together’ the organization is, and the more effective the group is likely to be. A rating of 1-5 means the group can marshal followers (when faced in numbers) equal in strength to a Mob (see ‘Followers’ on page 345 for more details), 6-10 means that the followers that can operate as a Gang when faced in numbers, and 11-15 are the most motivated members of all, equal in fighting strength to a Faction.

Membership is a measurement of the sheer numbers of people that belong to the group, and are available to it; generally speaking, this does not mean population so much as forces available to fight for the organization. A Membership of 1-5 is a small organization (tens of members); 6-10 a sizable one (up to a hundred); and 11-15 a large group (hundreds). Membership can go up to 25 (in the thousands), but the organization in question must have at least a 10 in either its Solidarity or Resources to have such a rating. Such large numbers of Followers are extremely difficult to maintain control of, without a motivating ideology or wealth to pay them!

Resources are essential to social organizations. One can have thousands of Followers with great solidarity, but such power will not hold together if you cannot feed or organize them. In other words, you need money. Economic power is always useful as a measurement of temporal power; if you don’t have material wealth, then you are unlikely to maintain hold on your political capital. Indeed, money is one common goal to those who want power, as it is a very real source of influence all on its own, though it is often more useful when combined with other kinds of leverage. A Rating of 1-5 is the Wealth of Individuals; 6-10 is the Wealth of Clans, and 11-15 is the Wealth of Empires. Each step represents a greater amount of time and infrastructure that must exist in order to maintain said wealth. Note there are Clans with greater wealth than ten, and it’s certainly possible for States to have only the wealth of Clans.

An organization always has a goal (or goals!) to pursue, even if that goal is merely to continue on as it has always done. But to even attempt any agenda (beyond mere survival), an organization needs **Power**. Firstly, it indicates how fiercely it will pursue its goals, called its **Agenda**, which is composed of both a passive and active goal. Its passive goal is its basic survival and its means; its active goal is how it wishes to further its Head’s aims across the face of Shen Zhou.

Secondly, its Power rating tells you how hard it is to redirect the organization from its Agenda as well as just how hard it is to damage it. The lower an organization’s power, the more likely it will be to simply focus on survival; the higher its power, the more likely it will pursue its

Agenda aggressively, actively seeking to wreak whatever changes its leadership see as paramount to their aims. Note that an organization’s Power will fluctuate across its lifespan; if anything should reduce its Power to zero, then the organization will fragment and break apart, ceasing to be a factor in the destiny of Shen Zhou.

Clans



The Bei Clan

Power 6

Solidarity 10 Membership 14 Resources 11

Clan Head: Zheng Bei, a First Rank Warrior armed with a Class II Weapon of the Gods – the Green Dragon Kwan Dao.

Stronghold: Mountain Manor, above the great city of Molten Serenity in Zhao.

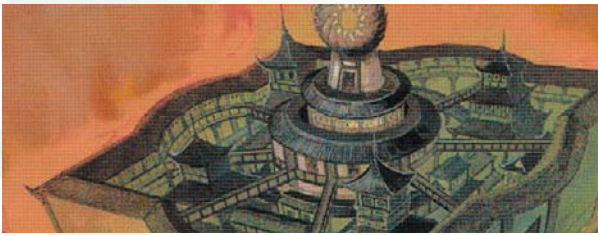
Special Kung Fu: Fist of Iron (Uncommon) and Limitless Freedom (Rare).

Description: The Bei (North) Clan is a good example of what a stable, good-sized clan looks like; while it does have one great weakness (Secret: its Master may not contend within the Wulin, at least for the time being), it is vital and well organized. It has good internal harmony, with little backbiting; the clan members on the whole are loyal and responsible, with around 150 Gang-rated Disciples and approximately 50. It’s reasonably large, having influence over the five nations of the north – Zhao, Xia, Northern Yang, Eastern Qin and Western Qin.

Agenda: To survive by making weapons for the entire Land of the Gods, and to support its Clan Head’s eventual bid for leadership of the Martial Arts World.

DESTINY COST

- 5 **Fortune:** You have an *Affiliation* with the Bei Clan, and have the opportunity to learn their Martial Arts.



The Dong Clan

Power 6

Solidarity 9 Membership 13 Resources 12

Clan Head: Ian Dong, a Second Rank Courtier-Warrior armed with a Class II Weapon of the Gods – Soul Biter.

Stronghold: Bohai Palace, just off the coast of Bird Progress City in Yang.

Special Kung Fu: Way of Inexorable Doom (Uncommon) and One Man Legion (Rare).

Description: The Dong (East) Clan is a clan in transition; its Old Master, Cloud Dong, has only just died. As a result, its Solidarity has been lowered, but should resurge to its former rating once its new Clan Head, Ian Dong has become better established. It has great reach and connections, for one can find Dong Clan members just about everywhere in their pursuit of trade. Its client states are wealthy and well connected, and the clan has good relations with them on the whole. These states are Yang, Eastern Liang, Southern Liang and Northern Liang.

Agenda: To survive by being essential to everyone via vital trade across the Land of the Gods, and to support Ian Dong's plans to become the power behind the scenes for all of Shen Zhou!

DESTINY COST

- 5 **Fortune:** You have an *Affiliation* with the Dong Clan, and have the opportunity to learn their Martial Arts.

The Hell Clan

Power 7

Solidarity 6 Membership 21 Resources 13

Clan Head: Dominion, an above first-rank Warrior wearing Perfect Armor with godlike Martial Arts. So great is his kung fu, he does not even bother to wield a weapon of any kind.

Stronghold: Xian Palace, in the city of Perpetual Peace in Hanzhao.

Special Kung Fu: Hell's Disasters (Uncommon).

Description: The Heaven-Earth Alliance (as it calls itself) is an almighty organization, spanning all of Shen Zhou!

It is the home of all crime and strife, and has spies and agents in every State of the Land of the Gods. Not only is the Hell Clan the largest clan, it is also the most powerful... the only reason it does not rule the Land of the Gods is the fact that it is so fundamentally at war with itself. The Hell Clan only rules the State of Hanzhao directly at present. It is speculated that the Clan is awaiting a single catalyst item or event to truly unify it – such as a Class I Weapon of the Gods.

Agenda: To survive by garnering profits and power by any and all means for its members, and doing whatever Dominion says.

Note: Membership in the Hell Clan is not a default game option. Confer with your Wulin Sage; while it's hardly out of the question to play a Former Hell Clan Member, it would be problematic, as any use of Hell's Disasters would mark your character as a target.



The Nan Clan

Power 5

Solidarity 8 Membership 10 Resources 12

Clan Head: Hong Dong is a Rank Two Courtier and a harsh and uncompromising leader; she must constantly struggle with the other proud and powerful martial arts warriors who would like to lead the clan.

Stronghold: Thousand-Sword Palace spanning Dongting Lake in the Jin Empire.

Special Kung Fu: Heart Moves the Blade (Uncommon).

Description: The Nan (South) Clan is a clan on the wane. Eighteen years ago, its beloved leader, Yi Nangong, died in the Cataclysm of Sword Island, as a result of his being struck down by the Curse of Heaven's Crystal. Things don't look good for the Clan; Hong Dong's masterful use of intrigue, along with the kung fu mastery of her son Ironheart, have prevented any attempt by its members to change or improve leadership... or the clan's fortunes. About the only thing it has going for it is the firm support of the Emperor, for the Clan's only territory is the fearsome Jin Empire itself.

Agenda: To survive and make it through this difficult period of its history, by being the most honorable and incorruptible security force for trade and public order. One can find Nan Clan warriors acting as Convoy Escorts and security all over Shen Zhou, though their price is high. The Clan does not currently have an active goal for its agenda, as Hong Dong is preventing any such while waiting for Ironheart's eventual ascension as Clan Head.



DESTINY COST

- 5 **Fortune:** You have an *Affiliation* with the Nan Clan, and have the opportunity to learn their Martial Arts.



The Xi Clan

Power 7

Solidarity 13 Membership 14 Resources 14

Clan Head: Ho Xi is the proud and power-hungry Master of the Xi. A Second Rank Warrior, he wields considerable kung fu and the famed Void Wheel – the Celestial Compass-Weapon of the Yellow Emperor himself!

Stronghold: The House of Xi in Fang and Gold Mountain City, in the State of Chenghan.

Special Kung Fu: Wind Sweeps Clouds (Uncommon).

Description: A clan that is both old and young, it was the first of Clans... but was smashed when its talented and charismatic leader died in the Yellow Turban Revolt. Founded anew forty years ago by Ho Xi, a direct descendant of Hui Xi, its fortunes have ever burgeoned since, as if it were gaining all at once the destiny that was its due. Alas, once Ho Xi was the most virtuous of fighters, but now he is greedy and grasping – ever seeking greater wealth and power!

Agenda: The clan works to ensure its own survival by guarding the passes into Shen Zhou as well as enriching its Master and increasing his power.

DESTINY COST

- 5 **Fortune:** You have an *Affiliation* with the Xi Clan, and have the opportunity to learn their Martial Arts.

States

The Jin Empire

Power 8

Solidarity 4 Membership 25 Resources 13

Emperor: Shi Hu is known as the Tiger... primarily for his vast appetite, whether for food or sex. A gigantic bloated tick of a man, Emperor Hu is a frightening figure to confront, though he invariably has the most perfect manners. It is rumored that he has strange kung fu that allows him to convert his fat into chi... but there is no

one who could be found as a reliable witness to such a feat.

Description: The Jin Empire is but a shadow of earlier Empires, but is still the single largest power base in the Land of the Gods. Shi Hu holds court over his Empire from the beautiful and dangerous city of Jiankang; thankfully for the other States, he does not seem to be aggressive... at least for now.

Agenda: To entertain the Emperor in his quest for all kinds of pleasure, whether from the joys of manipulation and politics, the games of war, or subversion of other states so they will fall like ripe plums into his lap. His more earthly pleasures, such as his thousands of concubines or grand feasts, are simply diversions along the way to these greater goals.

DESTINY COST

- 5 **Fortune:** You have an *Affiliation* with the Jin Empire, and have the opportunity to earn Status and privileges; however you will likely have an Onerous Obligation (qv.)

Kingdom of Yang

Power 5

Solidarity 2 Membership 15 Resources 12

King: Yue Guan, a canny politician. Not thought to be of the Wulin himself, but always has some mercenary Warriors on hand. Not of Han blood, but a cousin of the Emperor, which makes many think twice before trusting him... particularly since he seems to always know what's going on in his rather indolent country. The King holds his court in Thrashing Minister City.

Description: A beautiful land of rolling hills and easily traveled rivers, Yang is a popular destination for traders and people looking to make their fortune. It is also the site of important places like the sacred Mount Tai, the terrible twisted region of Zhuo Lu, and a major Hell Clan stronghold, Lor's Forbidden Territory, which is uncomfortably close to the important and busy town of Heaven's Hand.

Agenda: Yang is a well-to-do country with a sizable population, which has made good use of the old Qin roads and imperial infrastructure to enhance its position as a center of trade. So its primary agenda is to prosper and guard itself against expansion of the Jin Empire to the south, while watching for possible invaders from the North.

DESTINY COST

- 4 **Fortune:** You have an *Affiliation* with the Kingdom of Yang, and have the opportunity to earn Status and privileges; however you will likely have an Onerous Obligation (qv).

*Country of Xia**Power 6*

Solidarity 6 Membership 18 Resources 10

Lord: The Iron Shadow Warlord, about whom very little is known. He is definitely a Warrior of high rank, and almost certainly wields a Weapon of the Gods... but beyond these rumors, nothing is certain. It is known that Xia's relations with the Bei Clan are good, supplying the country with both fine weapons and instructors in the martial arts in return for steady financial and political support with the occasional troop of mercenaries.

Description: Xia is a harsh land – much of it is desert, and the peoples are nomads and barbarian settlers. But all this matters little; the country's lord leads it with an unbreakable will, and any attempts to invade his land in any shape or form is coldly repulsed with fanatically unified forces. While the Warlord does permit trade, few people are allowed to stay, and members of the Wulin of either stripe find their welcome wears thin if they remain too long without swearing loyalty to the Master of Iron Shadows himself. There is only one city where people may come and go as they please – **Only Six Devils** (or *Six Devil City* as it is commonly known), the capital, above which the Cold Fortress of its master sits above in shadow. It is a frontier city in every sense of the word, and has no laws save the will of its master. Rumor has it that absolutely anything can be bought within its walls, including souls.

Agenda: The goal of this state is to continue as it always has – a harsh and uncompromising supplier of mercenaries to the Land of the Gods. The Iron Shadow Warlord's forces will fight on the behalf of anyone, though never against one another or for the Jin Empire (it is unknown what the Iron Shadow Warlord's grudge against the Emperor is, but it is thought that it dates back to before the Emperor's rise to the throne of Jin).

DESTINY COST

- 4 **Fortune:** You have an *Affiliation* with the Country of Xia, and have the opportunity to earn Status and privileges; however you will also probably have an Onerous Obligation (qv).

*Western Yang**Power 5*

Solidarity 5 Membership 15 Resources 10

Leader: Cai Ying-ping, a powerful and implacable syndic in her middle years. Western Yang is unique in the Land of the Gods for being a business-run country; even more astounding, its leader is a woman of mixed Han and Mongol heritage who resists all attempts to replace her. It is easy to believe that Cai Ying-ping is indeed a descendant of the illustrious Banchao himself – she compels by force of personality alone!

Description: High and mountainous, Western Yang is a land that thrives on what moves through it. The Silk Road (more of a route than an actual road, really) passes through it, carrying trade from the distant lands of Europe. It is also a prime pathway for invasion, so great stockaded cities, guarded by large garrisons of Xi-trained and –led forces are the rule for the lands of the West. The Capital City of **Mating Butterflies**, on the Yellow River, is no exception; here one can find in great numbers both the trademasters of the West and their friendly rivals, the canny and devious deal-makers of the Dong Clan. The city is favored by young warriors of the Wulin; many opportunities to adventure and gain seasoning against bandits and would-be invaders of the Land of the Gods can be found here, whether acting independently or as convoy escorts.

Agenda: To prosper in all ways. That has been, and it seems always will be, the primary goal of the syndicates of Western Yang. While it has always held to the defense of Shen Zhou, such a goal is so inherent to all of the lands of the west as to be too obvious to even mention.

DESTINY COST

- 4 **Fortune:** You have an *Affiliation* with the State of Western Yang, and have the opportunity to earn





Status and privileges; however you will also probably have an Onerous Obligation (qv).

Clans

Eight-Way Union

Power 4

Solidarity 8 Membership 8 Resources 8

Head: Udon, a Third-Rank Warrior with a good reputation and a gift for politics.

Stronghold: Thunder Villa, in the foothills of Tai Mountain, just above the city of Heaven's Hand.

Kung Fu: Heaven's Thunder (Common).

Description: The Eight-Way Union is an example of a 'Clan' that is actually a number of smaller clans that function as a coalition – the largest of these smaller clans is the Heaven Sword Clan, but at last count there is at

least a dozen in total. The Heaven Swords served as the 'seed crystal' of the Union back during its toughest time some years back. A rival to the north spent a great deal to bring in two of Hell Clan's dukes to kill the Heaven Sword's former leadership! When the dust had settled, the Clan was so weakened that it was receptive to Udon's proposal to forge an alliance of many small clans, so as to better wield influence as if it were a larger clan... and so the Eight-Way Union was born. Originally eight separate clans, it has since surpassed that number in size, and it commands the eastern quarter of the Country of Yang.

Agenda: To continue to wax in power, wealth and influence, until it is accorded one of the Great Clans, on an equal basis with the Four.

DESTINY COST

4 Fortune: You have an Affiliation with the Eight-Way Union, and have the opportunity to earn Status and privileges; however you will also probably have an Onerous Obligation (qv).

Dali

Power 4

Solidarity 9 Membership 7
Resources 6

Head: Great Ocean, the Abbot of the Monastery. A Scholar's scholar, he is known for his sagacity and even-handed leadership of his order of Daoist Monks.

Stronghold: Dali Monastery, high above the City of Dao Min's Territory, in Northern Liang.

Kung Fu: Five Sacred Elements (Uncommon).

Description: The Dali are a good model for a successful Clan. An unusual group, they are essentially a Daoist Sect that is large enough to be reckoned a Clan; as such, they bridge the gap and teach both kung fu and Daoist Magic. They have good relations with their neighbors, powerful kung fu, and a committed base. Their resources are not great, but then, they have no great need of them. Their stronghold is eminently defensible, and their kung fu is demonstrably lethal, as would-be rivals have discovered to their horror.

神兵玄奇

Agenda: To continue their researches into daoist theory-based kung fu, learning greater truths about the very structure of the universe. They will teach their kung fu, but only to those who have earned sufficient status in the Wulin as xia heroes, and are willing to trade favors of service to the Clan.

DESTINY COST

- 4 **Fortune:** You have an *Affiliation* with the Order of Dali, and have the opportunity to earn Status and privileges (or learn their Kung Fu!); however you will also probably have an Onerous Obligation (qv).

Mao-Shan

Power 5

Solidarity 12 Membership 10 Resources 8

Head: Absolutely nothing is known about the Head of the Mao-Shan Clan. It is assumed that she is a powerful Warrior (at the very least!) and a master of the group's deadly kung fu styles.

Stronghold: **Scarlet Peak**, on Mao Mountain. No non-member has ever been there to discover more than its name and the fact that it is literally a peak of the mountain itself (a small one), hollowed out to contain the Clan.

Kung Fu: Bloody Claws (Uncommon) and Purple Shield (Rare). Outside the Clan, only Purple Wave of the Flame Cult is known to practice these styles, and she does not teach them to others.

Description: The Mao-Shan are an example of a powerful and capable Minor Clan, that might well ascend to Major Clan status some day. Composed primarily of women, Mao-shan clan members can be found anywhere in the Land of the Gods, doing anything. They rarely identify themselves, unless they're trying to make a point. They are powerful, and will often hire out clan members as assassins and bodyguards; while they *seem* to be a corrupt organization, there is no question that their members perform undeniably heroic acts, and seem to honor the Wulin and its conventions. They are a mystery, and they like it that way.

Agenda: Unknown, beyond keeping their own counsel. Even Emperor Hu is a little afraid of them, and compensates for this by trying to employ them as often as possible (usually as assassins); they smile, and permit this... but not as often as he might like. Their relationship can best be described as 'guardedly tolerant'. What is known (at least to those with enough Politics knowledge) is that the Mao-shan have never been observed to interfere, harm, or obstruct the Jade Dragon Society in any way; why this should be is not known. Lastly, the Mao-shan are always hard to find... unless they're looking for you.

DESTINY COST

- 4 **Fortune:** You have an *Affiliation* with the Mao-Shan Clan, and have the opportunity to earn Status and privileges (or learn their Kung Fu!); however you will also probably have an Onerous Obligation (qv).

Factions

Yellow River Society

Power 5

Solidarity 10 Membership 10 Resources 5

Leaders: **The Rat and the Raven**, co-leaders of the entire faction. Formerly a well-established fighting partnership, some sort of rift seems to be coming between them, which is affecting the Society adversely (formerly, their Solidarity was 12; now their fighting effectiveness has declined accordingly).

Headquarters: **Mobile.** Given the group's dedication to the Yellow River, almost certainly somewhere along its length. Currently thought to be in the Country of Yang.

Special Kung Fu: Yellow River Sword Style (Uncommon).

Description: The Yellow River Rebels (as they're usually called by the clans) are a varied lot. Whether Han or Five Tribes, male or female, rich or poor, they come from all walks of life. While not numerous, they have forty committed faction fighters and at least ten talented martial artists (Rank Three and higher). They rarely identify themselves, though they're fond of signing their work; they generally operate as mundane members of other professions, doing their Society work at night, in secret.

Agenda: The Yellow River Society (as it calls itself) is an organization dedicated to freeing the common people (at the village level) from the patronage system of the Clans, whether lesser or greater. Not only does this make them unpopular with the Clans (which derive their base support on tithes from communities and states), it also makes them unpopular with the authorities, as they are challenging the rightful order of things!

DESTINY COST

- 2 **Fortune:** You have an *Affiliation* with the Yellow River Rebels, and have the opportunity to earn Status and privileges (or learn their Kung Fu!); however you will also probably have an Onerous Obligation (qv).

Flame Cult

Power 6

Solidarity 10 Membership 17 Resources 8

Leader: **Purple Wave**, a powerful Second Rank Warrior; she reports to **Sky Lord**, the ultimate First-Rank Warrior Leader of the Flame Cult (and first lieutenant of the Hell Clan).



Headquarters: Mobile. The Flame Cult's leadership is housed on the *Dragon of the East*, a huge golden boat literally shaped like a dragon, shrouded in sorcerous flames. A powerful Treasure, the boat either has powers or a powerful Daoist sorcerer on board, as it can move rapidly and can even shroud itself from being viewed at a distance!

Special Kung Fu: Unknown; they claim credit for Holy Fire, an art now commonly found across Shen Zhou.

Description: Originally from India, this organization's name was the West Fire Doctrine Clan, and followed the principles and knowledge of Zhu Rong of the Fire Temple in Heaven. Alas, their leader, Flaming God, led them astray; the more they made repeated attempts to subvert the rightful order of things in Shen Zhou, the further they fell from grace with Heaven. Heaven's disfavor was shown in the Clan's downfall; reduced to a fraction of their numbers by the Wulin Army of Yi Nangong, with the aid of Zheng Bei, Flaming God was forced to lead his remaining followers into an alliance with the Hell Clan.

Agenda: The Flame Cult exists primarily to advance the interests of its Master – Flaming God, who now goes by the name of Sky Lord. It is only secondarily in support of the Hell Clan, and indeed, secretly looks down upon the rest of the organization their Faction belongs to.

Secret Societies

Falling Wren Society Power 5

Solidarity 10 Membership 10 Resources 10

Leader: Shih Kuan, a talented Warrior getting on in years. Once one of the Top Ten heroes, he has foresworn his fame and works only for the betterment of others. These days, he focuses on two things over all else – selecting and training only the best and most righteous warriors to join the Society, and then sending them around the Land of the Gods to places where they'll be needed – he is aided in this by keeping expert Predictionists on staff, who do nothing but calculate where the Falling Wren's strength will be most needed.

Stronghold: A hidden compound in the nondescript City of Brown Place, in Yang.

Special Kung Fu: Three Kings (Uncommon).

Description: The Falling Wren Society practices that most venerable of traditions – preserving the glorious past. Whether carefully preventing the loss of their kung fu or protecting the fragments of Pre-Qin libraries (most destroyed by Qin Shihuangdi!), the Falling Wren Society preserves the past, as it has done for nearly three hundred years. This, indirectly, also explains why they fight so hard for the common people – because their ultimate definition of excellence is Huangti himself. The Yellow Emperor symbolizes everything the Falling Wrens value: civilization, caring for others, the value of knowledge,

and the importance of everyone in the culture having a place. The Falling Wrens are the proud stewards of the past, and greatly respected because of it – they show filial piety to Huangti himself!

Agenda: At every turn, Shih Kuan carefully presses his Society's agenda, which is twofold: preserve the greatness of knowledge of the past, and return modern society—with its corrupt and decadent ways—to that former level of excellence.

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Fortune:** You have an *Affiliation* with the Falling Wren Society, and have the opportunity to earn Status and privileges (or learn their Kung Fu!); however you will also probably have an Onerous Obligation (q.v.).

Jade Dragon Society Power 5

Solidarity 15 Membership 9 Resources 6

Leader: Ban Jai, a Third Rank Warrior – the aged great-granddaughter of Ban Zhao. Though she has decided to cease cultivating her chi and her kung fu has waned... her spirit is still formidable! She guides her Society with a firm but gentle hand, reserving her compassion for her charges and her fury for those who would sell or defile women.

Stronghold: A well-defended estate in the City of Characteristic Philosophy, in Eastern Liang.

Special Kung Fu: Unfolding Glory (Uncommon).

Description: The Jade Dragon Society's profound commitment to the welfare of women in Shen Zhou gives it great influence – which it primarily uses to find and guide women in need to its doors (that, and occasional fundraising). They maintain agents and safe houses in virtually every large city of note in Shen Zhou, and many female heroes have been trained by them – though not all wield the Society's potent kung fu.

Agenda: The Society's main objective is to give freedom of choice to the women of Shen Zhou – to support and even encourage women to become Wuxia Heroes in their own right! For this, they are reviled and occasionally attacked. None, however, disdain the power of their swords, and they have the secret support of certain powers and potentates in the Land of the Gods.

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Fortune:** You have an *Affiliation* with the Jade Dragon Society, and have the opportunity to earn Status and privileges (or learn their Kung Fu!); however you will also probably have an Onerous Obligation (qv). See pg. 260 for more on **Unfolding Glory**, the Society's special Kung Fu.

Fire Mantis

Power 4

Solidarity 11 Membership 8 Resources 4 (9)

Leader: **Xi-men Chou** is the nominal Leader of the Society. In truth, he is simply the eldest and most respected. The Society is actually fairly independent, each member acting as they see fit, ranging out from the group's headquarters on their missions. Xi-men Chou's main authority is that he never takes missions, instead approving and training new initiates into the Society.

Stronghold: In a hidden complex below a member's house in the City of **Notably Picturesque**, in Southern Liang.

Special Kung Fu: Disrespectful Sages Kung Fu (Rare).

Description: The Fire Mantis is a well-meaning Daoist Sect that upholds the greatest of Wulin ideals – serving the weal of all, as well as enhancing the scholarship of the past, by preserving the remnants of one of the greatest kung fu styles ever devised – a Rare style that can havoc the earth itself!

Agenda: To serve the commonwealth of the people – specifically by opposing monster warriors and the worst of selfish heroes. With their powerful kung fu, they are undeniably effective, and would be far more so... if they recruited and taught their knowledge more often. But Xi-men Chou refuses – for his predecessor misjudged most severely when he trained **Lo-pan Choe**, who then disappeared... and formed the **Demon Scholars**, baneful and foul, who seek to destroy the good order of the Yellow Emperor! As a result, the organization grows very slowly, which reduces the good that they could do... as well as the possible damage.

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Fortune:** You have an *Affiliation* with the Fire Mantis Society, and have the opportunity to earn Status and privileges (or learn their Kung Fu!); however you will also probably have an Onerous Obligation (qv).

Gangs

...come and go on the face of Shen Zhou. They are usually nicknamed according to the region in which they operate; though in one case, the gangs that exist in the west, the White Tigers, assist and aid the defense of the Xi Clan territories, and are really not much more than mercenaries.

Generally speaking, gangs are fairly anarchic, and rarely have Solidarity ratings above 5, given that they're based on the Superior vs. Minion relationship. Their leaders come and go, though sometimes they will learn enough martial arts, or suffer defeat by a martial arts warrior, that they will 'go straight' and join the Wulin.

Most often, their lives are nasty, brutish, and short. If a gang becomes too big and too threatening, the Five Clans will usually send out warriors that will decisively end them as a threat. So bandit groups and gangs tend to stay below a certain size, in order to avoid the attention of the Wulin... but there are times that they will grow large enough to be come serious threats. This happened long ago with a particularly large gang that acquired aggressive martial arts-trained leadership, and became the Heaven-and-Earth Alliance, now known as the Hell Clan.

Shown below is an example of one such particularly infamous gang. In the canon setting of Weapons of the Gods, Ironheart Nan killed every single member in a single night; in your game, perhaps they're a rising threat that your players, as beginning wuxia heroes, see fit to take on themselves.

The Tiger Gang

Power 4

Solidarity 5 (10) Membership 12 Resources 6

Leader: **Bang Fu** is the current leader of the Tiger Gang. An unprepossessing man who looks like he should be a tax collector, he is nevertheless a canny and ruthless killer (though not a member of the Wulin), and has managed to last a whole six months as leader... a record! Who knows, he may last... and succeed in his efforts to organize the Gang and turn it into his personal army. So far, those efforts have been for naught... but things may always change.

Stronghold: The Tiger Gang made their haven in a series of caves within the mountains in the northwestern corner of Southern Liang.

Description: The Tigers were frightening to many simply from their sheer numbers... two hundred strong! However, they have **No Wulin** – not even Hell Clans members respect them enough to join, and the Tigers fight fiercely as Gang Members because of their increased solidarity against those 'meddling fairy warriors' (as they refer to any martial artists they come across). They've also had some success in murdering some Fourth-Rank Warriors who tried to stop their slaving and pillaging ways, so they feel vindicated in avoiding martial artists as a whole.

Agenda: To get ahead and acquire more wealth for its members, primarily through slaving – they descend on villages and small towns, kill or drive off the menfolk, and then take the women and children, selling them to other nations as slaves. Rape and pillage are pastimes for them, and even the Hell Clan considers them ‘bad for business’, even as they buy some of the group’s ‘harvest’.

Wandering Bands

...of heroes are the norm for beginning heroes in the Wulin. Generally in groups of at least three and up to six, Fourth-Rank martial artists band together for mutual aid and defense. The better ones learn to coordinate their skills over time, and usually include a courtier and even a scholar instead of just warriors.

What becomes of wandering bands down the line? Well, any number of things. Some bands remain intact up until their members choose to leave the Martial Arts World; some persist, and recruit replacements for those who leave or are killed; still others focus on one region, settling down and perhaps even evolving into a Faction, a Secret Society or even a small Clan. It is customary for bands of heroes to acquire their own Status over time, sometimes even outstripping the Status of the individual members!

As with Gangs, above, a single Wandering band of heroes is detailed as an example. This group, too, was destroyed in a single battle by Ironheart Nan’s sword mastery – but before that, pretty much did what they wanted as a group of selfish heroes. It is believed by the sages that, had Ironheart not ended their career, this band would have been recruited by the Hell Clan; that almighty organization’s powerful backing would have made this band only more difficult to destroy.

North-Side Four Ghosts

Power 4

Solidarity 10 Membership 6 Resources 5 (10)

Leader: **Ghost King** is the ‘eldest brother’ of the North-side Four Ghosts. Full of overweening ambition, he intends to use his little group as the starting point to recruit his own army, so he may eventually claim his own State... and work towards ruling the Land of the Gods!

Stronghold: **Mobile.** The Ghosts were truly nomadic, and rarely stayed anywhere long.

Description: Four potent martial artists, these four treat each other like brothers, and are quite loyal to each other as a result. They have no followers, but are all reasonably powerful warriors (assumed to be Third Rank, but your Sage will determine their power levels and archetypes), and each is equipped with quality equipment and perhaps even a Weapon of the Gods.

Agenda: To succeed on their own without anyone else’s help or interference. While selfish heroes, they have carefully avoided joining the Hell Clan, not wanting to tie down their destiny by allying with any single group. They are formidable and canny fighters, but will eventually become too full of themselves – in the canon *Weapons of the Gods* setting, they are all killed in a single battle by Ironheart Nan! But who knows to what depths these selfish zealots would have sunk, had they not been stopped...

神兵玄奇



Conflict in Shen Zhou

The Art of Battle

Conflict is the engine driving the Wulin. Virtuous warriors battle one another, testing themselves and resolving their differences. Corrupt warriors fight amongst themselves for influence and power. The virtuous oppose the corrupt, giving them opportunities for acts of heroism. Baneful warriors stand outside the system, but the Wulin co-opts them — using the horror and mystery of their Heaven-defying state to make them the perfect mentors and enemies for the greatest warriors. Without this conflict keeping them in check, humans would inevitably create such monstrous disorder as to pose a threat to Heaven.

Each Conflict (whether martial or social) offers opportunities to display Virtue; to show off your excellence to the world and earn the recognition that you so richly deserve. When in a battle, watch for truly outstanding events, whether it's simply a stunning maneuver, or overcoming your opponent in a memorable fashion — these are the moments when virtue shines clearest, and when players can award a point of virtue as recognition of something that truly increased everyone's enjoyment of the game. To see more of the ways you can earn virtue, see pg. 80.

This chapter discusses how basic martial combat works.

Styles of Combat

Artful Weapons and Kung Fu

Artful weapons and kung fu use the Melee skill. They represent the application of speed and finesse. Artful weapons usually use blades and other cutting edges, and allow Artful kung fu enhancement to attack and defense.

Characters can use artful weapons to defend against attacks. Against hand-to-hand weapons, apply the weapon's Strike as a modifier to the roll. Against thrown and projectile weapons, an artful defense suffers a -10 modifier and does not benefit from the Strike.



Brutal Weapons and Kung Fu

Brutal weapons and kung fu use the Fight skill. They represent the application of raw force. Brutal weapons include fists, feet, and most blunt weapons, and allow Brutal kung fu enhancement to attack and defense.

Characters can use brutal weapons to defend against attacks. Against hand-to-hand weapons, apply the weapon's Strike as a modifier to the roll. Against thrown and projectile weapons, a brutal defense suffers a -10 modifier and does not benefit from the Strike.

Ranged Weapons and Kung Fu

Ranged weapons and kung fu use the Ranged skill. They depend upon the application of insight, flow, keen senses, and Wu Wei. Ranged weapons include thrown and projectile weapons. They allow Ranged kung fu enhancement to attack and defense. In addition, you can enhance Ranged attacks with sharp weapons with Artful kung fu, and you can enhance Ranged attacks with blunt weapons with Brutal kung fu. Thus, sharp projectiles and thrown weapons are called Ranged (Artful) weapons and blunt projectiles are called Ranged (Brutal) weapons.

Characters can use ranged weapons to defend against attacks. Do not apply the weapon's Strike as a modifier for defense; instead, apply a -15 modifier. You can use thrown weapons, arrows, and other ranged techniques to block swords or knock arrows out of the sky, but it's usually better to dodge.

Artful/Brutal Weapons

Certain weapons allow the use of both Artful and Brutal styles. Most of these weapons rely on a combination of power and speed. Some are edged weapons that have special brutal techniques available and some are blunt weapons that require or allow the use of speed and finesse. When attacking or defending with these weapons, you can use either the Fight or the Melee skill, and you can apply Artful kung fu, Brutal kung fu, or a combination.

Artful/Ranged Weapons

Certain hand-to-hand weapons allow the use of both Artful and Ranged styles. These weapons are so long and flexible that Ranged kung fu applies. From a tactical perspective, artful/ranged weapons can be used at short range — they're not literally ten meters long, but when kung fu masters are flying around, long weapons might as well be. When attacking or defending with these weapons, you can use either the Melee or Ranged skill, and you can apply Artful kung fu, Ranged kung fu, or a combination.

Note that artful/ranged weapons do not change the restrictions on defensive techniques — if you use Ranged skill to defend, you'll still suffer the -15 modifier, even if you're using a whip.

Brutal/Ranged Weapons

Certain hand-to-hand weapons allow the use of both Brutal and Ranged styles. Most such weapons have heavy weights at the end of flexible cords. From a tactical perspective, brutal/ranged weapons can be used at

short range. When attacking or defending with these weapons, you can use either the Fight or Ranged skill, and you can apply Brutal kung fu, Ranged kung fu, or a combination.

Brutal/ranged weapons do not change the restrictions on defensive techniques — if you use Ranged skill to defend, you'll still suffer the -15 modifier, even if you're using a double head flying maul.

Artful/Brutal/Ranged Weapons

In theory, one could create a weapon that allows the use of Artful, Brutal, and Ranged styles. Such weapons do not currently exist. Some kung fu techniques explicitly allow warriors to blur the styles, though, and might allow a three-style combination.

Mobility

Characters in *Weapons of the Gods* are mobile. This is deliberate, and it means that if you want to interact with someone in a fight, or something in the local environment, you can usually just do so. Declare your action and, unless the GM objects, go to.

This doesn't just apply to you — it also applies to enemies and foolish friends. If you want your tactics to restrict others' range of motion, don't just describe your action. Make it clear what you're trying to accomplish with it. Typical tactics involving distance work as follows:

- Keeping your distance from someone or some group. You can accomplish this by moving away from them faster than they move towards you.
- Closing the distance with someone. You can do this by moving towards them faster than they move away from you.
- More complex tactical maneuvers. You can funnel your enemies, present them with hard choices regarding location, close with one person while evading another, blocking access to fallen weapons, and so forth. To do so, make an opposed Tactics skill roll as a free action (see the next page) under Athletics (pg. 38). Brilliant player ideas give a +5 or +10 bonus. Well-described ideas give an opportunity to acquire a Virtue. If the GM doesn't think your idea is sound, she can assess a -5 to -20 penalty.

When you're moving around on the battlefield, you can do at most one of these things at any given time. Characters can usually move 10 yards a round; use the "covering ground" rules under Athletics (pg. 38) if you want to move faster. You can only move once per round — you can't dedicate multiple actions to movement, with or without Athletics. Note that it is possible via Combat Effects (qv) such as **Knockback** and **Downing** to prevent someone from gaining their full movement for a round.



Initiative

At the beginning of each round, all the characters involved in the combat roll Initiative. During the round, characters act in order of their initiative rolls, highest to lowest. In the event of a tie, the GM chooses who acts first. Characters can wait until after someone else acts to take their action; if this results in a loop (multiple people waiting on one another), none of them act that round.

Characters not involved in the combat, but who expect to arrive before it's over, can also make Initiative rolls. This becomes their initiative on the first round they enter combat. It also determines the elegance of the timing with which they enter the fray.

Weapon Speed

If a character has one or more weapons drawn, the weapons' Speed modifies the character's Initiative. This is a specific trait of the weapon, listed in the chart of weapons below. Note that many kung fu styles have techniques that allow quick-draws. Not only that, but many martial arts warriors simply carry their weapons all the time!

Remember, as always, that you only pick the best modifier — two daggers give a +15 modifier, not a +30 modifier.

Combat Actions

Actions

When it's your turn to act, you can take one full action and two free actions. The full action represents the focus of your effort for the round. The free actions represent little things that shouldn't take up your full focus.

Some kung fu allows for an additional full action at the end of the initiative order — after everyone else acts.

Full Actions

Most skill rolls are full actions. You make a skill roll, do something that you can reasonably do as a single action, and that's your action for the round.

Sometimes an action depends on two separate skills. Carving a poem into an unwilling target's cheek or armor requires both Learning and Melee. This is a "complex" full action. Roll the skill giving you the smaller set of dice for this action. To succeed at the action at all, you must meet all task difficulties. Composing a humiliating poem is a Moderate (20) task, due to the short time frame; admirable calligraphy also requires a 20. Hitting your enemy is trivial (10), but you also have to overcome their defense — so the real target for this roll is either 20 or the enemy's opposed defense roll, whichever is higher.

You can't combine two attacks into a single action without kung fu — not even if they depend on separate skills. The only way to get in extra attacks without supernatural effects is if an opponent is helpless; then you can attack them with one of your free actions.

Free Actions

Skill rolls for unopposed Trivial tasks are free actions unless stated otherwise.

Skill rolls for opposed or unopposed Trivial, Simple, and Everyday tasks are free actions when they rely on the mind or the senses rather than the body. If you want to spot someone sneaking around on a clear, sunny day, that's an opposed Trivial task — a free action, even though you might need a high Sense skill roll to penetrate their Stealth. If you want to spot someone sneaking around during a monsoon on a moonless night, that's a Moderate task — you need to spend your full action on it, even if they fumble their Stealth roll.

Some other things are free actions because the rules specifically say they are. For example, critical success on some Athletics rolls lets you do things as a free action.

Example Actions

Tian Wen's initiative comes up while fighting Sky Lord. Sky Lord has Tiger Soul in hand.

First Free Action. Tian shouts insults at Sky Lord. (Trivial physical action.)

Second Free Action. Tian closes the distance between himself and Sky Lord. He's 20 yards away, and rolls a 33 on his Athletics roll. This is a critical success, so the Athletics rules let him cover that ground as a free action (Note that use of Lightfoot ensures that Athletics rolls are always free actions, but there will be times you can't afford the Chi.)

Full Action. Tian can't beat Sky Lord while Sky Lord holds Tiger Soul. He decides to get past Sky Lord's defense by deliberately steering Tiger Soul's blade into the bone of his own leg and trapping it there with his inner power. If Sky Lord struck Tian's leg deliberately, he'd shear right through it — but the GM thinks that if Tian tricks Sky Lord, this idea might work.

Manipulating Sky Lord's attack this way is an Everyday Finesse roll, opposed by Sky Lord's Melee skill. Bracing for the horrendous pain and strengthening his bone to trap the supreme weapon is a Legendary Hardiness task.

Tian has Finesse I (giving him a two-die skill) and Hardiness 5 (giving him a five-die skill). He rolls just two dice to pierce Sky Lord's defense of 34 and the Hardiness

difficulty of 40. Fortunately, Tian has three 5s in his river, and he rolls another — giving him a set of 45.

Alternate Full Action Example. Instead, of course, Tian could just attack. With a roll of 45 over Sky Lord's defense of 34, he'd do some meaningful damage — and if Sky Lord is already wounded, it might just be enough.

Opposing Others' Actions

In addition to your regular actions, you can oppose the actions of others. You can do this an unlimited number of times per round. This takes three forms.

Defensive Actions

You can always defend yourself against an attack. You get one defense against any given attack.

You can use your Dodge skill to oppose any physical attack against you. You can also oppose (“block”) attacks with your Fight skill, blocking with your fists, feet, or a Brutal weapon. If you have an Artful weapon available, you can block attacks with your Melee skill. As noted, you only get one defense — pick the skill pool of your choice. Fight- and Melee-based defenses have serious negative modifiers when blocking ranged weapons, but might be preferable to Dodge if you have other negative modifiers, a shield, or a large enough dice pool.

In case it comes up, bear in mind that without appropriate kung fu (usually techniques that grant armor), you cannot block weapons with your bare hands without risking damage — usually 2 points per block, even if successful. If you fail badly enough, take 4 points and consider yourself *Maimed* (unable to use two-

handed weapons).

You can use your Confidence skill to oppose any direct social attack. You can also block social attacks with the skill used — resisting attempts at persuasion with your Persuade skill, resisting inspiration with your Inspire skill, ignoring the performances of others with your Perform skill, and so forth.

Other defensive actions include opposing pain or torture with Hardiness, opposing Stealth with Sense, and opposing tactical attacks with Tactics. In general, any time someone tries something where “success” means overcoming your reactive resistance, you get to make a defensive opposed skill roll.

Tactical Opposition

You can spend your full action preparing some kind of opposition. Describe the kind of actions you wish to oppose, and how you intend to do so. Until your next chance to act, you automatically oppose all relevant actions

with the relevant skill. If you can defend against an action with both a defense and your tactical opposition, pick one — you don't get to oppose it twice. The GM should impose negative modifiers on overly ambitious or nonsensical opposition types.

As an example of tactical opposition, when bandits attack a village, you could declare that you want to parry any attack against a child standing near you. When a bandit attacks the child, you can defend the child as if they were you, with your Melee skill. When a bandit attacks you, you get a normal defensive action.

If you declared instead that you wanted to defend a group of children — say, five or six — the GM might impose a -5 modifier. Defending six people at once is ambitious, but it's perfectly in genre to succeed.

If you decide to tactically oppose everything the bandits do with your intimidating command of social etiquette (“you cannot ride down that peasant that way! Your form is improper!”), opposing everything they do with a Grace roll, the GM might just veto. In a comedic game, the GM might allow it, but impose a -10 or -15 modifier.

Opportunistic Opposition

The GM can always decide that an opposed roll just makes sense.

Suppose, during a fight, that Tiger Soul falls to the ground. The GM feels that many

What Actually Happens During Defense?

It's up to you. If you don't think you're cool enough to reliably dodge arrows, just assume you're ducking and weaving. If you're cool enough to stand in the center of a rain of swords and, in a blur of steel, block them all and send the attackers staggering back — do it. This is wuxia, and three seconds is a lot.





participants in the fight will dive for it — but only the person next in the initiative order has an immediate opportunity to pick it up.

In such circumstances, the GM can declare that grabbing the weapon first requires an Initiative skill roll, and that other characters get to oppose it — typically with their own Initiative. If no participant manages to win that opposed test on their turn, the GM might rule that the contenders pigpile on the weapon. Seizing it becomes a matter for opposed Athletics tests, the default skill for uses of raw force an strength, rather than Initiative.

If the GM wants to limit opportunistic opposition, then making this kind of opposed roll uses up the character's next full action in advance.

Hurting People

Damage works like a style roll — the roll doesn't determine whether you damage the target, but how much damage you can do.

If your attack minimally succeeds, you get to roll one die of damage. For each full five points you succeeded by, roll one more die. (So if you succeed by 5, roll two dice; if you succeed by 10, a critical success, roll three dice. If you succeed by 15, roll four; if you succeed by 20, roll five; and so forth.) The total damage done is the result of your roll plus the damage bonus of your weapon and kung fu (if any), minus the result of any opposition your target musters (like armor or chi aura, for example).

Succeed by	Result Dice Gained
1-4 points	1
5-9 points	2
10-14 points	3
15-19 points	4
20-24 points	5
and so on . . .	

Weapons

Most weapons add a modifier to your damage roll. Barehanded attacks have a -5 modifier, long swords add +5, great swords add +15, and terrible Weapons of the Gods can add +20 or more.

Armor

The victim's armor imposes a negative modifier to the damage roll. Light armor gives you a -5 modifier. Medium armor gives you a -10. Heavy armor gives you a -15.

Opposing Damage Rolls

Characters can oppose damage rolls by spending their Chi Aura. Each point spent gives one die with which to oppose the roll. This is the only free defense against damage.

Tactical opposition to damage rolls is possible, with GM permission. Characters can forsake their action to oppose damage with Hardiness (or, for whirlwind acupuncture scholars, Medicine); this keeps them from attacking, but lets them hold out against wounds and pain for a while longer.

Damage Example

Tian Wen attacks Sky Lord, rolling 45 to attack against a defense of 34. Tian Wen is using a great sword, and Sky Lord is wearing medium armor. Tian Wen rolls three dice of damage, with total modifiers equal to +15 and -10, for a net change of +5. Tian Wen rolls 23 (+5). Sky Lord spends a point of Chi protection and rolls 15. The total damage is 28 - 15 . . . 13 points of damage!

Being Hurt

You have a finite ability to absorb damage. This capacity is measured by your Health. Random ordinary citizens of Shen Zhou usually have 5 Health. For exceptional mundane people or Disciples (Fifth Rank Fighters) in the Wulin, Health is 10; thereafter, Health is calculated by adding up the character's Chi Ratings (for Non-player characters in the Wulin, simply add 5 points per rank to make it simpler — 4th Rank has 15, 3rd has 20, 2nd has 25, and 1st has 30).

You can take up to five times your Health in damage before you die. That's a lot — but damage is cumulative, and each time you take your full Health in damage, you suffer progressively increasing impairment.

Healthy / Battered. Before you take damage, you're healthy. Afterwards, you're "battered." There's no immediate penalty for this, and it lasts until you've taken at least your Health in damage.

Injured. You suffer *chi flow loss* (pg. 230) in one color of your choice. You take a -5 penalty to Athletics rolls to cover ground. This state lasts until you've taken at least twice your Health in damage.

Wounded. You suffer *chi flow loss* in another color of your choice. You take a -5 penalty to all actions, and a -10 penalty to Athletics rolls to cover ground. This state lasts until you've taken at least three times your Health in damage.

Staggering. You suffer *chi flow loss* in a third color of your choice. You take a -10 penalty to all actions. This state



lasts until you've taken at least four times your Health in damage.

Last Legs. You suffer *chi flow loss* in a fourth color of your choice. You take a -10 penalty to all actions, and a -20 to Athletics rolls to cover ground. This state lasts until you've taken at least five times your Health in damage.

Dying. *Weapons of the Gods* is a rough and tumultuous world. When you take five times your Health in damage, or more, you are Dying (But see **Toys of the Gods**, below). If you have any chi left, you're still conscious, but in the state of **Dying** (see pg. 275, *Medicine*, for what this means). If you have no chi, you're completely unconscious and in a coma, and will die without medical help at the end of the scene. If your character dies, then they die – righteousness is no guarantee of immortality. Make a new character with the same Rank and Destiny as your previous character, and bury him properly so he won't come back from the dead.

Toys of the Gods

Sometimes — particularly when you and your enemies start using joss and the river on damage rolls — you can knock unconscious or kill someone in one shot. This is a climactic moment in the battle but sometimes an anticlimactic moment in that character's story. Any time you take someone straight from Healthy, Battered, Injured, or Wounded to dead, the gods

might ensure that the victim somehow survives and returns. This applies both to your victims and to you yourself — if the most powerful martial artist in the world swats you like a bug, you're important enough to crawl away, recover, and swear vengeance, no matter how much damage your enemy rolls. This rule is always at the GM's option; sometimes, it's more dramatic to die, and sometimes, it's more dramatic to live.

Breaking Things

Destroying chunks of the landscape, whether from shattering rocks, smashing buildings, or breaking mountains, is a part of the wuxia genre. There's a scene in the movie *Iron Monkey*, where the title character is fighting the evil Royal Minister, and each time they take a step in their battle, they're shattering the tiles on which they're stomping or landing on.

For determining such incidental damage (if your Sage feels like it and it's dramatically appropriate), treat the combat rolls as Style Rolls to find out what gets broken. (This does not change the combat rolls, it's simply done to figure out what gets broken; no joss or river dice can affect these results to do more damage, what you break is what you break, period.)

The number of result dice you scored on the roll also determines how much thickness of a given substance will be broken through, depending on the size of the object. Your Sage will determine how much based on the circumstances.

Property Damage	Combat Value	What gets Broken
Mortifying	15	Your fist or foot; take damage (Sage's option).
Embarrassing	18	Your ego; you are Embarrassed (see pg. 75).
Competent	20	Rocks, brick or tiles; tree branches.
Impressive	25	Small trees or poles; small boulders.
Stunning	30	Big Trees and poles, or thin-moderate walls.
Jaw-dropping	35	Thick walls, good-sized boulders.
Legendary	40	Castle Walls, Cliffs, giant boulders.



Healing

You can spend Jade Chi to heal as a free action — each point spent restores a point of lost Health. This option is available to all characters who have cultivated their Chi and reached the 4th rank or above. Healing can reverse your injuries, returning you from Last Legs to Staggering, Staggering to Wounded, Wounded to Injured, Injured to Battered, and Battered to Healthy. Your penalties are always those of your current Wound Level, so healing can fix chi flow loss and reduce movement and action penalties.

End of the Round

At the end of each round, all characters participating in the battle recover their full Chi Aura and one point of each kind of Chi.

Basic Combat Summary

1. Determine Initiative

Characters roll their Initiative, and act in order of their Initiative rolls, highest to lowest.

Kung Fu Techniques that boost Initiative.

- Must be used before dice actually rolled. If a technique is used after initiative, then any modifiers to Initiative are ignored, as there is no pre-emption of actions in progress.

2. State Actions

When it's your turn, you can take one full action and up to two free actions, in any order.

Free Actions.

- Trivial unopposed physical skills.
- Trivial, simple, or everyday mental or sensory skills, opposed or otherwise.
- Free actions that are free because the rules say so (such as healing with Jade Chi).

Full Actions.

- Skill rolls, complex skill rolls, and attacks, possibly augmented by kung fu or the supernatural.
- Preparing tactical opposition, which lasts until your next action.

3. Resolve Conflict

Defense.

- If your actions are opposed, any relevant defenders roll and determine their defense.

Damage.

- If you hit someone with an attack, roll and determine the damage done.
- They can oppose this damage with Chi protection.
- If hurt, they may suffer increasing impairment.

Completion Phase.

- Make any Additional Attacks as provided by Kung Fu, in exact same Initiative order;
- Take any Combat Effect Damage (such as Burning or Poison);
- Channel Chi to maintain a technique.

4. Round Ends

All characters recover their Chi Aura and one point of each type of Chi, up to their capacity.

神兵玄奇

Attack and Defense Modifiers

Range

Ranged weapons take a -5 modifier at medium range and a -10 modifier at long range. Point blank shots (fired from within a yard) take a -5 penalty; this is usually only an issue when the attacker's back is literally to the wall.

Strike

Weapons provide a modifier to attack and defense rolls. This is called the weapon's Strike.

Surprise

If you're surprised by an attack — because you didn't see it until it hit, because of special kung fu, or because you were asleep and failed your Everyday (18) Awareness roll to notice trouble coming — you suffer a -10 to defense rolls and you cannot use your weapon's Strike; you may not attack the round you are Surprised.



Visibility

Artful or Brutal techniques suffer a -5 modifier when fighting an opponent you can't see. This applies to both attack and defense.

Ranged techniques suffer a -10 modifier when you attack someone you can't see — even heroic archers have trouble hitting someone with nothing but instinct, intuition, and Wu Wei to guide their shot. This penalty rises to -20 when you're defending with a ranged weapon against someone you can't see.

Situation	Modifier	Add Strike?
Artful attack or defense	—	Yes
Artful attack, can't see opponent	-5	Yes
Artful defense, against projectiles	-10	No
Brutal attack or defense	—	Yes
Brutal attack, can't see opponent	-5	Yes
Brutal defense, against projectiles	-10	No
Ranged attack, point-blank	-5	Yes
Ranged attack, short range	—	Yes
Ranged attack, medium range	-5	Yes
Ranged attack, long range	-10	Yes
Ranged attack, can't see opponent	-10	Yes
Ranged defense	-15	No
Ranged defense, can't see opponent	-20	No
Surprised	-10	No

Combat Effects

In addition to damage, successful attacks can have a variety of additional effects.

Blinding

Some attacks can blind their victim, temporarily or permanently. This assesses attack and defense penalties for reduced visibility and gives a -5 modifier to Awareness and Sense rolls.



Burning

Some attacks set a victim or the victim's environment on fire. Some poisons and all acids use the burning rules. The fire causes one die of damage each round, with no weapon or armor modifiers. Burning attacks have an Intensity that determines how long they burn — normally, one round per point of Intensity. The victim can extinguish the fire early; this usually requires a full action or a free action that submerges the character in water or rolls them in dirt.

Disarming

Some attacks disarm the victim, knocking their weapon out of their hand and away. In particular, characters wielding certain specific weapons can choose “disarming” as the result of a critical success on their attack roll. Retrieving a fallen weapon is a Simple (15) Athletics task. (Tactical opposition is possible.)

Disorienting

Some attacks are particularly hard to track. In particular, characters wielding certain specific weapons can choose “disorienting” as the result of a critical success on their attack roll. Characters struck by a disorienting attack cannot use Chi Protection to reduce the damage.

Downing

Some attacks knock the victim off their feet. Being prone imposes a -5 modifier to Initiative, Dodge, Fight, and Melee rolls. Standing up in a raging battle is a Simple (15) Athletics task; tactical opposition is possible. If you are hit with a Downing result, you can spend Five Any Chi and retain your footing... unless the attacking roll has a 20 point advantage over you - in which case you should resign yourself to kissing the floor anyway.

Embarrassing

Some attacks embarrass the victim, making it more difficult for them to react. In particular, characters wielding certain specific weapons can choose “embarrassing” as the result of a critical success on their attack roll. Embarrassed victims suffer a -10 modifier on all their actions next round.

Entangling

Some attacks entangle their victim, limiting the victim's actions. In particular, characters wielding certain specific

weapons can choose “entangling” as the result of a critical success on their attack roll. While entangled, the target cannot attack, cover ground, or perform complex physical non-defensive actions. Instead of rolling damage and hurting your opponent, you apply your damage dice to determine how long the entanglement lasts and the difficulty of the Athletics or Finesse task to break free prematurely.

Characters without Athletics or Finesse are encouraged to perform kung fu marvels to break free.

Grappling

When attacking barehanded, you can grapple your opponents on a regular or critical success. Grappling also limits the victim's actions. Grappling works exactly like entangling, save in two respects. First, the victim can attack you (and only you), suffering a -10 modifier. Second, grappling only lasts one round — but once you've grappled someone successfully, you can grapple them again next round as a free rather than a full action.

Damage Dice (Not Inflicted)	Athletics or Finesse Difficulty to Escape
1 die	Simple (15)
2 dice	Everyday (18)
3 dice	Moderate (20)
4-5 dice	Hard (30)
6+ dice	Legendary (40)

Knocking Back

You can always choose “knocking back” as the result of a critical success on an attack roll. In addition to normal damage, your blow knocks your opponent away — one round's distance for each damage die rolled. If you yourself are hit with a Knockback result, much like Downing, you can resist by spending Chi - 2 Any Chi per each damage die rolled against you. Again, if your opponent has a 20 point advantage over you, then you're going to go flying regardless of whether you want to or not.

Maiming

Some attacks maim their targets, making it temporarily or permanently impossible for the victim to wield two-handed weapons. (Two-handed weapons are denoted on the weapons table with Note I.) If the victim does not wield a Note I weapon, the Sage may alternatively permit someone with this Combat Effect to reduce a victim's Lightfoot Mobility Bonus by -5, or if they have Missing Extremity: One Arm, to force them to only use Open-Hand attacks only. Maiming can be specifically cured by spending 2 Jade Chi and a Free Action to remove the Effect.

Damage Dice (Not Inflicted)	Duration	Athletics or Finesse Difficulty to Escape
1 die	1 round	Simple (15)
2 dice	2 rounds	Everyday (18)
3 dice	3 rounds	Moderate (20)
4-5 dice	4-5 rounds	Hard (30)
6+ dice	one scene	Legendary (40)

Poisoning

Some attacks pollute, twist, corrupt, or poison the body or chi of the opponent. Some poisons and chi attacks use the same rules as Burning, but others inflict special Chi conditions (see page 275; for full details on poison use, see page 346) Poison is considered monstrously dishonorable, frowned upon though not forbidden even in the abode of the Hell Clan; kung fu, sorcery, and medicine with poison-like effects is merely

Damage Dice (Not Inflicted)	Duration	Hardiness Difficulty to Recover
1 die	1 round	Simple (15)
2 dice	2 rounds	Everyday (18)
3 dice	3 rounds	Moderate (20)
4-5 dice	4-5 rounds	Hard (30)
6+ dice	one scene	Legendary (40)

“unscrupulous.”

Stunning

Stunning works exactly like entanglement, save that the defender must use Hardiness — not Athletics or Finesse — to recover. Note that members of the Wulin can still Defend normally while Stunned!

Other Unusual Attacks

Area Attacks

Some attacks can hurt everyone in a certain radius. These are the province of large crossbow or archery barrages, really large projectiles, and special kung fu techniques. Area attacks are complex skill rolls — each defender opposes separately, and the attack's success, failure, critical success, or critical failure is assessed separately for each.

Called Shots

Sometimes, you want to do something tricky — cut off a sorcerer's ponytail or a warrior's ring, stab someone in their single point of weakness, or whatnot. This is a called shot, and it usually makes the attack itself more difficult. Most called shots are Hard

or Legendary, meaning that you need a 30 or 40 just to succeed at the attack — if not, you've wasted your action, and they won't even bother to defend.

Targets sometimes have specific weaknesses that called shots can take advantage of. Called shots cannot inflict combat effects or ignore the target's armor unless you're using special kung fu or weapons that would do that anyway — choose your descriptions accordingly.

Hazardous Environments

Hazardous environments do a certain number of dice of damage each round, often with a small positive modifier. Relatively minor hazards — swarms of mosquitoes, scalding water, and so forth — give the character a free defense; the character can oppose the damage with Hardiness or some appropriate skill as a free action. Characters facing major hazards such as boiling lava, drowning, infernos, and so forth, don't get a free defense — the only defensive options are Chi auras, armor if it applies, and tactical



Example Condition	Damage Dice	Damage Modifier	Armor?	Free Defense?
Swarm of mosquitoes	1d	+0	Yes	Yes
Swarm of birds	2d	+0	Yes	No
Swarm of swords	1d	+15	Yes	No
Drowning	1d	+5	No	No
Scalding	2d	+0	No	Yes
Lava	3d	+5	No	No

opposition that uses up the character's full action every round.

In a hazardous environment, large numbers of damage dice (3+) indicate variably high damage. High modifiers makes the damage consistently higher and harder to resist with Hardiness and Chi Aura. Refusing a free defense means that characters *have* to use their full action or their Chi Aura simply to survive. Allowing or refusing armor is mostly a matter of consistency — armor helps survive a storm of glass shards, but it can't prevent drowning.



Healing

Characters wishing to heal without the use of Jade Chi can heal up to their Health in damage each scene. This requires a Medicine or Hardiness skill roll; doctors can treat themselves and others with Medicine, but the only person who can heal you with Hardiness is yourself.

Characters wishing to heal make the healing roll at the end of the scene, and can use joss or the river as desired.

Equipment

Quality Armor

Weapons of the Gods uses simplified armor rules. Armor comes in three types, and all save Light armor are expensive or rare. Armor greater than Light is always considered a Quality possession.

Light Armor. Light armor doesn't really impair mobility. It's usually made of quilted cotton or leather. Thunder Bei wears light armor as a matter of course, as do many practical (or insecure!) martial artists. Light armor imposes a -5 modifier on an attacker's damage rolls.

Medium Armor. Medium armor provides significant protection and is both bulky and heavy — but a strong, healthy martial artist can handle it. Tian Wen is usually seen wearing this level of protection, principally provided by a strong breastplate and gauntlets. Medium armor imposes a -10 modifier on an attacker's damage rolls. Characters wearing medium armor need to make a Trivial (10) Lift roll when starting serious physical activity like combat. Failure means a round of entanglement (pg. 75). Success gives a -5 modifier on physical activity rolls and doubles the cost of Lightfoot Techniques. Critical success lets the character move freely.

Heavy Armor. Heavy armor is made of large, massive metal plates, articulated to enclose the torso. Earth Lord wears this kind of armor. Heavy armor imposes a -15 modifier on an attacker's damage rolls. Characters wearing heavy armor need to make an Everyday (18) Lift roll when starting serious physical activity like combat. Failure means a round of entanglement. Success gives a -5 modifier on physical activity rolls and doubles the cost of Lightfoot Techniques. Critical success lets the character move freely.

Perfect Armor

Perfect armor imposes a better modifier on damage rolls — perfect light armor imposes a -10, perfect medium armor imposes a -15, and perfect heavy armor imposes a -20. Armorers estimate that sixteen suits of perfect armor exist in Shen Zhou: five light, nine medium, and two perfect suits of heavy armor crafted by Huangti himself.

Wound Level

Dead
Last Legs
Staggering
Wounded
Injured
Battered

Difficulty to Heal

Impossible (60), at best.
Legendary (40)
Hard (30)
Moderate (20)
Everyday (18)
Simple (15)

Weapons

Weapons are the defining tool of the warrior: they help you attack others physically. When you have a weapon in hand, its Speed modifies your combat Initiative rolls. Its Strike modifies your attack and defense rolls. Its Damage modifies your damage rolls.

If you wield two weapons at once, your basic attack and defense get the best benefits of the set. Regardless which weapon you attack with, you get the best Speed and the best Strike your weapons offer. That's the point of the other weapon — it helps you overpower the enemy on attack and defense. Only one weapon actually hits the enemy, though, so damage, critical success techniques, and most kung fu depends on which weapon you actually attack with. The biggest penalties to two-weapon combat are the cost of the weapons and the fact that you don't have a hand free if you need one. (Note that many swordfighters like to fight with their scabbard in their other hand for use in blocking!)

Some weapons take two hands. This means that you can't practically wield another weapon, but you can free up a hand when you're not actively attacking or defending.

Quality Weapons

Quality weapons improve on these weapon characteristics. Pick one logical improvement:

- Add 5 to Speed; *or*
- Add 5 to Strike; *or*
- Add 5 to Damage; *or*
- Allow a two-handed weapon's use in one hand; *or*
- Converts a weapon from Brutal into Artful/Brutal or Brutal/Ranged; *or*
- Converts a weapon from Artful into Artful/Brutal or Artful/Ranged; *or*
- Adds one positive quality (note 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, or 9) to the weapon's qualities.

Shields

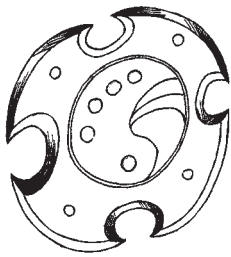
Weapons of the Gods classifies shields as just another weapon. You can hit someone with one, you can block attacks with one, and it takes up a hand. That's a weapon — shields just happen to be better than most Brutal weapons at blocking ranged attacks.



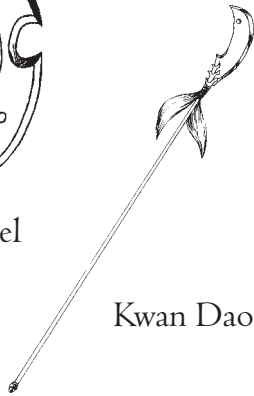
Weapon	Speed	Strike	Damage	Type	Notes
<i>Unarmed</i>					
Bite (human)	+0	+0	-5	Brutal	
Punch or kick	+15	+0	-5	Brutal	
<i>Blunt Weapons</i>					
Gauntleted punch	+15	+0	+0	Brutal	9
Shield	+5	+10	-5	Brutal	10
Baton/Iron Fan/Flute/Spatula	+15	+0	-5	Artful/Brutal	5, 9
Club / Hammer /Mace	+10	+5	+5	Brutal	4
Big Club / <u>Melon Hammer</u>	+10	+5	+10	Brutal	1
Flail	+10	+5	+0	Brutal	2
<u>Staff-Flail</u>	+5	+5	+5	Brutal/Ranged	1, 2
Staff	+10	+5	+5	Brutal	1
<u>Wolf-Teeth Staff</u>	+0	+15	+10	Brutal	1
<i>Sharp Weapons</i>					
Hand Axe	+10	+5	+0	Artful	9
Long axe	+5	+10	+5	Artful	
Battleaxe	+0	+15	+10	Artful	1
Whip	+15	+0	+0	Artful/Ranged	2, 6
Small Knife	+15	+0	-5	Artful	9
Dagger or Punch Daggers	+15	+0	+0	Artful	4, 9
Short Saber	+10	+0	+5	Artful	4, 9
<u>Saber</u>	+10	+5	+5	Artful	
Longsword	+5	+10	+5	Artful	
<u>Nine-Ring Saber</u>	+5	+5	+10	Artful	
Greatsword	-5	+15	+15	Artful	1
Short spear	+10	+5	+0	Artful	9
<u>Judge's Brush</u>	+15	+0	+0	Artful	9
Long spear	+10	+5	+10	Artful	1
War lance	+0	+5	+10	Artful/Ranged	1, 7
<u>Long-handled Saber (Kwan Dao)</u>	+5	+5	+15	Artful	1
<i>Kung Fu Weapons (Requires Unusual Training to use)</i>					
<u>Rope Dart</u>	+15	+5	+0	Artful/Ranged	1, 6, 8
<u>Fire Wheel</u>	+15	+0	+5	Artful	3, 4, 8
<u>Tang-ba or</u>					
<u>Crescent Moon Shovel</u>	+15	+5	+5	Artful/Brutal	1, 3, 8
<u>Sectional Steel Chain</u>	+15	+0	+10	Brutal/Ranged	1, 2, 6, 8
<u>Blade Wheel</u>	+15	+5	+10	Artful	8
<u>Short Hook Swords</u>	+10	+5	+5	Artful	3, 4, 8
<u>Three-Section Staff</u>	+10	+5	+5	Brutal/Ranged	1, 2, 8
Stone Column	-10	+10	+20	Brutal	1, 8, 10
Ten-Head Falling Star Hammer	+0	+10	+10	Brutal/Ranged	1, 2, 8

Notes

- ¹ Requires two hands to use (includes paired weapons).
- ² Unpredictable weapon: you can choose Disorienting as the Critical Success effect.
- ³ Disarming weapon: you can choose Disarming as the Critical Success effect.
- ⁴ Dual weapon: +5 Strike when used in pairs.
- ⁵ Really Embarrassing: you can choose Embarrassing as the Critical Success effect.
- ⁶ Entangling weapon: you can choose Entangling as the Critical Success effect.
- ⁷ Mounted combat weapon: -10 modifier to use on foot.
- ⁸ Unusual weapon: -10 modifier to use without appropriate training.
- ⁹ Easy to carry and hide: +5 modifier to appropriate Lift, Finesse, and Stealth skill rolls.
- ¹⁰ Shield: you can use a shield to block projectiles and thrown weapons as if they were hand-to-hand attacks.



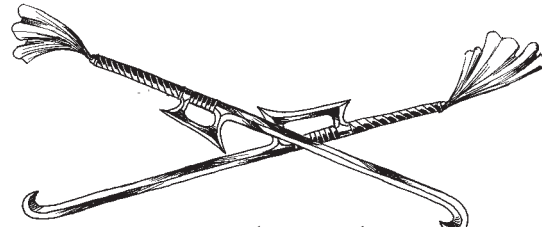
Blade Wheel



Kwan Dao



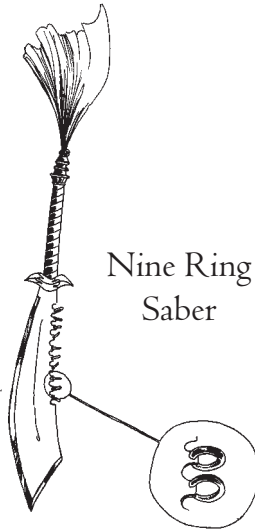
Crescent Moon Shovel



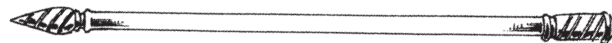
Hook Sword



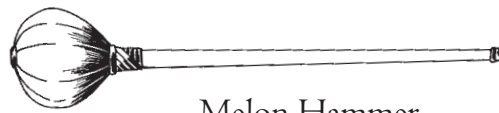
Mace Flail



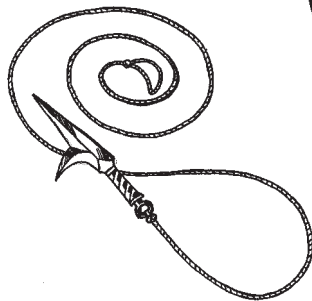
Nine Ring
Saber



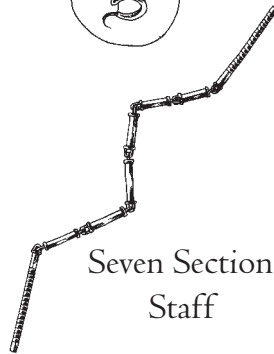
Judge's Brush



Melon Hammer



Rope Dart



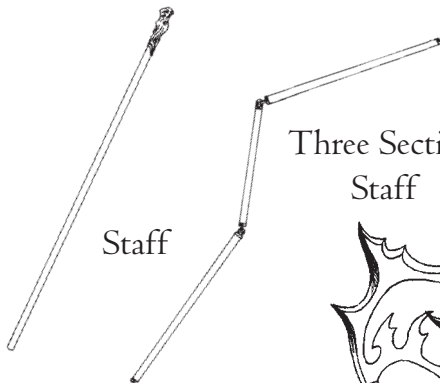
Seven Section
Staff



Saber



Staff Flail



Three Section
Staff

Staff



Wind Fire Wheels



Wolf Tooth
Staff



Ranged Weapon	Spd	Strk	Dmg	Type	Note
<i>Thrown Weapons</i>					
Needle	+15	+0	-5	Ranged (Artful)	⁹
Flying Dart, Knife	+10	+0	+0	Ranged (Artful)	⁹
Spear	+5	+5	+0	Ranged (Artful)	
 <i>Projectile Weapons</i>					
Rock or Coin	+15	+0	-5	Ranged (Brutal)	⁹
Sling Bullet	+10	+0	+0	Ranged (Brutal)	⁹
Iron Ball	+5	+5	+0	Ranged (Brutal)	⁹
Bow	+10	+10	+5	Ranged (Artful)	^{1, 11}
Crossbow	+5	+15	+10	Ranged (Artful)	^{1, 12}
Sling Bow	+10	+10	+0	Ranged (Brutal)	^{1, 11}

Notes¹ Requires two hands to use.⁹ Easy to carry and hide; +5 modifier to appropriate Lift, Finesse, and Stealth skill rolls.¹¹ Reloading a bow or sling bow is part of the attack.¹² Stats only for a loaded crossbow; otherwise treat as a club.

Reloading a crossbow takes a separate full action — a Simple (15) Athletics roll.

Ranged Weapons

Ranged weapons let you attack from a distance. Projectile weapons can attack out to Long range. Thrown weapons can attack out to Medium range.

Remember, Short range is up to one round away (10 yards); Medium range is up to five rounds away (50 yards); and Long range is up to ten rounds away (100 yards).

Military Archery

There are three ways to attack beyond Long range. One is special kung fu and other supernatural abilities. The other two rely on military

conditions: groups of archers firing together, and archers firing into troop formations.

When using projectile weapons, you can attack groups of minions who are up to one hundred rounds away. They can also attack you, from up to one hundred rounds away. This is pretty brutal if you're a melee fighter — if you decide to charge them, find some sort of cover or long-duration Chi defense.

Doing Deeds

— because accomplishing Deeds is what being a Hero is all about!

As you play your character in *Weapons of the Gods*, your hero will have the opportunity to achieve amazing **Deeds**. A Deed is any successful action that does both of the following: is **Impressive** (whether to your peers, your enemies, or simply the ordinary folk looking on), and **Virtuous**, living up to the Five Xia Virtues, as enumerated below.

Whenever you do something that does both of the above, you've scored a Deed of the most appropriate Virtue. Put a check in the Deeds box on the back of your character sheet under the relevant Virtue. Each time you score a Deed, you get a Destiny point and Joss of the appropriate type. You can earn additional joss points by describing the execution of the Deed vividly and excitingly; your Sage will watch how much of a response you get from your fellow players, and you will earn anywhere from 1-3 Joss based on their sincere responses to your Deed.

So read the next several pages closely — because Deeds are all what being a hero are all about! Do something daring and virtuous, and describe it well — and both Destiny and Fortune will be on your side. Never mind

Throwing Weapons

You can throw just about any weapon — or, really, anything — out to Short or Medium range. Your action depends on your Ranged skill and kung fu, to hit, and your Lift skill, to throw it in the first place. Many Shen Zhou weapons have lengths of silk attached to the hilt. If you hold these strips of silk, you can throw the weapon to Short range and then retrieve it with Lift Skill.

Throwing random objects out to Long range takes special kung fu.

Weapon Strike	Expected Weapon Weight	Short-Range Throwing Difficulty	Medium-Range Throwing Difficulty
+0	< 30 pounds	5	10
+5	30-60 pounds	10	15
+10	61-120 pounds	15	18
+15	121-250 pounds	18	20
+20	251-400 pounds	20	30
+25	401-1200 pounds	30	40

You're reading this chart correctly — in Shen Zhou, characters really *do* carry 200-pound greatswords as a matter of course. It's part of the martial arts mystique.

Quality weapons and Weapons of the Gods are often lighter than their Strike indicates, but this isn't reliable — the Immortal Emperor in Heaven uses a ten-thousand pound greatsword when he wants to work up a light sweat.

that when you acquire enough Deeds, you're eligible to gain Rank!

(To learn more on how this works, refer to the *Scroll of the Sage*, pg. 339, Gaining Rank.)

Heroic Virtues

These are the five Xia Virtues that all righteous heroes in the Wulin revere. If you achieve these, the common folk and any other martial artists nearby will pass on tales of your greatness — and the Wulin Sage will mark you for future monitoring to see if you are worthy of higher Rank. The Martial Arts World is a bragging society as much as any other kind of community; if you do the deeds, the respect will come. *Note:* If desired, your gaming group can remove the social aspect of these virtues and award them solely for in-character coolness.

俠 Xia is the Virtue of *Justice* — of all-as-it-should-be. When someone does something cool and *right* in pursuit of poetic justice, harmony, and revenge in Shen Zhou, it earns the Xia Virtue.

Among many other possibilities, you can earn Xia with well-planned or well-executed revenges, describing an action or result in a way that beautifully evokes harmony-of-elements and harmony-of-yin-and-yang thought, and when your player describes a mortifying or embarrassing failure in a fashion that makes it seem poetic justice for your own earlier deeds.

寬 Kuan is the Virtue of Altruism or *Benevolence*. Kuan is helping others when aid is appropriate or necessary — it's on a personal scale. Cannibal bandits have taken a farm and are preparing the family for the pot? Leap to the rescue! Someone is worse off than you? Help them! While Xia is seen as more 'heroic', Kuan is often more appreciated by others. Out of game, when someone does

something unselfish that improves the game — such as bringing snacks, well-described assistance to others, and so forth they can earn the Kuan Virtue.

義 Yi is the Virtue of *Righteousness*. When someone strives greatly towards laudable ends, whether they succeed or fail, they can earn the Yi Virtue. Yi is unlike Kuan in that this is doing the right or benevolent or good thing on a large scale; Kuan is personal, while Yi is addressing it on a system or large-scale. Yi differs from the Xia Virtue in that it's about acting with integrity to bring positive change, whereas Xia is about restoration of balance and order to the Land.

This virtue is the one that causes ordinary folk the greatest discomfort, for it is what drives Xia Heroes to challenge the unrighteous, as in the Story of "Ling Liu's Flowering". Good description on a mortifying or embarrassing result often earns Yi Virtue, because characters usually overreach when striving to excel or act in a righteous fashion. Righteousness is about doing the right thing, regardless of the desires or demands of established authority.

忠 Zhong is the Virtue of *Loyalty*, Honesty, and Honor. Zhong is the virtue of taking acts against one's own self-interest in the name of higher principles; to act properly in

all things, whether to one's friends or society. For characters, this means self-sacrifice in the name of higher principles or one's companions — "Leave no friend behind" is certainly one expression of Zhong, as is keeping your sworn word. For the player, that means sacrificing for the fun of other players — and, when players can't come to agreement, the GM can offer Zhong Virtue to the one that gives way.



神兵玄奇

神兵玄奇





霸 **Ba** is the Virtue of *Force* – as in Force to be Reckoned With, or Force of Will. When someone achieves stunning results, showing raw ability and capability, they can earn the Ba Virtue. Another good way to develop Ba Virtue is to bend people to your will – whether through careful use of Intrigue as a Courtier or just good old Inspiring Terror in your enemies; these are the ways to practice your Force. Good description on a stunning or better style result also allows characters to develop Ba Virtue. Great achievements of heroism do the same – for example, the GM may award everyone a point of Ba after a major victory.

Corrupt Virtues

Every coin has two faces – this is as true in the East as it is in the West. Heroes are not always the most temperate of people – to cultivate your Chi is to become larger than life, with passions that flow accordingly! Poor choices are made in the heat of the moment, and once an unrighteous choice is made, it becomes easier to make again and again... and many are the heroes who have fallen off the Path of Righteousness to become Selfish Heroes: heroes who think only of themselves and their own fame. To be Corrupt is not necessarily Evil – but it IS unrighteous, as you no longer think of the good you can do for others. Just like Deeds done for Xia Virtues, Corrupt Deeds have a way of becoming known to the Wulin and its Sage; and yes, you can still climb Rank doing these Deeds. *Note:* Just like Xia Virtues, your gaming group can remove the social aspect of these virtues and award them solely for in-character action.

仇 **Chou** is the Corrupt Virtue of *Revenge*, corresponding to a hero's Xia. Corrupt martial artists receive Chou for being properly impressive villains and acting with ruthless harmony towards their goals. Chou is about paying debts of lost face with blood – even Xia Warriors can accumulate Chou if they become over-concerned with their own reputations. Chou is the dark side of 'Face' – anything that damages your face and standing in the world must be answered!

私 **Si** is the Corrupt Virtue of *Individualism*, corresponding to a hero's Kuan. Corrupt martial artists receive Si Virtue for hindering the actions of their enemies in an estimable fashion, as well as successfully pursuing their own aims. Part of being a 'Selfish Hero' is the concern for your priorities over anybody else's – again, Xia Warriors can indeed gain this Corrupt Virtue by acting for themselves, even at the cost of their own stated objectives, such as when Thunder Bei heartlessly allows the Convoy Forces die at the hands of Earth Lord's Demon Army, simply to save the money he would have had to pay them!

暴 **Chan** is the Corrupt Virtue of *Obsession*. Chan is about pursuing a goal without limit or restraint, employing any and all solutions; it's about being *creative* in the face of adversity, even if that adversity is partly resulting from driving towards your overwhelming goal. If someone manages to make every action serve their goal, then they are exemplars of Chan and should gain Deeds accordingly. Si is about how much regard you have for your own goals; Chan is how hard you drive towards a goal that you have, whether it's yours or someone else's. (Corrupt Flunkies and lieutenants traditionally serve Chan more than Si, as they're fulfilling someone else's will, not their own.)

狠 **Hen** is the Corrupt Virtue of Ruthlessness. The companion Virtue to Chan, Hen is earned whenever you find the most beneficial solutions to problems at the absolute least cost to you... and at the greatest expense to others, whether they be political opponents, rivals in your own clan, or just anybody who has the misfortune to cross your path. Note that this is not like Chan; Hen is where you increase your Face by making sure that people know what you're capable of in the pursuit of your goals – and use them or run roughshod over them!

纏 **Bao** is the Corrupt Virtue of Ferocity, corresponding to a hero's Force. If a selfish hero commits deeds of great ferociousness, defeating his enemies, humiliating them and demonstrating how much fiercer he is than they are, he can earn Ferocity. The paragon of this Corrupt Virtue was *Chi You*, the Wormy Rebel himself, who liked nothing better than to smash the lives of the innocent, harvesting their tears, and then eat them alive. It is a fighter's nature to be violent, to be sure – but there are kinds of violence, both necessary and cruel. If you earn Bao, it's because you were the latter.

The world was in chaos, and the kung-fu world was full of stormy waves. Amongst the practitioners of martial arts, each school set up a separatist regime by force of arms and they contended for hegemony. In these times, the four great clans mastered the way of morality. However amongst the evil parties, the Hell Clan was dominant.

The Nan Clan

From the great lake in the central plains, headed by Yi Nangon - they mastered the art of the sword, and were well renowned.

The Hell Clan

An almighty organization, with power in all the lands, practicing secret and dangerous arts, their methods were cruel and devious!

The Bei Clan

Called the military warehouse of the world, experts in forging every kind of weapon. Their head, Zhong Bei was obsessed with ambition, and plotted to take over the world.

The Xi Clan

In the Western realms they guarded the pass between east and west, abundant in arms, headed by Ho Xi, they're wealthy but arrogant and unrefined.

The Dong Clan

Powerfully situated on the shore of the Bohai Sea, and headed by Ian Dong. They operated the shipping trade and were as rich as an empire with skills as high as the clouds.



Shen Zhou: The Land of the Gods

The Lore of Shen Zhou

Introduction

The following setting information draws heavily upon traditional Chinese history and myth, reinterpreting it within the context of the *Weapons of the Gods* storyline. The tales are told in a form that mimics other Chinese stories and folklore; they are meant to provide flavor and style as well as greater insight into the world of Shen Zhou.

Lore Sheets

The next few chapters present the secrets of Shen Zhou.

Each topic is presented as a “lore sheet” — a focused description of part of the setting. Basic topics discuss matters that most characters understand on a rudimentary level. System topics discuss matters for the players to understand the game better. Advanced topics focus on secrets only a handful of people know.

For practical reasons, this book assumes that players have access to all of the information herein. Players who buy the book may wish to read it fully. The Game Master in one game may be a player in the next. The real secrets of the game originate in the GM’s mind.

Characters, conversely, do not understand much of the world they live in. They learn more about the secrets of Shen Zhou and the Martial Arts world in one of three ways. They can “buy” access to some of this lore with Destiny, study lore between sessions, or receive it as an award from the GM.

Format

Each lore sheet has a Destiny cost. This is what characters must pay in order to understand the subject in depth — to know all the little details of the matter without Learning rolls. A character with high Learning knows about all of the gods. A character with the Celestial Goddess lore sheet may or may not know anything about the Immortal Emperor, but knows how Nüwa wore her hair when she battled the River Stone Lord.

In addition, lore sheets give characters access to various plot threads. Spending Destiny, a player can involve their character in events relating to the lore. This is an optional system for both players and Game Masters. If the player spends no Destiny on plot involvement, the character still

has an exciting and plot-filled life—the player just has no formal input into what kinds of things will happen. Game Masters can always veto individual expenditures, adjust the costs, and add new plot threads off of existing topics. Further, the Game Master may wish to offer new advanced topics to the characters, for appropriate Destiny costs, with plot threads tying directly into the directions the Game Master wishes to take the game.

Destiny spent this way always and only creates opportunities. When the Game Master allows a given purchase, it has the same weight as any other plot thread the GM has in mind—the players can still screw up their opportunity and take the story in a different direction. In other words, the Game Master can make it as challenging as she chooses to take advantage of the purchase — although if she does not intend the character’s ultimate success, she should use her veto instead.

Buying Lore Sheets

Many lore sheets interrelate. Understanding one thing can help learn another. Thus, lore sheets offer discounts on other lore. When buying a new sheet, you always get the biggest applicable discount, but you don’t get all of them. Understanding the Zhou Dynasty helps a little when it comes to understanding Daoism; understanding the Han Dynasty and the Yellow Turban revolt helps more; but if you have both, the discounts don’t stack.

You can learn any basic topic just by spending Destiny. You can only learn an advanced topic if you first learn a basic or advanced topic that references it. Game Masters may hand out lore based on things you deal with in a significant fashion in play; this breaks the required prerequisite rule.

Studying for Lore

Many lores have a “study difficulty.” This is a skill and a task difficulty — e.g. Learning (30).

You can normally study one lore at the end of each session, making a single skill roll to acquire a single lore. For more realism, the GM can instead allow you to study one lore during each long Downtime, but not between sessions.

If you make the roll, you reduce the Destiny cost to purchase that lore by one. If you critically succeed, you reduce the Destiny cost by two. You can accumulate knowledge over the course of multiple sessions of study to reduce a lore’s Destiny cost to zero, at which point you acquire that lore. This is cumulative with any discounts received from other lore sheets.





This applies only to the cost for the lore sheets themselves. You must always pay the full Destiny cost for the miscellaneous Destiny purchases available through that lore. If a lore sheet has no study difficulty, you must pay the full Destiny cost for that lore.

Purchase Types

Bonus — you receive or purchase a benefit. For example, you might receive extra Destiny when taking certain actions, or a bonus to certain rolls.

Defense — you receive a +1 die bonus when defending against a given Weapon's techniques, usually because you know the myths and stories surrounding it. For example, you can purchase a bonus to defend against Bile Rain. This bonus can take you above the usual 7 die limit for skills, by the way.

Destiny — you have a Destiny that lets you do something you might otherwise have difficulty doing. This generally adjusts the overall shape of the story to come, so the Game Master should look at these purchases carefully. For example, if you have a personal quest to pursue, a Destiny might integrate it into the plot so that you don't have to decide between that quest and working with the other PCs.

Discovery — this represents a declaration that something's already true. The Game Master can veto a discovery, but if she allows it, it's for real — at some point soon, you'll discover it in character. For example, you could "discover" that you have an ally in the Flame Cult.

Entangled Destiny — if you tangle your Destiny with something, it'll play a role in your life and you'll play a role in its history. You might want to do this if you think something's neat, or if you want to make other purchases that require its presence in the story. For example, you can entangle your Destiny with many of the individual Weapons of the Gods the lore sheets mention.

Fortune — this explicitly represents an opportunity to do something or obtain something. If you take proper advantage of the opportunity the Game Master gives you, you'll realize the benefit of this Destiny. For example, you could have a chance to join a secret society.

History — you have connections to a historical figure. This normally refers to a connection by blood or martial lineage, and it's something stronger than raw descent — the blood of that ancestor, or the style of that martial ancestor, shows very strongly in you. Without special permission, characters have at most one of these historical connections.

You can purchase your first historical connection during play; when you do so, the influence

of that ancestor begins to show. Shen Zhou families interbreed, so all ancestors are available to all Clans with Game Master approval. For example, you can descend from Huangti's martial lineage — if you follow the chain of teachers and students back to the first influences on your kung fu style, you'll find that the Yellow Emperor played a part. This is true for most martial artists in Shen Zhou; when you purchase the History, it means your personal style of kung fu somehow brought Huangti's influence to the fore.

Secret — at some point soon, you learn something secret.

Technique — you have an opportunity to learn a given martial arts style (or technique), perhaps from a manual or a solitary master. This is identical to a Fortune that offers that opportunity, save that the Game Master may want to apply more stringent rules to the purchase of Techniques.

Victory — the Game Master recognizes a success already achieved. In this kind of Destiny, what you have to do is to realize the Destiny is either obvious, stated, or freeform; when the Game Master agrees that you've done it, you spend the Destiny and achieve the benefit. This usually represents a "best effort" case — if you spend the Destiny, your best effort is enough to achieve the goal; if you don't, it might not be. For example, you might start looking for places tainted by Void Chi. In theory, you might never find one, or you might find one instantly. If the Game Master can't think of any obvious efforts you're not making, you can declare Victory and find such a place. Similarly, dominating the divided Qichao Clan requires beating their two leaders and capturing their Weapons. If you do that but the story doesn't naturally flow to your ruling the Qichao, there's not anything definitive to do — so, while you're politicking with the Clan members, you may want to declare Victory. If a Victory can be claimed "once during the game", then a given character can only make that Destiny purchase once.

Destiny Discounts

Characters can sometimes reduce a purchase's Destiny cost by including an unfavorable element in their Destiny. For example, locating lost treasures is usually cheaper if one of the character's enemies also learns its location. If such a drawback is listed, and the character accepts it, subtract the parenthesized cost from the cost of the overall purchase.

Balance

Characters who spend Destiny on plot involvement are really buying *favorable* involvement — events and circumstances that help them in the direction their player wants them to go. They walk the paths of the gods, and this has certain benefits.

Tiger Soul: An Example Plot Seed

The first plot arc of the *Weapons of the Gods* comic deals with Tiger Soul, a terrible weapon forged by Chi You. Its impending return catalyzes the Martial Arts world—its wielder will reign supreme, and only Heaven's Crystal will compare! If these events took place in your game, the Destiny costs for involvement might run as follows.

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Fortune:** involve yourself in a major Clan's quest to retrieve Tiger Soul.
- 1 **Fortune:** involve a major enemy in the quest to find Tiger Soul.
- 2 **Secret:** learn key information helpful in finding Tiger Soul or Heaven's Crystal.
- 3 **Fortune:** lead a major Clan's quest to retrieve Tiger Soul.
- 5 **Entangled Destiny:** involve yourself with Heaven's Crystal.
- 25 **Fortune:** obtain Tiger Soul.

How the Players React

Hong Dong's player finds Tiger Soul interesting. She spends a point of Destiny to involve herself with the quest. She also spends a point of Destiny to ensure that Ian Dong gets involved, so that she can keep an eye on him. Hopefully, the fallout of the quest gives her an opportunity to remove him!

Great Oak's player is obsessed with the hero's attempt to win Snow Bei's heart, and doesn't spend Destiny here. The actions of the other characters carry him along, but it's not really important to him.

Bufon Jou's player wants to find out key information. The GM decides that this is okay, although she wasn't really ready to give more out yet. Previously, the gods had frustrated Bufon Jou's attempts to learn the secret location of the Crystal from Heaven's current whereabouts; now, he makes a heaven-defying prediction about where it might be found!

Ironheart Nan's player wants to be important, and thus buys the opportunity to lead the Dong-Nan combined force. The Game Master makes things a little difficult early on, but ultimately the Clans choose Ironheart to lead them.

Tian Wen's player doesn't like the straightforward approach to things. Instead of purchasing direct involvement—at least, at first—the player instead binds Tian Wen's Destiny to Heaven's Crystal.

Any of these players could spend 25 Destiny and arrange their character's ultimate destiny as the wielder of Tiger Soul. Since multiple player characters are interested in Tiger Soul, and since the Game Master has nefarious plans of her own, the GM might veto this. Alternately, she can make a few good opportunities available and let the chips fall where they may. Circumstances are sure to favor one character over the others in any case, and it does no harm to have them pay for their fortune.

Characters who spend Destiny on improving their character are stronger in a head-to-head fight, but stories generally involve them under less auspicious circumstances. The gods throw greater challenges at greater heroes, even when both participate in the same events.

In practice, both approaches should yield the same amount of time in the game's "spotlight". Doing cool things requires both opportunity and ability. Spending Destiny on plot involvement helps with the first, and spending Destiny on character improvement helps with the second. Game Masters can tune the system, giving characters extra Destiny to spend on lore and plot purchases or extra Destiny to spend on character improvement.

Plot Density

Reading the following chapters, it may seem that Shen Zhou has an unexpected density of kung fu masters, secret societies, mystic sites, lost Weapons, and adventures. The Game Master should bear in mind that most of these elements do not appear in a typical game. The various threats, secrets, and treasures mentioned in boxed text are part of the game world only when a player spends Destiny on them or the Game Master decides they'd be fun to include. Most of Shen Zhou is tame and dull; it's the lives of the heroes that are full of adventure.

Destiny Purchases in Character Creation

Game Masters award each player a pool of Destiny for purchasing kung fu, specializations, skill improvements, Advantages and the like. These Destiny points can also be spent on lores and plot involvement during character creation. Normally, this does not allow the purchase of Bonuses, Defenses and Techniques (as Lores, that is). Fortunes cost double if the player wishes to follow up on the opportunity before play begins. Victories, similarly, cost double. Since the Game Master still has a veto, she should tell the players in advance what kinds of purchases she'd be comfortable with.





Shen Zhou: The Land of the Gods

The Origin of Shen Zhou

Legendary Texts

Pangu
Fire and Water
The Celestial Goddess
The Wulin
The Enchanted Demon
The Yellow Emperor

Pangu

Destiny Cost: 3
Study Difficulty: Learning (30)

The First Event

IN THE BEGINNING, the first creature, Pangu, appeared in the void. Instantly he sought to destroy it so that the world could exist, but he did not have sufficient strength. A dismal failure, he retreated to the corner of nonexistence and slept for many millennia. His dreams grew heavier over the years until they collapsed in on themselves and condensed into a perfect jewel: the Two-Faced Cleaving Axe Style, also known as the Pangu Binding Edge. When he awoke, he understood this style in its entirety. He bit his thumb and spit blood into the void, creating from that blood the great axe First Conception. "One edge for cutting," said Pangu, "and one to bind the wounds!" He took up this axe and marched against the void.

Scholars regard the void as a great black egg, boiling with Void Chi —

the dark and undifferentiated Chi that existed before Pangu

divided the world. It cast its shadow on Pangu's heart, but Pangu's heart was a diamond and he stood undeterred. The battle began. Pangu plunged into the center of That Which Was Not and began to lay about him with his axe — yet his axe met nothing, for there was nothing in the void. It countered, laying a chill upon him, until it seemed that he would wither away to dust.

Pangu Shapes the Void

"I cannot fight that which has no arms!" cried Pangu, and spun his axe; and then the void had arms, and he chopped them off. Each arm that he severed turned immediately upon its body, lashing out against the great black egg — but now the void understood the meaning of arms, and it crafted them in endless millions to oppose Pangu. Each arm held a weapon, the first of its kind: the first straight sword, the first butterfly saber, the first dagger, the first hammer, the first water-fire rod, and so forth. These were the Black Void Treasures. As he cut away the arms that held them they screamed in rage.

"I cannot fight that which cannot move!" cried Pangu, and spun his axe; and then the void had legs, and he chopped them off. Each leg that he chopped off became immediately a demon of transition or motion, which turned upon the void — slithering and leaping, bounding and crawling, flying and swimming, running and kicking, each expressing the principle of its motion as it sought to unbalance the void. Now the void understood motion, and it crafted legs and wings in endless profusion, battering them against Pangu. Pangu was not deterred. With the binding edge of his axe he flung the void about.

Pangu Teaches the Void

"I cannot fight that which has no form!" cried Pangu, and spun his axe; and then the void knew kung fu, and its motions took on sanity and rigor. Each move that it attempted against him, he parried with the blunt edge of First Conception, and he returned each blow with the sharp. Now the void understood the meaning of battle, and it crafted styles in endless millions to oppose Pangu. It struck at him with hard styles and soft styles, unarmed styles and armed styles, the styles of deceit and the styles of honesty. It strove to paralyze his Chi and to poison it; to divert it and to disrupt it; to enslave it and to defeat it. It used the kung fu that is seen, the kung fu that is heard, the kung fu that is smelled, the kung fu that is felt, the

kung fu that is conceived, and the kung fu that is known. Yet after Pangu parried each style, he carved it away and turned it against the void, so that it knew the pain of every act it used against him.





"I cannot fight that which has no heart!" cried Pangu, and spun his axe; and then the void had a shape, and the ten thousand qualities of existence. With the diamond of its heart, it sought to withstand his blows; with the fire of its heart, it sought to burn him; with the wind of its heart, it sought to cast him away beyond even nothingness. Yet Pangu caught each of its natures with the binding edge of his axe, and severed it with the sharp edge, and fire and diamond and wind fell screaming away.

Pangu Cuts the Void

"I cannot fight that which has no Chi!" cried Pangu, and spun his axe. The void shuddered in pain as it felt its Void Chi dividing. Crimson Chi poured like blood from veins cracking open in the blackness. White Chi spun through the void egg like snow. Golden Chi gleamed around the weapons of the void. The light of Jade Chi shone around Pangu and his axe. All that remained of the void was Silver Chi, pulsing black with the remnants of its corruption.

"If I must die," said the void, "you will die with me!" With redoubled energy, it poured its chill into Pangu's heart. Now his axe grew slower and its edge rimed white. Pangu gathered his energy and refused to die.

"Your Existence-Hating Radiance cannot compare to the Pangu Binding Edge!" he cried, and sundered the void's corrupted Silver core. It exploded into a million shards. As the void dissolved, its components flew apart. The lighter components, such as clouds and wind and azure, rose to become the sky. The heavier components, such as iron and weight and deep places, fell to form the world.

Pangu Maintains the World

Pangu knew that if he did not prevent it, the power of the void would ensure its reincarnation — its pieces would draw together once more, dragging the Black Void Treasures with them, to oppose him and unmake all things. "This is no trouble for a hero like myself!" he declared. Without pause for reflection, he took up a position standing between the sky and the world, holding them apart with all his strength.

Two centuries passed, and Pangu looked down. He saw the rivers and the seas. "Whence came this liquid?" he asked.

Three centuries passed, and he felt a pain in his chest. "Ah," he said, "I must be bleeding."

Four centuries passed, and he sensed a chill within him. Then he knew that a shard of the void's corrupt Silver Chi, in the explosion, had pierced his breast and delivered its icy touch to his heart.

Pangu Sleeps

Five centuries passed. "I could tend to the wound," Pangu said, "but that would require that I put down the sky; and the world is developing so nicely!"

Six centuries passed. The blood pouring from him had become ice, creating the first winter of the world. "I shall survive," he said. "The sky is beginning to adhere, and needs only another fifteen hundred years."

Seven centuries passed. The world turned cold, but Pangu's blood oozed forth too slowly to freeze it. He closed his eyes and went into a healing trance.

Eight centuries passed. Dear Pangu! He opened his eyes. "The sky shall hold," he said. "Now I will sleep." So he did, and if you look to the north, to the highest mountains in the world, you will see Pangu standing among them, snow shrouding his head and his heart. Whether he died or merely sleeps, we do not know.

Secrets of Destiny: Pangu

Axe Immortals

[*Secret Society*]

In every generation, eight warriors shoulder Pangu's legacy. They give up the names of their birth, becoming one of the so-called "axe immortals." They must also sacrifice their faces — most wear black cloth masks, but a few maim their face until no longer recognizable. The Axe Immortals believe that the Void seeks always to return. To prevent this, they walk the Path of Pangu. They seek out and destroy sources of Void Chi, Black Void Treasures and other forces that might return the world to its original undifferentiated state.

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Secret:** You know the Axe Immortals exist, and have some inkling about how to find one.
- 2 **Entangled Destiny:** your Destiny will touch that of the Axe Immortals.
- 3 **Fortune:** you unknowingly have an Axe Immortal for a Friend (a Quality Contact). As is usual for such things, this is a two-way street; fortunately for you, an Axe Immortal usually just wants favors of information or espionage.
- 3 **Fortune:** you gain the Axe Immortals **Affiliation**, joining their select few (which is only done when one of the Eight retires and brings in their successor!) and gain access to the Pangu Binding Axe Style.

See pg. 268, Pangu's Binding Edge Kung Fu, for more information.



Black Void Treasures [Weapons of the Gods]

In its battle with Pangu, the substance of the void formed terrifying weapons. It also created a few infinitely efficacious tools, such as acupuncture needles and grain scythes. These are the Black Void Treasures. Using them corrupts and then destroys their wielders.

Legend says that the strongest of souls could maintain purity and virtue while wielding the Weapons of the primal void—but time and time again, great heroes and monks have failed, falling to the Weapons' sway, becoming tyrants and monsters. A few lost their Weapons and found redemption. The remainder were ultimately slain by those they held dear.

See *Building a Reputation in Hell*, pg. 367, for more information on Black Void Treasures.

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Fortune:** an enemy finds a Black Void Treasure.
- 2 **Discovery:** an enemy's existing weapon is a Black Void Treasure.
- 5 **Victory:** you tame a Black Void Treasure, and can wield the weapon for a GM-defined period without it corrupting you.
- 10 **Victory:** you tame a Black Void Treasure, and can wield it indefinitely.

Existence-Hating Radiance [Location]

Some dark places remain plagued by the echoes of the void's Existence-Hating Radiance. Their chill is hostile to most life, but certain monsters find it congenial. A few humans find it bracing — either they share the anger of the void, or it reminds them of their own life.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **Discovery:** you can exist comfortably in a place tainted by the Radiance.
- 3 **Victory:** you locate such a place to serve as a stronghold.

Million Style Manual [Treasure]

The "Million Style Manual" is a set of sixty-four jade stones marked with pieces of Chinese characters. It expresses the kung fu of the void, as taught by Pangu's axe. One can write the core secrets of

any kung fu style by arranging these stones properly in an eight by eight grid.

Most of the possible patterns mean nothing. If you began counting the possible arrangements of the stones, listing one in each beat of a hummingbird's wings, you would not finish in ten thousand generations. Conversely, there are only a few million kung fu styles. Trying to find one by arranging the stones at random is harder than teaching a tiger to read! However, characters who know something of a style can sometimes learn a little more by making a partial arrangement. Those who have a Million Style Manual usually strive to keep it and its symbols secret.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **Fortune:** you find a Million Style Manual and learn how to use it.
- 1 **Victory:** If you possess a Million Style Manual, you can use it to learn one to three pieces of useful information about an enemy's style by arranging the stones. You must pay this Destiny cost each time.

Tarnished Needle [Weapon of the Gods]

In the high cold mountains of the north, martial arts masters sometimes venture deep into abandoned mines in search of Tarnished Needle, the shard of Chi that pierced Pangu's heart. It is rumored that it has fallen to earth there, becoming a Class II Weapon. Some suggest that removing it from its resting place will reawaken the Void; others say it will bring Pangu peace. A few say it will bind Pangu's spirit to the one who draws it forth. Very few who quest after Tarnished Needle return — a hairy and primitive barbarian tribe haunts those mountains, and its ancestral spirits have sworn to protect the Tarnished Needle.

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Entangled Destiny:** your Destiny will touch that of Tarnished Needle.
- 3 **Defense:** improve your defense against Tarnished Needle techniques.

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- 1 *Fire and Water* — when Pangu sleeps, Gong Gong makes trouble!
- 1 *The Enchanted Demon* — who sought to awaken the Void!

Fire and Water

Destiny Cost: 3
Study Difficulty: Learning (30)

The Fire Temple

ZHU RONG RULED the fire temple in Heaven. Every god feared him. He carved the walls of his temple from the shell of a divine tortoise. More than ten thousand divine disciples practiced kung fu under his tutelage. His chief disciple memorialized the Zhu Fire Style like so:

The master moves across the polished floor.

His crimson robe caparisoned with gold.

Maidens fan the flames of the braziers

Their skin shining beneath their silks.

He performs the first form: a mountain topples!

He performs the second, and boils the seas.

The third form would shatter Heaven;

The fourth would make the seasons turn.

The final form would cause the sun to burn and swell

Turning the moon in the autumn sky to ash.

Truly, this is the Five Cataclysms Form!

Gong Gong

Among Zhu Rong's disciples was the demon Gong Gong. Gong Gong had great talent but a pettish disposition. He often challenged the other disciples so that he could demonstrate his skills, and showed no restraint when trouncing them. He even insulted Zhu Rong to his face: when Zhu Rong sparred with and defeated him, Gong Gong claimed that Zhu Rong won only because of the "secrets of the style."

Zhu Rong suspected that Gong Gong meant him ill. Investigating his student, he learned that Gong Gong had many lovers, including a hummingbird spirit named Ruby Eyes. Exercising the powers of transformation that his mastery gave him, he took her shape and made a rendezvous with his disciple. After relaxing Gong Gong's suspicions, he made inquiries as to the demon's plans for life.

"Ah!" declared Gong Gong. "Truly I have a glorious destiny before me."

"Oh?" inquired the fire temple's master.

"Well," said Gong Gong, in a grandiose fashion, "it is self-evident that I am the pre-eminent disciple of the fire temple. In due time, the old tiger will recognize my merit and appoint me first among his students."

"An excellent ambition!" exclaimed the false Ruby Eyes, clapping her hands.

"It does not end there!" Gong Gong assured her.

"Truly, your destiny is boundless! I must know more."

"Why, it is simply this: when I am the new chief disciple, Zhu Rong must then teach me the inner secrets of the style. I shall become the superior fighter, and roust him from the temple! His shame shall be limitless; he will not show his face in Heaven."

"Is that so?" roared Zhu Rong, forgetting the disguise and leaping up to assume martial stance. "Why, I shall myself shred you to ground weasel!"

Gong Gong looked at Zhu Rong skeptically. "Pardon, my dear," he said, "but you are far too delicate for such pursuits! Perhaps we should limit ourselves to intimacy."

Zhu Rong's rage knew no bounds. He did not bother to transform back; with one mountain-shattering blow, he knocked Gong Gong through seven walls and onto the streets of Heaven. Then he launched himself into pursuit.

For two hours he fought Gong Gong, with every blow beating him back. Welts the size of cities appeared on Gong Gong's baneful flesh. Gong Gong needed a weapon, so he reached down to earth and seized up a river for his defense. Tainted by his grip, it became the weapon Bile Rain. Leaping onto the back of a divine elephant, Gong Gong took the offensive, raining blows down upon his master. Zhu Rong leapt up to do battle with him at Gong Gong's height, but could not get close:



神兵玄奇



the river battered him in midair, each touch suffusing his veins with poisoned blood. Pestilent sores opened above his eyes and liquid filled his lungs.

Zhu Rong Retaliates

"Hoo!" cried Zhu Rong with his last clear breath, and grew to twenty times his former size. He laced his body with clean, consuming flame. The poison, too weak to survive inside this divine form, poured out from his mouth like a cloud.

"Ruby Eyes!" exclaimed Gong Gong. "I do not know how I have offended you, but I must now put an end to your bedroom games!"

"Foul traitor!" cried Zhu Rong. "I will teach you to respect your master!" He pulled a length of red and orange silk from his courtesan's sleeve and lashed out at Gong Gong with it. It whipped across Gong Gong's skin with such speed and force that Gong Gong's skin, bones, and vital organs caught fire.

"Hot!" declared Gong Gong. "But it is nothing compared to the might of the Zhu Fire Style! Now, here is a lesson!" Clasp his arms to his chest, he suspired the flame in the shape of a red centipede demon. It clung to Zhu Rong's face and tore at him with a dozen claws.

At first, Zhu Rong made only a muffled response — when he opened his mouth, the centipede demon clawed at his tongue. Annoyed, the fire temple's master bit the demon in half and spit it down at the sea below, where it became the sea monsters Gong Bi and Gong Li. "The Zhu Fire Style?" he said. "I will show you its third form!"

Gong Gong went pale, thinking, "The master has taught her these things? How can I survive a form that can shatter Heaven?" He had no alternative — he unleashed his own secret style, practiced far from the temple. Gong Gong struck at Zhu Rong with Bile Rain first once, then twice, then four times, then more. Each blow fell lightly, like a drop of water, but each move of the form doubled the blows struck. The gray end of his weapon became first a driving rain, and then a torrent, and then a flood, and then a typhoon that fell upon Zhu Rong and threatened to drown Heaven. In an instant, he turned failure into triumph and a brawl into a cataclysm — and then Zhu Rong attempted the third form. Bile Rain shattered, falling in a million pieces onto the world below. Heaven shook. Gong Gong's elephant reared; he fell, unconscious, from its back.

"Wake up!" cried Zhu Rong, and struck at Gong Gong. Instantly, Gong Gong rolled out of the way — a master of kung fu can fight even while unconscious.

"I cannot wake up!" cried Gong Gong. "Ruby Eyes will kill me!"

Gong Gong Wakes

Zhu Rong could take no glory in defeating an unconscious opponent. "Only a coward fights while asleep. Wake up!" He beat Gong Gong through Heaven for three days and three nights, but his disciple would not wake. Finally, he stalked off to the temple to resume his true form.

Another three days passed before Gong Gong woke up. He finally realized what must have happened — but he also knew that, no matter who wore her shape, Heaven would prefer to tell the story of Ruby Eyes beating Gong Gong around its streets. "I'm ruined!" he cried. "Humiliated. It's all Zhu Rong's fault!" In his anguish, he sought to kill himself, ramming his head against one of the pillars that supported Heaven. Gong Gong's head was hard. The pillar cracked, causing much devastation, but he himself was unharmed.

Gong Gong abandoned his old conceits and conceived a new plan. He marched into the fire temple and cried, "I challenge Zhu Rong for command of the temple!"

The other students only laughed. "You can't even discipline your own woman," they told him. "We won't fetch Zhu Rong for a worthless bum like you."

"I'm a gracious teacher," said Gong Gong. "I'll teach you a new form! It's called the Tooth Eunuch Stance." He took ten of the students and ground their heads into one another until their teeth flew out and their lips puckered together. Looking around at the rest of the room, he roared, "Fetch me Zhu Rong!"

Ten of the stronger students stepped forward. "A gracious teacher would know the proprieties! We will explain them to you."

"Later, later," declared Gong Gong. "For now, I will show you the Stomach Vine Flail." He did not even break a sweat; with one punch, he inverted the stomach of each student, so that it hung from their mouths like a ripening fruit. "Practice striking your enemies with your stomach. It cannot worsen your kung fu! As for the rest of you, fetch me Zhu Rong."

"There is no need for this display," said the chief disciple, stepping forward. "I will meet your challenge."

"You?" sneered Gong Gong. "You do not even have the inner secrets."

"On the contrary," declared the chief disciple, "Zhu Rong has entrusted me with the Eight Fire Sutras. They echo always within my ears."

"I won't be impressed by any old technique," warned Gong Gong, and leapt to the attack. The chief disciple countered. Soon the room rang with the sound of their blows.

Water Boils

"Your form wastes Chi," said the chief disciple, balancing upon a brazier's flame as he defended against Gong Gong's attack. "With each blow I divert, the air grows heavier with power."

"I command the Many Waters Style," proclaimed the demon. "It is only natural that where fire meets water, one should find steam." One perfect blow extinguished the flame on which the chief disciple stood; another seized away the disciple's shadow and cut at him with its infinitely sharp edge. The chief disciple, calm, jumped back onto a wisp of drifting smoke.

"Your form wastes Chi," said the chief disciple again. With a clap of his hands, he relit the brazier. With his left hand, he seized individual sheets of color from the flame and cast them down at Gong Gong like razors. "The air is already as heavy as a cloak."

"It is only natural," Gong Gong answered, knocking the shards of flame away with the disciple's shadow and spitting poison at his enemy's face. "Water; fire; steam."

"Your form wastes Chi," said the chief disciple, but the rest of his thought was interrupted; for then the weight of power in the air grew too great, and with a great crack, the tortoiseshell temple split. The outer wall shattered; the inner wall shattered; every room in the temple exploded into shards, and disciples fell from the meditation chambers like droplets of spilled wine. Gong Gong acted without pause; before the chief disciple could react, he leapt for the room where Zhu Rong kept the scrolls with the Eight Fire Sutras, seized them, and vanished into the sewers of Heaven.

Gong Gong studied the secrets of the Sutras for many years. They became the seeds for the Dirty Water Style of divine martial arts. To revenge himself upon Zhu Rong, he trained a legion of hungry ghosts and demons in this style and prepared them for war. Whether he was successful in this endeavor, we do not know.

Secrets of Destiny: Fire and Water

Bile Rain

[*Weapon of the Gods*]

This magnificent Class II Weapon of the Gods contains flexible techniques for poisoning and drowning one's enemies. A hero would never use its terrible Seven Deadly Sicknesses technique (truly a Corrupt Deed), but might find its lesser abilities worthwhile.

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Entangled Destiny:** your Destiny will touch that of Bile Rain.
- 2 **Defense:** improve your defense against Bile Rain techniques.

Dirty Water Cult

[*Secret Society*]

The Dirty Water Cult (also called the Filth Cult) has not troubled Shen Zhou for many years, but it always threatens a resurgence. Its members live scattered through all the cities of Shen Zhou, a network of unpleasant criminals bound by their oaths to the Cult hierarchy. Unlike many criminal organizations, they do not reliably support the villages and cities they prey on against other bandits and killers — as the peasants say, "Dirty Water makes a bad elder brother!" Their virtues are loyalty, bravery, and the desire for self-perfection, but most of them try to steal or blackmail techniques out of others rather than mastering their Chi through adventure and glory. The Cult becomes a major influence once or twice every century when a great leader emerges. These are traditionally either "tiger leaders," who try to reform the Cult and lead it on the path of martial virtue and glory, or "elephant leaders," who exemplify the Cult's unpleasant attributes. Both kinds engage in terror and wholesale slaughter of the Cult's enemies, but a tiger leader fights with honor and respects the peasants.

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Discovery or Fortune:** you have an ally in the Dirty Water Cult.
- 2 **Fortune:** you develop good relations with the Dirty Water Cult.
- 3 **Fortune:** you join the Dirty Water Cult.
- 7 **Destiny:** you are a potential tiger leader or an elephant leader, and can unify the Dirty Water Cult under your banner.
 - (-I) You have a rival for control of the Cult.
 - (-I) . . . and that rival is of the opposite type. (Tiger to your elephant, or vice versa.)





Fire Sutras

[Kung Fu]

The inner secrets of the Flame Cult's kung fu come from just two of the eight fire sutras. A warrior knowing even five of them would be truly terrible.

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Secret:** Obtain key information regarding the location of the Flame Clan's fire sutras.
 - 5 **Secret:** Obtain key information regarding the location of an unrelated fire sutra or a master trained in it.
- (-1) A Flame Clan leader also learns hints about the sutra's location.

Flame Cult

[Secret Society]

The West Fire Doctrine Clan followed the ideals of Zhu Rong. Its leader, Flaming God, brought the clan from the west to take over the martial arts world. Although walking Zhu Rong's path lent strength to Flaming God, and emulating Zhu Rong's disciples lent strength to the clan members, Flaming God did not behave in a reliably appropriate fashion. This undermined his destiny, and he suffered a stinging rebuke at the hands of Zheng Bei and Yi Nangong. Flaming God and the remains of the West Fire Doctrine Clan joined the Hell Clan, becoming the Flame Cult (for more information, see pg 94, *Social Organizations of Shen Zhou*). Whether their new attitude brings them closer to or further from Zhu Rong we do not know.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **Discovery:** you have an ally in the Flame Cult—probably an old friend or family member who had previously concealed their allegiance.

Gong Bi and Gong Li

[Ally (Allies)]

These monsters command many of the unintelligent creatures of the sea. They speak with tongues stolen from drowned sailors. When provoked, they spit Green Sea Fire Mucous, which does not cease to burn even under water.

DESTINY COST

- 3+ **Fortune:** make an alliance with Gong Bi or Gong Li. Spending additional

Destiny makes it easier and cheaper to call upon your ally's aid. The two monsters do not get along — a strong alliance with one may anger the other!

Advanced Topics

- * *The Flame Cult* — right arm of the Hell Clan, the followers of Zhu Rong doctrine. (This advanced topic is for the GM to create.)

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- 1 *Pangu* — before this history, the first warrior strikes at the void!
- 1 *The Celestial Goddess* — Gong Gong broke the sky; who will mend it?

The Celestial Goddess

Destiny Cost: 3
Study Difficulty: Learning (20)

The Creation of Humanity

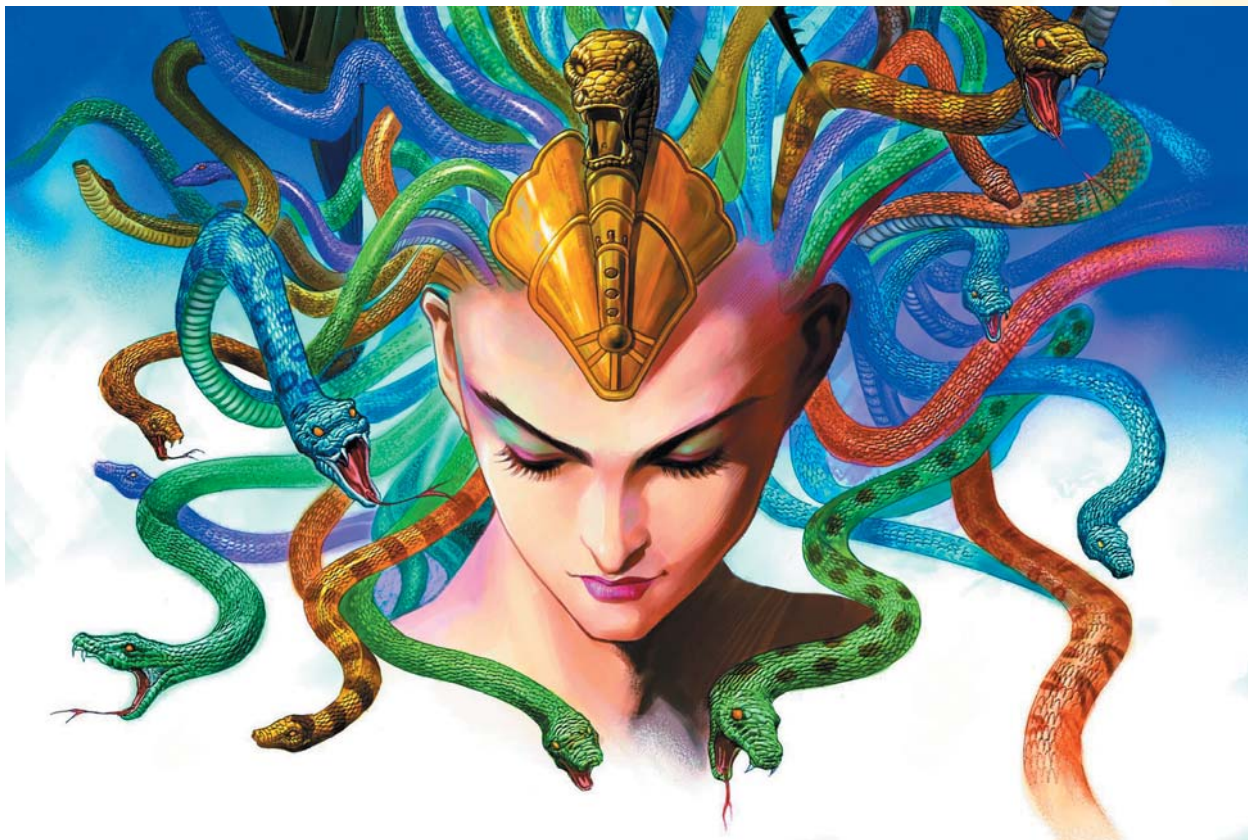
NÜWA, THE CELESTIAL Goddess, had the upper body of a woman and the lower body of a dragon. She found the world too empty, so she traveled to the Yellow River and attempted the Mud-Molding Practice. As she performed the sacred steps of this Practice, lightning danced across the mud and shaped it into human bodies. Then she struck each with the Life-Giving Blow. The mud baked instantly into terracotta, and then shattered away, revealing the first humans.

Humans lived in a state of relative contentment for many years. When Gong Gong shattered a Heaven-supporting pillar, however, disaster piled upon disaster. Chunks of Heaven fell to the ground, leaving a gaping hole in the sky. Chasms opened in the earth, spewing forth fire and flood. The kung fu of the primitive humans was no good, and they could not withstand such torments. It fell to Nüwa to save them.

Nüwa decided to gather the power she needed from the special stones found on the banks on the Yellow River and the Yangtze. On previous visits to the rivers, these stones lay free for anyone to claim. Now, when she returned to the Yellow River, she found the stones missing and an imposing keep built upon each river's shore.

The Celestial Goddess Enters

"Pardon," she said to the Yellow River fort's gatekeeper. "I had hoped to locate certain of the riverbank stones — ideally, one in each of the five primary colors."



神兵玄奇

"They are now the property of the River Stone Lord," answered the gatekeeper, "who does not share his power with any old woman."

The Celestial Goddess' eyes flashed. "Let me in to the keep," she said, "and I will discuss the matter with him personally."

The gatekeeper stared at her flatly for a moment. "It would be kinder to refuse you entrance."

"I ask a second time; I will not ask a third."

The gatekeeper nodded quietly, opened the gate, and stood aside. The Celestial Goddess moved three steps past the gatehouse into the keep. Then ninety-six demons descended upon her, twelve from each direction, and sought to snap her into chains.

"What's this?" she cried. Pulling forth her war fan, she battered the chains with her magnificent All-Things-Ordering Energy. Instantly, they defied the demons' inferior grip and coiled into a great eight-part knot. This caught more than half of the demons inside. The others screamed and drew forth lesser implements of binding: manacles, ropes, and three Any-Size Cages. This was to no avail: in two moves, the Celestial Goddess stuffed them all into an Any-Size Cage and shrank it down to the size of a gnat. The demon limbs caught on the outside flailed about as she tossed the cage aside.

"Rude creatures," she said, and moved further into the keep.

Nüwa confronts Zhu Yin

The main hall of the keep stood almost empty. A barren table occupied its center, six candles around its edges. The demon Zhu Yin stood upon it. He had six arms and a bone mask; in each hand, he held a brutal mace. Firelight from the candles reflected on his skin.

"I am sorry," he said quietly, "for what I must do." Then with a single blow, he extinguished all six candles. An aura of Demon Chi flared against the Celestial Goddess' sight — in an instant, it confounded her vision, filling it with darkness and afterimages. Even her mystic awareness became confused.

"Vile demon!" she said, rearing back as a mace crashed against her arm. "I'll repay blindness with emptiness!"

Clapping her hands, she called forth her boundless life power. The stones under her feet shattered as grass and tree warriors leapt forth to assault Zhu Yin. Even his skull betrayed him, coming to life beneath his skin and seeking to squeeze his brain into submission.

"Sssa!" answered Zhu Yin. With one hand, he paralyzed his skull so that it could not fight him; with three, he squeezed the plant warriors into juice; with the two that remained, he continued the assault. They boxed the Celestial Goddess' ears, one with each mace, so that her hearing faded and her head rang like a gong.



"Your actions do you no credit," she said, tumbling sideways to brace herself against a wall. "But have no fear! You can accumulate merit in a later life."

If Zhu Yin made a reply, she did not hear it. With her All-Things-Ordering Energy, she shouted a single word. This restored her impeccable vision and hearing, and she saw all things as they were. Under the pressure of her gaze, the table shattered; the candles flared and melted to stubs; and the maces shivered until Zhu Yin could no longer hold them. With a squeak of panic, Zhu Yin turned into a shadow and hid in the corner of the room.

"Because you apologized," she said, "I will give you an opportunity to mend your ways. Take me to the River Stone Lord! Then I shall permit you to live."

"Leave the keep," said Zhu Yin, in a subdued voice. "Leave the river. We need pursue this tawdry matter no further."

"I ask a second time; I will not ask a third."

"I cannot yield," said Zhu Yin. "I am the Bone-Mask Shadow Demon. My wife is ill, and I cannot save her except with the magic stones. I came here to find them and effect her cure, but instead the River Stone Lord struck me with his Thousand Torments Sword. Now, if I defy him, such pain wracks me that I envy the sinners in the Avici Hell!"

This story moved the Celestial Goddess to compassion. "Then step aside," she said. "When I have defeated the River Stone Lord, you may return to your home."

"I cannot," he said. With his magic, he pulled a dread blade from the shadows in which he hid. It weighed ten thousand pounds, and had two thousand pounds of wicked spines. In one swift motion, Zhu Yin struck.

Ah! This nearly decided the matter. The blade of Zhu Yin had the property that its image lagged nearly a quarter second behind it. It always struck before it seemed to strike. The Celestial Goddess' immaculate parry might also have lagged — but a fragile spider web hung between her and Zhu Yin. The instant it snapped, she recognized illusion at work, and again invoked her ability to see all things truly. She executed a perfect reply, and Zhu Yin's blade snapped back. Repelled by her All-Things-Ordering Energy, it circled around and chopped off Zhu Yin's own head. It flew off into space, ending the story of the Bone-Mask Shadow Demon, although we do not know if his head was ever found or what might have happened then.

Nüwa confronts Wu Mengda

Sighing sadly, the Celestial Goddess cast her gaze about. With her peerless insight, she noticed a great upwelling of power below. With a flick of her tail, she split open the floor and slithered effortlessly into the room beneath. It was filled halfway up the walls with water and lit by algae torches. A great toad god glared at her across the room, silver metal knuckles wrapped around his front feet. This was the god Wu Mengda.

"I am sorry," said Wu Mengda, "for what I must do." His tone was resentful and haughty. Truly, he was a spoiled warrior, not wanting to kill but blaming his opponent for the necessity! He struck the water's surface with his silver knuckles, releasing the All-Consuming Wave. It poured against the Celestial Goddess like the end of all existence.

"Vile demon!" cried the Celestial Goddess. "I'll repay your silver with gold!" In that instant, Nüwa opened the well of masterful Chi that lay within her. Pure gold light washed out and set a pure and regular order on the wave. Understanding that order, she slipped easily between the peaks and troughs.

"Bah," said the toad demon, and struck at her soundly. She brought up her war fan to defend herself, but it dispersed before his silver fist like the fog. With another hand, she raised her all-powerful rod; it, too, faded, like a mirage before the sun. The blow landed solidly on her breast; Nüwa herself flickered. Only invoking her All-Things-Ordering Energy kept her from extinguishing like a candle's flame.

"So!" she said, somewhat taken aback. "You know the Truth Becomes Illusion Style. Maybe you'll use it on the shame of your birth!"

If the toad god made a reply, she did not listen to it. With a shout, she struck at its weapons with a Life-Giving Blow. The silver fists tightened cruelly. The toad's hands burst, and blood flowed endlessly into the water.

"My beautiful hands!" he cried. "I'm ruined!"

"Because you apologized," said the Celestial Goddess, "I will give you an opportunity to mend your ways. Take me to the River Stone Lord! Then I shall permit you to live."

"I have no interest in your petty requests," said the toad god. "Go back! I wish to be alone with my sorrow."

"I ask a second time; I will not ask a third."

"I cannot yield," said Wu Mengda. "I am the Silver-Knuckled Toad God. My family are ordinary toads, and I cannot exalt them to divinity save through the use of the magic stones. I came here to find them and effect this miracle, but instead the River Stone Lord struck me with his Thousand Torments Sword. Now, if I defy him,



I dry and wither, until my cracking skin clings to my frail bones and I cannot draw breath enough to croak!”

This story moved the Celestial Goddess to compassion. “Then step aside,” she said. “When I have defeated the River Stone Lord, I shall exalt your family with my Heaven’s Glory Fist.”

Wu Mengda wept. “If I could only believe you,” he said, “I would let you past and endure my withering — but if I cannot defeat the River Stone Lord, how could you hope to succeed?” Inhaling deeply, he spit water of transformation into the Celestial Goddess’ face. Before she could react, she became a dragonfly; with one long snap of his tongue, he swallowed her up.

Ah! This nearly decided the matter. The stomach of a toad god is a terrible prison even for a Celestial Goddess! Even as he dragged her in, however, she invoked a mental summons and seized up the silver knuckles with the power of her kung fu. She shoved them so hard against the toad god’s stomach that his cheeks and stomach ruptured; his eyes popped out and were lost beneath the waves.

“That will teach you to insult the dignity of a goddess,” she said, as she resumed her natural shape; but whether he abandoned such tricks in the future, we do not know.

Nüwa confronts the River Stone Lord

As she looked around, recovering from the battle, the water began to drain from the room. The walls shuddered with heat. In a crash of thunder, the River Stone Lord strode into the chamber. He took the form of a withered old man, wearing jade-encrusted armor and holding his Thousand Torments Sword. He wore silver and gold twined into his braids. His perfume had the scent of crushed mandrake in it. Cruelty lined his face.

“You have cost me two useful minions,” said the River Stone Lord, “so must work three times as hard when you enter my service!”

“I’ll give you a service you won’t like!” answered the Celestial Goddess. “Unless you explain yourself and then give me the magic stones. Why do you hold gods and demons in this oppression? Why have you seized the stones for yourself? By what right do you threaten a master of kung fu such as myself?”

“Bah,” said the River Stone Lord. “A man such as myself deserves loyal slaves! The magic stones are my trap: if destiny calls you to the stones, it calls you to serve me. If you were not meant to fall into the trap, then you would never have come — this is simple logic.”

“Convenience or birth may choose a king,” answered the goddess, “but still he needs the mandate of Heaven!”

Nüwa struck at the walls with the Life-Giving Blow. They rippled, and for a moment they began to move — then, casually, the River Stone Lord tapped them with

his Thousand Torments Sword. “I have watched your battles,” he said. “I know this form.”

“Then taste this one!” she said, and gave a shout. The All-Things-Ordering Energy washed over him — but it tangled in the tip of the Thousand Torments Sword, and fell away.

“I have watched your battles,” he said again. “I know this form as well.”

“Then I have no choice,” she said, and essayed the Completion Touch against the Thousand Torments Sword. In that instant, the story of the River Stone Lord reached an orderly ending, and further purpose to his existence faded away. Like a statue, he froze, and we know that he never moved again. Even when his child, the Enchanted Demon, burst forth from his flesh, he did not act — but that is a matter for another time.

The Celestial Goddess walked past him and chose a handful of stones in each of the five primary colors from the River Stone Lord’s treasure house. Melting them in her heavenly forge, she mended the sky. So elegant was her crafting that she had seven stones left over!

Secrets of Destiny: *The Celestial Goddess*

All-Things Ordering Energy [Kung Fu]

The Celestial Goddess could use her Golden Chi to impose order on the world. Humans can use this technique, but risk transforming themselves into dragon-tailed monsters who hunger for the flesh of their loved ones. Some suggest that a true master could learn Dragon-Tail Style and channel these impulses into infinite benevolence; however, even such a master would risk great evil should disease or injury ever weaken their Chi to the point where they could no longer perform the Style. For more information, See *Formless Techniques*, pg. 355.

DESTINY COST

10 Technique: you have an opportunity to learn the All-Things Ordering Energy Level 6 formless technique.

* Receive 2 Destiny for transforming into a dragon-tailed monster who hungers for the flesh of your loved ones. Requires knowledge of the All-Things Ordering Energy. The GM determines whether the physical transformation is minor, major,

or progressive. Treat this condition as a Disadvantage henceforth.

- 5 **Secret:** learn of a teacher for Dragon-Tail Style.

Bone Blinder [Weapon of the Gods]

See *Zhu Yin*, below. His weapon, Bone Blinder, is a Class II Weapon of the Gods. It has fallen to Earth, we know not where.

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Entangled Destiny:** your Destiny will touch that of Bone Blinder.
- 2 **Defense:** improve your defense against Bone Blinder techniques.

Frog Fist [Weapon of the Gods]

See *Wu Mengda*, below. Frog Fist, the Class III silver knuckle Gauntlet Weapons of Wu Mengda, also remains on earth. For full details on Frog Fist and its techniques, see pg. 358.

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Entangled Destiny:** your Destiny will touch that of Frog Fist.
- 2 **Defense:** improve your defense against Frog Fist techniques.

River Stone Lord [Treasure]

Sages say that the Celestial Goddess transfigured the body of the River Stone Lord into a perfect jewel. Even with its stomach broken by the Enchanted Demon's emergence, it would be a treasure able to buy countries — a gem that could entice anyone to avarice!

DESTINY COST

1 **Discovery:** a susceptible enemy has an **Overwhelming Passion** Disadvantage to find and possess this great treasure. (This purchase is most effective when used on multiple enemies.)

- 1 **Victory:** having seen the River Stone Lord's body, you gain an **Overwhelming Passion** Disadvantage to possess

it. This is an exception to the normal limits on Disadvantages.

- 3 **Secret:** learn the location of the River Stone Lord's body.

Wu Mengda [Destiny]

When Wu Mengda returned to Heaven, he left his eyes back on earth. Illustrious gems, they became the insignia of the noble Qichao Clan. The leader who held both eyes commanded the Clan, and held sway over mortal toads as well. Sadly, fifty years ago, a schism formed within the Clan. The two children of the Clan Lord — Brother Sa and Sister Cha — each claimed one of the eyes. They used them to make the Class III Weapons Winter Sorrow and Anguished Lover. Auguries suggest that the hopelessly divided Clan cannot reunite until one Weapon is destroyed and the gem from its hilt delivered to the other Weapon's wielder.

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Entangled Destiny:** your Destiny will touch that of the Qichao Clan.
- 3 **Victory:** you earn the loyalty of some members of the Clan. To purchase this Destiny, you must first seize one sibling's Weapon, driving away or killing its former owner. You must then promise the Qichao you will destroy the other Weapon and unite the Clan.
- 5 **Victory:** you earn the loyalty of roughly half the Clan. This has the same requirements, save that your victory over the Weapon's former owner must be definitive.
- (-3) You previously purchased the loyalty of part of the Clan.
- 10 **Victory:** you earn the loyalty of the majority of the Qichao. You must defeat both siblings definitively and destroy one of their Weapons, claiming its gem.
- (-3) You previously purchased the loyalty of part of the Clan, but not half.
- (-5) You previously purchased the loyalty of half the Clan.

Zhu Yin

[Treasure]

The Immortal Emperor issued an edict restricting the gods and demons to Heaven and the Hells. Rumors say that Zhu Yin's head lacked the power to return to Heaven, forcing him to defy the edict. The Immortal Emperor, displaying great benevolence, cast afflictions upon him but did not order him killed, as Zhu Yin's head also lacks the power to overturn the world.

Zhu Yin's magical abilities remain strong, and he would make a powerful ally — able to consult auguries and conjure darkness — for a kung fu warrior strong enough to subdue him. Of course, if he gained dominance over a weak-willed warrior strong enough to carry him around, he would stir up endless trouble.

See *Bone Blinder*, above.

DESTINY COST

7 **Secret:** learn the location of Zhu Yin.

(-3) Zhu Yin is already in the hands of a known or unknown enemy.

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- I *The Enchanted Demon* — who confronted the Celestial Goddess!
- I *Fire and Water* — why did Gong Gong break the sky?
- I *The Wulin* — when Nüwa's humans master kung fu, there's great trouble!

The Wulin

Destiny Cost: 3
Study Difficulty: Learning (40)

Kuafu the Giant

THREE THOUSAND YEARS after the Celestial Goddess created humans, Old Man Kuafu unlocked the secrets of divine kung fu. The power of his Chi had no limits. After just three days of practice, he grew to the size of a giant and was powerful enough to take on Heaven itself.

"I'll seize the throne of Heaven's Emperor," he told his disciple. "Then everyone will know my infinite accomplishments!"

"Ridiculous," snorted his disciple, whose name was Thoughtless Wen. "How can you even get to Heaven?"

"You are heavy and plodding," answered Kuafu. "It's no surprise you would think that way. But if you're light-footed, you can run on a sunbeam!" He wasted no time putting action to words: with his feet pushing off of trees, sunbeams, clouds, and the sky itself, he flew towards Heaven.

"Ah!" said Thoughtless Wen, pained. "The way of kung fu is difficult. Still, I must accompany my master." Removing his jacket, he took hold of each of its arms and blew powerfully into its center. It instantly billowed out and yanked him upwards after Kuafu.

Heaven Responds

The guardians of Heaven soon came to report to the Immortal Emperor. "Two humans are rapidly ascending into the sky," they said. "One walks on light: his mastery is unparalleled! The other rides upon a turbulent wind. I fear that they do not have an invitation."

"Then they must be turned away," said the Immortal Emperor. "Send ten divine warriors to rebuke them."

Kuafu rose through the sky like a firework. His Chi left a shining trail that filled the world with light. Every god in Heaven looked down to see him — his ascent was that beautiful! The ten warriors flew out to confront him. Each rode a multicolored cloud and bore a staff of shining metal. The illustrious symbols of divine office adorned their robes.

Kuafu Batters His Enemies; Wen Flails

"It is regrettable," said the leader of the warriors, whose name was Min Fu, "but you and your companion must turn around. You do not have the proper authorization papers to enter Heaven."

"I told you!" said Thoughtless Wen. "This enterprise is ill-thought!"

"You are foolish and hidebound," said Kuafu. "It's no surprise you would feel that way. But if you're a true master, Heaven can't oppose you!" He pulled off his belt, which had weights at each end, and swung it about him. Three of the heavenly guardians sought to approach him, but they could not penetrate this defense — a single touch of his belt sent them tumbling a thousand miles. In an instant, Kuafu broke free of their formation and continued past.

"The way of kung fu is difficult," said Thoughtless Wen, under his breath, as he looked at the remaining warriors. "I do not even have any hands free with which to fight! Still, I don't suppose you would permit me to

神兵玄奇

accompany my master?"

Min Fu spoke a word, and his shining metal staff split. Razor-edged blades sprouted from each end, and it shimmered with power.

"Such is the way of the world," said Thoughtless Wen, sadly. Then the seven divine guardians attacked. He had no hope of fighting them all. Swinging desperately back and forth from the jacket that supported him, he was forced to kick their clouds away as they approached him, keeping them back — he flailed like a fat ox beset by tigers. Eventually, however, the clouds of the guardians could not take the strain — they cracked and split, and the guardians lost their balance, and Thoughtless Wen flew away.

Enter White Locust

White Locust, the heavenly commander responsible for all ten of the guardians, reported immediately to the Immortal Emperor. "The two humans have overcome my guards. They continue their illicit ascent; soon they will stand at our gates."

"They must be turned away," repeated the Immortal Emperor.

"I shall accomplish it myself," said White Locust.

"Then do so."

Without a further word, White Locust went to stand outside the gates of Heaven. He arrived barely in time — before he even set himself in stance, Kuafu came barreling up.

"Your presence is ill-advised," said White Locust. "You have mastered the secrets of kung fu and made yourself a god among men. Why rise towards Heaven? To be a god among gods is not so rare, and you have no favor in the celestial court."

"My people are made of mud," said Kuafu. "But mud is a noble essence. You will see that my kung fu is more than a match for any god's — my Chi is incomparable! Can even heaven stand against my Light-Body Form? Not with a million soldiers, and not in a million years!"

The Shadow of Heaven

"You may have some small measure of strength," said White Locust,



as the panting and exhausted Thoughtless Wen arrived on the scene. "Yet humans are children of the gods. To seek your parents' overthrow is wickedness — such intentions will earn you a thousand torments!"

"See?" demanded Thoughtless Wen. "See? You have transgressed against the order of things, master! You must reconsider."

"You lack my destiny for greatness," said Kuafu. "It is no surprise that you'd believe such things. But if you're a true master, there are no transgressions — your actions flow from your intentions without thought or remorse. I'll show you what I mean!" He leapt forward and touched White Locust's cheek. Like a bell struck by a hammer, White Locust staggered back against the celestial realm's gate. The gate cracked, and gaping holes formed, characters the size of elephants reading: "A small man stands in the shadow of Heaven, but Heaven stands in the shadow of the great." In an instant, Kuafu stepped



through the holes and vanished.

"The way of kung fu is difficult," Thoughtless Wen said.

"I cannot help but agree," said White Locust, employing his inner mastery to keep his teeth from shattering and falling from his mouth as pure ivory dust.

"Still, I must accompany my master."

"I cannot permit that," answered White Locust. "I am shamed enough to allow one of you in Heaven."

"I cannot compare to your matchless power! Still, if you remain here and oppose me, he will rampage through Heaven and no doubt dethrone the Immortal Emperor. Perhaps we can seek him out together; then you can arrest us both and earn great merit."

White Locust, still thoroughly addled from the blow he had taken, turned this plan over in his mind. "I can find no flaw in this suggestion."

White Locust Pursues; Thoughtless Wen Hungers

The two of them followed Kuafu into Heaven. They had not walked ten steps inwards, however, before Thoughtless Wen's stomach rumbled loudly.

"That smell," he said. "What is that I smell?"

"Ah!" said White Locust. "That over to our left is the house of the moon. Even now, I suspect, the servants are preparing a meal for the rabbit that lives there. Come! We must pursue your master in all diligence."

"Of course," said Thoughtless Wen, shaking it off. "Let us move on!"

A mere hundred steps later, his stomach rumbled even louder.

"That smell!" he said, in torment. "What is that I smell now?"

"Ah!" said White Locust. "That over to our right is the house of the stars. Even now, I suspect, the servants prepare a hundred-fold treasure meal for the constellations' repast. Come! We must pursue your master in all diligence."

"The way of kung fu is hard," said Thoughtless Wen, in misery. "Still, I must follow my master."

A thousand steps later, his stomach rumbled harder yet. Heaven shook; even White Locust paused to stare.

"That smell," said Thoughtless Wen. "Tell me!"

"Ah!" said White Locust. "We stand before the house of the sun. Even now, the servants prepare his evening repast. But do not consider it! His meals are not for humans like yourself." With that, White Locust loped

off on Kuafu's trail.

As for the master, he had progressed through Heaven with little difficulty, leaving ruined buildings and shattered guards in his wake. When White Locust caught up to him, he stood before the Imperial Palace itself.

"Stop!" cried White Locust. "Our battle is not complete!"

"You are an irritant and a pest," answered Kuafu. "Of course you would say such things. But if you're a true master, petty obstacles fade from your path!" He stomped his foot; the path buckled, and flung White Locust sideways into the palace wall. Chunks of stone fell and shattered at White Locust's feet.

White Locust glanced down. The broken stone formed characters reading, "If you trouble a tiger, you can still run away. If you trouble Kuafu, you'll learn your lesson!"

Kuafu Samples a Peerless Fruit

"Do you still oppose me?" asked Kuafu. "Then the stones are wiser than you!" Even as Thoughtless Wen rushed onto the scene, a bowl of beef and peppers in his hand, Kuafu reached into White Locust's chest and pulled out his heart.

Thoughtless Wen frowned. "That was unnecessary," he said. "He was a polite soldier."

Kuafu shrugged, and threw the heart into the sky; it caught fire as it arced away and then began its long descent towards earth. "Manners do not compensate for inadequate kung fu. What have you there?"

Thoughtless Wen clutched the bowl protectively. "It is from the house of the sun," he said. "My skills are small and mean, but sufficient to obtain it from them."

"Then we shall share them," said Kuafu, plucking a pepper from the bowl and popping it in his mouth. "It is only fair to have a grand repast before concluding a military victory."

"I was advised," said Thoughtless Wen, "that they should be eaten mixed . . ."

"Nonsense," said Kuafu, and then paused. "The house of the sun, you said?" For even as he spoke, he began to feel a terrible thirst. He immediately applied internal kung fu to balance his temperature — but the peppers of the sun have no rival. His body began to burn up.

"Perhaps if you had some of the beef and rice?" offered Thoughtless Wen.

"You do not follow my meritorious vegetarian



diet,” said Kuafu. “It’s only natural that you’d say that! But if you’re a real master, you fight thirst with water.” He turned immediately and jumped off Heaven’s edge, falling towards the sea. He did not reach it; before he hit the water, the last of the fluid of his body withered to nothingness and Kuafu turned to stone.

“The way of kung fu is hard,” said White Locust, somewhat pale and wan from the loss of his heart. “Still, that is a better ending than some.”

“My master has left me,” said Thoughtless Wen, sitting down heavily. “I am bereft.”

“And you must now be arrested.”

“Arrested? And detained?”

“Indeed.”

“For coming to Heaven without an invitation?”

“Indeed.”

“But I am under arrest,” protested Thoughtless Wen. “I have no choice but to be here.”

“Indeed.”

“So I can hardly be considered uninvited.”

White Locust, still thoroughly addled from the blows he had taken, turned this argument over in his mind. “I can find no flaw in your reasoning. The arrest is withdrawn. As you have assisted in my great victory against the monster Kuafu, I will now take you to meet the Immortal Emperor.”

The Emperor Creates the Wulin

The two of them traveled into the palace, and White Locust made his report to the Emperor. Afterwards, the Emperor frowned.

“A bear or snake can be terrible trouble. When it becomes too powerful, Heaven trembles. A monkey is worse yet. When it becomes too powerful, Heaven shakes! But these humans of Nüwa’s crafting are the worst yet. They do not know right from wrong, and cannot perceive the virtues. When a human learns divine kung fu, Heaven may break! We must eliminate the lot.”

Hearing this assertion, Thoughtless Wen felt a tremor in his heart. He kowtowed seven times before the Emperor, saying, “Worthy majesty! Surely some other solution exists.”

“It is regrettable,” conceded the Emperor. “But what else can be done? These humans do not know the order of things.”

“With your majesty’s permission,” answered

Thoughtless Wen, “can humanity receive instruction from Heaven?”

“Very well,” said the Emperor, who did not recognize Thoughtless Wen. To his scribe, he said, “Record this: let a ministry be created to advise humanity and lead them down the proper paths, that they offer no threat to Heaven. This worthy individual —”

“Thoughtless Wen,” the mortal said.

— shall receive the title of Minister of Wulin, along with a staff of seven gods, a wife selected from the imperial handmaidens, and a salary of ten bottles of imperial wine, ten pellets of elixir, and various rare brocades and pearls per annum. He shall develop and submit a plan by which Heaven shall contain human wickedness and encourage its merit. Should this plan fail, however, he shall face the same fate as the humans he has responsibility for, and furthermore shall be whipped until dead no less than sixty-four times.”

“I thank your majesty!” exclaimed Thoughtless Wen, performing additional obeisance.

“Now,” said the Immortal Emperor, “you may present your plan.”

“Ah!” said Thoughtless Wen, who had expected a longer development cycle. “The way of kung fu is hard!”

“This digression seems irrelevant.”

“Very well,” said Thoughtless Wen.

After a pause, the Emperor said again, “You may, as I have said, present your plan.”

“Wulin!” said Thoughtless Wen.

“What about it?”

“It is a very fine term. It means the World of Martial Arts, does it not?”

“I am grateful that you appreciate the finer points of your title.”

“I do!”

A third time, frowning slightly, the Emperor said, “In any event, you may present your plan.”

“I shall create a World of Martial Arts,” said Thoughtless Wen, temporizing. “And build it in such a fashion as to enforce appropriate behavior, while drawing humans in who seek true mastery of kung fu!”

“Alas,” said the Immortal Emperor, “I cannot extend you sufficient budget for the creation of an additional world.”

“The term is entirely metaphorical,” said Thoughtless Wen, waving a hand in dismissal of the point.



“Well, then, how shall it draw in humans who seek true mastery?”

“By offering them greater opportunities to obtain and demonstrate this mastery!” declared Thoughtless Wen, who understood the motivations of such men as Kuafu.

“And how will it enforce appropriate behavior?”

This stumped Thoughtless Wen, and after a long moment, the Immortal Emperor began to look somewhat impatient. Nüwa, who had been watching all of this, took pity on poor Wen. With a spark of her All-Things-Ordering Energy, she filled his mind with inspiration. Straightaway, he declared, “Why, the mortals who follow the ways of the gods shall receive good fortune: their Chi shall wax strong, their forms prosper, and their techniques become in all ways immaculate! In this fashion shall obedience to Heaven become the cornerstone and archstone of kung fu, and the greatest warriors of the world shall be those who in their actions emulate the gods. This is the law of the Wulin: that those who follow the rules of altruism, loyalty, force, righteousness, and justice shall be the high hands of the gods, obtaining limitless power, while those who follow the rules of villainy shall be the low hands of the demons; and both shall serve the will of Heaven.”

Secrets of Destiny: The Wulin

Divine Kung Fu [Destiny]

For the reasons laid out in *The Wulin*, most humans strengthen their Chi and their kung fu with the assistance of the gods or the demons. They receive their Destiny from Heaven as a payment for living as a warrior ought. However, humans can also learn kung fu in defiance of the gods. Stepping outside the order imposed by Heaven offers limitless potential — the character can achieve power that even the gods fear to offer them. Heaven calls those who walk this path “baneful humans” or “monster warriors.” Those chosen to hunt them down and destroy them are called Heaven Hunters.

DESTINY COST

- 5 **Destiny:** you will become a Heaven Hunter. A dream will teach you how to make a split divining rod that will lead you to three troubles and three rewards. The three troubles are usually baneful humans that Heaven wishes removed. The three rewards are payment for your services. Most Heaven Hunters reinforce their divining rod with steel and use it as a weapon.
- 10 **Destiny:** you are a baneful human. You can no longer gain Xia Joss from your altruistic behavior (*kuan*), loyalty (*zhong*), or righteousness (*yi*). You can no longer gain Corrupt Joss from selfishness (*si*), obsession (*chan*), or ruthlessness (*ben*). Whenever you

gain Xia or Corrupt Joss for Deeds of Force (*ba*) or Ferocity (*bao*), however, you receive a matching point of Transcendent Destiny.

Light-Body Form [Kung Fu]

Studying the Light-Body Form unifies thought and action. Passionate Crimson Chi moves the body directly, observing none of the limits of flesh. An arrogant warrior who masters this style grows to the size of a giant, and an angry warrior grows the tusks of a boar! The techniques thought to exist in the form are the Ultimate Ascension Body, the Thousand Mile Defense, the Ten Distance Assault, and the Inexorable Thought Practice. Heaven sealed the secrets of the Light-Body Form with a 10,000-Year Lock, but diviners say that this time has nearly elapsed, and this most powerful of Rare kung fu styles will be able to be learned again!

DESTINY COST

- 5 **Secret:** learn something about when, where, and whether the secrets of the Light-Body Form will become available again.
- 10 **Secret:** learn where and how the gods imprisoned knowledge of this Form. (Breaking open such a prison requires, at minimum, the assistance of a Class I Fighter.)

Sun Stone [Treasure]

Since Kuafu ate one of the peppers of the sun, his withered stone body now gives off great heat. For fear that he might dry out the ocean, the Immortal Emperor had his body dredged out and hidden away on earth. If someone found Kuafu — now called “the sun stone” — they could end storms and bring on droughts. If they ate part of his body, they could absorb some of his powerful Chi, but would also suffer a perpetual thirst.

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Secret:** learn something about the location of the Sun Stone.
- 5 **Secret:** learn the exact location of the Sun Stone.
- (-2) The Sun Stone is already in the hands of a known or unknown enemy.

Ten Greatest Sinners

[Destiny]

Rising to the ranks of the Ten Greatest Sinners of All Time offers great potential for a young warrior's destiny. The character must properly observe the xia virtues or the corrupt path, thereby glorifying Heaven or Hell, while mercilessly disregarding proper authority and familial loyalty. The top five ranks are permanently reserved for those whose sins troubled Heaven itself — the Handsome Monkey King, Kuafu, the Enchanted Demon, Chi You, and Lou Sa. To displace one of these figures would be a legendary accomplishment, but not one that would earn divine or demonic merit!

DESTINY COST

I+ Victory: you are one of the Ten Greatest Sinners of All Time. This option costs 6 Destiny in character creation. If you notify the GM later in life that you are pursuing this path, the GM should tell you when the option to claim the tenth rank makes itself available, along with a Destiny cost (I-6) based on the merits of your candidacy.

Wulin Cooking

[Destiny]

Power comes in many forms. A true sage of cooking can compete with a kung fu master. While cooking cannot destroy, a master can make meals that revitalize, arouse, calm, heal, cleanse, taint, or poison the eater, as well as — most importantly — prolonging the recipient's life. Rare ingredients only exaggerate this effect. Prepared properly, a mandrake gives forty-seven thousand years of life; cooked poorly, it offers scarcely five hundred!

DESTINY COST

- **Bonus:** you receive a +5 modifier when using the Secret Arts of Genius or other secret arts to enhance your cooking. The character pursues the cooking techniques practiced in the houses of the sun, moon, and stars. This helps you use good cooking to win hearts and hot cooking to disable your enemies!

Advanced Topics

10 *The Way of the Wulin* (p. 353) — the structure of

the Martial Arts World.

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- I *The Celestial Goddess* — her sky-mending techniques inspired Kuafu!
- I *The Enchanted Demon* — humans make great trouble; are demons worse yet?
- I *The Yellow Emperor* — a shining gold-plated missionary of Wulin!
- I *A Woman's Life* — how does the Wulin affect the lives of women?

The Enchanted Demon

Destiny Cost: 3
Study Difficulty: Learning (20)

The Enchanted Demon is Born

WHEN THE CELESTIAL Goddess was eight million years old, the stomach of the River Stone Lord split open and the Enchanted Demon came forth. He took three steps and roared, "The lord am I of all this world. Evil shall consume all things!" He set forth with a will to implement this agenda, corrupting humans and gods alike to serve his vile plans. He fostered hatred in others and helped them forge great and terrible weapons from that passion. Soon his army grew great enough that he could enslave God and the Devil themselves, and in his wickedness he planned to reconstruct the primal void.

Soon after he conceived this plan, Nüwa approached him. "You came out of the earth and never ceased to do evil," she told him. "Surely, you doom yourself to the darkest Hell."

"Send me before King Yama!" he laughed. "I shall only conquer Hell before I move on to Heaven!"

"Your plans," she said reasonably, "disturb certain of those of us in the celestial hierarchy who prefer an orderly world."

He grabbed her arms and pulled her close. "Then they had best," he hissed into her face, "learn a better appreciation for the winning side, before they meet an unfortunate fate. It is not for worms to oppose the dragon."

"Release me!" she snapped, and essayed the Completion Touch against him — but a single Horrid Pulse from his Enchanted Demon Style disrupted her form and sent her Chi into disarray. She slumped, stunned, and he pushed her away.

"I prefer my women less insolent," he said. "Remember this, when I am lord of all things, lest I exile you from my harem and cast you into the outer darkness." Laughing, he walked away.

Nüwa Responds

When she had mastered her Chi enough to rise, Nüwa set her mouth in a thin frown. She went to her celestial forge and regarded the seven stones that remained to her. "If I wished to build a cage for him," she said, "I would need at least eight of them. If I wished to construct an automaton that would rival his kung fu, to emasculate him and suspend him by his scrotal sack from the highest point in Heaven, it would need twelve! Ah, if only I had constructed the sky with more efficiency."

With her ability to see all things truly, she cast her gaze upon the Enchanted Demon's army. Even as she did so, the hateful god Jin Long completed the horrid scythe Bone Keeper.

"I shall play his own game," she said. Drawing on her great love for humanity and the natural law of the world, and pouring her All-Things-Ordering Energy into the forge, she constructed Heaven's Crystal — the monk-king of swords, perfect in its purity and prowess. Then she flew down from Heaven to confront the Enchanted Demon's army.

The Challenge

"Lord Demon!" cried an adjutant, rushing into the Enchanted Demon's chambers. "The Celestial Goddess stands outside, challenging our entire force to mortal combat."

"Then fight her," said the Enchanted Demon, bored. "I have prepared for all her tricks!"

Outside, the legions of demons and gods and humans prepared to swarm the Celestial Goddess. She stood undeterred:

*A dragon-goddess clad in gold and brown —
She shines with All Things Ordering Energy!
Horned demons drool and leer at her.
Humans shout insults.
Gods and kings, calm, marshal their blades.
Brave in the face of this endless hardship,
She holds up an immaculate all-conquering
sword!*

Heaven's Crystal shone with a glorious light. Nüwa began to dance. The host of her enemies sought to surge forward and overwhelm her, but could not — the radiance of her blade held them back. Then, suddenly, all of their weapons jerked from their hands, hanging in the

air and trembling like rabbits in a storm. Weapons forged with the Enchanted Demon's assistance shook with horror; blades forged by mortal hand shattered into a thousand pieces. Calmly, Nüwa danced forward towards the Enchanted Demon's tent; those in the assembled host that sought to stop her melted to ash.

"Lord Demon!" cried the adjutant. "She wields an unconquerable blade — the supreme magical weapon!"

The Enchanted Demon snapped his fingers, calling God and the Devil to his side. "Then I suppose I must deal with this petty matter myself."

Demon and Goddess Duel

Stepping out of his tent, the Enchanted Demon surveyed the situation. "Ah! A fine and entertaining dance. But Celestial Goddess, you take my words too harshly. You do not need to become an entertainer for my army — I have not yet rejected you!"

Stung by his implications, Nüwa lowered her blade and glared at him. "Heaven's Crystal is a magical thing, but today, I shall use it to kill a dog!"

"Braggart Goddess," said the Enchanted Demon, and drew his own weapon. "The Thousand Torments Sword will shatter Heaven's Crystal!"

At this, Nüwa smiled; for she had not been certain, until he drew the blade, that he would wield the sword of his father. The two weapons clashed, one against the other, and the Thousand Torments Sword completed Heaven's Crystal. In that moment

*Jade light flares forth, burning like the ten gold
suns.*

Horned demons melt to noxious wind.

Humans turn to blood and paste.

Evil gods vanish from the world.

*When the perfected monk-king meets the torment
sword Dukkha*

All things fade to naught.

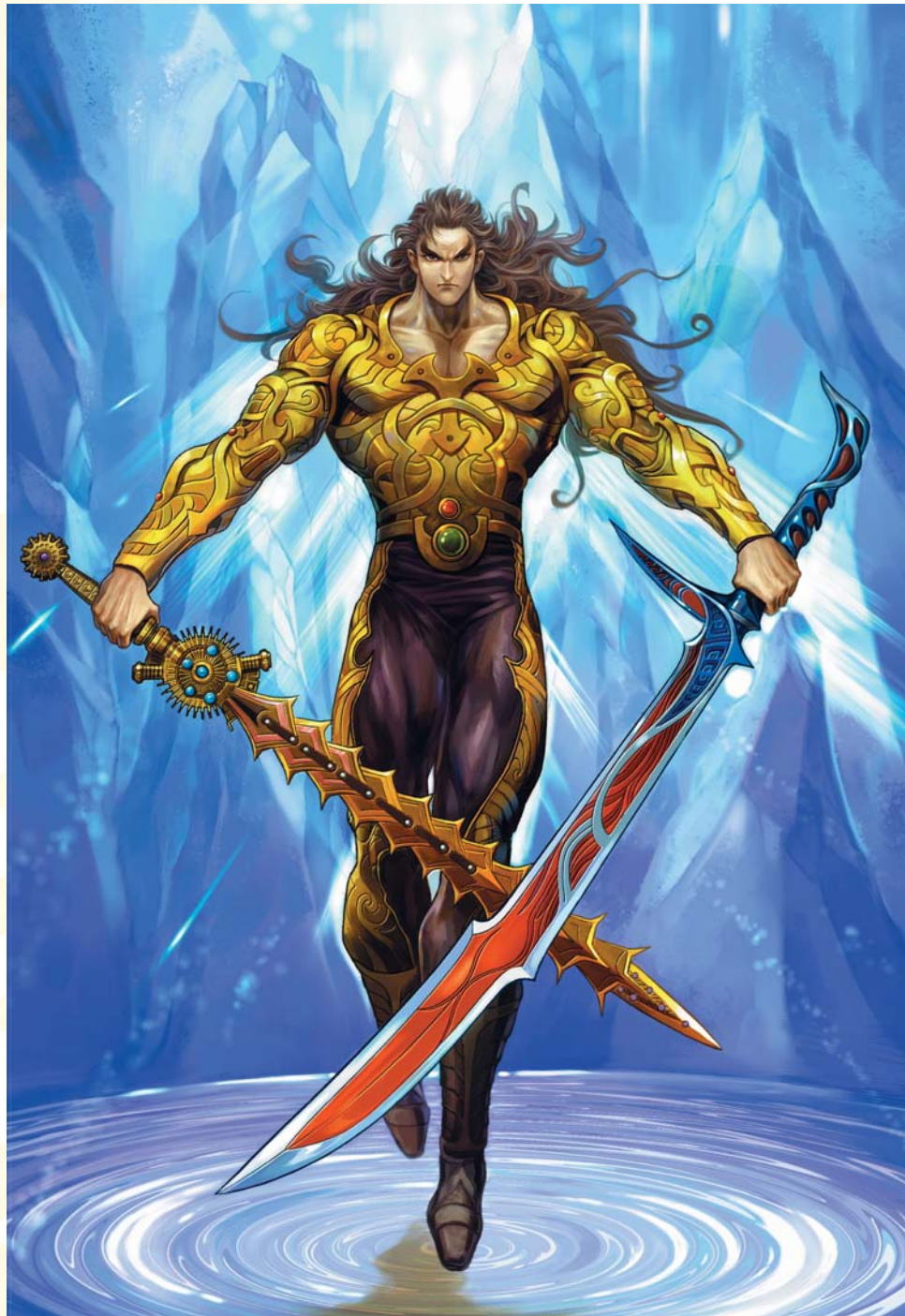
*God and the Devil fly to the outer limits of
the world*

Even the Enchanted Demon weakens!

Then the light faded. Nüwa confronted the Enchanted Demon across the black, baked, empty battleground. The Thousand Torments Sword hung shattered from his hand; Heaven's Crystal rested, masterful, in her grip.

神兵玄奇

神兵玄奇



"You came out of the earth and never ceased to do evil," she told him. "Surely, you doom yourself to the darkest Hell."

"Then kill me," he snarled. "I will make trouble again in another incarnation!"

"You shall never be born again," she said, and exorcised him from the world. As his Chi burned away to nothingness, he issued this bitter curse:

*Those who wield Heaven's Crystal will be blessed
with great wealth*

And cursed with boundless catastrophe.

Secrets of Destiny: The Enchanted Demon

Battle-Poetry of the Celestial Goddess [Destiny]

Many of the songs and poems of the Celestial Goddess were lost during the Qin Dynasty, when the

First Emperor had nonessential writing destroyed. This includes the *Classic of the Monk-King Battle*, a cycle of poems studying the battle between the Celestial Goddess and the Enchanted Demon. It is such losses as this that diminish the world and turn Heaven's gaze away. Tracking down the surviving pages and reconstructing this classic is a task worthy of a scholar-hero; learning its secrets offers insight into the lost arts of war.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **Destiny:** integrate the quest for the *Classic* with the plot, so you can hunt down surviving pages without separating from the group.
- 8 **Victory:** reconstruct the *Classic*, acquiring powerful kung fu secrets. You must first make substantial progress on collecting lost pieces.
- (-5) The reconstruction does *not* offer powerful kung fu secrets.

Heaven's Crystal [Weapon of the Gods]

Many years ago, Heaven's Crystal was lost. In the comic *Weapons of the Gods*, its fate is connected to Tian Wen, son of its last wielder. If the Game Master is not using the comic's plotline, however, characters can seek out the lost monk-king of swords.

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Secret:** learn key information helpful in finding Heaven's Crystal.
- 5 **Entangled Destiny:** your Destiny will touch that of Heaven's Crystal.
- 3 **Defense:** improve your defense against Heaven's Crystal techniques.

Ultimate Exorcism Technique [Kung Fu]

Many scholars know that Nüwa possessed the ultimate exorcism technique, useful in slaying demons. A student steeped in the lore of her battle with the Enchanted Demon could track down this technique.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **Secret:** learn key information helpful in finding the formless Ultimate Exorcism Technique. (This is relatively inexpensive due to the extreme rarity and danger of demonic encounters in modern Shen Zhou. If the characters come into conflict with a demon, the Game Master should know whether the Ultimate Exorcism Technique is a desirable solution, and devise its particulars as needed. If this Level Seven formless technique is such a solution, students of *The Enchanted Demon* should know where to begin the search; if not, the GM should veto this expenditure.)

Advanced Topics

- 5 *Making Weapons of the Gods* (p. 356) — the arts of the Enchanted Demon!

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- 1 *Pangu* — he destroyed the primal void!
- 1 *The Celestial Goddess* — she confronted the Enchanted Demon!
- 1 *The Wulin* — Kuafu unnerves Heaven. Did his stirring up trouble make the Enchanted Demon so powerful?
- 1 *The Yellow Emperor* — Heaven strikes at all disorder!



The Yellow Emperor

Destiny Cost: 3
Study Difficulty: Learning (20)

Thoughtless Wen

THOUGHTLESS WEN'S WORK in Heaven was never complete. No matter how hard he struggled to bring humanity into accord with Heaven, people kept turning to wickedness. One day word reached the Immortal Emperor of the actions of Chi You, the powerful chieftain of the barbarians of the earth. Chi You was vicious and hateful. He ignored the Wulin, wishing only to kill. The Immortal Emperor saw him as a threat to Heaven, and chastised Thoughtless Wen.

Nüwa, watching poor Thoughtless Wen squirm, felt compassion enter her heart. "Your Majesty, allow me to send additional guidance to the mortals below. Then Thoughtless Wen shall surely succeed!"

The Immortal Emperor agreed to this plan, and so Nüwa sent Huangti down to Earth.

Master of every virtue

And every accomplishment

His hair flows like a forge's fire

Behind a jade circlet.

His armor is celestial riches.

He descends to earth

Like a gold plated spirit: the Yellow Emperor Huangti.

He opens his mouth and imparts wisdom.

He draws his blade and imposes order!

Sitting on his throne, he binds the world to his will.

The Path to Excellence

Huangti sent emissaries to Chi You, attempting to reason with him. He offered to show Chi You the path to true excellence. Uninterested in excellence, Chi You ate the emissaries. Having no other choice, Huangti marched his armies to war.

As the two armies clashed, Chi You confronted Huangti. An aura of death and rotten flesh hung about Chi You. Huangti radiated magnificence.

Chi You snarled and sprang. Huangti parried with a gold-covered arm and caught Chi You's hair with his other hand. "If you surrender," he said, "you'll be my great disciple. If you fight, you'll surely die."

Chi You turned on him like a snarling tiger. The touch of his hand left great claw marks in Huangti's armor. A knee to Huangti's side sent the Yellow Emperor tumbling; a twitch of Chi You's hair, still tangled in Huangti's hand, yanked him back.

"If you stay civilized," said Chi You, "you'll live two hundred years. Become a beast like me: you'll live two thousand!"

Chi You's arms closed like a fanged maw around Huangti's chest, crushing several ribs beneath the armor. Huangti did not waver. Beside his throne was his standard, affixed to a great gold spear. Kicking it into his hand, he thrust the spearpoint up under Chi You's chin and out the back of You's neck.

"Curse you!" said Chi You, staggering away. "You'll still lose this war!"

Nine Layers of Fog

Yanking the standard out of his neck, Chi You spat on it and crushed it in his hands. The immaculate spirit of Huangti's standard mixed with Chi You's bestial blood, billowing out in a great cloud of sinister fog. Chi You cast a net around his own soldiers and leapt away, dragging them behind him. He left the Yellow Emperor and his soldiers trapped in the mist. No matter how they marched, they found themselves traveling in circles: it seemed that before they could resume the battle, they would starve!

Huangti performed the Celestial Fortune Practice, standing before his tent and beseeching Heaven for its gracious assistance. Soon, the goddess Shan Nu stood before him.

"Surely the master cannot be lost," she said, teasing. "Your impeccable kung fu can lead you out of any troubles!"

"I have mastered All-Directions Kung Fu," he answered, seriously. "North — south — east — west — they are as one to me! How could I find my way from a mist?"

"Betrayed by your own infinite accomplishments! How sad." She pondered. "If you could see the stars, then you could find your way free. So let us craft you a weapon that knows the directions of the stars."

Together with Huangti's ministers, she set to work, and soon built the Void Wheel. This weapon of finest bronze also served as the world's first compass. Without wavering, it led Huangti from the fog.

The Rain-Making Minister

Huangti summoned forth his rain-making minister. "Two can play at the weather game," he said. "Drown Chi You's army with torrential rain!"

As the clouds formed, Chi You looked up and snarled. Snatching the spine from one of his own soldiers, he bent it into a spear and cast it at the sky. It punctured the clouds above the Yellow Emperor's army before they could move out to assault Chi You — instantly, the Yellow Emperor's forces were besieged by his own storm.

Calm in the face of adversity, Huangti again went outside his tent and again performed the Celestial Fortune Practice. Soon, the goddess Drought Fury attended him. She stood in the fierce storm and did not get wet — in fact, the whole pavilion quickly grew dry.

"Surely the master cannot fear a little rain," she said. "Your impeccable mastery of Chi can keep you dry."

"I have mastered All-Weather Kung Fu," he replied. "Rain — sun — wind — they are all the same to me. How can I free my army from this storm?"

Drought Fury shrugged. "You have the Void Wheel," she said. "Strike each drop of rain with it before it falls, and you shall defeat the storm."

"Wise advice!" said Huangti. Spinning the Void Wheel, he leaped into the air. With eight sky-spanning steps, he touched its blades against each raindrop. In an instant, he obliterated the storm. His rain-making minister, appalled that both Chi You and Huangti could so easily overcome his power, fled to the South.

Huangti Makes a Drum

Both Chi You and Huangti had used their greatest tricks, and now the war began in earnest. Their forces clashed in a long and bloody struggle. Huangti felt that he would win — but the morale of his men was low, and a chance remained that they would fail. A third time he performed the Celestial Fortune Practice, and soon, an exalted Thunder Goddess stood before him.

"Surely the master does not find this war too dreary," she said. "A warrior such as yourself lives for the fight!"

"I have mastered Every-Occasion Kung Fu," he said. "To fight; to teach; to build; to destroy — I am afire for every task! But how can I give my army such matchless determination as mine?"

"With the Void Wheel, you can fly to the Eastern Sea," she advised him. "There, you will find the monster named Kui. Kill it; make a drum from its skin. Such a war drum can inspire even a coward to valor."

"Wise advice!" said Huangti. Riding the Void Wheel,

he traveled at great speed to the Eastern Sea. He killed the Kui —

The great sea-ox

Its single foot twined in the ocean floor

Barnacles cover its mottled flesh.

Kelp drapes across its back.

It opens its mouth and issues forth lightning

It cavorts with storms.

It stands a hundred times the height of a man

With one blow, Huangti brings it to its end!

— and returned to his army to craft a drum. As promised, the pounding beat of the Kui-drum was incomparable. No instrument had rivaled it in all the history of the world. Still, Huangti was not content. Calling back the Thunder Goddess, he said, "This drum has the sound of slaughter, but not sacrifice."

"I understand," she said, and bowed her head. So he slew her with the Void Wheel and took out her thigh bones to form the sticks. Now his chief drummer played a row as if to end the world, and Chi You shuddered in fear. Huangti's army descended upon Chi You's forces like a terrible flood. In three moves, Huangti cast Chi You from the battlefield; in an instant, the barbarian tribes were overcome.

Chi You hungered for revenge. From an alien substance and the vertebrae of a heavenly tiger, he forged Tiger Soul — deadliest of weapons. Where Heaven's Crystal was an immaculate monk-king of swords, Tiger Soul incarnated the barbarian power of destruction, making it the dark god of blades. To make it perfect, Chi You killed his own parents and his son and used their bones to fire the furnace. Wielding Tiger Soul, Chi You could have destroyed the world — but to finish its creation, he gave up the last of his humanity. Before he could destroy Huangti, he became a snarling immortal beast, lacking the hands and mind necessary to wield his own weapon. Thus Tiger Soul

and Chi You vanished from the history of the world. If they later returned to cause further trouble, we do not know.





Secrets of Destiny: *The Yellow Emperor*

Barbarian Arts of War [Kung Fu]

To learn the barbarian fighting ways of Chi You, one must emulate his practices. Defy authority and eat the men you kill!

DESTINY COST

- 25 **Victory:** research the legends of Chi You and reconstruct his fighting art. You must first establish a strong position among the barbarian tribes, do extensive research with a Scholar (or be one!) and you must still buy the techniques themselves.
- 3 **Victory:** you receive the mandate and acclamation of the barbarian tribes as Chi You reborn. You must first have a very strong position among them.

One-Foot Drum [Weapon of the Gods]

Huangti's War Drum is a Class II Weapon of the Gods—its beat makes even the most terrible enemies tremble!

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Entangled Destiny:** your Destiny will touch that of the One-Foot Drum.
- 3 **Defense:** improve your defense against One-Foot Drum techniques.

Void Wheel [Weapon of the Gods]

The Void Wheel is a Class I Weapon of the Gods. It allows the wielder to fly and can strike in every direction at once; these are the least of its powers! It is rumored that the Wheel can exalt its wielder's Chi to inhuman heights, but at a terrible risk.

DESTINY COST

- 5 **Entangled Destiny:** your Destiny will touch that of the Void Wheel.
- 3 **Defense:** improve your defense against Void Wheel techniques.

Wretched Mei [Ally]

Drought Fury later taught humanity a formless technique for using crimson Chi to stay dry in any weather. The only surviving master of this technique is Wretched Mei, who knows it too well; wherever she walks, drought follows, and the peasants chase her from their lands. A wise tactician could use her to wither an enemy's lands or break an unseasonable storm.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **Secret:** learn Wretched Mei's location.
- 3 **Fortune:** befriend Wretched Mei, so that you can turn her curse to your service.

Advanced Topics

- 10 *Slaughter and Sacrifice* (p. 356) — what power did Huangti gain from the Thunder Goddess' death?
- 5 *Tiger Soul* (p. 352) — the secrets of Chi You's Weapon!
- 5 *Transformation of the World* (p. 353) — how did Huangti bring harmony to Shen Zhou?

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- 1 *The Enchanted Demon* — before Chi You, a demon plagued the world!
- 1 *The Wulin* — the plan Huangti implemented, in the Celestial Goddess' name!
- 1 *The Wu Di* — myth ends, and history begins. Huangti triumphant!

Shen Zhou: The Land of the Gods

The History of Shen Zhou

The Dynasties

The Wu Di

The Xia

The Shang

The Zhou

The Qin

The Han

The Time of Chaos

The Wu Di

(3000 Years Before

Tiger Soul's Return)

Destiny Cost: 3

Study Difficulty: Learning (18)

Huangti Governs

EVEN AFTER DEFEATING Chi You, Huangti still faced many challenges to his rule. The three disrespectful sages, resentful of Huangti's excellence, set themselves to destroying him.

Sniveling Bu, the first disrespectful sage, could create hurricanes with his kung fu. His power shattered houses, tore through walls — even the Imperial Palace of Huangti could not stand! Ministers and concubines blew in every direction; Huangti's government became disorganized.

"See the power that comes from unrighteousness?" cried Sniveling Bu. "How can the glory of Heaven compare?"

Huangti laughed. "I do not need the glory of Heaven to deal with such a disgraceful scholar! Go and learn discipline; then you're worth fighting!"

Stung by the insult, Sniveling Bu directed the hurricane at Huangti's chest; but the Yellow Emperor stood, unimpressed. Focusing his Chi, he invoked his masterful knowledge of all crafts. Stomping his foot, he rebuilt the

palace out of brick! Sniveling Bu's hurricane could do no harm; concubines and ministers floated back to the ground. The sage retreated in disarray. In this fashion, Huangti brought brick construction to Shen Zhou.

Spineless Li, the second disrespectful sage, could send the world into disarray with his season-destabilizing touch. Stalking towards the capital, he invoked a terrible winter. Courtiers and ladies shivered and gnawed on dying grain; the people fled.

"See the power that comes from defiance of Heaven?" cried Spineless Li. "Who could match my prowess?"

Huangti shook his head, unimpressed. "A spineless master is lower than a peasant girl! Why do you make war against me—won't your husband disapprove?"

Spineless Li flushed bright red, and the heat of his anger and shame melted the winter away. Focusing his Chi, Huangti invoked his masterful knowledge of all sciences. Raising Void Wheel on high, he corrected the calendar and established a new capital. Courtiers and ladies set aside their shivering to strut before Huangti. The sage retreated, scowling. In this fashion, Huangti organized the seasons of Shen Zhou.

Noxious Chu, the third disrespectful sage, could turn the land against its owners. With his Chi powers, he bent Shen Zhou itself to his will. Gaping holes opened in the ground under the capital, and water sprayed everywhere. Wrinkled mystics clung to the ceiling to avoid falling in.

"You call yourself Emperor?" mocked Noxious Chu. "You can't rule anything if you don't own the land!"

Huangti sighed. "Must I put an end to your mischief? My matchless prowess is not for swatting fleas!"

Noxious Chu swept his hand to the side, and the entire capital fell into the earth. Huangti stood, unimpressed, balancing on the head of a mystic who had learned to fly. Focusing his Chi, the Yellow Emperor invoked his masterful understanding of governance, seizing the land from Noxious Chu's control and distributing it equitably among his people. Wrinkled masters scrambled up from the gaping pit in the earth and stood panting at the sides of the hole. The disrespectful sage fled. In this fashion, Huangti established righteous land sovereignty.

Soon the three disrespectful sages gathered. They prepared to use their kung fu with one mind and will; surely, this would destroy the Yellow Emperor! Side by side, they returned to the new capital to trouble him.

Huangti met them outside its gates, a gleaming figure armored in gold. "Three dogs can trouble even the noblest man," he said. "Unless I confront you, you can surely destroy my capital!"

神兵玄奇

神兵玄奇

"It is good," said Sniveling Bu, "that you at last acknowledge our power."

"Good," agreed Noxious Chu. "But I'll still give you a drubbing!"

Focusing his Chi, the Yellow Emperor invoked his all-world knowledge. With his fingertip, he traced characters in the air: Bu, Li, and Chu. The three sages stared, for this was Huangti's invention of writing.

"What kung fu is this?" said Spineless Li, drooling with his desire to possess the Yellow Emperor's sacred knowledge.

"It is a thing only understood by a superior man," said Huangti.

The three sages were defeated by their own greed. "Glorious master, show us your excellence!" they chorused, and fell to the ground in obeisance.

"I'll show you my fist!" said Huangti, and with one

punch cast each of them to the far corners of the world. "But when you come back, I'll teach you secrets."

In this fashion was the civilization of Shen Zhou accomplished.

Huangti's Successors

After Huangti and his court returned to Heaven, his son Shao Hao succeeded him as the illustrious ruler of all things. Huangti's grandson Zhuan Xu next claimed Huangti's mandate, followed by Huangti's great-grandson Di Ku. The next in line was Di Zhi, Di Ku's first son.

Casting the portents, Yao Di—Zhi's brother—grew troubled. He spoke to Zhi's officers, saying, "I do not think my brother wields perfect righteousness. I fear the land will lose its excellence."

"Sir!" exclaimed the officers, in distress. "An unworthy ruler cannot have the mandate of Heaven!"

"It is sad," said Yao. "But what can be done?"

"You must overcome him!"

"Nonsense," said Yao. "He is my brother; I cannot harm him! Further, he commands the Incomparable Sun Weapon."

"Sir!" the officers answered. "We shall steal his Weapon and bring it to you; then you can defeat him!"

"Nonsense," said Yao.

Heedless of Yao's desires, an officer snuck into Zhi's room at night, removing the Incomparable Sun Weapon and delivering it to Yao's home. The next morning, Zhi discovered it missing. Furious, he leapt towards Yao's home—though it was many miles distant, it took him only twelve bounds!

"Brother!" exclaimed Di Zhi. "How can you defy your lord! I'll tear out your spine and whip you until you bleed!"

Yao felt a great compassion for his brother, but knew that pacifying him would be impossible. Reluctantly, he assumed his combat stance.

"I fear you're a weak King," he said, "and don't have Heaven's grace. If it's true, you'll lose to me in battle. But if you're strong, I'll die happy!"

Di Zhi felt a great sadness, recognizing his brother's love for him — but he had already made his challenge, and could





not turn back. Adopting the stance of a defiant tiger, he struck. Yao Di blocked three blows, augmenting his strength with internal kung fu; touched by Di Zhi's Chi, the wall behind Yao Di exploded!

"You are aggressive," said Yao Di, "and waste your power. This is not the way of battle."

"My kung fu is great," asserted Di Zhi. "I could balance on a needle!" He grasped Yao Di in a tiger's grasp; but Yao touched Zhi's neck, and Zhi's arms grew limp.

"It is as I feared," said Yao. "You have no inner mastery."

"Petty tricks cannot constrain my Chi; I can kill you with one foot!" Di Zhi struck Yao an unrighteous blow, and then shook out his arms to restore their motion.

"All this for anger?" said Yao, his stance deepening.

"All this, and your death!" declared Di Zhi, and sprang. Nothing could oppose that blow — it was a hammer forged in the fires of Hell! Yao's hands burned with golden Chi and he struck a counterblow at Zhi's heart.

"I'm sorry," said Yao. With those words, shame overcame Di Zhi, and he lost the desire to kill. His attack went awry, but Yao Di's did not; thus, Yao's fist emerged from Di Zhi's back with Zhi's heart clenched in it.

"It is regrettable," said Yao.

"It is the way of things," conceded Di Zhi, and died.

Wei Qi

To restore balance to the world, Yao sought the secret power of Huangti. In a dream, the Yellow Emperor showed him Wei Qi (also called Go) — the magnificent strategy-studying exercise of Heaven! Convinced that Wei Qi could unlock infinite spiritual prowess, Yao trained his officer Yu Shun and his son Dan Zhu in its intricacies. Sadly, while Yu Shun learned Wei Qi's lessons, Dan Zhu only understood the game — he wasn't good for anything else! Yao had to give his throne to Yu Shun.

Through study of Wei Qi, Yu Shun developed a matchless understanding of the world, similar to that of Huangti himself. This was just in time; no sooner had he ascended the throne than the three disrespectful sages returned from the distant corners of the earth.

"Where is Huangti?" demanded Sniveling Bu. "He promised us great secrets!"

"Two hundred years' gone," said Yu Shun. "But I'll show you a thing or two."

"Gone?" wailed Bu. "He betrays us with his absence!"

Spineless Li began to limber and stretch. "I'm three hundred years old," he said. "My kung fu's seen better days. But I bet I can still make trouble for you!" He

clenched his fist and called the Winter Heart; a terrible chill shimmered around his hands.

"Here is a lesson of Huangti!" said Yu Shun. "These are the five relationships: righteousness of the father, kindness of the mother, friendship of the older brother, respect of the younger brother, and piety of the son. Can your Winter Heart match the Five Relationships Fist?" With that, he beat the disrespectful sage back, until the old man crawled upon the ground.

"Mercy!" cried Spineless Li, sprawled in a field of crackling ice. "I'm no longer a match for such wisdom!"

Yu Shun turned to regard the other two sages, and they too fell to the ground, cringing.

"There's no glory in beating dirty laundry," said Yu Shun. "I'll let you live."

"Bah," said Noxious Chu. "So Huangti's line does not keep his promises — his secrets are for the Emperor alone!"

This stung Yu Shun's pride. "The grace of the imperial throne is infinite; how can you say it does not keep its promises?"

"Then you'll teach us his secrets?"

"I'll have a school," said Yu Shun, "and you its first pupils! But you mustn't betray me."

In this fashion, Yu Shun established the first schools, and tamed the disrespectful sages; and whether they used their skills to kill him eighteen years later in the wilderness and eat his heart, forcing his sons to hunt them down and execute a final vengeance, we do not know.

Secrets of Destiny:

The Wu Di

Disrespectful Sages Kung Fu [Secret Society]

Practicing the kung fu of the disrespectful sages is a terrible embarrassment — but to destroy an ancient line of martial arts training would be worse! Thus, a handful of masters still pass down their secrets. One line, the Fire Mantis society, seeks to redeem this kung fu by performing great deeds in honor of civilization. Rival students, calling themselves the Demon Scholars, are baneful martial artists — they want to prove the Yellow Emperor wrong and destroy Huangti's order!

Modern Disrespectful Sages Kung Fu includes techniques like evoking the Winter Heart to freeze your enemies with your attacks,

the Hurricane Heart to flow like the wind, and the Earth Power of the land below. Most scholars believe that the counter-technique — Yu Shun's "Five Relationships Fist" — is not an actual kung fu move, but rather Yu Shun's argument that righteousness prevails in all things.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **Entangled Destiny:** your Destiny will touch that of the Fire Mantis Society or the Demon Scholar Society.
- 3 **Fortune:** you join the Fire Mantis society and can eventually gain access to Disrespectful Sages kung fu. As a Rare Style, Disrespectful Sages will not be quickly taught to anyone; you must earn significant Status first and prove yourself.
- 3 **Fortune:** you join the Demon Scholars and eventually gain access to Disrespectful Sages kung fu. You must first know the Wulin and become a baneful human. As a Rare Style, Disrespectful Sages will not be quickly taught to anyone; you must earn significant Status first and prove yourself.
- 15 **Fortune:** you steal the secrets of Disrespectful Sages kung fu. Why?

(Talk to your Sage; it's unlikely that a beginning character would start the game with a devastating Rare style of kung fu.)

Huangti [Destiny]

In addition to the noted deeds, Huangti invented the magnet and the wheel, built an observatory for studying the stars, and brought an advanced culture to Shen Zhou. His heirs were both Kings and Emperors, as the term "Emperor" postdates them.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from Huangti by blood or martial tradition.
- 3 **Victory:** once during the entire Story, if you descend from Huangti, you can bring a world-changing invention to Shen Zhou. It should be appropriate to the era — matches, playing cards, the mechanical clock, or an improvement to metallurgy or medicine are reasonable choices; digital watches are not. To invent guns or other 'anachrotech' requires GM permission.
- 3 **Victory:** once during the game, if you descend from Huangti, you earn the favor of Heaven. Perform a deed of great righteousness, and invoke

this destiny; Heaven will send a sign of its appreciation.

Incomparable Sun Weapon [Weapon of the Gods]

The Incomparable Sun Weapon is a Class III Weapon with a distinguished history. Its shape is a "dragon head whip club", with a six-foot metal rope connecting a dragon's head and a spearpoint. Its techniques make a stone in the dragon's head burn like the sun — a powerful defensive and offensive energy.





DESTINY COST

- I **Entangled Destiny:** your Destiny will touch that of the Incomparable Sun Weapon.
- I **Defense:** improve your defense against Incomparable Sun Weapon techniques.

Yu Shun
[Destiny]

In addition to the noted deeds, Yu Shun fought a flood, improved the calendar, and standardized weights and measures. A righteous man can accomplish all things!

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from Yu Shun by blood or martial tradition.
- 3 **Victory:** once during the game, if you descend from Yu Shun, you can bring a world-changing invention to Shen Zhou. It should be appropriate to the era — matches, playing cards, the mechanical clock, or an improvement to metallurgy or medicine are reasonable choices; digital watches are not. To invent guns requires GM permission.
- * **Bonus:** if you descend from Yu Shun, you have a +10 modifier to Tactics rolls to play Wei Qi.

Advanced Topics

- 5 *The Transformation of the World* (p. 353) — the impeccable Huangti brings chaos to heel!
- 0 *Writing* (p. 227) — the earth-shattering invention of the Yellow Emperor and his historian Can Ji!

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- I *The Yellow Emperor* — he defeated Chi You and brought chaos to an end!
- I *The Xia Dynasty* — heirs to the glorious Wu Di kings!

The Xia Dynasty

(2500 Years Before
Tiger Soul's Return)

Destiny Cost: 3
Study Difficulty: Learning (18)

The First Xia Emperor

THE PRODUCTS OF Yu Shun's college included many excellent warriors — students of the martial virtues and qualities, shining with righteousness! One swordsman emerging from this college was Xia Yu Di, whose name became synonymous with heroism.

The Yellow River flooded long before Yu Di entered the Emperor's service. His father Gun promised Yu Shun he would stem the flood; he proved inadequate, and the Emperor had him executed. From a young age, Yu Di burned with the desire to succeed where his father had failed and prove himself to Yu Shun!

Yu Di was a dedicated engineer. With the help of other heroes, he labored ceaselessly to control the flood. He ate once a day; he slept once a week! He refused to go home until the floodwaters receded. Yet even Yu Di's iron heart could not resist the eyes of Elegant Swan, who labored at his side. On such occasions as he slept, he dreamed of her face. When he hungered, she made his meals!

Three times Yu Di felt the situation controlled, and started to go home; but each time, some new disaster struck. Dams crumbled; the river changed its course; it was as if the gods themselves worked against him! Yet Yu Di knew himself righteous — and where the gods do not act, one finds a mortal hand.

He stood by the river, looking in turn at each of those who worked with him against the flood. "One of you prolongs this misery," he said. "What monster would sabotage our efforts, and strike at Shen Zhou's heart?"

As he said this, he watched their faces. The truth in Elegant Swan's eyes put a chill in his heart.

"Why?" he asked her. "For years, I have not slept; I have not eaten; I have not gone home. People drown; crops die; the land weeps. What could justify such sorrow?"

"I have no home to return to," she said. "To be at your side is the only happiness I have known."

"Ah," he said, and took her hand, and looked into her eyes; and for a moment, they were still. Then, in the same instant, they drew their blades, and flew into the

神兵玄奇



air; their swords clashed at every step, until the air filled with the afterimage of gleaming metal. Their blades came together, then shoved the pair apart, until they faced one another on two opposing clouds.

"This is the Serpent's Bite," she said, and leapt towards him.

"This is the Thunder of Heaven."

For an hour, they held one another with their swords, his through her heart, and hers through his side; then she fell into the river, with a final scream, and her heart's blood pacified the unruly river gods. Yu Di floated to the ground; for his deeds the people acclaimed him the Legendary Swordsman, and Yu Shun made him the first Xia King.

The Four Virtues of Xia Qi

Yu Di's son Xia Qi also wielded a marvelous blade and accomplished many wonders. He was a legend in the world of martial arts — none could humble him!

Yu Di appointed his follower Yi to the throne of Shen Zhou, but Xia Qi would have none of it. He stormed into the throne room, declaring:

The morning mist rests heavily on the streets

A watchman's boots jingle.

*He lifts his lantern, looking north, south,
east, west:*

Where is an adequate king?

*Only a useless bureaucrat sits upon the
throne.*

Ten thousand guards — an
imperial army! —
started forward
to arrest

him, but Yi held up his hand. "Ten thousand to one is an embarrassing exhibition," he said. "Let Qi approach."

Xia Qi strode cockily towards the throne. "A wise choice, old man! Shen Zhou cannot afford the loss of so many men. But can your kung fu defeat mine?"

Yi leaned forward. "Violence in the imperial court? A disgraceful concept. Why shame this throne with blood? You are the son of the glorious Xia Yu Di. I, the source of all righteousness! We must settle this another way."

"I am master of all things," said Xia Qi. "Choose your test!"

"You call me a useless bureaucrat," said Yi. "Let us compare our skills thus: you shall preach the virtues of your sword, and I shall speak of the virtues of bureaucracy. When we are done, you shall judge the winner."

"Agreed!" said Xia Qi.

Yi leaned back. "Begin."

"My blade has four virtues," said Xia Qi. "I shall tell you of three of them: they are integrity, force, and loyalty."

Yi nodded.

"De," said Xia Qi. "Integrity. Martial skill flows from martial integrity; it cannot be otherwise. The ethics of the sword are righteous and honorable behavior — proper comportment in all things."

"Yet you would turn your blade against your king?"

Xia Qi inclined his head. "De is not abiding by the law," he says. "Nor is it fearing blood. It is living admirably; and it does not discriminate between kings and men."

"Continue," said Yi, introspective.

"Ba, or force," said Xia Qi. "I am a swordsman; I am



a force unto myself. Power cannot corrupt me. Poverty cannot change me. Authority cannot bend me. Thus, I am the same now as I will be as king."

"Yet you come here to seize my court?"

"Not for myself, but for Shen Zhou; a petty man cannot hold my father's throne!"

"Ah," said Yi.

"Finally," said Xia Qi, "I speak of loyalty."

"Yes," said Yi, acerbically. "Tell me of the loyalty of your blade."

"Those whom I respect," answered Xia Qi. "Those who respect me in turn: these have my *zhong*, or loyalty. Thus, the service of my sword defies rank — my blade dances for those who deserve it most."

"This is your presentation?"

"What can you offer, to compare to such virtues?"

Yi leaned forward again. "Nobles plague our land," he said. "A hereditary aristocracy! Look to the north: to the south: to the east: to the west: you see no adequate king. But do you see an adequate lord?"

Xia Qi hesitated. "Many who inherit their power have some merit."

"Then you would advocate distributing the empire among them, each according to their worth?"

Xia Qi laughed. "I would give them no such privilege! The rule of Shen Zhou is mine."

"Indeed," said Yi. "And such thoughts are in each of their minds."

Xia Qi frowned. "You paint a bleak picture of Shen Zhou, where no man understands righteousness, and the worthy are corroded by ambition."

"I do," agreed Yi. "This is why I am a bureaucrat. As long as the officers of my court are chosen by their worth, and serve in my bureaucracy, and at my whim, all power flows from the king. Should I weaken, and give credit to those of superior birth, then power flows from the father; the king has no meaning. You wish to rule by the sword? A foolish ambition. Such a King has no power."

"This," Xia Qi asked, turning it over in his mind, "is your presentation?"

"Yes."

Xia Qi considered. "You make a compelling case," he said. "But if I said that it was the better of the two, then our contest would end, and you would have me executed."

"This is true," Yi agreed. "Still, the *de* of your blade does not fear death."

Xia Qi nodded. "I have no choice; I shall show you the fourth virtue of my blade. It is *xia*, or justice."

Yi rose in one motion to his feet, drawing his double fork stick.

Xia Qi said, "You have wronged me, and taken the place that should be mine; this demands justice. This is no matter for *de* or *ba* or *zhong*. You have stirred the anger in my heart and the justice-essence in my blade."

"Haa!" cried Yi, charging Qi from the throne, his double fork stick spinning to catch his enemy's blade. His movements were fast; the floor caught fire where he stepped. His double fork stick plunged into the ground where Qi, a moment ago, had stood; stone sprayed in all directions. But Qi's sword was buried in Yi's neck, and Qi standing thirty yards back.

"This is the fourth virtue of my sword," said Xia Qi, "and I claim victory by default."

"Victory?" exhaled Yi, and died.

"Hail the king!" cried ten thousand guards. "Hail the son of Heaven!"

Xia Qi drew forth his blade from Yi's neck. "To the last, you trouble me," he said, his eyes full of fire as he stared upon his enemy. "You have made me a bureaucrat; and I have made you a corpse."

Xia Jie

Inspired by Xia Qi's fierce blood, the Xia dynasty survived many years. In time, the notorious Xia Jie came to Shen Zhou's throne.

Xia Jie built lakes of wine and mountains of yeast. He was truly a degenerate king. At just one party, he ordered the death of 3,000 men — "Jump into the wine," he cried, "and drown yourselves for my amusement." Those who refused faced his royal guard's blades!

Guan-Long Feng told him, "Such wickedness spells the end to a royal line. If you act like a demon, Heaven will show you a lesson!"

"I won't repent!" roared Xia Jie. With one punch, he broke both Guan-Long's hands; with three vicious kicks, he brutalized his minister!

Guan-Long moaned.

"Take him to a cell," said Xia Jie, airily. "Let him think on his mistakes. Then he'll surely die."

Guan-Long Feng sat in his cell, cold and alone. "This is no good," he thought. "Such a King will bring disaster on the people. And I am his minister!"

He limped to the door.

"Guards," he said. "Bring me incense, scrolls, pen, ink, and a fire. I will issue prayers to Heaven for the health of the land."

For twenty-two years, Guan-Long Feng sat in his cell. With hands that never fully healed, he composed pious prayers and burned them to send them to the gods. Though his health grew frail, he hung on to his life; and so great was his virtue that the gods did not strike the king down.

One day, Xia Jie looked up from his entertainments. "What of old Guan-Long Feng?" he said. "This woman is good; but the eye of his skull would be better!"

"August majesty!" said his servant. "Guan-Long Feng sits in his cell, composing efficacious prayers to Heaven, on behalf of your rule!"

"What?" Xia Jie pulled himself to his feet. "This is infamous. He should have died years ago! Have him hung at once, and his tongue pulled out!"

"Immediately!" said the servant, bowing and withdrawing from the room. With Guan-Long Feng's death, the prayers to Heaven stopped; and Heaven withdrew its grace from Xia Jie. Instantly, troubles blossomed throughout the land; and the great Shang Tang's armies surrounded Xie Jie's palace.

Xia Jie sulked about this as he bathed in a lake of wine. "A Shang can't kill a monster!" he said. "I'll tear off his head!"

Into the chamber strode Shang Tang, shining in the regalia of his rank. Xia Jie realized, with a sudden chill, that his servants had abandoned him.

"Where is this monster?" said Shang Tang. "You're a wrinkled prune sitting naked in a puddle of wine."

"Give me a sword!" cried Xia Jie, rising to his feet; but Shang Tang simply smirked at his corpulent body.

"You're not worth fighting," said Shang Tang. "So I'll cut off your manhood, put you in a cage, and ship you off to Nanchao; and if you don't displease me, I'll let you drink the dregs of the Imperial wine."

In this fashion did the mantle of king pass to the glorious dynasty of the Shang.

Secrets of Destiny: *The Xia Dynasty*

Four-Virtue Sword [Weapon of the Gods]

The Four-Virtue Sword of Xia Qi is a shameful weapon, bathed in the blood of an Emperor! This Class III Weapon resonates with the wielder's emotions — their great acts are greater, and their monstrous deeds more deadly.

DESTINY COST

- I **Entangled Destiny:** your Destiny will touch that of the Four-Virtue Sword.
- I **Defense:** improve your defense against Four-Virtue Sword techniques.

Guan-Long Feng [Destiny]

Guan-Long Feng was a loyal minister. Though cursed by his Emperor, still he labored in pain and darkness for the good of Shen Zhou!

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from Guan-Long Feng by blood.
- 3 **Victory:** once during the game, if you descend from Guan-Long Feng, you can offer magnificent prayers to Heaven to protect some person, project, or institution. As long as you continue with your prayers, your target can be hurt but not destroyed — to wipe your ward out, enemies must first stop you! You can take time off to sleep, eat, and otherwise attend to your body. It's possible to offer prayers while fighting and traveling, as long as you describe it well.
- 3 **Victory:** once during the game, if you descend from Guan-Long Feng, you can instantly earn the favor of a loyal minister — with a glance, they recognize your excellence! They must not already dislike you.

Thunder Horse [Weapon of the Gods]

Thunder Horse is a distinguished Class III Weapon — the double fork stick of Emperor Yi! It has a fork on one end and a stabbing point on the other. After Yi's death by assassination, these weapons fell out of use; the shape of Thunder Horse is unique in Shen Zhou. Its techniques are unknown.



DESTINY COST

- 1 **Entangled Destiny:** your Destiny will touch that of Thunder Horse.
- 1 **Defense:** improve your defense against Thunder Horse techniques.

Xia Yi [Destiny]

Xia Yi was a thoughtful bureaucrat-king. With philosophy and double fork stick, he opposed the sword of Xia Qi!

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from Xia Yi by blood or martial tradition.
- 5 **Destiny:** once during the game, if you descend from Xia Yi, you can bolster a kingdom. Like sucking the poison from a wound, you draw the corruption from its bureaucracy, so that all power flows harmoniously from the king. You must still invest time in the project and deal with any military or personal threats your bureaucratic opponents can offer.

(-2) The ruler listens to your advice, or the kingdom is your own.

- * **Bonus:** if you descend from Xia Yi, you receive a +10 modifier when using Crafting to affect bureaucracies.

Xia Yu Di [Destiny]

Xia Yu Di was a glorious engineer-warrior. Most men run from a flood — he met it in battle!

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from Xia Yu Di by blood or martial tradition.
- 3 **Destiny:** you are capable of performing engineering wonders, stunning the world! Once during the game, if you descend from Xia Yu Di, you can accomplish such a marvel even when all seems hopeless. You must still invest time in the project and deal with any threats, but you can achieve an engineering miracle that the Game Master would otherwise rule impossible with the time and resources allotted. Examples include rerouting rivers, building great

fortresses even as enemies march upon you, and constructing a unique and terrifying engine of war.

- * **Bonus:** if you descend from Xia Yu Di, you receive a +10 modifier when using Crafting to perform engineering projects.

Yellow River Society [Secret Society]

This band of outlaws takes their inspiration from Yu Di's battle with the yellow river — their sword skill is like water, rising and falling with elegance. These fighters organize to oppose the unrighteousness of the Clans, who hunt them like dogs through the streets of Shen Zhou. Their most terrifying technique has the power of the river in flood! Yellow River techniques specialize in the use of "Zi-Wu Mandarin Ducks" — short hook swords, each with one blade pointing forward and one pointing back, wielded in pairs; however, the techniques are efficacious with any sword. To learn more about the Yellow River Society, see *The Social Organizations of Shen Zhou*, pg. 62.

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Discovery or Fortune:** you have an ally in the Yellow River Society.
- 2 **Fortune:** you develop good relations with the Yellow River Society.
- 3 **Fortune:** you join the Yellow River Society and gain access to their style.

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- 1 *The Wu Di* — what wonders come from the age of great kings?
- 1 *The Shang Dynasty* — glorious warriors, they stole Shen Zhou from its corrupt King!

The Shang Dynasty

(2100 Years Before
Tiger Soul's Return)

Destiny Cost: 3
Study Difficulty: Learning (18)

The Shang Diviners

SHANG TANG DECLARED, "The high god Di guides my family. He speaks to no one save the ghosts of my ancestors; and they speak only to me!"

Hearing Shang Tang's declaration, the peasants trembled. All hailed the glorious ancestor-speaking King!

Shang Tang held a tortoiseshell in one hand and a hot poker in the other. On the tortoiseshell was writing: "Can anyone challenge the peerless divinations of the Shang?" He touched it with the poker; the shell cracked.

His oracles studied the pattern in the shells. "It is not auspicious!" they cried, and kowtowed. "He who challenges the Shang would surely perish!"

"Do the gods favor peace?" asked Shang Tang, and touched poker to shell.

"Inauspicious!" cried his oracles. "Inauspicious! Inauspicious!"

"Then send 3,000 men to war; for the barbarian Qiang of the west displease me!"

His men gathered in their armor and their bronze-tipped spears. They beat the ground. They rattled their shields. They marched off to war.

"Do the gods favor peace?" cried Shang Zhong Ding, and touched poker to shell.

"Inauspicious! Inauspicious! Inauspicious!"

"Then send 4,000 men to war; for the Deng anger me!"

Legions gathered in their armor and their chariots. They beat their war drums. They cried out the rage of the Shang. They marched off to war.

"Do the gods favor peace?" cried Shang Wai Ren, and touched poker to shell.

"INAUSPICIOUS!" thundered his oracles, as one.

"Then send 5,000 men to war;
for the Huai and Xian tribes
rebel against
me!"

Thus did the generations of the Shang Dynasty pass, in blood and triumph.

Liubo

The Emperor Shang Wu Yi said, "Ages ago, the Celestial Goddess defeated the Enchanted Demon, God, and the Devil, in one act. But was she so great? I could defeat God with my own hands!" He turned to his courtiers. "Bring God to me in chains, that I may demonstrate my power!"

Full of consternation, his servants constructed a statue named God and brought it to the court. Shang Wu Yi studied it through narrowed eyes.

"This is not God," he said, "and I will not prove my glory by breaking a stone! Fetch me a liubo board. I shall play a game against God. This statue shall serve as his representative, and my officials shall perform its moves!"

Again and again, Shang Wu Yi defeated God; his liubo techniques were flawless. Then he had a troubled dream, facing the Immortal Emperor of Heaven.

"What do you hope to prove by this?" said the Immortal Emperor. "You earn no glory by defeating a statue."

"This is what you see," said Shang Wu Yi, "and what I see. But the people see only a perfect unchallenged Emperor — a man who daily humiliates God! This ensures the security of my reign."

"To rule untroubled, the people made peaceful by fear and awe — this is a righteous desire," agreed the Immortal Emperor. At that moment, Wu Yi woke.

"I have confronted the Immortal Emperor," said Wu Yi, "and my kung fu made him weep!"

"Praise the Shang Emperor!" cried his court.

Shang Zhou

Emperor Shang Zhou called his three uncles to him: Bi Gan, Qi Zi, and Wei Zi. He held up a tortoiseshell; the writing on it read, "How shall the reign of Shang Zhou fare?" He touched a poker to it; the shell cracked.

"Read it," he said, and pushed it across the table to them.

One by one, his uncles read his fortune; but all three of them were silent.

"Do you imagine," said Shang Zhou, "that I do not know what it says?"

"Then I shall read it," said Bi Gan. "You will be a terrible Emperor, Shang Zhou, and lose the mandate of Heaven. You intend virtue, but the rage and cruelty in your heart will overpower you. In the end, your realm shall fall to chaos."



"Such is the will of Heaven," said Shang Zhou. He looked at his uncles, eyes shadowed. "I do not accept it; thus, I have brought you here. When I fall into rage, or cruelty, you will protest, saying, 'Honored Emperor, remember that a great man's heart is calm.' Do this for me, and my rule shall flourish."

"Yes, your majesty," said each of his uncles in turn.

For three years, Shang Zhou ruled wisely and well. Then his wife, Ta Ji, felt certain concerns.

"Where is the fire of your youth?" she asked him. "You seem older, and more tired, every day. At times, I see its spark returning: your spine straightens, your eyes blaze, you move like a tiger! But then your uncle says, 'Honored Emperor, remember that a great man's heart is calm', and it fades away."

"I am burdened," admitted Zhou. "It is no tiger that lives in me, but a demon—I must struggle to contain it! This is why my uncles counsel me to calm. If I cannot master myself, I am no king!"

"Ah," said Ta Ji, unsatisfied. She gathered Wei Zi, Qi Zi, and Bi Gan in a grove of bamboo. "You have made my husband fear that he will become a monster," she told them. "Why do you do this? He has become a meek and cringing woman-king."

"You would say that," said Qi Zi. "But you lack our superior wisdom."

"I'll teach you wisdom!" said Ta Ji. "I've convinced him that you've gone too far. I've told him there's a rumor that one of you wants to make him weak and replace him as Emperor. He'll be watching to see which one! So if you speak up too often, he'll have you killed."

Qi Zi fumed. "A woman like you should be beaten!" He leapt upon her in a fury, his sword drawn and lightning burning about the blade. Ta Ji snapped off a length of bamboo and blocked him with it, floating back; though the bamboo bowed like a frantic courtier beneath his blows, still she deflected each one. Then, with a long lunge, she touched his forehead with the bamboo, and he fell to the ground. She turned to face the others, but they made no move to strike. She drove the length of bamboo into the earth with a single forceful blow; then, calmly, she walked away.

From that moment, the tenor of the court changed. When the Emperor felt rage or cruelty, not Qi Zi, nor Wei Zi, nor Bi Gan dared speak. Shang Zhou engaged in torture and slew captured prisoners of war with his own massive sword. Only when his acts approached demoniacal monstrosity did his uncles speak. Qi Zi would open his mouth, and then look at Ta Ji, and fall silent; Wei Zi would mutter something under his breath; and Bi Gan, his voice clear as the wind, would say, "Honored Emperor, remember that a great man's heart is calm."

Once, after a particularly brutal killing, Ta Ji exclaimed, "Ah!" and clapped her hands.

"You celebrate the man's death?" said Zhou. "For one, I feel that my rage has shamed me."

"It is not that he is dead," said Ta Ji. "Rather, it is your power! You are becoming my shining Zhou again — an immortal demon-Emperor, full of fire! Nothing can oppose your forceful manner."

"Well," agreed Shang Zhou, "I suppose that should not be so bad."

"Honored Emperor!" said Wei Zi.

"Ah," said Shang Zhou, and turned to face Wei Zi.

In that instant, Wei Zi feared he had spoken too late: for Shang Zhou's face was a demon's mask, full of cruelty and corruption. Still, Wei Zi found his courage: "Repent of this path. Our enemies on all sides grow ever stronger; you will lose the mandate of Heaven."

Shang Zhou's eyes were haunted. He rose to his feet, and took Ta Ji's hand. "I must speak to my wife. Do not be here when I return."

"You must not listen to him," said Ta Ji. "He seeks to destroy you!"

Shang Zhou sighed. "What is sweeter than an enemy's blood? What is more pleasant than to hear his screams of agony? But I am Emperor; I must remain virtuous."

"You are deceived by your ancestors," cried Ta Ji. "They have taught you false principles!"

"I cannot decide," said Shang Zhou.

"Then I will prove it to you," said Ta Ji. "I will make your uncles reveal their true intentions!"

A great weight seemed to lift from Shang Zhou's shoulders. "No," he said to her, gently. "For you do not understand them. You see me full of life and fire, and rejoice in a powerful husband; but this is not the truth. I am weak, Ta Ji. When I succumb to the beast in my heart, it shows my folly; it taints my martial virtue. When I am calm and wield my power justly, it is a strength that cannot be seen. My power, warring against itself, becomes still and quiet. This is happiness. Do not deprive me of it, Ta Ji."

Ta Ji took out her knife and cut her arms. "Have I misunderstood my glorious lord? I deserve to suffer!" She lowered her head. "I shall watch my beloved demon-Emperor fade, and hold the hand of Shang Zhou who guards inside."

"You are reckless," said Shang Zhou, touching her arm.

Outside, the three uncles debated.

"We must stop him," said Bi Gan. "It is the servant's duty to correct the master. He has asked our aid; we must be righteous!"

"I fear him," said Qi Zi. "And I, for one, will pretend insanity."

"I will leave this court," said Wei Zi. "There is no hope for him."

"Ah!" said Bi Gan in anguish. "This is all the fault of that heartless woman Ta Ji. We have seen how her face lights up when he tortures his prey; how can we endure her corruption?"

Qi Zi shrugged. "I am mad," he said, "and such matters are irrelevant to me. Still, if you strike swiftly, and from behind, can even her Ta skill save her?"

Wei Zi sighed and left the court.

Soon, Ta Ji and Shang Zhou emerged. Her long sleeves concealed her wounds. Shang Zhou did not inquire as to Wei Zi's whereabouts. He accepted Qi Zi's madness without qualm. When Bi Gan would tentatively chastise him, Shang Zhou became calm. Each time, Bi Gan saw the flash of pain on Ta Ji's face.

"The woman schemes against me," he thought. "In time, she will kill me, and my advice will be for naught."

One morning, when she entered the court, he struck. His hand came around and a poison needle flew from his sleeve; it hissed like a viper as it flew through the air.

Ta Ji spun like a dancer, sinking into a crouch, and catching the needle as it flew by between two of her hairpins. Her sleeves flared and then settled.

"What is this?" inquired Shang Zhou. His eyes began to burn.

"Honored Emperor!" cried Bi Gan. "Remember that a great man's heart is calm!"

The angle of the trapped needle clearly showed its origin. Shang Zhou howled. "Your words are self-serving!" cried the Emperor.

Ta Ji's face went white as the Emperor stalked down from the throne. She could not say a word as he examined the needle. Then, with one powerful blow, he struck the air in front of it. The needle shivered, broke loose of her grip, spun end-over-end, and flew into Bi Gan's neck.

"Instant death poison," said Shang Zhou. "An unworthy tool."

Ta Ji stared at him for a long moment. "Husband ..."

"You have proven his lack of worth."

"I do not wish this!" she said.

"You will," he answered; and her shoulders slumped.

"My glorious demon-Emperor," she said; and set her hairpins on the ground.

Secrets of Destiny: *The Shang Dynasty*

Bi Gan [*Destiny*]

Bi Gan was a valorous advisor — he condemned Shang Zhou's policies even when he thought it meant his death! His kung fu was weak, so he fought Ta Ji with poison — but he remains a name worth honoring.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from Bi Gan by blood.
- 3 **Victory:** if you descend from Bi Gan, you can counsel even a madman! Spend 4 *xia* joss and you can deal safely with a hostile NPC or group thereof — until you pose a direct apparent threat to them, their interests, or their allies, there's nothing you can say that will make them decide to kill you.
- * **Bonus:** if you descend from Bi Gan, you receive a +1 bonus to your Persuade skill. This can increase it to 6.

Shang Divination [*Treasure*]

To those who know how to read them, the cracked tortoiseshells used during the Shang Dynasty provide many secrets. The Shang did not limit themselves to asking whether the gods favored peace — they would ask their ancestors for the locations of hidden treasures, the secrets of the gods, and even methods of kung fu! Thousands of Shang tortoiseshells are scattered through Shen Zhou, and only a few dozen hold secrets worth knowing — but those are treasures beyond price.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **Secret:** learn key information regarding the location of an important Shang tortoiseshell.
- 3 **Secret:** learn to read Shang tortoiseshells. You must first have an appropriate Predictionism lore and *Tools of Divination*.

Shang Wu Yi

[Destiny]

Shang Wu Yi mastered liubo, wielding dice and ivory chess pieces against God on a square board. In this fashion, he demonstrated all-empire mastery!

The game later evolved into xiangqi, with additional game pieces but no dice.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from Shang Wu Yi by blood or martial tradition.
- * **Bonus:** by force of will, you can convince others you wield improbable prowess. If you descend from Shang Wu Yi, any time you roll a critical success, you can spend 3 Destiny to turn it into a gossip-spawning legend — even if the subject of the roll is manifestly trivial and unimportant, such as a Persuade roll at the local market or a Confidence roll to impress a peasant.
- * **Bonus:** if you descend from Shang Wu Yi, you have a +10 modifier to Tactics rolls to play liubo and a +5 modifier to Tactics rolls to play xiangqi.

Ta Ji

[Destiny]

Ta Ji possessed legendary skill — secretly, she served her husband the Emperor as assassin and torturer! She loved him when he shone with divine wisdom, but admired his evil face more. Those who descend from Ta Ji tend to suffer a great attraction to those unsuited to them.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from Ta Ji by blood or martial tradition.
- * **Bonus:** at least once during the game, if you descend from Ta Ji, the Game Master will encourage you to fall in love with a manifestly unwise choice. The player can refuse if, in the player's mind, it directly contradicts the character concept; otherwise, the matter is a fait accompli. On acceptance, you receive a bonus of 3 Destiny.
- * **Bonus:** at least once during the game, if you descend from Ta Ji, the Game Master will arrange for your presence to destroy something you care for — a person, an enterprise, even an empire. This differs from the normal events of the game in that destiny and fortune go out of their way to

crumble this pillar of your life. When this happens, you receive 5 Destiny. The Game Master should agree with the player on how often this will happen — typically, either “once,” “twice,” or “rarely.”

- * **Bonus:** if you descend from Ta Ji, when you torture an enemy, they have a -5 modifier to Confidence or Hardiness rolls to resist.

Thunder Cult

[Secret Society]

Shang Wu Yi's statue of God survives to this day. The “demon-warlord” Hou Jing of the Thunder Cult plays xiangqi against it regularly — his victories terrify his peers! Those who would challenge him should beware; he plays xiangqi with living pieces, and a challenger is always among them.

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Discovery or Fortune:** you have an ally in the Thunder Cult.
- 5 **Victory:** you steal Hou Jing's mandate and dominate the Thunder Cult (Hou Jing is of at least Third Rank; his prowess and skills will be determined by your Sage). You must first defeat him at xiangqi and then magnificently defeat God. (The followers of Hou Jing who oppose the transition will provide moves for God.)

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- 1 *The Xia Dynasty* — the first Dynasty, they inspired the Shang Kings!
- 1 *The Zhou Dynasty* — when Shang Zhou lost the mandate of Heaven, who would take his place?



The Zhou Dynasty

(1400 Years Before
Tiger Soul's Return)

Destiny Cost: 3
Study Difficulty: Learning (18)

Three Righteous Kings

THE CULTURED KING, King Wen, saw the Shang Dynasty as the successors to Heaven. Huangti's empire once stretched in every direction — greater than modern Shen Zhou! The Shang Dynasty ruled only a small kingdom. But that kingdom had a cultural glory that knew no bounds. Wen wished that for his own people. He made alliances with his neighbors and prepared his kingdom to assault the Shang.

His son Wu, the Martial King, launched an attack upon the Shang. Shang Zhou's corruption cost him the mandate of Heaven. He was a cruel king, and his courtiers had no shame! Such degeneracy leads only to failure. King Wu's armies triumphed and captured the Shang.

King Wu died soon after. His brother, the Duke of Zhou, became regent for his son. Though a righteous and powerful ruler, the Duke of Zhou still bowed his head and surrendered the throne to Wu's son when he came of age. The Zhou dynasty began.

Secrets of Destiny:

The Zhou Dynasty

The Duke of Zhou [Destiny]

A divinely loyal regent, the Duke of Zhou dedicated his life to his nephew's rule. Though he held the throne of Shen Zhou and commanded its armies, he kowtowed and surrendered it all to his ward and king!

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from the Duke of Zhou by blood or martial tradition.
- 3 **Victory:** if you descend from the Duke of Zhou, you represent all that is harmonious. Once during the game, on achieving a significant victory on behalf of your family and Clan, you can amplify the results. The exact effects are up to the Game Master. As a n

example, a Xi hero defeats a barbarian tribe that threatens the Clan; after she invokes this Destiny, the tribe and several others choose to become clients of the Xi, vastly expanding Xi territory.

- * **Bonus:** if you descend from the Duke of Zhou, you have the trust of your family and Clan, and they yours. They may demand and expect heroic acts of you, but will not trap you with unpleasant obligations — even if pushed to do so by a courtier's manipulations.

The Cultured King [Destiny]

King Wen saw the potential in the land of Shang, and wished it for his own! The legendary Cultured King wielded diplomacy and grace to organize the world against his rival. He is revered to this day as the very model of the Courtier-King.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from King Wen by blood or martial tradition.
- 3 **Victory:** if you descend from King Wen, you have a legendary ability to make alliances. Once during the game, you can display dazzling diplomatic skill, winning the loyalty, alliance, or support of a powerful NPC who does not already hate or loathe you. The NPC will support you until betrayed, and even after a betrayal will be unusually inclined to forgive. The exact manifestation of the character's loyalty depends on the character's disposition and your comparative power — an Emperor offers measured support, while a younger brother offers passionate service.
- * **Bonus:** if you descend from the Cultured King, you receive a +1 bonus to your Grace skill. This can increase it to 6.

The Martial King [Destiny]

King Wu recognized Shang Zhou's madness, and seized the throne of Shang for his own! The legendary Martial King was an impeccable military commander, empowered by Heaven to rule Shen Zhou. The Martial King is well-known and oft spoken of by those Warriors with imperial ambitions.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from King Wu by blood or martial tradition.
- * **Destiny:** If you descend from King Wu, you have a legendary ability to inspire soldiers. Whenever you lead warriors into a battle, you can spend 3 Destiny to treat mob members as gang members, gang

members as faction members, and to give faction members a +5 modifier to their attacks. This benefit lasts for one scene.

- * **Bonus:** If you descend from King Wu, you receive a +1 bonus to your Tactics skill. This can increase it to 6.

Three Kings Kung Fu [Kung Fu]

Because of its practice by the three righteous kings, Star-Crown Morning kung fu became known as “Three Kings” or “Three Zhou” kung fu. The Falling Wren Society still practices this tradition, using it against injustice. Its techniques rely on sword skill, and often invoke darkness and light.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **Entangled Destiny:** your Destiny will touch that of the Falling Wren Society.
- 3 **Fortune:** you join the Falling Wren Society and gain access to the Three Kings style.

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- 1 *The Shang Dynasty* — what wonders did King Wen see, inspiring his envy?
- 1 *The Qin Dynasty* — the First Emperor arises, surmounting the world!
- 1 *Daoism* — what is this mystic philosophy?
- 2 *Confucianism* — in the troubled years of the Zhou Dynasty, can Confucius survive his deadly enemies? Learn his benevolent teachings!
- 2 *Legalism* — as the Zhou Dynasty fades, witness the First Emperor’s deadly techniques and learn the social theories that inspired them!

The Qin Dynasty

(550 Years Before
Tiger Soul’s Return)

Destiny Cost: 2
Study Difficulty: Learning (18)

The First Emperor

IN A SERIES of military victories, Ying Zheng conquered Shen Zhou and began the Qin Dynasty. He declared himself Qin Shihuangdi, the “First Emperor.” Influenced by the scholar-warrior Han Feizi, he adopted the tenets of Legalism and pursued fierce policies. He consolidated power in the hands of the bureaucracy; standardized language, currency, and all things under Heaven; and confiscated weapons, melting them down to forge the All-in-Chaos Bells and Thousand-Sword Statue Warriors, intimidating those who might rebel against him.

Many sought to kill the First Emperor—his blade ran black with the blood of assassins. Yet he stood undeterred, and set his will upon Shen Zhou.

The Great Wall

The First Emperor spoke into a mirror.

“This is the way of the law. If it serves the realm, I must not hold back, though it drive a hundred thousand men from their homes.”

His officials rounded up the people of Shen Zhou in droves and sent them to build the First Emperor’s Great Wall. In pain and sorrow, they labored and they died. Not one of them cared that the law made their realm strong. The First Emperor’s will inspired them to a greatness they would never have had; but it was not a greatness they wanted.

“This is the way of the law. Though ten thousand men die, still Shen Zhou grows strong, in harmony with Heaven.”

Many died at the wall. A superstition began that if a man named Wan, “ten thousand,” died, then no more need perish. Such a man was found, and torn away from his beloved, and sent to kill himself with harsh labor.

“And if it break my own heart,” said Qin Shihuangdi, “still — the law must prevail.”

Wan’s beloved, Meng Jiangnu, traveled to the Wall to recover Wan’s bones. The First Emperor

神兵玄奇



made a tour of inspection. When he saw Jiangnu there, he fell instantly in love — but Jiangnu would never love the man whose regime had killed Wan.

“That is the way of things,” said Qin Shihuangdi, and turned from the mirror.

In his mind, he heard again the words of Jiangnu, spoken as she killed herself: “You will always be hated for your tyranny.”

The First Emperor smiled. Shen Zhou was strong, and this made him glad.

The Island of Peng Lai

The First Emperor, wishing to live forever, sent several expeditions to the island of Peng Lai, famed for its immortality elixir. None returned. Bu Jinhong, a palace maiden, set forth to achieve this goal herself. Surely, this would win her the eternal approval of the Emperor!

She reached the beach at the coast of Kiangsu and looked out at the islands opposite the shore. “With my Lightfoot technique, I can run on water — this expedition is no challenge.”

She blinked; a man of sorrowful countenance faced her. “I am Wei,” he said, “and I am thirty-seven hundred years old. Since I was a young boy, my hands have killed those who sought the islands of Peng Lai. Turn back! Why soil my fingers with your blood?”

“Such a criminal act!” she said, incensed. “To find the islands is the will of the Emperor.”

“We all have our masters,” said Wei. “He is not mine.”

Testing his skills, Jinhong struck him thirty-seven times with her thin bamboo staff. Thirty-six times, he swayed casually out of the way; upon her thirty-seventh attack, he caught the end of the staff and all her efforts could not move it.

“I cannot defeat him easily,” she thought, “so I must use other means.”

Trained as a palace maiden, Jinhong had access to secret arts that could evoke the souls of the five elements within her flesh. She drew deeply on her body’s Fire in its passionate intensity, making herself as desirable as the sun. She stirred the Metal in her to action, making herself unapproachable. In the sunlight on the beach, she stood magnificent: a living goddess, more beautiful than the day. Yet to touch her invited seven deadly retributions!

“Ah,” said Wei, stricken. Embarrassment overcame him; unwilling to stare at her, he forced himself to watch the sand.

Jinhong performed the Divine Movement of the Wistful Maiden; her hair shone. The air around her shimmered with the power of her Fire art. Standing on the shore, she was the master of all things; how could Wei bear knowing she would one day wither and die?

“Beware of partisanship,” Wei croaked. “I must not extend the favors of Peng Lai out of love.”

Jinhong held out one hand to him in the Eightfold Gesture of Infinite Lament. Though he fought her with his own powerful Kung fu, Wei could not resist; his eyes snapped up to her face, and his heart trembled with sorrow.

“It is not pleasing to Heaven,” said Wei. “We will both suffer if I do this thing.”

Jinhong counted off the seconds. “When he is weak,” she told herself, “I will lunge, and put my hand through his eyes into his brain.”

“I stand on the verge of forsaking my duty,” thought Wei. “This must not be! I will strike at her eight times in the ‘Dog Drives the Horse’ style; she will flee.”

In the same moment, like two dancers in the same dance, they moved. Wei’s hand came up as Jinhong lunged. His Chi-hardened fingers tore into her heart. Her hand broke both of his eyes and tore into his brain. He staggered backwards, pouring inner power into his Jade Restoration technique. Thanks to the immortality elixir of Peng Lai, which Wei had consumed many times, the effects were profound. In moments, his vision cleared, and he looked upon Jinhong again.

“Forgive me,” he told her.

She shook her head. “You have acted correctly,” she said, quietly, “as have I. There is no shame.”

He lunged forward, palm blazing with the healing fire of his jade Chi; but Jinhong died before he reached her.

“Immortality is not for the unenlightened,” he said, and buried her in the sand.

The Scholar’s Defiance

Scholars used their writing to disagree with the Emperor. This undermined his law. In accords with Legalist principles, Ying Zheng ordered all non-essential books destroyed.

The “illustrious devil-scholar” Meng Li sent his inner self flying across the miles to trouble Ying Zheng’s dreams. As the Emperor slept, Meng Li confronted him. “Your work is wicked, son of Heaven. If you destroy the classics, you will make Shen Zhou a lesser thing.”



Ying Zheng's dream-self donned his armor and picked up a great obsidian blade. "Chi You faced the Yellow Emperor and said, 'Civilization makes men less — become a beast like me, and live a thousand years!' Yet the law of Huangti showed its power. Will mine do any less?"

Meng Li drew his Judge's Brush — the weapon of scholars, symbol of justice and understanding, a metal rod ending in a brush-like spear-point. "It is culture that civilizes barbarians, not law." The steel tip of his weapon gleamed as he traced the first secret character of Wisdom Breath kung fu: *na*, an ever-changing symbol, redrawn in a different fashion with each repetition of the form.

Zheng spun his blade and lunged, full-extension, at Meng Li; but the movement of the brush as it traced out *na* was inexorable, and when the two weapons touched, the blade stopped dead. The Judge's Brush whirled about, and Zheng flew sideways.

"Thus does erudition triumph over strength," said the illustrious devil-scholar. His weapon began to trace the second character, *mo*. The aggressive nature of this character struck many times at Zheng's heart, forcing him to scramble back.

"The law treats all alike," answered Zheng. "If a scholar acts against me, what refuge will he have in scholarship?"

Zheng struck forward. Meng Li made a casual effort to counter his blow, but Ying Zheng used the harmony-of-principles technique — he prevented direct weapon contact by keeping his blade in the shadow of the Judge's Brush as he lunged forward. The obsidian weapon touched Meng Li's chest and exploded. Zheng looked aghast at his hands as the blade turned to dust.

"Your methodology is strong, First Emperor, but in my flying devil dream, you cannot triumph."

Meng Li's brush began to trace out *gan*, and the First Emperor stiffened in agony. Only superlative Chi control kept the Emperor's body from dying as the devil-scholar carved *gan* into his dream-body's chest.

"In matters of law, the Emperor is beyond compare!" said Meng Li. "In matters of philosophy, trust to a scholar."

"Without law," said Ying Zheng, "there is no room for scholars. Men paint pretty characters and write ornate poetry; then, they are killed by bandits and lawless rebels. The bandits must clean themselves after bodily functions; what is handier than the scholar's scrolls?"

Meng Li frowned, drawing back.

"You present a dilemma, Emperor. If a scholar may not live under the law, and may not live without it, how will culture endure?"

"With foresight," said Ying Zheng, "all things are possible."

"What do you mean by that?"

At that moment, miles from the palace, the soldiers of Ying Zheng struck off Meng Li's head. Slowly and groggily, the First Emperor woke. To his advisors, he said, "Who can doubt this wisdom? A scholar's brush, left to write as it will, is poison. Arrest those who still defy me. I will have them buried alive."

End of the Qin

The power of the Qin came from the First Emperor. His godly kung fu was the source of all law and all order. Thus, when he died, Shen Zhou fell into chaos. His second son betrayed both his first son and his Wall-building general, ordering them killed and ascending to the throne as Qin Er Shihuangdi — the Second Emperor.

The heroes of the time could not tolerate such acts. Rising at the head of peasant armies, Liu Bang and Xiang Yu ravaged the Qin Dynasty. Full of unrighteousness, Qin Er Shihuangdi could not command the Thousand-Sword Statue Warriors. His sages constructed an army of terracotta soldiers to teach a stern lesson to Xiang Yu and Liu Bang — but the soldiers turned on him, crying: "A righteous king could replace Ying Zheng! A harmonious king could replace Ying Zheng! Even a magnificent law-giving demon could replace him! But what law-giving king could be so lawless?"

Stunned, the Second Emperor watched his terracotta army march off to guard his father's tomb. He committed suicide soon after. Ying Zheng's nephew came to the throne; soon afterwards, Xiang Yu executed him. The Qin Dynasty died in blood and war. Four years later, Liu Bang came to the throne.

Secrets of Destiny: The Qin Dynasty

All-in-Chaos Bells

[Treasure]

The First Emperor's All-in-Chaos Bells were terrible constructs. When someone hears them ringing, they must spend an extra point of Golden Chi with all techniques or risk Chi corruption. Rebellions against Qin Shihuangdi often faltered when the bells rang — the greatest fighters of the rebellion had to struggle to control their power. Only authorized representatives of the Qin Dynasty can ring an All-in-Chaos Bell; such warriors are immune to its effects. There is even rumored a method for such a representative to make a number of warriors immune to the

power of the Bell, if only for a limited time.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **Fortune:** you have a lead that enables you to track down a legitimate heir to the Qin Dynasty.
- 5 **Secret:** learn the location of an All-in-Chaos Bell.

Meng Li [Destiny]

A glorious and ruthless scholar, Meng Li stood for everything the First Emperor opposed — culture, wisdom, and scholarship without discipline or loyalty! In their conflict, Qin Shihuangdi proved the victor.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from Meng Li by blood or martial tradition.
- 3 **Victory:** once during the game, if you descend from Meng Li, you can perform an incomparable work of scholarship. You craft a perfect poem, painting, sculpture, treatise, analysis, or some other product of art or philosophy. The result is a classic, remembered in Shen Zhou forever.

- * **Bonus:** If you descend from Meng Li, you increase the Strike of any Judge's Brush while wielding it by +5.

Thousand-Sword Statue Warriors [Treasure]

The First Emperor had his Thousand-Sword Statue Warriors built by melting down the weapons of his enemies. The result was an army of deadly metal automata. Scholars do not know how the First Emperor compelled them into action — some think demons possessed them. Others believe that Qin Shihuangdi animated them with the power of his Chi. A few suggest that the Thousand-Sword Statue Warriors were hollow, with powerful kung fu warriors riding inside them when the Warriors rose against rebellion. Presumably, the terracotta warriors guarding the First Emperor's tomb use similar or identical techniques.

To command a Thousand-Sword Statue Warrior requires more than Qin Dynasty authorization — the Warrior itself must approve of its potential master. Without that approval, they will not move — even if someone melts them down for scrap!

DESTINY COST

- 2 **Fortune:** you have a lead that enables you to track down a legitimate heir to the Qin Dynasty.
- 3 **Secret:** learn key information about how the Thousand-Sword Statue Warriors judge potential masters.
- 3 **Secret:** learn the location of a surviving Thousand-Sword Statue Warrior.
- (-2) The Warrior is in poor condition.
- 3 **Victory:** having demonstrated appropriate qualities, impress a single Thousand-Sword Statue Warrior so that it enters your service.

* The Game Master should often adjust the listed costs for finding and impressing additional Thousand-Sword Statue Warriors after the first — in realistic games, a significant increase in costs discourages metal armies; in high-powered games, a reduction in costs facilitates them.

Wisdom Breath Kung Fu [Kung Fu]

Wisdom Breath kung fu draws on calligraphic principles. Its techniques are also characters in the language of Shen Zhou. These ever-changing characters, drawn and redrawn in the air, form the key patterns for a style using the Judge's Brush or spear. This kung fu may also hold the key to the flying devil dreams that Meng Li used against his foes.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **Entangled Destiny:** You will encounter the scholarly descendant of Meng Li, the reclusive and dangerous Wen Li. Impress him, and you may gain access to Wisdom Breath kung fu, though this style is not what it was. (See pg. 263, *Kung Fu*.)
- 5 **Victory:** research the legends of Meng Li, visit Wen Li and reconstruct the lost techniques of this fighting art. You must first receive significant acclaim as a scholar and study the calligraphic styles practiced before the Qin, and you must still buy the techniques themselves.
- 5 **Technique:** if you can learn secret arts, you have an opportunity to learn the *Flying Devil Dream* Secret Art, allowing you to plague enemies in their dreams. Either participant in a combat dream can change the setting or events of the dream, making declarations that do not directly affect their opponent. To do so, you need spend only 1 Chi; for the same effect, your victim must spend 2 Chi. Chi spent to modify



dreams can be of any color.

Ying Zheng [Destiny]

A visionary and a tyrant, Ying Zheng would sacrifice anyone and anything to unify Shen Zhou and make it strong. In pursuit of greatness, he labored endless hours and learned unconquerable kung fu. When he died, an empire crumbled.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from Ying Zheng by blood or martial tradition.
 - 5 **Victory:** once during the game, if you descend from Ying Zheng, you can bolster a kingdom. Like sucking the poison from a wound, you draw the corruption from its bureaucracy, so that all power flows harmoniously from the king. You must still invest time in the project and deal with any military or personal threats your bureaucratic opponents can offer.
- (-2) The ruler listens to your advice, or the kingdom is your own.
- * **Bonus:** if you descend from Ying Zheng, and have the Slaughter and Sacrifice lore, double its Transcendent Destiny benefits.

Advanced Topics

- * *Peng Lai* — the secrets of the mystic islands! (This advanced topic is for the GM to create.)

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- I *The Xia Dynasty* — who was the first great bureaucratic King?
- I *The Zhou Dynasty* — shaping the world that birthed Qin Shihuangdi!
- I *The Han Dynasty* — when the dust of war cleared away, what wonders would follow?
- I *Legalism* — learn the social philosophy of Qin Shihuangdi!
- I *Daoist Sexual Basics* — what is the secret of Shihuangdi's E Fang Palace?

The Han Dynasty

(500 Years Before
Tiger Soul's Return)

Destiny Cost: 2
Study Difficulty: Learning (15)

Gaozu and Wudi

LIU BANG NAMED himself Emperor Gaozu. He spent his reign warring against the Hsiung-nu, barbarians of the north. His successor, Han Wudi, embraced Confucianism as a pillar of his court. Shen Zhou expanded to the west, south, and east. It struggled as it grew to recover the cultural legacy the First Emperor had so casually cast aside.

Wild Swan, Princess of Shen Zhou, looked to the east, saying:

The men of the barbarian court,

Dressed in strange costumes,

Perform the rituals of their rule.

One holds out his hand: I am promised to him.

Bone rings hang from his sleeve.

A knife at his belt.

I will make him our ally.

I will dance with him

Remembering the dances of my home.

I do not fear his savage ways,

But the distance frightens me.

神兵玄奇

Dispatched to find allies against the Hsiang-nu, Chang Ch'ien looked to the west, saying:

*To stand against such enemies,
We must be righteous.
Then, our people will think only of virtue.
Their hearts will grow strong,
The Hsiang-nu will tremble.
Tribes and kingdoms alike, seeing strong hearts,
Will stand by the Han rulers.
The Emperor must stand above the politics of the court.
The Empress must stand outside it.
The courtiers and the eunuchs must show restraint and grace.
What man does not love power?*

Chao Tuo, who would become the Great Chief of the Southern Barbarians, looked south, saying:

*Locusts pound across the southern land:
An infinite savage army!
Offer them writing and iron;
They will sell their culture for it.
Let a locust taste grain
And it knows no restraint.
So are barbarians with civilization.*

Wangmang

In Wangmang's youth, the court of the Emperor saw many wonders. Great swordsmen and dancers came to display their skills. Daoist magicians performed sublime miracles. All Shen Zhou displayed its wonders for the Emperor.

On an auspicious day for Wangmang, an animal tamer brought a great white tiger to the court. Enraged by the taunting faces of the courtiers, it broke free of its cage. It slew a palace maiden and tore three courtiers to shreds! It turned towards the throne. Wangmang, inspired to martial excellence by his studies of the Confucian classics, sprang upon its back and used a dead courtier's hair to garrote the tiger. All applauded his bravery and willingness to risk himself, although some called him "the Corpse-Hair Warrior."

Respecting his
valor and

accomplishments, the Blue Jade Ink martial society took him in as a brother.

Years later, Wangmang's society brother Waiting Dragon paid him a visit. After they exchanged full courtesies, Waiting Dragon admitted, "I regret I must impose upon you for your assistance."

"Anything, seventh brother," said Wangmang.

"I am being hunted by the soldiers of the Emperor; and at their head, Commander 'Thousand-Killer' Li."

"It is said he never abandons the hunt," said Wangmang. "Will he be here soon?"

"Most likely." Waiting Dragon looked sad. "I regret that I could not give you more warning; you may, of course, refuse my request for aid."

Wangmang shook his head firmly; a Blue Jade Ink warrior never abandons a society brother. "But why does the Emperor hunt you?"

"The Emperor?" Waiting Dragon laughed. "Wangmang, your hair is not even white! Don't tell me you've ever seen the Emperor give an order. Cheng is an infant, heir to a line of children; Li's orders come from the palace eunuchs."

"The empress . . ."

Waiting Dragon snorted. "Her relatives have power, as you should know; but she will not step forward to save a humble scholar like myself."

At that moment, the gates to Wangmang's estate burst open. A loud clear voice rang through his courtyard and through his home: "Illustrious scholar Wangmang! Having reason to suspect that a criminal shelters here, Captain Li and the soldiers of his majesty request the grace of an interview!"

"One moment," said Wangmang, and stepped outside to meet them.

Thousand-Killer Li took off his helmet and smiled kindly at Wangmang. "Thank you for meeting me, honorable friend. My infallible criminal-hunting techniques suggest that Wei Tsu, the 'Waiting Dragon', has come to visit you here; please have him brought out, and we can conclude our business."

"My sincerest apologies, dear Captain," said Wangmang, bowing his head. "I regret that I shall have to kill you and your soldiers instead."

"Ah," said Thousand-Killer Li. A wind blew past Wangmang to ruffle Li's hair. "So it is like that."

"It is."

Li frowned. "It is all right if you must kill me," he said,





"but please have pity on my soldiers."

This request, sincerely made, filled Wangmang's heart with sorrow. "You had best order them to run, then; for when I have finished with you, I must not let them report to your masters."

Li nodded gravely, and bid his men depart. Then, facing Wangmang, he drew his tang-ba — a long stave, tipped with a spear-point and a terrible crescent edge. This weapon was named Infinite Accomplishments. He tilted it gently, cutting the breeze that blew towards him in two.

Wangmang made a strong gesture, flinging weighted silk threads from his sleeve. Twice he performed this maneuver, the first time casting forth thirty threads and the next time forty. Twice, a soft gesture of Li's marvelous tang-ba severed every thread. A third time Wangmang gestured; fifty weighted silk threads flew at Li, who could catch only forty-nine of them. The last stung his cheek, drawing blood.

"Ah," said Wangmang. "You have a seven-times-seven technique!"

Li laughed. "Numbers fill a scholar's head! But a true hero would have stunned me with that blow, and a true villain poisoned me. Now, I am confident!" He leapt forward, the point of the tang-ba lunging at Wangmang — it struck like a serpent's bite, curling and twisting in the air! With a sharp shout, Wangmang vanished from sight.

"Daoist tricks!" said Li, pulling back his blade. But though Wangmang had made himself invisible, Li could still see Wangmang's shadow flying along the ground. He thrust sharply and low. His spear-point pierced straight through Wangmang's ankle and into the stone behind it. Crying out in pain, Wangmang called his own weapon to his hand: a "chun jie", or tree knot spear, named Heaven Rings. It flew to him and did not pause; as his hand grasped it, it lunged towards Li's throat. Li twisted his tang-ba and yanked it back, flying three steps away to avoid Heaven Rings' touch — but a thread from Wangmang's sleeve was knotted in his hair. Even as Li reached the furthest point of his retreat, Wangmang yanked upon that thread and pulled Li back. Heaven Rings' tassel flared as its point tore through Li's neck.

Li hit several of his pressure points to stop the bleeding, but his life had run out. He had but two more breaths. "I had not expected a Confucian scholar to know such magic."

"I have studied a modern synthesis of various doctrines," explained Wangmang.

Li sighed out his last breath. "It seems Heaven favors you. Please convey my apologies to the Emperor."

Wangmang nodded gravely. Limping, he returned inside.

"I have dealt with the rooster," he said, "but not with the eggs."

"Then the eunuchs will soon know what has happened here," said Waiting Dragon. "They will issue an order for your execution. Unless the empress stretches forth her hand to aid you, you will become a fugitive."

"Politics!" said Wangmang, irritated. "This country should return to the policies of the classics — why should it be a prize for ladies and eunuchs to war over?"

"I could not agree more," said Waiting Dragon. "It is for suggesting just such a program that I earned the ladies' and eunuchs' wrath."

"Intolerable," said Wangmang. "Gather the brothers and meet me at the Imperial Court. I will deal with this matter myself."

Waiting Dragon nodded. The two left in their separate directions: Waiting Dragon to gather the Blue Jade Ink society, and Wangmang to storm the Imperial Palace. With Daoist magic, he confused the guards. With his powerful kung fu, he piled up the bodies of those who still opposed him. Soon, he stood in the throne room, facing the eunuch Fang-Head Wu and his seven most trusted servants — the so-called "Peacock Warriors". Behind them the infant Emperor Cheng sat with utmost dignity upon the throne.

"With apologies, Son of Heaven," said Wangmang, "I am here to clean up this trash and seize your throne."

"August majesty," said Fang-Head Wu, "please grant me permission to kill this unworthy Corpse-Hair Warrior."

Emperor Cheng blinked.

"That will do," said Fang-Head Wu. As one, the peacock warriors opened their gold-laced war fans; the display was brilliant. Two stepped forward to engage Wangmang; the other five politely gave them their turn.

"Invulnerable spear!" snapped Wangmang. His tree knot spear struck the ground and sang with anger. Then, like a shadow, it flew up and tore the peacock warriors' fans in half. The half remaining in the warriors' hands caught fire, pouring forth a choking blue smoke.

"Radiant spear!" cried Wangmang, and stepped forward. In the space of a quarter second, he struck three blows. The first warrior parried the haft with his forearm and his arm broke with a sickening crack; the spear rebounded to strike the other's head; it turned as it came back to slice the first warrior's head in half. Wangmang kicked the top of the man's skull towards Fang-Head Wu,



who caught it and flung it aside.

As one, the remaining five warriors charged. Wangmang spun in a circle, turning aside four blows; to evade the last, he leapt into the air, landing on the war fan and staving in the warrior's head with the butt of his spear. One low, arcing blow of the spear cut the other four warrior's throats. Wangmang settled lightly to the ground.

"Now I'll kill you, Fang-Head Wu," said Wangmang. His spear flew like lightning at the chief eunuch.

A horrible sight! Fang-Head Wu dislocated his jaw and gaped his mouth wide. He flew at Wangmang, swallowing the end of the spear and snapping his teeth shut to break the haft. Before Wangmang could react, Fang-Head Wu spit the spearhead back out at him; it embedded itself in Wangmang's arm.

"Strong teeth, to break a Weapon of the Gods."

Fang-Head Wu grinned, and Wangmang saw that the eunuch's teeth had been replaced with a metal trap. "This is Earth Swallower — torn from the mouth of a demon! And that's not its only efficacy." Fang-Head Wu swallowed his tongue, and Wangmang could see a long tongue of demon-metal behind it. It lashed out at Wangmang, its tip divided into two deadly needle-blades.

Wangmang turned invisible and flew backwards — but while he could hide his image from Fang-Head's eyes, he could not remove his reflection from the demon-teeth. The demon tongue followed him infallibly. Only when he struck it with a shield pulled from a guard's body did it recoil into Fang-Head Wu's mouth.

"You think you'll fight me alone?" said Fang-Head Wu.

With a single, shuffling movement, the peacock warriors returned to their feet. Wangmang stared in horror.

"When the Emperor's weak," said Fang-Head Wu, "chaos fills the realm. A child Emperor and eunuchs behind the throne — that's weaker than no Emperor at all! So it's possible to learn such tricks."

"I understand," said Wangmang, bowing his head.

"Do you?"

"Righteous spear!" cried Wangmang, and shook his arm. The sharp metal point of Heaven Rings flew from his bone towards Fang-Head Wu. The monster swayed easily to the side.

"A foolish attempt," said Fang-Head Wu.

Then he frowned and spun towards the throne. Emperor Cheng's head lolled to the side; the point of Heaven

Rings was buried in his chest.

"Perhaps."

"If you seize the mandate of Heaven," said Fang-Head Wu, "still it won't end my monstrous power."

"But if Heaven is with me," said Wangmang, "I'll surely prevail." The doors of the room flung open, and the thirty brothers of the Blue Jade Ink society entered. "Here's a sign for you."

Fang-Head Wu calculated. "If Heaven's not with you, I'll still kill you all. Your kung fu may be better than that Captain's, but you're still pretty weak."

Wangmang considered. "I'll offer you exile," he said.

Fang-Head Wu sighed. "To rule Shen Zhou is an excellent thing, but to conquer a barbarian tribe is not so bad. I'll take those terms." Riding a terrible wind, he flew from the palace and disappeared to the south.

Rise of the Clans

Wangmang's coup and subsequent efforts removed much of Shen Zhou's entrenched political corruption. Wangmang, however, ultimately proved an unsuccessful reformer. Many of his policies were ineffective or unpopular. His Xin Dynasty died within fifteen years, and a scion of the Han returned to the throne.

The glorious Banchao traveled to the west and civilized many of the tribes there. Despite his efforts, the region still had many troubles. The All-Honored Serpent, a fierce axe-wielding bandit king, rejected the influence of Shen Zhou. His forces made lightning raids against the peasant families of Shen Zhou and its new western tributaries. It seemed that nothing could stop him — his bandits melted away into the distance before warriors could assemble.

The Xi family, illustrious and noble, lived in the west and pursued many accomplishments. Its scion, Hui Xi, traveled to those who risked death at the All-Honored Serpent's hands.

"In times of troubles," he said to them, "a man needs strong kung fu to survive. Your techniques are weak, and could benefit from instruction."

Often, at this point, one of the tribesmen or peasants would strike at him. In that moment, his spirit howling like the wind, Hui Xi would catch their weapon with his bare hand. Strong weapons, he would fling aside. Poor weapons, he would snap in two! Unarmed attackers would stagger away, burned by the power of his Chi.

"If you become a client of the Xi," he said, calmly, "I will train your family in our kung fu and share our secret techniques for forging the Weapons of the Gods. Can anyone oppose such power? Your line will live forever."

Many refused him, but some accepted. They gave their land and their power to the Xi, in exchange for patronage and the opportunity to rent that land back again. For years, Hui traveled from home to home, training those who had agreed in the secrets of Wind Sweeping Away the Clouds skill. Those around them grumbled, saying that the Xi were greedy — they stole the land from the villages and tribes with Hui's honeyed tongue! Then the All-Honored Serpent struck.

Into a small village the Serpent swaggered, dispatching his bandits north and south. He planned to raid the market while others stormed the farms. His eyes gleamed silver.

Screams filtered to his ears. He turned, and saw a hurricane. At its center was young Bao, the strongest of Hui's local disciples. Caught in the spinning hurricane were the corpses of more than a dozen bandits, raining body parts and blood in every direction. Bao walked towards the All-Honored Serpent, a many-part staff whirling around him to form the terrible wind.

"A prodigy!" said the All-Honored Serpent, and gestured to his men to retreat. Buying them time, he turned to face Bao, unlimbering his axe.

Contemptuously, Bao's left hand caught the free end of his weapon. It snapped into his grip with a sound like a drum. Bandit corpses landed all about him, one in each cardinal direction and the rest upon the awnings of various stalls. His eyes were lit with golden fire.

The All-Honored Serpent spun in a great swift arc, attacking Bao at the end of a full rotation. On one side, a merchant's stand stood in the way of his axe; his blow did not pause as it knocked the stand away. On the other, a great building stood; his axe only sped up as it touched stone and wood, and the building exploded into splinters and gravel. Through the dust of the wall the All-Honored Serpent's axe-head came at Bao, swift as a diving eagle. Bao took one section of his staff in both hands, extended his arms to block with it, and leaned into the blow. There was

a sound like thunder and a great flare of sparks as the axe struck wood, and Bao's hair blew straight back, but the axe-head did not penetrate Bao's defense.

"I've heard some snakes don't have much of a bite," said Bao. "I guess that's true."

The Serpent employed a short-arc technique, using the incredible strength of his wrists to spin the axe under Bao's guard. His arms and body scarcely moved, so this technique gave Bao little warning of the incoming blow — but Bao's body was light. The axe did not cut him. Instead, the force of the blow made Bao skate straight back along the ground like a leaf blown by the wind.

"Huh," said Bao, somewhat bruised. "That one was better."

"I don't need to cut you," said the Serpent, and advanced, the heavy axe dancing like the lightest rod. Seven blows slipped past Bao's defense; Bao realized that, unable to cut his skin, the Serpent was striking pressure points.

"I'll let him play this game," thought Bao, and let the next blows through.

The ninth attack completed the pattern, and the Serpent whirled back triumphantly.

"I've stopped your heart and the flow of your blood," said the Serpent, "so you might as well give up now."

"Stopped?" said Bao, and struck his own chest a blow. His heart pulsed with wind energy, and blood raced through his veins again. "My heart was just resting."

The All-Honored Serpent lunged again. Bao met him with one extended hand. As Bao's palm met the Serpent's weapon, the great axe exploded into a thousand shards. Then Bao's other fist caught the Serpent in the head.

"A snake shouldn't trouble a man," said Bao.

Because of this victory, more and more families joined the Xi. As the power of the Xi grew, it became





difficult for the households of the west to resist them. To serve the Xi was financial and physical security. To refuse their patronage led only to disaster.

Hui Xi did not represent an isolated phenomenon. Seeing his success, many great families of Shen Zhou took advantage of rising taxes and the dangerous times to lure peasant families and even whole villages under their wing. As the Xi became a power in the west, the Bei rose to dominate the north; the Dong, the east; and the Nan, the south. These four became the most important families, ruling great Clans.

Heaven and Hell

Near the center of Shen Zhou, one Clan pursued a different recruitment process.

"In times of troubles," explained the recruiters for Hell Clan, "a man needs strong kung fu to survive. In a few minutes, everyone here who doesn't become a client of the Hell Clan will die. Your techniques are weak. They won't save you from me."

Often, at this point, one of the tribesmen or peasants would strike at him. In a burst of infernal fire, the Hell Clan recruiter would burn off the attacker's skin, letting them die in agony. Though some refused the Hell Clan, surviving such refusal was rare; most who escaped their influence did so by preemptively declaring their allegiance elsewhere.

A sixth Clan made a bid to rival the five powers of north, east, west, south, and center. The Heaven Clan drew on the Daoist secrets of the Classic of Great Peace, offering them freely to all. It promised a coming age of Great Peace, when the efforts of the Clan would bring a utopia of perfection and plenty. Those who accepted the patronage of the Heaven Clan and its benefactor, Chang Chio, wore the yellow turban and possessed startling mystic powers. This Clan traded its secrets for loyalty but did not take the peasants' land; thus, the Heaven Clan and its cult of Great Peace swelled like a flood to cover Shen Zhou.

"To give yourself to the Heaven Clan is to turn against your ancestors!" railed Hui Xi.

"Accept the Heaven's Clan patronage and you won't find a friend in Bei!" said the lordly Hong Bei.

"Their Daoist powers can't match our divine kung fu," explained Yu Nan.

"The Heaven Clan has no money—it's like a beggar! It'll take your coins and give you words," said Fu Dong.

The Hell Clan remained silent.

"I'll face you all," said Chang Chio, and met the great heroes of Xi, Bei, Nan, and Dong. He stood on a cloud, bearing a many-colored sword. He radiated the infinite power of the immortals. The heroes attacked.

Across Shen Zhou, peasants rose against the Emperor, yellow turbans marking their allegiance. This ended, like all things must, in blood.

The poet Liu Zhi said,

North, south, east, west—

Each gives its best to Chang Chio's blade.

Screaming, squabbling birds rise from the trees

Hui does not rise.

*Demon-faced men charge the armies of Shen
Zhou, screaming*

Hong does not rise.

Scented courtiers look up from their wine

Yu does not rise.

*Each dawn, the sun surmounts the Dong Clan
keep*

Each dawn, the waters burn with its fire

Fu does not rise.

The Han army triumphs.

Yellow turbans flutter to the ground.

Chang Chio ascends to Heaven.

He stomps the ground — a parting gift.

The empire begins its crumbling.



Secrets of Destiny: The Han Dynasty

Banchao [Destiny]

The Emperor awarded Banchao the tang-ba Infinite Accomplishments — its name matched his nature! He was a terrifying military commander and a charming diplomat; nothing stood beyond him. The kingdoms along the Silk Road strove against Shen Zhou; then Banchao descended upon them like a shining god. In no time at all, they bound themselves to the Emperor.

directly responsible. Their virtuous quest earns them few friends.

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Discovery or Fortune:** you have an ally in the Blue Jade Ink Society.
- 2 **Fortune:** you develop good relations with the Blue Jade Ink Society.
- 3 **Fortune:** you join the Blue Jade Ink Society.

DESTINY COST

I **History:** you descend strongly from Banchao by blood or martial tradition.

* **Bonus:** If you descend from Banchao, you master all endeavors. After succeeding on any roll, you can spend 1 joss (of either type) to upgrade it into a critical success.

Blue Jade Ink

Society [Secret Society]

The Emperor Han Wu Di established the Blue Jade Ink Society in secret, signing the order with ink the color of blue jade. This honorable martial society originally existed to defend the Emperor against hidden dangers within and without the court. In Wangmang's time, the Blue Jade Ink Society realized that an easily-manipulated Emperor was unworthy of their protection. By the end of the Han Dynasty, the society became entirely criminal, using terror and intimidation to press their benevolent policies on the Emperor and others. Now, when Clans stray too far from the Blue Jade Ink Society's Confucian ideals, the Society strives to kill those Clan members most

神兵玄奇



Chang Ch'ien

[Destiny]

Chang Ch'ien traveled west through enemy territory to find allies for the Han. Though the barbarians captured him and held him captive for ten years, Ch'ien did not falter — he escaped and pursued his mission! A Heavenly diplomat, he embodied the good faith of Shen Zhou; soon, the name of Chang Ch'ien spread throughout the west.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from Chang Ch'ien by blood or martial tradition.
 - 3 **Victory:** you are a capable traveler. Once during the game, if you descend from Chang Ch'ien, you can make a legendary journey. This is any trip that makes people say “wow” a stunning exploratory mission during downtime, an unbelievable race against time on ordinary roads, or a successful journey through incredibly hostile enemy territory. Examples include carefully mapping Hell Clan territory and racing Earth Lord to Bei territory.
- * **Bonus:** if you descend from Chang Ch'ien, you're welcome everywhere. You receive a +I bonus to your Grace skill. This can increase it to 6.

Chao Tuo

[Destiny]

Chao Tuo, an adventurous hero, traveled south to rule the barbarian tribes there. Though he resisted Han rule, he taught the tribes Han ways, and when Chao Tuo died his people became Shen Zhou tributaries.

DESTINY COST

- 1 **History:** you descend strongly from Chao Tuo by blood or martial tradition.
- * **Destiny:** If you descend from Chao Tuo, you wield the glorious culture of Shen Zhou as the ultimate weapon. At some point during the game, Destiny will impel you to travel outside of Shen Zhou, where you will forge an army or a nation by teaching the people of a distant land Shen Zhou's ways. The Game Master chooses the timing for this event.

Classic of Great Peace

[Treasure]

After the imperial army put down the Yellow Turban revolt, it became difficult to find complete copies of the
C l a s s i c

of Great Peace. Now, Shen Zhou has no true Emperor and no imperial army — but the major Clans still loathe and fear the volume for inspiring the Heaven Clan in its revolution. Someone wanting to reconstruct the Classic must proceed with subtlety or have a pressing need; otherwise, such a quest brings enemies from north, south, east, and west.

A reconstructed volume would contain meditation practices, philosophy, secrets of long life, and — presumably — a guide to the Daoist powers wielded during the Yellow Turban revolt.

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Destiny:** integrate the quest for reconstruction of the Classic of Great Peace with the story.
 - 8 **Victory:** reconstruct the Classic, acquiring powerful Daoist secrets. You must first make substantial progress on collecting lost pieces. (See pg. 316 for more on Daoist Magic.)
- (-5) The reconstruction does not offer substantial power — somehow, Chang Chio's tricks no longer function.

Earth Swallower

[Weapon of the Gods]

Earth Swallower is a hideous Class II Weapon of the Gods — to use it, you have to pull out all your teeth! Once it replaces them in your mouth, it offers all-consuming demon skills and an extensible metal tongue tipped with twin needles.

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Entangled Destiny:** your Destiny will touch that of Earth Swallower.
- 2 **Defense:** improve your defense against Earth Swallower techniques.

Fang-Head Wu

[Destiny]

Majestic in his evil, the eunuch Fang-Head Wu exhibited limitless kung fu and monstrous political acumen. Entering the imperial palace a castrated nonentity, he rose to rule the Emperor himself!

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from Fang-Head Wu by martial tradition.
- * **Bonus:** at least once during the game, if you descend from Fang-Head Wu, the Game Master will encourage you to involve yourself in some new evil — you'll have the chance to hook up with or take advantage of some unpleasant power bloc

developing somewhere in Shen Zhou. Doing so is unwise. Whether you're a nasty sort yourself or a hero who thinks you can use unpleasant things for virtuous ends, it'll burn you in the end. The player can turn down the opportunity if, in the player's mind, accepting directly contradicts the character concept. Otherwise, you accept, and, on acceptance, receive a bonus of 3 Destiny.

- * **Bonus:** once during the game, if you descend from Fang-Head Wu, the Game Master will encourage you to involve yourself in some new evil. This works exactly like the above option, except — just this once — it does work out for you. If you're ruthless, it opens a doorway to unlimited power. If you're a hero, it helps significantly more than it hurts, possibly by giving you a better chance to oppose that evil later.

Hui Xi [Destiny]

Glorious recruiter for his family, Hui Xi forged the Xi Clan with his magnificent kung fu. Fighting the rebel Chang Chio, he died in a blaze of glory, and his clan with him! Scattered to the winds, the remaining embittered clan members keep their knowledge closely to themselves, until his descendant Ho Xi re-founds the Clan — leading it to prominence, driving back the invaders and taking their riches.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from Hui Xi by blood or martial tradition.
- 3 **Victory:** if you descend from Hui Xi, you have a legendary ability to make alliances. Once during the game, you can display dazzling diplomatic skill, assembling a large coalition under your banner. You might send out hero-invitations and gather a collection of heroes; unify three Clans temporarily under your leadership; or convince the courtiers of Emperor Hu to set aside their squabbles and advise their lord with one voice — yours. You choose the timing and general nature of this effect, but the Game Master chooses the scope.
- * **Bonus:** if you descend from Hui Xi, you can increase your Confidence skill to 6.

Infinite Accomplishments [Weapon of the Gods]

Infinite Accomplishments is a Class III Weapon of the Gods, cut from black glass in reflection of a furious passion. It is a tang-ba, a spear with a crescent moon blade placed near its point. It's sharp enough to cut the wind. Its edge needs no force to cut through armor, flesh, or even stone. For more information on Infinite Accomplishments, see pg. 359, *The Weapons of the Gods*.

DESTINY COST

- I **Entangled Destiny:** your Destiny will touch that of Infinite Accomplishments.
- I **Defense:** improve your defense against Infinite Accomplishments techniques.

Wild Swan [Destiny]

The Han gave many of its fierce warrior-princesses to distant tribes. With their martial virtue and beauty, they proved the superior Han bloodline — bringing far lands under Han sway!

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from such a princess (e.g., Wild Swan) by blood or martial tradition.
- 3 **Victory:** if you descend from a Han warrior-princess, you can spend 3 Destiny to arrange a wonderful match. Over the next few stories, the Game Master will arrange for you to meet several excellent marriage prospects, at least one of which will meet all your needs admirably. Whoever you wind up with, they won't get in the way of your lifestyle — a pliable man with servants for household chores who will let you adventure; a stay-at-home woman who doesn't mind your travels; or a marvelous companion of either sex who'll stand by your side as you storm the martial arts world.
- * **Bonus:** if you descend from a Han warrior-princess, you receive a +1 bonus to your Grace skill. This can increase it to 6.

神兵玄奇

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- 1 *The Qin Dynasty* — in the days before the Han Dynasty, Qin Shihuangdi reshaped Shen Zhou!
- 2 *Daoism* — what philosophy inspired the Daoist revolution?

The Time of Chaos

*(100 Years Before
Tiger Soul's Return)*

Destiny Cost: I

Study Difficulty: Learning (15)

Chenghan

(70 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

TSE CREPT ONTO Red Season Fei's land. She seized one of his chickens using her Mental Summons. It died in silence. She slipped away. At the gate, she paused. She sighed.

"He never catches me," she said. "It's sad. Maybe I should have made some other promise."

Inside the house, she could hear Fei fumbling into his clothing; but before he emerged, she was gone.

Hanzhao

(65 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

THE SUN SET and shadows fell.

"Please," Uncle Yang said. "Reconsider."

"I can't serve Hell Clan and call myself Glorious Heart Blossom," Yasha said. "It's a good kung fu name, but not for a corrupt demon warrior!"

"But to call yourself Evil Courtesan — people will get the wrong ideas about our family."

She stood in the shadow of a great and terrible statue, and her uncle was strung up by the wrists in front of her; and there were terrible rents down his side from her blade; but still, the look she gave him was tender.

"Uncle!" she said. "Your ideas are so old-fashioned."

"That's no insult!" he said. "You may have the

superior kung fu, but I have the superior propriety. That's why you should do what I say and keep your old kung fu name! Or something prettier. Like Pink Moon Warrior!"

She studied him carefully. He set his chin.

"I have to respect my uncle," she said. "But what if people mocked me, saying, 'Who came up with that stupid name?' I'd have to kill them; then their blood would be on your hands!"

Yang sighed. "Perhaps Cold Star Warrior, then. Or Blood Mask Woman. And then I'd look down from Heaven, and I'd say, 'That's my blood she means!'"

Yasha scrubbed unhappily at her face. "Your arteries are too unruly," she said. "It wasn't supposed to squirt like that."

"It's a sign of Heaven's displeasure," Uncle Yang said. "Possibly because the peasants revolted and brought the Han to chaos. Possibly because you're carving up your uncle! Who could say?"

"It's my cruelty," Yasha said. "I have to be cruel and disrespectful if I'm going to be an Evil Courtesan."

He glared at her.

"I mean, a Cold Star Warrior."

"Listen," Yang said. "If I had to lose to a monstrous demon warrior, at least it's my niece. That way, I don't have to doubt my skills — it's just that my training was too excellent! But if you want to succeed in life, it's better to pick on strangers than family."

She sat down and sighed.

"Uncle," she said, "do you think things will ever go back to the way they're supposed to be?"

"There's no Emperor," he said. "Just three Kingdoms, and Hell Clan."

Chenghan

(60 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

Blue Shadow Tse crept onto Fei's land. She moved with elegance and grace, her hair done finely, her clothing impeccable; and with one swift movement she had one of Fei's chickens by the neck. She turned — but before she could flee, the door to Fei's house slammed open.

"Ah," she said. "Red Season Fei."

He stood there, cold, hardened, and as unforgiving as Heaven. In a whisper of steel, his blade came from its scabbard, and he lunged forward. She dropped the chicken, clapped her hands around the steel, and sent a pulse of Chi down its length; his hands released the blade and he stumbled back. She flipped the sword around and the hilt landed in her palm.



"It's too bad," she said. "You're handsome as a devil, but you fight like a dog."

Fei drew himself unhappily to his feet. "It's Heaven's displeasure," he said. "The world's wrong-way around." He blurred towards her, holding himself sideways, his arm lashing around her guard like a boneless snake; but she ducked low, and kicked out his foot, and he landed hard again.

"Well, there's no Emperor," she admitted. "And that's like having no sun in the sky. And I think your hip's broken. And everywhere there's war. But —"

She stooped, grabbed one of the chickens, and dropped his sword in the mud. "— I have a meal, and that's right-way up to me."

Liang (45 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

Xin and Fang pushed their way through the crowd to the center of the market. People jeered as they passed. They threw fruit. Xin swayed aside. They reached the center. Xin and Fang turned.

"Foul!" someone cried. "It's an official and his pet!"

Xin scratched the bridge of her nose.

"Get out! This is an independent city!"

"They're here to steal! The King can't support himself — he has to send officials to steal from the market!"

"Who needs officials if you won't save us from the bandits?"

Fang nodded to Xin, who drew her sword.

The crowd grew quieter.

"I do not serve a King," Fang said.

"Ha!" someone muttered.

"But there is," Fang said, "an Emperor."

The crowd went silent.

"The Three Kingdoms have come together," Fang said, "under the Son of Heaven, Sima Yan. And now we may have peace. But it has come to his attention that there are a few trouble spots, here and there."

The silence dragged on.

"I am here to judge you," Fang said. "To decide whether this town should be razed, and everyone in it killed, or instead made orderly."

The crowd was full of muttering. "An Emperor!" they said, one to another. "Is it possible?"

Then a lean, snake-like man looked up, and said, "Does Sima Yan have the sacred seals?"

Xin struck for his throat. He twisted out of the way, and his hands caught fire with powerful Chi. He struck her sword with one hand, and her left arm with the other; she gasped with the heat and staggered back. He pressed forward, waves of heat coming off of him, pushing her back towards Fang; but her hand caught his, and as the skin of her palm smoked, she twisted his arm and flung him to the ground. With one casual, angry cut, she opened him down his chest; and his skin smoked from the heat of her sword.

"Don't ask such things," she told him.

He laughed.

The blade came down through his leg. "And don't laugh that way, either."

"It's a shame to be killed by a grieving woman," he said.

"And what am I grieving for?"

"Your Emperor," he said. "It's like the Ultimate Predictionist said. If an Emperor doesn't have the sacred seals, then he'll reign for ten years, and make everyone happy, until he dies and his sons tear Shen Zhou apart. Then the barbarians will move in. That's why you're so sad."

"Bah." She stomped back over to Fang. "Can I kill them all?"

"I'm not sure," he said. "On the one hand, this place is full of the seeds of chaos. On the other hand, it's notably picturesque."

Chenghan (35 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

Tse crept into the yard, holding a long thin needle-like spear. Her face was lined, but her hair was still done neatly, and none could complain of her grace. She moved as softly as a shadow; but this time, Fei was waiting for her.

"Those aren't all chickens," he said. "Some of them are transformed Daoist spells."

Tse frowned. She stabbed one chicken through the neck. It died. She stabbed another. It died. She stabbed a third. It rolled vigorously out of the way, and came up to its feet. It hissed at her. Its breath was foul. It cried, "This chicken-killing woman is no candidate for the mysterious register!"

"So they are," she confirmed.

Fei looked smug. "They're perfectly concealed among the other chickens. You'll never know which ones to fear until they

choose to peck at you — so you'd best surrender now."

"If a woman can steal Admirable Fei's chickens," she said, "do you think she can't steal the secrets of Crashing Thunder?"

"Now!" Fei shouted, panicked. "Now, magic chickens, now!"

But Tse clapped her hands, and a wind roared about her, and Fei, chickens, and spells alike were blasted back. She kicked one of the dead ones with her foot as it flew, and caught it in her hand, and leapt; and in an instant, she was gone.

"You've failed me," Fei said. "Ten years I save my cash to buy special magic chickens, and you fail me."

"It's because Sima Yan is dead," the chicken spirit said wisely. "His sons squabble over his Empire, the Han move south, the barbarians move in and found their kingdoms — and that woman eats well through it all."

Fei sighed, and studied the chicken.

"Is this all there is to Daoist wisdom?" Fei asked.

"My master knows the secret ways to command the Heavens, shake the world, and become an immortal; but to defeat a warrior like Tse — that's hard!"

Zhao

(20 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

The Mongol was named Li. He was tall, muscular, and had a brutal look to him. He turned as Xu passed.

"Hey!" he shouted. "Hey! Little Han man! Xu!"

An old woman looked up. She'd been stirring rice on the street. She frowned. A few children stopped playing. Even the dog, Black Cur, stopped running around and sat in puzzlement.

Xu stopped. He turned, slowly. "It's not strange," he said, slowly, "if a barbarian's mannerless."

The children bolted. The old woman carefully got to her feet and began to hobble away. The dog bit at its own fur.

"You wound me, Xu! Calling me a barbarian. We're 'state people' now."

Xu pointed at the dog. "I could say that dog is licking its sword, but it doesn't make him a fierce warrior! Your barbarian King can say that barbarians are state people and the Zhou are 'Han', but really, you're just a dog's —"

Li coughed.

Xu sighed. "I suppose," he said, "that all are

equal in the Wulin. What do you want, Li?"

"There's a meeting," Li said. "All the brothers have to come. They say Cutting-Tooth Shark Gang has found a Black Void Treasure."

"That's bad," conceded Xu.

"It's bad everywhere," Li said. "I blame the little Han men."

"Filthy barbarians," muttered Xu, and walked away.

Chenghan

(12 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

The old woman was in his yard stealing a chicken again. So Creaky Fei stood up and hobbled out to face her.

"Ha!" he shouted. He lunged forward, cane blurring through the air. She gave him a panicked look. Then her eyes flashed white. She hurled the chicken into his path; it struck the tip of his cane, which plunged straight into its heart in an explosion of feathers, and he stumbled.

"Ah," he said, trying to get up again with a chicken affixed to his cane. It fluttered feebly. "You know the Ultimate Heavenly Accuracy style. But can it compare to my Agonizing Melody?"

She eyed him warily. "You don't have an instrument, Creaky Fei."

Making it to his feet, he stomped on the chicken. The sound it made then was no earthly sound. As its hellish squawk rang out, he drove his Gold Chi through the creature's windpipe. The old woman sat down with a thump, hands desperately covering her ears.

"Ha!" said Fei. "I win! Now you have to marry me!"

"Fifty-eight years!" she said. "That's too long a courtship. You can't hold me to that promise!"

Fei danced gleefully.

"I don't even own anything red," she said, in sorrow.

Jiankang

(10 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

A man sat in a cage made of iron and bone, suspended above a pit from which rose a terrible burning flame. Quietly, he played the lute, plucking at the strings, and the sound of this instrument was the most beautiful thing that the listeners had ever heard. The two courtesans were open in their wonder, staring at him from their bed of silks and pillows with gaping mouths and dreamy eyes. Hu was a giant of a man, eight hundred pounds or more. He listened with casual aplomb, but still, the music moved his heart. Finally, the man in the cage set his instrument aside, and waited.

"More," said Hu.



"I've played everything in my heart," said Cheng.

"I am the Emperor," Hu said.

"Yet you cannot command my heart."

"I command your body!" Hu said. "If you won't play, I'll cut off your privates and feed them to my dogs. It'll be their favorite delicacy!"

One of the courtesans tensed.

Cheng frowned. "You mustn't do such things," he said, "if you're going to be Emperor."

Hu snorted.

"You'll lose Heaven's mandate," Cheng explained. "It'll bring disaster and chaos to the land. Instead of unifying the rest of Shen Zhou, you'll shrink the remnant of the Jin Empire to nothing. Haven't I taught you anything?"

Emperor Hu gestured towards the courtesans. "These are Mai and Fu," he said. "They've seen you, so they'll probably die before they leave this room. Can't you gladden their heart with music?"

Cheng sighed. "That's, at least, a more benevolent motive."

Fu, too long deprived of music, shook off her trance. "You're — teaching the Emperor? How arrogant! You're a musician. Play for us!"

"My name is Jin Cheng Di, and my father was Jin Ming Di, and I am heir to Huangti's throne," he said. "That's why I consider myself to have some experience in the matter. As to why I would apply it in his service —"

Cheng shrugged. "I'm in a cage, you see."

Fu's eyes widened in startled insight. "You're trying to rule from behind his throne! You're like an evil minister in the stories, except for actually being the Emperor!"

Hu gestured, broadly. A wave of Chi struck Fu across the throat, crushing her windpipe. She began to gag on her blood.

"I suspect she meant," said Cheng, "except for actually having been the Emperor, previously, before Hu led his barbarian army to seize the Jiankang throne."

Hu shrugged. "It's still intolerable."

Mai inched away from the dying Fu on the bed. Fu flopped over, and one hand landed on Mai. Mai leapt to her feet in panic.

"You'd kill her for that?" Cheng sighed. "Now I feel guilty."

"It's too bad," Hu said. He walked up to the edge of the flame. "But there's nothing you can do."

The thin end of the lute stabbed through the bars to

strike Hu in the center of his forehead. For the shortest of moments, the Unrighteous Emperor stood dazed; and Mai charged him, her hands suddenly rimed with the ice of Blizzard Fist, and pushed him into the flame. Hu's body was large enough to plug the pit, one arm and one leg dangling awkwardly into the fire and depriving him of the leverage to escape. With ten sharp blows against the iron of the cage, Cheng shattered its floor and fell. He landed lightly on Hu's back and rolled to his feet on the floor.

"Mai," he said. "I am disappointed to see you here. I had told you not to risk yourself for me."

"He's turning red," Mai said, in a tone of detached wonder. "Like a lobster!"

There was a roar that shook the palace at Jiankang. With an exertion of unmeasurable strength, Hu shoved his arm and his leg through the stone of the floor and gained the leverage needed to pull himself out. He turned, shakily, to face them.

"I don't want to kill you, Jin Cheng Di. You're teaching me to be a fine Emperor."

"You'll need a righteous minister," said Cheng. "Because soon I'll be gone, or I'll be dead."

"There's no such thing as a righteous minister!" Hu protested.

Cheng gave this thought.

"You could try making one," he said, "with some sort of powerful kung fu? A minister-correcting style?"

Hu sighed.

"I'm sorry," Cheng said. He almost looked sad.

"It's all right," Hu said. "Two Emperors can't really be friends, even if one's in a cage; and now that you're free, we're deadly enemies."

Cheng nodded.

"Now run," Hu said. "It's not polite to kill you while we're talking."

Yang

(5 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

The white of the city — of its snow, of its walls — was stained black with frozen blood.

King Murong strode through the city. He was one of the few who remained. Thousands of his people were dead. The others had fled. But he was Wang Murong, and he was invincible. He hunted the army of his enemies.

Archers,



swordsmen, and camp followers — when he found them, he killed them all.

In the snow, lying to the side, he found a monk. He reached down to choke the life from the man.

“You must be,” the monk murmured weakly, “the invincible Murong. My name is Tang. I have wanted to meet you.”

Murong’s hand withdrew. Blood dripped from his brow, past his eyes, and fell into the snow.

“I am not,” he said, “receiving visitors at this time.”

Tang inclined his head. “I did not mean to trouble you. Please, proceed with the strangulation.”

“I am now disinclined.”

Murong sat heavily on the snow. “What brings you here?” he asked.

“There must be one Emperor over Shen Zhou,” Tang said. “Like one sun in the sky.”

“Ah.”

“Look,” Tang said. He gestured out at the city. “Dead women. Dead children. Dead dogs. And all the rest are fine dead men. This is what we have come to.”

“I grant,” said Murong, “that it is troublesome to have so many Kings. I have killed three, myself, but they seem an endless tide. Sometimes, I think that the courtiers are the true power of the world — Kings are fierce and powerful, but if you kill one, or ten, or a thousand, the courtiers will just crown more.”

“Is that so?”

“In the west,” Murong assured him, “there is a rat King. He’s not a rat with good blood. He’s not even a magic rat! He can’t talk. But after all the wars and troubles, he’s the best King they could find. When he twitches his nose, people kowtow furiously! That’s how powerful a crown can be.”

“I have come to bribe you,” Tang said.

“Bribe me?”

“To serve the Jin Emperor. Guan has taken this land from you, but you will find another. I want you to be ready to answer the Emperor’s call, when he rises to reclaim his throne.”

“And what would you bribe me with?”

Something black moved in the snow, camouflaged in all its blood. It struck for Murong’s ankle, but Tang moved faster; his hand interposed, and the creature’s fangs closed on his hand.

“This is the curse of Yue Guan,” Tang said. “Sent to deliver a fatal poison.”

“Ah,” said Murong. “Well, that is a good bribe, as such things go.”

Chenghan (2 Years Before Tiger Soul’s Return)

“She’s dead,” Fei said.

“I’m sorry,” said Ho Xi.

“I loved her,” Fei said. “I had two wives, and many sons, and when they were alive, she didn’t come by once — she wouldn’t steal chickens, she wouldn’t even have tea. And she was wild. Disreputable. But I loved her. And finally my second wife was dead, and she started coming back, and then I won her, and I turn around hardly ten years later, and she’s dead. What does it mean?”

“It means that this is a time of chaos,” said Ho Xi. “The Jin Empire is a fraud. We are a land of broken Kingdoms under the power of the Clans. Mongols and Han alike walk the streets, and only the laws of Kings and the Wulin unite them. There must be one Emperor over Shen Zhou, like one sun in the sky, or there will be no order to the world. But Cheng Di is in hiding, ever fleeing the Emperor’s men, and there is no righteousness in Hu.”

“If there was an Emperor,” Fei said, “wouldn’t Tse still be dead?”

“We answer our grief with propriety,” Ho Xi said. “We turn to our knowledge of the rituals, and the forms, and the guidance of our ancestors. That’s why Shen Zhou is weak now. It’s not because we don’t have one man to lead us. The Xi don’t need an Emperor to rule them, and maybe no one does. But there’s no one man to stand between Heaven and Earth, and through his intercession help us find an order to the seasons of our lives. There is no order. Our hearts know only chaos.”

Secrets of Destiny: *The Time of Chaos*

Han Dynasty Seals [Treasure]

When the Han Dynasty lost Heaven’s mandate, four of the six Imperial Seals vanished. Some sages whispered: this is the will of Heaven! While four Seals roam Shen Zhou, no Emperor can hold tightly to his throne — the land loses its unity! The return of the Seals would mark the rise of a glorious true Emperor.

Emperor Hu holds one of the remaining seals; Jin Cheng Di, Emperor in hiding, holds another. The other



four, Hu has supposedly recovered — but scholars whisper that his Seals are counterfeit. Legend tracks one to an island over the sea and another to Qin Shihuangdi's tomb; the locations of the other two are unknown.

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Secret:** Obtain key information regarding the location of one of the lost Seals.
- 3 **Victory:** Having found a Han Dynasty Seal, use its recovery to prop up the Imperial claim of Emperor Hu, Jin Cheng Di, or some other Emperor.
- 5 **Fortune:** Your family actually has one of the remaining Jade Seals. For the sake of your clan's continued existence, this should probably remain a secret!

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- I *The Han Dynasty* — were they the last true Emperors of Shen Zhou?
- I *Ruler and Subject* — what is the secret of the sacred seals?

神兵玄奇

Shen Zhou: The Land of the Gods Philosophy

Major Philosophies

Buddhism
Confucianism
Legalism
Daoism

Buddhism

Destiny Cost: 0
(800 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

This is the mysterious scripture.

Lao Tsu traveled to a far place.

He was tired and weary,

For he had traveled beyond the edge of the world,

And even into the worlds above and below,

And nowhere found a ruler given to the practice of virtue.

He met Prince Gautama, who said, "Great teacher,

I wish to become a righteous King of Men."

*"Abandon your throne, then,
and give up these thoughts of righteousness,"*

said Lao Tsu.

So Gautama gave up his throne,

And stopped his search for righteousness,

And opened his eyes to the truth of all things.

"Everything is suffering," he said.

"We suffer because we are ignorant of the Dao."

"I shall learn the Lotus Art of Compassion,

*"And bring wisdom to all the
world."*

And thus he became a righteous King of Men.

Buddhist Philosophy (Discussion)

"Desire and ignorance bring evil and suffering;

Compassion brings goodness and cultivates the Chi."

In the Time of Chaos, Buddhist philosophy in Shen Zhou is somewhat muddled. Its ideas are just beginning to catch on, and most people consider them a foreign corruption of Daoism — it's even reasonably certain, to any Zhou who investigates the matter, that the Buddha was nothing more than one of Lao Tsu's greatest disciples.

What this means, from a game perspective, is that no one's quite sure how Buddhist doctrine works, or even why it seems so popular in some areas. Even the Zan Buddhist monks have to work from a few scraps of knowledge and miscellaneous legends, brought by their founder. If you're playing a Buddhist, make up a compassionate doctrine that you like, working from real legends or your own ideas.

Confucianism

Destiny Cost: 3
Study Difficulty: Learning (10)

Dog-Face Ying
(800 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

Dog-Face Ying studied White Season kung fu from his father for fifteen years. His father Ling knew no equal with White Season knife techniques, but Ying surpassed him with the two-bladed Heaven-Earth Sun-Moon Saber.

Ling called his son to him. "A teacher named Confucius practices near here. Are you familiar with his ideas?"

"He is an advocate of principles," said Ying. "Ren, or Kuan, benevolence towards all; filial piety, that balances the family; and righteous action, in accord with tradition and hierarchy, ordering all men in harmony."

"That is one perspective," said Ling. "But note how he trains his disciples for government service. His ultimate goal is to advise and influence the Zhou; in this, he seeks personal power! This conflicts with the goals of my patron, Seven-Principles Li, also called the Wasp of Huixian. Therefore, Li instructs us to eliminate Confucius."

Ying stood up. His ugly face turned pale. "Are you a man without respect? Such an act is unworthy of a filth-eating beggar."

"Mind your manners!" said his father. "You'll help me or I'll sell you as a eunuch — it's your choice."



Ying was furious. He snatched his saber from the wall and turned on his father. The blades of the saber cut at each side of his father's head, but Ling only swayed out of the way, a few wisps of his hair falling to the ground. His knife appeared in his hand and struck Ying's saber; the saber shivered like a bell and an ache spread up Ying's arms. Ling spun inside the saber's reach, his white-edged sleeves flaring, and put out Ying's eye. With one hand on Ying's stomach, he shoved; his son fell backwards against the wall.

"Beg me for forgiveness," said Ling, "and I'll let you live."

Ying reached upwards towards the paper-covered window in the wall. He found its edge; his other hand firmed its grip on his saber. With one arm, he pulled himself off the floor and curled his body through the window; when his father rushed to the torn paper, he could see his son bounding away through the trees.

Ling cleaned and sheathed his dagger. "I'm not displeased to have a strong son," he said to himself. "Still, he must learn manners." Then he set off for Confucius' home.

Ying burst into Confucius' presence. "Honorable master," he said. "I come to warn you of a plot upon your life!"

Various disciples regarded him thoughtfully, puzzled by the interruption.

"My father Ling seeks your life, for fear of your political aspirations; you must flee! I will meet him here and set my blade against him, but his White Season kung fu is terrifying. I cannot promise a victory."

With that, Ying turned to face the door, bracing his Heaven-Earth Sun-Moon Saber for combat. No sooner had he assumed his stance than Ling glided smoothly into the room.

"Run, master," said Ying, his voice choked. Blood ran down his face from his injured eye. His hands shook.

"How can you oppose your father?" answered Confucius. "Though it may save my own life, this is not righteousness."

"It is what must be done," answered Ying.

Ling practiced the arm extension maneuver, his whole body sliding forward as his knife hand skimmed ten feet towards his son. Only the most desperate effort of the Heaven-Earth Sun-Moon Saber blocked the knife. The air shook with Ling's power, and a pulse of his Chi sent his son stumbling back. The Heaven-Earth Sun-Moon Saber slashed at Ling, but one sleeve blocked it. Ying's saber rang against his father's sleeve like metal meeting stone.

"You would shed your father's blood for universal

benevolence?" Confucius shook his head. "You would serve him, and me, better to remonstrate with him; explain how he has gone astray; and, if he does not wish your advice, then you must not murmur or strive against him."

"If no man will fight for it, the principle of *ren* dies before it is born!"

The knife danced in Ling's hand as if it were a hundred blades. Ying was confused, and could not block them all; instead, he fell to the ground and spun his saber to sweep away his father's leg. Ling drifted back, like a specter. He threw a handful of pepper from his free hand into Ying's remaining eye.

"This is not harmony," said Confucius. "To serve Confucianism is not to serve Confucius — the matters differ. Set down your blade and let events take their own course."

"YAA!" shouted Ying, lunging upwards in the Heaven-and-Earth Thunder method. So forceful was his thrust that Ling was forced to block it five times, the knife rebounding and the saber shivering like a bell, before it came to a halt an inch from Ling's throat. With a contemptuous slice, Ling cut off the saber's right blade and kicked it into his son's leg.

"Which is my enemy?" said Confucius. "The murderous father, or the disloyal son?"

These words stung Dog-Face Ying like no other had. "Master! Would you have me serve him in your death?"

"You have come here because you value my teaching — but you have only learned defiance and folly. This shames me! Better that I die, and know I taught my lessons well."

Ying flushed, realizing that his actions betrayed the principles he fought for. "A thousand apologies, master," he said, and turned so that he might make obeisance.

Ling looked down at his son. "We are here to kill him, not kowtow to him!"

Confucius said, "He is thanking me for returning to you your son."

Ling looked up at Confucius. He too flushed in shame. "You took a healthy son from me, and gave me back a weakling covered in blood!"

"A son learns from example," said Confucius. "Why does he fight with such reckless violence? Why does he not trust the virtue in others' motives?"

Ling was horrified. He realized instantly that he had brought his family to this, acting on cynical judgments rather than embracing virtue. He could not admit

this, however — it would embarrass him too much.

“I can’t leave my son with such injuries,” said Ling, picking up his son. “When they’re better, we’ll come back and kill you.” Then with one leap he was gone

Confucian Philosophy

(Discussion)

“Study to develop your natural qualities of goodness.”

Confucianism is primarily an ethical tradition. Confucius taught a set of virtues and ideas that Shen Zhou’s people consider vital to good governance and harmonious life. The Wulin rejects his philosophy; its brash heroes and corrupt villains have their own virtues. Yet there are still Confucian principles that a hero or villain may cling to.

First, even a warrior may cling to humaneness. This is the devoted effort to practice virtue, which flows out of the innate human capacity for goodness. In Shen Zhou, pursuing Confucian virtues and practices is the highest form of humaneness, but adhering to the Xia virtues at great cost is also an act of humaneness. The Corrupt Virtues are a third, even smaller, form of humaneness; the demon-inspired acts of the corrupt warriors are humane in the sense that they reinforce the structure of what-should-be and flow out of a dedication to virtue. The ethics of a baneful warrior who rejects Heaven are the least form of humaneness, scarcely worth counting. Someone who assiduously practices humaneness might someday achieve the rank of “Superior Person” or even “a humane person.”

Second, Confucius believed firmly in study — in the deliberate cultivation of the self through reflection, consideration, and proper relationships with others. This is something that every Predictionist practices and anyone in the Wulin can benefit from. As Confucius noted, those who love humaneness but don’t like study will suffer at the hands of their own ignorance; those who are bold, but don’t study, betray themselves with their own passions. One of the most important practices of study is simply watching those around you and understanding how they relate.

Third, Confucius placed a great value on the rituals of society. This includes the proper performance of the large rituals such as weddings, funerals, and making sacrifices to one’s ancestors. The Confucian tradition also values such small customs and proprieties as carrying a dustpan with the mouth turned towards oneself when in the presence of one’s elders, setting sliced meat on the right of a plate and the bones on the left, and not casting aside the seeds of a fruit given one by a ruler. An

impetuous martial artist often has trouble with these rituals, but courtiers and scholars rely on them.

In addition, Confucius advocated a number of principles incompatible to varying degrees with the World of Martial Arts. He encouraged a rigorous, unwavering loyalty to tradition and family. This loyalty runs deep even in the Martial Arts World, but in the Wulin, betraying filial piety or the tradition of the land isn’t a sin — it’s just shameful. For an ordinary person, refusing to honor and obey one’s parents is like waking up with a hangover and realizing you committed a sadistic murder when drunk — no matter how you justify it to yourself, it’s still unforgivable. For a member of the Wulin, it’s more like being displayed naked to your enemies or beaten up by a child — it’s supremely distressing, but a little revenge clears the whole matter up.

Secrets of Destiny:

Confucianism

Humaneness

[Philosophy]

What is better than clinging to virtue? If you pursue humaneness, you can put the world in order!

DESTINY COST

I+ **Bonus:** You have **Quality Humaneness**. You gain a +5 modifier on skill rolls where your great dedication to virtue is an important factor. In addition to many social rolls, this explicitly includes Crafting rolls to order a bureaucracy and advice rolls made to your rulers (your King, your Clan Head, or anyone else in a ruler-subject relationship with you.) For an additional 3 Destiny, you can instead have **Perfect Humaneness**, which gives a +10 modifier on these rolls but a -5 modifier to any roll when you’re acting badly. These qualities help you resist temptation but don’t help you do good deeds.

Rituals of Society

[Philosophy]

If you’re good at propriety, you can conduct yourself well in any circumstance. If you’re bad at propriety, traditions are always a stumbling block!

DESTINY COST

3 **Bonus:** You’re good at propriety. If you have this bonus, you can spend 2 Xia Joss to declare the existence of a local or general tradition favorable to yourself and 2 Corrupt Joss to declare the existence of a custom unfavorable to an enemy. The GM can veto individual uses of this ability — it’s useful to know the forms to make a bloody and bedraggled

entrance acceptable in court, and it's fair to trouble your enemy by making them fetch specific gifts before they can see Ho Xi, but it's inappropriate to have the locals attack an enemy because they failed to gargle a fish at the entrance to a town.

Study [Secret Arts]

Tsu Chin asked Tsu Kung, "Shortly after arriving in a country, Confucius always seems to know everything about it. Does he have a secret technique for gathering information?"

Tsu Kung answered, "He is cordial, upright, courteous, temperate, and complaisant. If this is a secret technique, we all should practice it!"

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Technique:** If you can learn secret arts, you learn the **Cordial, Upright, Courteous, Temperate, and Complaisant** secret technique. By talking to someone for a full scene, you automatically learn an interesting secret about them or their organization — no matter how guarded they are, they have to let something slip.

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- 2 *Parent and Child* — the model for all hierarchical relationships!
- 1 *Ruler and Subject* — the secrets of crown and throne!
- 1 *Superior and Minion* — Will Confucian thought profit No Good Ting?
- 1 *Elder and Younger Brother* — how does one guide the other?
- 1 *Husband and Wife* — how does Confucian thought shape marriage in Shen Zhou?
- 2 *The Zhou Dynasty* — when Confucianism was born!

Daoism

Destiny Cost: 3
Study Difficulty: Awareness (15)

The Terracotta Man (850 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

Li Er rode his water buffalo to the western border of the Shang Empire. There, at the border, he met a soldier named Kun. Kun stared at him for a long time, and then snapped into a straight posture. "You're that sage!" he said. "Old Boy!"

Er nodded noncommittally.

"I can't let you leave Shen Zhou, sir."

Er slipped lightly off his buffalo. He assumed a stance like flowing water, swaying slightly as he thought. Kun watched this form, impressed, and then blanched, realizing that he had placed himself in opposition to the sage.

"It's just, sir, that you're known everywhere for your wisdom. I can't let you leave if you haven't written it down! It'd be a dishonor to my ancestors, your ancestors — everyone's ancestors! They'd be very sad, sir!"

Er's motion flowed naturally out of his form; he moved without seeming intention or desire, and drifted past Kun, and the soldier's armor broke to pieces and rained down to the ground, and Kun found himself stumbling back to sit against the wall of his outpost. Er mounted himself again on the water buffalo, and began to ride.

"Great teacher!" Kun lunged, and his hands took Li Er's arms from behind, and held him pinned. The water buffalo snorted.

"You're not human," Er said mildly.

"My father didn't have a son, so he made me out of terracotta," Kun said. "But I have an official position, so hardly anyone notices."

"Ah," Er said, apologetically. He waited. After a few minutes, Kun let go and stepped back.

Er made a face. "All right," he said. He dismounted. He began to write.

"Thank you, great sage."

"Listen," Er said. "A human should be like water. It's not about making things complicated. It's about simplicity. It's about flow. It's about being quiet and calm. The secret of life is inaction — letting things happen on their own, and valuing what you have."

"I'll remember!"



“Terracotta can hold water,” Er said, “but it still cracks and discolors, if you douse it for too long. So I’ll give you a special wisdom: don’t live with people, terracotta man. Some live a complicated life, and they have no virtue; they’ll use you badly. A few are like water, and they’ll wash you away.”

Er handed Kun the book that would become the *Dao de Ching*, mounted his buffalo, and left; and the color of Kun’s hands was scoured away.

Daoist Philosophy (Discussion)

“Live simply to unlock your natural qualities of goodness.”

If one accepts the principles of Daoist thought, people have made the world too complicated. It’s not important to gather wealth, kill one’s enemies, or rule others with an iron hand. These things just make trouble! People should live quietly, in harmony, and value the simplest things as if they were great treasures. Then they’d be happy. Even if no one obeyed the Kings and Emperors, even if no one achieved great feats of scholarship, still the Son of Heaven would go down in history as the most virtuous of rulers and the scholars would be known to all men and women as wise.

It’s traditional for Daoists in the Time of Chaos to preach a magical worldview: where everything in nature has spirits;

curse and influences are things of magic; and where one can learn immortality by performing secret alchemy or learning the secrets of the sages. The secrets of this sort of Daoism require special study — they’re discussed under Daoist Magic, on pg. 316.

Secrets of Destiny: Daoism

The Natural Way [Philosophy]

If you killed all
the virtuous

people, then there’d be no benefit to corruption — who’d be shocked at cruel deeds or surprised by deceit? Even Earth Lord and Sky Lord would have to behave well. But if you can make the world better by killing all the virtuous people, maybe the virtues and laws people write about in books aren’t very important — just follow your own heart, and all will come into balance.

DESTINY COST

* **Bonus:** It’s good not to worry too much about money. Treat your Wealth rating as one point higher when you need something, and two points higher when it’s vital. If you’re going north, warm clothing is vital; if you’ve broken your last weapon, a sword is necessary; but you can’t use this advantage for armor, silk, servants, or riches unless you have a compelling plot reason (such as “the only way we’ll get in to see Ho Xi is with a suitable gift.”) In play, this means that you use Wu Wei and flow to find lucky discounts.

* **Bonus:** It’s important to value what you have! You can spend 5 Destiny at any time to make one item you possess Quality, as you discover its hidden virtues. Similarly, you can spend 5 Destiny at any time to make any Quality object you possess Perfect.

5 **Bonus:** Once during the game, you can discard your Archetype, replacing its Challenge and Archetype skill with new ones of your choice. This purchase is incompatible with the Advantage Archetype

Gift (p. 46) — you can have one or the other, but not both.

The Terracotta Man [Treasure]

Somewhere near the western border of Shen Zhou lives Kun, the terracotta man, whose legend may have inspired the Thousand-Sword Statue Warriors and terracotta men of the Qin Dynasty.



DESTINY COST

- 5 **Victory:** Having located and impressed the terracotta man, claim him as a 5-point Mentor. What Daoist secrets does he know?

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- 1 *The Zhou Dynasty* — when Daoism was born!
- 2 *The Han Dynasty* — Daoism became prominent with the rise of the Heaven Clan!

Legalism

Destiny Cost: 3
Study Difficulty: Crafting (20)

Heaven Sword, Heartless Blade (560 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

Two warriors came together on a field of bodies. Their blades pointed at one another as they circled. One held a glorious heaven sword; the other, a dark and heartless blade cooled in its maker's blood.

"The Zhou Dynasty is in decline," said Feizi. "All men hail the Son of Heaven, but his orders have no efficacy. Zhou once ruled other Kings; but now it only advises. Once, its advice was feared; now it falls on deaf ears. Once, the Zhou were sacrosanct; now, Zhou is annexed, and the Son of Heaven is in hiding."

"Virtue flows from the Zhou Emperor — perhaps it will prevail."

"A weak king relies on virtue," said Feizi. "A powerful king follows the seven methods, and builds a government from strong laws and efficacious organizations."

"Some would doubt your seven methods," answered Zheng.

"Then I will demonstrate them." Feizi skated forward, his heartless sword singing. The dark sword came at Zheng from every direction at once. The glorious heaven sword sought to parry it, but it could not touch Feizi's blade — it was as if Feizi's attack melted from place from place without passing through the air in between. To evade, Zheng flew backwards over the field of corpses, his own sword extended in both hands before him. As he flew, he stomped a dead man's simple iron blade; it struck upwards at Feizi from behind. There was a loud clang of metal on metal as the heartless sword turned to meet it; Zheng rolled to a stop, blade angled upwards.

"That is the first method," said Feizi. "Do not attack a problem from just one angle; consider all possibilities.

The simple blade of virtue cannot compare."

"Like this?" said Zheng, and blurred forward. His sword multiplied in his hands, striking not like a single blade, but like a great cloud of light. Yet Feizi's eyes saw truly, and with one motion he stopped the sword. A crack ran down the length of the heaven blade. Zheng gaped.

"This blade is a perfect weapon," he said. "Worth more than my kingdom!"

"This is the second method," said Feizi equably. "Punish failures with unvarying severity. Had you defeated my sword skill, the heaven sword would remain intact. Do not blame me; rather, blame your own weakness."

"Like this?" said Zheng, and focused his Chi through the incomparable blade. The metal shattered at its weakened point, and a spray of a thousand steel needles washed over Feizi. As dozens stung Feizi's face and hands, Zheng soared towards him through the chaos, broken blade extended to cut Feizi's throat. Though blinded by blood, Feizi bent backwards, one hand and two toes supporting him in the posture of the bowed archway; as Zheng flew over him, Feizi's heartless blade came up and clicked against Zheng's armor. Under the armor, Zheng's side boiled and puckered with terrible heat; he gasped as he fell.

"The third method advocates a generous and reliable reward for others' success," said Feizi.

"A generous reward?" said Zheng, struggling to cool himself with internal skill.

"It required certain adaptations when translated to the sword," admitted Feizi.

Zheng laughed. "Then here is your reward: I have absorbed your lesson!" His hand came forward like a claw. It stopped two feet away from Feizi's face, but Feizi's cheek nevertheless bubbled with heat, a new scar forming the character for "wisdom." Pained, Feizi cooled his cheek with the metal of his blade. As he paused there, Zheng launched forward in an attack, using the long-arm form to compensate for his shortened blade. Feizi parried strongly, but Zheng shifted to the thousand blossoming flowers form — the glory of Three Kings kung fu, using the virtues in his soul, said to offer an attack no mortal blade could stop.

Feizi grit his teeth, his heartless blade dancing ever-faster as he strove to resist the onslaught. "You are a man with many qualities of greatness —" he said. "One for each stroke of your blade! Yet you will observe, virtue is not consistent. A man struggles with his neighbor, both unrighteous — who will your compassion help? The left-moving stroke of your blade is the urge to help one; the right-moving stroke, to help the other! You

神兵玄奇

cannot do both at once, and thus I may parry even a thousand virtues."

Zheng, smiling thinly, moved his blade in the left-right-stroke named *ren*.

Feizi took his heartless blade in both hands and spread it apart, a ghost blade in his left moving to intercept Zheng's shattered heaven sword to one side while the true sword blocked it on the other. Zheng stumbled, falling to one knee.

"This is the fourth method," said Feizi. "Listen to all views, and hold the speaker responsible for every word. Even as the sword moves to block two attacks, so can the listener understand and react to two viewpoints."

"Like this?" said Zheng, and advanced on Feizi in four-armed heaven-blade stance. Three ghost blades spun out from his shattered sword, striking together in pairs to overwhelm Feizi's blade. Feizi turned the heartless sword, reflecting the light into Zheng's eyes. Blinded, Zheng felt five sword blows in darkness. His technique failed; one blow blocked his blade, three dissolved the ghosts, and the fifth cut a line across his scalp. Zheng's hand closed around the last sword and held it tightly.

"This is the fifth method," said Feizi. "The use of deception."

Zheng's eyes cleared; Feizi stood one hundred feet back. Zheng's hand closed on air. He felt his forehead, and there was no blood.

"Ah," said Zheng. "Your attack was entirely in my mind."

"Issue unfathomable orders," said Feizi, "and make deceptive assignments. This is kingship."

Zheng's eyes locked on Feizi. "Like this?"

Feizi shuddered, and cast his hand over his eyes. Zheng charged towards him. At the last moment, he realized that the heartless

blade had changed hands, hidden by the shadow of Feizi's sleeve; he threw himself aside just as it touched his armor again.

"The second technique of deception," said Feizi. "Conceal one's blade when facing another's; conceal one's knowledge when making enquiries of a minister." He then blinked: Zheng's hands were empty. Looking down at his stomach, he saw the remains of the heaven blade, buried to the hilt. Blood dripped slowly downwards.

"Like that?" said Zheng.

Feizi yanked free the sword. Blood gushed forth for a moment, then slowed to a trickle. "The seventh method," he said, "is to speak in opposites and act in contraries." He looked at Zheng. "The blow was well-struck; I must tend to the wound or I will die. Thus, you are the victor. Yet I have shown the superiority of my techniques: for the heartless blade survives, and the heaven sword —"

Feizi shook out the shattered blade, and it turned to dust.

"— is nothing."

"An elegant final lesson," said Zheng. "You have persuaded me. I will adopt your philosophies of

government."

"Ha," said Feizi, and then sank to his knees with pain. "I know your reputation, King of Qin. You set your guards on me to see my techniques; and you meant to welcome me as an honored teacher from the moment I arrived."

"Perhaps so," said Ying Zheng. "I will have your brother Li Si tend your wounds."

Legalist Philosophy (Discussion)

"Strong laws restrain the natural human tendency towards depravity."

In Legalist thought, humans are fundamentally bad — greedy, selfish, lustful, even monstrous. They behave well only if it profits them to do so. Harsh laws create a strong state, because they ensure that people are too afraid to do evil. Rigorous and impartial laws create



a strong state, because they reward people for acting properly. Good government requires ruthless dispassion. It is this philosophy that shaped the actions of the First Emperor.

Secrets of Destiny: Legalism

Han Feizi

[*Destiny*]

Han Feizi was a prince of the Han Kingdom. He came to the court of the King of Qin as an ambassador for the Han, and the two were soon fast friends. However, Li Si, a Legalist advisor to King Ying Zheng, recommended that Zheng keep Feizi prisoner; and before Zheng had a good opportunity to release him, Li Si made Feizi drink poison. Some suggest that Feizi's last words were to congratulate his fellow Legalist on his unwavering disposition.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from Han Feizi by blood or martial tradition.
- * **Bonus:** if you descend from Han Feizi, your virtue is indifferent to ruthlessness — you have a single track for both Hen and Zhong Deeds and a single track for both Bao and Ba Deeds. Decide whether you want to treat these Deeds as Corrupt or Xia, and earn the appropriate type of *joss* and Destiny thenceforth.
- 3 **Victory:** if you descend from Han Feizi, once during the game, you can use your philosophies to increase an organization's Power by one, dividing five points among its Solidarity, Membership, and Resources.

Heartless Blades

[*Treasure*]

When a Quality weapon is cooled in its maker's heart — particularly involuntarily — it becomes a Heartless Blade. Such a weapon, forged in cruelty or sacrifice, becomes a true extension of the wielder's philosophy, able to oppose even the great Weapons of the Gods. At any point when the weapon would normally break, the wielder can spend 3 Jade Chi to prevent its destruction.

This rule does not apply to otherwise magical weapons, although a Weapon of the Gods can have the heartless property.

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Victory:** having embedded a new-forged Quality weapon in its maker's heart, you make a new Heartless Blade.
- 6 **Fortune:** you have an opportunity to obtain a heartless blade.

Legalist Tools

[*Secret Arts*]

If you have this lore, you can use legalism to support the Secret Arts of Intrigue.

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** If you also have the Secret Arts of Intrigue lore, you can use **Dispassion** — arguing that your actions flow in an impersonal fashion out of your legalist philosophies — in place of the courtier's Benevolence tool.

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- 2 *The Zhou Dynasty* — when Legalism was born!
- 1 *The Qin Dynasty* — when Legalism came to flower!



Shen Zhou: The Land of the Gods The Painter's Path

Regions

The North

The East

The South

The West

The geography of Shen Zhou is herein described through a painter's eye, but these ideas should be equally valid for any artist who wishes to capture Shen Zhou in their own particular medium.

Players can also pursue these quests for miscellaneous rewards of the GM's choice. The GM should substitute something interesting for the ability to make a painting that will be famous forever.

The North

Destiny Cost: 2
Study Difficulty: Hardiness (20)

K'an

"WHEN THREE STAND AT ODDS, one must decide."

—the Mantra of K'an

The moon looks down and sees the north as a lake. The air is thick and full of motion: ice, wind, the flight of cold white birds. The snow laps against the mountains and buildings like a pond's shallow water breaking against great stones. It is a deep and dangerous place.

When the sun shines, it burns brilliantly on the snow. When it is dark, the cold rises to drown the world.

Roads run through the north. They are made of cracked gray stone. If the snow were a lake, then the roads would be their shore.

The earth burns beneath the surface. Hot springs well up, their mud thick and black. The air shimmers above them, shaking like the reflections in a droplet of wine clinging to its glass.

Molten rock wells up in great fire pits. They sear the world like the fires of

Hell. They are the blood of the earth.

When the wind stops, the world is clear and calm. It waits. When the wind blows, all is turmoil.

The night sky is black. It is the backdrop against the deeds of flying heroes.

The principle of K'an rules here. It is the Abysmal. It is the thief that comes in the night to take away your breath. Your family finds your cold corpse come the morning.

Ken

"FROM DEFLIANCE COMES STRENGTH."

—the Mantra of Waiting Mountain

Look into the hilt-gem of the Wind Eye Saber and see the north as the wind sees it: a still and resplendent gathering. In the night's darkness, the mountains stand about like great and dignified men, poised forever amidst some deep and august discussion. The gnarled trees that grow in the north are firm and strong — the wind and cold may take their leaves, but not their lives. Great husky fortresses dot the land. The aurora and the sunset form streaks of color in the sky, backdrop for this great assemblage.

Dogs live in the Clan homes. They walk stiffly and stand at attention. Their light brown eyes are full of the vigilance of the Waiting Mountain, Ken, principle of the northeast. They are a good friend to humanity. They stand in high places and bark to sound warning when bandits come. When it is cold, and food is scarce, and the principle of K'an rules the north, the dogs are also food.

The people of the north are strong. They stand defiant. Their hearts are steady. When they are cold, they waste no energy. They wait with still alertness, poised for their next action; or they move with purpose.

Many settlements in the north have died. The north is full of old stone, broken monuments, and frozen cities. These things stand vigilant forever amidst the ice

Ch'ien

"WHEN LIFE IS HARSH, IT strengthens the great in their convictions."

—the Mantra of Cloud-Face Ch'ien

Seen from Heaven, the north is full of fire. It burns in the hearts of everyone who lives there.

The gray skies are full of turmoil. They struggle against the stillness. They fight the cold. The wind stirs them. The ice fills them. The clouds wrestle with themselves like giants warring in the sky. This is Heaven's call to arms: when the sky itself surges and trembles, let no man lay down quietly to die!



The people of the north gather around great cook-fires. They eat spicy foods and drink Nine Devil Wine. Their faces and noses turn red from this. The people assemble in great hordes to work their crafts. Here, a young man looks at a young woman: see the fire in his eyes! Here, a child crouches to defend herself and her meal from the rival who would take it from her: her skirt is red, her hair is silver, her eyes are hot. In the north, even the bandits are full of fire. Hear them laugh and jest as their captives stare in horror — such merriment!

The land is cold. It wields the nose-biting technique against its citizens, the finger-killing touch, the sleep of death kata. They do not surrender. Even the white-feathered ravens of the north do not succumb. Look: by the Bei Clan headquarters, a raven realizes that its death has come, and it can sustain itself no longer. It screams, three times, like a dying man; then it flings itself into the sky. Later, its frozen body will fall at a hungry dog's feet. That dog will bless the grace of Heaven, and its heart will thank Cloud-Face Ch'ien, the principle of the northwest.

Secrets of Destiny: Painting the North

The Vision of the Lake

[*Destiny*]

To understand and paint the northern principle of K'an, one must see its watery aspect.

To learn the north's deepness, travel to Zhao, to the Eight Mountain Shore, where eight great peaks bracket a sea of blackest ice. There, the Three Powers Sage meditates upon his heartbreak, killing those who disturb his solitude. Share tea with him and look into the sea, and you may understand the depths of K'an.

To learn how the north flows with the heat of blood, go to the peak Laughing Bird, in Western Qin. In the caves beneath is the bandit city Heavenly Virtue. For thirty years, snow has sealed the entrance to the caves, and famine grips the city. It awaits a hero to set its people free, so that they may ravage the north again. Watch them boil free from their prison and understand the blood of K'an.

To learn the north's chill, meet the maiden Ho Guan in Stone Drunk City, in Northern Yang. She has a heart of water, that destroys the fire in those who court her. Overcome that chill — woo and win the maiden — and you will look into the true heart of K'an.

Do these three things, and you may understand the vision of the lake, and make paintings of the north that none could forget.

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Destiny:** integrate the Three Powers Sage, Heavenly Virtue, or Ho Guan into the story in an auspicious fashion, giving you opportunities to develop the vision of the lake.
- 1 **Destiny:** substitute another possibility of the Game Master's choice for one, two, or three of these goals.
- 3 **Victory:** having shared tea with the Three Powers Sage, freed the people of Heavenly Virtue, and won Ho Guan's affections, make an immortal painting of the north and the principle of K'an.

The Vision of the Gathering

[*Destiny*]

To understand and paint the northern principle of Ken, one must see the strength that rises from stillness; and, more importantly,

神兵玄奇

one must learn it for oneself.

To learn world-defying endurance, visit the monastery at the Immaculate Sun-Shouldering Mountain, north of the city of Waiting Branch in Eastern Qin. Spend three days hanging from the monks' training gallows, wrists bound to the ornate stone above. The cold will eat into your bones. The rising sun will sear your eyes. The monks may seek your death; or the beasts of the north; or your enemies. When the three days end, a surviving hero will understand.

To learn self-sacrificing vigilance, travel to the City of Molten Serenity; stand guard outside the door of the courtesan and great teacher named the Silver Gate. (Loh Hou-kang, if the Silver Gate is male, or Loh May-ling, if female.) Keep those who would kill him away. Turn back those who would pit their kung fu against his, and seek to drain his skills. Shun the temptation to enter his chambers. Let all others pass. If you have Hou-kang's favor, then in time one shall come to the door whom you would not wish to see there. Learn discretion, and let them pass; learn strength, and hold them back. The Silver Gate is indifferent to your choice.

To learn the endless strength of the resistant heart, follow the path of Seven Shadows through the northern mountains, in Northern Yang. The underworld will send you visions of torment; stand fast, and your heart will fill with the power of Waiting Mountain.

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Destiny:** integrate one of these challenges into the story in an auspicious fashion, giving you opportunities to develop the vision of the gathering.
- 1 **Destiny:** substitute another possibility of the Game Master's choice for one, two, or three of these goals.
- 3 **Victory:** having surmounted these three challenges, make an immortal painting of the north and the principle of Ken.

The Vision of Northern Fire [Destiny]

To understand and paint the northern principle of Ch'ien, one must see the creative fire that this harsh land makes.

To learn the reckless fire, Nine Devil Wine is not wine enough! Only Hundred Devil Wine will do; but the crone who makes it refused the will of Zheng Bei, and now must hide from heaven's wrath. Taste of this wine, and when the drunkenness clears, you will understand.

To learn the regal fire, one must complete the Dragon-Tooth Wheel. The symbol for Ch'ien that marks it already approaches calligraphic perfection. Finish its construction, and the symbol will prove a revelation. This requires only that one claim the Wheel from the Iron Shadow Warlord of Xia and dip it in the molten rock of the Bei Clan foundry. This will call forth the ghost of every weapon ever forged therein to serve the wielder; but at the next dawn, those ghosts will turn against whomever holds the Wheel, and possessing it shall never be safe again.

To learn the cold-defying fire, one must sacrifice a long-standing ambition when almost achieved, understanding at the last moment that it is better thus. Ideally, this should be done in a fashion to entertain the other players and produce dramatic interest.

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Destiny:** integrate one of these challenges into the story in an auspicious fashion, giving you opportunities to develop the vision of northern fire.
- 1 **Destiny:** substitute another possibility of the Game Master's choice for one, two, or three of these goals.
- 3 **Victory:** having surmounted these three challenges, make an immortal painting of the north and the principle of Ch'ien.

The East

Destiny Cost: 2
Study Difficulty: Grace (20)

Chên

"WAKE! WAKE! AND TURN YOUR dreams to action."

—the Mantra of Chên

The gulls soar over the Bohai Sea. When they look towards the land, eastern Shen Zhou resembles a great flowering tree. Its soil is brown and cracked, like bark. It rises towards the sky. The distant mountains are its branches, and the purple sky its coat of blossoms. The east is alive.

People swarm on the roads of the east, merchants and peasants. From a distance, they look like so many ants, their hair a rich black, their armor or weapons catching the sun. Their horses too are dark and lustrous.

Their buildings are rich, warm colors. They give texture to the east, like bumps on a tree. Most are of haphazard, comfortable construction.

The east loves the spring. When the weather begins to

warm, the peasants and nobles turn out for celebrations. A characteristic color of the east is green. To a seagull's eye, it can seem as if the entire land — trees, people, houses, and all — has come into its leaves.

Ken

"YOUR TIME WILL COME."

—the Mantra of Ken

Ships sail towards Dong Clan territory. From the sea, the east seems a great gate of blue and white jade. The sky is streaked with clouds, so that its rich color forms blue pillars reaching to Heaven, braced along the shore by great ornate fortresses. The land is low, a great dark threshold. Docks open from the shore to welcome travelers.

The east is a place of riches. Its merchants are powerful, with trade routes that span Shen Zhou and the Bohai Sea. Gold, jade, and spices flow forever through its doors.

The east is full of auspicious journeys. Merchants, wandering swordsmen, brave and wicked bandits, all begin their travels here. They shoulder their pack, take a deep breath, and look towards the blue jade of the sky; then their story begins.

The east is a place of thought. Many great schools and powerful contemplative orders make their home here. Students and acolytes look up at the sky; they see the gate it forms, and know that one day their studies must end and they will enter a greater world.

The world is full of waiting—waiting for opportunities, waiting for power, waiting for understanding, waiting for love. Those who live in the east understand that all waiting ends. They need only lift their gaze from the ground.

Sun

"EVERY DAWN BRINGS HOPE."

—the Mantra of the Wind Maiden

The people of Shen Zhou see the east as a woman.

The sunlight washes across the water. It is the caress of white hands. Black rocks under the surface are sharp, like fingernails. The Dong Clan fortress is the stone upon her ring.

The wind blows through the land and makes the grass bend, like a woman's hair waving. The earth is often warm, like an embrace. The hills are low, rolling, full of gentle curves.

Many think the men of the east too mild, their hands too soft, their courage too weak. They live oddly ornate lives, full of philosophy, posing, and intrigue. Their kung fu often uses women's weapons — fans, needles, polearms, and staves. Standing in their homes or by the merchant's wagons, they are polite and appealing.

Perhaps in reaction, the women of the east are often fierce. Hong Dong comes from the east, as have many female heroes. One classic painting of the east shows the heroine Ou Nine standing on a hilltop, holding a spinning wheel and a sword, as the demons of five directions close in.

Secrets of Destiny: Painting the East

The Vision of the Tree

[Destiny]

To understand and paint the eastern principle of Chên, one must fill oneself with the vigorous essence of spring.

In a Daoist shrine hidden among the eastern hills of Eastern Liang, an eminent sage tends a great tree grown from a vat of cinnabar. Many dream of tasting its fruit, but there is only one, and another will not grow for one hundred years. Take a single bite, and your life force strengthens. Eat three bites and you become an unstoppable demon warrior!

In the city of Heaven's Hand in Yang, each spring, the residents hold an all-out brawl. The last man or woman standing may have their pick of the others for a bride. (Women have won on two occasions, and taken a husband instead, but custom does not oblige a man to accept.)

Each year, the reclusive artist Toy Wen releases one golden carving into general circulation. The merchants of Southern Liang (where he dwells) have made a contest of it, bidding and scheming fiercely to obtain it and present it at a ceremony one month later. To hold a golden Toy Wen statue brings great prestige, and shame falls upon your enemies.

These are but two of many contests of the eastern spring. Win one of them and sizzle with vitality; win two and burn with life!

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Destiny:** you stumble into one of these contests, or otherwise have a good excuse to participate.
- 1 **Discovery:** an enemy has taken interest in the cinnabar-bred fruit.
- 2 **Destiny:** you have some other reason, somewhat less dangerous, to investigate the fruit.
- 1 **Destiny:** substitute another possibility of the Game Master's choice for one, two, or three of these goals.
- 3 **Victory:** Having tasted of the fruit and won several



contests, make an immortal painting of the east and the principle of Chên.

The Vision of the Gate [Destiny]

To understand and paint the eastern principle of Ken, one need only spend time there — the image is writ large in the minds of its residents. To find a new insight and understand it in a way no one has seen it before — *that* is a worthy challenge for a painter!

The seven-hook master of the Horse-Hair Cult of Hanzhao claims to have learned kung fu secrets from his castration —without the distraction of sex, he asserts, he has grown more powerful than others can imagine. For twenty years, his cult has kidnapped boys to serve as his disciples, their sacrifice fueling the master's Chi more than their own. To save one child from his clutches, and see another fight with inhuman prowess to defend him, is to understand paths both taken and untaken.

The Rat and the Raven are the two masters of a secret society dedicated to the protection of the Yellow River region from clan recruiters, bandits and corrupt officials who would seek to exploit its people. Unfortunately, the two have fallen in love. Embarrassed by their feelings, each has grown increasingly difficult to deal with, refusing to show any weakness or affection to the other. Aided by their many followers, who regard this as a serious rift and are taking sides, the Yellow River Society stands on the verge of civil war. To resolve this rift — perhaps by healing it, or perhaps by exploiting it — teaches the heart of emotions both treasured and abandoned.

Mi Szu of Northern Liang wields the Two-Talon Banner, a weapon belonging to one of the First Emperor's lieutenants. His dying wish was that his children return the hooked stave to his master — but the location of the First Emperor's tomb is secret, and for many generations his family has failed to discharge this obligation. Some say that Heaven's patience is running thin; complete her task, or help her do so, and learn of the final gate between life and death.

DESTINY COST

1 **Destiny:** integrate the Horse-Hair Cult, the Rat, the Raven, or Mi Szu into the story in an auspicious fashion, giving you opportunities to develop a new vision of the gate.

1 **Destiny:** substitute another possibility of the Game Master's choice for one, two, or three of these goals.

3 **Victory:** having rescued one child from the Horse-Hair Cult and fought another, resolved the

Rat and Raven's rift, and delivered the Two-Talon Banner to the Emperor's grave, make an immortal painting of the east and the principle of Ken.

The Vision of the Wind Maiden [Destiny]

To understand and paint the eastern principle of Sun, you must understand how to grasp the world firmly but gently. You must learn the control that lets you burn with passion, speak with a calm voice, and act with decision.

You must follow your passion to a culmination undesired — driving yourself through unwise passion and great deeds to the point where the only hope of success in life is to swallow your rage or desire — and, understanding this, do so. Ideally, this should be arranged in a fashion to entertain the other players and produce dramatic interest.

The east is home to several nests of martial artist revolutionaries who seek to undermine the authorities and establish a bandit rule. One such is the flesh-eating abbot of Sun and Moon Monastery, located in the Twisted Ground of Zhuo Lu in Yang; another, the marsh bandit Wallowing Snake of Southern Liang, whose kung fu animates the severed hands of his enemies; a third, the scholar Wen Li, whose hilltop library in Northern Liang is a deathtrap that has slain many of the local magistrate's soldiers. To kill such a man shows little control; to humiliate one, or convince him of the need for righteousness, proves the mastery of the gentle hand.

In the palace of the sinister Len Wu in Eastern Liang, guests are treated to the feast of poisons. The master of the house is, of course, immune. His meals are not simply tasty but are, some say, the quintessence of the flavor of the east. Of course, all who have eaten of them die. Survive the feast, and learn the meaning of the Wind Maiden.

DESTINY COST

1 **Destiny:** integrate one of these challenges into the story in an auspicious fashion, giving you opportunities to develop the vision of the wind maiden.

1 **Destiny:** substitute another possibility of the Game Master's choice for one, two, or three of these goals.

3 **Victory:** having swallowed a burning rage, mastered a bandit leader, and tasted of the feast of poisons, make an immortal painting of the east and the

principle of Sun. This may require a suitable model to pose as the Wind Maiden.

The South

Destiny Cost: 2
Study Difficulty: Athletics (20)

Li

"A DEMON MAY FALL TO blades; but who could stand before a righteous man?"

—the Mantra of Li

The sun looks down. In the south, she sees herself reflected. Touched by the sun's hot attentions, the land blushes glorious colors. In the day, its grass is yellow. The dirt and stone have a red-orange tint. The hills cast back the light. At dawn and sunset, the dry earth and the leaves of the trees reflect the sun's orange glow.

The fields of rice shift and shimmer like a hearth fire, with burgundy trees and bushes near their edge. Muddy ponds are common, alive with reflections. Most buildings are stained wood, shining in the sun.

The south is hollow, like the trigram Li. At its center, there is the great lake. The sun looks down: the lake casts back her face. The waters shift, struggling to contain her glorious visage. Such wonders!

At night, the moon looks down, and sees herself reflected. The towns are full of lanterns. They cast back the moon's light. The roads are white and pale. The towns form circles, mysterious as the sky. Sometimes, rabbits are seen, or white foxes. The moon's light bounces from the curved roofs of the temples.

Sun

"WEEP FOR THOSE WHO HAVE no heart, and cannot see the world as it truly is."

—the Mantra of Sun

The sage Deng Li said, "The south is candles and poetry in a gentle rain."

The hills of the south rise from the lowlands like candle stubs: great and sharp, but blunt-topped and coated in soft vegetation. When the dawn comes over the hills, it is as if each catches fire in turn.

Rivers run slowly. Some say that their curves form elegant characters, pleasing to Heaven. At night, they are black, like ink.

From far away, the shapes of the houses fade, their rich wood tones fading into obscurity, leaving only the reflection of the sunlight. This makes towns look like scraps of white paper.

The heat of the south makes the air shimmer. Even on a cloudless day, this gives distant things a haze.

The people of the south are small. They do not clutter the landscape.

In the south, the land is soft, save for the palace of Emperor Hu — a sharp and terrifying edifice that does not match the temper of the land.

K'un

"IN THE END, THE PURPOSE of a blade is to survive."

—the Mantra of K'un

The south is a kettle of life.

Everywhere, the earth thrusts forth trees, grass, bushes, reeds, and flowers. The soil is round and lumpy, like a pregnant woman's belly. Birds dash through the air, finding mates to help them fill their nests. Butterflies with blue and green wings dance.

Ravines open in the headland, the earth spreading apart to show the entrance to the great lake. Waves crash against the shore.

Peasants work their fields. They grow many tons of rice to feed their ravenous Emperor. Water buffalo help till the fields.

Cradled by this land of life, the people express a vigorous temper. The efforts of the bounteous earth are an inspirational example; they work and play in earnest

Secrets of

神兵玄奇

Destiny: Painting the South

The Vision of the Mirror of Light [Destiny]

To understand and paint the southern principle of Li, one must see its fiery aspect.

At the top of Red Day Hill in the Empire of Jin, the Ju family daily burns its offerings to the dead. The assassin Bloody Jaw wishes to steal Ju Min for his wife, but has sworn to refrain as long as this practice continues. Now, he is impatient, and sends his servants to disrupt the offerings.

In the kitchens of Emperor Hu, a fire rages — it burns five times the height of a man, fed on human bones; it is said that gazing into the fire reveals certain of the Emperor's kung fu secrets to the viewer. The Emperor allows none past his kitchen's doors save those who work there, and they may never leave.

At the top of the Thousand-Sword Palace of the Nan Clan, a mirror blazes with the sun's bright reflection. It is said that to regard oneself in this mirror is a great boon; accordingly, the Nan Clan has surrounded it with deadly traps and treacherous footing, so that it could train its scions in their sword skills by sending them to see it. The mirror itself holds the deadliest trap of all!

See these three fires, and understand.

DESTINY COST

- I **Destiny:** connect one of these locations to the plot in a fashion that allows one to visit it without separating from the group. (For example, a running fight in the Thousand-Sword Palace might end at the mirror.)
- I **Destiny:** substitute another possibility of the Game Master's choice for one, two, or three of these sights.
- 3 **Victory:** having seen the kitchen-fire of Hu, the Ju family offerings, and the mirror of the Nan, make an immortal painting of the southern principle of Li.



Deng Li's Vision [Destiny]

The sage Deng Li painted the south as it was before the Jin Empire, when the principles of the land stood in harmony. Who could match this painting? Emperor Hu's grip makes the Sun trigram's influence recede from the land. It is even weak in the southeast!

DESTINY COST

- I **Fortune:** you become involved with the efforts to unseat Emperor Hu.

I **Victory:** the Emperor becomes aware of your positive contributions to the land. You must first make such contributions, and spend I Destiny each time you wish him to hear of a new contribution. When sufficiently impressed, he will grant you a position of influence.

3 **Victory:** having dethroned the Emperor or used your influence to help him restore balance to the

land, paint an immortal painting showing how the south has evolved since the time of Deng Li.

The Vision of the Kettle [Destiny]

To understand the southwestern principle of K'un, one must understand the land's fertility.

One husband or bride from the south would not suffice. The reckless artist seeking to understand K'un must woo and abandon a dozen!

The land bestows its love on all in equal measure. Taste the rice of every province and know its bounty. Sadly, the rice of Gao Province grows in only one field, and the Emperor has forbidden it to all.

Some cling to life beyond any reasonable measure. The ghost of Seven Ivory Hong, slain by her one-time lovers, refuses to pass into Hell. To measure such dedication, one must lay her to rest — or, in failing, understand her defiance of the natural order.

DESTINY COST

- I **Fortune:** facilitate the occurrence of frivolous romantic affairs, if for some reason the Game Master makes them difficult.
- I **Destiny:** connect the ghost of Seven Ivory Hong or the shipments of rice from Gao Province to the Emperor's palace to the plot in an auspicious

fashion.

- I **Destiny:** substitute another possibility of the Game Master's choice for one, two, or three of these goals.
- 3 **Victory:** having wooed and abandoned a dozen would-be brides or grooms, tasted the rice of every province of the south, and dealt with Seven Ivory Hong, make an immortal painting of the southern principle of K'un.

The West

Destiny Cost: 2
Study Difficulty: Melee (30)

Tui

"JOY IN YOUR ENEMIES' DEATHS."

—the Mantra of Tui

The west is a monster forged of steel and blood. It has grown accustomed to the people of Shen Zhou, and troubles them little — but, for the invaders who time and again rage into the land through the western passes, the land is a nightmare. Its lakes and marshes open like great maws, ringed with mountainous teeth. Iron and rust color its peaks. The sun on the clouds sets the sky afire. Its trees rise in angry rows. Its roads are sharp, like knives.

In the west rise the great mountains — cold, hostile, and angry. They are the first defense of Shen Zhou.

The west favors an ornate style of construction. Its buildings are thoroughly and rigorously decorated. They stand at attention like soldiers in uniform and gleaming armor.

Overly Glorious Xi, facing an opponent across a western lake, declared:

A strange hunger troubles the earth —

Only blood can sate it!

A hundred lakes yawn thirstily.

Hungry pillars gnash beside.

Grass flutters. The sun flares.

Heaven warns of folly.

Who can oppose Clan Xi?

Ch'ien

"ALL UNDER HEAVEN."

—the Mantra of Ch'ien

The west cradles the sky.

The warm-toned mountains of the west reach upwards like a mother's extended arms. They touch the heavens. They lend the sky their strength so that it may extend ever upwards, driven to even greater glories than the earth that loves it so.

The air is clear. The wind blows fiercely. The stars are bright with Heaven's gratitude.

The west shapes itself to the sky. Its lakes are blue, and white with clouds. The land between the mountains is flat.

The lights of human lanterns sparkle at night like the constellations of the earth. The dragon boats of the south carry gold lamps and race at dusk. As these boats glide along the rivers, the stars look down to see their cousins dance.

K'un

"ALL MUST YIELD TO STRENGTH."

—the Mantra of K'un

The barbarians look into western Shen Zhou and see vulnerable riches.

The mountains rise around the west like a cage — bars of stone to keep thieves away. Inside, Shen Zhou is soft, flat, gentle, and squishy: its open spaces have few barriers to keep the hordes at bay.

The homes of the west are like golden treasures. They are ornate — shining and desirable. The people are tall and bulky, but many have a quixotic appeal. They have round faces, like coins or opals.

The west is full of celebrations. The red lamps burn and the dragons dance — such decadence can only mean weakness.

Shen Zhou is a gift meant for harder, stronger men.

Overly Glorious Xi, on slaying his first barbarian, said:

His hand clenches and unfolds —

He performs a dance for the Yama Kings!

His eyes glare fire at the sky.

His stomach spills its contents on the ground.

A barbarian full of righteous fury, certain of his path —

He comes to Shen Zhou to destroy the weak!

He finds his ignominious death surprising.

神兵玄奇



Secrets of Destiny: Painting the West

The Vision of the Monster [Destiny]

To truly understand the west, one must know its troubles.

The lord of the Xi clan, Ho Xi, is a powerful and clever man — but his desire for personal power distracts him from the protection of Shen Zhou. Once the most virtuous of warriors of the Wulin, he now uses his enormous wealth and power in ways unhealthy for the west. To learn the west's power, one must challenge him on his follies in his fortress-home, Fang & Gold Mountain, in Chenghan.

A barbarian invasion through the western passes is a common event in Shen Zhou's history. The barbarians of the outside world are fierce and strange; to thwart their designs may require a single show of force or a multi-story struggle. Though Ho Xi has many Weapons, the outsiders have strange powers of their own. To learn the west's anger, face and force back an offensive coming through the western passes.

The west is a place of sorrow and the setting sun. To learn the west's sorrow, one must bury a friend in its soil.

DESTINY COST

1 **Destiny:** arrange for a new friend, who will be doomed to die at some auspicious point in the campaign.

1 **Destiny:** substitute another possibility of the Game Master's choice for one, two, or three of these goals.

2 **Destiny:** you involve yourself in a western plot that will likely include both a confrontation with Ho Xi and a struggle against a barbarian invasion.

3 **Victory:** having confronted Ho Xi and the barbarians both, and buried a friend in the west, make an immortal painting of the western principle of Tui.

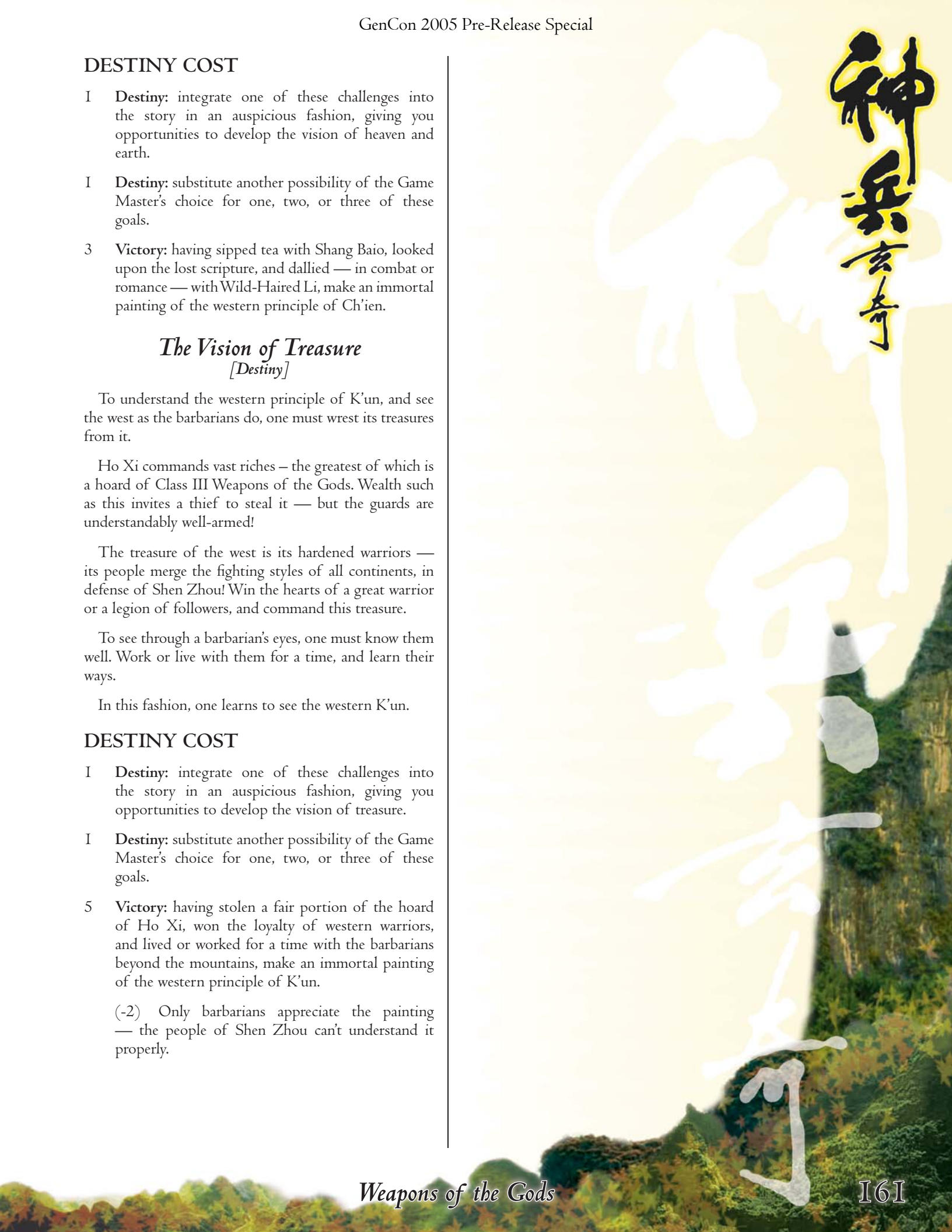
The Vision of Heaven and Earth [Destiny]

To understand the western principle of Ch'ien, one must hold both the earth and the heavens in your heart.

Ancient tea plants grow in Western Yang, precious in their delicacy. Shang Baio, sometimes called "The God of Tea," understands them like no other. Ten years ago, annoyed by boisterous merchants demanding his expertise, he vanished — but to find him, and drink with him, is to understand western perfection.

A lost scripture of the Buddha resides in a casket in the mountains of Western Liang. Many fear that its discovery would produce political turmoil, monks using new moral authority to agitate for greater devotion and donations from the people, destabilizing the balance of power between ascetic and governmental orders. If it contained Buddhist kung fu secrets, the results might be even more troublesome. Yet what glory it would be, to read the Buddha's long-forgotten words!

Wild-Haired Li, though nothing more than a wandering hero, is superstitiously held to be a spirit of the western mountains of Chenghan. A romantic interlude with him — or a contest of strengths, should this prove undesirable — could only prove enlightening. Female heroes should beware — he is fickle, and might wish to take their chastity without repaying it in love or marriage.


 神兵玄奇

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Destiny:** integrate one of these challenges into the story in an auspicious fashion, giving you opportunities to develop the vision of heaven and earth.
- 1 **Destiny:** substitute another possibility of the Game Master's choice for one, two, or three of these goals.
- 3 **Victory:** having sipped tea with Shang Baio, looked upon the lost scripture, and dallied — in combat or romance — with Wild-Haired Li, make an immortal painting of the western principle of Ch'ien.

The Vision of Treasure [Destiny]

To understand the western principle of K'un, and see the west as the barbarians do, one must wrest its treasures from it.

Ho Xi commands vast riches — the greatest of which is a hoard of Class III Weapons of the Gods. Wealth such as this invites a thief to steal it — but the guards are understandably well-armed!

The treasure of the west is its hardened warriors — its people merge the fighting styles of all continents, in defense of Shen Zhou! Win the hearts of a great warrior or a legion of followers, and command this treasure.

To see through a barbarian's eyes, one must know them well. Work or live with them for a time, and learn their ways.

In this fashion, one learns to see the western K'un.

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Destiny:** integrate one of these challenges into the story in an auspicious fashion, giving you opportunities to develop the vision of treasure.
- 1 **Destiny:** substitute another possibility of the Game Master's choice for one, two, or three of these goals.
- 5 **Victory:** having stolen a fair portion of the hoard of Ho Xi, won the loyalty of western warriors, and lived or worked for a time with the barbarians beyond the mountains, make an immortal painting of the western principle of K'un.

(-2) Only barbarians appreciate the painting — the people of Shen Zhou can't understand it properly.



Shen Zhou: The Land of the Gods

The Society of Shen Zhou

Matters of Family

Parent and Child
Elder and Younger Brother
Clan and Family

Courtship and Marriage

A Woman's Life
Husband and Wife
Courtship
Daoist Sexual Basics
Male Homosexuality
Female Homosexuality

Hierarchical Relationships

Ruler and Subject
Teacher and Student
Superior and Minion

Non-Hierarchical Relationships

Friendship

Courtiers (An Advanced Topic)

Destiny Cost: 0

Courtiers use persuasion much as a Warrior uses the Fight skill. It's the basic, reliable technique underlying all others. When they want to get fancy, though, they need a better weapon than their tongue, or all the Persuade skill and secret art skill in the world won't help them. They need intrigue.

Intrigue is the art of indirect manipulation. Courtiers use people's relationships with others as leverage to maneuver them. GMs should remember that loners don't challenge courtiers so much as frustrate and irritate them. Interesting challenges come from people with strong, healthy relationships and alliances.

GMs using this information should distribute this lore to all courtiers.

The Six Relationships

GMs and players interested in intrigue will benefit from graphing the social context in terms of the relationships involved. Each person relates to others through one or more of the six key relationships in Shen Zhou.

- **Parents → Children:** Parents dominate their children. Secret society members *often* treat their teachers as "martial parents."
- **Ruler → Subject:** Rulers dominate their subjects. Clan Heads *often* relate to their Clan as a ruler.
- **Teacher → Student:** Teachers dominate their students.
- **Elder ↔ Younger Brother:** The elder brother dominates the younger brother, but the younger brother can influence the older. Members of secret societies *often* relate as brothers. Unmarried couples *sometimes* relate as brothers.
- **Husband ↔ Wife:** The husband dominates the wife, but the wife can influence the husband. Unmarried couples *often* relate as husband and wife.
- **Friend ↔ Friend:** Friends influence one another. Sisters *sometimes* relate to their siblings as friends. Members of a secret society *sometimes* relate as friends.



Derivative Relationships

In addition, a courtier may sometimes want to examine minor relationships. Five minor relationships ultimately derive from the core six, and one can treat them as independent relationships in practice.

- **Superior → Minion:** Superiors exert influence over their minions. Sisters *often* relate to their brothers as minions.
- **Family Member ↔ Family Member:** Family and Clan members share a certain general loyalty.
- **Ally ↔ Ally:** Allies are not always bound by friendship or family. This makes them inherently untrustworthy — but the relationship exists.
- **Rival ↔ Rival:** Rivals exert influence on one another — their example, if not their words, can persuade the other to act!
- **Romantic Interest → Interested Party:** Even in Shen Zhou, love can blind the heart and turn precedence relationships upside down. A romantic interest can influence those who find him or her appealing. This relationship is one-sided unless the interest is mutual.

Using the Graph

Consider Tian Wen. He has a single parent, his adoptive father Uncle San. Clan Head Zheng Bei has both a ruler and a teacher's authority over him. He has Fat Dragon, Bone Headed, Snow Bei, and his sister Cha Wen as friends. To a lesser degree, he relates to most of Clan Bei as family and to Great Oak as a rival.

Suppose that you want to persuade Tian Wen to fetch a lost treasure for you, but he won't do it — he's too stubborn! Your best option is to persuade Uncle San or Zheng Bei. If they tell Tian Wen to help you out, he'll do it. Having Fat Dragon, Bone Headed, Snow Bei, or Cha Wen push for your agenda might work — none of them can order him around, but he does want to make them happy. If Clan Bei suffers because he won't get your lost treasure, this might change his mind. Finally, if Great Oak volunteers to do it, Tian Wen might get involved — he can't let that fat pig show him up!

If Tian Wen is in your way, then the graph also shows whom he'll turn to. You can cut off his resources in advance by poisoning the minds of Uncle San and Zheng Bei against him. If they think that opposing you is shameful, they might not stop him, but they won't help him at all.

For an advanced intrigue, you might influence Tian Wen through Jade Duke. Although Tian Wen wouldn't

recognize Jade Duke as anything but a monstrous Duke of the Hell Clan, Uncle San and Jade Duke have a strong relationship — so it's possible for Jade Duke to convince Uncle San that Tian Wen should act a certain way.

When building Relationship Maps (see pg. 333, *On Being the Wulin Sage*), it's always best to identify the links between individuals using the Six Relationships and the Derivative Relationships!

DESTINY COST

0+ **Discovery:** a selected NPC exists in a richer social context than previously shown — there are more people you can work with when attempting to indirectly influence them. You can use this for free once per story. Additional uses cost 1 Destiny each.

Parent and Child

Destiny Cost: 2
Study Difficulty: Grace (15)

The Legend of Bronze Dragon
(650 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

Feng and Hark

Jiao Feng sat in his office, studying a battle map. His hair was dark. His face was clean. His eyes were bright. The doors to his office opened. Ten soldiers stood outside, wearing full-face masks. They rapped their spears upon the floor, then moved aside.

Jiao Hark entered. His hair was white. His eyes were tired. He wore a legendary sword: Bronze Dragon.

"Honored father," said Jiao Feng.

"You don't do me much honor," snapped Hark. "You sit here in Wei while I travel from Zhao. Travel's hard on the old!"

"Of course I wanted to visit my father," said Feng. "I can't forget you in your old age! But I'm a minister in Wei. I thought: surely, if I travel to Zhao, the King of Zhao will have me killed. Even if he doesn't, my father will worry every day! I couldn't be such a trouble to you."

"And I'm safer here?"

Feng shrugged. "I'm a dutiful son. If the King of Wei tried to kill my father, I'd have to kill him first! That'd be no good for anyone. The King knows this, so he won't dare hurt you."

Hark frowned and sat down. "It's good to have an accomplished son," he says, "but you're too self-righteous."

"I'm sorry, father."

"Zhao and Wei are at war. It's a lot of trouble for everyone. So as a minister of Wei, you've failed at your job. You haven't given your King good advice!"

Feng tilted his head. "Zhao's not at fault?"

"Ah!" said Hark. "I'm wounded. You don't think your father is an estimable advisor? You'd blame me for this tragedy? Men will shed their blood and women weep, and you'll sit in Wei saying, 'This must be the fault of my father. It's his poor advice leading Zhao astray?'"

"Perhaps you remonstrated with the King of Zhao, and he did not listen."

"He heeds my advice to the letter."

"Then I'm perplexed," answered Feng.

"You'll advise Wei to surrender. That'll save bloodshed."

"I can't do that."

"Curse you, boy! You should obey your father."

"Instead, I gently remonstrate: father, surrender can't be in Wei's best interests. Zhao would cackle in greed and march into this land."

"I won't listen to such nonsense; my mind's made up! Wei should surrender."

"Father, the King wouldn't listen. He'd know where my advice came from—a glorious minister of Zhao! A son should obey his father, but the gesture's futile."

Hark wrinkled his mouth. "I suppose you're right. Then there's to be a battle?"

"That's typical in war."

River Battle

"We should hold the battle here." Hark's finger stabbed down at the map. "Nice stretch of river land, between two hills. The blood'll be good for the soil."

Feng studied the map, then closed his eyes. He saw the clash of soldiers in his mind. Archers sent forth their arrows like rain. Swords clashed against shields.

In his vision of the battle, Kin Ming, the magnificent heroine of Wei, danced through the troops of Zhao like a scythe through grain. She wore green silk robes. She used a long-handled saber with rings on the blade — her enemies called it Leaf Tip because it flowed around her like a leaf in the wind. Sometimes, the tip would go clean through an enemy's chest and the dead soldier would slip onto the handle. When five or six enemies got stuck this way, the weapon would start moving slowly, and she'd have to kick them off.

Then Shen Szu, warrior of Zhao, came forward. Her hair and body were wet — she'd just come from the river.

She used a sectional steel whip — five steel bars linked by short chains, ending in a point. The first time she'd used this weapon, Szu sliced effortlessly through her kung fu teacher's defense and killed him, so his ghost moved into the weapon and she called it by his name: "Jie Bian."

Szu met Ming and the two clashed. Their weapons moved like wind and water, impossible to see — the sound was like falling rain, and the sparks as the weapons clashed were like fireflies on a summer night. Feng saw the sparks grow ever closer to Shen Szu, whose mouth set in a thin line. Then Szu moved her Jie Bian in a serpentine gesture, and the waters of the river rose. They poured across the field and lapped at Ming's feet. The soldiers Ming had slain washed towards her, and their dead hands grasped at her ankles. Looking horrified, Kin Ming slammed the butt of her saber against the water, and the river blew away from her feet — but in the moment of her distraction, Jie Bian coiled around Leaf Tip's blade and snapped it off.



Hilltop Battle

Feng opened his eyes again. "Truly, Szu is a fearsome fighter," he said. "Perhaps holding the battle here would be fairer?" He tapped the map, indicating a new location. "It's higher ground, so Heaven will get a better show!"

Hark meditated upon the map, closing his eyes. In his vision, Shen Szu moved like an unstoppable wave through Wei's troops, killing hundreds; but her body was dry and her hair nearly so. Ming stepped forward, and the two of them clashed.

Szu had a lean and hungry look. Her weapon battered Ming's like a tiger shaking its prey. Now she drove the saber left; now, right! Ming was parched and tired — instead of drinking fresh, cold water before the battle, she'd climbed a hill! Still, the

神兵玄奇

heroine of Wei did not relent. She held up Leaf Tip and shook it. The rings did not chime — they roared like a wounded bear! Szu stepped back. Ming turned the blade, and it caught the high land's wind; as the metal vibrated, it screamed like all the demons in Hell. Szu screamed too, her eardrums shattering; Ming's blade took her through the stomach.

Hark opened his eyes. "That's not the best location," he said.

"Ah," said Feng.

A Loyal Son

"A dutiful son would recommend the river," Hark pointed out.

Feng's eyes narrowed. "I respectfully disagree. Is a temporary advantage for Zhao worth my reputation as a sagacious advisor? The idea seems ludicrous."

"I'm set on my plan," said Hark. "You'll tell Wei; I'll tell Zhao! It's a wonderful battle if Kin Ming dies."

"Please, father. Don't ask this of me."

"Don't you have any filial piety? What kind of son sets his reputation above his father's wishes?"

"A son loyal to his King. Father, this is no virtuous request."

"You came into this world because of your mother and me! I bought you food! I bought you clothes! I took care of you in your youth! Didn't Confucius say you could carry me on your shoulder for a thousand years and not pay back the debt you owe me for this life?"

"... it's my duty to reproach you three times if you make a foolish decision," said Feng. "I suppose I've done that." He looked at the map, brooding. "I'll recommend your battle site and flee to Zhao after Wei loses."

Hark nodded briskly and rose to his feet. After a moment's thought, he took off the sword Bronze Dragon and set it on his son's desk.

"What's this?" Feng asked.

Hark shrugged. "A man should obey his King," he said. "The King of Zhao told me, 'go to your son. Convince him to fight by the river — then Shen Szu's unstoppable!' But Szu's weapon can't defeat Bronze Dragon, so it's a tragedy for Zhao."

"The King of Zhao will kill you."

Hark smiled. "Now that I know I have a dutiful son, it's okay if I die."

River Battle (Revisited)

Feng closed his eyes. In his mind, Kin Ming slammed the butt of her saber against the rising river. The steel whip coiled around Leaf Tip's blade.

Leaf Tip did not break; it was already falling from Kin Ming's hands. In one smooth motion, Ming pulled Bronze Dragon from her back and swept it at Szu. The steel whip changed course like a river diverting around a stone; Bronze Dragon shone as brightly as the sun.

"Bronze Dragon hates water — that's its legend," thought Feng. "So it must hate Szu terribly."

The air around the sword pulsed. A wave of Chi stopped the steel whip dead in the air. Bronze Dragon took off Shen Szu's head. Hissing like an angry beast, the whip fell into the water. The retreating river dragged it and Leaf Tip away.

Feng opened his eyes. "Thank you, father. I'll send offerings to your spirit."

"Every week!" said Hark. "Hell's no good if you don't have comforts!"

"Every week," said Feng, and waved him away.



Filial Piety

(Discussion)

In Shen Zhou, the parent-child relationship eclipses all others. A child must offer their parents absolute respect, loyalty, and consideration. This is the supreme virtue *Xiao* (filial piety).

The parent-child relationship imposes emotional and ethical obligations on the parent, rather than practical ones. Parents have no specific duty. They should conduct themselves with righteousness, provide a good example, and care for their children. Most parents take these obligations to heart, but the child cannot enforce them. No matter how parents act, unfilial children are wicked. Judging one's mother or father derelict or unfit is in itself an unfilial act.

Xiao is not a martial virtue. It belongs to the world of the people, not the world of Martial Arts. Characters who cultivate their Chi often place martial virtues above filial piety. In others' eyes, this makes them both horrifying and glamorous. Their cause is good, but their means are

appalling! This makes heroes who place honor and justice above filial piety the social equivalents of Dirty Harry, rogues willing to go to shocking extremes in the name of righteousness. Warriors who completely discard their filial piety have a social place closer to that of serial killers — they go to shocking extremes for no good reason!

It's important to remember that filial piety *matters* to the people of Shen Zhou — it's not just a dreary obligation. It's the heart of being a good person. In the Land of the Gods, people who like going to bed feeling virtuous, cool, and like they're fundamentally doing the right thing practice filial piety. The emotional payoff for an act of filial piety is similar to that which a modern Westerner feels after helping a lost child or saving a drowning one — it's not like paying taxes or jury duty.

Social Strategy: Children (Discussion)

Stress Profile for the Parent in Shen Zhou Parent-Child Relationships

This profile helps explain the behavior of a typical parent in Shen Zhou. It's here to help GMs and interested players estimate how much a child's behavior strains the parent-child relationship, and how the parent might react to an increased or decreased level of strain.

- **Tension increased by:** The child's independence. Parents do not fear disobedient or disrespectful children. In Shen Zhou, a child's open defiance is too monstrous to think about! Covert defiance, though shocking, reinforces the relationship in its own way — the child hides their defiance *because* they recognize the necessity for obedience.

Instead, parents fear their children will stop thinking about them and their interests. Their nightmare scenario: a child who patronizes the parent, gives lip service to the parent's orders, and lives a basically independent life.

- **Behavior in Tense Relationships** Unreasonable demands. Parents actively seeking reassurance test their children's obedience. When a child cheerfully obeys hard or painful orders, the parent knows that the relationship is strong.
- **Tension reduced by:** Obedience and reverence. Unprompted shows of reverence and concern reassure the parent. If it's hard and painful to obey, then obedience is also reassuring. Reassuring the parent reduces the threat of independence and strengthens their bond to the child.
- **Behavior in Low-Tension relationships:** Support and love. Parents live on in their offspring — primarily in their sons, who continue their lineage,

but also in their daughters. For this reason, they often make great sacrifices for their children. Shen Zhou morality does not require parents to support their offspring, but it admires parents who sacrifice for their children.

Children who desire or accidentally find an independent lifestyle generally try to show their reverence and filial piety in impressive ways. If they don't, there's a risk that their parents, uneasy, will make unreasonable demands. On the positive side, if the child can fulfill those demands, the parent takes joy and pride in their devoted offspring.

Secrets of Destiny: Parent and Child

Bronze Dragon [Weapon of the Gods]

Bronze Dragon is a Class II Weapon of the Gods. A terrible flood drowned all the maker's sons, so he made Bronze Dragon and killed himself with it. The sword hates water and sometimes disrupts enemy techniques based on Silver Chi.

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Entangled Destiny:** your Destiny will touch that of Bronze Dragon.
- 2 **Defense:** improve your defense against Bronze Dragon techniques.

Destiny Binding: Children [Destiny]

Children loyal to their parents can sometimes perform extraordinary deeds in their name. These Destiny options work best if the player finds the character's parents interesting.

DESTINY COST

- I+ **Destiny:** increase the role of your mother or father in the story. This makes their motivations more complex, gives them more resources to offer you, and makes them more troublesome to you. Spend more Destiny for increased effects; this is one of the few instances when you may spend Destiny to increase your *Mentor* Advantage.
- I **Victory:** when serving one's parents with fanatic devotion, receive the attention of Heaven. A small miracle is possible, particularly when you sacrifice either your life or something more important and it's just not enough. Either way, in a thousand years, Kuo



Chu-ching will include your story in his classic, *The Twenty-Four Examples of Filial Piety*.

Destiny Breaking: Children

[Kung Fu]

Parents often complicate the child's life — but if the character's domineering parents make the *player* unhappy, it's time to distance them from the story.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **Technique:** the character has the opportunity to learn the *Jade Reverence* level two formless technique. Dedicated practice of this technique imbues one's parents with health and longevity. Their hearts swell with awareness of their child's devotion and concern, making them profoundly less demanding in all other matters. Sages are divided on whether this technique represents true devotion or the wickedest impiety.

Faithful Child

[Weapon of the Gods]

Courtiers too may command the Weapons of the Gods. The five Graceful Swords are the most famous courtier's weapons, with Faithful Child foremost among them. Looking at someone with a hand on its hilt, a courtier can see the important lessons that person's parents taught them. Wounds from this Class II weapon can inflame someone with urgent filial devotion or cut away their loyalty so that they show disgraceful impiety.

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Entangled Destiny:** your Destiny will touch that of Faithful Child.
- 2 **Defense:** improve your defense against Faithful Child techniques.

Father-Son Swords

[Treasure]

In the Zhou Dynasty, a few weaponsmiths learned to make father-son swords: paired blades, individually unremarkable, but possessed of great power when a parent wields one and their child the other. These swords give the child righteous power in service to the parent. The parent commands invincible skill on the child's behalf!

Despite the name, these swords are not restricted to men —
mothers and sons,
fathers and

daughters, and mothers and daughters have used them in the past. Treat them as Quality longswords or sabers and work out their statistics with your Sage. When wielded by a parent/child pair, each adds the other's Jade Chi Modifier (from their Might) to the weapon's Strike.

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Fortune:** you find a pair of father-son swords.
- 5 **Technique:** you have the opportunity to learn Father-Son Sword kung fu techniques — powerful kung fu that only works when your parent or child wields the other blade.

Great Secrets of Kung Fu

[Kung Fu]

To access the power of your ancestors, you must display filial piety! In ancient times, many great men and women would lock away treasures and kung fu secrets to answer their descendants' future needs. These "Great Secrets" of the Clans include vaults and rooms that only their descendants can open, books and verses that only their descendants can decrypt, and so forth. Often, to prevent unrighteous descendants from abusing these Great Secrets, the ancestors would seal them so that only the truly reverent descendants could open these vaults — heirs renowned for their *xiao*!

DESTINY COST

- 5 **Destiny:** you are a moral hero. You can perform Deeds (pg. 80) in the name of the Virtue *Xiao*.
- (-2) You can only perform such deeds when showing filial piety to your parents or ancestors — filial piety to other superiors doesn't count.
- 3 **Secret:** Obtain key information about the location of a Great Secret of your Clan. You need a rating of 5 in the *Xiao* Virtue to access it!

Leaf Tip and Jie Bian

[Weapons of the Gods]

Legend says the river will one day return Leaf Tip and Jie Bian. Each Weapon will find a wielder, and lure them into conflict once more. Leaf Tip hates the weapon Jie Bian, that tried to break it; Jie Bian hates Leaf Tip, which it calls the "brother of Bronze Dragon". These weapons are most likely Class III in power, possibly up to Heavenly Grade, but can be detailed by your Sage.

DESTINY COST

- 6 **Fortune:** you are the destined wielder of one of

these Weapons.

(-3) The wielder of the opposed Weapon is terrifyingly powerful.

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- I *Elder and Younger Brother* — understand the bond and rivalry of brothers in Shen Zhou!
- I *Husband and Wife* — learn how wives adopt their husband's ancestors!
- I *Ruler and Subject* — what secret power flows from the throne?
- I *Teacher and Student* — why are teachers like unto gods?
- I *Friendship* — five relationships are given to you by Heaven, but friends you claim for yourself!
- I *Confucianism* — learn the sage's theory of filial piety!
- I *Clan and Family* — how do your parents, siblings, and children tie you to a broader family?

Elder and Younger Brother

Destiny Cost: 2
Study Difficulty: Grace (20)

The Story of Iron Cloud Lake
(2900 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

Zhuan Xu Survives

Near the end of his time in the world, some say that the Yellow Emperor Huangti knew great tragedy: five deadly assassins killed most of his sons and grandsons, leaving Shao Hao and Zhuan Xu his only heirs. Huangti went from room to room in the palaces of his sons, finding only dead bodies; but in his first son's home, his three-year-old grandson Zhuan Xu played happily, with his aged tutor Shen Shi at his side.

"Ah!" said Huangti. "A miracle!" He embraced his grandson. "Yet this room stinks of blood and unrighteous kung fu." He looked up. "Tell me, Shen Shi, how is it that Zhuan Xu survives?"

Shen Shi rubbed his nose, and gestured towards the wall. "It's nothing of any great account," he said. "Some men came here. They'd killed Zhuan Xu's father — my first pupil! So I took the child and fled. But they followed

us everywhere. So I had to give them a drubbing."

Huangti looked up. "There."

Shen Shi nodded. "That's where I put Wood Brother."

Wood Brother

Zhuan Xu had been sitting in the far corner of the room. He tried not to show his fear — he descended from the glorious Yellow Emperor! He still flinched when the door opened and Wood Brother walked in. Wood Brother was a tall man, dressed in brown, carrying a rope whip tipped with a wooden dragon's head.

"Pardon, elder," Wood Brother told Shen Shi. He bowed. "You've run well, but now you should withdraw. I'll kill the child, but I'd rather spare you."

"Eh?" Shen Shi was wrinkled. His hair was white. His beard nearly reached his stomach. He stood, bowed over, near the door.

Wood Brother spoke louder. "Withdraw. Leave."

"Hush," said Shen Shi. "You'll scare the boy."

Wood Brother shrugged. "It's your own choice — if you won't leave when told, you can't expect me to spare you!"

The whip lashed out. Channels in the dragon's head let the air through: as it flew, it roared! But Shen Shi caught the rope behind the dragon's head one-handed, dragged Wood Brother close, and struck a terrible blow to his neck. Wood Brother's spine cracked. Blood bubbled from his mouth. He did not give up. Dragging his body with his Chi, Wood Brother looped the rope around Shen Shi's arms and tried to pull it taut. He failed.

"Metal controls wood," said Shen Shi. He stepped back three paces, drew two swords, and crouched. Then he charged. His blades went up through Wood Brother's legs, embedding themselves in the bones of his thighs. The force of the blow carried Wood Brother all the way to the high point where the ceiling met the wall. The swords plunged into the wall and held. There Wood Brother hung. When Huangti looked up, later, he saw Wood Brother's blood; then he looked away.

"There," said Huangti, looking towards the stairs.

"That's where he wound up. Also, Earth Brother, Metal Brother, and Fire Brother."

"I know him," said Huangti.

Fire, Earth, and Metal Brothers

Six years ago,

神兵玄奇

神兵玄奇

Fire Brother studied under Huangti — he'd pursued the arts of excellence. He lusted after Huangti's magical weapon, the One-Foot Drum. When Huangti wouldn't give it to him, he defied the Yellow Emperor and fled. Only a few hours before, with a suspended Wood Brother dying above him, Shen Shi heard a terrible drumbeat. Tormented by that sound, the delicate scrolls and tapestries around him burst into flame. Even Shen Shi's beard smoked! Earth Brother and Fire Brother entered the room together: Fire Brother playing his lesser war drums, and Earth Brother hefting a terrible comet-headed mace.

"If Zhuan Xu burns, I'll get a lecture!" declared Shi. "But water controls fire." Shen Shi picked up his ink-bowl and ink-brush, one in each hand. He darted past Earth Brother, parrying a swing of the mace with his brush; he held the ink-bowl over Fire Brother's mouth and nose, suffocating him. The mace and brush trembled, strength against strength. The beat of Fire Brother's drum sped up, growing louder and more frantic. Shi's brush caught fire. Suddenly, it shattered in his hand, Earth Brother's mace swinging past. Shi hooked Fire Brother's foot with his own and dragged him to the floor, the mace passing over them both; a shove with his other leg sent Earth Brother staggering back. As Fire Brother kicked out his last, the mace swung again; Shen Shi slithered out of the way, and the mace-blow knocked the drowned Fire Brother down the stairs. The spines on the comet-shaped head sent forth spurts of blood from Fire Brother's side.

A shape appeared in the high window: a lean man, Metal Brother, holding a net woven of steel wire. "What's taking so long?" he asked.

Wood Brother croaked out, "We've met an unexpected fighter. Heaven must have sent him."

Below, Earth Brother and Shen Shi dueled. Without a weapon to focus his Chi, Shen Shi could not get close — the sweep of the mace was too terrible.

"Should we retreat?" Metal Brother asked.

"You'll have to avenge me," said Wood Brother. "Besides, Zhuan Xu must die. If we don't kill him now, it'll mean a Dynasty for Huangti — humanity won't ever break free of Heaven!" Blood dripped from his mouth as he coughed.

"I'm willing to defy Heaven and pursue forbidden techniques," said Metal Brother.

"But I'm also happy learning Heaven-compliant demonic kung fu. So let's leave. If we

get you to a safe place, you can heal yourself with Chi!"

"Don't defy me," said Wood Brother. "What's the will of Heaven, compared to filial loyalty?"

"If you're a baneful warrior, I'll be a baneful warrior," agreed Metal Brother. "But that doesn't mean I should get both of us killed. A dead man's no good to the martial arts world!"

"You can use them as weapons," said Wood Brother. "That's something!"

"I'd better go help Earth Brother," said Metal Brother, and leapt down. His net spread out in the air to fall towards Shen Shi.

Shen Shi rolled out of the way, snatching the burning remnants of his brush. "Fire controls metal!" he shouted, and hurled them; two searing splinters went through Metal Brother's eyes. The net flailed horribly in the air, and for a moment it tangled Earth Brother's mace; the next sweep of the weapon pulled the net with it, and Metal Brother, not even finishing his fall, was swept sideways and flew down the stairs.

Shen Shi stepped back. "Wood controls earth," he said. He needed say no more. The swords holding Wood Brother worked loose from the ceiling; Wood Brother plunged downwards. Shen Shi raised his hands commandingly.

His swords, still buried in Wood Brother's legs, burned and spun in the air. Wood Brother flipped end over end, dragged by the blades, and both swords slammed point-first into Earth Brother's back. The two brothers tumbled down the stairs and away. Thus Huangti sensed all three of them at the stairs. The Yellow Emperor's gaze wandered the room, and studied a spot of blood on the floor.

"Here," he said.

"That's the last of them," said Shen Shi. "Water Brother."

Water Brother

When Water Brother had walked through the door, Shen Shi knew his kung fu was strongest of the five. Water Brother was a short man in flowing robes, carrying the stave One Terror, made from the long bone of a demon's back.

"You don't have to fight," said Shen Shi. "Your brothers are dead."

"I have to honor their dying wishes," said Water Brother. "That's to kill Zhuan Xu."

"You're not a dishonorable man," said Shen Shi. "I can see that in your eyes. Why are you working against the





impeccable emperor?"

"To serve Heaven is just. To love your older brothers — that's the heart of justice. So we don't need to fight with anger or hate. Let's just see who's best." Water Brother lunged forward, One Terror blurring; the white of the bone made Shen Shi sweat with fear. The stave swept Shi's feet away and struck his side. Shen Shi's hands caught hold of it and kept it from crushing his kidney, but his grip shook. The bone flared and spun in his hands, breaking three fingers.

"Yaa!" shouted Shi, and struck the stave a double-handed blow, pouring all of his Chi into it. This drove One Terror's end into the ground, and the ground roared and split open; the stone floor split and swallowed Water Brother. Shen Shi withdrew his Chi, and the earth closed to crush its captive. Only a trace of blood remained for Huangti's eyes to catch. "Earth controls water," said Shen Shi.

"You surprise me," said Huangti. "For more than thirty years, you've tutored my son and my grandson — yet you don't use kung fu until now? You're a powerful fighter. If you cultivated your Chi every day, your hair would still be gray and you'd have no wrinkles! Your bones wouldn't ache from exertions like today's."

Shen Shi and Shen Ren

"In the days before Heaven sent you to Earth," answered Shen Shi, "my brother and I were great warriors. We used forbidden techniques in defiance of Heaven. I still acted with discretion and forethought, in the cause of justice. Ren served only himself, so his chaotic kung fu offended Heaven. Thus, the Immortal Emperor ordered him fed to the dragon of Iron Cloud Lake. Unable to swallow such an accomplished man, she wrapped him in a chain weighing ten thousand pounds and tied him to the lake bottom; only with supreme effort every hour could he struggle to the surface to breathe."

Shen Shi's tale continued. In the early days of Shen Ren's punishment, Shen Shi came to the edge of the lake. He called out: "Brother. Brother."

After a time, Ren surfaced, and called back. "I hear you. What brings you here?"

"I would free you from this torment."

"Not all the jewels in all the world could buy my freedom; not even the greatest hero of the world could sway the Immortal Emperor's heart." Ren sank. Shen Shi's heart went still. An hour passed, and Ren struggled to the surface again. "I'm glad you came, brother, but I can't fight long."

"You'll keep breathing until I free you," said Shen Shi.

"Forever's a long time to carry ten thousand pounds! I'd rather drown."

"You'd go to a worse Hell if you defied your older brother!"

Ren sank. Shi's heart went still. An hour passed, and Ren rose again. "It's too hard, brother! I've been sent here to be eaten, not to invent the Hell of Bobbing Up and Down in a Lake!"

Shen Shi sighed. "I won't have the Yama Kings punish you on my account," he said. "So if you give up and drown, I'll write to them and claim the sin for myself! But I won't take back my orders."

Ren shrugged. He sank. He rose. He sank. Shen Shi stood and walked away.

"I'll make the dragon sacrifices such as she cannot imagine," he said. "Then she'll set my brother free."

He crafted them with his own hands: a long-handled sickle of surpassing martial excellence, known as Bone Bows Before the Steel; silk robes that had no weight, warm as summer; a crown of beauty that could make the Enchanted Demon weep. When he returned to the lake, his hair was gray but his hands were steady. He stared at the lake for three hours, and saw nothing of Ren; but he closed his eyes to hold back pain and proceeded to the dragon's home.

"These are for you," he said, "should you but let my brother free."

The lake dragon regarded the gifts, then shook her head. "They do not suffice. I would not dare to break the Immortal Emperor's commandment even with such gifts to offer him as these; and if you brought me more, so I could make him sufficient offering, then what would it leave me for myself?"

"Please," said Shen Shi.

The dragon sighed. "You've always been a gracious hero, so I'll tell you what you can do. Soon, the Immortal Emperor will send Huangti down to civilize humanity. He's the very picture of excellence; if he asks for clemency, Heaven will let Ren go. But he won't do it — Ren's a chaotic warrior."

"He'll do it if I consent to an alliance."

"That's a trick for barbarians and courtiers," answered the dragon. "Huangti's the righteous human overlord. Serve him and he'll choose the reward. He might be stingy! But stand in his way and he'll beat you senseless!"

"Then how should I proceed?"

"It's not possible to defeat Huangti," said the dragon. "But people won't want to endure his Dynasty. So they'll try to kill his children and grandchildren. If you

stop them, he'll be grateful — he might grant your wish. But don't use your kung fu or he'll know you've studied disreputable techniques. He has an incomparable eye for Chi cultivation."

As he finished explaining this, Shen Shi shrugged. "That's why I've let myself grow old."

"To grow old and abandon your kung fu, all in your brother's name — that's a loyalty that outweighs your disreputable style! I'll make appeal to Heaven. But if Shen Ren's dead, it won't return his life."

Shen Shi kowtowed seven times before the illustrious Yellow Emperor. "I ask for nothing more. I will travel to the lake at once; if he is dead, I shall mourn him, and if not I shall help him to the shore."

Huangti dismissed him, and Shen Shi began his journey. Shen Shi reached the lake; there, he found Shen Ren sprawled upon the shore.

"Brother," said Shen Shi. "Did you stay true?"

Ren coughed.

"I have come to the lake and watched; but you did not surface."

"You're old, brother."

"And you're the same age." Shi's face went still. "Have I done all of this only to free your ghost?"

"No," said Ren, quietly. "The chains were too heavy. So I started surfacing once every eight days. And when that got too hard, I would surface once a season; and once a year; and once a decade. My lungs cried out for air, but always I told them, 'No; I must wait for Shen Shi.' So I survived; and if I am young, it is because I have taken but a hundred breaths since you saw me last."

"Ah," said Shi. "Then you have fulfilled your duty to me."

"It's the way of things," said Ren. "You're so old! You have no children! If I didn't survive, who would make offerings at your grave?"

Sibling Relationships

(Discussion)

In Shen Zhou, tension characterizes the relationship among brothers. On the one hand, the younger brother has a duty — predicated on filial piety — towards his elders. In a land of close families, the two are natural allies.

On the other hand, a younger brother *can* eclipse the elder. This is particularly true when two brothers have the same father but different

mothers — if the new concubine outshines the wife, the father's allegiance may shift to his younger son. In addition, in large families where both brothers marry but remain in the family home, they must compete for family resources. The two are natural competitors.

Sisters don't have a strongly defined place in society. Women leave the family when they marry. They're not natural allies or natural competitors with their siblings — it's all up to personality. A girl's brothers and sisters might love her, admire her, hate her, or think of her as dead weight. She relates to them as a friend, a subordinate, or a stranger.

Social Strategy: Brothers

(Discussion)

Stress Profile for the Elder Brother

This profile helps explain the behavior of a typical elder brother in Shen Zhou. It's here to help GMs and interested players estimate how much a younger brother's behavior strains the sibling relationship, and how the elder brother might react to an increased or decreased level of strain.

Senior members of secret societies often act like elder brothers. Sometimes, the dominant member of an unmarried couple behaves towards their mate like an elder brother.

- **Tension increased by:** Disrespect. Intentional disrespect represents an outright challenge — the younger brother wants to change the terms of the relationship and achieve dominance. Unintentional disrespect is too much like a challenge, so it threatens the relationship. It often manifests as questioning the elder's wisdom or resisting the elder's orders.
- **Behavior in Tense Relationships:** Pushy arrogance. In a tense relationship, the older brother asserts his authority more strongly. He tries to prove his superiority. More importantly, if he can, he forces



his younger siblings to acknowledge that superiority. He shows them up and pushes them around.

- **Tension reduced by:** Open acceptance of the elder's superiority. What this means depends on the elder brother's character. If the elder considers himself superior in strength, then grudging obedience

satisfies him more thoroughly than praise. If the elder brother considers himself superior in wisdom, grace, and virtue, humble dissent pleases him more than insulting submission.

- **Behavior in Low-Tension Relationships:** Righteous leadership. Sometimes, an elder brother is a brutal manipulator. There's nothing to be done — no amount of service helps. In many cases, though, a well-served elder brother tries to repay that service by offering righteous guidance and leadership to his younger siblings — thinking of them and their virtue as well as his own.

Stress Profile for the Younger Brother

This profile helps explain the behavior of a typical younger brother in Shen Zhou. Keeping one's younger brothers happy sometimes matters!

Junior members of secret societies often act like younger brothers. Sometimes, the socially inferior member of an unmarried couple views their mate as a younger brother would.

- **Tension increased by:** Using the younger brother as a tool. Elder brothers sometimes focus on the perquisites of their position. They use their younger brothers as tools, vassals, and slaves, rather than family. This is hard on the younger brothers, since conflict is neither virtuous nor desirable.
- **Behavior in Tense Relationships:** Resentment, covert defiance, or open challenge. Truly filial younger brothers stay loyal even when their elder brother uses and torments them. They derive personal satisfaction from doing so. This kind of thing is rare in the Martial Arts World, though; most warriors will resent or rebel against such treatment.
- **Tension reduced by:** Righteous guidance. Shen Zhou isn't the modern West. Younger siblings don't particularly *want* to be their elder's equal or superior. They want their elder brother to behave properly, that is, as a righteous leader within the sibling group. This relationship is not balanced or equal, but it is two-sided — like that between a teacher and a student, or an officer and a soldier. That's the elder brother's role, and even monstrous demon warriors who won't ever *obey* their elders still respect them more when they fill that role well.
- **Behavior in Low-Tension Relationships:** Respect and often obedience. Younger brothers can recognize deliberately virtuous uses of position and authority. If an elder brother tries to lead his younger brothers well, they'll respect him for it — and generally, they'll go along.

Generally, as long as both brothers strive for a proper relationship, they can achieve one. A defiant and

disrespectful younger brother often produces a pushy, violent, arrogant elder; a wise younger brother backs down, noticing his own misstep. Similarly, an abusive elder brother usually produces younger brothers who constantly test his authority; an insightful elder brother recognizes that the fault for this is ultimately his own, and seeks a more righteous path.

Secrets of Destiny: *Elder and Younger Brother*

Bone Bows Before the Steel

[Weapon of the Gods]

Bone Bows Before the Steel is a Class III Weapon of the Gods, a long-handled sickle forged as Shen Shi's gift to the dragon of Iron Cloud Lake. Its techniques are unknown.

DESTINY COST

- I **Entangled Destiny:** your Destiny will touch that of Bone Bows Before the Steel.
- I **Defense:** improve your defense against Bone Bows Before the Steel techniques.

Brotherhood Wine

[Treasure]

The Wan Clan descends from a Zhou Dynasty aristocrat with ten thousand concubines — his sons had many brothers! They use special alchemy to make brotherhood wine. Have your brothers mix their blood into the brotherhood wine for a potent brew: each point of Health they bleed out is one point of temporary Chi you can drink from the wine. The blood of a younger brother is worth Gold Chi, enhancing an elder's righteous command; an elder brother's blood is worth Jade Chi, restoring a younger sibling's health. Note that more than one drink of this potent wine in a scene is likely to put you into the Drunk condition (see **Medicine**, pg. 275).

DESTINY COST

- 2 **Fortune:** you acquire a barrel of brotherhood wine.
- 5 **Fortune:** you learn the secret of making brotherhood wine.



神兵玄奇

Destiny Binding: Brothers

[Destiny]

Brothers rich in loyalty are favored by the trigrams Chen, Ken, and K'an. These Destiny options work best if the player finds the character's siblings interesting.

DESTINY COST

- I+ **Destiny:** increase the role of one of your elder brothers in the story. This makes his motivations more complex, gives him more resources to offer you, and makes him more troublesome to you. Spend more Destiny for increased effects; this is one of the few instances when you may spend Destiny to increase your *Mentor* Advantage.
- I+ **Destiny:** increase the role of one of your younger brothers or sisters in the story. This follows the same rules, but GMs should be more careful — if you can order this younger brother or sister around, then their resources are proportionally more valuable to you. Also, it's harder for them to make trouble for you. Just making their motivations more complex won't be enough to balance their increased value — the GM probably has to give them enemies or other troubles.
- 3 **Bonus:** the eldest son belongs to the trigram Chen. The youngest son belongs to the trigram Ken. Middle sons belong to the trigram K'an. Buying this bonus makes the appropriate trigram good luck for you when it comes up in auguries, but only if you spend a lot of effort serving or righteously leading your siblings.

Destiny Breaking: Brothers

[Kung Fu]

When the character's pushy elder brothers or rebellious younger brothers make the *player* unhappy, it can be a problem. The recommended solution is to make them less effectual, so that the character can either show them up or ignore them in the future. These Destiny expenses are appropriate when the player has mixed feelings — the character's brothers are good antagonists, but also annoying. In other words, the player wants to compress plotline resolution rather than ignore it. Truly annoying characters should simply fade away.

DESTINY COST

- I+ **Bonus:** changing tides of Destiny give you a +5 modifier when against one of your brothers in all confrontations. Spend an extra Destiny to make this a +10 modifier instead.

One Terror

[Weapon of the Gods]

One Terror is a stave made from a demon's spine. This Class II Weapon of the Gods assists in Inspire Fear rolls, adding its Strike. Its attacks can shatter stone!

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Entangled Destiny:** your Destiny will touch that of One Terror.
- 2 **Defense:** improve your defense against One Terror techniques.

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- 1 *Parent and Child* — the illustrious parent-child relationship, driven by the supreme virtue Xiao!
- 1 *Friendship* — can you and your brothers share this sacred bond?
- 1 *Confucianism* — the sage spoke of the relationships, and showed how filial piety creates them all!
- 1 *Clan and Family* — does your family belong to a greater society?



Clan and Family

Destiny Cost: 2
Study Difficulty: Grace (20)

The Outcast

(500 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

Qi Weng Stands Guard

It is Qi Clan tradition that when a man marries, taking his wife into the family, he stands guard for three nights beside the bed as she sleeps. Now, it is simply the way of the Qi Clan. In the early Han Dynasty, the husband's guard was in deadly earnest.

Qi Weng stood guard over his bride, as his father had done, and his father's father. The first night passed without event, as did the second. On the third, the air turned chill. He felt the life draining from him. His wife whimpered in her sleep. The air rang with bells. A shape drifted into the room: formal robes, richly appointed, but they were empty of all save shadows and crimson Chi.

"Back," Weng said. He held a fearsome spear.

The shape dropped low to kowtow, and Weng heard the faintest rapping upon the stone. He felt faint and weak, and his spear trembled. "Forgiveness for this intrusion, master," the shadow said. "But I come to ask a favor of Weng, of the Qi Clan."

"Back," Weng whispered. "Go away."

"Forgive me!" the shadow said again, and again Weng heard a tapping on the stone. "The moon and stars have told me tales of your compassion; you must extend it to me and hear my tale."

"You'll wait for me to pass out and then you'll steal my bride's soul," said Weng. "I won't have it."

"No, honored master!"

Weng hesitated. His powerful Chi, bent to scholarly pursuits, sharpened his perception of truth and falsehood; and in the creature's tone he heard no deception. "Very

well," he said. "Tell your tale, and ask your favor; but be quick."

"You must adopt me as your son," groveled the creature. "Take me into your family. I'll continue your line in honor of your ancestors!"

"Adopt a monster?" Weng laughed. "That'd shame my family, even if you worked hard!"



"I wasn't always a monster," answered the shadow. "I was a human like you. My name was Chang. I traveled to the capital and spent three years there and then returned to my Clan. But everything was different."

Qi Weng Dreams

The shadow
looked

神兵玄奇



up. Crimson Chi flared, and Weng's ears roared. He grew dizzy, and fell, the spear clattering to the ground. His eyes closed. He dreamed of a time years ago, and the life of a man named Chang.

In the Clan headquarters, all the people seemed wan. Dreams and uncertainty filled their eyes. Chang frowned. Children slumped against walls, rather than running and shouting. Women fumbled at their mending and cleaning, and many lay prostrate upon their beds. The fields lay fallow, and the Clan elders seemed very, very old. The people greeted Chang's return with weary pleasure, and he made visits with his family and his friends. A growing weight of horror pressed upon his heart; but it grew worst of all when the evening came, and a stranger rose from the table, carrying wine and incense, and entered Chang's ancestral shrine.

"What is this?"

Chang rose to his feet, turning over the dinner table, and shouted. "What has become of my Clan? It is unthinkable that no one here should make an evening sacrifice; but that a stranger should do it in our place — the skies will darken with our ancestor's tears!"

"It's no matter, it's no matter," mumbled the Clan head. "That's just Mei Ming, a fine gentleman."

Chang made a noise of frustration and entered the shrine, saber in hand. Inside, Mei Ming lit the incense and prepared to pour out the wine.

"Who are you?" cried Chang. "What are you doing here?"

Chang and Mei Ming

Mei Ming turned. Chang saw a horrible sight: Mei Ming's skin was not his own, but scraps taken from at least a dozen other people, sewn together with needle and thread. His mouth was empty — inside, Chang could see the back of Ming's head. His eyes were different colors, and did not seem to fit his head. Chang recognized them both: one was the left eye of Chang's nephew Ssu, and the other the right eye of his grandfather's wife Ji!

Chang's saber fell from his hand. The Clan always said: Chang's the bravest sort of man when he can prepare himself, but sudden fear makes him weak as a child! Now terror gripped his heart. "What are you?" he whispered, his voice weak.

Mei Ming tilted his head to the side. "It's been so long since I've been anybody," he rasped. "I can scarcely remember. But now I think I'll be Chang!"

"No," said Chang. He shivered.

"My name

was Yanbo," said Mei Ming. "Of the Kung Clan."

"No," said Chang. He shook his head desperately. "There was no such person."

"I worked hard for the Clan," hissed Mei Ming. "I made the Clan rich. But the Clan elders only took that money and used it to help others. My work fed the sick. My work housed the widows. My work paid for the luxuries of my brothers and the elders of the Clan!"

"I am a scholar," said Chang. "I know the history of the Kung Clan. There was never a Yanbo!"

"So I argued," said Mei Ming. "And I protested. And I incited others to defy the will of the Clan. And for this righteous justice my ancestors cast me out. They came to me in my dreams, and said, 'We gave you your name. We gave you your flesh. We raised you. We fed you. We asked only filial loyalty. But now, as you have none, we reject you. We cast you out. You have no name. You have no flesh. You have no history. You are not Kung. You are not Yanbo. You are nameless. You are Mei Ming!'"

Chang closed his eyes.

"So I came here," said Mei Ming, "and I stole skin from the members of your Clan. And I stole eyes. And I stole your ancestors. That's why you can't even remember your Clan name!"

"No!" cried Chang. "I'm Chang of the Clan!"

"But I didn't like any of the personal names," hissed Mei Ming. "And I thought: this is my Clan now. If I take a name from someone, they won't be productive. Their efforts won't benefit me. So I should stay Mei Ming. Then my Clan is sure to prosper. But you! You spend your time in the capital. You don't bring anything to the Clan. And you're disrupting my worship of my ancestors. So I think I'll be Chang. You can be Mei Ming."

"You can't do it!" said Chang. "I've always honored my ancestors. If you took my name, it would unbalance earth and heaven!"

Mei Ming lunged at him, hands outstretched to hook Chang's name. Dizziness washed across Chang. He strained with all his power to resist Mei Ming's monstrous will; and in the end, the creature fell back, rebuffed. It snarled and grew teeth in its empty mouth: long needles, hanging on sewing threads. "It'll take a bit longer for your ancestors to forget you," he said. "You haven't abandoned them like your kin. That's all right. I can wait."

Chang shouted in anguish and grabbed his saber from the ground. He lunged forward, plunging it through Mei Ming's chest and out the other side; but the wound only hissed foul air. Mei Ming shook his head. "It's not possible," he said. "You can't kill someone without name or flesh. You should go. Then I'll finish sacrifices. In a few weeks, I'll come and find you. Then I can take your name."

Chang flailed at Mei Ming viciously, until only a



cloud of scraps of cloth and flesh hung in the air; but the creature only took up its sewing needles and began to assemble itself once more. "If you make me use my kung fu," it said, "you'll regret it." It passed a hand before Chang's eyes, and he felt death energy filling him. Chang cried out and sank to his knees. Though a strong man, he found himself sobbing.

Mei Ming turned back to the altar and poured out the wine. He knelt.

"Wait," said Chang. The flow of tears stopped; his eyes became distant and chill. "If you've stolen my Clan, I don't care any more. You can have my name."

"Ah," said Mei Ming, pleased. He rose and placed his hand upon Chang's head. In that moment, Chang became empty — a shadow, without name or flesh. Mei Ming became Chang.

But the shadow that had been Chang commanded the Mental Summons. In the moment of the transfer of the name, the sword flew of its own will, and buried itself in the monster's spiritual core. The creature that had been Mei Ming and now called itself Chang screamed, long and high; and then its robes, skin, and eyes dissolved into dust and blew away.

The Outcast

As this vision faded, Qi Weng woke. The air of death in the room made his sight waver and his skin feel alternately hot and cold. He whispered, "So."

"My Clan did not recover," said the shadow. "And its name is forgotten. A soul cannot live without ancestors or a name, not even as a ghost. I have struggled, for five decades I have struggled, to survive without committing Mei Ming's crime; but my strength of will fades. Soon I will steal another Clan's ancestors; or, if virtue remains strong in me, I will dissipate entirely, never to meet the Yama Kings. Please. Adopt me as your son. Give me a name and a family again."

"Why me?" asked Qi Weng.

"I begged Heaven for mercy," said the shadow, "and the

wind and rain gave me this message: the Qi Clan branched from your own. When its line opens, and a man of the Qi takes a woman into his family, then you have three days. Speak to the husband; speak to the wife; they may grant you sanctuary. Thus, I have come; for decades, I have come; but all men have turned me away."

"Why?" asked Qi Weng.

"A man marries in hopes of sons," whispered the shadow. "Who would marry a barren woman? So they have all said, 'I cannot. If I adopted you, great would be my merit; but I must think of my future sons. Why should you steal their inheritance?'"

"Ah," said Qi Weng.

"Ah," said the shadow. "Your feelings are the same."

"It's the way of things," said Qi Weng.

The shadow drifted away.

Clan Relationships

(Discussion)

Everyone in Shen Zhou has a Clan name. It links them to an important historical or mythical ancestor. Someone with the Clan name Dong, for example, descends from the dragon trainer Dong Fu or the sons of Zhou Xin, who served as "Dong Shi" officials (historians) in the Jin kingdom.

People with the same ancestor share a bond. This is true whether their ancestor is a mythical figure tenuously connected to them or a recent ancestor whose line they can genealogically trace. It's not righteous to marry someone born with the same Clan name — it's practically incest!

Clans often live together, bringing much of the family under one roof or into one village. The great Clans and a few lesser Clans also have client families. Members of the client families might live with the main Clan for generations at a time. Less respected than regular Clan members, they still have some access to Clan resources and kung fu.

Social Strategy: Clan Members

(Discussion)

Stress Profile for a Clan Member

This profile helps explain the behavior of typical Clan members in Shen Zhou. It's here to help GMs and interested players estimate how much interactions strain the Clan relationship, and how Clan members react to an increased or a decreased level of strain.





- **Tension increased by:** Arrogance. Some Clan members seek superiority over the rest. In a broad context, this isn't righteous — in the absence of actual authority, such as Clan elders and Clan heads have, or parents have over their children, the purpose of a Clan is mutual support. Among equals, superiority should come from others' acclaim, not from one's own assertion. In the Bei Clan, Tian Wen is humble but admired as a superior individual. The Dirty Ting brothers are powerful fighters, and could have everyone's acclaim — but they're arrogant. They want people to call them superior, so nobody really likes them!
- **Behavior in Tense Relationships:** Resentment and false cooperation. No one particularly wants to help people they don't like. Since the bond of Clan is pretty important, Clan members often get grudging help no matter what — but there's a big difference between giving some scraps to a hungry girl and spending five hours preparing a feast for her.
- **Tension reduced by:** Pitching in. Giving one's sweat, blood, and cash to the Clan is the path of virtue. If the Dirty Ting brothers go to beat up some villagers, that's shameful. If a powerful fighter intercepts them and tries to kill them, that's not so bad. But if Tian Wen goes and risks himself to save them, that's virtuous! It shows how much he can give to Bei Clan — he'll even risk his life for the Dirty Tings!
- **Behavior in Low-Tension Relationships:** Support. A virtuous member of the Clan gets more reliable support. Even Tian Wen doesn't have many friends. He doesn't get special treatment, either — that's for people with high rank! But everyone knows that he's good for the Clan, so they'll help him out if he needs it.

Secrets of Destiny: Clan and Family

Ancestral Prestige

[Destiny]

A family's reputation depends on its history. Clans can become weak or strong in the space of a night, but only generations of prestige build greatness.

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Fortune:** you discover something prestigious about your ancestry. This in turn makes your Clan more reputable.

(-2) You must adventure to verify this information. This adventure fits reasonably well into any ongoing stories.

Clan Reputation

[Destiny]

If a warrior has their Clan's support, no task is impossible! Powerful warriors can often call upon their Clan to provide minions.

- * **Bonus:** you can spend your Virtues to request minions from your Clan. Each Virtue point spent converts to two points of followers for one story only. Buy them as a mob, but if you've worked hard to make yourself popular in the Clan, you can treat them as gang members — so five points of the Xia Virtue would buy you a 100-disciple gang.

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- I *Parent and Child* — reverence for the parent is the seed of a great Clan's growth!
- I *Elder and Younger Brother* — righteous guidance from the elder brother binds the Clan together!
- I *Husband and Wife* — with the devotion of husband and wife, a Clan endures its endless generations!
- I *Friendship* — whom in the Clan will you claim as friend?
- I *Ruler and Subject* — whence comes the Clan head's mandate?

A Woman's Life

Destiny Cost: 2
Study Difficulty: Grace (20)

On Playing a Female Character

Being female in Shen Zhou is, unquestionably, a disadvantage. *A Woman's Life* touches on some of the reasons why.

Often, however, playing the target of sexism makes the game less fun. This is a big problem. People play *Weapons of the Gods* to have fun. They don't play to vicariously experience historically-correct unhappiness. Moreover, oppressive sexism can often break the genre — horrible things in wuxia exist to motivate characters, not to break their spirit.

This section contains tools for people playing female characters. Use these tools to dodge as much or as little of the inherent disadvantage as you like. Game Masters and other players should take note: this is okay. This is acceptable. It's how the game is played. It's okay to play a female fighter whose parents loved her and whose peers don't notice her gender. It's okay to play a whole group of them. Until you start buying Destiny options, in fact, it's the *default*. It's okay to have a happy marriage with a husband who supports you. It costs Destiny, because that's a useful thing, but it's also the normal kind of marriage for a female player character. You can even take martial advantage of patronizing or romantic male attitudes without losing the respect of your peers. Living that kind of life can backfire, but it doesn't have to.

Go ahead. Play the female fighter or even non-fighter for whom all the prejudice amounts to nothing. It's a larger-than-life game. Your character gets to be cool.

Ling Liu's Flowering (950 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

Sister Liu

LING LIU LIVED in the Kingdom of Chu. She had two older brothers, but both her parents died young. Thus, her destiny fell on her brothers' shoulders: Gong, a merchant, and Lang, whose passion lay with the martial arts.

Chung Du was a swordsmith, also living in Chu. The night that Liu's parents died, he dreamt that a dead man came to his door, on the way from this world to Hell. The man held a bowl of water. "I have two sons and a daughter," the man said, "but only the daughter cries for my memory. Please take her tears."

The next sword that he made was a willow leaf saber — the Sun's Tears Sword, he called it. When he quenched it, he realized that it was a magical weapon, the finest sword that he would ever make, and that he could not sell it, for its destiny lay with another. Three years passed.

Ling Gong said, "A woman is an outsider to the family." He gestured towards the sun. "Look at the sun: she shines on our home now. In a few short hours, she will cross over the hills to shine upon our neighbors. We'll only have darkness! Liu graces us with her presence, but in a few short years she will leave the home to marry another — I don't know why we bother feeding her!"

His brother Lang looked at the sun, shading his eyes with one hand. "It's sad to be born a woman," he agreed, "but a man without empathy is a greater sorrow."

"Bah." Ling Gong turned and walked away.

Liu ate the scraps from Gong's table and kept his manor clean. She grew up a lean and solemn girl, often suffering casual violence at Gong's hands.

Brother Lang

One afternoon, as she scrubbed Gong's floor, Lang approached her, squatting down so that she would not need to rise. "You'll never be any good to anyone with this life," he said. "So I'll make you a deal. I'll teach you how to fight, but you can't fight our brother — I'd get in trouble!"

Liu looked up. "Why would I want to fight Brother Gong? A girl must respect her brothers."

Lang smiled. "Someone with no fighting spirit has an easy time being humble," he said. "They can abase themselves to satisfy even an emperor! But when you cultivate your Chi, it's hard to show respect. That's why so many swordsmen are unconventional."

"If you want me to learn," Liu said softly, "then I'll study hard."

Liu began her training, learning her brother's sword art. To give herself time for practice, she used Chi techniques to speed the cleaning and cooking she performed — her blade hurricane would scour the floor clean, and with internal kung fu she could work directly with boiling hot food. Now, when Gong struck her, she faded back before the blow, and felt no pain.

神兵玄奇

"She's so hard to discipline," said Gong, frustrated, and put her on a starvation diet. Liu grew leaner still, but when hunger pained her most, she drew her willow leaf saber and focused her mind upon the blade, passing through hunger and into peace. Even so, her sword arm trembled.

"You're doing well," said Lang. "I hope you've kept your promise."

"Sometimes," Liu said softly, "I think, 'It would be pleasant to kill him.' But a girl must respect her brothers."

Lang touched her arm. "You are growing into a woman," he said. "Soon, you will marry; and, whether your husband is a man of quality or a beast, at least you'll leave Gong's family."

"A woman is an outsider to the family," she agreed. "Yet I think I shall always know Gong and Lang as brothers."

"True," said Lang. "The sun may pass beyond the hills, but it does not forget the Kingdom of Chu."

Chung Du

Ling Gong's cruelty came from selfish stupidity and bestial viciousness, rather than malice. When Liu was old enough to marry, he did not think of her happiness — either to enhance it or to crush it. He sought only a beneficial match. Thus, Liu found herself married to an indifferent man — Chung Du, a man whose heart resisted both love and wickedness.

"Serve me well," he told her, "and bring me strong children, and you can have what you need for happiness."

To this, Liu nodded. She labored in his house, and bore him two sons; and as the years went by, her sword arm ceased its trembling, and with one blow she could shatter hills.

One day, she approached Chung Du as he labored at the forge. "My husband," she said, "you made me a promise when we married, but I cannot hold you to it."

Chung Du looked up. "Your words are empty air," he said. "My promises are steel."

"I'm sorry," she said, and lowered her head.

"What is it that you need?" he asked.

"My brother Lang belongs to the Dawn Tempest Sect," she said. "With heroic action, he angered an unrighteous magistrate. Now both Lang and Gong are in chains. Soon, they will be executed. I wish to intercede."

"Ah," said Chung Du. "But Lang brought this upon himself, and Gong's heart is made of iron."

"Nevertheless," said Liu, "I cannot abandon them, any more than I could leave my sons or my husband to such a fate. I must ask your permission to set them free."

"On such a mission, you may die. Even if you survive, you may implicate me."

"Yes."

Chung Du said, "Let me see your sword."

Liu silently drew her sword and extended it towards him. Chung Du tapped it lightly with one finger, listening to the sound. Then he struck its fracture point with his palm; the blade dissolved to dust. Liu interpreted this as refusal. "I'm sorry," she said, abasing herself.

"It's too weak," said Chung Du, ignoring her. "You'll need a better one." He assumed a stance, and began to burn with the golden fire of his Chi. "Swords!" he shouted. "Come here!"

A rattling and thundering of steel came from his storeroom; then, in an instant, more than a dozen swords flew into the room to hang trembling in the air. He looked them over, skeptically, tapping one, then another. Finally, he reached the last sword in the set, a jade-handled willow saber that turned its edge towards him. "This one," he said. "The Sun's Tears Sword. Take it. No matter what kind of enemies you face, it won't break in your hands."

Liu reached for it, and it fell into her hand. "Thank you," she said.

"My joy is in my sons, and in my swords," Chung Du shrugged. "A promise is a promise."

The Long-Body Magistrate

In the magistrate's prison, Ling Gong begged for his life. "I'm not a dissident!" he said. "You want to kill my brother, not me!" Both Gong and Lang were tied thoroughly, the ropes holding their wrists leading up to the ceiling.

The official Lu Wang had a crocodilian smile and stood nearly seven feet tall. Thus, most of his enemies called him 'the Long Body Magistrate'. He smiled at Gong. "You're rich," he said, "and your brother's a criminal. So you'd best be a criminal as well — then I'll take your wealth!"



"Take it!" said Gong, full of fear. "Just let me live!"

"You'll sign evidence against your brother?"

"Yes!"

"And sign over your shop and riches?"

"Yes!"

"You've got good vital spirit," said Wang. "Like a dog! You want to live whatever it takes."

With a thrust of his hand, he put out Gong's eyes. "Now you're a blind dog! Do you still want to live?" He laughed, high and thin, as Gong screamed.

Lang's spirit was still, and his demeanor turned inwards, but still he spoke. "It's no wonder they call you a corrupt official," he said. "You laugh at the wrong jokes."

"It's wiser to respect my rank," answered the Long Body Magistrate.

"Ah," agreed Lang softly. "When you cultivate your Chi, it becomes harder to show respect. You must forgive my burning desire to destroy you utterly; it is simply in a swordsman's nature."

Wang giggled again. "That's good," he said. "It's our nature to kill each other, but you're the one who's going to die. That's why the world's in balance."

The door to the magistrate's office opened. "Is it natural for a magistrate to turn from righteousness?" asked Liu's voice. "Surely, a man of great station must behave properly to earn respect."

"A wicked magistrate might be harmful," said Wang, turning to face her. "But disrespect is worse. To defy those who are your natural superiors — this is chaos! Soon, all things come undone. It is not the place of the ordinary people to judge those set above them; to do so unravels society."

"Ah," said Liu. "Then I should not be here."

"Certainly not," said Wang, "if you intend violence against me."

"The sun," said Lang, "does not forget the Kingdom of Chu."

Liu looked down. "I would not wish to trouble those of greater station," she said. "This is a lesson my brothers taught me well."

"Good," said Wang, turning back to the prisoners. Brother Lang winced.

"How strange," said Liu.

How Strange

Liu's blade came from its sheath like a butterfly from its chrysalis.

Wang spun on her, a mad fire in his eyes, shouting, "Thousand Poison Sand!" His hand cast a spray of fine gravel at her, each piece melting to viscous acid in the air. Her eyes gleaming, Liu met it in midair with a wind of sword energy; droplets of acid scattered across the room.

"Hurricane Blow!" Wang gestured powerfully, his Chi casting forth a wind of its own; even though her sword met and cut the wind, Liu still flew backwards into the wall.

"Terrible Hell Prowess!" cried Wang, and drew his own blade from the wall: seven feet long, to match his height, and the width of a man's body. It danced in his hands like the lightest knife, crackling with demonic fire, and when it touched the Sun's Tears Sword, it pressed the blade effortlessly back until it cut deep into Liu's chest. Tears rolled down Liu's face from the pain, and she said something too soft to hear. Her left hand came up to grasp the tip of the Sun's Tears Sword; slowly, her hand turning slick with blood, she pushed the locked blades back from her flesh.

"What's that you said?" asked Wang, frowning.

Liu breathed, with some difficulty. "There is a blow I practiced," she said. "To show Gong; but he has not seen it, for I made a promise to brother Lang."

Wang grinned. "I'd like to see it."

Liu moved. Wang's sword shattered, and Liu's blade buried itself in him from crotch to neck. "This," she said softly, "is the fracture point of a man."

The blade twisted, and Wang's body turned to dust.

"I didn't see it," said blinded brother Gong, and his voice was bitter.

The Three Maidens' Answers

(1900 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

A Concubine's Lot

THREE SISTERS SERVED as concubines: Kung Min, Kung Jai, and Kung Hu. Min said:

This is the lot of a concubine: when we are young and beautiful, the emperor blesses us with his attentions. As we age, he loses interest; he turns his interest towards younger women, and may disinherit our sons in favor of theirs. No one trusts a concubine — others say we will seek our lord's death before

神兵玄奇



our faces turn wrinkled, in our children's name. Many speak of the chaos strewn by women, but doesn't the problem begin with the fickleness of men?

Hu smiled wryly, and answered:

The natural order is what's natural for men. If women ruled empires, it'd be different — our ways would be seemly, and theirs chaotic! It's how things are that make us troublemakers. But we can't change the way things are, since it's mandated by Heaven — if we tried, we'd prove their point!

Jai frowned, adding:

We may follow Heaven's laws, but we shouldn't let it ruin our fate. Let's find an answer that will keep us happy in our old age!

Min looked thoughtful. "I will keep myself young and beautiful forever," she said. "Then I will always have the emperor's eye, even when he's wrinkled as a clam."

"I'll prove myself worthy of the emperor's trust," said Jai. "I'll master kung fu and destroy the enemies of his realm!"

Hu shrugged. "There's no point in despairing," she agreed, "so I'll encourage the emperor on the path of righteousness. My son Tai Wu is the eldest — if the emperor's wise and virtuous, I'm sure he'll inherit the throne, and we'll be respected ladies when we're old."

Having reached a determination, the three women set to their tasks. Min studied esoteric Daoist tricks for prolonging her beauty; the poets called her "the eternal peony of the emperor." Jai mastered powerful kung fu and set out into the realm to subdue bandits, outlaws, and monsters; although this nonplussed Emperor Yong Ji, he was inclined to acknowledge his gratitude. Hu made herself the most elegant of advisors, presenting the Emperor with invaluable advice that broadened and empowered his influence. Yet, as was inevitable, the emperor's eyes began to wander. "It's strange," he said. "Min's still the prettiest of girls, but Hu's turned into a forbidding hag — her bearing's so stern, and her skin's lost the flush of youth! Such a woman can't mean me well with her advice — she must be scheming to protect her son."

Yong Ji turned to his minister of the left. "It would be best," he said, "if Hu and Tai Wu were to vanish, and trouble me no more."

"Will your majesty be wearing white?" inquired his minister, delicately.

Yong Ji considered. "I dislike mourning colors."

Sky-Breaking Mountain

Since the emperor did not wish to mourn them, Hu and her son Tai Wu were not slain. They were taken from their rooms in the dark of night and buried in the most forbidding prison, in lightless cages beneath the stone of Sky-Breaking Mountain. When Jai and Min made startled inquiries, the emperor assured them that Hu and Tai Wu had gone elsewhere, for their health; and so only two sisters remained to pursue their plans.

Three years passed, and a legend began to spread around the kingdom: it told of the White Scorpion Bandit, paler than a ghost, with metal braided into his hair. He used a long blade and a short blade to kill the emperor's officials and steal the tax money. The faces of those slain showed that they died in torment. The hills shook with his footsteps; who could kill such a demonic warrior? Kung Jai went to slay him, but he seemed to know her every plan; no matter how many auguries she cast, no days were auspicious for his capture, and when she recklessly sought him on a forbidden day, she found nothing but an endless trail of bodies.

"Ah," said Yong Ji, mournfully. "The wealth of my empire fades. No righteous choices remain to me; I must cut the pay of my employees or wage war upon my neighbors."

In such a mood Yong Ji visited Min, and left her again, and she lay sated and thoughtful in their bedchamber. A shadow moved upon the wall, and a cold voice spoke.

"In a warm, wet spring, everyone knows the importance of family. Sisters twine their hands and promise to support one another forever. In a harsh, cold winter, circumstances differ — who has time for such concerns?"

Min smiled slightly, rolling onto her side. "Hello, Hu."

Hu stepped into the light. Her hair was thick and white under her wide hat, with bits of metal braided into it; her face was scarred; her skin was pale. She wore two swords on her back. "I don't use that name much any more."

"Still," said Min, "It's yours. What do you want?"

"The emperor is unrighteous," said Hu. "Therefore, my son shall supplant him. I have hired warriors and made allies with surrounding kingdoms. I am preparing my forces to strike. It would simplify matters if the army was sent elsewhere and the gates of the palace thrown open for my approach."

"And you wish me to arrange this?"

"I do."

"And the benefit to myself?"

Hu shrugged. "It is better to live in spring than in winter."

"Ah," Min reflected. "Very well," she said. "The emperor is growing tiresome and pettish in his age, and perhaps over-fond of Jai and her prowess; but my influence has not entirely waned. I can arrange these things."

Hu frowned. "There is a shadow on your heart," she said.

"I am sad," Min answered, "that I did not take action before now to aid my sister Hu. But now you must leave; there are footsteps in the hall."

Hu inclined her head, and faded away.

Three Solutions, Compared

Tai Wu's army marched on the palace of Yong Ji. The emperor's forces, sent off to deal with unimportant matters, marched furiously to reach Yong Ji in time; the matter seemed hopeless. When the army reached the palace, the gates were open and the guards were nowhere in sight, but Kung Jai stood before them.



"Ah," said Hu, and moved forward to stand before the troops.

"It is the strangest thing," said Jai. "My horoscope indicated that today would be an auspicious day to face the White Scorpion Bandit; but reports had not indicated that he would be my sister."

Hu smiled. "Jai, you are always welcome at my side."

"I can't join you," she said. "We made an agreement — our words were as good as a promise! I have to destroy the enemies of the emperor's realm."

"But the emperor is unrighteous; he has lost Heaven's mandate."

"Such words are easy to say," agreed Jai. "But I see no chaos in the realm, only a spiteful woman. You have failed to teach the emperor your morality; why should I fail to serve him with my sword?"

"You'd dislike him too, if he buried you beneath Sky-Breaking Mountain."

"I'd kill the commander sent to capture me," said Jai, "and take his head to the emperor, saying, 'This unworthy soldier misunderstood your orders. Please be more eloquent in the future, your majesty — such deaths are tragic!'"

"So you'd place yourself above your lord? That's worse than trying to defeat him!"

Jai shrugged. "I am the right hand of his realm; Min, the left. Bitterness has turned you into the realm's unmentionables!"

Hu sighed and drew her swords. "You may call me

bitter and spiteful, but I seek only justice. In a cage under Sky-Breaking Mountain, I extinguished the passion in my heart and the delusion in my mind, achieving ultimate mastery; that's why I won't lose."

Jai's weapon was the Ten-Head Falling Star Hammer. Ten long lengths of chain ended in deadly "falling star" mauls. The other end of each chain ran through holes in a flat wooden board before connecting together into a single knot. Jai cradled the board in one arm and used techniques like a musician's with the other — a slap of her palm against the chain sent a maul lashing out towards

Hu, while a finger's tug at the chain on her side of the board made that chain snake back. Her first attack pattern was the Four-Blow Falling Star Hammer Symphony: two mauls always in the air, lashing out towards Hu, and two retreating back towards Jai. Hu met each blow with her swords. The impact of the heavy mauls bent the blades like bowing maidens, but Hu spun the swords after every other blow — the next impact would straighten them again! Hu advanced calmly forward.

Jai caught handfuls of chain in her hands and twisted; each hand sent three maul-heads spinning towards Hu at once, and when she parried them they whirled around to strike her from the other side. The ringing of metal on metal became an endless song, like a river's, and Hu could not take even a single step forward without risking bludgeoning; but Hu's heart remained still, while Jai's forehead shone with sweat.

"You can't win this way, sister," said Hu. "Your Chi is finite; the emptiness in my heart is limitless."

She turned her swords and cut through two of the comet star maul heads, rolling backwards to avoid the hungry mauls that sought her stomach. Shock progressed backwards down the chains. Even as Hu came lightly to her feet, Jai staggered.

"I'll have to employ an ultimate technique," Jai agreed, and put her hands upon the wooden board; now the eight heads and two half-heads of her weapon flailed at Hu like the arms of an octopus. This was a moving-point technique, where the only safe place in the maze of attacks drifted randomly like a drunken soldier. Yet Hu understood the pattern of attacks, dancing like Heaven's palace maidens through the path of safety. Jai spun the board; the point of safety vanished; for ten meters around Hu, a haze of falling stars struck every point at once. Hu's sword moved faster than the eye could follow, forming a shining lattice around her; in four places, the mauls pierced this defense, striking her in her back, knee, shoulder, and side. The blade in her right hand fell uselessly



to the ground; the short blade in her left, in one swift maneuver, struck through the ten chains and pinned the maul-heads to the ground.

"Kya!" shouted Hu, abandoning the blade, and blurred forward; she stopped, left knee bent, left fist buried in Jai's stomach, her right arm hanging uselessly at her side and her right leg canted awkwardly behind her. Jai smiled down at her, not even wincing at the blow.

"In unarmed kung fu," Jai said, "I am your superior."

Hu spun her head. Her hair cut across Jai's throat, the metal woven into it sharp as razors. Jai collapsed; slowly, Hu straightened. The dents and cracks in her arm and leg began to mend again as she applied Chi healing.

"Is there anyone left who'll fight me?" she said.

A lean, pale man walked up to stand at her side: Prince Tai Wu. Yong Ji entered the courtyard, with Min trailing behind him. Hu's attention fixed on the emperor like a cat's upon its rival.

"Surely," said Hu, "the strayed emperor now realizes his folly, and comes to lay his throne at my feet. Who would not praise such a wise and righteous act? Such meritorious deeds are worthy of a legendary emperor."

"Once, you sought to advise me in all wisdom," murmured Yong Ji. "Once, you shared my bed. Now, I've hurt your feelings; you'd abandon my service. That's not the act of a noble servant — you're just a woman seeking your own advancement, with or without me! If you cared only for righteousness, what happened to you wouldn't change your loyalties. That's why people say a woman's touch breeds chaos."

"To imprison a woman and disinherit her son because she's lost her beauty — you don't think that's unrighteous?"

"It's the order of things," sister Min said. Her eyes were fixed on Tai Wu. "A woman like you brings nothing but trouble — to this emperor or any other. It's inevitable that you'd bring strife."

Tai Wu's eyes widened and his face grew hot.

Stepping forward, Min shoved Yong Ji's back. He stumbled into Hu; startled, she caught him.

Tai Wu moved like a puppet on strings, his blade leaping to his hand and striking through his mother's back and spine to pierce Yong Ji. Hu stiffened, pinned to her enemy by her own son's blade.

"What's this?" she asked.

Tai Wu twisted the blade, fiercely, and then let them both fall.

"It's the way of things," he

said, looking up to answer the promise in Kung Min's eyes. "Better to have a beautiful wife than a troublesome mother."

"Ah," said Hu, and turned her head to look at Min. "I suppose your way was the best of them."

Tai Wu's foot crunched upon Hu's back as he walked towards his aunt.

Min looked down. "I wouldn't say that," she said, with some delicacy. "But your way — ah! Hu! Surely, you cannot hope to spur men to righteousness."

All Are Equal

(30 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

Chung

THE MOON WAS BRIGHT. The trees were green and damp. They cast great shadows on the river. Chung ran on its surface, his step too light to interrupt the water's flow. The sacred book was under his arm. He had been running for three days, since the moment of its theft, knowing that his pursuer followed him still; and there, on the river, his time ran out. A figure bounded past him along the riverbank, then flew out onto the river, meeting his charge with the point of her sword. Chung froze, his feet drifting down through the water's surface.

"Wu Hai," he said. "I had not expected to see you here."

"You'll pass the book to me," she said.

"Is that any way to greet your brother-in-law?"

"You're not dead."

Chung kicked off the bottom and skipped backwards along the water, drawing a hook blade with his free hand. Wu Hai lunged towards him. The hook looped under her sword and guided it off to the side; he swung the locked blades over his head, extending her stance forward and down. A thin knife appeared in her other hand and lunged at him; he yanked her sword upwards to block it. Her foot hooked his knee from behind and brought him down; her knife speared his arm; and the hook blade fell from his hand. Chung blinked.

"I suppose you may have the sacred book," he agreed, tossing it to her. She caught it one-handed and slipped it into her pack.

"I'd best."

Hai

"I hadn't realized you'd become such a fierce woman."

"If you live in the World of Martial Arts, you'd best be skilled."

"I'd be fiercer," he said, "if it weren't for the fatigue."

"Life is a weary affair," she agreed. "Why waste it on battle? Yet when a man steals the sacred book of my society, a certain amount of valor is expected."

Chung sighed, jumped to the riverbank, and sat down. "Such secrets as the book contains are compelling; my actions are hardly unjust."

Hai shrugged and followed, sitting some distance away. "It no longer matters."

"So businesslike!"

"If I were a less serious woman," she said, "I would have to kill you for revenge; so it's just as well. How is my sister?"

"Don't you know?"

"I've looked down from the mountain," she said, "on the Clan's home. I saw you chopping down a peach tree. I saw the festive colors on your house. So I know you had a child last spring. But I haven't come back."

"She's well," said Chung.

"Is she still beautiful?"

Chung shrugged.

"A man's affections are like a shadow crossing over the moon," said Hai. "I'll look down from the mountain in a few years and see you with some other girl."

"If that's how it happens," said Chung equably. "She mends my clothes well enough; maybe I'll stay true instead."

"If that's how it happens," agreed Hai.

"And what news shall I give her of you?"

"In the Wulin," said Hai, "all are equal. Fu Hsüan said, 'How sad it is to be a woman!' — but I am a sister of my society, and only foolish men disdain my sword."

"That seems pragmatic," agreed Chung. "A girl is like an empty cup, but a warrior contains all accomplishments."

"It's such a waste," she said. "My sister had as much potential as I did."

"Ah," said Chung. "But I have a son; so in the end, it worked out for the best."

"She does not even practice her Seven Fire Blade."

"Our home is flammable," said Chung.

"Ah." Wu Hai rose to her feet. "I am returning the book to my brothers," she said. "If you attempt to steal it again, I will hear your footstep on the mountain pass and

kill you from the peak."

"Such a fierce demeanor! This is why I do not visit you."

Wu Hai sighed. "Really, you are tiresome." She started to walk away, then turned back. "Some time ago, before I left home, my father . . . spoke to Li . . ."

"Shiny-Tooth Li?"

Wu Hai nodded.

"He's not disappointed," Chung answered. "I hear he's engaged to Su-Chen now."

"Ah," said Wu Hai.

"They'll be married outside," said Chung. "You'll see it from the mountain."

"Yes," agreed Wu Hai, and then she was gone.



Secrets of Destiny:

A Woman's Life

Growing up Female

[Destiny]

Traditionally, girls in Shen Zhou leave their parents' family when they marry. They move in with their husband. This is a significant source of sexism and makes most girls' lot miserable — since girls ultimately leave their family, their families have no material reason to invest in them, educate them, or care for them.

DESTINY COST

* **Bonus:** you receive this lore sheet for free if you grew up an "outsider to your family." This has no mechanical effects — it just means that, where most heroes sulk about not being the most important person in the world, you sulk about your childhood and the lot of women in Shen Zhou. If you don't take this bonus, then you grew up with typical male privileges and parental affection. (In the comic *Weapons of the Gods*, Hong Dong grew up an embittered outsider; Snow Bei was valued.)

A Married Woman's Family

[Destiny]

In the upper tiers of society, a second problem exists. Men have social license to take concubines or additional wives. When a man grows disenchanted with his wife's

神兵玄奇



beauty, her fertility, or her other qualities, he may turn to a concubine. If they relate well to one another, the concubine's status may eclipse that of his first wife! The resentment this breeds has given women the reputation of troublemakers and sources of chaos. However, it's not always this way — sometimes, a man's wives and concubines become very close.

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Discovery:** your family is arranging your marriage. It will come with useful allies and connections as well as complications.

(-3) It won't come with useful allies and connections.

- 2 **Fortune:** one of your husband's other wives or concubines is someone worth allying with, and you'll have the opportunity to do so.

- 2 **Fortune:** you can exploit or create strife between an enemy and that enemy's spouse or fellow wife.

- 3 **Discovery:** you're pregnant with a son or a heroic daughter. Normally, the discomfort and inconvenience of pregnancy happens off-screen, and the Game Master will keep the game interesting for your player in the final months when you can't adventure. (Possibly by skipping through those months with a few minutes of narration.)

(-1) The discomfort of pregnancy appears occasionally on-screen.

(-1) The game is short-term. New children can motivate characters but will never be old enough to join the Martial Arts World.

- 1 **Technique:** you have an opportunity to learn the Level One **Xia Pregnancy** formless technique that concentrates powerful Jade chi in the placenta, allowing a female warrior with child to remain in top form. For more information, see *Formless Techniques*, pg. 353.

Special Note: the Game Master can give these destinies out for free. However, the player should always have a veto over marriage or pregnancy. (This doesn't necessarily apply to marriage *arrangements*, but the Game Master should plan to enforce a player veto of the marriage itself if necessary.)

Kung Hu

[Destiny]

"The natural order is what's natural for men. If women ruled empires, it'd be different — our ways would be seemly, and theirs chaotic! It's how

things are that make us troublemakers. But we can't change the way things are, since it's mandated by Heaven — if we tried, we'd prove their point!"

Kung Hu resolved the concubine's dilemma by making herself a valuable and reliable advisor to the King. When this approach proved faulty, she took up the sword and became the White Scorpion Bandit.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from Kung Hu, by blood or martial tradition.

* **Bonus:** you can encourage others to righteousness. When someone earns *Yi Virtue* while following your advice, they also receive a point of Transcendent Destiny.

* **Bonus:** a righteous advisor is not strident. When tragedy or infamy strikes an ally, friend, family member, or lover because they ignored your advice, and you accept their decision calmly, you receive a point of the *Yi Virtue*. It's okay to arrange the disaster yourself, as long as you're temperate about it.

Note: Men can descend from Kung Hu, although this is rare.

Kung Jai

[Destiny]

"I'll prove myself worthy of the emperor's trust," said Jai. "I'll master kung fu and destroy the enemies of his realm!"

Kung Jai resolved the concubine's dilemma by joining the Wulin. Her fighting skill made her valuable even when her beauty no longer enchanted the emperor.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from Kung Jai, by blood or martial tradition.

- 3 **Victory:** you're an exception to the general rule — your participation in the Wulin enhances your appeal. Once during the game, when you defeat a major opponent, you can declare them enamored rather than resentful or ashamed. This also happens whenever the Game Master wants it to, but only costs Destiny when it's your idea.

* **Bonus:** you gain the 3-Destiny version (Quality Beauty) of the Good Looks Advantage; if you already had it, you gain the 6-Destiny version (Perfect Beauty).

Note: Men can descend from Kung Jai, although this is rare.

Kung Min

[Destiny]

"This is the lot of a concubine: when we are young and beautiful, the emperor blesses us with his attentions. As we age, he loses interest; he turns his interest towards younger women, and may disinherit our sons in favor of theirs."

Kung Min resolved the concubine's dilemma by remaining forever young and beautiful. She also developed secret techniques for manipulating others.

DESTINY COST

2 **History:** you descend strongly from Kung Min, by blood or martial tradition.

* **Bonus:** your chaotic influence corrupts the Wulin. People who do great favors for you earn *Zhong* Virtue, even if the deeds are unworthy. For example, stabbing their mother and the emperor with one blow to clear away obstacles to marrying you would qualify.

* **Bonus:** you can spend the Joss of your lovers as if it were your own. From each lover's supply, you can spend one Joss per session. They feel this drain, so it's up to them whether they want to stay in a relationship with you!

Note: Men can descend from Kung Min, although this is rare.



Ling Liu

[History]

Ling Liu let men and tradition run her life. Facing the unrighteousness of the Long-Body Magistrate, her soul unfolded like a flower in the light. Wielding the Sun's Tears Sword, she overcame her meekness and joined the Wulin! Later, she became a famous fighter and a credit to the Ling and Chang families.

DESTINY COST

2 **History:** you descend strongly from Ling Liu by blood or martial tradition.

3 **Victory:** at some point during the game, as with Cinderella and Snow Bei, your hidden potential reveals itself. For one scene, you roll three extra dice on all your rolls. In addition, you instantly receive your accumulated set-aside Destiny and Virtues (see below), and can spend that Destiny without training time.

* **Bonus:** each session, until you use the Victory above, you can earn a point of Xia Destiny if you were

useful to the story as a sidekick, frill, romantic interest, victim, or hostage. These points are set aside — you can't spend them immediately. (Don't play someone descending from Ling Liu if you don't like this kind of thing.) In addition, set aside any *Ba* or *Xia* Virtue gained.

* **Bonus:** if you descend from Ling Liu, you can focus your Chi aura into Crafting rolls to maintain a household. (While this benefit lacks a certain glamour, Game Masters should beware underestimating high-rank fighters — a first rank fighter in Ling Liu's tradition can probably renovate a crumbled castle with a single sword technique, clean a temple with a single burst of Chi, and seamlessly mend the garments of an emperor.)

Note: Men can descend from Ling Liu, although this is rare.

Women in the Wulin

[Destiny]

In the Martial Arts World, all are equal. While men often underestimate female fighters, assuming they'll be weak and helpless, they accept that strong women exist. Women with proven worth are perfectly acceptable allies, teachers, rivals, and enemies — as good as any man of their skill.

Romance tends to complicate this. A woman can choose to present herself in society as nothing but a fighter, but this means she'll never find love or marriage. Considering the low status of wives, many find this tradeoff worthwhile — but it's still a cost. Women who keep some of the trappings of womanhood soon discover that those interested in marrying or sleeping with them don't give them as much martial respect.

DESTINY COST

0 **Destiny:** you tend to attract less attention than you really should — even if you're flirtatious and dress to appeal, men will still think of you as a fighter.

0 **Destiny:** you tend to attract more attention than you really should — even if you're businesslike and present entirely as a warrior, some men will still see you as a woman.

Advanced Topics

3 *Admonitions for Girls* (pg. 225) — can the secrets in this book improve a woman's kung fu?

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

-1 *Courtship* — what

神兵玄奇

transforms a woman from daughter to wife?

- I *Husband and Wife* — how does a woman fare in her husband's home?
- I *Superior and Minion* — an outsider has little status in her siblings' eyes;
- I *Friendship* — but a well-loved woman is her brothers' greatest friend!
- I *Daoist Sexual Basics* — how do Daoist principles influence a warrior's courtship?
- I *Female Homosexuality* — for some women, the heart follows its own path!
- I *The Wulin* — why does the Wulin take a woman out of the normal social context?

Husband and Wife

Destiny Cost: 2
Study Difficulty: Grace (20)

Sun's Oath

(30 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

Sun and Yin Argue

SUN AND YIN stood back-to-back, surrounded by the armies of Shu. Commanders barked orders. Endless ranks of soldiers clashed against them. Sun and Yin did not yield: with masterful sword skill, they repelled the advance, as they had done for three days. Like the waves of the sea, the armies of Shu poured against them, held a moment, and then washed back. The soldiers stumbled dazedly as they retreated — seawater stunned by impact with the shore.

"We won't win if we don't take the offensive," Yin commented to Sun. Her long black hair swirled around her ankles as she beat back another wave of soldiers. It shone with her sweat.

"I promised the Buddha that I won't hurt people," answered Sun. A few nicks and cuts marred his youthful face. Five soldiers charged him; with a circular parry, he knocked two into the paths of the others and they staggered off into the ranks of Shu. "That's my compassionate oath!"

"I didn't swear that oath!"
Yin blocked a high sword

cut and slammed the hilt of her sword into a soldier's forehead. He reeled and fell, stunned, into the path of two others.

"I'd be ashamed before the Buddha if my own wife broke my sacred oath," said Sun. "How could I look him in the eye?"

"You couldn't anyway! He suspired into Nirvana!"

"My own wife!" Sun shouted, pained. "You don't think I can face the Buddha! Now I'm embarrassed before the commanders of Shu!"

Humiliated, Sun struck the next wave of soldiers with both palms. Like waves of grass bowed by the wind, the ranks of soldiers stumbled backwards. Their commanders looked horrified — faced with kung fu like Sun's, their formations had no discipline!

"It's ridiculous," fumed Yin. "Having to fight without hurting people."

Yin glared her fury at the field. Commanders shouted, urging their soldiers against her, but the troops would not attack — Yin's glare was too frightening! Her narrowed eyes promised more torments than the Avici Hell.

"You're right," agreed Sun. "It's ridiculous. You shouldn't have to stay here and die; that's not my compassion. You're a loyal wife — you can be a loyal widow! If you jump over the soldiers, I'll distract them. Then they won't give you dirty looks or chase after you."

"If I wanted a dead husband, I'd have one. Schick! I'd just cut off your head. So I'd rather stay."

Sun looked anguished. "Never teach your wife kung fu! That's what my master said. He said that people in the martial arts world don't have enough respect! You were so sweet and polite, I defied him and taught you anyway — but now you'll contradict me in front

of my enemies? It's my bad luck that makes you shame our marriage this way!"

Sun couldn't look the soldiers in the eyes. He had to defeat them while watching the ground. Still Sun's prowess was not diminished. He kicked a soldier in the stomach, and the soldier spun in the air to knock down three ranks. The force of the blow radiated through the soldier's armor, so that when he struck the ground, his armor, weapon, and the stone beneath him shattered. The man himself lay there unharmed.

Waves of Soldiers, Like the Sea

Yin glanced over at Sun, releasing the soldiers on her side from her terrifying gaze. "It's not like that," she





protested, unhappily. “Even with my Chi cultivated, I’m still a loyal wife! But I promised that I’d cook you dinner in the evenings — if I run away and leave you here, I can’t do that. I promised I’d bear you children — you can’t expect me to excavate your corpse, or sleep with your ghost? Such demands would require a dishonorable husband!”

“It’s too late!” wailed Sun. “Everyone here knows you’ve defied me.” He grabbed a soldier with two hands and held him off the ground. “You know it, don’t you? I’m a shameful husband — my wife won’t even flee when I tell her to!”

The soldier nodded vigorously. Then he saw Yin’s eyes. He shook his head with even more vigor. “No!” he shouted. “Shu’s armies know there is no more loyal wife than Sun’s wife Yin!”

“Bah,” said Sun. “You have no discipline. What would you know?” He threw the soldier back into the ranks.

Shu’s commanders shouted. The assault stopped — the troops needed rest!

“It’s not fair for you to say I have no loyalty,” sulked Yin. “Here I’ve fought for three days without killing anyone, all because of your stupid oath — that’s true devotion!”

“Aiya!” shouted Sun. “I should have let them kill me. Then I wouldn’t have known this trouble!”

Yin frowned at Sun, and then sat down. “If you’re serious,” she said quietly, “you know I’ll run; but I’d spend all my days in sorrow. That’s no way to leave your wife, drowning in a sea of men!”

Sun spoke:

In the gardens of Peng Lai’s immortals

Grow herbs to raise the dead

And snow-capped mushrooms that grant eternal life

Jade temples carved with dragons rise

Amidst the peaceful groves.

The arias of the birds delight the Daoist sages.

My mind cannot cross such miles, or comprehend such treasures,

So I have chosen the Buddha’s way,

Cultivating compassion before eternal life.

I stand among the shores of life and death.

If I live, I shall look towards the dawn,

Where my wife set sail to the east.

Yin bowed her head.

Marital Relationships

(Discussion)

The supreme virtue *Xiao* (filial piety) governs relationships between husband and wife. Like all hierarchical relationships, marriage patterns itself on the relationship of parent and child.

A wife in Shen Zhou enters her husband’s family. She must still respect her birth parents and grandparents, but her new ancestors are her husband’s ancestors. In effect, marriage “sells” her to the new lineage. A wife’s place in the world comes from her ability to contribute to that lineage by honoring the husband and giving him sons.

It’s important to remember that while the culture of Shen Zhou is okay with oppressing one’s wife, the *wuxia* genre (and the comic and this game!) is not. Anguish exists to motivate heroes and villains. An anguished wife is a hero in the making, a villain in the making, or an early warning that her husband is a monster. GMs should avoid creating unpleasant husband-wife relationships just for cultural exposition — it might make Shen Zhou more like ancient China, but it’ll actually undermine the quality of the game.

Social Strategy: Husbands and Wives

(Discussion)

Stress Profile for the Husband

This profile helps explain the behavior of a typical husband in Shen Zhou. It’s here to help GMs and interested players estimate how much a wife’s behavior strains the marital relationship, and how the husband might react to an increased or decreased level of strain.

The dominant member of an unmarried couple often behaves like a husband.

- **Tension increased by:** Disrespect, particularly in public. There’s a cultural assumption that a righteous husband earns his wife’s respect. When a wife’s not respectful, it threatens the husband’s appearance and sense of righteousness. This puts stress on the marriage. Personality difficulties don’t — a personality clash makes the couple unhappy, but a strong partnership in Shen Zhou depends more on reliability and honor than on happiness and love.
- **Behavior in Tense Relationships:** Neglect, patronization, and cruelty. In a tense relationship, the husband rarely treats his wife well. Wives with strong Chi or political connections risk neglect. He’ll withdraw from them slowly as tension grows.



If he's besotted, then the more tension he feels, the less he'll listen to anything his wife has to say. Patronizing, pampering, and ignoring her allows him to close his ears to disrespect. If the wife has neither of these advantages, then tension can manifest as increasing cruelty on his part. Ultimately, he may punish her brutally or return her to her family in disgrace. Such horrors, as noted, happen in practice only when they can motivate important characters.

- **Tension reduced by:** Dutifulness and devotion. When a relationship grows strained, a wife can reassure her husband by showing that her duties to him and her dedication to him are foremost in her mind. This pleases the husband and soothes the sting of any recent disrespect.
- **Behavior in Low-Tension Relationships:** Partnership and adoration. Just as many men are above the extremes of cruelty and neglect, many are incapable of offering a true partnership. Still, to whatever extent a man is capable of it, he rewards a dutiful and devoted wife with his heart and his support.

Stress Profile for the Wife

This profile helps explain the behavior of a typical wife in Shen Zhou. Keeping one's wife happy makes her a stronger ally!

Often, the socially inferior member of an unmarried couple views their mate as a wife would.

- **Tension increased by:** Criticism of her role as wife. In Shen Zhou, a husband wishing separation from his wife has options — concubines, divorce, or remarriage after her death. For women, marriage is essentially final. Even a widow can't remarry without disgracing her dead husband's name. A wife feels threatened by emotional infidelity, physical infidelity, and accusations that she's failing in her filial duty — if she loses her husband's esteem, she's trapped in an unfortunate place.
- **Behavior in Tense Relationships:** Fear, anger, and unhappiness. In practice, wives can leave. This is one way in which Shen Zhou differs significantly from historical China — every woman, like every man, is a potential hero. Leaving is dangerous, and you can wind up a disgraced outcast, with nowhere to turn, shortly before tigers and bears eat you and spit out your bones. But there's an equally real alternative — a heroic journey, involving the ex-wife in the affairs of secret societies, Clans, and foul cultists. Wives
w h o

don't want to risk it find threats to the marriage very frightening.

- **Tension reduced by:** Demonstrations of continued interest. If the husband's still pleased that he married her, a wife can trust in the marriage. Showing love, admiration, or just an explicit absence of regret does the trick.
- **Behavior in Low-Tension Relationships:** Supportive. Husbands value their wives for many reasons — diligent performance of their household duties, beauty, personality, powerful kung fu, and social connections are some of the things wives can bring to the table. In a low-tension relationship, the wife gives the husband everything she can.

In Shen Zhou, the relationship of a husband and a wife is sacred — it's like the relationship between a parent and a child, or an Emperor and his subjects. The parent-child relationship is more important, but there's no mystique that any of these relationships have that the others don't. Serving one's husband gloriously has as much legendary character as great deeds on the Emperor's behalf — and the stories of such deeds are told just as often. Similarly, a cruel husband risks the same fate as a cruel King — Heaven may withdraw its favor.

Secrets of Destiny: Husband and Wife

Destiny Binding: Husband and Wife [Destiny]

A couple united by love or duty fights as one. These Destiny options work best if the player finds the character's spouse interesting.

DESTINY COST

- 1+ **Destiny:** increase the role of your husband in the story. This makes his motivations more complex, gives him more resources to offer you, and makes his demands more troublesome to you. Spend more Destiny for increased effects.
- 1+ **Destiny:** increase the role of one of your wife in the story. This follows the same rules, but GMs should be more careful. A strong wife is no kind of hindrance to her husband, so the Game Master needs to introduce other complications. If your shy, retiring wife turns out to have secret martial prowess, reveals herself as a relative of the Emperor, or starts paying off your debts with mountains of jade, one expects that she's also got an evil kung fu cult after her life.
- 2 **Victory:** when your wife or husband dies, it isn't over — your spouse will come back. Sometimes this means a ghost, sometimes it means a faked death, and sometimes it means your spouse was a heavenly

spirit sent to earth all along. The result is always a blessing and often a very, very mixed blessing.

- 2 **Victory:** once per game, you can spend Destiny to bring back an enemy's spouse the same way. This is also a blessing or mixed blessing for you, whereas the enemy may find it more problematic.
- * See *Daoist Sexual Basics*, pg. 194, for an alternate approach to making your husband or wife a (literally) stronger character.

Destiny Breaking: Husband and Wife [Destiny]

A character's bad husband can make the player unhappy. Sometimes, a bad wife can do the same — although wives are less likely to exert unpleasant dominance in Shen Zhou society. Since players are likely to romanticize marriage more than typical denizens of Shen Zhou, the recommended solution is fading the spouse from view. They disappear from the story, and it's assumed that they don't cause as many problems any more.

Regardless of the prominence and health of the relationship, husbands and wives should never be more romantic, intimate, or sexual than the GM and the relevant players are comfortable with. This is a least common denominator thing — if even one real person is uncomfortable, it's time for the fictional relationship to change.

DESTINY COST

- 0 **Destiny:** your husband fades into the background of the story. This is the angst-free solution for players who — thanks to their characters' unpleasant or domineering husbands — aren't having fun. Game Masters can veto this, but need to discuss other workable solutions with the player if they do. (Common alternatives include "trust me" and "he's going to die at the end of this story arc anyway.")
- 0 **Destiny:** your wife fades into the background, similarly.
- 5 **Fortune:** you find a bridge to repair your relationship with your spouse. This Destiny purchase makes sense when plot events alienate a spouse that the character enjoys interacting with, and that tension — rather than the spouse's personality — is what's damaging your fun.

Husband-Wife Techniques [Kung Fu]

When husbands and wives are powerful fighters, it's important that they bring their Chi into harmony. That increases their chance of healthy offspring. Some warriors have refined this meditative process into useful fighting techniques.

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Technique:** you have an opportunity to learn the Level One **Perpetual Awareness** formless technique that allows flawless coordination between a husband and wife. For more information, see *Formless Techniques*, pg. 354.
 - 2 **Technique:** you have an opportunity to learn the Level Two **Chi Harmony** formless technique that allows you to harmonize your two spirits, dedicating part of your Destiny to your descendants. For more information, see *Formless Techniques*, pg. 354.
- (-I) The game is short-term. Your children will have a brilliant future in the Wulin, but you won't see it in play.

Outsider Kung Fu [Kung Fu]

Women change lineages when they marry, taking their kung fu secrets with them. Some Clans won't teach women because of this. Others swear female students to secrecy — if they're true fighters, they're members of the Wulin. If they get married anyway, their husbands can't make them tell! Sometimes, though, if a woman is talented but interested in marriage, kung fu becomes part of her dowry. She mixes the tradition of her birth Clan with the secret kung fu of her new lineage and passes new secrets down to her children. Women have created some of the most powerful kung fu syntheses in Shen Zhou.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **Destiny:** if a woman, your kung fu training is part of your dowry. This means that you can reasonably learn the secrets of your birth Clan and your marriage Clan, and pass on certain secrets to your husband and children without reprisal. Without this Destiny, if you learn your birth



神兵玄奇

Clan's kung fu, you'll be sworn to secrecy before your marriage, and your husband's Clan might not teach you.

- 2 **Fortune:** if a man, you can negotiate for your wife's dowry to contain a few kung fu secrets.

Perfect Mending Technique

[Kung Fu]

When a woman labors with love to mend her husband's clothes and cook his meals, it makes him invincible. What enemy sword could tear his coat? What terrible press of battle could stifle his vigor? Such nightmares are impossible when one maintains a house with devotion.

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Bonus:** when an NPC husband adventures without you, he'll always come home safely.

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- I *A Woman's Life* — how even a married woman can surmount the world!
- I *Parent and Child* — what virtue do the parents wield, that they can order their children to marry?
- I *Clan and Family* — what reception awaits a newly-married wife?
- I *Confucianism* — the sage defines the relationships of Shen Zhou!
- I *Courtship* — marriage begins with the three letters and the six etiquettes!
- I *Daoist Sexual Basics* — can an unwise marriage risk the health of one's Chi?
- I *Male Homosexuality* — does every man have eyes for women?
- I *Female Homosexuality* — love knows fewer boundaries than convention!

Courtship

Destiny Cost: 2
Study Difficulty: Grace (30)

Lingering Song

(25 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

LINGERING SONG
STOOD at the
road in the

evening. She fingered her hollow sword and looked down the road's length. At its far end, she could see the territory of Hell Clan.

"If you go," said Chang Pao, "they'll treat you horribly, and then you'll die." He was a tall, well-favored man. She called him Tsiek-tsiek. It was the sound of his fingers clicking against the ink stone when he paused in his studies to think. He walked up from the trees behind her as he spoke.

"I have to marry an awful spider," she answered. "They say Lum Li has four extra arms! It's better to pit my sword against all Hell Clan."

Chang Pao frowned at her. "He doesn't have four extra arms. He has an extra finger on one hand."

She looked horrified. "Tsiek-tsiek! An extra finger? That's almost as bad."

"His family wants a skilled girl — a fighter who can help defend them against Hell Clan. That's why his parents sent yours the Request Letter asking for your hand."

"Ah," she sighed. "But Tsiek-tsiek's so valorous — his family doesn't need any more warriors. Your hammer's always ready to fight Hell Clan visitors! One blow, and two fall! Their heads come together! Tsiek! Tsiek!"

Chang Pao frowned. "I don't think people's heads make that noise."

Song rapped his head with her knuckle. **Tsiek!** "It's all in the angle."

"You're really an indelicate girl," he said, shaking his head.

"I won't go back," she said.

"It's too late!" he said. "You can't marry Chang Pao. Li's family sent a Gift Letter. Now your family's accepted gifts for you, and chosen your dowry from them. It makes them look bad if you get killed by Hell Clan."

"Don't be silly," Song said airily. "If my honorable parents took the blame for everyone Hell Clan killed, they'd beat out Chi You and join the Greatest Sinners of All Time! It's prestigious, but it's not their way."

"It's only right, with such a disgraceful daughter."

Song flushed. "I won't disgrace them! I'll do them honor in battle!" She moved swiftly: her foot circled, and her heel struck hard against his knee. For a moment, his leg locked. He grabbed for her, but she had already started down the road, and her Lightfoot style gave her speed.

Chang Pao braced himself, drew his hammer, and hurled it. It flashed over Song's head, the metal bludgeon brushing against her hair. The wind of its passage struck her like a great fist. She lost her balance, startled and

stunned, and tumbled to the ground. It took her only a quarter second to recover; but in a fifth of a second, he'd caught up to her and loomed down to grab her arm.

"It's a waste," he bit out. "You fight like a stunned frog — no one knows which way you jump. You won't be any good to the Lum family!"

He dragged her to her feet; she accepted the motion and continued it, her free hand curling around to smack him in the center of his forehead. A red welt formed. For a second, his eyes crossed. She turned and twisted to throw him. Rather than release his grip, Tsiek-tsiek did a cartwheel to the ground.

"Stunned frog?" she hissed. "Fine words from a stupid ox."

"Tomorrow, he'll bring the Wedding Letter!" Pao protested. "Then you'll be married! That's harder if you're in seven pieces in Hell Clan territory." His hand found the handle of his hammer, and he swung; as Song danced away, he used the energy of her motion to rise to his feet. He set the hammer's head upon the ground to steady his balance and then straightened, his grip on her arm lifting her off her feet.

"Aiya!" she said. "At least it's Lum Li and not Excessively Tall Pao!"

"You don't admire me? Then it's just as well!"

Her feet planted in his stomach and shoved; another welt appeared, as she burst through his protective Chi, and he staggered backwards, dropping her. There were tears in her eyes as she turned away. "Stupid ox," she said again. "It's not Lum Li who makes such tsiek-tsiek sounds."

"Even before the letters, his family sent a spokeswoman to tell your parents of his wish. That's a more proper

courtship than clicking an ink stone."

"It's not Lum Li who pays such attention to his family's needs — he's no model of filial piety."

"His family asked for your date of birth, and a predictionist looked at his and yours. Heaven has no problem with his filial piety — he's a fine match for a Lingering Song."



"It's not Lum Li who gave me half a poem."

"His family sent gifts — money, cake, food, sacrifices. He's chosen a good day, with the help of the predictionist! Tomorrow, your houses will be decorated in red, and you'll wear a red veil — that's how joyous this occasion is."

"It's not —"

Pao stumbled to his feet and snarled. "Do as you like. If you die, it's Lum Li who'll grieve — not me!" He looked away.

Song bit her lip and waited.

Pao said, quietly:

The mountain: a solitary man in white, reflecting on memories of spring.

For an hour, they stood there, and neither spoke. Then Song hung her head, and answered him, completing his poem:

The peony: a bride in red, turning her mind from future winters.

After a moment, she added:

Silence rises, and wind. Songs are no part of a scholar's wisdom.

"Come on," said Pao. He took her arm, and they walked back towards home. He did not reply;

but later, when she woke, she found a note upon her pillow:

The song lingers in the stone. Listening together: tsiek, tsiek.

Secrets of Destiny: Courtship

Romance

[Destiny]

Love at first sight happens in Shen Zhou. It's usually nothing but trouble! When making marriage plans, the couple's parents rarely consider the couple's admiration for one another or lack thereof. It's not wise to fall in love when your parents won't care! Often, people fall for other people's wives or husbands, or even for a widow — it's terribly shocking. Sometimes, love brings happiness to everyone, but that takes heroic effort or lots of good luck.

DESTINY COST

1 **Destiny:** make your love interest more important to the story, or add an interesting romantic prospect to the story. This mostly only brings trouble, but there are intangible benefits to having an interesting NPC whom you admire prominent in the story — even without playing out a romance, it can sharpen your focus, expand your motivations, make the game more involving, and give you a touch more time in the spotlight of the game.

4 **Destiny:** If the GM's okay with a given character as a romantic interest, you can seal the deal — ensuring that you're never far from their thoughts, no matter how much you fight. You don't have to take this to have a stable relationship, particularly if you're married — it's just a measure of story protection for the love.

(-3) In Shen Zhou, romance is often typified by quarrels. You have a -10 modifier on all social interactions with your romantic prospect, and a -5 modifier on any social interaction where the prospect is even involved.

* **Bonus:** You're reasonably versed in the courtship customs and romantic ideology throughout Shen Zhou.

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

-I *A Woman's Life* — what Destiny options influence a woman's courtship a n d

marriage?

- I *Parent and Child* — marriage facilitates grandchildren, the ultimate filial duty!
- I *Husband and Wife* — the ultimate courtship-concluding technique: wedding style!
- I *Daoist Sexual Basics* — whom should a warrior court, and why?
- I *Male Homosexuality* — courtship and love among the men of Shen Zhou!
- I *Female Homosexuality* — can a woman court another woman as wife?

Daoist Sexual Basics

Destiny Cost: 3

Study Difficulty: Learning (20)

Why is This Section Here?

Sex is fundamental to human motivation. However, the people of Shen Zhou don't think about it the same way the modern West does.

You aren't expected to roleplay out your characters' sex lives. You probably will spend at least a little time on your characters' romantic lives, though. Understanding how the people of Shen Zhou think about sex — and the health benefits of both indulgence and abstinence — can give your characters romantic motivations suitable to the genre.

The Classic of the Plain Girl

(3000 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

THE ILLUSTRIOUS EMPEROR Huangti set forth the principles of proper sexual practice in the *Classic of the Plain Girl*. This volume records conversations between himself and his three sexual advisors. One such conversation follows.

"Show me a Yin Chi technique," demanded the Yellow Emperor. He stood at the center of a cleared dirt field. His three advisors circled him, maintaining a position at three points of an equilateral triangle.

"A woman's Yin Chi is inexhaustible," answered the Plain Girl. "Thus, when a woman performs a technique that she may continue indefinitely, we call this a Yin technique. Jade, white, crimson, silver, gold — all have their Yin aspect."

She flowed towards the emperor like a tide, performing the technique named "the Cycle of Seasons". Her open



hands floated towards his defenses like a rain of cherry blossoms. He blocked each blow with sharp ferocity, yet the force he used to block her seemed to feed each new blow. For five hours, her assault continued, and the Yellow Emperor's forehead began to gleam with sweat. The Plain Girl remained as fresh as the morning. The Yellow Emperor called upon his limitless vitality, drawing strength from the well-governed land; accepting her attack, he grasped her arm and flung her to the ground. She rolled to her feet, made obeisance to the infinite power of the Yellow Emperor, and resumed her circling.

"That is Yin," said the Yellow Emperor. "Now show me a Yang Chi technique."

"The Yang is fiery," the Rainbow Girl said. "It ignites on contact with the Yin. Yet a man's Yang Chi is rare and precious. Thus, when a man exhausts his energies in performing a technique, we call it a Yang technique. Jade, crimson, gold, white, silver — all have their Yang aspect."

In an instant, the Rainbow Girl closed with the Yellow Emperor. The silk of her robes blossomed like an ever-expanding flower, striking at him from every direction. The Yellow Emperor invoked his All-Directions Kung Fu, his Chi flaring as he used the edge of his hand to parry attacks from every side; yet the twitching lengths of silk that attacked him snaked past even this magnificent defense, forcing him to skip back.

"No proper attack has more than eight directions!" thought the Yellow Emperor. He instantly understood that the technique of the Rainbow Girl was hollow, and saw its weakness. Focusing his Chi, he struck an all-powerful blow into the center of the pattern of her attack. The air slammed outwards around his fist. The flailing silk settled limply around the Rainbow Girl, who staggered backwards and fell to the ground. She kowtowed once, in recognition of the Emperor's glory, and rose to circle him again.

Huangti stood panting in the center of their formation. "That is Yang," he said — in making her attack, she had showed him its Yang Chi counter. "How, then, should these forces combine?"

"In bed," said Peng-tze, "the male and female exchange their Chi. The woman's pleasure nurtures the male with her limitless Yin Chi — a desirable outcome! The man expresses his limited Yang Chi with his semen; this weakens him in all ways. Accordingly, she must reach pleasure with frequency, and he must reach pleasure without emitting his vital fluid; this is the 'jade gate path' to long life."

Huangti frowned, meditating upon his masterful knowledge of all arts. "It seems somewhat one-sided."

Peng-tze flew towards the Yellow Emperor, each hand wielding a crescent-edged half-ring. The blades spun in the endless mandala style, forming a pattern that drove

him backwards. "You have refrained for seven days," she said, "and these are the results: your mind is clear, your body is strong, and your vision and hearing have improved."

The emperor heard a faint hum, scarcely louder than an insect's complaint. He shifted himself to the side as the Rainbow Girl struck; a length of silk lashed before his face and licked through both of Peng-tze's blades before retreating. He saw a motion from the corner of his eye, scarcely more than a blur of pink; he turned the other direction to avoid the endless flow of the Plain Girl's Cycle of Seasons. Enemies were on every side, leaving him no room to retreat; as he blocked each attack, he drove his advisors now to the left, now to the right, then back, to leave him room to duck the next blow from another. He roared, once, and crossed his arms; Peng-tze's metal blades shattered on contact with his wrists. She stumbled and fell. Shouting again, he caught the silk of the Rainbow Girl and pulled; she flew past him and into the Plain Girl, who caught her and cast her aside.

"You must deny yourself the occasional pleasure," said Peng-tze, struggling to gather the energy to rise, "but your love for women will increase! You will feel an endless attraction to those you love; is that not a truer and more lasting pleasure?"

The Yellow Emperor ignored her, facing off against the Plain Girl. Understanding the pattern of the Plain Girl's attack, he struck; but that pattern shifted before he could touch her, and he found himself beset by the "Five-Chi Cycle." Her movements flowed through every style of kung fu; and his greatest attacks dissolved against her.

"How will I know which women to indulge with?" he asked.

"If you cannot defeat them in combat," said the Plain Girl, "then you must not indulge with them; their Chi will overpower yours, and you will find yourself drained. If they are as nothing before your kung fu, then you must likewise refrain; the exchange of Chi will give you nothing worth the taking! But if a kung fu battle is a close thing, or if it sometimes goes one way and sometimes the other — then she may stir your Yang to the four attainments!"

Huangti laughed, for he understood the weakness of her Five-Chi Cycle; all of its elements expressed the deep, damp, passive Yin aspect of her Chi. It drew its power from the Yang force of his own blows. Knowing that weakness, he chose his strategy, and struck.

This is the lesson of the *Classic of the Plain Girl*.



E Fang Palace

(500 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

Liu Bang

"Where do you come from?" asked Liu Bang.

"E Fang Palace."

"There's nothing in E Fang Palace."

"So it's said."

Liu Bang studied the woman. "And you say?"

"Emperor Qin Shihuangdi kept a thousand palace maidens there. He had us trained in Daoist alchemy, and slept with us in search for immortality. When he died, it seemed only natural to continue our researches. We've taken such measures as necessary to discourage intrusion."

"Why have you invited me here?"

"You'll die five deaths, Liu Bang, before you're Emperor Han Gaozu of Shen Zhou. Here, I've painted them for you."

Five Deaths

The woman gestured at the canvas behind her. One showed a man nicked to death by a dozen swords; soldiers in Xiang Yu's garb stood all around him. One showed a man pinned to the ground — a dead soldier had fallen on him, trapping his ankle and foot, and a lethal warrior with slick black hair closed in. A third showed Liu Bang, relaxed over a glass of wine, but blood trickled from his mouth; that same warrior's sword was embedded in his back. The fourth did not show his enemy: a blade as thick as Liu Bang's neck sliced through him from outside the frame. The last showed Bang's rival Xiang Yu standing triumphant: victorious in battle, the new emperor of Shen Zhou. Fields of corpses lay all around, and which blob of ink depicted Liu Bang he could not tell.

"Amazing," said Liu Bang. "To die so many times shows true refinement; but how many times will I die after I become Emperor?"

"I can save you from each of these deaths," she said, "through erotic techniques. I ask only that you discard Lu Hou, your wife, and give me her name."

Liu Bang shrugged. "If I'm dead, she won't live long. Save me four times, and perhaps we'll make this bargain."

Too Many Swords

One account of
Liu Bang's
history

says that he lost every battle but his last. It did not take him many days to find himself on the field, with the tide of the struggle against him. Eight soldiers surrounded him, and his blood flowed out from the nicks and cuts of their blades.

"It's not polite to gang up on a reputable leader like this," said Liu Bang, "and I see four more of you coming. I suppose that I could be dead."

He moved in an elegant pattern, and the blades of the soldiers helped him to complete its cycle; but as he moved to finish two soldiers off, his blade blurring like a shadow through their armor, another cut slipped through his defenses. A wave of weakness tugged at him.

"It's your own bad luck," he said. "For I've drunk the 'jade liquid energy' from a woman's mouth during her ecstasy."

He closed his eyes, and a wave of heat poured off of him. The soldiers staggered back. Liu Bang's wounds sealed. His eyes blazed with Jade Chi. An enemy struck at him, and he turned his blade sideways to block; with a horrid shriek, both the soldier and his sword shattered against Liu Bang's defense.

An ink-haired man glared at him across the field, where Liu Bang's soldiers were swarming him, and then he bounded away.

A Fallen Soldier

Three days, and another battle. Liu Bang lay, stunned, on the ground, and a slain soldier fell towards him. "This is my second death," he thought. A wave of crimson Chi poured from his heart's core, and its fire moved him; he rolled to his feet and the armored corpse rattled to the ground behind him.

The ink-haired man stalked towards him now. His face was cold and thin.

"Liu Bang," he said. "My name is Wolf Tooth. I'm sent to kill you; though I'm sorry that you'll be standing up for it."

"It's her eyes," said Liu Bang.

"Pardon?"

"There's a heat in them — a subtle energy that wakes my Crimson Chi. I'll show you."

Liu Bang moved forward. His speed was legendary — like a ripple of heat, his passage barely registered upon the eye. His blade burned past Wolf Tooth's armor and grated to a halt upon the enemy's protective Chi. A great mottled bruise sprouted on Wolf Tooth's side. He turned green and spat out blood.

"That's fast," conceded Wolf Tooth. "But I've got a friend. Big Tiger."



Wolf Tooth gestured at a pile of corpses. Liu Bang glanced over. Big Tiger rose from the pile, pale as a dead man himself — seven feet tall, four hundred pounds, and carrying a sword as large as Bang himself. He stretched his wrists, making crackling noises.

"I keep explaining," said Liu Bang. "It's not polite to gang up on someone like me. I'll fight you later."

With that, he withdrew.

An Assassin

Liu Bang sat sipping from a glass of wine, contemplating the course of the war. A shadow moved behind him; but Liu Bang's eyes burned silver.

"I wouldn't."

"You can't have spotted me," said Wolf Tooth. "I learned that approach from a stealthy master!"

Liu Bang watched Wolf Tooth's reflection in his wine glass. "The yin tiger is born when the energy of a woman's kidneys reaches her heart. When she sees her lover, this energy pours forward and to either side, becoming 'snow energy' that can strengthen her lover's Silver Chi."

"I don't want to hear about your sex life when we're fighting," said Wolf Tooth. He crept a notch closer.

"That's fine," said Liu Bang, "but you're not really in a position to criticize."

Wolf Tooth spun his sword in his hands and lunged, his sword trembling with its yearning for Liu Bang's back. Liu Bang had tracked Wolf Tooth's every motion, and he moved with precision. The shadow of Liu Bang's sword met Wolf Tooth's blade in midair, and cast it aside; the steel of his blade thrust deep where once it had only bruised him.

Wolf Tooth shook his head and snarled, and backed away. "I'll leave now. If you follow me, you'll meet Big Tiger at the road."

"I won't do that, then," said Liu Bang, equably. "But I've poisoned your Chi, so you're lucky if you don't die."

A Giant's Blade

On the battlefield, Liu Bang picked up the scent of tainted blood; and turned to see Wolf Tooth staggering towards him.

"Stealthy," he said, "but you're dying anyway. Why bother fighting me?"

"If I'm going to die," said Wolf Tooth, "I want to finish it."

"You're walking funny," said Liu Bang. "Moving funny too. Why's that?"

"It's your death dance," said Wolf Tooth. "You'll see."

The two clashed swords, once, twice, three times. "You're in bad form, too."

"I'm doing your death dance," said Wolf Tooth. "It's hard to fight properly."

"I'm not intimidated," said Liu Bang, and struck.

His sword picked Wolf Tooth off the ground, and the soft beat of Wolf Tooth's footsteps on the ground stopped; and in that silence, Liu Bang heard what it concealed. A sword, big as Liu Bang himself, was swinging through the air, and scarcely a finger's length from his side; for the death dance was Wolf Tooth's stealth, covering the noise and shadows of Big Tiger's approach with the sound and pattern of his own movements.

A white maelstrom of Chi spun around Liu Bang. "Son of a dog!" he shouted, and the shadow of his sword became a mirror; and as it touched that white Chi mirror, Big Tiger's blade turned away.

"That's him," said Big Tiger. "Not me."

His blade cut around again, as light in his hands as a feather. Blocking it, Liu Bang stumbled and fell to one knee. But his own troops were coming, leaping in swarms onto Big Tiger's back; and slowly, reluctantly, the large fighter withdrew.

"How?" asked Wolf Tooth, using his second-to-last breath.

"Moon flower energy."

Wolf Tooth winced.

"It comes from below," Liu Bang explained. "As the blood rises to the cheeks, moon flower energy sinks from the heart. Then it rises outwards to meet the woman's lover."

Wolf Tooth snarled out his last breath and died.

Gold Chi Attainment

Later that day, Liu Bang met with a courtesan from E Fang Palace.

"If I make you my wife, Han Lu Hou," he said, "what will you do?"

"I'll teach you the secret of absolute mastery — the Daoist alchemy to enrich your Gold Chi. Then I'll give you sons and rule through them. I'll be as decadent as I please, but I won't lose the mandate of Heaven — that's my own special trick."

"That's not so bad," he agreed.

"Tell me of this absolute mastery."

神兵玄奇



"To enrich the Gold Chi requires a perfect union," she said. "There is no part of man or woman that can hold back — all must participate in the symphony of the rising Chi. Then the gold radiance pours from my body to yours, and yours to mine; and you shall have the command and grace you need to win a battle at last."

Emperor Gaozu

Liu Bang stood on the battlefield, and looked across the fields of the dead. Xiang Yu, his rival, had fallen. Big Tiger stalked towards him; but the gold power of command

blazed in Liu Bang's eyes, and the giant knelt before him.

"You've come to pledge fealty," said Liu Bang, and his Chi burned like a god's.

"Can't," said Big Tiger.

"If you don't, you'll die — your master is dead."

Big Tiger thought. "Wolf Tooth," he said.

Liu Bang reflected. "I'll give him a posthumous ministry and a rich funeral, for his role in the end of the Qin."

"Then I'll call you Gaozu," Big Tiger said, "a highly respectable man."

Secrets of Destiny:

Sexual Basics

Bedroom Strategies:

Heterosexuals

[Secret Arts]

The result of a sexual encounter depends on the relative combat ability of the two participants.

A man's ideal mate possesses power close to his own, so that he will find her Yin Chi nourishing. If her power is greater than his, however, he may be overcome in bed as in battle, expending more Yang Chi than he receives. A male kung fu warrior with Daoist

inclinations seeks a woman whom he can just barely defeat, or who defeats him in one battle out of three. For such warriors, ritual or actual combat is a necessary part of the courtship ritual — to marry a woman whose strength is inadequate or excessive would doom them to a short, unhappy life.

A woman's ideal mate possesses as much fighting power as possible; this provides optimal nourishment for the woman's inexhaustible Yin Chi. It takes an extraordinarily strong mate — two or more ranks of fighting prowess above the woman — before an inequity in their skills risks unbalancing her Chi. Such a mate, however, can produce all manner of Chi deficiencies or excesses in a woman's system.



DESTINY COST

- 1 **Destiny:** having found an appropriate mate, ensure health and long life (barring accident or murder) through proper use of bedroom skills.
- 2 **Technique:** if you can learn secret arts, you have an opportunity to learn the *Cultivating Yin/Yang Energy* secret technique (pg. 226), allowing you to nurture an inadequate sexual partner.
- 2 **Technique:** if you can learn secret arts, you have an opportunity to learn the *Mastered Yin/Yang Energy* secret technique (pg. 226), allowing you to sleep safely with a superior sexual partner.

E Fang Palace

[Location]

The Emperor Qin Shihuangdi stocked E Fang Palace with beautiful palace maidens. He trained them in Daoist arts so that they could nourish his Chi, prolonging his life. When he died, the maidens spread rumors that E Fang Palace was empty and cursed, allowing them to continue private research into Daoist practices. Five hundred years later, these practices continue, although the maidens' successors have relocated the Palace to avoid scrutiny.

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Secret:** learn something of the location and practices of E Fang Palace.

Sexual Alchemy

[Medicine]

Sexual alchemy is a medical technique for nurturing the five colors of Chi. Proper sexual practice converts a man or woman's natural secretions and energies into sources of Chi. When absorbed, this temporarily increases the partner's Chi ratings. Less scrupulous practitioners can use sexual alchemy to warp their victims.

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you can substitute sexual alchemy for acupuncture needles when performing Medicine and Medicine techniques, for **Benevolence** when performing the Secret Arts of Intrigue, and for **Pacing the Constellations** when performing Daoist Magic.

(In the story, the courtesan used this technique to afflict Gaozu with a paired joy/ruthlessness passion and inspiration, as described on pg. 313, strengthening his Chi through his love for her while weakening his ability to respect others — specifically, by encouraging him to overshare.)

Advanced Topics

DESTINY COST

- 0 *Daoist Sexual Techniques* (pg. 226) — but you must be able to learn secret arts.

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- I *The Yellow Emperor* — the glorious Yellow Emperor Huangti, father and inventor of Shen Zhou's sexual practices!
- I *The Qin Dynasty* — what kind of man would build E Fang Palace? What folly incited Liu Bang's rebellion?
- I *A Woman's Life* — how do sexual traditions influence attitudes towards women in Shen Zhou?
- I *Courtship* — if a partner is worthy, how may they be wed?
- I *Male Homosexuality* — three strategies for a Daoist male couple!
- I *Female Homosexuality* — can the Yin flourish without the Yang?

Male Homosexuality

Destiny Cost: 2
Study Difficulty: Learning (20)

Why Is This Section Here?

Demographic data suggests that most of our readers are straight. Even those who aren't won't necessarily want to play a gay or bi male character.

Still, in the modern world, the odds are that you have one or two gay friends and several more acquaintances. You have probably read books or seen television shows with cool gay characters. They're part of your world, and part of the library of character ideas in your head.

The unimportant reason for this section: you might be playing a gay character. The important reason: some of your character's friends, relatives, enemies, or personal heroes might be gay. Sex has very little to do with how your character relates to them during play, but it has a major influence on their goals, drives, and personality.

This section is designed to make sure that it shapes their personality in ways that make them more interesting kung fu warriors.

Mizi Xia

(800 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

Duke Ling of Wei walked in his garden on a misty morning, reflecting upon his conversations with the sage Confucius. Descending lightly from the misty sky, seven armed men landed all around him. They carried long poles tipped with iron beast claws — the weapons of the Writhing Sickness Sect!

Ling raised his arms to block as the first two claws struck; they tore through his sleeves, stopping with a clang as they touched the metal beneath — for the Duke had short swords strapped to each arm. As he shook out his hands and stepped away from the third blow, they sprang into his grip. Ling flew gracefully into the air like the prow of a ship, both swords striking downwards behind him; but the long poles of the assassins parried the blows and a pair of claws hooked each sword, yanking him back downwards.

He was forced to bend backwards, almost to the ground, to avoid the iron claw that lunged for his face.

"Fire sword!"
he said,

and his blades burned with the power of his Chi. One remained locked to the ground by the pair of claws that grappled it; the other sliced through the metal paw that held it and cut down the shaft until the pole shattered in his enemy's grip. Another claw lunged at him from the side; he dropped to the ground and kicked it. It spun in his enemy's hands, hitting Ling with the blunt side rather than the sharp. Air hissed from Ling's lungs. The onslaught was never-ending: to catch the next pair of claws that lunged at him, he had to drop his swords. As he lay there, two claws held inches from his face, he saw one of the sect brothers raise his weapon for the finishing blow.

It did not arrive. Ling watched in astonishment as a soft and delicate clenched hand, its nails carefully tended, blossomed from his enemy's chest. Someone had punched clean through the man from behind, snapping his spine, exploding his heart, and emerging through his ribcage and robes. The hand unclenched, turned once to ensure the man's death, and withdrew. The assassin fell to the ground.

Four of the remaining six turned instantly on their new enemy, three still armed with iron claws and one assuming the water silk stance of the Sect's martial arts. Ling saw a young man, beauteous in countenance and dressed in a simple floral robe, standing where the assassin had fallen. A moment later, Ling placed his name — Mizi Xia, a courtier in his service.

A claw lunged towards Mizi. The courtier extended his hand, open, to lace his fingers with the talons of the claw. Before it could turn to bite him with its poisoned tips, he rotated his grip; the beast claw spun in the assassin's hands, and the assassin dropped it. The Duke's eyes widened; the assassin's palms were bloody, raw, and black, as if scourged by a volcanic fire. Mizi spun his sleeve as the next assassin came at him; the claw tangled in silk, and the assassin flew through the air to slam into the earth.

"Who do you think you are?" cried the leader of the seven warriors. He charged towards Mizi, his weapon tracing horrid patterns in the air. Mizi shoved one palm towards it; an inch from Mizi's pale skin, the iron exploded. The talons flew in every direction, striking one cultist in the eye, another in the forehead, a third in the groin, and a fourth in the heart. Overcome by their own Yang poison, they burst into flames. The morale of the others broke; with their leader, they fled.

Mizi looked to all sides, scanning the grounds for other intruders, then turned and vanished into the mist. For nearly a minute, the Duke lay on the ground, recovering his breath. Then he pulled himself to his feet. "Hey!" he shouted. He staggered off after Mizi, tracking the courtier by the grass — where Mizi had walked, it was lush and healthier than the blades around it.

He caught up to Mizi underneath a peach tree. The



courtier had pulled down a peach, and taken a bite; he turned to regard the Duke as he staggered up.

"Wonderful!" murmured Mizi, studying the peach in his hand. Then, with a smile, he turned and offered it to the Duke. "Please," he said. "Have the rest."

"Ah!" said the Duke, greatly touched. "So sincere is your devotion to your liege that you seek no praise for your valor, nor wish good flavors for yourself — you think only of my health and pleasure!"

Mizi frowned. "Your majesty makes too much of a small thing."

The Duke took the peach and ate, savoring its sweetness. After a time, he said, "How is it that your kung fu is so strong? It is unusual in a man such as yourself."

"It is the way of the Yin-Yang Warrior," said Mizi.

"Please explain."

"When a man lies with a man," said Mizi, "he expends his Yang Chi. Yet his partner has no Yin Chi to offer him; he derives no nourishment from it. Both suffer depletion."

"I am familiar with this difficulty," said the Duke.

"In an effort to be more pleasing," said Mizi, "I resolved to master the principles of Yin and Yang. I would cultivate my Chi and make myself a fit partner for man and woman — able to nurture the Chi of both sexes alike. In so doing, I have developed a limitless supply of Yin and Yang; this is the secret of my kung fu."

The Duke considered Mizi's beauty. "Then I should not suffer for intimacy with you?"

Mizi smiled. "The two of us can share the joy of the same peach, though both of us are men; why should it be different in the bedchamber?"

In this fashion, Mizi Xia became the favorite of the Duke of Wei. For many years, they shared all manner of joys; but in time, like that of a withering flower, Mizi Xia's beauty left him. The Duke grew disenchanted, and spoke with him less and less; and in time, he lost favor completely.

One morning, as Mizi Xia walked through the garden, seven shapes emerged from the mist around him. They wore the armor of the Duke's elite guard, and bore swords as sharp as an adder's bite. Mizi caught the first two blades in his hands and kicked aside two more. As he turned to scan the mist, the guards whose blades he held stumbled helplessly after.

"Ah," said Mizi, sadly, as he saw the Duke. Ling of Wei stood, with his back against a peach tree, watching the whole scene. His expression was cold and implacable. Looking into his eyes, Mizi felt the strength flow from him. The blades of the guards battered him from every

side. He fell to his knees, then slumped unconscious to the ground.

The Duke walked forward and looked at Mizi. Though he lay unconscious, his power still exceeded that of the elite guard; their swords bruised him but could not cut his skin.

"Will you kill him yourself, great lord?"

"Take him to a cell," said the Duke, and turned away.

From his cell, Mizi wrote to the Duke, asking what crime he had committed, and if the Duke would hear his defense. The guard took the message away, and returned with the Duke's reply: "How could I trust such a man as Mizi? He does not respect my throne; he gives me his leavings to eat!"

Pan Zhang

(700 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

Wang Zhongxian studied at Chu Kingdom Tiger Temple. Though Zhongxian possessed a keen mind and an aristocratic heritage, his constitution was weak and his fighting skills an embarrassment to his master.

Chung Lung, his instructor, frowned. "Your parents asked me to raise you in my martial arts tradition, but it's hopeless. I can't teach you anything."

"I'm sorry, master."

"I should kill you now so you won't disgrace me," Chung Lung said. "But I'll give you one chance. Go out and study the world for eight years; then I'll test you. If you're stronger, I'll let you live."

Wang Zhongxian left the temple and sat upon a rock outside his gates. A cold wind blew past, sending him into a coughing fit. "There's no point in training," he said, directing his words towards Heaven. "If I can't learn from the master, I won't learn anywhere; I should enjoy these next eight years."

He tilted his head to one side, listening to the wind. "There's a man named Pan Zhang near Lofu Mountain," he says, "beautiful in appearance and bearing. The wind and the sky speak well of his poetry. What is better than fine words? I'll go and ask him for his writings."

Rising to his feet, he walked towards Lofu Mountain. This was a journey of 500 *li*, and when he reached its end, his feet were bloody and his heart weary; but in autumn, he reached Zhang's gate. A servant called out Pan Zhang. It took only a single breath: when Zhang and Zhongxian looked upon one another, they fell instantly in love.

Eight years passed,
with Zhang

神兵玄奇



and Zhongxian sharing a pillow and a coverlet; and Zhongxian, whose health had been as frail as a swallow's egg, burned with the flush of life. Then a servant brought word to him: the old master, Chung Lung, stood at their gate!

"He's come all this way to kill you?" said Pan Zhang. "The man is infamous!"

"When I came to Chu Kingdom Tiger Temple," said Zhongxian, "I would not fight at all. The master asked me why, and I told him, 'The world is full of torments. Men live within their skin; they feel the world's touch like a burning scourge. I have abandoned my body; I feel its sorrows not at all. Thus, I cannot muster the strength to fight.'"

"Ah," said Chung Lung. He knelt down before me, and drew a character in the dirt. This was the character for the will and harmony of the cosmos — 'Heaven'.

"For a month, I did not move from that spot, save to dispose of my wastes. One of his disciples brought me water and my meals; when I caught a fever, an attendant at the temple tended me with needles. I did nothing save stare at the character he had drawn. In time, I understood what he had drawn, and knew why I must live."

Zhongxian rose to his feet. "Now," he said, "I must pay him the life he gave me."

Pan Zhang followed after him as Zhongxian came to the gates. Chung Lung looked him up and down.

"It's my bad timing," said Chung Lung. "Your heart's so weak, I thought you'd be dead in six years. Who'd have believed you'd last for eight?"

"Zhang made my heart strong," said Zhongxian. "It's all because of him."

"If it's strong enough, maybe you'll live!" said Chung Lung. He lunged like an apocalypse.

Stone and dirt roared up from the earth around him. The gate to Zhang's house buckled, and the lamp

that hung above it shattered. Wang Zhongxian's eyes burned, and in one motion he drew his willow leaf saber and lunged forward. Chung Lung's attack was terrible, but Zhongxian's counter was fiercer; in an instant, Zhongxian stood thirty feet from the gate. The clash had cost him whip-length strips of skin and muscle from his arms and calves. A mist of blood, meat, and bone sifted to the ground behind him; this was the remains of Chung Lung.

"A wonderful display," said Pan Zhang, but his voice was subdued.

Wang Zhongxian turned, and sank to his knees. "I struck only once," he said, his tone thick and deadened. "How could I have killed my master?"

"I have studied the arts of cultivating the lover's yang," said Pan Zhang, quietly. "I had thought it would please you — you have grown so strong!"

"If I had known!" said Zhongxian.

"You're bleeding," said Zhang, hurrying to his side. "Let me tend to you."

"No!" snapped Zhongxian, tearing at his wounds with his nails. "I've betrayed him. I should be killed!"

Zhang knelt and embraced him; but Zhongxian did not relent. His blood poured over Pan Zhang, leaving fierce burns on Zhang's flesh. They knelt there through the night, and the morning, and the night again. On that night, Zhongxian's arms wrapped around Pan Zhang, at last returning his embrace.

"Heaven," he said.

"Ah," said Zhang.

Zhongxian rose to his feet, pulling Zhang with him. "Let us go inside," he said.

For thirty years, Zhang and Zhongxian lived at Lofu Mountain. When they died, they died together, and their servants buried them there. The mountain groaned and shook as the servants placed the bodies within their tomb, and from its peak sprang a tree with long branches and

leafy twigs. These embraced one another. In remembrance of Zhang and Zhongxian, the people of the region called it the Shared Pillow Tree.

Chronicle of Extraordinary Love (350 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

In the south, custom favors men who wish to marry men. One — generally, the younger — adopts the female role; the wedding rituals then proceed normally. Often, but not always, the families involved show great support for their sons.

In this region, during the Han Dynasty, Ji Fang fell in love with Rui Jin. They were married in due course. However, Jin was his family's only heir. Both families expected the marriage to come to an eventual end. This would allow Jin to marry a woman and continue his line.

In time, a suitable candidate was chosen. Jin was promised to Shen Hong. When he heard of this, Jin was shattered; a love for Ji Fang still consumed his heart.

"You are made of stone!" he cried to his father, but his father only shook his head.

"Would you kill our line? Am I to have no grandchildren? This is how it must be."

Furious, Jin drew his paired daggers and, using a traditional scissor technique, castrated himself. "You'll have no grandchildren!" he shouted. Stopping the gouts of blood with internal kung fu, he fled the room; his father had no chance to use healing techniques to mend the damage.

When she heard the news, Shen Hong turned red with fury — she looked like a boiled crab! She turned to her five brothers, whose notorious habits had earned them the name 'the Greasy Shen'. "Ji Fang has cost me my husband!" she said. "You'll end his life!"

Though he felt no anger, Ji Fang was as appalled as Hong. "What have you done?" he said. "Why would you mutilate yourself for our love?"

Gently, he undressed Jin and lay him upon the bed. "Ah!" he said softly. "The wound is too serious. Little brother, you may die."

"I would not wish that," said Jin, feeling mild regret for his rash behavior.

"I know no healing techniques," said Fang. "I must adapt my jing yin flowering style."

Resting his hands upon Jin's chest, Fang closed his eyes. A great heat poured from him, and sweat broke out on his forehead; visions danced before his eyes, and his Chi scoured the floor beneath him clean. A series of terrible chills raced through Jin. His flesh turned clammy

and cold, and the world receded from him. The terrible excesses of Yang and Yin this invoked within husband and wife sought balance, and flowed between them. There was a moment of clouds and rain. Jin woke as a woman, clasped in her husband's arms; and in her womb, their child was beginning.

In this fashion, the couple found three days of happiness. Then Fang left the house to find himself confronted by the five Greasy Shen.

"Filthy beast," said Shen Yu. "You cost my sister her husband!"

"It is useful to know efficacious sexual techniques," reflected Fang, "but at this point, it would also be helpful to know kung fu."

The fists of the Greasy Shen rained down upon him. Blood poured from Ji Fang's mouth, and his leg bones snapped. He felt his kidneys burst. Then Jin burst from the house, her eyes bright with fury. She had only scarcely bothered to dress, but she held a wicked knife in each hand.

"If I'll do it to myself," she said, knife edges gleaming, "I can do it to you."

The Greasy Shen stared for a moment. Confusion and embarrassment at Jin's transformation mixed in their hearts with fear of Jin's rage; they fled from her like startled rabbits. She knelt by Ji Fang.

"I think I'm dead," he said. "But you'll take care of our son?"

"I will," she agreed, and took his hand. He needed only that promise; his next breath sighed out his life.

Widowed, Jin returned to her home. In due time, she gave birth to her son Xin.

Twelve years passed, and Xin became known around the village as a miraculous child. He possessed all the charms of his mother, and all knew he would be a beautiful and intelligent adult. In delivering a message for his mother, he caught the eye of Shen Yu. In that moment, the Greasy Shen brother felt a powerful desire.

He traveled to Jin's home. "Let me marry him," he said. "I'll give him a good life."

Jin brushed back an errant strand of hair. "He'll grow to age without the Shen," she said, "and take the exams, and become a powerful minister. If you want him, ask him then."

Shen Yu frowned. "Don't deny me," he said. "We still haven't had our reckoning for your insult to my sister."

神兵玄奇



"Would you still like me to marry her?" asked Jin, lowering her eyelashes. "We can sacrifice a carp, a duck, and Shen Yu at the marriage ritual; then we'll smear one another's mouth with these animals' blood. That will help the marriage last!"

"You bitch!" said Shen Yu, and struck at her; but she caught his wrist between the edge of two blades, and he froze.

"Poor Shen Yu!" said Jin, laughing. "If he apologizes, he'll be a laughingstock. If he doesn't, he'll have one hand!"

"I'm sorry!" he said, and fled the room. This did not end his mischief, however. When next Xin left the house, he found himself surrounded by all five brothers. Slipping a gag over his mouth, they snatched him away. They carried him rapidly to their home, and bound him to a chair, and only then took the gag away.

"What do you plan to do with me?" asked Xin, in tones of calm curiosity.

"We'll sell you as a concubine," said Shen Yu. "Or maybe a eunuch. I haven't decided."

"Ah," he said, settling back.

"That doesn't disturb you?"

"Well," said Xin, "it would, I suppose, but you won't live to do it."

"Is that so?"

The fire in the hearth guttered and went out, leaving only glowing coals. Black clouds covered the sky: the daylight pouring in through the windows vanished. In an instant, the room had gone dark, save for the dim red light that shone behind Xin.

"A widow who devotes herself to the education of her son deserves only the highest respect," explained Xin. "Yet you have shown her none. Heaven must want her to show you a lesson."

The door opened behind them. The Greasy Shen turned to face the woman silhouetted there. From this encounter there comes a song:

*When cutting the meat from a man,
It is important to begin with the ligaments.
If they are properly severed,
The man simply falls apart — look at Shen Fu!
If you leave the ligaments for last,
You won't get a good cut.
Muscle clings to the bones.
The bones cling together.
It's a lot more work — just look at Shen Yu!
A superior man
Respects a scholarly widow.*

Male Homosexuality in Shen Zhou (Discussion)

The people of Shen Zhou do not conceptualize homosexuality and bisexuality in the same fashion as modern Americans. Inborn sexual preferences follow the same distribution as in the modern day, but the relevant social pressures differ.

The prevailing social model defines penetration as the adult male role. This leads to two common forms of homosexual relationship. In one form, one partner becomes gender-dissonant and adopts a female role — primarily within the relationship, although this extends somewhat to social interactions in general. In the other form, both partners remain men, and the relationship hinges on the power disparity created by the gap in their ages and ranks.

Relationships of either type are socially acceptable, and many of the Han emperors were functionally bisexual. In practice, neither homosexual nor heterosexual social identities exist — while most people still strongly prefer male or female bedmates, it's ultimately a matter of taste and personality. A homosexual relationship is only shocking and humiliating if the wrong person is seen to be dominant — i.e. the man with less social standing acts as if they're the husband.

Secrets of Destiny: *Male Homosexuality*

Bedroom Strategy: Homosexual Men [Kung Fu]

Unfortunately for those in homosexual relationships, most Daoists consider the sex a total loss. A man's Yin

Chi is not strong enough to nurture his partner's Yang; thus, both partners expend sexual essence but receive no benefit in return. Much like men who pleasure themselves, they suffer weak muscles, poor eyesight and hearing, and clouded minds. The partners can avoid this only if they do not ejaculate.

In the Martial Arts World, this is the fundamental tragedy of homosexuality — social issues cannot compare! To find both fighting power and love, one must become a legend. The path of least resistance makes a warrior a burden to his mate.

DESTINY COST

- I **Destiny:** having found an appropriate mate, use Daoist Self-Control (a Specialization in the Hardiness skill) in bed. This counteracts significant health or game mechanical effects a homosexual relationship might otherwise incur, but both characters still notice the drain upon their Chi that the occasional indiscretion brings.

Partner Cultivation

[Secret Arts]

The “three strategies” provide superior alternatives for male warriors who find love with other men. All three rely on secret techniques; using them is not common practice, but rather the superhuman effort that typifies legendary and heroic characters. Powerful figures in the martial arts world inevitably find one of these solutions; typical members of the Clans do not.

The first of these strategies is Yang Sacrifice. Only one partner can perform this technique, as Pan Zhang did for Wang Zhongxian. Used during the sexual act, this technique feeds some of the user's strength into his mate. At a minimum, this gift compensates the recipient for lost Yang; used to its fullest, it can restore life to the dying or make a feeble man into a powerful fighter.

DESTINY COST

- 10 **Discovery:** your partner possesses the Yang Sacrifice technique.
- 3 **Technique:** if you can learn secret arts, you have the opportunity to learn the *Yin/Yang Sacrifice* secret technique (pg. 227), making homosexuality safe and beneficial for your partner.

Partner Transformation

[Secret Art]

The second strategy is partner transformation, in which Chi techniques convert a beloved “blossom boy” into a woman. This is usually the least desirable strategy from an in-character standpoint, but has social benefits and can result in an interesting story.

DESTINY COST

- 10 **Technique:** if you can learn secret arts, you have the opportunity to learn a sexual style that includes the ability to transform a partner in this fashion. This can be a “surprise,” but the partner must consent sexually, even after Chi techniques are invoked.

(-5) The technique only works on previously castrated partners.

- * **Bonus:** you receive this lore sheet for free if your character is a woman who had this strategy performed upon her.

Yin-Yang Warrior

[Secret Art]

The third — and most desirable — strategy is the way of the Yin-Yang Warrior, in which a male becomes a well of both Yin and Yang Chi. If one partner is a yin-yang warrior, both grow strong. In bed, a yin-yang warrior adapts his Chi to the pattern of either a man or a woman. This allows him to purchase destiny and apply techniques as a homosexual or heterosexual member of either sex, although he cannot act as both a man and a woman in a single encounter.

DESTINY COST

- 5 **Technique:** you can make Destiny purchases, sleep with your partner, and apply sexual techniques as either a heterosexual or homosexual member of either sex, although you cannot act as both a man and a woman in a single encounter.

Advanced Topics

DESTINY COST

- 0 *Daoist Sexual Techniques* (pg. 226) — take this lore if and when you can learn secret arts.

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- I *Courtship* — how are others wooed and won?
- I *Husband and Wife* — the pattern for committed relationships of all sorts!
- I *Daoist Sexual Basics* — can warriors practice both sex and violence?
- I *Female Homosexuality* — a female couple need not fear Yang depletion, but can their bedroom skills nourish the Yin?



Female Homosexuality

Destiny Cost: 2
Study Difficulty: Learning (20)

Why Is This Section Here?

Pretty much, for the same reasons as the section on male homosexuality (earlier). Again, this isn't really about sex — it's about core romantic motivation. No one cares what your character does under the covers; it's all about how it affects the character's life in Shen Zhou society and the Martial Arts World.

Canary and Fish

(400 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

Jin Ching's Chicken

The night was clear and the moon was bright, but the hills rang with the distant sound of thunder. The pine trees stood tall and green. Jin Ching roasted a chicken over her fire on a hot metal spit. She sat nearby, occasionally reaching out to turn the bird.

Four bandits surrounded her. They were ugly, unshaven men, wearing metal on their chest and carrying long, tasseled spears. The end of each spear was wickedly barbed. The bandits gave her no opportunity to speak. No sooner did she look up to acknowledge their presence than the first one rushed her.

Still sitting, Jin Ching grasped the spit by one end and raised it up to skewer the haft of the spear just behind its point. She dragged her arm in a circle, and the spear slammed into the ground to her left. Her left hand grabbed the spear and shoved its haft into the bandit's stomach. His armor rang. He wrenched the spear away and staggered back; Ching's spit slid smoothly out of the wood.

Two attacked. Jin Ching whipped the spit; the chicken flew from it to slam into one bandit's head. He reeled. The spit came around in her hand and caught the other's spear behind one barb; with a contemptuous gesture, she guided the spear into the bandit's comrade's neck. Jin Ching's position remained unchanged; she still sat calmly by the fire.

"I'm Jin Ching," she said, "and I belonged to the Autumn Edge Society. I wore gold in my hair and sang to greet the dawn, so they called me Canary. If all three of you attack me, it'll be a terrible fight; I might need to stand up. If

you leave, I'll eat my dinner in peace. It'd be wise to run."

"I won't run from a woman, even if it's unwise!" exclaimed the leader.

Ching stood then, and the air burned with the power of her Chi. The leader set himself in stance; the other bandits fled. Carefully and deliberately, Ching reached down to pick up her wineskin. "You're a stronger fighter than the others," she said. "I'll use a two weapon technique."

The leader stepped forward, probing the air with his spear. She slammed the wineskin into it, and wine sprayed over his face. For a moment, he was blind; the spit flew from her hand to embed itself through his eye and out the back of his head. Ching kicked his spear to the side and sat down again. The leader fell.

From outside the circle of firelight, a voice spoke. "Admirable technique."

"Hardly," said Ching. "I've lost my wine and my dinner. It's hard to cultivate inner peace on an empty stomach."

Thunder rolled in the air. It was closer now.

"I've got bread and dried meat."

"I can smell it," Ching agreed. "But it's rude to take food from someone you've killed."

"You don't have to kill me."

Ching did not turn. "Fei Yuan," she said. "You swam every morning in the river, so the brothers called you Flying Fish. You're here to bring me back to the Society. So even if it's regrettable, you'll have to die."

Fei Yuan Names Maneuvers

Fei Yuan came forward into view: a slim and decorous woman, with two long knives sheathed on her leg. "We could discuss the matter."

Ching smiled. "I haven't spoken to you in some time," she said. "So we can talk. But I'm hungry and tired, so I'll have to start killing you now."

In one smooth motion, she drew a sword and stood.

Fei Yuan said, "At the society, after dinner, we'd go upstairs together. Sixteenth brother used to smirk at us. I think he imagined that as soon as we shut the door, we'd start making the clouds and rain."

"Such attitudes are disgusting," answered Ching.

"Probably," Yuan agreed. "But I'd always somewhat wondered why we never did."

"If you won't fight," said Ching, "you'll die wondering such things."

Fei Yuan nodded and drew her knives. "First maneuver," she said. "The Crane defends its Mate." She lunged, a long and cutting stroke against Ching's right side, her left-hand knife held sideways to intercept Ching's sword.



"It's polite of you to announce your moves," said Ching, and her sword swept forward. Yuan's left-hand knife met it mid-stroke. The soft-packed earth could not support such a confrontation; rather than breaking Yuan's defense or stopping against it, Ching's blow sent Yuan skidding three yards to the side. Her right-hand knife speared into an old pine, which shuddered. Ching jumped at Yuan, who scrambled up the tree in three bounds. Just before Ching reached it, the trunk, shivering from Yuan's blow a second before, exploded in a cloud of bark and wood. A dozen turns of Ching's sword kept shards of pine from her face, even as Yuan leapt to another tree.

"Why did you leave?" Yuan asked. Ching swept her sword through the base of Yuan's new perch, cutting the tree in two; she kicked it to make it fall. Yuan pushed lightly off the tree branch and, floating in the air, gave it a kick of her own; the tree spun in the air and swept towards Ching.

"The Society spends its time meddling in politics and the affairs of the world." Ching lunged past the branches to catch the tree trunk near the top; with a supreme effort, she spun the fallen tree like a giant club to catch Yuan in midair. Yuan plunged both knives into it and the impact split the tree in half; Ching shrugged and tossed it aside. As Yuan landed, Ching added, "I'm tired of fighting for such things — I just want peace."

Yuan's foot touched a bandit's spear. She looked at it for a moment, thinking, and then kicked it aside. It landed, point canted upwards, its haft wedged between two rocks.

"Second maneuver," said Yuan. "Evening the Balance."

Yuan hurled herself towards Ching, facing sideways to minimize her profile. Ching's sword came up to meet her, sweeping Yuan around; but rather than blocking it solidly, Yuan yielded to the blow, her body twisting. Her feet came up in a kick. She turned until she lay sideways in the air, Ching's sword passing over her waist, arm, and head, and both feet slammed solidly into Ching's abdomen. Ching landed hard on her back, gasping for breath.

"That's the sixth maneuver, not the second!" she said, outraged.

Yuan curled herself forward like a striking snake; rather than landing on her back or side, she extended her toes to the ground and dug them in, pulling herself forward into a kneeling position, knife slamming down to touch its point to Ching's throat.

"And what about those you abandoned?" Yuan asked, delicately.

Ching shrugged. "You think my path's unrighteous," she said. "If you won't use kung fu to fix the world's wrongs, you don't deserve to be a fighter — isn't that what the society says? So I'm a shame to our style. I should be killed to preserve its purity."

Yuan considered. "That is what our teacher would do."

"But I won't let you do it!" said Ching. She hit the ground with her elbows and then grabbed the knife. Before Yuan could move, the ground down to six feet beneath them dissolved. Ching flipped Yuan in midair, slamming her against the wall of the hastily-formed pit, and rolled away from the blade. Her sword came into her hand and lunged for Yuan's heart.

Yuan caught it between the two knives and held it away from her body. Her arms trembled with the strain. "Will killing me bring you peace?"

The sky was still clear, but the thunder was very close.

"You didn't have to find me," Ching replied.

Yuan's calm façade broke, and she snarled. Her knives came together; the metal of Ching's sword cracked and the blade split. She lunged forward, two steps, three steps, five; Ching swept her broken blade in frantic parries until she was pressed up against the edge of the pit. She tried to jump out; Yuan's foot lashed out and pinned her against the dirt wall. Ching's eyes widened. Yuan's words were as sharp as her knives, and louder than the thunder. "You think I could just let you vanish?"

Ching sagged, blade falling. The knives came forward, passing between Ching's ears and her scalp to slam into the wall. A few wisps of hair floated to the ground.

"Yes," Ching said. "I thought you could do that."

Yuan turned away. "Why?"

"Because the alternative is killing me."

"And?"

"You don't want to do that."

"I could bring you back with your arms and legs trussed and your sword in five pieces," said Yuan.

Ching nodded. "At which point our master would kill me, rendering the decision moot."

"I could have come with you."

"He won't lose both of his prize students. If you go back empty-handed, you'll get a beating. If you run off with me, he'll find us and carve us open."

"You have a point," said Yuan.

"So why'd you come here?"

"Because I believe in using our skills to solve the problems of the world."

Master Wu Approaches

The woods rumbled with thunder, and Ching's face went pale. "That's no storm god making that racket."

"No," agreed Yuan. "It's our master keeping himself calm by bleeding off excess Chi."

Ching reflected. "May I translate your previous statement into everyday language?"

"Go ahead."

"You want us to commit glorious suicide trying to fight him, so you left a note saying that when you found me, you weren't coming back."

"More or less," agreed Yuan. "But I'd hoped we'd win."

"Next time you want to fight at my side against hopeless odds," said Ching, "could you not break my sword? I don't have a spare."

"I'm sorry," said Yuan. "I'm better at strategy than tactics."

The ground shook. Yuan and Ching were flung into the sides of Ching's excavation. A sound like a falling dragon filled the forest, and the air grew thick with power. A man in loose brown robes advanced to the side of the pit and looked down at them; his eyes were dead white and his expression calm.

"Master Wu," said Yuan, inclining her head.

"There you are," he said. "I've been looking for you."

"Glorious teacher," Yuan said, "I believe that Ching would like to be freed of the obligations of our sect, so that she may retreat from the world and live a life of contemplation and inner peace."

"That's well and good," said Wu, "but it doesn't match my plans for her. Those who won't fight at my side might as well die."

"Conversely," said Yuan, "I believe in fighting for the sake of righteousness, and would therefore like to defend her and kill you, after which I will return your body to the society house."

"Again," said Wu, "this does not match my plans. Nevertheless, though I doubt your methodology, I find your motivations admirable, and I am glad that I have raised at least one respectful student."

Yuan held up her hand. After a moment, Ching did the same. Wu reached down and heaved both of them up from the pit, setting them down on the ground beside him.

"So we'll need," Yuan explained, "to fight."

W u ' s

expression flickered. His irises and pupils returned; anger flared in his face. Then his body blazed with a release of crimson Chi and a low rumble of power that set Yuan's teeth on edge. Wu calmed.

"Bones can be set," said Wu, "but students can't be replaced. I can't lose both of you; so I'll have to teach you a lesson and drag you back with me."

"First maneuver," said Yuan. "The Crane defends its Mate."

Yuan and Ching moved as a pair. Ching lunged, her broken blade extended in a long and cutting stroke against Wu's right side. Yuan glided forward beside her, holding her knives to shield Ching from Wu.

"I invented that technique," said Wu, and spread his arms like a crane baring its wings. The wind from that gesture caught Yuan and sent her tumbling into Ching. The two of them hit the ground; Ching rolled up and onto one knee, while Yuan bounded entirely upright. Wu's eyes regarded them, dead white once again. "You wouldn't beat me with it if you trained for ten thousand years."

Yuan shook her head to clear it. "Second technique," she said. "Evening the Balance."

"You're too predictable!" said Wu. "I'm ashamed of my students!"

Yuan hurled herself towards Wu, facing sideways to minimize her profile. Her back shielded Ching from view. Wu struck her a blow that caved in three ribs; but as Yuan spun in the air, Ching's feet slammed into Wu's chest. He staggered back three steps, and the bandit's upward-angled spear plunged through the back of his leg.

"Yaa!" shouted Yuan, and lunged. Her knife hit his extended palm and trembled there, shivering against his skin for a full three seconds, before Wu closed his fist and shattered it.

"That was the sixth technique," said Wu. The air shook as he bled off his anger.

"I would not want my master ashamed of my predictability," said Yuan.

Wu's eyes cleared, and his face contorted. He snarled like a tiger and struck. He passed between them, not touching; but the wake of his passage snapped Yuan and Ching's legs and knocked the breath from their lungs. He came to a stop against a tree, panting. Both Yuan and Ching screamed, in nearly the same voice, stumbling to the ground. Wu yanked the spear out of his leg and sat down. "It's over," he said. "Surrender, and I'll take you home."

Wincing, Yuan looked over at Ching. "I don't suppose you'd like to do that?"

It took Ching a moment before she could breathe again.

When she spoke, it was interspersed with gasping. "Yuan, surely you know why we never shared a bed."

Wu looked startled, then regretful; then, slowly, his face calmed and his eyes faded to white. Yuan only shook her head. Ching struggled for the breath to speak again; but it was Wu who answered.

"She didn't want you to get attached. Because she'd decided that if it came to this, she'd make me kill her and take you back alone." Wu allowed himself a rueful smile. "It's tragic for me — I'm discovering unexpected qualities in my students, but it's too late to cultivate them."



Unexpected Qualities

"If I'd taken your virginity," said Ching, "you'd be my widow. This way, you can find someone else."

Yuan frowned. "That's nice."

"It was doomed from the beginning," Ching said, "so I decided we'd be friends."

Yuan sighed. "I wish I'd known," she said. "I'd have snuck into your bed, if that's all it was."

"Don't mock my sacrifice," said Ching.

"I'm not," said Yuan. "But Wu should look at his hand."

Wu glanced downwards at his palm, which was black with clotted blood beneath the skin. His face set in a mask of iron control; power poured off of him in waves. "What's this?" he asked, mildly.

"The death touch," said Yuan. "I knew I wasn't powerful enough to break your skin with my knife, so I learned a technique that didn't require it."

Wu closed his eyes. "An intelligent student is a blessing and a curse. I should not have lowered my guard."

"Master," said Yuan, "I would like your blessing on my wedding."

"This isn't the south, girl," snapped Wu. The air pulsed. "You can't marry her."

"I'm not in the north, south, east, or west," said Yuan. "I'm not even in Shen Zhou! I'm in the Autumn Edge Society, and we stand apart."

"Then I'll give you my blessing," said Wu, "if you'll promise to redeem her, and drag her back into using her talents to fix the wrongs of the world."

Yuan calculated. "Done."

Ching blinked. "I don't agree to that!"

"It's her promise, not yours," said Wu. "Now go away and let me die."

"My legs are broken," Ching pointed out.

"Don't spoil a happy ending with complaints," said Yuan.

"My legs are broken, and I have a nagging wife."

"Life is full of sorrow," said master Wu wisely, and he died.

Before Her Victory

(10 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

The room was dark. The wolf claws strapped to Silver Willow's hand caught reflections of what light there was. She was sweating. Heat poured off of her. With her hand on Silver Willow's arm, An-mei could feel her trembling, beneath the skin.

"It's best," Silver Willow said, "if I die."

"Maybe," said An-mei, "but you won't."

"Tomorrow, I have to fight him. If I lose, my family will be humiliated; they'll have to kowtow before the Tang Clan."

"That's true."

"So I'll die now," said Silver Willow. "Then I won't lose."

An-mei's arm reached Silver Willow's throat before the wolf claws did, held sideways to protect it. Spots of blood welled up on An-mei's wrist, but the claws did not sink in. Silver Willow made an inarticulate noise of frustration.

"I'm too slow now. Even a girl can stop me!"

"You're a girl."

"That's not the point," said Silver Willow. Slowly, she withdrew her hand.

"There's no shame in being weakened by torture and drugs," An-mei said. "If they wanted a fair duel, they wouldn't do such things."

"You're not part of the Wulin," said Silver Willow. "You wouldn't understand."

"If you're going to be a fierce and proud warrior," said An-mei, "then fight him tomorrow and win. If you're going to snivel and crawl, then don't bother with suicide — you won't have any honor anyway."

“You’re not part of the Wulin,” Silver Willow repeated.

“You should imagine that I am,” answered An-mei, “if it will make my words sensible to you.”

Silver Willow sighed. “I’d be a warrior,” she said, “if I could remember how. I close my eyes and I see nothing but needles and filth. My Chi is like a river of their wastes.”

An-mei considered. “Literally?”

“. . . no,” said Silver Willow. “They haven’t poisoned it.”

“You keep your hair cut short,” said An-mei. “Your smile is warm and it has your heart in it. You’re strong and dedicated to your kung fu. When we’re not being held captive by the filthy Tang, it’s hard to get your attention — you’re so obsessed with the Wulin. You’re rude to me.”

“I don’t mean to be.”

“It’s not surprising,” said An-mei. “You’re afraid that if you were polite, I’d try to kiss you.”

Silver Willow considered. “That seems a valid fear,” she agreed.

“You’re in a lot of pain,” An-mei said, “so I’ll forgive you for an honest answer.”

“Thanks.”

“I was afraid, when I saw them grab you. That’s why I ran out to stop them.”

“That was dumb,” said Silver Willow. “You should have trusted that I’d beat them.”

“You didn’t.”

“But you wouldn’t be here.”

“I’m glad I’m here.”

“They’ll keep you here when I go to fight tomorrow,” said Silver Willow. “And if I win, they’ll kill you.”

“An empty threat,” said An-mei. “If you win, they’ll be ashamed; if they kill me, they’ll be too embarrassed to live!”

“Why would you want to kiss me?” said Silver Willow.

“A strong fighter still needs someone to mend her clothes, cook for her, and keep her house neat,” said An-mei. “If you show up at a fight with ragged clothes, you won’t impress the Wulin sage!”

“Is that really his criterion?”

“It seems as likely as any.”

“In the Wulin,” Silver Willow explained, “you have to stand alone. It’s true for men, and it’s more true for girls. If you can’t take care of yourself, you can’t be a fighter — it’s just that simple.”

“The emperor’s a strong fighter,” said An-mei. “I suppose he mustn’t have an empress.”

“Don’t let’s argue,” said Silver Willow, quietly. “It’s too difficult.”

“Are you scared of difficult things?”

“Tomorrow,” said Silver Willow, “I am going to have to fight him; and I am going to have to win, though I can scarcely not scream to imagine his face.”

An-mei touched the warrior’s arm. “Then we should do other difficult things.”

“Such is the lot of women,” said Silver Willow.

Female Homosexuality in Shen Zhou (Discussion)

Female homosexuality isn’t particularly shocking in Shen Zhou. Love and sexual attraction aren’t the core of a Shen Zhou marriage. Poets care, romantics care, but the fabric of society doesn’t care whom anyone loves or feels attracted to. Society only cares whether a woman marries and bears her husband sons. These things are social duties, not matters of the heart.

In a marriage predicated primarily on the social contract — specifically, on the woman having sons for her husband’s lineage — the husband may not care whether his wife also sleeps with her maid. Similarly, if two female servants sleep with one another, who has reason to object?

A daughter leaves the household when she marries. Her duty to the birth family isn’t related to sex or reproduction at all — she should avoid shaming them, and ideally the marriage benefits them in some way. In the south, two women can sometimes marry if the “husband” pays a suitable brideprice — it’s a better deal for the bride’s family than selling her as a servant.

The “husband” in such cases is often a woman who already stands outside the social norms. Powerful women, such as members of the Wulin, often refuse to accept arranged marriages. At that point it doesn’t matter if they sleep with women instead. If two such women find one another, then the roles of husband and wife are sometimes fluid.

Secrets of Destiny:
Female Homosexuality

Bedroom Strategy: Homosexual Women
[Kung Fu]

Daoists don't think of lesbian sex as a loss so much as a non-event. A woman's Yin Chi never runs out. It's hard for a woman to nourish another woman's Yin Chi, but there's no real harm in trying.

Much as with male homosexual couples, women occasionally pursue the "three strategies" to better cultivate their Chi through sex. These strategies are partner cultivation, partner transformation, and the way of the Yin-Yang Warrior; they receive abbreviated descriptions below, since lesbians don't need these techniques as much as male homosexuals do.

DESTINY COST

- 10 **Discovery:** your partner possesses the Yin Sacrifice technique.
- 3 **Technique:** you have the opportunity to learn the *Yin/Yang Sacrifice* secret technique, making homosexuality beneficial to your partner.
- 5 **Technique:** you are a yin-yang warrior. You can make Destiny purchases, sleep with your partner, and apply sexual techniques as either a heterosexual or homosexual member of either sex, although you cannot act as both a man and a woman in a single encounter.
- 20 **Technique:** you have the opportunity to learn a sexual style that includes the ability to transform a female partner into a functional male. The partner must consent sexually, and continue that consent even after you introduce Chi techniques to the encounter. These styles are forbidden by Heaven, since Heaven uses the birth of sons to reward worthy lineages.
- * **Bonus:** you receive this lore sheet for free if your character is a man, born as a woman but transformed using a forbidden sexual style.

Social Strategy: Homosexual Women
[Destiny]

A woman is an outsider to the family. She leaves it when she marries and enters her new family's descent line. This is why lesbian marriages are impossible in most of Shen Zhou — how can an outsider welcome another outsider into the line of descent, particularly when they can't have children?

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Destiny:** you're destined to become part of your descent line. This usually means that two destinies conflicted — even though you're the destined daughter of your parents, they also deserved to have a son (or an extra son) to continue their line. You'll marry a woman, bringing her into your family, and have at least one son by her. Exactly how and when is unclear; the GM decides. This is ultimately a gift from Heaven, so while unpleasant scenarios are possible, horrifying ones are not.
- 3 **Victory:** receive social recognition as part of your descent line, without disguising yourself as a man. You must have demonstrated your worth to Clan and family. If you're not in the south, you must also get appropriate auguries or other signs indicating that you're meant to play the part — the Destiny above helps.

Advanced Topics

DESTINY COST

- 0 *Daoist Sexual Techniques* (pg. 225) — but you must be able to learn secret arts.

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- 1 *Courtship* — how are others wooed and won?
- 1 *A Woman's Life* — what influences shape a woman in Shen Zhou?
- 1 *Husband and Wife* — what patterns shape a committed couple's interactions?
- 1 *Daoist Sexual Basics* — the Plain Girl teaches the illustrious Heaven-sent Yellow Emperor Huangti the fundamentals of healthy Daoist sex!
- 1 *Male Homosexuality* — a male couple has a firm place in the descent lines of their families, but can their bedroom skills compensate for lost Yang energy?



Ruler and Subject

Destiny Cost: 2
Study Difficulty: Politics (20)

The Three Heroes of Wu

(750 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

Ling Zhi, Crying Tortoise, and Topsy Monk stood before the King of Wu.

"You are the three greatest heroes of my realm," said the King. "Therefore, I have called you here to do battle with Xi Shi, who is also called the Thousand-Man Prophecy Killer."

Ling Zhi blanched. "She's called that because the diviners said she'd kill one thousand warriors before she was defeated — and she's only on five hundred and sixty-nine! Sending us against her is like signing our death warrant!"

"That's true," said King Fu Cha.

"I won't do it."

King Fu Cha tilted his head to one side. "Where's your loyalty?"

"Pardon," said Topsy Monk. "But it seems to me that this order's unrighteous. Why strip your Kingdom of its greatest warriors? It's a subject's duty to defy orders like this, and remonstrate the King."

King Fu Cha said, "I called you because she asked me to. She's a fierce warrior, but also a glorious beauty. If she fights and kills you, her reputation will grow. That will please her, and I'll see her smile. If you refuse, she'll watch your executions. That's not as pleasant for me."

Crying Tortoise sighed. "They whisper that our King has lost the mandate of Heaven. You'd throw your greatest warriors away? That's a sure sign."

King Fu Cha shrugged. "If I'm wicked, then I've lost the mandate. Great warriors will turn on me; my courtiers will lead armies against me; I'll end my life in exile. If I'm virtuous, then my dynasty lives on in Wu, and history will remember you as chaotic warriors without loyalty. Deciding when a King's mandate ends — that's hard even for the diviners! You'll fight her either way, so it's your choice: die serving a King, or die defying him."

Ling Zhi made a face. "Serving him, then."

Crying Tortoise nodded, curtly.

Topsy Monk shrugged. "You'd waste my life. I won't give in, even if it's best."

Fu Cha nodded. "Then begin."

From the back of the room, Xi Shi entered. Her beauty was radiant. Her eyes were dark blue. Highlights of the same color gleamed in her hair. Her long-handled battle axe gleamed. Her dress shimmered in several colors, and her pale skin was soft.

Ling Zhi drew his sword. Crying Tortoise and Topsy Monk assumed their stance. They stood in a fighting triangle — an invincible formation practiced in the time of the Zhou.

"First," said King Fu Cha, "attend to this matter."

Ling Zhi understood instantly. He turned, breaking formation, and struck. His sword reached Topsy Monk's chin before the counterblow came. Topsy Monk hit the blade sideways with the palm of his hand; but Ling Zhi's sword still bit into the side of his neck. Topsy Monk looked stunned.

"What's this?"

"All my blade's weight's at the tip," said Ling Zhi, turning the sword sideways with abnormal speed to widen the wound. "Two hundred pounds! That's why it was so hard to knock aside."

"No!" shouted Topsy Monk, trying to jump back. He only made it a single yard; Crying Tortoise hooked Topsy Monk's foot with his own and dragged him back. "Why are you attacking me? This is infamous!"

Ling Zhi's sword embedded itself in Topsy Monk's skull. "You're a traitor," he said. "It's only natural."

Crying Tortoise struck the side of Topsy Monk's head. Topsy Monk fell forward in an involuntary kowtow. The motion ripped Ling Zhi's sword through Topsy Monk's brain.

"It's true," agreed Crying Tortoise. "A virtuous warrior always triumphs over a soldier without filial loyalty."

"If that's true," asked Xi Shi, "do you expect to stand against me?"

"Alas," said Crying Tortoise, "when a virtuous hero competes against a vicious woman, the matter can go one way or the other."

"That's good, then," said Xi Shi. The silvery-white light that flared in the throne room of the King of Wu could have burned a man blind.

Afterwards, the King of Wu held Xi Shi in his arms and washed the blood and ash from her. "Ah!" he said. "The grime does not cling. Like a flower raised on manure, you grow more beautiful with every man you kill."

Xi Shi touched his nose and smiled. "You are the very model of a wicked King. Yet where shall I be when your mandate fails?"

The King of Wu said, "It is the King of Yue who sent you to me. When I fall, to his side you shall return. You will tell him that everything you've done, you've done only to dissipate me."

"So loyal!" said Xi Shi. "I must be very virtuous."

"Such measurements depend on one's priorities," said the King of Wu, and kissed her brow.

A Ruler's Authority

(Discussion)

To rule, one must make efficacious pronouncements. Before a minister or general can act on a King or Emperor's will, they must verify that any new orders come from the throne. This is why the Seal is the fundamental symbol of a ruler's authority. The ability to verify that documents and commands come from the throne is the lynchpin of a monarch's power. When Wangmang took power from the Han Dynasty, he demonstrated his authority by claiming a Jade Seal embodying Heaven's authority. The Han Dynasty returned when a Han emperor reclaimed the Seal.

One form of the seal is the tally—a carved stone, broken in half. One half travels with a military commander as he journeys. The throne retains the other half. If the ruler wishes to send the commander new orders, the messenger must take the broken tally. By fitting the pieces together, the commander can verify the truth of the messenger's words. Legitimate possession of half a tally is part of the package that defines a general's authority. It lets him draw on the righteous power of the throne, because it allows him to respond correctly to the throne's will.

The mandate of Heaven is like a tally. Heaven does not lend its authority to the Emperor or lesser Kings in full. It gives them a partial mandate. When Heaven wishes a King to reform, it sends disasters and trouble — implicitly, it reminds the King it still holds part of his mandate. If the King does not obey, Heaven withdraws the mandate, and the King can no longer rule by moral right. This leads with clockwork inevitability to the King's fall.

Rightful authority holds the mandate of Heaven. If a subject opposes a righteous King or Emperor, that's a chaotic and treacherous act! It's also against filial piety. When the mandate withdraws, then the King or Emperor has no real authority. Then it's proper to remove them from power.

Stress Profile for the Ruler

This profile helps explain the behavior of a typical monarch in Shen Zhou. It's here to help GMs and interested players estimate how much a subject's relationship strains the monarch's patience, and how a King or Emperor might react to an increased or decreased level of strain.

Clan Heads often act as rulers. They don't technically have the mandate of Heaven, but they have patrilineal authority — that's even better!

- **Tension increased by:** Denying the ruler's righteousness. From a Legalist perspective, an unrighteous ruler is an oxymoron — attacking a ruler's moral authority denies the existence and implications of his temporal power. From a Confucian perspective, unrighteous rulers can exist, but chaos inevitably consumes their rule. Qin Shihuangdi burned most of the books in Shen Zhou so that scholars could not quote from them to argue against his righteousness.
- **Behavior in Tense Relationships:** Debate or retribution. In private, when dealing with valuable subjects, a ruler might seek to rebut criticism. If a public response is necessary, however, it's almost always punishment — an attack against the philosophical foundations of a King's power is an attack upon the King.
- **Tension reduced by:** Keeping the ruler's best interests in one's thoughts. A truly filial subject values the ruler's best interests even above the orders that sovereign gives them. Given an unwise command, the subject remonstrates with their sovereign three times before obeying. If the ruler is intransigent, the subject then considers whether it is better to obey or respectfully accept execution.
- **Behavior in Low-Tension Relationships:** Righteous leadership. Philosophies differ. Some Kings reward for loyalty; others for effective service. Keeping a ruler happy does not inherently come with rewards. It does, however, facilitate the King's noticing one's accomplishments.

Secrets of Destiny: Ruler and Subject

Gou Jian

[Destiny]

After Wu conquered Yue, King Gou Jian of Yue was Fu Cha's slave for years. He served in an exemplary fashion, so Fu Cha released him and he returned to his throne. Then Gou Jian resolved to defeat the powerful King of Wu. To remind himself of his humiliation, he slept at night on firewood and straw rather than a bed, and licked a gallbladder to taste its bitterness. His dedication so impressed the beautiful and deadly Xi Shi that she let him send her to Wu as a concubine and slave. Her beauty destroyed Fu Cha's virtue, and Yue absorbed Wu.

神兵玄奇

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from Gou Jian by blood or martial tradition.
- 3 **Victory:** once during the game, if you descend from Gou Jian, you may resolve to commit a terrible revenge. No matter how great the indignity done you, if you dedicate yourself to your righteous anger, you'll have an opportunity to return it in kind. If the monstrous Earth Lord's tortured you in the dungeons of Lor's Forbidden Territory, you'll have a chance to catch him while he's weak and return the favor. The GM doesn't have to hurry, but you can't actually die until you've completed your revenge.
- * **Bonus:** if you descend from Gou Jian, you have a silver tongue. You have a +1 bonus to your Persuade skill. This can increase it to 6.

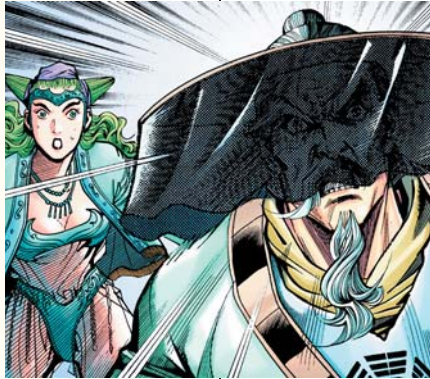
Metal Liquid Delegates

[*Secret Society*]

The Metal Liquid Delegates study a secret art that gives them perfect expression of their master's will. When their eyes go blank and white, they know exactly what their ruler would have them do. This knowledge drives them, but does not compel them — with an effort of Will, a Metal Liquid Delegate can rebel. Emperor Hu has a sect of Metal Liquid Delegates under his control (it is rumored he uses them to control his intelligence network), and the secrets are known to at least one Clan.

DESTINY COST

- I **Technique:** If you can buy secret arts, you gain access to the Metal Liquid secret technique. You can dedicate yourself to one person, gaining knowledge of what they would have you do in any circumstance. This is a prediction, not a communication — it tells you what your orders would be, if you had time to make a full report and receive orders in reply. Your superior does not actually learn anything about the situation.



Xi Shi

[*Destiny*]

The King of Yue sent Xi Shi to Wu to ensnare its King with her peerless beauty. King Fu Cha squandered the wealth of his Kingdom giving her treasures and wasted its heroes testing her prophesied invulnerability. She spread chaos and destroyed Fu Cha's mandate. Although Yue considered her a hero, Wu remembers her as an evil fox spirit, and its heroes hounded her until her death.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **History:** you descend strongly from Xi Shi by blood or martial tradition.
- 3 **Bonus:** if you descend from Xi Shi, the manner of your death is obvious to those with a diviner's arts. Work with the GM to define the circumstances of your death — by fire, by the sea, after killing one thousand men, and so forth. If the circumstances aren't right, only a baneful warrior can actually kill you — anyone else just knocks you unconscious instead. Note that your weakness will become common knowledge in the Wulin once a few people have reason to cast auguries, and NPCs can twist prophecy just like player characters can. If you can only die by sea, your important enemies can and will do things like writing the character for Sea on their weapon.
- * **Bonus:** you gain the 3-Destiny version (Quality Beauty) of the Good Looks Advantage; if you already had it, you gain the 6-Destiny version (Perfect Beauty). You're not any prettier, just better at capitalizing on it.

Advanced Topics

DESTINY COST

- 5 *The Transformation of the World* (pg. 353) — how can you manipulate the ruler's mandate?

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- I *Parent and Child* — the model for all hierarchical relationships!
- I *Clan and Family* — the harmonious social structure of Shen Zhou!

Teacher and Student

Destiny Cost: 2
Study Difficulty: Grace (20)

The Notorious Dark Warrior Wu

(15 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

The Sublime Doctrine Sect

The Sublime Doctrine Sect headquarters had demon faces carved into all of its walls and the heads of rival martial artists on stakes outside its gate. Although bold and virtuous for an eight-year-old, Feng could not help but feel afraid as she approached.

"Wai! Feng!" The boy sitting on the steps looked up. "What are you doing here?"

"I want to study with Master Zi."

"You can't, la," said the boy. "He'd tell you, 'it's the tradition of the Sublime Doctrine Sect — we don't teach girls.'"

"Bah," said Feng. "Won't you help your own sister?"

The boy brushed his hair to one side with his hand. "Help, la? I can't even let you in! You'll have to call me Frustrating Tai."

"Oh," Feng considered. "What if I burst in, wielding a farmer's sickle, and said, 'I demand that Master Zi teach me! I'll beat up his students until he does!'"

The boy shivered. "You're terrible! But I bet that his students would spring down from every side." He gestured in the air, sketching imaginary warriors. "They'd rain down from majestic stone pillars and circle around you, holding long-handled axes at the ready. Then they'd strike!"

"I'd hold them off!" declared Feng, impassioned. "Left, right, with the sickle! The sparks would fill the room and cast light on the ancient tapestries. I'd whirl and put my weapon to a student's throat. He'd be terrified! He'd have to surrender!"

"Oh!" said Tai. "You're better than I thought! But he still wouldn't teach you. I guess you'd just have to kill his students and leave."

Feng frowned. "I'm not good enough even then?"

Tai shook his head firmly. "It's the Sect tradition, la. No girls!"

Feng's Secret Techniques

Feng considered the matter further. "What if I went and learned a powerful fortress-destroying technique? I

could stride in and set myself in stance. When the students jump down all around me, I'd ignore them. Then, when they attacked, I'd whirl — they'd be blown to all sides! Light would gather around my sickle, and then I'd strike, one, two, three! The pillars would explode! The ground would crack! The roof of the Sublime Doctrine Sect headquarters would explode upwards, letting in the sun, and the dust of years would blow away. Surely he'd have to teach me then. If he didn't, I'd just finish the job!"

"No, no, no," said Tai. "If you learned a technique like that, he'd sense your Chi when you walked in. When you made that first attack, he'd catch your sickle in a grip like steel — that's how strong he is! Then he'd throw you out on your butt. I'd be sitting here on the steps, like this, and I'd point at you and laugh."

"What he wouldn't expect," said Feng, "is if I also had a special spiked sickle technique that made it too hard to grab. He'd hurt his hand if he tried!"

"Aiya!" said Tai. "You're a cunning fighter. But he still wouldn't teach you. I guess you'd just have to destroy the Sect headquarters, kill his students, mock Master Zi, and leave."

Feng stomped her foot. "He'd have to take me as his student if I was good enough!"

"Why?"

"Because I'd bring honor to the Sublime Doctrine Sect with my marvelous kung fu!"

Tai hesitated, and then heaved a long sigh. "Hoo."

"What if I marched in, a master of powerful techniques, but instead of breaking everything, I kowtowed before him, and said, 'Master, I wish only to bring honor to this place. Your reputation has spread to every peak and valley of the north! Let me study with you — I won't be disappointing!'"

Tai looked interested. "Would you have some kind of powerful kowtowing technique? You could break the ground with your head to impress him!"

"Annoying Tai!"

"He'd just say no, either way."

"But it's honoring him, to say that!"

"He wouldn't think so, la. It's too bad. You're dedicated to your kung fu!"

"Then help me," Feng kowtowed. "Tell me how I can have him accept me, or I won't stop kowtowing to you!"

"Aiya, Feng, stop that. It's too embarrassing."

"I won't stop!"

神兵玄奇

"Then I'll have to help you."

Feng sprang to her feet. "Wonderful Tai!"

"Bah," Tai said.

The Master's Heart

"Here's what we'll do," Tai decided. "I'll go tell him about my sister. I'll say, 'She's really dedicated to her kung fu, even at her age. It's too bad she can't ever join us!' And he'll say, 'it's too bad, la!'"

"And then he'll change his mind?"

"Ha," snorted Tai. "Not a chance! So I'll bring it up again in a few days. 'It's too bad,' I'll say. 'She wanted to go learn powerful techniques to prove her worth, but I couldn't even let her in!' And he'll say, 'It's a good thing she didn't! You'd have tried to stop her and she'd have made you Pounded Flat Tai! But it's too bad about the Sect tradition.'"

"And then he'll change his mind?"

"You're so impatient, la!" Tai shook his head. "So I'll bring it up again a few days later. 'I wish my sister was here,' I'd say. 'She'd love to study this technique with us!' He'll nod, to show he understands."

"And then —"

"And then," said Tai expansively, "you'll show up. In a mask. And you'll tell him, 'I am the notorious dark warrior, Wu, brother of Tai! I am here to kowtow before you in hopes of joining the Sublime Doctrine Sect. But do not ask me to remove my mask! I wear it to protect a sacred trust.'"

Feng looked dubious. "He'll know I'm a girl. Isn't it embarrassing if I lie to him like that?"

"It's not that he'll believe you," said Tai. "But if you come to him as Feng, you're disloyal from the start. You're telling him he's a bad teacher who doesn't respect tradition, la! That's no way to show your worth. If you come to him as the notorious dark warrior, Wu, then he'll laugh, but he'll get to decide — is it worth pretending you're Wu so he can teach you? If he says yes, then he doesn't ever have to recognize Feng. If he says no, then you've made him laugh — that's not so bad."

"I'll do it!" exclaimed Feng. "But you should tell him about the mysterious dark warrior, Wu, too. That way he'll know it's me even if my disguise is too good."

"That's a wise precaution," Tai agreed.

Teacher-Student Relationships

(Discussion)

Parents entrust some of their authority to a teacher when they have their children taught. Kung fu masters, scholarly tutors, and Daoist masters — all of them command their students with an echo of the parents' sacred power. Unless some other authority forbids it, they hold the power of life and death over their students. More than that, they can kindle a fire of absolute devotion in the hearts of those they teach. All-consuming filial love for a teacher isn't even unusual, for the same reason that children love their parents. A character's wisdom and attainments flow from the teacher; in a real sense, each teacher is the source for part of the character's identity.

Many people in the Wulin separate themselves from the fabric of society and even their family. This only strengthens their bond and loyalty to their teachers. Clans have become kung fu schools in part because it ensures loyalty — the Dong Clan disciples value the Dong Clan not simply because of family ties but because they learn their kung fu from the powerful teachers of the Clan. The integrated training and family life that most Clans offer serves as a bridge between the independent and sometimes unfilial Wulin and the rest of society.

Stress Profile for the Teacher

This profile helps explain the behavior of a typical teacher in Shen Zhou. It's here to help GMs and interested players estimate how much a student's behavior strains the teacher-student relationship, and how the teacher might react to an increased or decreased level of strain.

- **Tension increased by:** Questioning the teacher's stature. The authority of the teacher comes from their attainments. Martial arts masters are powerful warriors and philosophers. They honor their sect's ways and their power dwarfs their students'. Scholars are learned, intelligent, and virtuous, with respectable manner and deep philosophy. They write with elegance and have a masterful understanding of the classics. Courtiers understand the minds of men and women, the ways of power, and — through righteous leadership — bring others into harmony with their own desires and the will of Heaven. To question these things is to question the teacher's place. On occasion, a student exceeds the master; when the teacher accepts this, it's common to retire in the student's favor or jealously cast the student out. That's why, most often, when cast out as a student, a member of the Wulin both assumes and asserts the teacher's jealousy as a cause.
- **Behavior in Tense Relationships:** Demonstrations of superiority. The teacher's goal in a tense situation isn't typically to punish the student. Rather, it's to put the student in their place. Sometimes, this



the teacher will think of the student as annoying and troublesome.

• **Behavior in Low-Tension relationships:** Impersonal teaching. A respectful student rarely registers on the teacher's mind — instead, the master focuses on proper education. It often takes an act of mild rebellion to bring a student's actual worth to the teacher's attention; otherwise, the teacher only notices a student's attainments when specifically looking for them. Students occasionally provoke their master into a confrontation as a deliberate or subconscious attempt to prove how much they've learned. The goal isn't to defeat the teacher but rather to lose with surprising skill.

Secrets of Destiny: Teacher and Student

Destiny Binding: *Teachers* [Destiny]

If you're loyal to your teacher, you might learn their secrets! These Destiny options work best if the player finds the character's teacher and the teacher-student relationship interesting.

involves demonstrations of the teacher's power. It can also involve exposing a student's own inadequacies to them. A direct contest, of course, proves both. A good teacher, once having established their own credentials, focuses on showing the student how much there remains to learn — that's why a common answer to challenge is extra-hard training, rather than a normal punishment.

- **Tension reduced by:** Willingness to be taught. Students willing to learn are, in essence, accepting the teacher as a worthy source for the students' own future accomplishments. That's flattering, and it reaffirms the relationship. Some students increase and decrease the tension at the same time — doubting the teacher's worth, but still paying close attention to each lesson. This results in a perpetual state of mild tension — the teacher-student relationship remains strong, and such a student won't get kicked out, but

DESTINY COST

- I+ **Destiny:** increase the role of your teacher in the story. This makes their motivations more complex and gives them more resources to offer you, but also makes them more troublesome to you. Spend more Destiny for increased effects; this is one of the few instances when you may spend Destiny to increase your *Mentor* Advantage.
- **Victory:** whenever you increase your Rank and have at least 10 unspent Destiny, you can petition your teacher for your martial legacy. In exchange for those 10 Destiny, your teacher shares secret training or treasure — of the GM's choice — worth 15-20.

Destiny Breaking: Teachers

[Destiny]

As usual, when a dominant non-player character makes the player unhappy with the game, it's important to distance them from the story. Teachers, in particular, can just stop paying attention to the character!

DESTINY COST

- 0 **Destiny:** the teacher's active influence over the character recedes.

Sublime Doctrine Sect

[Secret Society]

The sublime doctrine shows the way to enlightenment — special kung fu to clear the mind and impress it with the keys to wisdom. To honor this marvelous kung fu, Master Shen created the Sublime Doctrine Sect and invited students. From Shen to Fu to Zi, the Sect's martial lineage has remained illustrious, and now the notorious dark warrior Wu is poised to inherit its leadership. Sublime Doctrine kung fu is best learned as a child, and the Sublime Doctrine Sect attracts children of poor families interested in bettering themselves through mutual assistance and the Wulin. Mechanically, Sublime Doctrine kung fu is similar to the Cloud Mastery skill, but its practitioners must develop a high Confidence.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **Discovery or Fortune:** you have an ally in the Sublime Doctrine Sect.
- 3 **Fortune:** you join the Sublime Doctrine Sect.
- 4 **Destiny:** you are a potential leader for the Sublime Doctrine Sect — the dark warrior's rival!
- 10 **Technique:** you discover, hidden in Sublime Doctrine kung fu, its final secret — a sixth technique, which you must buy normally, unknown to practitioners of the Cloud Mastery style! The GM designs this technique. You must know Cloud Mastery and the sublime doctrine, but you don't have to belong to the sect.

Teacher's Wisdom

[Kung Fu]

Often, when uncertain of their path, students think of all the wisdom and training their teachers have imparted. Remembering those words and actions, they find the answer for their dilemma!

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** once per story, you can invoke a flashback in which one of your important teachers sheds light on your current situation. The GM decides on a case-by-case basis how to handle the flashback — it can be long or short, interactive or narrated, and enigmatic or data-rich, as the story pacing dictates.
- 1 **Bonus:** invoking such a flashback before attempting a Skill roll (with a difficulty at most 10 times your Skill), you automatically succeed. This does not apply to kung fu or secret art Skill rolls. You pay the Destiny cost each time you use this ability, but it doesn't count against your flashback limit for the story.
- 2 **Bonus:** invoking such a flashback before attempting a kung fu marvel, you automatically succeed. This spends all your available Chi of the relevant color, and the marvel must be a valid Simple, Everyday, Moderate, Hard, or Legendary marvel of a kung fu path you have. You pay the Destiny cost each time you use this ability, but it doesn't count against your flashback limit for the story.

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- 1 *Parent and Child* — what is the filial virtue at the source of a teacher's power?

Superior and Minion

Destiny Cost: 2
Study Difficulty: Politics (20)

No Good Ting

(450 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

Ting Wastes Time

"You're useless," Ting's father said. "I ought to call you No Good Ting! Ever since you failed the examinations, you haven't done any work — you just lie around like a lazy dog!"

"It's not my fault I failed," said Ting, softly. "I had a fever. I could scarcely see the characters — it's no wonder I couldn't read them. But you insisted I was all right."

"That's no excuse for your behavior!"

"Heaven did me a bad turn," said Ting, his voice still gentle. "If the gods aren't with me, why should I even try?"

"No Good Ting!" snorted his father, and left.



From then on, No Good Ting was what everyone called him — even his friends. They'd sneer at him and say, "It's no good blaming Heaven for your own faults!" His oldest friend, Pin, was the one person who just called him Ting — and only sometimes.

Ting Visits Pin

Two years passed, and Ting showed up at Pin's door. He was freshly bathed and scented, and wore a scholar's outfit. "Hey, Ting," Pin said. "What's got you out of bed?"

"My father won't feed me any more," said Ting. He smiled. "So I've decided to promise my loyalty to you."

Pin fumed. "No Good Ting! It's one thing to remain as your friend, but why would I help you now?"

Ting tilted his head to one side. "I'm desperate, I suppose. If I must work to eat, then I must work — but my father won't give me the opportunity."

Pin sighed. "I don't have much," he said. "But I should be a good example. If you do a good job helping with my crops, I'll give you a meal or two. But you'll have to work hard! I'll be very strict."

Ting inclined his head. From that moment, the village saw a transformation in the young man. He cast aside his pretension and his laziness; in all matters, he was punctilious, loyal, and hard-working. At the end of a day's work, he was covered in dirt and sweat; then he'd cleanse himself and dress as the perfect gentleman. The village began to murmur, and Ting's father asked his wife, "What did Pin do that I could not? He's reformed my worthless son!"

The Superior Man

One morning, Ting approached Pin. "The town spends its meals talking about you," he said. "Even I've heard it. But what do you say, when they ask you of our relationship?"

Pin shrugged. "I tell them it's nothing. I guess you just decided to work hard! I wish you'd done that before your father cast you out."

"Ah," said Ting. "You should not say that."

"I should not?"

Ting shook his head. "You should say: 'The sage says this of the superior man: He speaks, having thought whether the words should be spoken; he acts, having thought whether his actions are sure to give pleasure. His virtue and righteousness are such as will be honored; what he initiates and does is fit to be imitated; his deportment is worthy of contemplation; his movements in advancing or retiring are all according to the proper rule. In this way does he present himself to the people, who both revere and love him, imitate and become like him. Thus he is able to make his teaching of virtue successful.'"

"Oh," said Pin. "And why should I say that?"

Ting gestured gracefully. "Well," he said, "you have reformed me, have you not? Surely this implies that you are such a man — capable of leading by example."

"But is that so?"

"What else could explain it?" Ting asked. "Surely you cannot doubt the wisdom of Confucius."

"It seemed to me that I've had very little to do with your reformation at all," said Pin, thinking hard.

"Indeed," said Ting. "The virtue of a superior works upon a subordinate as if by magical arts — I needed only your presence and example to become a virtuous man."

"Then I'll have to say that," said Pin.

Pin Quotes the Sage

When Pin began quoting the sage to explain Ting's actions, it startled people, and many jeered — but none could refute his simple logic. No longer did they call them Pin and No Good Ting, but Ting and Virtuous Pin; and stories of the wise leadership of Pin spread far and wide.

"The family's urging me to test for a government position," said Pin. "I'm just a farmer! I can't do it."

"I'll help you study," said Ting. For many months, Ting drilled Pin on the scholarly arts. Then, the night before the exam, they shared a skin of terribly strong wine. Pin's mind spun. His inner eye comprehended galaxies. He returned to the world with a terrible headache and prickles in every limb.

"The examination!" he said, sitting bolt upright. "I'll be late."

"Hush," said Ting, soothing him and pushing him back down in his bed. "You already took them, and did rather well."

"I did?" Pin asked.

"You studied too hard," said Ting. "And had something of a fever. That's no doubt why you don't remember."

Pin narrowed his eyes. "If I don't get an appointment, I'll know you're lying."

"I'm sure my friend Pin did very well on the exams," said Ting. "If you will excuse me, I have to work the field."

"Nonsense," said Pin. "If I'm going to have an appointment, I'll need a staff. That's you!"

"Very well," said Ting. "I'll prepare myself."

神兵玄奇



Pin the Magistrate

Pin's test results were remarkable. Before even two years had passed, he found himself appointed as a magistrate. When he received this appointment, the people of the province asked, "What kind of man is this who has received an appointment here?"

"Ah," said those who'd listened to the rumors. "He's virtuous but strict. Even before he took the exams, he accepted the loyalty of the lazy failed scholar No Good Ting! In no time at all, he'd turned Ting around. It's best not to question him — his history shows he's a superior man."

When Pin and Ting came to town, all mouths gaped open. Ting was dressed with utmost elegance, and his eyes were gentle and kind; but his muscles were hardened with labor in the fields. When Pin derided him, he only smiled; when Pin ordered him off his horse to spare it a few hours of his weight, Ting just laughed and complied. The deferential respect he showed Pin at all times proved the rumors — although Pin sometimes gave the appearance of ignorance and crudity, the new magistrate was truly a superior man! Recognizing the greatness that walked

among them, the people of the province became orderly, hard-working, generous, and pleasing to Heaven. In a year's time, Pin received a summons to the palace of the emperor.

Pin Worries

"A summons!" said Pin, waving the letter.

"That's good," said Ting, calmly, brushing out his horse's mane. "You'll be a high minister."

"His writing's so elegant," said Pin. "It's better than mine, and he's the emperor!"

"You know I copy over your reports before sending them off. Why would you ever worry about your writing?"

"I know," said Pin. "That's the problem! I only got such marvelous test results because I was drunk — it must've been inspired drunken scholar secret arts! I'm lucky here because the people are so orderly, but I'm nothing compared to the emperor — he'll know I'm a fraud!"

Ting looked thoughtful. "You have a marvelous house," he said, "while I have scarcely a hovel. You have great riches; I spend all of my cash on soap. I'll help you with the emperor, but there's a price — I'll want an important position of my own."

"Help? How can you help?"

"If the emperor asks you for your wisdom," said Ting, "simply say, 'Ah! That's a point my student Ting always has trouble with. But I've been trying to get it through his head; shall we see what he has to say?' If I don't know what to say, I'll say something foolish. Then you and the emperor can laugh at me. If I know what to say, I'll say it — then you'll seem a great teacher."

"Will you know what to say very often?" asked Pin.

"Why," said Ting, "if you're a virtuous magistrate, then surely your subordinates must command deep scholarship. That's just how things are."

"And if I'm not?"

Ting smiled brightly. "Ridiculous. In all these years, have I failed in my loyalty? With No Good Ting at your side, you can trust to the quality of your leadership."

"Ah," said Pin. "The sage said of inferior officers, 'Not failing in their loyalty and obedience in serving those above them, they are able to preserve their emoluments and positions, and to maintain their sacrifices.'"

Ting's teeth shone. "I reason," he said, "that the universe is harmonious. If the good example of a superior creates the respect of those beneath him, then the converse must, of necessity, be true. Here, you see the proof: for two years, I respected my father but little, and he grew ever harsher towards me. For less than three, I respected you in all conditions and respects, and both of us have gained

by it. Soon, I may send ample money home to maintain my parents in grand style; and I shall have all the things of my desiring.”

Superior-Minion Relationships

(Discussion)

Superiors ultimately trace their authority to the relationship of ruler and subject, teacher and student, or parent and child. Hereditary aristocracy derives its authority from its blood relationship with the various Kings, Emperors, and Clan heads. Scholars derive their social power from the government's recognition of their worth and their ability to impart knowledge to others. High officials, of course, can trace their power to the ruler that authorizes it. Parents, teachers, family authorities, and monarchs are fonts of righteousness. Other people who find themselves graced with authority are not. They are responsible to a higher power — and therefore partially responsible for their minions' failings.

In a harmonious relationship, the superior leads with righteousness and the minion obeys with respect. These are two halves of a whole: the minion's respect and obedience mates with the superior's virtue even as the yin mates with the yang.

Stress Profile for the Superior

This profile helps explain general hierarchical relationships in Shen Zhou. It's here to help GMs and interested players estimate how much a minion's behavior strains the superior-minion relationship, and how the superior might react to an increased or decreased level of strain.

Sisters often relate to their brothers as minions (or, using more general language, as subordinates.)

- **Tension increased by:** Disrespect and disobedience. Lesser individuals must show respect and obedience appropriate to the difference in ranks. Otherwise, maintaining the superior's virtue and authority is impossible! Just as no one praises a brilliant general if the troops don't execute her battle plan, no one admires a superior's quality if the minions won't respect it. Showing disrespect to a superior is a direct threat to the superior's position. This is true whether or not the superior accepts it. Occasionally, one of the great aristocrats or magistrates of Shen Zhou asks their friends to treat them as equals, and their friends refuse — doing so would hurt the superior's authority too much!
- **Behavior in Tense Relationships:** Appropriately severe. To accept disrespect diminishes a superior's virtue. Punishing it redeems the matter somewhat. A magistrate or military commander can often imprison or execute disrespectful minions. An aristocrat, insulted by someone a shade lower on

the social hierarchy, has fewer immediate resources — but can, at least, nurture an anger passion.

- **Tension reduced by:** Praise and efficient service. Reasonable respect from a minion is the norm; it does not actually restore a minion in the superior's eyes. Active praise, however, combined with good performance at one's duties — this affirms the superior as a righteous leader, and therefore soothes any tension in the relationship.
- **Behavior in Low-Tension relationships:** Self-centered or benign. Some superiors value their social place. They do not focus on the obligations of high rank or position but rather on the rewards, and in the absence of tension, they focus on their own needs. Others strive to be righteous superiors; when properly respected, they offer their minions adequate rewards and benign guidance.

Secrets of Destiny:

Superior and Minion

Destiny Severing: Minion Theft

[Destiny]

The high virtue of the glorious warrior can lure minions from the service of darkness. The threats and promises of the corrupt monster can corrupt one's minions from the righteous path!

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Bonus:** You have **Quality Minion Stealing**. You gain a +5 modifier on all attempts to subvert an enemy's minions, whether by persuasion, seduction, intimidation, or just an extended hand.

Respect Management

[Secret Art]

Respect is elemental to the people of Shen Zhou. For most people, humility is as natural as breath — they show respect to their parents, their elders, their rulers, their teachers, and to all people in power. People who cultivate their Chi have a harder time: the force of life in them fills them with arrogance and defiance. In the Wulin, most people view respect as a matter of self-control — they always remind themselves to defy the order when they should and respect it when they must. A few, however, have distanced their pride from their respect: they feel no shame in kowtowing to the lowest peasant or insulting the greatest Emperor.

神兵玄奇

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Bonus:** if you also have the **Secret Arts of Intrigue**, you have **Quality Benevolence**. This increases the modifier for your benevolence to +10, as long as you show excessive respect.

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- 1 *Confucianism* — what philosophy inspired Ting's transformation?
- 1 *A Woman's Life* — understand why sisters are often their brothers' minions!

Friendship

Destiny Cost: 2
Study Difficulty: Grace (20)

The Legend of Hsu Chao
(450 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

By the Waterfall

Hsu Chao knelt by the waterfall, deep in meditation. His clothes were elegant, green silk with a silver weave. His sword Swan Bride lay on a blanket near one hand. A cup of tea lay near the other.

Ling Lei approached in silence, bounding from branch to branch. She landed on the ground behind him with the softest sound, like a dragonfly alighting on a stone; but even that was too much, and Hsu Chao heard.

"Little sister," he said. "What brings you to me?"

Ling Lei drew her bow and nocked an arrow in one smooth motion, aiming at Chao's back. "I'm afraid I must avenge our brother," she said.

"That is unfortunate," said Hsu Chao. He sat very still, but a breeze toyed with his hair. "When we studied under Master Guo, you could never defeat me. Not even Cheng stood more than one chance in five. Do you expect to win today?"

"I have trained for three

years," said Lei, "with no other purpose. I forged this bow myself; its name is Chao's Death."

"That is an inelegant name for a weapon," Chao answered. "You must think of those who may wield it after your death. Perhaps 'Unfortunate Strife' or 'Fallen Hero's Vengeance'."

"If it wishes a different name, it will show me that name in time."

"True enough," said Chao. He picked up his tea, sipped, and set it down. "I regret Cheng's death. The bond of friendship we shared — all three of us — it made us kin."

"I renounced our friendship when you slew Cheng."

"Yet you do not fire."

"Your back is to me," said Lei. "It is a friend's duty to lead his friends to virtue. To shoot you from behind — I could not do that in Cheng's name. Better to die and leave him unavenged than to shame his memory with such acts. I will kill you when you seize your sword and rise."

"It is good to know such things," said Chao. He picked up his tea, drained it, and set it down. Then he moved like the wind, clawing his hand through the air; even as he



rose to his feet, the vacuum this gesture created dragged his sword into his hand. Continuing the motion, he spun towards Lei, who fired. No sooner had one arrow flown than the next was at the bow; even as Swan Bride cut through the first arrow, she had fired five more. She shot to his left side, his right, his left side, his right, his left side, and his right again, beginning near his heart and moving outwards. Shattering each arrow forced his blade into a great spiral cut. The seventh followed, striking not his left arm but his right; as he twisted the blade against



its momentum to sever the arrow, something crunched inside his arm. The arrow was weighted in the middle, with a flat steel head in its center; though cut in half, the back half still flew true, striking hard against a pressure point; Chao's right arm went numb. The eighth arrow flew.

"Fierce!" exclaimed Chao, and leapt. His sleeve flared, catching both the eighth and ninth arrows in its fabric, one below and one above his arm. Lei had anticipated this; the barbed head of the ninth arrow hooked into the body of the eighth. The two wooden shafts caught his arm and sleeve so tightly that his left hand began to lose circulation. Chao landed lightly on a pine branch above; the next five arrows shook the branch so fiercely that he could scarcely keep his balance. The fifteenth arrow severed the branch above him, so it fell towards his head; he swung Swan Bride upwards to intercept it, and the shock knocked the blade from his numb hand.

His Chi flared. The remaining three arrows shattered against his forehead, his chest, and his throat. Chao's face twisted with strain, and the last of his skills failed; the twentieth arrow took him in the lung. He fell, his landing driving it through his back. He panted heavily, blood flecking the corners of his mouth. Lei approached, kneeling beside him.

"You went easy on me, Chao."

"Fight Ling Lei under our master's eye, and she's scarcely worth the contest! But give her three years to plan and a Chao-killing bow, and she's too fierce for me."

"That's not it," she said.

Chao grimaced. He twisted his arm against the ground. The arrows binding his arm snapped. He lunged upwards, his hand passing clean through Lei's shoulder and out the other side; his knee came up to strike at hers. She whipped her bow one-handed over his head and twisted; the wooden bow bent like a closing hand, the unbreakable wood screaming protest, and the string tightened on his throat like a garrote. Chao's fingers flexed three times and then he fell back, dazed, his hand pulling out of her shoulder and falling back to his side.

"That's more like our Chao," she said. "If it weren't for my internal kung fu, I'd spend the rest of the day screaming — and that's if I didn't bleed to death first. But I'm still not fooled."

Chao tried to muster another effort, but his wounds were too great and his neck too raw. He shrugged.

"Accept your victory," he rasped out. "If I told you why, you'd be upset."

"You can't just let me kill you and then die!" she exclaimed. After a moment, she blushed. "Well, you can't."

Cheng's Hunt

"Do you know why Cheng hunted me down?" Chao asked.

"He talked to Lord Fu Po," answered Lei. "Fu Po said, 'This Hsu Chao — he's a trouble to me. He's lawless! He fights in my lands, but he won't give me any respect. He's your friend and your martial brother; can you straighten him out?' So he set out to find you and teach you a lesson."

"I told him," Chao said, "that I didn't respect him." He coughed. "I told him: what kind of friend are you? You've set your political aspirations above your martial brother's happiness!"

"It's righteous to respect the authority of the state," answered Ling Lei. "If you'd given respect to Fu Po, none of this would have happened."

Chao laughed weakly. "That's what he said. It wasn't politics. He just thought I had a bad attitude. All because Fu Po invited me to visit and I refused."

"You'd said that you'd rather eat excrement than dine with a greedy pig."

Chao smiled. "He's not a righteous noble. It's all right to say such things."

"Brother Chao," said Lei, "I think Cheng was right. You do have a bad attitude."

"So we fought," said Chao. "But he couldn't concentrate. He kept getting in the way of my sword. It was very disreputable of brother Cheng. So I asked him why. And he said, 'No matter who wins, you'll think I betrayed our friendship for politics. That's not how I want either of us to die.' I shrugged, and stabbed him; and he didn't defend himself at all."

"Ah," said Lei.

"I promised him I'd know better in the future," said Chao. "That's why I couldn't kill you. I thought I'd just get away, or knock you out, but your bow surprised me. You shouldn't call a weapon Chao's Death — it makes it hungry for my life!"

"I'll call it Fulfillment," said Lei.

"Too late," said Chao. "I think I'll probably die."

"Yes," Lei agreed. "I'm the last of our teacher's line."



Friendships

(Discussion)

In Shen Zhou, friendship is a distinguished relationship. Of the six relationships that Confucius valued, only friendship is truly voluntary, and only friendship exists without inherent hierarchy. In choosing their friends, people can define themselves and their social context — a rare and precious thing.

Filial piety constrains the heart. The love and loyalty that flows from filial virtue is a fabric of duty, heritage, and tradition. Friendship, therefore, attracts that wild love and loyalty that stands outside such things. Friends are vital in Shen Zhou precisely because one can forswear them. The power to end a friendship, when most of the important relationships are mandatory, makes friendships more meaningful when sustained. The friendships that displace hierarchical relationships — friendships among society brothers, within family, or between husband and wife — are the most precious of all; they mix sacred duty with voluntary affection to form the strongest bond possible.

Despite its non-traditional character, friendship has an important place in the society of Shen Zhou. Authorities and sages have praised friendship over the years because friends can influence one another towards righteousness. In ancient times, Kings would select their officials in part for the ability to inspire powerful friends to service and virtue. Between friendship and kinship, a competent official could hold large regions in their sway — the authority of the King wasn't even necessary. People in Shen Zhou are responsible for their friends, and must offer them support and guidance. It's acceptable to renounce a friend who fails in their virtue, but without such cause, friends receive every consideration. It's traditional to seek revenge for a friend's death, leave one's children in a friend's care, feed a friend when they're hungry, and, in general, give them every reasonable courtesy and trust. In the absence of such dedication, the relationship isn't a friendship — it's an alliance, an acquaintanceship, or possibly a friendship yet to be.

Stress Profile for Friends

This profile helps explain friendships in Shen Zhou. It's here to help GMs and interested players estimate how much a friend's behavior strains the friendship, and how the friend might react to an increased or decreased level of strain.

Sisters and society brothers sometimes relate to their brothers as friends.

- **Tension increased by:** Disloyalty, lack of trust, or breaking a trust. The core of a friendship is a loyalty you can trust. Being a good friend means treating the friend's life and family as your own, and in general showing true dedication and love. Betraying your friends shows great unworthiness. Setting trivial desires like rank and wealth above your friendships undermines the relationship. Finally, showing distrust for a friend indicates that the friendship is dying — if the friendship is strong, it's a deadly insult, and if the friendship is weak, it forces both parties to acknowledge that.
- **Behavior in Tense Relationships:** Effort to reform the friend, or disavowal. Friends react to tension in the relationship in two ways. If they can bear it, one friend will work to mend things, exhorting their friend to righteousness or making a greater effort to service. When the tension becomes unbearable, they make their point with a grand gesture — making a terrible sacrifice for the friendship or simply ending it. Throwing away one's life to prove loyalty is sadly typical in the Wulin.
- **Tension reduced by:** Friendship and dedication. Friendship is an atypical relationship. It's voluntary. With hierarchical relationships, a normal level of service and respect is usually assumed — it doesn't strengthen the relationship at all. With friendship, just being a friend makes the friendship stronger. Being comfortable around a friend helps; being loyal helps; showing trust helps.
- **Behavior in Low-Tension relationships:** Friendship and dedication. In turn, comfortable discussions, loyalty, and trust are how people in Shen Zhou respond to friendship.

Secrets of Destiny: Friendship

Dramatic Sacrifice Technique

[Destiny]

It's traditional to sacrifice your life for your friends. That can create some problems early in the game — it can lead to important characters and player characters dying left and right. These Destiny options are best taken earlier in a campaign to help counteract this. Using them later is not recommended, as the mounting death toll helps underline the nature of the Wulin.

DESTINY COST

- I **Victory:** you can imbue a non-fatal sacrifice with the same profound impact as suicide. In particular, having been dramatically wounded for a friend's sake, you can declare the wound near-fatal, have a short dramatic monologue, and then collapse. There's no risk of taking more damage later in the

fight, and it's guaranteed that a doctor or friend can revive you later, although you might be sick or weak for a while. (GMs should veto this when used only to guarantee survival in a difficult fight.)

- 3 **Victory:** you can declare that an NPC friend survives an apparently fatal sacrifice made for you. This requires player group consensus — sometimes, it's bad for the game's emotional tone to ruin such a sacrifice.

Destiny Binding: Sisters [Destiny]

Sisters rich in loyalty are favored by the trigrams Sun, Li, and Tui. These Destiny options work best if the player finds the character's siblings interesting.

DESTINY COST

- I+ **Destiny:** increase the role in the story of a family member you've claimed as friend — typically a brother, sister, or cousin. This makes their motivations more complex, gives them more resources to offer you, and makes them more troublesome to you. Spend more Destiny for increased effects.
- 3 **Bonus:** the eldest daughter belongs to the trigram Sun. The youngest daughter belongs to the trigram Tui. Middle daughters belong to the trigram Li. Buying this bonus makes the appropriate trigram good luck for you when it comes up in auguries, but only if you spend a lot of effort on righteous relationships with your family — particularly siblings you have a friendly relationship with.

Fulfillment [Weapon of the Gods]

Fulfillment is a Class II Weapon of the Gods. This bow hungers to resolve the betrayals and sorrows in the wielder's life, often through execution of the offenders. It is rumored that its arrows always seek out its target's weakest points.

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Entangled Destiny:** your destiny will touch that of Fulfillment.
- 2 **Defense:** improve your defense against Fulfillment techniques.

Discounts on Related Lore

DESTINY COST

- I *Parent and Child* — friendship you choose; but you are your parents' child forever!
- I *Elder and Younger Brother* — the seed of a thousand classic friendships: the filial piety that binds brothers together!
- I *A Woman's Life* — the seed of a thousand more: sisterhood, a bond of family and love without true social place!
- I *Clan and Family* — your people: the Clan, to choose friendships from as you choose!

Admonitions for Girls

(An Advanced Topic)

Destiny Cost: 3
Study Difficulty: Grace (40)

The situation of women in the Han dynasty is dire. No one wants daughters! They bring only burden to the family. No one trusts women! They cannot break themselves of family loyalties to see the greater good.

Compassionate towards the plight of her fellow women, the great Ban Zhao formed the Jade Dragon secret society. Her book, *Admonitions for Girls*, contains stern advice for women on fitting harmoniously into society — but for warriors driven to defy society, it also contains evidence of her kung fu secrets.

The admonitions teach humility: a woman should yield to the wishes of others, respect them above herself, and bear disgrace with equanimity. Those who practice this become graceful, like the willow, and controlled, like the stone. Their white chi becomes powerful. When they set aside humility and claim their place in the world, their kung fu rages like an autumn wind.

The admonitions preach industry and a dedication to manual labor. When one strives correctly in accord with the precepts of Ban Zhao, it strengthens one's kidneys and liver. The body becomes healthy, and the jade chi strong. When a woman loyal to the precepts of the *Admonitions* turns from manual labor to heroism, her kung fu triumphs like a dragon's!

The admonitions teach correctness of manner and purity in one's affairs. To follow these precepts makes one a divine individual — an unflappable master of all things!
This is Ban



Zhao's training regimen for developing gold chi. When a correct and pure woman enters the fray, who can defeat her sword?

The styles practiced by the Jade Dragon sect focus on gold, jade, and white chi. They draw on the well of yin energy within every woman.

The Jade Dragon Society

The Jade Dragon Society exists to help female heroes who feel obligated to live by the terms of society as well as the Wulin. If they cannot achieve their world-conquering desires due to the interference of their parents, husband, or parents-in-law, the Jade Dragon Sect acts. It's the gods' will that men and women alike achieve great destinies, yin and yang in balance under the sight of Heaven!

To maintain the world's harmony, the Jade Dragon Society exerts political and social pressure on behalf of female heroes trapped in impossible situations. If this fails, it offers them the opportunity of a "second birth" — faking their death and taking a new, symbolic name in service to the society.

DESTINY COST

- 1 **Discovery or Fortune:** you have an ally in the Jade Dragon Sect.
- 3 **Fortune:** you join the Jade Dragon Sect and receive a "second birth".
- 4 **Fortune:** By earning Status of at least 4 as a member of the Jade Dragon Sect, you will gain access to their secret Unfolding Glory kung fu.
- 10 **Fortune:** without membership in the society, you gain an opportunity to acquire its secret manual — spelling out in full the techniques that *Admonitions for Girls* merely imply. (Note that this allows you to pay the buy-in and acquire the style without social obligations; you must still learn and pay for the techniques separately, investing the time and Destiny necessary.)

Daoist Sexual Techniques

(An Advanced Topic)

Destiny Cost: 0

You must be able to purchase Secret Arts to have this lore.

If don't have good bedroom skills, it's bad for your health! As with liver damage from excessive drinking, wear and tear of a dissipated lifestyle, and bad luck for insulting your ancestors, the exact details aren't given here — it's just something for the GM and players to keep in mind as a source of possible concerns.

Cultivated Yin/Yang Energy (2 Destiny)

Sleeping with an inadequate partner — two or more ranks lower, with ordinary Zhou counting as sixth rank — might make you sick. You can make it safer by cultivating an inadequate woman's Yin or an inadequate man's Yang. This stimulates their Chi.

Stimulating someone's Chi has two possibilities. Either it makes them a fiercer warrior, or it makes them sick! When you use this technique on your partner, they have to attempt a Hardiness task. The first scene you use this in a week, the difficulty for that task is Simple (15); then, in the next scene of use, Everyday (18); then Moderate (20); then Hard (30); then Legendary (40). Further rolls remain Legendary. If your partner succeeds, they get a point of Destiny. If they fail, they get sick!

When this technique makes a woman sick, it gives her too much Yin. That's a **Sick Chi** condition that makes her Crimson Chi weak — she becomes tired, cold, and withdrawn. When it makes a man sick, it gives him too much Yang. That's a **Sick** condition that makes his Silver Chi weak — afflicting him with fever, fatigue, and delirium.

This sickness has a Recovery equal to the difficulty of the Hardiness roll, an Interval of one day, and a Duration of 3.

This is actually two techniques — one that men can learn, and one that women can learn.

Mastered Yin/Yang Energy (1 Destiny)

Sleeping with a meaningfully superior partner might make you sick. This technique lets you function in bed as if one or two ranks higher. This functions exactly as if your partner is using the Cultivating Yin/Yang Energy technique on you, except that you do *not* gain Destiny by succeeding at the roll.

This is actually two techniques — one that men can learn, and one that women can learn.

Yin/Yang Sacrifice (3 Destiny)

Your partner experiences long life and bountiful health.

If you also have the Medical secret art **Secrets of Treatment**, you can create paired medical conditions, where the weakness afflicts you and the hyperactivity afflicts your partner. This uses the Medicine skill and functions exactly like the paired condition technique in **Secrets of Treatment**, except that the effects are suffered by two different people. For example, you could create a weakness in your water system to nurture a woman's fire. This makes you sick, but makes her blaze with energy!

This is actually two techniques — one for nurturing a male partner, and one for nurturing a female partner.

Writing

(An Advanced Topic)

Destiny Cost: 0

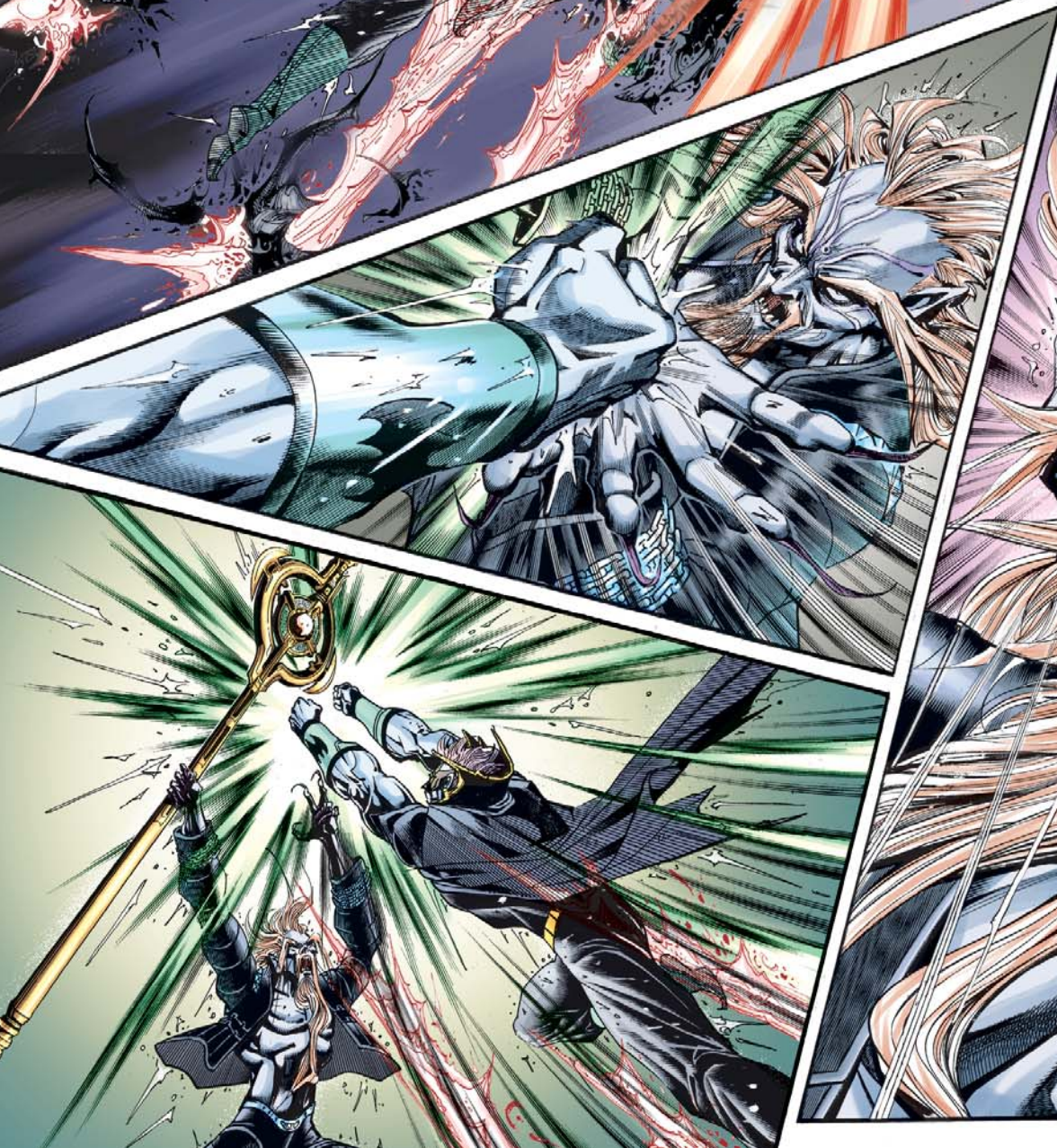
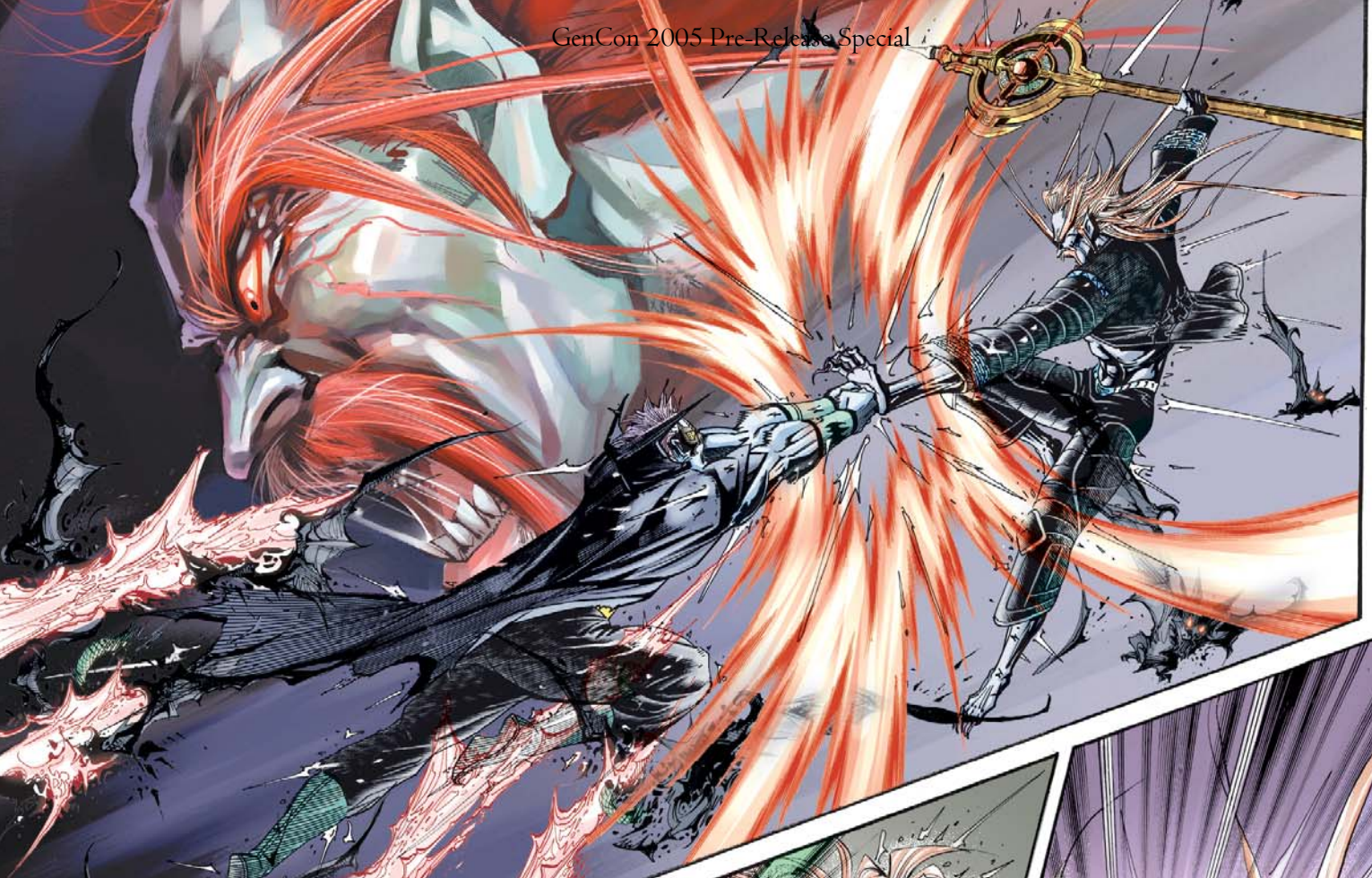
Writing is crucial. The magic of the “characters” binds Shen Zhou to its ancestors and holds it together through the long ages of history. This lore exists explicitly as a potential starting point for the GMs’ own advanced topics — such as rare kung fu styles, Daoist techniques, or secret arts encoded into Huangti’s invention of writing.

The characters of Shen Zhou are written with twelve basic strokes:

- The dot;
- The horizontal line;
- The vertical line;
- The left-falling line;
- The right-falling line;
- The rising line;
- The four hooks; and
- The two turns.

Each character is a combination of between one and sixty four strokes, written in a constrained space. Many characters combine simpler concepts into a greater whole; thus, the character for “bright” combines the characters for the sun and moon. This is the perfect yin-yang harmony created by Huangti, the Glorious Yellow Emperor, and a skilled calligrapher can use it to write a single concept in numberless different ways!

神兵玄奇





Martial Arts in the Land of the Gods

Kung Fu

The amazing abilities of the members of the Martial Arts World (otherwise known as the *Wulin*) look magical... but they are not. Truly, if anyone received the training, they could wield these amazing abilities on their own behalf – for that is all Kung Fu means... ‘hard work’ or ‘intensive training’.

Kung Fu is the training of body and spirit to control chi, and then apply it to the world through specific maneuvers called *techniques*. These controlled manipulations of both chi and physical force can create a multitude of effects, though the most powerful ones are often carefully kept out of common circulation. The most basic and reflexive of kung fu abilities that all martial arts warriors learn is how to focus their chi auras to work as shields against material harm.

There are three kinds of Kung Fu – *Common*, with teachers easily found and taught widespread around the Land of the Gods; *Uncommon*, knowledge carefully hoarded by the clans and factions; and *Rare*, the richest jewels of knowledge, kept under strict supervision and guarded savagely by the Clans and the few rare teachers who have knowledge of them.

The Five Elements

Everything in the world, without fail, is made of the Five Daoist Elements: Wood, Fire, Water, Metal and Earth. While everything is made of these five, not everyone can channel or use the energy (or *chi*) of the five elements within their bodies, henceforth referred to by their colors – Jade (Green), Crimson, Silver, White and Gold.

Jade Chi

This is the Chi of the element of Wood – the element that corresponds with the flesh and vitality, of growth and physical might. The color of Wood Chi is Jade green, the hue of the green earth. People with a great deal of jade chi are disgustingly healthy, shrugging off diseases, discomforts and other such distractions with little effort; they are stronger than their muscles might indicate. Green Chi is associated with the Attribute of Might, the Spring Season, and the East.

Crimson Chi

Fire Chi is Crimson, like its namesake; quick and leaping, with ferocity and verve. Indeed, it corresponds with the Attribute of Speed, the Season of Summer, and the Southern Direction. People with much Crimson Chi are fast with inhuman reflexes and precision of movement, dodging attempts to touch or harm them with ease.

Gold Chi

The color of the Earth Element is Gold, shining and precious, just as the Land of the Gods is to all those who are fortunate enough to dwell on it. The beauty of the Land should be self-evident; hence, those who possess a great deal of Gold Chi shine clearly. This explains the association of Earth with the Presence Attribute – one with high Gold Chi is confident and can project their wishes to others, for they are solidly rooted to the Earth; the direction of this Chi is the Center, as it is of everything. This chi is of the Season of Late Summer, where the days are golden and long.

White Chi

The color of Metal Chi is White – as the mirror looks from an angle, cold and reflective. This also describes those of high Genius; sharp, reflective, missing nothing... like the sword in the hands of a master. The greater the White Chi, the more profound the intellect; capable of holding and keeping an edge over others. This Chi is associated with the Western Direction, and its Season is Autumn. But remember: a powerful mind does not always confer great wisdom! There are many who have great amounts of white chi who do not use much of their intellectual potential.

Silver Chi

Silver chi is Water, reflecting the sky and clouds overhead. It is protean and flowing, adapting to its surroundings – those with abundant Silver chi have preternatural senses, aware of everything, for water flows wherever it can. This color of chi is associated with the Attribute of Wu Wei, the Winter Season, and the direction of North.



Uses of Chi

Spending Chi

Your Chi ratings are always (at the beginning of the game) equal to your Attributes. If your Strength Attribute is 5, then you have 5 Jade Chi to spend; and so on for each color of Chi. You may spend Chi at any time you like during the round, though of course you cannot spend more Chi than you actually possess.

Jade Chi and Healing

It should be noted that all Martial Artists, regardless of Archetype, can always spend Jade Chi to heal damage – one point for each Health point healed, as a Free Action. While not terribly efficient, it might make all the difference, though you can only heal one health level's worth of points for each die of the Hardiness skill you have (if none, then only one level, period) with this method; think of this as more of a “chi band-aid” than anything else; for greater healing you'll need acupuncture. At the very least, such healing might push you back across a health level threshold and allow you to function better in the crunch. Other colors of Chi, not being directly linked to your flesh and vitality, cannot be so spent to heal you of injuries (At least, not without kung fu). It should be noted that Jade Chi *cannot* be used to heal **profound** damage, as such wounds are to the very chi structure of the warrior herself, and as such are not yielding to such elementary means.

Chi Transfer

By spending a full action and placing your hands on another person, you may transfer as much chi as you like of a single color (up to how much you have on hand, of course); if you want to transfer other colors, then those will be additional full actions. This is usually used to help a friend back from the brink of death, by transferring your Jade Chi into them so they may heal particularly terrible wounds. Any chi transferred can only be absorbed up to the warrior's native limits (based on their attributes). Note that Chi can be transferred to **anyone**; transferring chi to people not in the Wulin does not confer the ability to use it (transferring Silver Chi to a peasant friend does not allow that peasant to use kung fu), though Jade Chi can always be used to heal – this is something anyone can do, as it is the vital energy of growing and life itself.

Investing Chi

A few hard-to-find kung fu techniques allow you to *invest* your Chi and maintain them constantly – an added benefit is that such investment will be maintained in the face of **Chi Flow Loss**. The price to this is that your effective Chi Rating is reduced downwards from its usual maximum by the amount of your investment, so instead of your Chi being equal to your Attribute, instead it is Attribute minus your Investment. Chi investment does **not** affect your Attribute; you still get the bonus for raw ability to your skills as per normal, regardless of any outstanding chi investments.

Regaining Chi

Chi means “breath”, and that's how one regains their chi, as naturally as breathing – one point of each color returns to you at the end of each round after all actions are done.

Unless, of course, something prevents you from getting your breath... like being severely hurt. Any round a warrior takes damage that takes him lower than the Battered damage level, they lose the ability to regain a single color of chi- their choice.

*Example: Liu Shao is **Injured** in combat, and he checks the box for the level; he'll have to choose a color of Chi to lose flow in. Later, he takes enough damage to knock him down to **Wounded**, and has to check the next box, and mark off another color of chi he can't regain points in. Needless to say, Shao is going to choose colors his martial arts don't depend on... if he's lucky.*

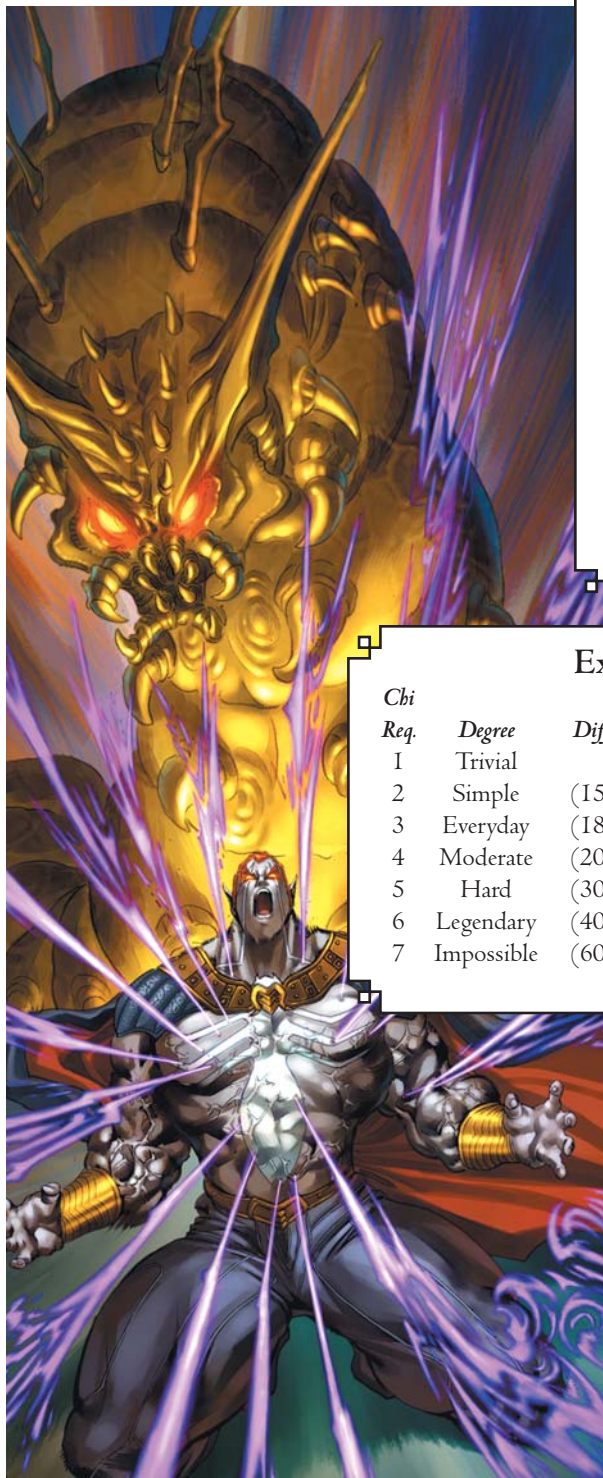
This is called **chi flow loss**; wherein you are unable to regain chi of the chosen color – you can use what you have left, but once it's gone, that's it. Not until you can heal the damage back up past the level boundary do you regain your breath, getting your chi back normally, one point per round.

The Rules of Thumb for Chi

When buying Attribute ratings, always try to have the color of chi that that kung fu depends on be two points higher than your highest technique. In other words, if you have **Heart-breaking Blade 3**, then you really should have a **Speed** (Crimson Chi) rating of **5**. This is optimal for your character's survival, as your ability to breathe in chi (regenerate) becomes crucial as a combat wears on, and you begin to tire. Another good rule is to avoid having more than one kung fu style depend on a single color of chi—that's a recipe for tiring yourself too quickly! Best have only one style of kung fu per color at campaign start.

Chi Aura

Your Chi generates a “Protective Air” (only active when aware and unparalyzed) that can be used as dice to oppose an injury — 1 die per each level of Chi Aura. Chi Aura is mastered by time and practice in the Wulin; as such, one point of Chi Aura is gained for each Rank attained. To be spent, Chi Aura points are rolled as dice and read normally; however, you only have one attempt per injury to spend it, so choose the amount of Aura to be spent carefully, as you might need some later in the same round!



Kung Fu Marvels

To create a Kung Fu Marvel, spend a Free Action before the Action in which it is used; you must spend 1 Chi per Degree of Difficulty, and only one color may be used in a single Marvel (though a single additional color may be invoked at Legendary or Impossible levels.) Finally, only Fourth Rank and higher may use Marvels; Fifth Rank martial artists do not have the familiarity necessary to improvise on the styles they know.

Chi Req.	Degree	Diff.	Example
-	Trivial		(No Marvels possible)
2	Simple	(15)	Draw Weapon as a Free Action
3	Everyday	(18)	Boost Initiative by the Modifier of the Chi color spent
4	Moderate	(20)	Additional Attack at the end of the round
5	Hard	(30)	Area Attack, number of attacks limited by Kung Fu Level
6	Legendary	(40)	Reduce Defense Dice of a target (must spend additional chi of another color)
7	Impossible	(60)	Master a new technique for the very first time; Formalize a Marvel as a new technique (Beware Critical Failures and the Hell Conditions they might bring! See pg. 361.)

Expelling Poison With Your Chi

Chi Req.	Degree	Diff.	Rank	Min. Details	Effect Possible
1	Trivial		na	Not possible.	
2	Simple	(15)	na	Not possible.	
3	Everyday	(18)	4 th	Common Poisons.	Expel (Reduce Potency)
4	Moderate	(20)	3 rd	Uncommon Poisons.	Expel (Reduce Potency)
5	Hard	(30)	2 nd	Rare Poisons.	Expel (Reduce Potency)
6	Legendary	(40)	1 st	Priceless Poisons.	Retard (Postpone Onset)
7	Impossible	(60)	1 st	Nonesuch Poisons.	Retard (Postpone Onset)

Chi Modifiers

Sometimes, with kung fu or other special abilities, you'll modify a roll based on one of your character's traits — often, one kind of Chi. This works as follows:

Chi or Trait	Modifier
1 to 3	+5
4 to 6	+10
7 to 9	+15
10 or more	+20

神兵玄奇



Kung Fu Use

To employ your Kung Fu is direct but requiring much skill; hence each Kung Fu is its own skill, measured in dice. While you may improvise kung fu marvels on the fly, simply by declaring your attempt and achieving the right degree of success, this is hardly reliable or terribly wise, particularly if you're in a fight for your life. Better then to use tried-and-true Kung Fu Techniques! Each of these is a specific set of maneuvers and chi manipulations that reliably create the same effects, time after time, subject to the layout as shown below.

- A.) **Type of Kung Fu.** The first entry after the descriptive text for Kung Fu is its *Type*. This means what type of weapon you may employ with this martial art; some styles are more flexible than others. The Types are: **Brutal**, which consists of *Palms*, *Kicks* (Fight skill with no weapons whatsoever) or *Blunt Weapons* (Fight Skill with blunt weapons), and **Artful** (Melee skill with weapons) and **Free** (uses any or no weapons as applicable).
- B.) **Chi Cost for Techniques.** You must have Chi of the appropriate color on hand. No chi, no kung fu. If you're 'tapped out' or simply too low on Chi for a technique, then trying to use kung fu based on that color of chi is a waste of time. You can do the physical maneuvers just fine (and maybe intimidate somebody), but the actual chi manipulation that gives the technique its power fails for want of energy.
- C.) **Technique Use in a Turn.** Unless otherwise noted, you may use as many techniques as you like in a turn. The limitation is that you may not use a technique *repeatedly* in the same turn; a given technique can only be performed **once** in a given turn. So you could use three different techniques (as long as you could pay the chi cost!), but not the same technique three times in a round.
- D.) **Technique Duration.** The effect of techniques will usually be for either a single roll or for an entire round. Some techniques have Channels that allow you to extend their parameters by spending more chi, whether to maintain them for additional rounds or to alter their effect in some way; see individual descriptions.

E.) **Combining Techniques in an Action.** Whenever you use multiple techniques in an action, you only get the highest effect available, not the sum of the technique's effects. So if you use two techniques, one that gives you +3 dice of damage, and one that gives you +2 dice of damage, you only get the +3, not +5 dice of damage. Same for Initiative bonuses or adds; see relevant text for each technique. If there are exceptions to this rule, they will be noted in the technique's descriptions.

F.) **Critical Successes** for each Style are shown; if you score 10 over your opponent's Defense roll, you may choose one of the two offered to inflict upon your target. Note that some techniques have specific Critical Successes; these override the usual two when used.

G.) **Kung Fu Marvels** are the precursors of Techniques. They are one-shot improvised maneuvers that actually work, cost one Chi per die used in creating the Marvel (up to the number of dice in the Kung Fu in question), against a Degree of Difficulty established by the Game Master. Marvels can only be improvised in a relevant fashion, directly connected to the purpose and theme of the path. You could improvise marvels of amazing acrobatics with your Lightfoot Skill, but you're not going to throw fire with it, as Lightfoot is all about the fast movement of your body through space, not about fireballs.

Kung Fu Style Title

(A System Topic <a topic that relates to the rules of the game>)

Destiny Cost (How much to buy into the style)

(Availability of Kung Fu) (Color of Chi Kung Fu is based on) Style

Paragraph of Descriptive Text that explains some history or background of the Martial Art. **Signature:** The Signature of a martial arts style is what visible manifestations of the chi being used evokes; such manifestations generally intensify as the more powerful techniques are used.

Type (Weapon): The focus of the style – Artful, Brutal, or Ranged combat. (The weapon most commonly employed; this is an example, not a limitation. A limited style will say <Weapon Type> Only).



Default Critical Successes: Two Combat Effects that can be chosen from, one of which can be used on a Critical Success. Note that these can be overridden by a Combat Effect from a specific technique.

Level One Technique of the Style (1 point): The level of the technique is also its chi cost for its favored color.

Level Two Technique of the Style (2 points): Higher-level Techniques can be based on lower level techniques, but are not always.

Level Three Technique of the Style (3 points): Third Level Techniques are the 'workhorse' maneuvers of the style – while not mastery, they show true proficiency.

Level Four Technique of the Style (4 points): For Common Styles, Chi Channels only appear at this level or higher.

Level Five Technique of the Style (5 points): Often a powerful combination of lower level techniques, but not always. Hard to offset or prevent, these techniques offer real power, even for Common Styles.

Level Six Technique of the Style (Chi expenditure for Level Six and up techniques is a bit different: you have to pay 6 points of the Style's base color, then four more of any color. Level Six techniques always cost ten points of chi [or Destiny, to buy]; Sevens cost 15.): Often a powerful combination of lower level techniques, but not always. Hard to offset or prevent, these techniques offer real power, even for Common Styles.

DESTINY COST

- * Bonus: you receive a free <Kung Fu> Skill Level equal to the highest technique you've learned. *This means that you have a number rating in the Kung Fu style that can be spent as dice, rather like Chi Aura. These dice may only be used to create Kung Fu Marvels.*

Common Kung Fu Styles

Blizzard Fist

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

Common Silver Chi Style

Sometimes called "Frost Fist", this style can be wonderfully disconcerting, as it slows victims with each

successful hit. While not as spectacular as other forms like Holy Fire, crippling the target's ability to respond in kind has a style all its own. Often favored by Courtiers and Scholars, this style enjoys a moderate following across the Land of the Gods. **Signature:** Techniques of this martial arts form are characterized by puffs of cold mist and frost coating the targets.

Type (Weapon): Brutal (Palms Only).

Default Critical Successes: **Down** or **Stun**.

I: Frost-Numbing Fist (1 point): Any damage inflicted with this technique causes the Test penalties of the next higher Wound Level (i.e. If you strike someone with this attack, and they are *Battered*, then they take the Test Penalties of *Injured*), and you do one additional die of damage from the cold.

2: Frozen Moon (2 points): Anyone who attacks you in personal combat while you're using this technique is rimed by frost from the extreme chill your Chi Aura exudes; their Strike is reduced by 5 from the cold. This wears off if they disengage from you next round, but otherwise, as long as they attack you, their Strike is reduced accordingly. As a nice side effect, you gain the ability to defend against cold and cold-based attacks equal to your Blizzard Fist skill pool. Note that Area Attacks are not 'personal combat'.

3: Wounded By Frost (3 points): As *Frost-Numbing Fist*, only you do 2 additional dice of damage, and may add your Silver Chi modifier to your Strike.

4: Frozen Shadow (4 points): Like *Frozen Moon* and *Wounded by Frost*, only worse; your target's Strike is reduced by 10 by the cold, you do 3 additional dice of damage (and the greater Test penalties). Finally, if you successfully hit them while this technique is in effect, then they lose their Crimson Chi's breath at the end of the round. Additionally, you can extinguish fires with a successful hit at a GM-determined Difficulty... and extinguish the flames of a Holy Fire practitioner if you have a higher Blizzard Fist Skill than the target's! The effects of this technique on your target only fade after as many rounds that you have dice in Blizzard Fist Kung Fu have passed. **Channel: 2 White** (extends the duration of this technique by one round).

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you receive a free *Blizzard Fist* Skill Level equal to the highest technique you've learned. *Example: You buy up to Level Three (Wounded by Frost), spending 6 Destiny points. Thus you have 3 skill dice (used to improvise Marvels) in Blizzard Fist.*



Cloud Mastery

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

Common Jade Chi Style

A powerful and flexible style, this Kung Fu takes its name from the scudding clouds that control the sky... and with the kung fu, the battlefield. It is a popular form with many practitioners across the Land of the Gods, though there is no single acknowledged master of the form; it is thought to have originated in the West, as many Xi Clan warriors know at least the rudiments of this style. **Signature:** This kung fu's techniques are usually marked by a visible blurring of the warrior's outline as they move, as well as a marked increase in the grace of their moves.

Type: Free (None).

Default Critical Success: None.

1: Phantom of the Clouds (1 point): Your body fades like clouds dispersing, allowing you to move as subtly as fog across the battlefield, striking where you will. When invoked, you may add your Jade Chi Modifier to your Initiative for the round. This technique must be invoked at the beginning of the round.

2: Moon Covered by Clouds (2 points): By hiding your Chi Aura within the local environment, you can make yourself harder to hit, as most warriors end up depending on their Awareness to aid their coordination in combat. For the round, if someone tries to attack you, you may subtract your Jade Chi Modifier from their Strike.

3: Flowing Clouds (3 points): Your motions become impossibly smooth, flowing, and perfectly timed, just as clouds move in concert pushed by the wind. Indeed, you seem to be moved by the very flow of combat itself. This technique acts like *Phantom of the Clouds*, but besides



the Initiative add, you may add your Jade Chi modifier to your Armor for the round (stacking with any you're already wearing), so hard are you to touch by hand or weapon. This technique cannot be used to pre-empt another's action or Initiative once the round

has begun.

4: Sun Sheltered by Clouds (4 points): This technique works like *Moon Covered by Clouds*, only more subtle and comprehensive; instead of merely hiding your chi aura, you hide your very light itself! This is not invisibility, but you are harder to see – you are a shifting blur, hard to focus on. While useless for Stealth (you are still visible) it is highly useful in the chaos of combat – no one can attack you until *after* you have taken an action, and you may add your Jade Chi Modifier to your Athletics or Dodge rolls, along with reducing your attacker's Strike by your Jade Chi modifier. Finally, you may not be targeted by any Ranged attacks at Long range, and at Medium range the penalties are *doubled*. **Channel:** 2 Silver (may maintain this effect for another round.)

5: Sea of Clouds (5 points): This technique grants you all the benefits of both *Sun Sheltered by Clouds* and *Flowing Clouds*, with one added effect: While no one can attack you until *after* you have taken an action, when you do attack, you have full **Surprise** on your <single> target (they are unable to defend, unless they manage to make an Awareness roll against your Cloud Mastery). You may only use this surprise attack on your first action in a given combat; on subsequent actions, your target has no problem tracking you for the rest of the battle, though of course you still have the increased Armor and Initiative ratings. This technique must be invoked at the beginning of the round. **Channel:** 2 Silver (may maintain this effect for another round.)

DESTINY COST

* **Bonus:** you receive a free *Cloud Mastery* Skill Level equal to the highest technique you've learned.

Dragon Saber

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

Common Crimson Chi Style

Dragon Saber kung fu is a good example of the many sword styles available in the Land of the Gods; each has its own name and variations, but when all is said and done, they enhance one's sword mastery. Needless to say, many practitioners swear by their particular version as being superior to all the rest. Note that while this style can be adapted to other Bladed weapons, it was and is a sword style in origin and practice, as swords are considered to be the most righteous of weapons in Shen Zhou. **Signature:** The weapon being used glints dangerously with the Crimson Chi used in the Dragon Saber techniques, often leaving red streaks or brief afterimages of the blade.

Type: Artful (Sword)

Default Critical Success: **Disarm** or **Maim**.

1: Flash of Steel (1 point): Using this technique adds your Crimson Chi modifier to your Strike and allows you to draw your weapon to your hand from up to your Favored Chi in yards as a free action, allowing you to attack regardless of whether your weapon is in your hand or not.

2: Dragon Speed (2 points): Often, combat is decided in who gets in the first blow. When this technique is invoked, you may add your Crimson Chi modifier to your Initiative. This technique must be invoked at the beginning of the round.

3: Submission to the Earth (3 points): Using this technique, if you attack and score a success then your target is **Downed**, and you do two additional bonus dice of damage.

4: Fierce Dragon's Talons (4 points): A magnificent defensive technique – add your Crimson chi modifier to your Strike for all Defenses for the round. In addition, you may score a **Reply** on a Critical Success against each such attacker, doing result dice in damage up to your Dragon Saber Level. **Channel: 2 White** (may maintain this effect for another round.)

5: Dragon's Teeth Overwhelms the Enemy (5 points): Make a single attack; as you do so, you will be surrounded by a brief ephemeral image of a dragon, traced in the Crimson Chi you use to invoke this technique. If you hit, you will ignore all Armor (which will be destroyed, unless it's magical; Chi Aura works as normal). If the damage done by this attack exceeds a health level, then a limb is lost for each level inflicted (the head is not a limb). While the damage can be healed, the limbs must be



DARK GLADE'S SABER IS A LEVEL 2 WEAPON – BROWN SABER. IT GREATLY DESTROYS BROWN SABER.

reattached via some higher level healing (i.e. a level six healing technique or better) so that any **Missing Extremity** Disadvantages can be removed.

DESTINY COST

* **Bonus:** you receive a free *Dragon Saber* Skill Level equal to the highest technique you've learned

Drunken Monkey

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

Common Silver Chi Style

An unusual style of Kung fu, based upon watching monkeys squabble after feasting on fermented fruit. Fighting while using this chi path looks somewhat silly – it involves a lot of low crouches, scuttling lunges and loose arm waving. But it is a superb path for avoiding injury, and for gaining the advantage on your opponent without him quite realizing it. **Signature:** This martial arts form has absolutely no visible manifestations; however, on the higher level techniques, the whooping or shrieking of an angry monkey can sometimes be heard.

Type: Free (None).

Default Critical Success: (See Below).

1: Monkey Capering (1 point): Using this technique, you may add your Silver Chi modifier to a single Dodge roll.

2: Monkey Roll (2 points): You may, when using this technique, add your Silver Chi modifier to your Armor; in fact, this technique will stack with any existing Armor you're wearing. Lastly, you will automatically be out of any tight spot you might be in when you use it; in other words, if you're pinned by two fighters who are teaming you, then you will have to face only one of them after you perform the Monkey Roll.

3: Monkey Antics (3 points): As *Monkey Capering* but for the entire round; with the added effect of negating any weapon specializations to be used against you during that round, from the sheer distraction of your bizarre maneuvers.

4: Monkey Tricks (4 points): As *Monkey Roll*, but while it is active for the round, you may execute a **Reply** on each successful Defense. Should your Reply succeed, you may inflict damage... but only up to a maximum of dice equal to your Drunken Monkey skill Level. Finally, should you gain a Critical Success and your Silver Chi rating is higher than theirs,

神兵玄奇

then each such Reply *Downs* an opponent.

5: Monkey Saint (5 points): When used, you have the effect of both *Monkey Antics* and *Monkey Tricks* – and you may maintain this technique for more than one round. **Channel:** 2 *Crimson* (may maintain this effect for another round.)

DESTINY COST

* **Bonus:** you receive a free *Drunken Monkey Skill Level* equal to the highest technique you've learned.

Eagle Claw

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

Common Crimson Chi Style

A fast slashing art, with claw-like strikes dealt by hand. Popular and fairly widespread, this kung fu is favored for those who don't want to rely on always having a weapon on hand; as such, it is popular in the big cities of the South, where Emperor Hu's draconian grip is at its tightest. **Signature:** The main sign of this art is the characteristic claw-like finger positions that the warrior's hand always takes when this style is in use. The only visual manifestation of this form is that sharp little flashes of light, like reflections off an eagle's eye, will glint off the warrior's eye or sometimes, off his nails.

Type: Brutal (Palms Only)

Default Critical Success: Disarm or Maim.

1: Quick Rip (1 point): If your Attack occurs before your opponent has had time to react (in other words, you have the Initiative), it does an additional die of damage; however, you always add your Crimson Chi modifier to your Strike, and have +5 to your Damage.

2: Flashing Talons (2 points): Using this technique, you may make an additional Palms attack after everyone else's.

3: Flesh-Rending Strike (3 points): This technique acts like *Quick Rip*, only doing two bonus dice (plus an additional bonus die if you get the Initiative!) and you can bypass five points of Armor.

4: Wing of Eagles' Dawning (4 points): With this impressive technique, you can attack so precisely and with such skill that you disarm your opponent! Apply your Crimson Chi modifier to your Strike, but it does a **Disarm** effect if you get a Standard Success (as well as normal damage). If you get a Critical Success,

you end up with his weapon in your hand, with which you may attack with in an additional attack after everybody else! (If you keep the weapon in your hand, you still gain the Additional Attack every round this technique is maintained.) **Channel:** 2 *Silver* (may maintain this effect for another round.)

5: Eagle Consumes His Prey (5 points): Instead of pulling your steel-like fingers free after striking, this technique leaves them in place, twisting and rending in order to worsen the wound. It works like *Flesh-Rending Strike*, but you can only attack *once* in a round using Eagle Consumes His Prey (no additional actions!). Your single attack has a Strike bonus equal to your Crimson Chi modifier, but you can ignore up to ten points of Armor and inflict three bonus dice of damage (plus an additional die if you gain the Initiative). Furthermore, on your next action you may forego making any rolls and simply use your previous damage result again. The victim may make a Fight roll to break free (ending it), and any successful attack on you while you're using this technique ends it, requiring you to attack again. **Channel:** 2 *Gold* (may maintain this effect for another round.)

6: Artery-Bursting Strike (6 Crimson + 4 Any - 10 points): To use Artery-Bursting Strike, the warrior must make a single attack (no additional actions). If the strike hits, it ignores **all** Armor – only Dodges, Blocks and Chi Aura affording any defense. Besides inflicting the expected damage, the target will suffer Chi Flow Loss to all five colors of inner power (that is, no breath or regaining chi of any color!), which will not return until **all** damage is healed.

DESTINY COST

* **Bonus:** you receive a free *Eagle Claw Skill Level* equal to the highest technique you've learned.

God of Wind Kick

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

Common White Chi Style

God of Wind Kick is another example of a very common martial art, with many variations with their own names across the Land of the Gods. Painful and dangerous, this is a favored second style for many warriors (as well as courtiers who like to have a few surprises on hand... or foot). **Signature:** This one's pretty obvious: the fighter pirouettes through the air, performing terrible smashing kicks as if they weighed like a feather.

Type: Brutal (Kicks Only).

Default Critical Success: Maim or Stun.



1: Earthly Spirit Kick (1 point): This technique is thought to be an adaptation of a Lightfoot technique; with it, you may leap to the attack at twice your normal distance as a Free Action, and are able to add your White Chi Modifier to your Initiative for this attack, and add a bonus die to your damage. This technique must be invoked at the beginning of the round.

2: Heavenly Deity Kick (2 points): Like *Earthly Spirit Kick*, only you may leap three times your normal jumping distance as a Free Action, add your White Chi modifier to your Initiative and add your Jade Chi modifier to your Strike, doing two additional dice to damage. This technique cannot be used to pre-empt another's action or Initiative once the round has begun.

3: Heavenly Warrior Circle-Kick (3 points): Make a single attack, no additional actions. Spinning like a dervish, you will kick any and all near you within your Favored Chi in feet, kicking multiple opponents in sequence. Make your attack; out of your possible targets, test against the single highest Defense roll; you are then able to devote result dice amongst your opponents, doing result die (dice) + three bonus dice in damage. Like *Heavenly Deity Kick*, you may add your White Chi Modifier to your Initiative and add your Jade Chi modifier to your Strike for this attack only. (This technique works splendidly on minions, incidentally). Be aware that allies cannot be excluded in this attack – you kick everybody who happens to be near you, so it must be employed

thoughtfully (if you don't want your allies mad at you). This technique cannot be used to pre-empt another's action or Initiative once the round has begun.

4: Divine Warrior Stepping Stone Skull-Kick (4 points): This technique is horrible to watch, particularly if you're on the wrong side. The warrior using this technique leaps like a grasshopper from head to head of each opponent, kicking in their skulls as she goes; only if she badly fails a roll does she fall to the ground! Like *Heavenly Deity Kick*, only you may employ it from round to round; in other words, you may leap three times your normal jumping distance as a Free Action, add your White Chi modifier to your Initiative and your Jade Chi modifier to your Strike, with each successful kick adding **four** bonus dice in damage. This technique works just fine against minions, but you may double the result dice (ignoring the usual damage bonus) for how many followers can be incapacitated each round. This technique must be invoked at the beginning of the round. **Channel: 2 Crimson** (may maintain this effect for another round.)

DESTINY COST

* **Bonus:** you receive a free *God of Wind Kick Skill Level* equal to the highest technique you've learned.

Golden Temple Bells

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

Common Gold Chi Style

A powerful art developed and spread around openly throughout Shen Zhou by the Zan monks, one can find practitioners of this style just about every where you may go; its Buddhist origins are rather apparent, given its defensive and almost utilitarian nature. **Signature:** The Gold Chi used in this style always manifests visibly as golden light, becoming more pronounced with the greater techniques. It is perhaps the most easily recognized martial arts form in Shen Zhou, which is no wonder, given the work of the Zan monks in spreading it far and wide.

Type: Free (None).

Default Critical Success: Disarm or Stun.

1: Bell-Carrying Sinews (1 point): When used, this technique allows you to add your Gold Chi modifier to your Lift roll for one round.

2: Hardness of the Bell (2 points): When invoked, you may add your Gold Chi modifier

神兵玄奇

to your Armor for the round. Much like Bell-Carrying Sinews, this technique is obvious in its use; one's Chi Aura becoming briefly outlined in golden chi sparks.

3: Resonating Calm of the Bell (3 points): When performed, the kung fu warrior begins to intone a mantra, beginning to resonate like a bell, the sonorous notes rolling out and impacting everyone in the vicinity. Make an Inspire roll: listeners resist with their Confidence (Fighters allied with the warrior using this technique get a +10 modifier on their roll; hostile strangers get no such adjustment). Each result die subtracts five from the victim's Initiative roll. The warrior invoking this technique may not attack this round (and does not have to roll Initiative), but the effect always takes place before any actions begin. One's eyes usually blaze golden while this technique is in use. This technique must be invoked at the beginning of the round.

4: Army-Rattling Peals of the Bell (4 points): By making an impassioned shout and a Inspire roll while invoking this technique, one can stop Followers in their tracks. With a successful roll, you automatically knock out Followers equal to your Golden Temple Bell level, and each result die knocks out another; finally, you can spend White Chi to knock out additional minions, one per each point of White Chi spent. **Channel: White** (as specified). It otherwise looks like Resonating Calm of the Bell, above.

5: Golden Invulnerability (5 points): This technique works similarly to *Hardness of the Bell*, only you may sustain it from round to round. This technique, like its precursor, has one limitation – it has a *Vulnerable Spot*, a single point where this protection can be completely bypassed and ignored. However, for this technique, the Vulnerable Spot can be moved with a Free Action. **Channel: 2 Jade** (may maintain this effect for another round). It otherwise looks like *Hardness of the Bell*, above.

6: Golden Notes of Power (10 points - 6 Gold, 4 Any): This technique is similar to Resonating Calm of the Bell in certain respects; it works against large numbers, particularly minions... but that's where the resemblance ends, as it is an effective way to attack large numbers of people with disorienting chi-energy sparks! Make an Inspire roll. The notes (sharper and harsher than Resonating Calm's) roll out, each manifesting as a bright golden spark that flies according to the martial artist's will. The sparks fly fast as birds, each impacting on as many Named enemy targets as the practitioner's Golden Chi rating. With groups of minions, each result die takes them out of commission, whether by striking their weapons from their hands, unhorsing them, whatever seems most appropriate (note that each group of Followers

count as one Named enemy target). Against Named opponents, the sparks act as a selective Area Attack, inflicting normal damage against all of them (depending on their defenses, naturally), and the kung fu warrior can maintain the technique for more than one round by channeling four points of Chi every round (any color will do). **Channel: 4 Any** (may maintain this effect for another round).

DESTINY COST

* **Bonus:** you receive a free *Golden Temple Bells* Skill Level equal to the highest technique you've learned.



Heart-Breaking Blade

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

Common Crimson Chi Style

Formerly named "White Season Knife Style", this form of Kung fu is favored by those who enjoy quick kills and slaughter; typically soldiers, kung-fu skilled bandits and Hell Clan extortionists. It is typified by quick rakes with weapon-edges across vital arteries or tendons, and the title refers specifically to the effect on the widows and children of the victims. It is thought that the original style of kung fu once had three more techniques (and could be used with knives!), but where it could be found today is



not known. *Signature:* The blade of the fighter using this style becomes hard to watch, it is moving so fast; leaving brief shimmers of cold metallic light in its wake.

Type (Weapon): Brutal (Swords Only)

Default Critical Successes: Disarm or Maim.

I: Killing Spree (1 point): The technique making the blade almost too fast to see, you add +5 to the Strike of your attack, and adding two dice to the Damage of a successful hit! Furthermore, you can draw your weapon as a Free Action.

2: Lightning Killing Spree (2 points): As *Killing Spree* (adding +5 to your Strike), but you can add your Crimson Chi rating to your Initiative total for the round, as well as adding two dice to the Damage of a successful hit. As above, you can also draw your weapon as a Free Action. This technique cannot pre-empt or alter existing Initiative rolls.

3: Killing Frenzy Spree (3 points): As *Lightning Killing Spree* inflicting three additional dice of damage, but you can affect multiple opponents if they are in close proximity to you! Make your attack roll; it will affect any and all within personal combat range (your Favored Chi in feet), including any units of Followers. This technique cannot pre-empt or alter existing Initiative rolls, nor may you use any technique that grants an additional attack, as this technique is so demanding so as to preclude any such diversion of your attention.

DESTINY COST

- * Bonus: you receive a free *Heart-Breaking Blade* Skill Level equal to the highest technique you've learned.

Heaven's Thunder

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

Common Jade Chi Style

This path is a good example of a 'Lesser Clan' style of Kung fu; the Five 'Great Clans' are very controlling of their kung fu knowledge, while the lesser clans, by necessity, do not have the power and influence to prevent the spread of their lore. Niu Lan (sometimes called "Bison") is the best-known practitioner of this style, but he is by no means the only one, as the Heaven Sword Clan has not maintained control of this powerful kung fu. *Signature:* A crackling sense of a nearby thunderstorm, complete with the smell of electricity in the air, is the manifestation of the use of this kung fu, along with sparks.

Type: Artful/Brutal (Sword).

Default Critical Successes: Knockback or Down.

I: Dragon Wind (1 point): Your speed increases – you add your Jade Chi modifier to your Initiative. Your running speed doubles, and with sufficient success, your tread is so light that you can run on things that would not normally support your weight! If your Jade Chi Score is 3-4, you can run on water or on the tips of blades of grass. If your Jade Chi Score is 5-6, you can run on smoke or raindrops. With a Jade Chi Score of 7 or higher, you can run on air! Finally, this technique can be combined with Lightfoot for truly amazing maneuverability. This technique must be invoked at the beginning of the round.

2: Lashing Torrent (2 points): This technique makes the warrior's attacks fall as ceaselessly and unpredictably as torrents of rain; upon invoking this technique allows you to make an additional attack at the end of the round, right after everyone else's.

3: Crashing Thunder (3 points): For those moments when the warrior is beset by multiple enemies attacking at once, this technique unleashes a terrible thunderclap from the upraised hand (or weapon; the warrior is unaffected), which will inflict your Confidence roll plus your Gold Chi modifier in damage to everyone within your Favored Chi in yards. Additionally, the target(s) who fail to defend against this technique will be *Knocked back* (Minions are automatically knocked flat regardless). It is worth remembering that this technique will affect friend and foe alike, if they should be in range!

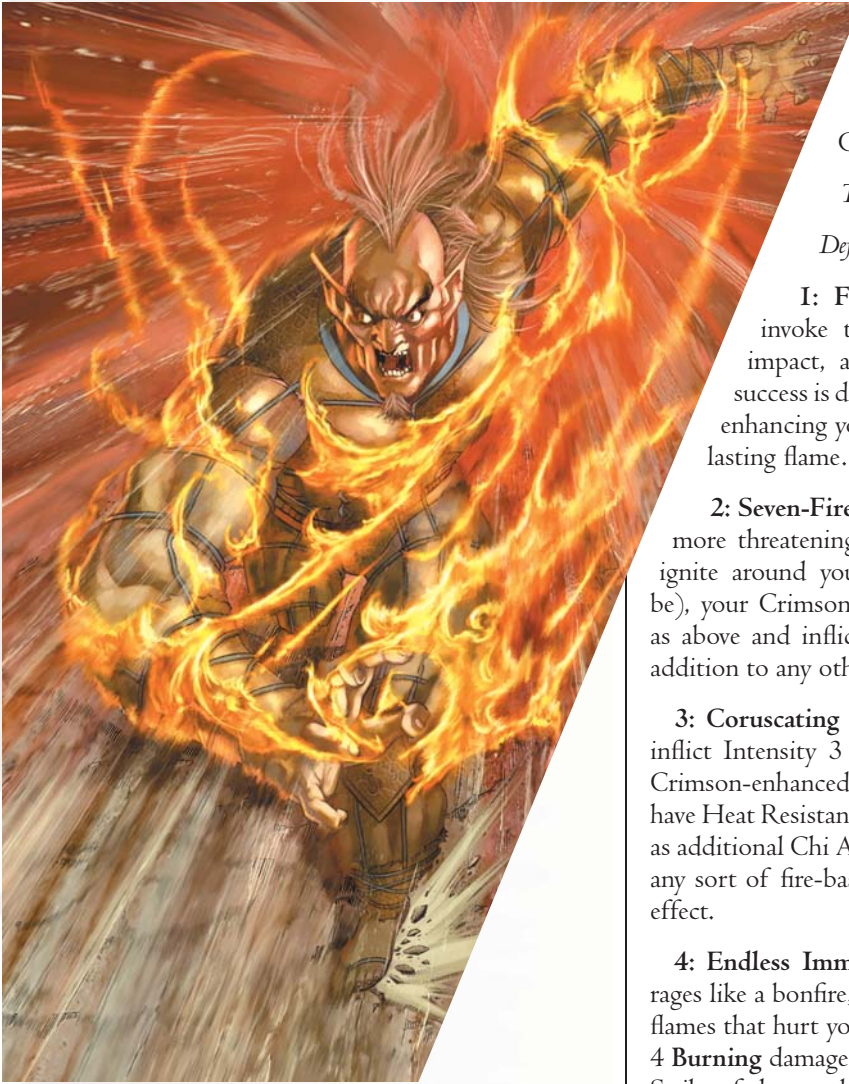
4: Gods-Lightning (4 points): By spinning rapidly in a circle, the warrior can unleash lightning bolts at every nearby living target. He cannot control the bolts; they automatically strike for their targets, doing your Attack roll plus 3 dice in damage (instead of the usual weapon damage), but only Dodging affords any defense; Blocks and Armor have no effect.

5: Heaven and Earth (5 points): By spending a full action to raise his weapon high to the sky then drag its tip along the ground, the warrior can charge his weapon (and himself) with the power of Heaven and Earth. Heaven grants its power by making him harder to hurt, and Earth grants him some of its endless strength. While this technique is active, add your Gold Chi modifier to your Armor (stacking with any existing Armor), and your Jade Chi modifier to your Initiative and Strike. This technique cannot be used to pre-empt another's action or Initiative once the round has begun. **Channel: 2 Gold** (maintains the technique for another round).

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you receive a free *Heaven's Thunder* Skill Level equal to the highest technique you've learned.

神兵玄奇



Holy Fire

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

Common Crimson Chi Style

Formerly the proprietary knowledge of the West Fire Doctrine Sect, this style escaped their control when they were forced to reform as the Flame Cult, under Hell Clan auspices. This form is derived from one of the Fire Sutras of the Zhu Rong Temple - and the power of the style cannot be denied. Never mind that many warriors would rather not pass up the feeling of setting an enemy on fire with your blows!

Anyone who is not of the *Wulin* is likely to be greatly intimidated by your hands being on fire... **Signature:** Flames, and lots of them... always springing

out from the weapon (or hands!) of the wielder of this kung fu. The colors of the flames produced always seem to reflect the warrior's Favored Chi.

Type: Artful/Brutal.

Default Critical Successes: None.

1: Flame Strike (1 Point): When you invoke this technique, flames burst out on impact, adding one die of damage after hit success is determined, your Crimson Chi modifier enhancing your Strike. Note this does not ignite a lasting flame... the burst of fire is too brief.

2: Seven-Fire Fist (2 Points): Like *Flame Strike*, but more threatening and more dangerous, as the flames ignite around your fist (or weapon, as the case may be), your Crimson Chi modifier enhancing your Strike as above and inflicting Intensity 2 **Burning** damage in addition to any other damage from your attack.

3: Coruscating Flame (3 points): Your strikes now inflict Intensity 3 **Burning** damage in addition to the Crimson-enhanced Strike of the attack. Additionally, you have Heat Resistance - you may use your Holy Fire Level as additional Chi Aura, but only for purposes of resisting any sort of fire-based damage while this technique is in effect.

4: Endless Immolation (4 points): Your body now rages like a bonfire, surrounded by a thin aura of roaring flames that hurt you not at all. Your strikes will Intensity 4 **Burning** damage in addition to the Crimson-enhanced Strike of the attack, and any Palm or Kick attacks against you will ignite any person so foolish as to do so. You can damp down the immolating flames to merely your fists at any time you desire for a free action, and raise them back again similarly while the technique remains active (your hands will always be on fire, though). Like *Coruscating Flame*, you have Heat Resistance as above, but can set fire to anything flammable that you touch if you will it. **Channel:** 2 *Jade* (may maintain this effect for another round).

5: Mantle of the Phoenix (5 points): Like *Endless Immolation*, only more so, and similarly controllable. Your entire body is not only aflame but is surmounted by the image of the Phoenix itself... or that of any spirit you hold most sacred; You get a free Morale Attack equal to your Attack Total. Your strikes will cause Intensity 5 **Burning** damage in addition to the standard bonus dice of the attack, and any Palm or Kick attacks against you will ignite any person so foolish as to attack you bare-handed. Instead of attacking with your fists or feet, you can make a Ranged Skill roll and do five dice of damage to a single target up to Crimson Chi in yards away! While this does damage your target, they will not **Burn** for a prolonged period; the flames are intense but short-lived,

inflicting Intensity 2 **Burning** flames instead. **Channel:** 2 *Jade* (may maintain this effect for another round).

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you receive a free *Holy Fire* Skill Level equal to the highest technique you've learned.

Lightfoot

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: Free

Common Flexible Chi Style

The oldest human dream is to fly; so this path is perhaps the very first form of all kung fu to be devised. Perhaps that's why you can use any color of chi to invoke it; the dream is that old and that dear, that chi flows so easily into it to create the oldest favored effect... first great leaps, then into the sky. This path is practiced by virtually every martial artist, and for good reason; it allows the insanely rapid travel and long flying leaps that allow a kung fu warrior to outmaneuver any merely mundane fighter. Please note that Lightfoot techniques have the benefit of changing what would be an Athletics action (requiring a full action) into a kung fu technique... which is a free action. This is why martial arts warriors can have extended battles while flying through the air!

Signature: Wuxia heroes (or villains) using this style seem to move through the air on invisible wires, with great grace and speed; they pirouette and spiral and bound like gazelles or glide like seagulls through the sky.

Type: Free (Athletics).



Default Critical Successes: None.

I: Surefoot (1 point): While using this technique, you can cling to walls like a spider, climb at your running speed, run on water, and take no damage from falling no matter how far you plummet. You may also recover from being **Downed** in the next round by bouncing to your feet using this technique. Note that there are instances and conditions where this technique will not work!

Chi Cost: 1 Any.

I: Run Like A Deer (2 points): This technique makes any attempts to Cover Ground by running a Free Action. **Chi Cost:** 2 Any.

Mobility Bonus: You may put on sudden bursts of speed for the entire round, which allows you to add +5 to your Dodge rolls... but only if you describe the maneuver that you're using the technique with (each time!), including any landscape features as supplied by the Sage or the player.

3: Headlong Flying Leap (3 points): This acts like *Run Like a Deer*, only for Jumping as well as Covering Ground. With a successful Athletics roll as a Free Action, against an Everyday (18) difficulty, you make long flying leaps, ten yards for each result die from your roll. You fly at a rate of ten yards per round. Note that if you take damage while in midair, you may have to make an additional Athletics roll to continue on to your landing point without falling and being **Downed**. **Chi Cost:** 3 Any.

Mobility Bonus: You may perform incredible aerial maneuvers for the round, usually off

some local item or piece of landscape, which you must describe vividly each time. You may not add in incongruous things to do these maneuvers off of; they must fit in and make sense, or your Sage will disallow the +10 bonus to Dodge that you can gain from using this

神兵玄奇

technique in tandem with your maneuvering, or may only grant you +5 instead of the full amount possible.

4: High As The Clouds (4 points): Make a successful Everyday Athletics roll (difficulty 18) as a Free Action. For every result die, you can fly a mile. You fly at a rate of twenty yards per round, and you may fly until you set down or use up your distance, whichever comes first. **Chi Cost: 4 of Any single color.**

Mobility Bonus: Like *Headlong Flying Leap*, only even more so. You may perform fantastic aerial maneuvers for the entire round, which you must describe vividly each time, including your body's reaction to weapon or physical impacts against your opponent. You may not add in incongruous things to do these maneuvers off of; they must fit in and make sense, or your Sage will disallow the +15 bonus to Dodge that you can gain from using this technique in tandem with your maneuvering. Again, the Sage may choose to grant a lesser bonus according to the strength of your description, or possibly to other factors.

5: Infinite Endurance (5 points): Used with another Lightfoot technique of lower level, this allows one to remove the limit of distance and time of that technique, until it is released or the warrior suffers a full Health level of Damage. The martial artist can also hover, which ordinarily is not possible for Lightfoot techniques, which usually require some sort of motion. Note that this technique cannot be invoked if you are already suffering Chi Flow Loss to any color of your Chi! **Chi Cost: Investment of 1 of Every Color.**

6: Supernal Speed (10 points): This technique makes you speed personified; the more erudite scholars like to call this technique "Velocity Transformation", but they're the only ones to ever do so. When this technique is invoked, you get the following effects:

1.) You always go first. When up against someone else with this kung fu, compare your Athletics roll with theirs, with the highest Speed breaking ties.

2.) You gain a +20 to all Dodge rolls for the round.

3.) You may make a free additional attack each round, after everybody else's.

4.) You can make lightning dashes of 30 yards per free action spent instead of the usual ten, allowing you to leave combat without your enemies getting the usual opportunity attack as you depart. Only other practitioners of Supernal Speed can hope to compete with you directly in any contest based on quickness of movement; then it is a normal opposed contest. **Chi Cost: 10 Any.**

DESTINY COST

* Bonus: you receive a free *Lightfoot Skill Level* equal to the highest technique you've learned.

Lunar Darkness

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

Common Silver Chi Style

Devised by a minor clan in the East, this form has spread far and wide. Often favored by Courtiers and Scholars, it allows any blunt object to become a deadly weapon; and is well suited to kung fu dependent weapons like the Three Section Staff or the Iron Fan. Many Dong Clan warriors know at least the basics of this style, as it compliments their clan's martial focus well. **Signature:** The weapon in use whirls blurringly fast, and trying to track it with your eyes leaves black shadows in your vision.

Type: Brutal (Three-Section Staff).

Default Critical Successes: Knockback or Stun.

1: Hiding Moon Strike (1 point): When used, this technique allows you to add your Silver Chi modifier to your Initiative, allowing you to strike much faster than you should with the normally slower blunt weapons you use with this style. This technique must be invoked at the beginning of the round.

2: Fleeting Moon Shadow (2 points): Invoked, this technique allows you to lash with your weapon in an additional attack after everyone else has acted.

3: Shadow of the Eclipse (3 points): A supremely effective defensive technique, this forces any and all attacks directed at you for the round to be read with one less die in the highest set, though of course you may choose freely of any singles you wish; the reduction only applies to sets of two dice or higher. If you gain a Critical Success on any Defense roll while this technique is active, then you may redirect the highest result your opponent **would** have gotten onto another opponent (who may still Defend!), but only if they are within personal combat range of you.

Example: Elder Moon whirls his Staff-Flail, the sweeper Lunar Soul, about in Shadow of the Eclipse, defending himself from Hell Clan assassins. Hoong Fang, the first assassin, has a 32 Initiative; her partner, Ang Cheb, has a 28. Elder Moon is at a bit of a disadvantage, as he was asleep when they broke in; he only has a 24. Fang stabs at him with her saber, scoring a 3, 4, 4, 4, and a 9. Now, Fang has a problem; Elder Moon's technique reduces her 34 (4, 4, 4) down to a 24 (4, 4), which isn't nearly as good. She opts to dump the 24 into her River, and attack with the 19 instead. Elder Moon rolls a 35,



which handily deflects her attack against her partner, Cheb... who has to awkwardly defend himself from his own partner!

4: Hellish Suffering (4 points): This technique works like *Hiding Moon Strike*, only you add your Crimson Chi modifier to your damage rating; furthermore, you may spend Jade chi to enhance your damage, one die per point spent. Lastly, the damage from this attack is so painful that while the target is injured, they are unable to employ any specializations, due to the intense persistent pain caused by this technique. **Channel:** Jade (as noted).

Example: Bufon strikes Silver Duke with his Iron Fan while invoking Hellish Suffering, rolling his four dice for 1, 5, 5, and 8. He gets to take the two fives (for ten) and then add the 8, for a total of 18 plus his Agility of 4 for a total of 22. Silver Duke tries to Dodge, but only gets a total of 12, and gets hit for 8 dice of damage... that's going to hurt! Just to add insult to injury, he can only use any of his skills at their base values, rather than the higher die pools he'd enjoy were his specializations active!

DESTINY COST

* **Bonus:** you receive a free *Lunar Darkness* Skill Level equal to the highest technique you've learned.

Mental Summons

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

Common Gold Chi Style

A Purely mental form of Kung Fu, this style works on focusing one's will on the local chi flows... to move objects. Not simple telekinesis, this; instead, it wields the local chi like a storm, moving many objects at your bidding. This form is never subtle, and has the drawback of being immediately apparent to anyone with Awareness in the vicinity. It is perhaps not as common as one might think, because of the difficulty of controlling the form's effects — one's allies do not appreciate having to duck for cover every time this style's more powerful techniques are invoked! Simply moving things around is a Free Action; actually using a moved object as a weapon requires a Full Action (Note that seizing hold of a person can still be defended against,

usually by a Dodge or Athletics roll). **Signature:** Veins in the fighter's forehead always glow distinctively green or blue when this art is used; the eyes will also blaze brightly as well at the higher levels of the style.

Type: Free.

Skill Basis (Typical Weapon): Ranged (Anything Handy).

Default Critical Successes: Knockback or Stun.

I: Veins of Anger (I points): You may move objects (up to your own weight), but not terribly fast or dexterously. You may wield twice as many objects as your Presence; if you use them as a weapon, the object or objects will only inflict damage up to as many dice as you have in your

神兵玄奇

Mental Summons skill. Using objects as weapons requires a Ranged skill roll, but you do so at a

–5 modifier. The title of this and other techniques in this path is due to the fact that chi energies are focused through the veins in one's forehead, which always become grotesquely visible when Mental Summons is used.

2: Veins of Rage (2 points): You may now wield your Summoned objects with greater facility; there is now only a –5 Penalty for your attacks, and you can move triple your Presence in number of objects up to three times as much as your own weight. You may now inflict your result dice + 1 bonus die in damage, up to your Mental Summons Level total in dice.

3: Veins of Fury (3 points): Your power grows, and you can wield one object as naturally as if you were wielding it yourself (using the Ranged skill) for result die damage (if a weapon). You may move up to four times your Presence in numbers and four times your own weight in projectiles. If you wield multiple objects as weapon, then you may wield them to do result dice + 2 bonus dice in damage as an Area Attack in an area of effect equal to your Favored Chi in yards, but only in a direction you're facing (you have to be able to see what you're attacking clearly!) You are no longer limited by your Mental Summons Skill Level in damage when you use this technique.

4: Veins of Frenzy (4 points): This is the apex of this form – to move an object as if it were fully in your hands (doing full normal weapon damage if it's a weapon), or to attack with large numbers of objects (everything that's loose within 10 times your Gold Chi in yards) to devastating effect, doing result dice + 4 additional dice in damage! You may make an Area Attack as above., and like Veins of Fury, are not limited by your Mental Summons Skill Level in damage. **Channel: 2 Jade** (to maintain the duration of this technique by one round; the distended veins on your forehead glow green with the Jade chi energies when this channel is used.)

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you receive a free *Mental Summons* Skill Level equal to the highest technique you've learned.



The Music of War

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

Common Gold Chi Style

Rumored to have been created at an earlier Emperor's request, this form is favored by those who like to assassinate with weapons in plain sight. Music of War does require you to be proficient in a musical instrument to even attempt to use, however! (It is otherwise treated as a Ranged weapon). It is enough to give the strongest warrior pause to think that the harmless-looking blind musician playing the ku-ching nearby might be able to kill him with only a few plucked strings... **Signature:** No visible manifestation besides the fact that people start bleeding from their eyes, noses and mouths from being injured by this style... and of course, the piercing sound of the killing notes.

Type: Perform (Musical Instrument).

Default Critical Successes: **Disorienting** or **Stun**.

1: Single Note of Pain (1 point): Playing this note of agonizing power, you can inflict damage (as indicated by your Performance roll) to a single target out to Short Range. Armor does *not* help (being based on deflecting impacts) to block damage from this or any other Music of War techniques, though Chi Protection is still efficacious.

2: Agonizing Melody (2 points): Like *Single Note of Pain*, only you can inflict damage out to Medium Range, and inflict an additional die of damage.

3: Threnody of Torment (3 points): As *Single Note of Pain*, but you can inflict damage with a +2 die bonus to a single target out to Long Range, with the additional effect of causing them to *lose their breath* in their Favored Chi.

4: Eight Notes of Death (4 points): As *Threnody of Torment*, only you may make an Area Attack within your Favored Chi radius in yards, with +3 bonus dice of damage.

5: Deadly Notes (5 points): This works like *Threnody of Torment* (with a +4 dice damage bonus), but instead of losing their breath, the target cannot focus his internal energy enough to use Chi Techniques. If he takes damage from this attack, then he cannot employ any Kung Fu for the rest of the round. The technique's chi-locking effect lasts for every round you manage to hit your target with Deadly Notes. Note that the chi-locking power only comes into play after your target has taken damage; if they attack you before you use Deadly Notes, then their kung fu affects you as normal. **Channel: 2 Any** (may maintain this effect for another round).

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you receive a free *Music of War* Skill Level equal to the highest technique you've learned.

Perfect Aim

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

Common White Chi Style

Useful in combat as well as out of it, Perfect Aim is used to enhance the precision, distance and impact of a projectile, whether thrown by hand or fired from a ranged weapon. It should be noted that Warriors as a group disdain use of this path, though Courtiers and Scholars have no such compunctions. To strike from a distance is considered dishonorable by most warriors... particularly if they're on the receiving end. **Signature:** Only the inhuman accuracy of the practitioner of this kung fu betrays their martial arts knowledge.

Type: Ranged (Arrows or even Needles).

Default Critical Successes: **Blind** or **Disarm**.

1: Eagle Eye (1 Point): Using this technique allows you to treat all targets as an entire Range Category closer than they actually are for one attack.

2: Palpable Hit (2 Points): The Strike of any projectile you throw or fire increases by your Silver Chi modifier and inflicts another bonus die of damage; this lasts for the entire round.

3: Unerring Flight (3 Points): As *Palpable Hit*, but you may add your White Chi modifier to your Initiative, increasing your Strike by your Silver Chi modifier, and doing two more bonus dice in damage while ignoring five points of Armor.

4: Ultimate Heavenly Accuracy (4 Points): This technique combines the previous three – greater base damage (+ 3 bonus dice in damage!), range and pinpoint accuracy and speed, with the additional effect of ignoring ten points of armor. **Channel: 2 Silver** (allows you to maintain this technique for another round).

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you receive a free *Perfect Aim* Skill Level equal to the highest technique you've learned.

神兵玄奇

Swift-Striking Sash

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

Common Silver Chi Style

Much like its parent style of *Universal Blow*, Swift-Striking Sash is an example of a closely-related martial art. Its students trained to hit harder and with precision using mundane objects like ropes or sashes; ideal for assassins or people who just don't want to get caught carrying incriminating weapons. **Signature:** Another derivative style, this one has long snaking wavy movements at range!

Style (Weapon): Brutal/Ranged (Rope or Sash)

Default Critical Successes: Entangle or Down.

1: Sinuous Soft-Hard Weapon (1 point): Using this technique allows a warrior to attack with a rope, sash or other flexible long item as if it were a regular Whip (+15/+0/+0). This technique must be invoked at the beginning of the round.

2: Thousand-Serpent Strike (2 points): When invoked, the fighter gets an additional attack that goes off after all other actions for the round. This technique does not work with other martial arts paths, only with Swift-Striking Sash-based attacks.

3: Hideous Painful Flail (3 points): As *Sinuous Soft-Hard Weapon* but it now functions as if it were a Sectional Steel Whip (+15/+0/+10) instead. This technique must be invoked at the beginning of the round.

4: Prehensile Power-Strike (4 points): As *Hidden Painful Flail* (with the increased Initiative, a Strike bonus of +10 and a two-die damage bonus) but you may control your weapon's movements as you will – allowing your weapon to perform special maneuvers. On a Critical Success, you may choose any Combat Effect save for Burning or Poisoned (Consult with your Sage). **Channel:** 2 *Jade* (maintains the effect another round)

Thousand Scythe Kick

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

Common Gold Chi Style

Perhaps one of the first kung fu styles based entirely on kicking, Thousand Scythe Kick is every bit of its name - wielding the deadly arc of one's incredibly fast kicks like a blade, able to hold one's own against those armed with swords and other such weapons. Thought to have originated in the cold north, the style focuses on training one's legs to move at speeds great enough to ignite the very air. **Signature:** Mostly from the incredible speed of the kicks used in this form... but the highest level techniques are very striking in use, whether from the flames or multiple trailing images of the kick!

Type (Weapon): Brutal (Kicks Only)

Default Critical Successes: Knockback or Maim.

1: Fast Scythe Kick (1 point): The most basic of the Scythe Kicks, Fast Scythe Kick adds one's Gold Chi Modifier to both Initiative and Strike for a single attack.

2: Sweeping Scythe Kick (2 points): A special-purpose attack, this kick both sweeps with great force (Gold Chi Modifier to your Strike), and scoring a successful hit will Down your target.

3: Crescent Scythe Kick (3 points): Much like the other Scythe Kicks, your Strike is enhanced by your Gold Chi Modifier, while a successful attack allows you to snag the very weapon out of your opponent's hand, causing the Disarm Combat Effect.

4: Fiery Scythe Kick (4 points): One of the deadliest kick attacks in Kung Fu, this technique literally sets the air on fire as the kick is made, inflicting Burning of Intensity 4 to your target, while enhancing the Strike and Damage of your kick with your Gold Chi Modifier.

5: Thousand Scythe Kick (5 points): The titular technique of this style, this terrible slicing attack allows the fighter to add his Gold Chi Modifier to his Initiative, Strike and Damage... and on a Critical Success, will sever a limb (the head is not a limb) - doing at least one Health Level's worth of Damage (if the final damage is less than the victim's Health, then adjust it to that minimum). However, no Secondary Attacks can be used in the same round as this technique, given the intense focus needed

DESTINY COST

* Bonus: you receive a free Thousand Scythe Kick Skill Level equal to the highest technique you've learned.



Thunder Hammer

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

Common Jade Chi Style

A derivative style, this Common Style is held in low repute by most of the Martial Arts World – not because it is ineffective, but because those who use it are so low and base in nature. *Signature:* Thunder Hammer is not a subtle style. Indeed, it is notable that whenever it is used, things get broken – whether just local items or people's heads.

Type: Brutal (Palms/Kicks, Blunt Weapons).

Default Critical Successes: Knockback or Down.

1: Thunder Strike (1 point): You can add +5 to Damage whenever this technique is used.

2: Rain of Blows (2 points): This technique makes the warrior's attacks fall as ceaselessly and unpredictably as torrents of rain; upon invoking this technique allows you to make an additional attack at the end of the round, right after everyone else's.

3: Clap of Thunder (3 points): Like *Thunder Strike*, only you get to add your Jade Chi Modifier to your Initiative and your Strike along with the +5 Damage, and you will not suffer the usual 2 points of Damage and Maiming if you are blocking unarmed. This technique must be invoked at the beginning of the round.

4: Lightning Strike (4 points): Like *Rain of Blows* and *Clap of Thunder*, only you may maintain it from round to round. *Channel:* 2 *Crimson* (to maintain for another round).

DESTINY COST

* **Bonus:** you receive a free *Thunder Hammer* Skill Level equal to the highest technique you've learned.

Universal Blow

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

Common Jade Chi Style

Thought to have originated in the South, Universal Blow is an example of one of the most common of martial arts. Its students trained to hit harder and with precision, whether with hand or weapon; there's no denying that it is

handy to know under the oppressive weight of Emperor Hu's reign. Many versions of this style exist, each with their own name and technique titles. *Signature:* Another style that is hard to guess in action until the higher levels, this martial art simply seems to be effective fighting, at least up until the next-to-last technique.

Style (Weapon): Brutal (Fist or Staff)

Default Critical Successes: Knockback or Down.

1: Flowers in the Fog (1 point): Using this technique allows a warrior to attack more rapidly, adding your Jade Chi modifier to your Initiative... with your specialized Brutal weapon *only*. This technique must be invoked at the beginning of the round.

2: Hail of Blows (2 points): When invoked, the fighter gets an additional attack that goes off after all other actions for the round. This technique does not work with other martial arts paths, only with Universal Blow-based attacks. This allows you to arc your fist or weapon in its course after the initial attack is made, thus 'hooking' it into another attempt to hurt your opponent.

3: Cloud-Concealed Strike (3 points): As *Flowers in the Fog*, but along with the increased Initiative, your Strike is increased by 5 and you may draw a weapon as a free action. This technique cannot be used to pre-empt another's action or Initiative once the round has begun.

4: Lighter Than Air (4 points): As *Cloud-Concealed Strike* (with the increased Initiative, a Strike bonus of +10 and a two-die damage bonus) but you may control your weapon's movements as you will – allowing your weapon to perform special maneuvers (this is especially useful with weapons like the Rope Dart or Dragon-headed Whip Club). On a Critical Success, you may choose any Combat Effect save for Burning or Poisoned (Consult with your Sage). *Channel:* 2 *Silver* (maintains the effect another round).

5: Zhong Kui Attacks (5 points): As *Lighter than Air*, but any successful hit will *Down* the target in addition to any other effects. On a Critical Success you may choose *any* Combat Effect, including Burning or Poisoning your target! It may also be maintained in the same way as *Lighter than Air* can. *Channel:* 2 *Gold* (maintains the effect another round). Your weapon will develop appropriate marks for whatever Combat Effect is being generated... flaming if it is set for Burning or glistening green and wet for Poison.

DESTINY COST

* **Bonus:** you receive a free *Universal Blow* Skill Level equal to the highest technique you've learned.



Walking in Shadows

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

Common White Chi Style

Although most potent warriors outwardly sneer at anything other than a straightforward challenge, most of them (at least to themselves) have wished or hoped for the advantage of complete surprise. For those who must have wishes be reality, there is the Shadow Walker Skill... ideal for surprise attacks, spies, and assassins. Courtiers seem to love this style, for some reason. **Signature:** To walk in shadows is to have them as your companion while this style is in use – it is rumored that those who use this style extensively eventually develop shadows in the back of their eyes permanently, but this is probably just rumor.

Style: Free (None).

Default Critical Successes: None.

1: Awash in Shadows (1 point): By locating some sort of cover against direct line-of-sight (whether a niche, a corner, or a high tower), this technique can reshape the local chi flows to draw shadows in and around the practitioner in a natural-appearing way, requiring any Sense test to be more difficult by two degrees than it should be. Note that if you somehow give away your position, then the test is treated as only one degree higher instead of two; your Sage will adjudicate such situations. Note that any benefits of this technique cease the moment you begin to move.

2: Silent Glide (2 Points): Your feet do not actually touch the ground when you employ this technique; instead, you glide silently along the surface of whatever you're crossing just above it, whether on the tips of blades of grass, dust motes, or even simply the air itself! In game terms, this technique allows you to add your Silver Chi modifier for the purposes of walking silently and resisting Sense roll tests on the part of any guardians - a Critical Success will allow the user to gain **Surprise!**

3: Breaking the Mirror (3 Points): When you invoke this technique, you weave Chi patterns around yourself to deflect and divert the gaze and Awareness of anyone happening to gaze in your direction; you may move at your normal rate, though any use of Lightfoot ends this technique's effects instantly.

Make a Stealth roll with a +10 bonus, noting the final total. To spot your presence, they must make Sense Rolls against your total. While you are not being seen, you

may decide to attack with **Surprise**, but after that you are then visible... and you will not be able to do attack so again for that combat, as your opponents will know your chi aura and not be so fooled again; but at the very least, you will be able to add your White Chi modifier to your Armor for the rest of the round once you're revealed.

4: Shadow Walk (4 Points): Using Shadow Walk combines the benefits of the two previous techniques, but you may channel chi to extend the duration as noted below. **Channel: 2 Silver** (maintains the effect another round).

5: Commonplace Face (5 Points): This technique allows the user to utterly change his appearance, becoming utterly anonymous, blending into the crowd. It does not allow you to pose as another person; instead, you simply match the expectations of the area you are in, seeming unworthy of notice. Make a Stealth roll adding in your White Chi modifier, noting your final total. To notice anything amiss with your disguise, they must make an Awareness or Sense Roll against your total. This technique lasts for a number of scenes equal to your White Chi score, but can be extended. **Channel: 2 Silver Invested** (extends the duration; your Chi is treated as if it were two points lower while this technique remains in effect, and *any* chi flow loss due to damage reveals your true appearance.)

6: Rakshasa's Complete Deception (6 White+4 Any Points): Ah, but this is the disguise technique to rule all others... for you can have ANY face you wish, whether crafted to your own specifications, or duplicating another's. It also provides the complete illusion of any and all appropriate raiment and jewelry, though of course this is a false seeming; any successful attack on you will break the illusion and reveal your true appearance.

Make a Stealth roll, and you may add your Silver Chi modifier, noting your final total. To spot something amiss, they must make an Awareness or Sense Roll against your total. **Channel: 4 White Invested** (extends the duration; your Chi is treated as if it were four points lower while this technique remains in effect <simply failing to recharge back up to its normal level, so you don't need a 10 White to use this technique>, and *any* chi flow loss due to damage reveals your true appearance.)

DESTINY COST

* **Bonus:** you receive a free *Walking in Shadows* Skill Level equal to the highest technique you've learned.

Waves Like Water

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

Common Silver Chi Style

This Kung Fu path exploits a basic fact of most weapons of Shen Zhou: they're flexible. With these techniques, you can take the great flexibility of your weapon and turn it into a weapon that can bypass almost any defense... your defender better know what he's doing to avoid being harmed by you, as your sword literally snakes through his defenses! **Signature:** The warrior becomes a virtuoso with their weapon, with its length warping and wrapping and bending to their will.

Type: Artful/Brutal (but the weapon must have a long haft or blade).

Default Critical Successes: Disarm or Maim.

1: Sliding Strike (1 Point): By weaving your weapon's tip in deceptively fast but hypnotic patterns, you may add your Weapon's Strike to your Initiative. This technique must be invoked at the beginning of the round.

2: Fierce Flexible Fence (2 points): You weave a fast-moving fence of your weapon's movements, making it seem everywhere at once, making a barrier against attack. When using this technique, you may add your Silver Chi modifier to all your blocks for the round. Additionally, you may defend against Ranged Weapons without the Strike penalty.

3: Rolling Wave Attack (3 points): This technique deceptively looks like *Fierce Flexible Fence*, but instead you may add your Silver Chi modifier to **all** of your attacks and blocks, and you may ignore five points of Armor.

4: Serpent Weapon (4 points): Often called after your primary weapon (In other words, "Serpent Sword!"), this technique (which otherwise works like *Rolling Wave Attack* in every detail) makes your weapon able to flex and extend like a living serpent, even coiling around your opponent's arm or neck or weapon to make an attack! Once invoked, you may channel Crimson Chi to snake through your opponent's defense, each point spent reducing your opponent's defense pool by one. **Channel:** *Crimson* (as noted above).

DESTINY COST

* **Bonus:** you receive a free *Waves Like Water* Skill Level equal to the highest technique you've learned.

Wisdom of the Seven Gates

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

Common White Chi Style

Of great utility in healing and espionage, this is the kung fu of pressure points and acupuncture – the manipulation of the meridians of chi, the 'Seven Gates' that centralize flow through all living things. With this style, one can manipulate not just the bodies but also the minds of their targets.

Signature: This style is instantly recognizable from its precision strikes, always made to vital pressure points, usually with stiffened fingers, but sometimes with needles.

Type: Free (Sometimes Needles).

Default Critical Successes: None.

1: Pain-Negating Method (1 point): Use of this technique can erase any and all Wound Penalties currently extant on a character, as well as stopping any bleeding. Naturally, this does not in any way remove the damage or any of the causes of such penalties; the damage or altered chi effects remain. Take a Full Action and make a Medicine roll, you can spend more time to gain Advantage (ask your Sage how much); each Wound Level is treated as a Degree of Difficulty, starting with Battered = Trivial and so on. If you botch this roll, you're in trouble – your patient will take an unblockable die of damage, worsening their condition.

2: Disturb the Jade Leaves (2 points): By striking a specific pressure point, one can provoke a natural reaction of some kind – hiccupping, sneezing, burping, flatulence, eye-crossing, up to and including vomiting or losing bladder control. This technique reduces skill pools by incapacitating the specialty of a single skill, a standard success on a Medicine roll (surpassing an opponent's Defense if used in combat) negating a single Specialization and a Critical Success nullifying two Specialization dice (chosen by the player). This negation lasts your Seven Gates Skill Level in rounds, though of course if the target knows Seven Gates, he can reverse your effect before that time elapses. The good news? You can use this technique on yourself to prevent such embarrassing reactions in yourself, even if you would ordinarily indulge in them for whatever reason.





3: Pruning the Jade Branches (3 points): A highly useful technique, it closes pressure points, causing **Stun**. Make a Attack roll; for each 10 points over your opponent's Defense, one of your opponent's possible actions will be lost – lasting one round per each result die. After that, actions are as normal. Note that this technique will only be effective on someone whose White Chi is less than your own; if they have more (or equal to yours), they can restore their normal chi patterns from your attempt to shift them by spending a free action.

4: Shaping the Jade Trunk (4 points): This wonderful technique can soothe the discomfort of diseases, natural dysfunctions, block aches and pains, and ease poisons. When working on a patient, make a Medicine roll versus a Sage-determined difficulty (based on the length of time the affliction has already been present in the victim). Make note that you cannot use other techniques in tandem with this kung fu. The number of result dice of the roll made determine what you can heal:

- 1-3 Result Dice:** Relieve common aches and pains, headaches, bruises or internal pains. (*Reduces the action penalty for injuries by 5*).
- 4-6 Result Dice:** Common diseases like the cold or pneumonia. (*Reduces the action penalty for injuries by 10*).
- 7-8 Result Dice:** Common poisons and drugs. (*Reduces the action penalty for poisons by 5*).
- 9 Result Dice:** Virulent diseases, like the plague; Uncommon Poisons. (*Reduces the action penalty for poisons by 10*).
- 10 Result Dice:** Rare vicious poisons. (*Prevents the last loss of Health points and Death from the poison, but nothing more*).

Note that there are poisons and plagues that are beyond the reach of this kung fu; in such cases, while this technique can only stall the inevitable (Priceless and Nonesuch poisons or plagues are beyond the reach of this kung fu, requiring Medicine to treat). **Channel: Jade** (each point spent over the base cost of the technique adds one result die for the purposes of healing, but only if an actual success was rolled on the roll).

5: Maintaining the Jade Crown (5 points): Hard to master, there is no denying this technique has its uses, particularly amongst those who administer power. Quite simply, it permits manipulation of the cranial pressure points. Make a Skill roll (for this technique, you may use Fight or Melee skill with no specializations instead of the Healing skill if you so wish, essentially turning your weapon or finger-strike into the equivalent of a acupuncture needle) against a difficulty of the target's Jade and Golden Chi added together; the number of result dice determines what effects you may choose from to apply. Make note: you may not use any other techniques in tandem with this kung fu in the same round – it requires your full attention (and a full action)

to enact this technique!

- 1-2 Result Dice:** Simulate any of the first three techniques at double efficacy.
- 3-4 Result Dice:** Complete Instant Paralysis (all three actions removed).
- 5-6 Result Dice:** Coma
- 7-8 Result Dice:** State of Suggestibility (More likely to answer questions)
- 9-10 Result Dice:** Extreme State of Suggestibility (Implant delayed suggestion)

Note that there are poisons and plagues that are beyond the reach of this kung fu; in such cases, while this technique can only stall the inevitable. **Channel: Jade** (each point spent over the base cost of the technique adds one result die for the purposes of cranial manipulation, but only if an actual success was made on the roll).

6: Keeper of the Seven Gates (10 points – 6 White, 4 Any): The master technique of pressure point manipulation, with this kung fu, even chi-based damage that have permanent effects can be reversed (for example, the Dong Clan's 'Shatters the Skulls' technique). Simply make a Medicine roll against the target's combined Jade and Gold Chi; the number of result dice are compared with the level of the technique that inflicted the permanent damage/ongoing kung fu effect; if it equals or exceeds the ongoing effect, that effect is removed. Furthermore, you can use this technique to close the gates of chi themselves within a target's body (blocking ALL kung fu use!), which can only be undone by the application of this same technique. Since there are seven gates to chi within the human body, there must be at least seven result dice; any additional result dice increase the difficulty of removing the blockage. Finally, this form can also be used to kill someone instantly; to achieve this effect, you must attain at least as many result dice as the total of the target's Jade and Gold Chi combined. If so done, then all of the target's Health points vanish save one, which will itself vanish at the end of the next round, inflicting death. (Notice that the victim may try and restore their health in their brief moment remaining!) **Channel: Jade** (each point spent over the base cost of the technique adds one result die for the purposes of chi gate manipulation, but only if an actual success was made on the roll).

DESTINY COST

- * Bonus: you receive a free *Wisdom of the Seven Gates* Skill Level equal to the highest technique you've learned.
- * Bonus: you receive a free Acupuncture Specialization on your Medicine Skill.

Uncommon Martial Arts

These paths are presented as examples of the more accomplished paths known only to the Clans and otherwise closed organizations; notice that this includes more than just the Five 'Great Clans'; smaller clans have proprietary paths as well, here shown as examples. While a person will usually possess an Affiliation to the Clan that originated the style, it is possible to know the form if you were lucky enough to find an independent teacher. Finally, some styles are so controlled that you simply must have a certain Advantage or background; the costs of these greatly restricted styles will be figured into the gateway cost—see individual listings.

Bloody Claws

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 10

Uncommon Crimson Chi Style

The Mao-Shan Clan, notable in its matriarchal leadership, has about the most dubious reputation in the Wulin that one can imagine. Why? Because they do seemingly awful things from time to time... and then follow them up with deeds that can only be deemed heroic. When asked about this, the Mao-Shan only smile in an infuriatingly enigmatic fashion.

Signature: this kung fu is disturbing to watch, as the Crimson chi spent manifests as literal blood dripping from your fingers as you wield the claw-like techniques. Perhaps their elite female warriors, wielding their terrible long nails as weapons, is why some call this the 'Hellcat Clan'... but not to their faces.

Type: Artful (Open-handed only).

Default Critical Success: Disarm or Maim.

1: Bloody Talons (1 point): Your fingernails lengthen when this technique is invoked (indeed, they do with any Bloody Claws technique), giving your bare hands the characteristics of paired short sabers - Speed +10, Strike +5, Damage +5. You may block unarmed safely while employing this technique, but must use the Melee skill in combat, rather than Fight.

2: Strength of Blood (2 points): With this technique, you can enhance the power of your blows (or your Might) with your own suffering! Each time you take actual damage, invoke this technique; add an additional die to your hand-to-hand attack damage (or +5 to your Lift result). Successive uses of this technique can add up to as many dice as your Bloody Claws Skill level. Once

the combat is done, the Strength of Blood bonuses will drop by one per minute; so if you're caught in two close-together battles, ask your Sage if you have any Strength of Blood left. If you get into another combat in close succession, you are able to begin building up again from the prior level, though of course your Sage may reduce that amount somewhat if rounds pass between battles.

3: Flickering Flame Claws (3 points): As *Bloody Talons*, but your stats improve to Speed +15, Strike +10, Damage +5, with the ability to make an additional attack after everyone else acts. **Channel:** 2 *Silver* (extends the duration by another round).

4: Weapon-Smashing Talon Strike (4 points): As *Flickering Flame Claws* in all ways (including the additional attack!), but you may make a **Reply** against the weapon itself; count your Defense as a Style roll against your opponent's attack total. If you exceed that total, then their weapon is destroyed (Palms or Kicks users will be **Maimed**), while your opponent suffers the normal damage. Needless to say, this technique cannot destroy or even harm Weapons of the Gods. **Channel:** 2 *White* (extends the duration by another round).

5: Sweet Harvest of Blood (Special: 5 points of Any Chi): This Bloody Claws technique is both nasty and rare; when used, you harvest Crimson Chi from those you kill. For each minion you kill (ordinarily you can choose to simply remove minions from combat, but not with this technique) you can only gain 1 Crimson chi; if you actually kill a martial arts warrior, you gain whatever Crimson Chi they may have left on hand... but this chi can exceed your own normal capacity! (Mark it in your temporary track.) This extra chi is only retained for the duration of the combat; once you stop fighting and relax; any additional chi you may have left over your usual rating will leak away as blood all over the ground, one point per minute. You cannot combine this with other kung fu techniques.

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you receive a free *Bloody Claws* Skill equal to the level of the highest technique you've learned.
- 4 **Fortune:** You have an Affiliation with the **Mao-Shan Clan** (pg. 62). If you choose not to participate in the Clan (since most xia warriors will be wary of you, bordering on violent), then you must take the **Unwholesome** Disadvantage to reflect your old clan's dubious reputation. It is unknown how the Mao-Shan react to their wayward members, but it's true that such people tend to disappear without a trace after a certain length of time (usually years). If you do not take this Fortune, you must consult with your Sage to determine how you could possibly know this form.
- 5 **Onerous Obligation:** in return for kung fu training, you pick up an extra

神兵玄奇

Disadvantage: the Onerous Obligation to fulfill your duty to the Mao-Shan Clan.

(-5) This is your first or second Disadvantage.

Fist of Iron

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 10

Uncommon Jade Chi Style

The Bei are famed for their weapons – not only are they well made, but they are to be found everywhere in the Land of the Gods. Perhaps that's why Feng Bei devised the Fist of Iron... so that a Bei Clan warrior could always face one of his clan's own weapons (even if caught without one) and prevail! No wonder this kung fu is called the 'Bei Fist Skill'... with this martial art, one need never fear mere weapons, only Weapons of the Gods.

Type: Brutal (Palms Only).

Default Critical Successes: Disorienting or Stun.

1: Living Weapon (1 point): Using this technique gives your bare hands the heft and hardness of hammers for the round; your bare fists are now Strike +5, Damage +10. Speed remains normal for bare hands (+15), and if you block with your bare hands, you do not suffer the usual damage.

2: Body of Iron (2 points): You may add your Jade Chi modifier to your Armor rating for a number of rounds equal to your Bei Fist Skill, and once that ends, channel your chi to maintain it. *Channel: 2 White* (extends the technique's duration by one round).

3: Rainbow Stunning Strike (3 points): As *Living Weapon*, but with Strike +10, Damage +10... but this formidable attack also causes an opponent to *lose their breath*. For every result die inflicted in the strike, a color of Chi regeneration is lost for that turn (the victim chooses which colors are lost). Of course, it still does full damage besides weakening the victim's kung fu! *Channel: Jade* (You may expend additional Jade Chi to amplify the damage done, 1 bonus die per each additional point so spent).

4: Never Weaponless (4 points): A logical extension of the *Living Weapon* technique, you can now forge your chi around your open hand or fist into a fully functional

weapon! You may create any weapon around your hand that you choose, but this technique must be invoked before Initiative is rolled. The main restriction is that you must have mastered the weapon (in other words, have a specialization in it) and you must channel additional Chi (of any color) to match the weapon's usual characteristics, one point of chi for each +5. Speed is always that of bare hands (+15), but you must spend the chi necessary to reach its normal Strike and Damage stats. Finally, you may not simply buy huge Strike or Damage bonuses; you can only duplicate the actual normal stats of a weapon, and they may never be Quality. *Channel: 2 Gold* (maintains the weapon for another round).

5: Breathtaker (5 points): This technique functions like *Rainbow Stunning Strike*, but is much more powerful. The warrior must make a single attack; they may not use other techniques to gain additional attacks in this round. If the strike hits, it ignores all armor, from any source (only Chi-based defenses may help avert it). Any resultant damage acts like *Rainbow Stun*, but causes **chi flow loss** instead – each die inflicted automatically knocks out one color of Chi (until all damage is healed). If the warrior desires, he may select which colors to be taken by channeling a point of each color to be lost; otherwise, the target chooses which color(s) of chi flow are to be lost. *Channel: Any* (as noted).



DESTINY COST

* **Bonus:** you receive a free *Fist of Iron* Skill Level equal to the highest technique you've learned.

5 Fortune: You have an Affiliation with the **Bei Clan**. (pg. 57). If you do not take this Fortune, you must consult with your Sage to determine how you could possibly know this form.

2+ Fortune: You must have some Status in the Bei Clan (if you don't have any, why do you know the Bei Fist Skill?)

Five Sacred Elements

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 10

Uncommon Unique Chi Style

High in the mountains, the Dali Clan meditates upon ways of combining Daoist theory and practice with kung fu – and Five Sacred Elements is one of their successful efforts. Not many know this style, but those who do are respected when they display their skill. *Signature:* Elemental auras shine around the body of the warrior



appropriate to the technique used.

Type: Free (Confidence).

Default Critical Success: None.

1: Fire in the Eye (1 point - Crimson): For as long as this technique is active, your eyes hold fire in their depths and you can see as if by torchlight. You can use your Confidence Skill to make a Morale Attack, but it will only work on Mobs, never on better-trained Minions.

2: Rooted like the Mountain (2 points/Chi Cost - 2 Gold): Take a deep breath and focus your chi - you may add five points per Level of Elements Skill Level you possess to your Armor. To keep this technique in effect, you may not move from the spot where you're standing or use Kicks, keeping both feet on the ground - but while this technique is active you cannot be *Downed* or *Knocked back*. **Channel:** 2 *Jade* (extends the duration by another round).

3: Vines in the Woods (3 points/Chi Cost - 3 Jade): Perform a shaping and focusing maneuver, and make a Five Elements Skill roll while gesturing at your opponent. Green vines will rip out of the ground (regardless of the nature of the surface) and attack your target (with +3 bonus dice), with a critical success **Entangling** your target. This technique will only last for as long as you stand still while holding the gesture on your opponent (requiring a full action every round, and no additional actions techniques can be invoked while maintaining this one without ending this one). If you fail to defend yourself and take damage or otherwise fail to continue the gesture and chi expenditure, the vines will wither away to nothing and your target will be free. Note that this technique only inflicts damage on the first attack; the Entangle does not itself do damage, and can be broken with a Lift skill or Might Feat by the trapped fighter. **Channel:** 2 *Gold* (extends the duration by another round).

4: Metal Strengthens the Skin (4 points/Chi Cost - 4 White): As *Rooted like the Mountain*, only you can move freely, and you can only be *Downed* or *Knocked back* if both of your feet are not on the ground; furthermore, you may add your Favored Chi modifier to your Armor, instead of the 5 points per level of Five Sacred Elements Skill if you like.

Note that ordinary weapons can be blunted or even bent after impacting on your skin - if they fail their rolls badly enough, the Sage may determine that the weapon is damaged! (Note that particularly skilled warriors will be able to straighten their blades by hitting you just so again...) **Channel:** 2 *Silver* (extends the duration by another round, and may be *Invested*, continuing the effect automatically, even while you're asleep).

5: Sacred Water of Ineffable Purity (5 points/Chi Cost - 5 Silver): This technique is memorably nasty, and your enemy will never forgive you for it... if they survive. Make a Ranged roll while spitting at your opponent; you

may use this technique up to Short Range (beyond that, the efficacy of the missile dissipates). The Silver Chi you expend becomes a single shimmering missile that speeds through the air to your target - it has your Silver Chi modifier in both Speed and Strike, and inflicts +5 bonus dice of damage as the silvery fluid penetrates into the body, ignoring all mundane Armor. Thereafter, it will explode out of the victim's body as if they are *Burning* with Intensity 5 flames inside, one die of damage per round for five rounds after. If the target should live, they will bear twisted silvery scars on their bodies to mark the exploding from within of the horrible silvery liquid death.

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you receive a free *Five Sacred Elements* Skill equal to the level of the highest technique you've learned.
- 4 **Fortune:** You have an Affiliation with the **Dali Clan**. (pg. 61). If you do not take this Fortune, you must consult with your Sage to determine how you could possibly know this form.
- 3+ **Fortune:** You must have some Status in the Dali Clan (if you don't have any, why do you know the Five Sacred Elements Skill?)
- 5 **Onerous Obligation:** in return for kung fu training, you pick up an extra Disadvantage: the Onerous Obligation to fulfill your duty to the Dali Clan.
- (-5) This is your first or second Disadvantage.

Heart Moves the Blade

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 10

Uncommon Silver Chi Style

An old form of Kung Fu, the "Heart Sword Skill" as it is often called, is considered to be the pinnacle of sword-style martial arts. Truly, one can fight an army and kill just about anyone or anything if this form is practiced to its ultimate limits. But beware - such a powerful form has its perils, and it asks much of its wielder... possibly even their life! **Signature:** Afterimages flicker in the air behind the blade as it is swung - the more powerful the technique, the more numerous and distinct the blade-images are.

神兵玄奇

Type: Artful (Sword).

Default Critical Successes: **Disarm** or **Maim**.

1: Ambition: Soaring Blade (1 point): Your ambition to win is so great that it enhances the swiftness of your sword strikes - when this technique is invoked, you may make an additional attack in the same round, after everyone else's actions. Additionally, you may draw your sword as a Free Action.

2: Brutal: Speed Blade (2 points): Channeling your most brutal urges to violence, you can speed your blade's race to drink your foe's blood! Invoke this technique and you may add your Silver Chi Modifier to your Initiative roll, as well as automatically win any Initiative ties, unless the other person has this technique; then it's down to the usual Speed vs. Speed tiebreaker. This technique must be invoked at the beginning of the round.

3: Heartless: Sharp Blade (3 points): This technique focuses your cold will to see the light of life fade from your foe's eyes as they die. Make an Inspire skill roll - the chi spent manifests as two flaring energy duplicates of your specialized weapon blazing out of your eyes, visible only to your targets and stabbing into their eye sockets. You may target this attack at a number of people equal to your Presence Attribute. Each person so targeted is struck to their core by your ferocity and unstoppable will. Minions within the area so targeted face a Morale Attack against their entire unit! Those targeted may defend with a Confidence roll, and may spend Gold chi to add bonus dice to their effect total if they get a successful defense roll. Those who do not successfully defend against Sharp Blade suffer the number of result dice as a penalty to any rolls they make, regaining one die per round until they are back to normal.

4: Clear: Smart Blade (4 points): The sword of the Kung Fu warrior becomes like unto a sentient thing, deliberately striking through an opponent's defenses and seeking their death. When in use, you can automatically reduce a single opponent's Defense (whether Dodge or Fight/Melee pool) rolls by your Silver Chi Modifier. **Channel: 2 Gold** (maintains the technique for an additional round.)

4: Anger: Vengeful Blade (5 points): Make an Attack Roll - a success produces a wave of force that sweeps an entire compass quarter in front of you, out to 10 yards in a single moment. Everyone within that arc suffers an Area Attack equal to your roll, with five bonus dice to your damage (double ALL dice when determining effect on Minions); and will be **Knocked Back** if they take any damage.

Channel: Crimson (Each point spent extends the maximum range by two yards.)

5: Strong: Fierce Blade (10 points - 6 Silver + 4 Any): Terrifying to behold, this technique is sometimes called "Lion Leaps" because the blade bounds from target to target, defending with a lion's strength, but attacking with its ferocity. Fierce Blade combines all the effects of Smart Blade, Speed Blade and Vengeful Blade, with one addition: a single die may be reset after the roll to any number you choose, even to create /extend Divine rolls! Note that Fierce Blade does not generate the Knockback that Vengeful Blade does, instead involving an irresistible wave of sword attacks lashing where the wielder wills. **Channel: Crimson** (Each point spent extends the maximum range by two yards.)

6: Kindness: Elegant Blade (15 points - 7 Silver + 8 Any): This terrifying technique has

five effects - one for each type of chi. First, it ignores armor equal to your Jade Chi Modifier. Second, it adds bonus damage to your attack equal to your Crimson Chi modifier. Third, it produces an Area Attack able to attack all targets in a radius equal to twice to your Gold Chi in yards (This aspect is completely controllable by you, though you can only control the width of the radius, not cherry-pick targets within that area, as Elegant Blade is too overwhelming for that). Fourth, all of your targets' defense rolls are reduced by your White Chi modifier. Fifth, and perhaps most frightening, this attack is automatically **Disorienting**, preventing any use of Chi Aura!

However, this ferocity comes at a terrible risk. Elegant Blade is unforgiving of failure or inner weakness. If you attempt Elegant Blade and roll no successes, the worst happens. Instead, the 'Kindness Effect' erupts, centered on you and inflicting full damage, but also striking everyone within your Golden Chi in yards. Furthermore, this is exacerbated if you have the 'Black-hearted' Disadvantage, which resets a failing die of your pool to create/add to either Heavenly or Divine rolls - one die for each time the Disadvantage is taken.

Almost as bad, just invoking this technique courts death. Specifically, unless you have at least one point of Silver Chi remaining, then you suffer the exact same amount of





damage you just did to your opponent! Of course, this is not common knowledge; those who perished from the technique of course weren't able to tell of it.

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you receive a free *Heart Sword Skill* equal to the level of the highest technique you've learned.
- 5 **Fortune:** You have an Affiliation with the **Nan Clan**. (pg. 58). If you do not take this Fortune, you must consult with your Sage to determine how you could possibly know this form.
- 3+ **Fortune:** You must have some Status in the Nan Clan (if you don't have any, why do you know the Heart Sword Skill?)
- 5 **Onerous Obligation:** in return for kung fu training, you pick up an extra Disadvantage: the Onerous Obligation to fulfill your duty to the Nan Clan.
- (-5) This is your first or second Disadvantage.

Hell's Disasters

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 15

Uncommon Crimson Chi Style

Truly reflective of the Hell Clan's will to power, Hell's Disaster techniques are deadly and fierce, causing hideous damage via their perversion of Crimson Chi. Any warrior found to practice this kung fu will probably be thought to belong to the Hell Clan (and therefore fair game), regardless of what they might say. Signature: Hell's Disasters is usually typified by flashes of red and gold light (sometimes black and gold) from one's weapon while it is used.

Type: Artful/Brutal (Staff or Sword)

Default Critical Successes: **Knockback** or **Down**.

I: Eternal Hell (1 point): Incredibly cruel (the clan's hallmark, really), this technique literally burns the skin off a target, leaving them flayed and charred. Invoking this technique (before the attack is rolled!) adds 2 bonus dice to damage on a successful hit. When a Critical Success occurs, the attack roll total for the attack may be applied as a Morale Attack to any minion-level onlookers as a patch of skin suddenly burns away, exposing charred bare muscle beneath.

2: Endless Catastrophe (2 points): Sometimes called "Endless Disaster," this technique reduces an opponent's defense dice, whether from blocking or dodging. Each point of Jade chi spent effectively erases one defense die from an opponent's defense roll. When used, Endless

Catastrophe produces glaring gold and black sparks around the weapon or open hand. *Channel:* **Jade** (as noted above).

3: Endless Execution (3 points): This technique sends destruction ripping through the area around its user, flinging sharp shards at his enemy at high speed. Roll your Melee skill (or Fight skill if you don't want to use a weapon) with three bonus damage dice; this creates an Area Attack that will affect everyone in a Hell's Disaster Skill level yards in radius, centered on the user. However, one must take care and not use Endless Execution unless standing on something very thick – it literally tears up the area where you're standing for the raw material for the assault. *Channel:* **Gold** (every point spent extends the radius of effect by another 2 yards).

4: Death Territory (4 points): To use Death Territory, you must spin your weapon through a full rotation around your body (you may attack in so doing!) before striking with it. You can do this up to nine times (or nine rounds) before the technique reaches its upper limit, but the technique must be used every round to get to that highest level; any interruption (such as Combat Effects like being **Knocked back** or being **Downed**) will require starting the technique all over again. Each time you spin your weapon, it adds another additional die of damage (up to the maximum of +9 bonus dice).

Incidentally, if Death Territory kills someone, it raises him from the dead and kills him again, nine times over. There's no way to interfere with this process and it's absolutely excruciating. If you've got enemies around to see your victim's corpse jerk to its feet, scream, fall over and then get up to scream some more, then you automatically get a free Inspire (Fear) roll as a free action this round, with as many additional dice as your current bonus dice for the technique. *Channel:* **2 Any** (maintains the technique for another round).

5: Deadly Reincarnation (5 points): This terrifying technique is one of many reasons why the Hell Clan is so feared; it attacks the fundamental attributes of the Martial Artist himself, reducing his Attributes! Make an attack roll and determine how many dice of damage you will do, deducting your opponent's announced Chi Aura against you from the total; for each two remaining dice, you may reduce a single Attribute you specify by one. Furthermore, you may spend additional chi to increase the harm; for each two chi of a specific color you spend, you may increase the damage to the related Attribute of that chi by another point. Finally, if a target has their Attribute(s) reduced from this technique, then they suffer chi flow loss in each chi color that was damaged in the attack.

This damage can only be healed by the appropriate (high-level) Medicine, as it transcends

神兵玄奇

mere physical trauma, instead striking at a warrior's very physical reality. **Channel:** *Any* (as noted above.)

6: World-Ending Flame (10 points: 6 Crimson + 4 Any): This technique is well suited to Sky Lord (once known as Flame God), who is the only Hell Clan member (below Dominion, of course) to have mastered it. Quite simply, upon invoking this technique and making a Confidence roll, the user ignites a chain reaction that releases the 'inner heat' within the chi that makes up all things under Heaven. This causes a terrible multicolored fire begin to build outwards in a ring from the meditating initiator, setting fire to everything (yes, everything, including water, stone, and other substances that wouldn't ordinarily burn), doing result dice + six additional dice of damage (ignoring all armor!) to everything within 10 yards per point of Golden Chi spent. Worse still, the user can reset a single die to extend the width of the success by one. The wielder will not be harmed unless he empties his temporary crimson chi, in which case he takes the damage of the attack as if he himself were a target. **Channel:** **Gold** (as noted above).

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you receive a free *Hell's Disasters* Skill equal to the highest technique you've learned.
- * **Bonus:** You have an Affiliation with the **Hell Clan** (pg. 58). If you choose not to participate in the Clan (wise, since most xia warriors will want to kill you... and many will still be hostile if you display knowledge of this form!), then you must take the **Hunted 4** Disadvantage to reflect your old clan's attempts to abduct you for the heinous month-long

torture — after you die, your remains will be hung by the gates as an example to any who might consider betraying the Heaven-and-Earth Alliance. (*Former Hell Clan Member* is a possible character concept... but a risky one!)



Inexorable Doom

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 10

Uncommon Jade Chi Style

Sometimes called the 'Bone-Breaker Skill', this path is the ideal towards which all Dong disciples strive: to kill a man with a single blow. Many of them practice on bulls until they get a chance at a human being. These techniques are based on using hands or blunt weapons to strike to vital points with organ-breaking force. **Signature:** The form carries a lot of force – blows seem stronger than they should be, and your strikes make shockwaves that ripple the air almost visibly.

Type: Brutal (Three-Section Staff).

Default Critical Successes: Maim or Stun.

1: Breaks the Bones (1 point): When this technique is invoked, your attack not only does it add 2 bonus dice of damage on a successful hit, but any damage actually inflicted is treated as being a Wound Level worse than it actually is (with the attendant penalties), and remains so until the damage is healed.

2: Imminent Doom (2 points): You wield your weapon in such an impressive fashion as to turn any attack you make into a potent Morale Attack, as well as doing 3 more dice of damage.

3: Earth Shaker (3 points): As *Break the Bones*, but when you hit someone who is standing on the ground, your Strike is 5 greater and you do four additional dice of damage (along with the higher penalties as noted above).

4: Heaven Shaker (4 points): Works like Earth Shaker, but against airborne opponents; it has the effects as noted above but will also **Down** them, and inflict a –5 Initiative penalty on them for the next round as they recover and get up again.

5: Shatters the Skulls (5 points): This terrifying technique inflicts terrible permanent wounds, by damaging the faculties of the target by injuring their brains! Make a single attack (no additional action kung fu permitted for the round), and invoke this technique. If you hit, you will ignore all armor (which will be ruined, unless it's magical), inflicting full normal damage, which can still be reduced by the target's Chi Aura. But that's not all; for each result die (coming from how much you beat your opponent's roll), your target must remove a single die of specialization, starting with the highest specialized skill first. While the victim can



be helped by Medicine, only a higher-level technique (i.e. a level six healing technique) can heal back the lost specializations; otherwise, they must be painstakingly re-learned, taking time and requiring instruction.

6: Consuming Flame (10 points - 6 Jade + 4 Any): As *Shatters the Skulls*, but the technique reduces Chi points instead of Specializations! You must Channel two points of the color you wish to ignite when you make the attack (and if you miss, they're lost); for each point of Chi burned away, the target takes a die of unblockable Burn damage (and the character's clothes and possessions will almost certainly be ignited by the Chi flames). Your Attributes remain the same; your chi ratings are what's being burned away, not your Elements themselves. The other bad news: Your Health rating declines by the amount of lost Chi. Like *Shatters the Skulls*, the lost chi points can only be healed by powerful kung fu or Medicine. **Channel:** Any (as noted above).

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you receive a free *Fist of Iron* Skill Level equal to the highest technique you've learned.
- 5 **Fortune:** You have an Affiliation with the **Dong Clan**. (pg. 58). If you do not take this Fortune, you must consult with your Sage to determine how you could possibly know this form.
- 3+ **Fortune:** You must have some Status in the Dong Clan (if you don't have any, why do you know the Bone-Breaker Skill?

Subtle Hand

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 15

Uncommon Silver Chi Style

Subtle Hand was created around a simple question: "How do you end a fight?" The simple answer has always been "Kill your opponent first."

The Zan Brotherhood was not satisfied with this answer.

As a group of Buddhist monks who had dedicated their lives to helping the common people, they sought another answer to this question.

Through meditation and study, they sought to define the essence of combat; from this study they devised an art for dealing

神兵玄奇

with conflict that would exhaust all other options before indulging in lethal force.

Signature: Subtle Hand's techniques are as their name suggests, save for the Fifth one... hard to see until they hit.

Type: Brutal (Palms Only).

Default Critical Success: **Down** or **Stun**.

1: Feint (Level 1): The first lesson in Subtle Hand is the lesson of distraction. The feint is the perfection of a simple tactic—you make an attack roll adding your Silver Chi modifier to your roll, but any result dice (which cannot exceed your Subtle Hand Skill level) are added to your next defense roll, instead of inflicting damage on your opponent.

2: Irresistible Wind (Level 2): The second lesson in this kung fu is the lesson of stance. When this style was created, it was discovered that most kung fu requires a steady stance or balanced posture. It was also noted that one of the ways to end a fight is to force an opponent off their feet (hopefully into unconsciousness), or, barring that, into another opponent who is attacking you! With this lesson, a student learns to knock an opponent off their feet as efficiently as possible with the use of sweeping hand or foot. Make an attack roll adding your Silver Chi modifier to your roll; while it does normal damage, you will **Down** your opponent; with a Critical Success, you can redirect their attack upon you towards another opponent within your Favored Chi in feet!

3: Pause for Thought: (Level 3): The third lesson in Subtle Hand is the lesson of thought. One soon discovers that many combatants do not truly understand why they are in a fight, or have false or merely ego-based reasons. The intent of this technique is to ensure that if an opponent has time to think about a fight, they may realize that fighting is not necessary. Through the use of joint locks, pressure points, or sudden non-lethal attacks the user may stun an opponent. Make an Attack, adding your Silver Chi modifier to your roll; while you inflict no damage, your blows require a check against being **Stunned** for one round (qv. Pg. 76.) **Channel: 2 Any** (extends the duration of the Stun effect by one round).

4: Monsoon Wind (Level 4): The fourth lesson in Subtle Hand is to give in to every strike... while not being harmed. This is accomplished by a harmonization of your movement with the flows of your opponent's strikes, making you move out of the way effortlessly while turning your opponents' movements against them! This technique operates like *Irresistible Wind*, only you are able to do full damage along with the **Downing** or redirecting effects. Finally, you may add your Silver Chi modifier to all Dodge rolls made while this technique is active.

Channel: 2 Crimson (extends the duration of the technique for one round).

5: Startling Revelation (Level 5): The martial artist bursts into a series of maneuvers so breathtaking as to suggest that struggling against such mastery can only be folly! Make an Attack, adding your Silver Chi modifier to your roll; you are making a massive Morale Attack, able to affect up to your Presence in number of Named targets. Against minions (which are not subject to the Presence limit), double the result dice and add your Inspire dice (Fear or other such Specialties apply) as a Bonus to a successful roll to determine how many minions you drive off. For named characters, do the same, only do not apply the Inspire Bonus. Targets may defend with their Confidence, and each result die they do take will apply a -5 penalty, lasting for the Attacker's Presence in rounds.

6: Ultimate Conflict-Answering Touch (10 points - 6 Silver + 4 Any): One of Holy Zan's most accomplished martial descendants, Raging Ocean, developed this technique. Raging Ocean first used it during a duel between one of the creators of Subtle Hand, Water's Stillness, and the powerful Nan Clan warrior, Wei-Lian Chiang. Raging Ocean was able to defeat Chiang by using this deadly technique, though that warrior managed to escape the battle and his body was never found. Water's Stillness, alas, was not so fortunate; Raging Ocean could not save his companion from Wei-Lian's deadly sword skills.

Raging Ocean taught this lesson as the final truth to the question: "How do you win a fight?" The Zan leadership recognized that there are, regrettably, people who will never understand that death is not the only answer to conflict. So they must be taught the bitterest truth of all: that they need to die. So these extreme individuals must be put down, quickly and mercifully, with as little risk as possible to the monk and those under his protection.

Due to the lethality of this lesson, it is rarely taught. For one to learn this technique, they must show total loyalty to the Zan ideals of Buddhism and justice, and be an exemplar of the Brotherhood (at least Status 4).

Rules: When using this technique (sometimes called "Buddha's Palm"), you must first make an attack roll, adding your Silver Chi modifier. If successful, the defender is inflicted with a chi-based poison with an Intensity equal to your level of Subtle Hand kung fu; this poison is resisted normally with Hardiness. The Result Dice of the attack determines how many days you can delay the Chi poison from taking effect. For example, if you roll two Result Dice, you can have the victim start the poison damage any time within the next two days. **Channel: Any**, for every Chi spent you may reduce the Chi poison's Intensity by one, allowing you to sicken someone rather than outright killing them.)

DESTINY COST

* **Bonus:** you receive a free *Subtle Hand* Skill Level equal to the level of the highest technique you've

learned.

- 2 **Fortune:** You receive an Affiliation with the **Zan Brotherhood**. If you do not take this Fortune, you must consult with your Sage to determine how you could possibly know this form.
- 3+ **Fortune:** You must have some Status in the Zan Brotherhood (if you don't have any, why do you know the Subtle Hands Skill?)
- 3 **Robust:** Due to the Zan Brotherhood's Tendon-Altering Exercises, your Character's body is good at healing from injury, thus granting you the Robust Advantage at a discount (see pg. 49).

Three Kings

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 10

Uncommon White Chi Style

Originally called Star-Crown-of-Morning Kung Fu, this style was practiced by the greatest of kings, Ying Zheng, the First Emperor himself. Originating in the Zhou Dynasty, this kung fu is old and proven in its power – one of the exalted sword styles of Shen Zhou! In this modern age, however, it is only rarely taught, as the few independent sifu who could teach it slowly die off. The Falling Wren Society is the only organization that retains this Kung Fu in its entirety, and they exact oaths from their members and students to keep it pure and unsullied from the passage of time. **Signature:** This kung fu's techniques all shine with distinction – they are the unity of will and action, and are always impressive to watch in their speed and grace.

Type: Artful (Sword).

Default Critical Success: **Disarm** or **Down**.

1: Left-Right Ren Stroke (1 point): Using this technique, you may strike without any test penalties that you might be currently suffering for any reason – whether blind, burned, wounded, or poisoned! Using this form does not erase your wounds or the cause of the penalties themselves; it only negates them for the purpose of all attacks for the round in which it is used. This technique also grants the ability to draw a weapon as a Free Action rather than a Full, as well as adding your White chi modifier to your Initiative for the round. This technique must be invoked at the beginning of the round.

2: Long Arm of Righteousness (2 points): Such is your mastery that you can wield any object as any sharp weapon of your choice! Simply invoke this technique, and even if you are wielding a broken chair-leg, it will behave in all ways as the weapon you have chosen. You may only use this technique to evoke the characteristics of weapons you

have actually mastered (that you have specializations for), and you may only evoke weapons that require the Weapon Training Advantage if you have something in your hands that can emulate that weapon properly (ie. To use this technique to emulate a Blade Wheel, you'd have to have something roughly the shape and size as a Blade Wheel... like a large plate!) Note that this technique grants the durability and hardness of the weapon emulated to the everyday object being employed as that weapon! **Channel:** 2 *Any* (to maintain the technique for an additional round).

3: Harmony-of-Principles (3 points): This technique can easily bypass the greatest of defenses - it prevents weapon contact by keeping your blade in the shadow of your opponent's weapon, no matter what it may be! When invoked, you may reduce your opponent's defense pool by one die per chi Channeled. **Channel:** *Gold* (as noted).

4: Glowing Cloud of Heaven (4 points): When invoked, your sword seemingly makes so many strikes that it melts into an endless cloud of metallic light before your opponent, baffling his eyes and wits, forcing him to recoil from a seemingly endless barrage of feints and strikes. When used, all damage done by this kung fu is treated as a whole level higher for the purpose of wound penalties; also, you gain an additional attack at the end of the round, and both attacks made in the round with this technique are **Disorienting**. **Channel:** 2 *Jade* (extends the duration by another round).

5: Four-Armed Heaven-Blade Stance (5 points): A masterful technique that blends shadow and light to create illusory duplicates of your blade and your sword arm. It makes it look like you are attacking with four weapons simultaneously – thus making an unstoppable onslaught that no opponent or opponents can easily survive unscathed. The technique has the following effects: 1.) You will automatically have the Initiative regardless of your roll for the round, but only if your White Chi exceeds that of your opponent(s). 2.) You may make an Area Attack, hitting as many targets as many Named Opponents as your Three Kings skill level, 3.) Your result dice are doubled for attacking Named characters, quadrupled for the purpose of eliminating Minions.

6: Thousand Blossoming Flowers (10 points - 6 White + 4 Any): The crowning glory of Three Kings Kung Fu, this technique allows you to invoke the Deeds of your recent past that embody your virtues, to totally overwhelm your opponent! To do so, check your Deeds Chart – you can invoke the following effects according to your most recent achievements: Make an Area Attack against as many opponents as you have Deeds in *xia*; cause Chi Flow Loss in your target to as many colors as you have Deeds in *sun* (but only if you hit and inflict damage!); reduce your target's Chi Aura by five points per every Deed of *yi* that you have, ignore five

神兵玄奇

神兵玄奇

points of your opponents' Armor for each Deed of *li* and finally, reduce your opponent's next attack by as many dice as you have Deeds in *zhong*.

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you receive a free *Three Kings* Skill equal to the level of the highest technique you've learned.
 - 3 **Fortune:** You have an Affiliation with the **Falling Wren Society**. (pg. 63). If you do not take this Fortune, you must consult with your Sage to determine how you could possibly know this form.
 - 3+ **Fortune:** You must have some Status in the Falling Wren Society (if you don't have any, why do you know the Three Kings Skill? An independent Sifu, perhaps?)
 - 5 **Onerous Obligation:** in return for kung fu training, you pick up an extra Disadvantage: the Onerous Obligation to fulfill your duty to the Falling Wren Secret Society.
- (-5) This is your first or second Disadvantage.

Unfolding Glory

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 10

Uncommon Gold Chi Style

Devised by Ban Zhao and hinted at in her *Admonitions for Girls*, this style is centered around a woman's natural gifts of speed and grace — expressing the power of Gold chi, which can express itself as either Yang or Yin. Drawing on principles of this unbounded mastery, this Kung Fu augments simple circular attacks, throws, and parries with a radiant power. It dazes, blinds, and hurls enemies about. These techniques flow naturally from Yin Chi; a man can learn to practice them, but a character suffering Yin deficiency cannot. **Signature:** This kung fu is bright and flaring, with many flourishes that seem over-decorative, but instead are full of meaning and deadly effect; flashes of silver and gold are often seen glimmering through the air as the weapon traces through the air.

Type: Artful/Brutal (Palms, Household Items, Swords of any type).

Default Critical Success: Down or Maim.

I: How Swift Thy Weapon (1 point): Practitioners of Unfolding Glory kung fu emulate the ways of light itself, developing speed and deftness with their weapons. Add your Gold Chi Modifier to your Initiative and gain an additional Specialization die in *First Strike*. Lastly, any weapon draw requires only a Free Action instead of a full. This technique must be invoked at the beginning of the round.

2: Willow Stance (2 points): As its name suggests, this Defensive technique is based on being as supple as a willow, bending and leaning out of danger, while driving back the wind with your limbs. Add your Gold Chi modifier to your Dodges and Blocks. **Channel:** 2 *Silver* (maintaining the technique another round).

3: Face of the Moon (3





points): The warrior learns how to evoke the brightness of her soul with her chi, dazzling her enemies and setting them up for defeat. Make an Inspire Roll, adding in your White Chi modifier, with a Double Specialization (+2 dice) in *Dazzle*. Bright silvery-white light will blaze out, **Blinding** and **Disorienting** everyone within your Favored Chi in yards. Your targets will suffer the usual -5 penalty for Blindness and take the result dice in damage (which bypasses all Armor). The Blindness and Disorientation will last your Unfolding Glory level in rounds. Targets may Defend with their Awareness skill (in order to look away in time), but must gain a Critical Success to be completely unaffected; if they get only a basic success, they will still take a -2 penalty for the usual duration, though they won't be **Disoriented**, and will only take half the result dice (rounded down) in damage.

4: Dragon Rising (4 points): A supreme defensive technique – the warrior learns to coil her chi inwards, then explode outwards - scattering her attackers like leaves on the wind! Make a Defense roll - against minions, double your result dice to see how many are knocked away (you Defend against the force of minions as if they were a single Named opponent). Against Named opponents, you may make a full *Reply*, determining against the highest total of the attackers; doing up to your Unfolding Glory level in result dice of damage, along with **Downing** your attacker. You may affect multiple opponents by dividing up your result dice between them, as long as each one receives at least one die. This technique lasts the entire round it is used. **Channel: 2 White** (maintaining the technique another round).

5: Pure Heart Transcendence (5 points): Unfolding Glory kung fu focuses on a woman's natural grace – with this technique, whenever you take actual damage, you can convert your agony into grace and speed! Each time you are wounded in battle, you may add +5 to any Speed-based skill rolls. This Technique will last your Favored Chi in rounds, and will continue to enhance the user's Speed every single time they take damage. The extra speed and grace slowly drains away, one +5 for each minute once the combat is over; if you enter two combats close together, ask your Sage if you still have any Pure Heart Transcendence Speed left.

6: Yin Principle (10 points - 6 Gold + 4 Any): Sometimes called "The Cycle of Seasons", this powerful technique allows one to fight for disturbingly long periods of time... for it draws in and absorbs the chi spent by other martial artists in the use of their kung fu! It grants two powers, one automatic and defensive: *Endless Hungry Void* – anyone in personal combat with someone using Yin Principle finds that they must spend an additional point of chi (of that kung fu's color) to get their kung fu to work... and that additional point flows directly into the chi reservoirs (though not silver, which goes to maintain the technique) of the Cycle of Seasons warrior! Secondly, she has the choice of using the second, active power - *Endless Chilly Void*. She can make a single

attack each round that can damage an opponent's chi directly – make an attack roll, and she can drain points of a single color of chi equal to the number of result dice, the color chosen by her on attacking, adding it directly to the relevant chi reservoir... and she may go over her usual chi capacity! On a Critical Success, she not only takes the chi but also inflicts chi flow loss! This technique operates until the martial artist badly fails an attack using *Endless Chilly Void* – if only using *Endless Hungry Void*, then the technique is maintained by the constant drawing of chi into herself. *Endless Chilly Void* is a greater risk, hence the technique ending if this attack is failed. **Channel: Special**.

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you receive a free *Unfolding Glory* Skill equal to the level of the highest technique you've learned.
 - 3 **Fortune:** You have an Affiliation with the **Jade Dragon Society**. (pg. 63). If you do not take this Fortune, you must consult with your Sage to determine how you could possibly know this form.
 - 3+ **Fortune:** You must have some Status in the Jade Dragon Society (if you don't have any, why do you know the Unfolding Glory Skill?)
 - 3 **Dragon Health:** Your Character's body is good at fighting off illness and disease. Whenever your character makes a Hardiness Test to resist the effects of sickness, they receive a +2 Test Bonus. This stacks with **Healthy as an Ox**.
 - 5 **Onerous Obligation:** in return for kung fu training, you pick up an extra Disadvantage: the Onerous Obligation to fulfill your duty to the Jade Dragon Society.
- (-5) This is your first or second Disadvantage.

神兵玄奇

Wind Sweeping Away the Clouds

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 10

Uncommon Gold Chi Style

The people of the Xi Clan live close to the slopes of the Great Tibetan Plateau; wind affects them every day of their lives. It is only natural that their premier kung fu path should take as its inspiration the bitter cold powerful winds that blow down upon them. Xi clan members, fitting their extroverted culture, love to use unorthodox weapons – such as large spinning blades, strange multipart axes, you name it... but with consummate skill. They may be rich, but effete and unable to defend themselves, they're not. The Xi are the lordly and proud gatekeepers of the Land of the Gods, and they know it; they guard the passes from the West into Shen Zhou. **Signature:** As one might guess from the title of the style, fierce chill winds twist and snarl around the wielder of this kung fu.

Type: Artful/Brutal (Wolf-Teeth Staff or Blade Wheel).

Default Critical Successes: **Down** or **Stun**.

1: Howling Hurricane (1 point): When used, your strikes do two bonus dice on a successful hit. If you score a hit and inflict damage, then you will **Knock back** your opponent on a standard success (Called Shots can knock away weapons), while a Critical Success will automatically **Knock back** and **Down** your target!

2: Like Wind Sweeping (2 points): Invoking this technique swathes you in terrifying stormwinds and static electrical discharges, frightening to behold. The game effect of this technique is like **Howling Hurricane**, but the physical attack is also simultaneously a Morale Attack for any onlookers. It otherwise works like **Howling Hurricane**, but inflicting three bonus dice on a successful roll and inflicting either Knockback or Knockback and Downing.

3: Divided Mountain (3 points): Similar to Like Wind Sweeping, you create a shocking violent wind that (like winds roaring down through a mountain pass), while trailing howling winds that harmfully tear at opponents' flesh, hurting and disorienting them. While the user is immune to this effect, no one else is, regardless of how close they are, making this technique ideal when the warrior is besieged from all



directions. In game terms, you produce an Area Attack. It affects everyone within a Favored Chi radius in yards, with the effect centered on you and manifesting from your weapon or hand, as the case may be, inflicting three bonus dice on a successful hit.

Channel: 2 *Silver* (extends the duration by another round.)

4: Heaven Burst (4 points): By spinning your fist or weapon hand rapidly in a circle while it bursts into heavenly fire, you can do great harm to your enemies. Not only do your strikes do +4 bonus dice, but you also **Burn** your targets for Intensity 4 fire damage, and you can make an additional attack at the end of the round. **Channel:** 2 *Crimson* (extends the duration by another round.)

5: Cloudless Sky (5 points): By breathing and centering all of your chi in your body, you can invoke this powerful protective effect. You may add your Gold Chi modifier to your Initiative and Armor, as well as automatically healing Health points equal to your Favored Chi every round. This technique must be invoked at the beginning of a round, but will last for a number of rounds equal to your Wind Sweeps Clouds Skill. Once that ends, you may channel your chi to maintain it. **Channel:** 3 *Any* (extends the duration by another round.)

6: Unstoppable Monsoon (6 Gold + 4 Any – 10 points): Like **Divided Mountain**, but on a grander scale, suited for battlefields. You unleash a swirling howling windstorm that does not affect you in the slightest; crackling with your Golden Chi, your kung fu acts like a combined Area and Morale Attack. Make an Attack roll; it inflicts normal damage +4 bonus dice. It affects everyone within your Favored Chi x2 yards. **Channel:** *Any*



(each point spent increase the area of effect by another 2 yards).

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you receive a free *Wind Sweeps Clouds* Skill equal to the level of the highest technique you've learned.
- 5 **Fortune:** You have an Affiliation with the **Xi Clan**. (pg. 59). If you do not take this Fortune, you must consult with your Sage to determine how you could possibly know this form.
- 3+ **Fortune:** You must have some Status in the Xi Clan (if you don't have any, why do you know the *Wind Sweeps Clouds* Skill?)
- 5 **Onerous Obligation:** in return for kung fu training, you pick up an extra Disadvantage: the Onerous Obligation to fulfill your duty to the Xi Clan.
- (-5) This is your first or second Disadvantage.

Wisdom Breath

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 15

Uncommon White Chi Style

Devised by the "Illustrious Devil-Scholar", Meng Li, back in the Qin Dynasty, this kung fu has refused to die out. Starting with Meng Li himself, each scholar who knows it has taught it to a single student... and so it has persisted until the current day; the reclusive scholar, Wen Ling, is the current master. While only three techniques are shown here, it is thought that there are as many as four more, each progressively more powerful – many scholars would give much to learn even a single one, for this is the only martial art where your education is itself a terrible weapon! **Signature:** Each Wisdom Breath technique resembles writing, with the Judge's Brush literally being used to scribe an ever-changing character into the target's Chi Aura from a distance.

Type: Free (Learning - Calligraphy or Judge's Brush Specialization).

Default Critical Success: **Disorienting** or **Knockback**.

I: Na: "All Must Yield To Change" (Level 1): Wisdom Breath kung fu is based on calligraphy of a most potent kind – one writes in the language of the world, the act of writing being the technique. Each technique is a single character, scribed into the very chi flow of the world itself; as the chi flow is never the same, so must the character be written and rewritten to suit the moment. *Na*, when written, negates the weapon specialty being

used against its writer; in other words, if you are attacked with a sword, then *Na* alters the rhythm and pattern of sword use of your attacker, deactivating the specialization for a number of rounds equal to the scholar's Wisdom Breath Skill Level... as well as inflicting normal damage for the weapon! Only one die of Specialization is lost on a standard success; on a Critical Success, the target loses both dice (if they have a full specialization, that is) as well as the scholar's choice of Combat Effect (from the options listed above) to be inflicted on the target. Scholars usually like to combine this technique with a more damaging one when the situation warrants.

2: Mo: "Aggression Turns Upon Itself" (Level 2): This character strikes viewers as very aggressive in nature, but in sooth, what they are viewing is their own aggression reflected – they are defeated by their own will to dominate and overcome! This technique has the effect of causing the target's own aggressiveness to turn against them as they use it – while this effect lasts (again, for a number of rounds equal to the scholar's Wisdom Breath Skill Level), the target has their attacking die pools reduced by a number of dice equal to the scholar's result dice, as well as suffering the usual damage for the weapon.

3: Gan: "Death Awaits Within You" (Level 3): This last character hints at the power available in the lost knowledge of the higher levels of this style – for the power of this character is undeniable. When scribed upon the chi flow of the opponent, it causes their chi to **Burn**, each result die turning a point (of the scholar's choice) of the target's chi into a die of unblockable damage that ignores Armor... literally turning their strength against them, while weakening them at the same time! It does do the usual damage bonus of the weapon, but the result dice are used only to Burn the chi of the chosen opponent, being rolled all together to determine the damage.

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you receive a free *Wisdom Breath* Skill Level equal to the level of the highest technique you've learned.
- * **Bonus:** You receive the **Mentor: Wen Ling 5** Advantage, for otherwise you could not possibly know this form.
- 5 **Onerous Obligation:** in return for kung fu training, you pick up an extra Disadvantage: the Onerous Obligation to fulfill your debt to Wen Ling.
- (-5) This is your first or second Disadvantage.

Yellow River Sword Style

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 10

Uncommon Silver Chi Style

Developed by the Yellow River Society, a faction that fights the Five Great Clans' patronage system... and they need it, for the Five Clans' response has been to kill them whenever they're found! All these techniques are notable in that they are acquired while training in water, usually the Yellow River itself. The Yellow River Rebels (as they're usually called) are a resilient and powerful organization, and considered unrighteous for their efforts, despite their attempts to benefit and serve the people however they can.

Type: Artful (Paired Hook Sabers).

Default Critical Success: **Disarm** or **Knock back**.

1: Perilous Rapids Meditation (1 point): A technique simple in effect but difficult to master – when invoked, you may add your Silver Chi modifier to your Initiative, as well as allowing drawing a weapon as a Free Action... and one can summon one's weapon to the hand, if it's within Favored Chi in yards from its owner. It is said that the Yellow River Society learns this technique by training while hip-deep in the Yellow River; as they grow more proficient, they stand in deeper water. Once mastered, their bodies are as light as air out of the water, no longer restrained by the River-God, able to react in an eye blink. This technique must be invoked at the beginning of the round.

2: Broken Stones Prayer (2 points): Another technique that looks simple in execution, this allows you to use a Melee weapon to attack from a distance! Excellent for gaining surprise, this technique allows the Yellow River Rebels to take down Clan Disciples and make wonderfully effective ambushes. The effective distance of this technique is only **Short**, however; to use this form requires careful planning if you're wishing to assassinate some important Clan personage. Note that your targets will find it hard to close with you; it can be hard to close to normal melee distance if you have to defend yourself. Attempting to close with the attacker who is using this technique costs you a single die out of your Defending pool!

3: Rippling Cascade Movement (3 points): This technique is feared by all Clan Disciples with sense —

not only does it grant the benefits of the Perilous Rapids Meditation, but it also allows everyone who knows it in an allied group to use the highest gained Initiative roll! The technique may be invoked after the die roll so as to permit a better result for a given member, but all members of the group must know the technique. Given that the Rebels prefer to attack in groups, one can see why they're so despised by the members of the Great Clans. **Channel:** 2 *Any* (maintaining the technique for another round).

Example: Bik, Ying and Dina are all Yellow River Rebels, pretending to be maids in a Clan Stronghold. Late one night they make their move; Bik and Dina guard while Ying prepares to slit the Clan Representative's throat as he sleeps. Alas, they are surprised by the guard detail! Initiative is rolled – Bik gets a 26, Ying a 15 and Dina a 18. Both Ching and Dina invoke Rippling Cascade and can now use Bik's 26 for their Initiative roll.

4: Jagged Rock Barrage (4 points): This technique is the more advanced form of the Broken Stones Prayer, you may make a single attack up to **Medium** range with +4 bonus dice to damage, or make an Area Attack on as many targets as your Wu Wei (but only with +1 bonus die for damage to each target). **Channel:** 2 *Any* (maintaining the effect for another round).

5: Roaring Cataract Assault (5 points): This technique allows unity in action with one's fellow Rebels! While used on its own it can make a single Remote Attack up to **Long** range with +5 bonus dice of damage, but its true virtue is in concert with other practitioners of the style. If your force is only minions, then you may add their value to your damage; if named characters, then you may choose the best roll of any made in the force. That roll is then used to in an Area Attack with full damage against everyone in front of the unified force, with the first attack being with **Surprise** (but not again for the rest of the combat). Any who take damage from this technique are **Knocked back** automatically.

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you receive a free *Yellow River Sword Skill* equal to the level of the highest technique you've learned.
- 2 **Fortune:** You receive an Affiliation with the **Yellow River Society** (pg. 62). If you choose not to participate in the Society (understandable, since warriors of the Five Great Clans will want to either capture or kill you), then you must take a **Hunted 3 Disadvantage** to reflect the Yellow River Rebels considering you a traitor; if you're actually playing a Yellow River Rebel game, in which your group all belongs to the Society, then you must take a **Hunted 5 Disadvantage**, to reflect being targeted for death by the Five Great Clans! If you do not take this Fortune, you must consult with your Sage to determine how you could possibly know this form.

Rare Forms of Kung Fu

These kung fu paths are the most powerful and flexible; you can easily modify them if you will, dropping an effect or altering how it manifests. What you can't do is make them more powerful, save by spending chi to enhance their effects, as the upper limit of their damaging potential (if any) has been maximized over the years. On the other hand, all damage done by Rare Forms of Level 2 and above is considered **profound** for the purposes of healing. Note that any of these techniques that are of ongoing nature (can be maintained) will always fail if you suffer chi flow loss to the color they depend on... and those few that use Any chi are disrupted by chi flow loss of any kind! These forms' *Signatures* are also customized by the wielder; and each character who learns one should write up their own.

Disrespectful Sages

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 15

Rare White Chi Style

An example of Kung Fu preserved for the sake of knowledge and posterity, this form is very powerful, and only taught to the oldest and most trusted members of the Fire Mantis Society. It is thought that this Rare form was originally three separate arts, each devoted to the different effects; over the centuries, it has gradually been condensed into this style. While one *could* learn it from the Demon Scholars (as it was one of their number that defected from the Fire Mantis Society), it is unknown what price they would expect for the teaching of this knowledge... but it must be very high, and involve forsaking the *Wulin* to become a Baneful human.

Type: Palms.

Skill Basis (Typical Weapon): Fight (Palms).

Default Critical Success: **None**.

Form 1 – Hurricane Hand (5 points – 5 White): This art makes the famed Xi Clan style of Wind Sweeping Away the Clouds seem paltry by comparison. While this technique is active, you may direct remote blows carried by hurricane winds up to double your Favored Chi in yards, doing five bonus dice to damage, and automatically inflicting **Knockback** on whatever you hit, and you always have an additional attack at the end of the round. Against

minions and buildings, you double all result dice, adding in the bonus, for how much damage is done to either the attacking army or the buildings against which you direct this technique upon. Anyone in personal combat with you must reduce their Initiative totals in half, to reflect having to struggle against the winds to reach you. Your Armor is double normal against all ranged weapon attacks, as the fierce winds surrounding you swat the projectiles out of the very air! This technique must be used at the beginning of the round. **Channel: 2 Jade** (maintaining the effect for another round).

Form 2 – Winter Heart (10 points – 6 White + 4 Any): This power is staggering, for it can shift the very season of an entire area to deepest winter – with all the effects that implies. The Fire Mantis Society uses this form to moderate extremes of heat, for the amount of cold can be controlled precisely. Alas, the Demon Scholars use it to its full extent, ruining crops and often extorting what they can before the forces of the clans come to drive them away. When invoked, this technique reaches out in a radius around you, to a distance equal to triple your Favored Chi in yards; within that radius, you can determine the temperature within that area, as long as it is *lower*. Within that radius, everyone (besides you) will suffer a penalty up to as much as your White Chi modifier to their Strike; you may make remote attacks, inflicting six bonus dice of damage and automatically causing **Breath Loss** to a single color of chi to your victim (your choice). Furthermore, all damage you inflict is treated as two health levels greater for purposes of test and movement penalties, and if they are a Holy Fire practitioner, you can extinguish their flame as well. Finally, all result dice are doubled for the purpose of attacking forces of minions. **Channel: 2 Silver + 2 Any** (extends the duration of this technique by one round).

Form 3 – Earth Power (15 points – 7 White + 8 Any): This powerful technique can level buildings and **Down** armies, for it havoCs the Earth itself... the very Land of the Gods shakes! Make a Fight roll – it acts as an Area Attack, affecting everyone (and thing!) within quadruple your Favored Chi in yards. Dodge pools are halved and mundane Armor is ineffective against this technique, though Kung Fu based protection is still efficacious. A Standard Success inflicts **Downing**; a Critical Success both **Disarms** and **Downs** the target. The Attack does double result dice in damage as a base, plus your Favored Chi in bonus dice; the result dice are quadrupled against minions and structures. **Channel: 3 Gold + 5 Any** (extends the duration of this technique by one round).

神兵玄奇

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you receive a free *Disrespectful Sages* Skill Level equal to the level of the highest technique you've learned.
- 3 **Fortune:** You receive an Affiliation with either the **Fire Mantis Society** (pg. 64) or the **Demon Scholars** (pg. 64). If you are a member of the latter, you will be a Baneful human, hunted and hated by all. However, you will have more latitude for action, as the Demon Scholars do not place any burden of responsibility; using the power granted you by the form is the main responsibility you have. If you do not take this Fortune, you must consult with your Sage to determine how you possibly know this form.
- 5 **Onerous Obligation:** in return for kung fu training, you pick up an extra Disadvantage: the Onerous Obligation to fulfill your duty to the Fire Mantis Society (note the Demon Scholars do not exact this price, instead expecting you to sacrifice your reputation instead, becoming a Baneful human).
- (-5) This is your first or second Disadvantage

Limitless Freedom

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 20

Rare Jade Chi Style

Devised by Hong Bei, Ancestor of the Bei Clan, this kung fu was derived from the works of the Daoist Sage Zhuangzhi, and grants considerable power. Handed down from father to son in the strictest of confidence, it can only be taught by the current Head of Bei Clan: Zheng Bei, has recently decided to do what was once thought unthinkable – he has taught the first two forms of this art to a worthy Clan Member not his own son.



Type: Artful/Brutal (Palms or Kwan Dao).

Default Critical Success: **Knockback** or **Stun**.

Form 1 - Streams Between The Sky (5 points – 5 Jade): When this technique is invoked, the Chi spent flurries around you, granting the following benefits: You may add your Gold Chi modifier to your Initiative, your Silver Chi score to the Strike of all Attacks and Defenses (including against Ranged attacks), and any Successful Attack you make will automatically inflict **Knockback**. Finally, the chi spent can be shaped however you like so as to create a Morale Attack equal to your physical attack, effective on all viewers not loyal to the user on the battleground. This technique must be used at the beginning of the round.

Form 2 - Yin-Yang Defense (10 points – 6 Jade + 4 Any): This technique can achieve that rarest of effects - it can bolster your Protective Chi! Add your Limitless Freedom Skill Level to your Chi Aura rating, lasting for 2 rounds plus your Rank Level. (In other words, a Rank Three Fighter who happened to know this technique would have it last for six rounds before having to invoke it again). You may also add +5 per each level of Limitless Freedom you know to your Armor.

Form 3 - Endless Universe (15 points – 7 Jade + 8 Any): Also called Elastic Shadow, this technique draws in chi energies from the locality so as to greatly expand the scope of your attacks or defenses, appearing as if your weapon were duplicating itself in a large area spreading from you as a starting point... hence the nickname. Even more important, all damage done by attacking with this technique is **profound** (qv).

While invoking this technique, make your Attack or Defend roll as normal; but all result dice are *doubled*, and you may add your Jade Chi modifier to the damage bonus for your weapon! If attacking, you may then apply the result of the roll as an Area attack to all targets that are within a range of five yards times your Favored Chi score. Using Elastic Shadow, you can extend a single Defense to block an Area Attack, no matter the magnitude or scope!

Form 4 - Eternal Contentment (20 points – 8 Jade + 12 Any): There has to be some ironic tale concerning the title of this deadly technique, but if there is, the Bei aren't telling it.

When you use this form, you focus your chi with a powerful cry (making a Confidence roll with your Jade Chi Modifier) that rips up any loose material – stone, ice, ground, wood, whatever's lying around – and fling it in a battering cloud at your opponent; this attack is considered **Disorienting**. On any sort of success, this matter then forms chains around him, which automatically **Entangle** him, preventing him from fighting back unless he can break free.

The round you invoke Eternal Contentment, you select

a Focus for it - he bears the brunt of your attack, which is always considered to be with **Surprise**. Any unallied onlookers suffer a Morale Attack from the overwhelming power of this technique.

At the end of the round, the person you picked as the primary target is bound. The chains last a number of rounds equal to the result dice of your attack roll, and have a Might score equal to double that of the user's Favored Chi score. While bound, the victim has no actions and cannot spend chi; the chains bind his spirit as much as his body. He can make an attempt to break free once a round - by making a Fight roll against the Might of the chains (rolled as a dice pool), and getting a better result.

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you receive a free *Limitless Freedom* Skill Level equal to the highest technique you've learned.
 - * **Bonus:** You receive the **Mentor: Zheng Bei** 5 Advantage.
 - 5 **Fortune:** You receive an Affiliation with the **Bei Clan**. (pg. 57).
 - 5 **Onerous Obligation:** in return for kung fu training, you pick up an extra Disadvantage: the Onerous Obligation to fulfill your duty to the Bei Clan.
- (-5) This is your first or second Disadvantage.



One Man Legion

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 15

Rare Gold Chi Style

The Dong Clan prefers Kung Fu that doesn't require weapons - therefore, they're never caught completely by surprise! This form is an extension of their clan focus of slaying in a single blow to the logical conclusion: slay an army with as few blows as possible. Sometimes known as the 'Soul Biter' Skill, it can free the souls of enemies in vast numbers, and only the highest ranked warriors of the Clan are ever taught it. This terrifying martial arts style allows a single individual to multiply his life-destroying blows to wipe out many at once... it takes the normal ability to strike with fist or weapon and expands it through dimensions of space and time to create a veritable barrage of enemy-smashing strikes.

Type: Brutal (Palms or Three-Section Staff)

Default Critical Success: **Knockback** or **Stun**.

Form 1 - Battering Multitude (5 points / 5 Gold): This technique is what preserves the Dong Clan from its enemies - knowing this technique, one can hold back an army! When this technique is invoked, you gain the following effects: 1.) You may make an additional attack at the end of every round; 2.) Your Strike and Damage are increased by your Gold Chi modifier, and your result dice are doubled (against minions, they are *quadrupled*). Finally, 3.) Any and all minions who see this technique performed automatically suffer your attack total as a Morale Attack, and may break and flee simply from witnessing your mastery. This technique lasts for two plus your Rank Level in rounds. **Channel:** 2 Any (extends the duration by an additional round after the duration lapses.)

Form 2 - Shattering Assault (10 points / 6 Gold + 4 Any): 1.) You can apply an Area Attack you make against a number of targets equal to your One Man Legion Skill, and you may do this to as far as away as double your Favored Chi in yards. 2.) you may reset a single die to any number you want, extending or creating Heavenly or Divine rolls; 3.) your Strike and Damage are increased by your Gold Chi modifier, and your result dice are doubled (against minions, they are *quadrupled*.) Finally, 4.) Any and all minions who see this technique performed automatically suffer your attack total as a Morale Attack, and may break and flee simply from witnessing your mastery.

Form 3 - Thousand Hand Skill
(15 points / 7 Gold + 8 Any): This form functions

神兵玄奇



much like the previous two in that you gain the following effects: 1.) You can apply an Area Attack against a number of targets for a single action equal to your Favored Chi; 2.) you may reset two dice to any numbers you want, extending or creating Heavenly or Divine rolls; 3.) your Strike and Damage are increased by your Gold Chi modifier, and your result dice are doubled (against minions, they are *quadrupled*.) Finally, 4.) Any and all minions who see this technique performed automatically suffer your attack total as a Morale Attack, and may break and flee simply from witnessing your mastery.

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you receive a free *One Man Legion Skill Level* equal to the highest technique you've learned.
- 5 **Fortune:** You have an Affiliation with the **Dong Clan**. (pg. 58). If you do not take this Fortune, you must consult with your Sage to determine how you possibly know this form.
- 3+ **Fortune:** You must have some Status in the Dong Clan (if you don't have any, why do you know the One Man Legion Form?)
- 5 **Onerous Obligation:** in return for kung fu training, you pick up an extra Disadvantage: the Onerous Obligation to fulfill your duty to the Dong Clan.
- (-5) This is your first or second Disadvantage.

Pangu Binding Edge

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 20

Rare Flexible Chi Style

Also known as Two-Faced Cleaving Axe Style, this form was supposedly handed down from the Creator of the Universe himself. This rarest of forms is known only to the Eight Axe Immortals, who rarely operate in concert and have no single place they dwell. The only time this style is ever passed on is when an Axe Immortal retires and trains a replacement; it is unknown what becomes of the 'retiree'. It is rumored they are either accepted into Heaven for their good works or voluntarily suicide so as to preserve Pangu's knowledge from being used by servants of the Void.

Type: Artful (Axe Only).

Default Critical Success: **Maiming** or **Stunning**.

Form 1 – Pangu's Reach (5 points – 5 Any): Just knowing this technique safeguards an Axe Immortal's life, for each is hated and pursued by the allies of the Void, whether they are knowing servants of Nothing or not. Whenever you are placed in a situation wherein you could be surprised (even if you are asleep!), you may spend the chi cost and negate the Surprise; not only that, but you may add your Favored Chi modifier to your Initiative roll, as well as draw a weapon as a Free Action, from up to Favored Chi in feet away from your hand as need be. This technique automatically invokes at the beginning of the round.

Form 2 – Pangu's Binding Edge (10 points – 10 Any): This technique is the paragon of connecting or the prevention of connection. When this technique is used, you may infallibly heal any type of damage to yourself or others, negate poisons, or heal one entire Health level (regardless of how many Health points it has) per use. It can also negate the need for food, water or air for one day if used to that purpose. Finally, you can sever spells, magicks or persistent effects of Kung Fu. However, this technique cannot bind or retain kung fu; only Pangu himself can do that.

Most notably, this technique can bind the ravages of age away from its wielder; each time a nexus of Void Chi is destroyed (this includes Black Void Treasures) and this technique is invoked, it adds 50 years of life to its user, preventing aging during that period. As long as this style is used for its intended righteous purpose, the Axe Immortal is immortal in truth as well as name!

Form 3 – Pangu's Cleaving Edge (15 points – 15 Any): The power of this technique is undeniably of divine origin; when invoked, it has the following effects – 1.) This attack is automatically **Disorienting**; 2) You ignore all Armor, which is destroyed in the blow; 3) You inflict your Favored Chi modifier as a Strike and Damage bonus and all damage done with this technique is **profound**; 4) The closest Axe Immortal will become aware of the use of this technique and will come to investigate (appearing within some days or weeks), if only to hear the tale of the user and of the Void yet further prevented from returning.

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you receive a free *Pangu's Binding Edge Skill Level* equal to the highest technique you've learned.
- * **Bonus:** You receive the **Pangu: Axe Immortals Lore**, as the only way you can know this form is to be one of their number. Please see pg. 89 for more details.
- 3 **Robust:** Due to the rigorous Axe Immortal Training, your Character's body is good at healing from injury, thus granting you the **Robust** Advantage at a discount (see pg. 49).
- 5 **Disfigured:** you are one of the Axe Immortals who has given up their face in the most literal way possible... you've marred your features or ruined

them outright; horribly twisted keloid scar tissue, or even permanently charred and burned flesh is your lot in life. You have the **Unwholesome** Disadvantage to reflect your hideousness.

(-5) This is your first or second Disadvantage.

Purple Shield

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 20

Rare Silver Chi Style

This path is another deeply guarded secret of the Mao-Shan Clan, and known only by their most trusted fighters. The only one to know this form outside of the Clan is Purple Wave of the Flame Cult, who brought it with her when she defected from the Clan. It is thought that she is under sentence of death for this crime, but as with all things regarding the Hellcat Clan, their true feelings are unknown. This style is fearsome because to even dare to fight with a Mao-shan Elite Warrior is to risk death... from her mere touch!

Type: Free (None).

Default Critical Success: None.

Form 1 – Crimson Vision (5 points – 5 Silver): Upon activating this form, your eyes blaze bright red. While this glow is active, you cannot be blinded or evaded by techniques that prevent sight; you now see by the glow of every living thing's "Heart Fire", or life force. You can tell at a glance the state of health in every way, as well as strength of chi; with the wealth of knowledge you gain from this technique, you may add your White Chi modifier to Medicine/Tactics rolls *or* to either your Initiative or Awareness rolls, as you can see the flow of the Heart Fire as it about to act. This technique lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Rank Level. This technique must be used at the beginning of the round.

Form 2 – Indigo Heart (10 points – 5 Silver + 5 Any): As you focus your chi and bring this effect into existence, your heart blazes indigo right through your flesh and clothing, the blue glow then enveloping your entire body! Make a Confidence roll against a Moderate (15) difficulty. If successful, your Chi Aura doubles, but only for the purpose of shielding you from damage. This technique lasts for your Favored Chi in rounds, and then it must be invoked again. If you have a critical failure, you will be unable to invoke this technique or the higher form for the rest of this combat, as your chi flow has been disrupted. Your entire body has a dark blue sheen to it while this technique is in effect.

Form 3 – Amethyst Aura (15 points – 5 Silver + 10 Any): When invoked, your eyes blaze crimson and your heart blazes indigo... then your body is enveloped by the Amethyst Aura that gives the style its name. This form subsumes the first two in every way (right down to the

duration in rounds equal to your Favored Chi), with a very important addition – any contact with you in any way inflicts a Potency 5 Poison effect on your victim! Anybody with the Awareness skill knows from merely looking at you that you are utterly venomous to the touch. Fighting a practitioner of Purple Shield means relying on dodging a great deal, as even blocking puts you at too much risk. Finally, any other technique that you use that has the **Reply** quality will automatically affect the victim with the full poison effect from this form on a successful Reply, right through their weapon if they block!

DESTINY COST

* **Bonus:** you receive a free *Purple Shield* Skill Level equal to the level of the highest technique you've learned.

4 **Fortune:** You have an Affiliation with the **Mao-Shan Clan** (pg. 62). If you choose not to participate in the Clan (since most xia warriors will be wary of you, bordering on violent), then you must take the **Unwholesome** Disadvantage to reflect your old clan's dubious reputation. It is unknown how the Mao-Shan react to their wayward members, but it's true that such people tend to disappear without a trace after a certain length of time (usually years). If you do not take this Fortune, you must consult with your Sage to determine how you possibly know this form.

Three Powers

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 20

Rare Unique Chi Style

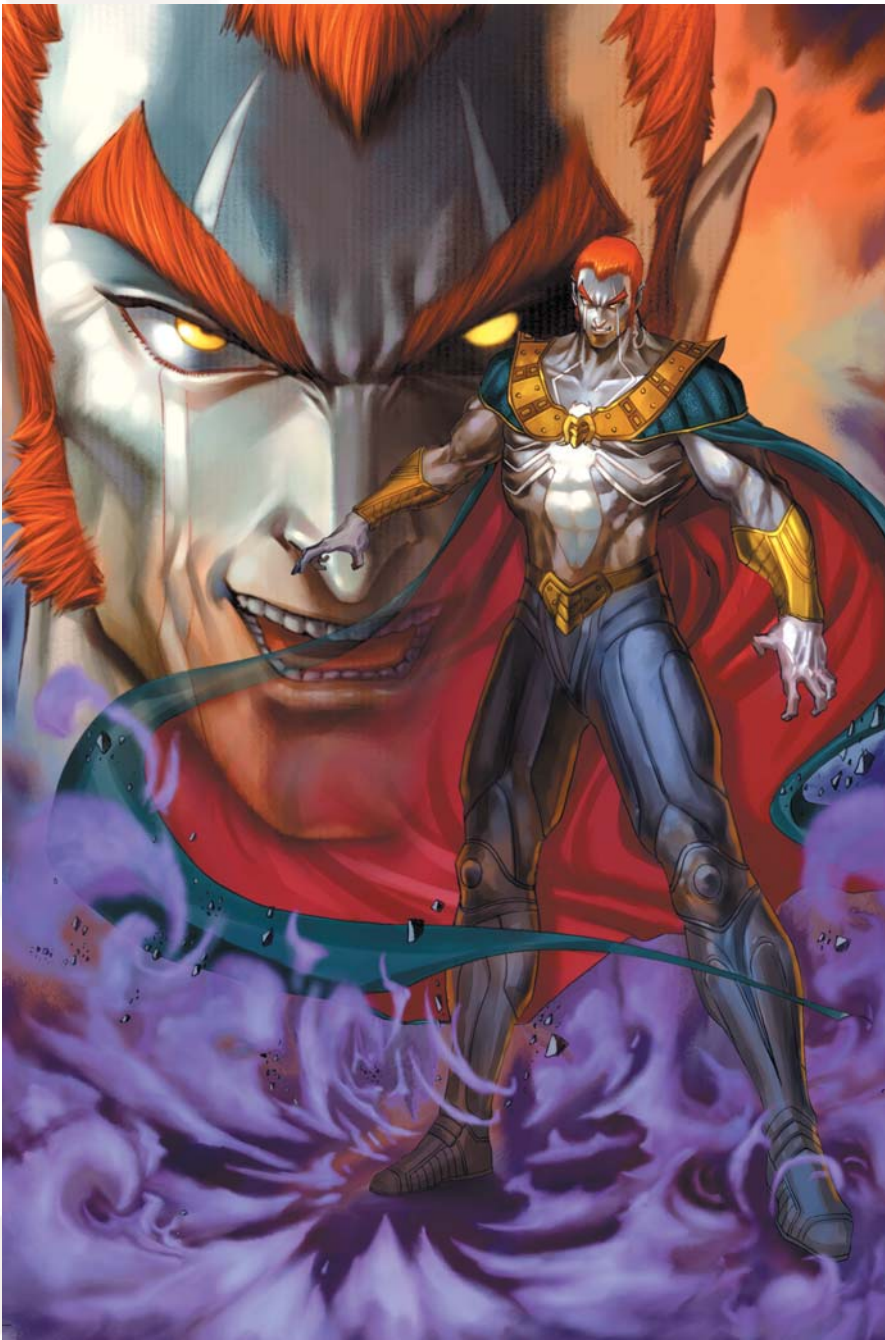
This Kung Fu is perhaps the rarest of all – for only one man may teach it, the Three Powers Sage himself. Living high on the slopes of Grey Foot Mountain, he may be immortal... but is positively known to be a baneful warrior. Why, he has even been suggested as a candidate for the Ten Greatest Sinners! Be that as it may, very few have survived even attempting to speak to him, much less learn his knowledge. It is known, however, that the First Emperor was one of those few, and that this kung fu almost certainly preserved Ying Zheng in the face of the many assassins that tried to kill him during his reign.

Type: Artful (Spear).

Default Critical Successes: **Disarm** or **Maim**.

神
兵
玄
奇

神兵玄奇



Form 1 – World-Breaking Form (5 Points - 5 Gold): By striking his weapon against the ground, the Three Powers kung fu warrior shatters the Earth itself, which explodes with rage. Make an attack roll; this creates an Area Attack that strikes everyone within the fighter's Favored Chi in yards, on a successful hit doing double result dice + weapon bonus in damage to each victim of the attack, automatically **Knocking** them back. A Critical Success on this attack will cause **Downing** as well! However, one must take care and not use World-Breaking Form unless standing on something very thick – it literally tears up the area where you're standing for the raw material for the assault.

Channel: Jade (every point spent extends the radius of effect by another 5 yards).

Form 2 – Heart Cutter (10 points - 6 Crimson + 4 Any): This hideous technique could only have been devised by a man so utterly hurt and alone that he had lost even the most basic compassion for other human beings... and so it was. Make an attack roll while invoking this technique; on a successful hit, each result die reduces your opponent's Crimson Chi and Speed by one. On a Critical Success, this technique permanently assigns the victim's Crimson Chi to their 'Flesh Wound' level, so that when they are injured, it is the first chi flow to be lost. Each of these effects are considered **profound** damage, curable only by the most skilled of doctors.

Form 3 – Fury of Emptiness (15 points - 7 White + 8 Any): Hold up your weapon and invoke this technique; where your weapon's tip literally seems to shatter the order of the world itself, and the minds of those witnessing it momentarily see a flash of what lies behind the world – the remnants of the void. Make an attack roll – as this attack utterly paralyzes any and all viewers (a powerful Area Attack) within your Favored Chi in yards, each effect die (result dice + bonus dice) removing 1 Full action (and the associated Free actions); actions lost extend into future rounds. The only way to Defend against this technique is to make a Confidence roll; one can spend Gold Chi to try to negate the attack, each point reducing the rounds of duration and then returning the actions into play. A round's worth of actions are always lost, though the ability to Defend can be returned, preventing total paralysis.

Form 4 – Black Rain (20 points - 8 Silver + 12 Any): The Three Powers Sage devised this technique on his volcanic peak, high above the city of Passing Cloud, which served as his test area—many people died a horrible death the day he perfected it! Make an attack roll; it is an Area Attack, and each defender within Favored Chi in yards of the target area must Defend as best they can. Do not roll the result dice as damage; instead, each die represents a

point of your targets' chi that becomes *poisoned* (this effect is not blocked by Armor or Chi Aura), while the victim will take the Weapon's Damage bonus to their Health as normal. Have the target circle the poisoned chi points; when they are spent, they inflict a die of unblockable damage (damage that can neither be stopped by Chi Aura or Armor). Upon a Critical Success, the chi flow for a single color becomes poisoned; each time the target regains chi, the point regained is itself poisoned, until all are poisoned as noted above. When every single point of chi is so *poisoned*, this technique's effect comes to an end; no more chi will be poisoned from breathing, and if the victim of this horrid technique survives, will no longer be chi-poisoned. Note that this technique will function perfectly well with Ranged weapons, making a barrage with Black Rain a horrifying way to attack entire groups or even small armies! (Against minions, double all result dice, disregarding weapon bonuses, to determine how many unnamed combatants are horribly slaughtered). The damage from this technique is considered **profound**, though the chi-poisoning counts only while it is in effect.

DESTINY COST

- * **Bonus:** you receive a free *Three Powers* Skill Level equal to the level of the highest technique you've learned.
 - * **Bonus:** You receive the **Mentor: Three Powers Sage 5 Advantage**, for otherwise you could not possibly know this form. As far as Mentors go, one should not presume too far with the Three Powers Sage, for he is unpredictable and dangerous, even to those who might call him friend.
 - 5 **Onerous Obligation:** in return for kung fu training, you pick up an extra Disadvantage: the Onerous Obligation to fulfill your debt to the Three Powers Sage.
- (-5) This is your first or second Disadvantage.

神兵玄奇



Shen Zhou: The Land of the Gods

The Secret Arts

Basics

Secret Arts

Introduction to Medical Conditions

Health and Sickness

Changing Chi Conditions

Secret Arts of Medicine

Medicine

Secrets of Diagnosis

Physical Conditions

Secrets of Treatment

Secret Arts of Understanding

Predictionism

Secret Arts of Genius

Secret Art of Prediction

Tools of Divination

Yin-Yang Theory

Five-Element Cycle Theory

Story of the Self

Story of Fortune

The Courtier's Art

Secret Arts of Intrigue

Extraordinary Courtier Techniques

Passions

Inspirations

Controlling Passions

Controlling Inspirations

The Scholar's Art

Daoist Magic

Extraordinary Daoist Techniques

Curse Spells

Influence Spells

Crafting Curses

Manipulating Influences

Manifesting Spirits

Secret Arts

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 0

Scholars receive this lore at Fifth Rank;

Courtiers at Fourth Rank;

Warriors at Third Rank.

You must have this lore to purchase secret arts.

The Secret Arts are special skills and techniques known only to a few. If you have this lore, you can buy secret arts — both individual techniques and various lores.

This chapter details four important secret arts. It expands on the concepts of Medicine and gives secret techniques for legendary doctors. It explains the techniques of "Predictionism," arts of genius and divination. It describes the Secret Arts of Intrigue that the courtiers practice. Finally, it discusses the secret magic of the Daoist scholars.

Using the secret arts — techniques from any lore marked as "Secret Arts" — counts as an attack, which means that you cannot combine it with a physical attack or another secret art in a single full action.

If you want simple, quick powers, then consider one of the following packages:

Quick Techniques Packages

Courtiers

Secret Arts of Intrigue gives you the basics of the courtier's secret arts. See pg. 305.

Extraordinary Courtier Techniques gives access to six simple and "instant" techniques of the courtiers' secret arts — techniques you can use in a single round.

Daoists

Daoist Magic gives you the basics of the scholar's magic. See pg. 316.

Extraordinary Daoist Techniques gives access to nine simple and "instant" techniques of Daoist magic — techniques you can use in a single round.

Doctors

Read the Medicine lore sheet and have a high Medicine skill.

神兵玄奇

Advanced Secret Arts

If you're more interested in secret arts with strategic noncombat applications, you'll also want to read the following lore.

The Basics

Introduction to Medical Conditions gives you a basic primer on Chi conditions. These are what you use when you use secret arts to change other people's Chi.

Health and Sickness gives you the mechanical tools you need to understand the Chi conditions in depth.

Changing Chi Conditions explains the kinds of things you can do to others with your secret arts.

The Body

Secrets of Diagnosis gives some basic tools for improving your Medicine.

Physical Conditions describes conditions afflicting the body.

Secrets of Treatment allows you to use special techniques to change those conditions.

Predictionism

Predictionism is a basic primer on the arts of divination and insight.

Secret Arts of Genius lets you have prodigal tactical, social, or other insights.

Secret Art of Prediction lets you understand the future.

Tools of Divination explains the methodology of the I Ching.

Yin-Yang Theory and **Five-Element Cycle Theory** explain the structure of the world.

The Heart

Story of the Self explains how to spot and understand passions and inspirations.

Secret Arts of Intrigue lets you manipulate the passions and inspirations in others' hearts.

Passions and Inspirations explains how strong passions and calls to virtue work.

Controlling Passions and **Controlling Inspirations** explain how to create and manipulate them.

Magic

Story of Fortune explains how to detect and divine curses and influences.

Daoist Magic lets you manipulate yin and yang magic.

Curse Spells and **Influence Spells** describe the yin and yang magic of Shen Zhou.

Crafting Curses and **Manipulating Influences** explain how to create and manipulate them.

Manifesting Spirits gives you a certain sway over the spirits of curses, influences, passions, inspirations, and sickness.

Destiny Options

These options exist to help define some of the more unusual fighters in Shen Zhou and the wuxia genre. Examples of suitable conditions and costs will appear in future supplements.

DESTINY COST

I+ Victory: A useful physical condition, passion, inspiration, curse, or influence becomes a permanent character trait. The GM sets the cost, with the default being 1 Destiny for a trivial condition, 5 Destiny for a minor condition, and 10-15 Destiny for a major condition.

*** Bonus:** One of your detrimental physical conditions, passions, inspirations, curses, or influences becomes permanent. The GM gives you bonus Destiny — normally, 0-1 for a trivial condition, 3-5 for a minor condition, and 5-15 for a major condition.

Introduction to Medical Conditions

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 0

Each person has a natural Chi balance that represents "health". This differs from person to person. It is natural for the sun to be hot and the moon to be cold. The sun isn't sick, but if a human became that hot, they'd die. If the sun cooled down to human temperature, it'd be very sick.

Medical conditions come in two forms. Sometimes, the Chi of the body is weak or deficient. Sometimes, it's hyperactive or in excess.

Weak Chi offers penalties and hyperactive Chi only offers bonuses. This makes hyperactive conditions good from the players' perspective. For the characters, this isn't always true — hyperactive Chi is still out of balance. It can produce manic glee, but never a sense of solid health.

Some hyperactive Chi conditions are entirely miserable. The GM can take advantage of this in a bad situation — giving a character a hyperactive injury or illness makes the situation even worse and more dramatic for the character, but it increases their chance of survival.

Some example conditions appear below. If you're not interested in the details of Shen Zhou medicine, this is all you need to know. Otherwise, you can find the details and the underlying rules behind these examples in Chi Weakness and Hyperactivity (pg. 277).

Conditions are either weak or hyperactive. It's possible to have both, but that's two conditions.

Drunk

You're drunk. Really, really drunk. You stagger and weave. You're not very alert and your strategic sense is shot.

Weakness: If this is a weakness, you should avoid intelligent, focused decisions. You don't take any penalties if you're entertainingly or realistically drunk, but if you focus your Chi enough to think in a sober fashion for a few turns, you start getting mechanical penalties. Weak liquor might give a -5 modifier on Speed Skills, and strong liquor might cause Crimson Chi flow loss.

Hyperactivity: Some fighters find liquor inspiring. As long as you act properly drunk, you actually improve your Speed — gaining a +5 modifier on Speed Skill rolls or even an extra point of Crimson Chi breath a turn. It's up to the GM how drunk you have to act, and how much you have to roleplay that drunkenness.



Dying

You're febrile, weak, and dying. If you have any temporary chi left, you're awake; no chi left, you're unconscious. Anybody transferring chi to you can awaken you, though.

Weakness: If this is a weakness, then you have to limit yourself to resting, giving dying speeches, and so forth. If you decide to take one final stand against the foe, you'd better hurry — if you exert yourself at all, your Chi ratings will plummet. If you don't at least do some feeble shivering and walk with a crutch, you're likely to burn out your energy entirely. This condition is best used for NPCs or for PCs who'd otherwise just be dead.

Hyperactivity: Dying is rarely good, but sometimes it focuses the mind. As long as you're resting, giving dying speeches, and so forth, you can get a +10 bonus on appropriate Genius and Presence rolls. You can take one glorious final stand against the foe, casting aside your illness and burning yourself out in a blaze of glory; it'll probably kill you or leave you comatose, but the fire might cleanse you instead.

Injured

You're hurt. You limp, or favor an arm, or otherwise show the injury in your behavior. The pain is terrible.

Weakness: If this is a weakness, then any action that aggravates your injury suffers a negative modifier — either -5 or -10. If you keep abusing your injury, you'll make it worse, suffering that penalty on every roll of every type until you can rest.

Hyperactivity: Your body responds to the injury by dumping everything it has into survival. All your Attributes rise temporarily by one point. If you stop protecting your injury or showing the pain, it's probably because you've got things under control; the adrenaline rush ends and you lose the benefit for the scene.

Sick

You cough, snuffle, and struggle for breath. You're cold. You shiver. You need to limit daily activity.

Weakness: If this is a weakness, these are requirements. You lose your breath in Gold Chi if you force yourself to breathe normally and act warm. If you don't get enough rest, you'll suffer temporary Gold Chi flow loss.

Hyperactivity: If hyperactive Chi gives makes you sick, it probably means your body is waterlogged. Shivering, coughing, wrapping yourself in blankets, drinking tea, and acting miserable gives you an extra point of Silver Chi recovery every turn.



Other Kinds of Sickness

Weak Chi (or) Hyperactive Chi

Result

Gold	Silver	Typical waterlogged sickness, as described.
Crimson	White	Cough, weakness, bleary, hoarse, dried out, sad.
Jade	Gold	Slow, tired, drained, low-energy, obsessive.
Silver	Crimson	Fever, delusions, sweating, fear.
White	Jade	Frantic, unfocused, angry, manic.

The last sort of sickness probably represents a panic or nervous breakdown of some sort rather than a virus—people flush with excess Jade Chi are in fact sick, but their bodies are healthier than most horses. Only if the person remains sick indefinitely will the condition eat away their physical health: the Jade Chi burns itself out, and the character falls into a low-energy state.

Trivial, Minor, and Major Conditions

Conditions come in three forms: trivial, minor, and major. Trivial conditions are noteworthy but have no mechanical penalties or benefits — the character is sick, but it doesn't slow them down or speed them up. Minor conditions have a significant, measurable effect on play. Major conditions can easily change the outcome of a conflict.

Health and Sickness

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 0

When someone isn't healthy, they have a medical condition — in some way, their Chi is either weak or hyperactive. This includes diseases, headaches, wounds, and indigestion, but Chi imbalance isn't just being sick. If a child's parents die and she becomes shy or sad, that's a Chi imbalance. If she instead becomes unnaturally outgoing, friendly, and competent, that's an imbalance too — a doctor would consider it unhealthy, even if it's not worth "fixing" it. Even bad luck and unhappy relationships can be medical conditions.

People eventually adapt to their conditions. If someone loses a leg, this starts out as a medical issue — and legendary doctors might try to reattach it. Over the years, the character's Chi adapts, and having one leg becomes the healthy state. At that point, a First Rank doctor might still be able to attach a new leg, but it's not healing the person any more — it's performing bizarre experiments on them. Similarly, the human-animal hybrids created by Earth Lord are currently healthy. Even if a virtuous doctor could restore their humanity, many would refuse to do so.

The severity of a condition has very little to do with what it is. It's just like in real life — one person can catch a cold and feel a little run-down and sniffly, and that's a trivial condition. Another can catch the cold and feel really sick; that's a minor condition. A third winds up bed-bound; that's a major condition. Serious things like a missing leg or plagues are usually at least minor conditions, but wuxia is full of people who don't let blindness or a spot of malaria slow them down.

Recovery

Most conditions ultimately fade on their own. Given time, the body will fight off the sickness, circumstances will change, or the character will die. Only the most virulent Chi conditions become permanent "healthy" states instead.

Recovering from a Chi condition is a series of tasks. Characters roll Hardiness to recover from physical sickness, Confidence to recover from mental sickness, and Awareness to recover from conditions that affect luck and the spirit. Most sickness requires multiple successful rolls. After a successful recovery roll, the character can make the next roll immediately. If they fail, they must wait a while before trying again. Critical failure can make the condition permanent, at which point even a doctor can't cure it.

What is this For?

These rules govern every kind of sickness — from mundane disease to strange and esoteric illnesses. No matter how terrible the effects, they're set up so that you can suck up a penalty or sacrifice an advantage and ignore them outright. This means that you can go a bit wild with the effects, whether you're a GM handing out strange Chi diseases or a Daoist sage crafting special imbalances in others' Chi. You can't destroy someone's character concept — if a courtier uses secret arts to tempt an austere monk into lust, or a Daoist curses a refined and delicate lord to eat spiders, the victim can accept the penalty and stave off the condition.

Because of this structure, the arts of scholars and courtiers are arts of influence, not control. If you want absolute effects, try beating people up with kung fu!

Each Chi condition is rated in Recovery (the difficulty of the recovery roll), Duration (the number of successful recovery rolls one must make), and the Interval — how long one must wait after an unsuccessful roll before trying again. Most Intervals are measured in scenes, sessions, or stories, but some have a duration in minutes, hours, or days.

For example, a flu has Everyday (18) Recovery, two-task Duration, and an interval of two days. If a character catches the flu and rolls 18, 15, 15, and 19 when trying to recover, she'll stay sick for four days. She catches the flu, immediately tries to recover, gets one



successful roll, tries for another, fails, waits two days, tries again, fails, waits two more days, and finally gets another roll.

A broken leg has Moderate (20) Recovery, five-task Duration, and an interval of a single session. Because this is wuxia, it's possible to snap a leg back into place and heal it instantly — it only takes five good rolls in a row. People with no Hardiness need to take it easy in order to heal; without a +5 modifier or a doctor, they'll never recover.

A severed leg has Impossible (60) Recovery, one-task Duration, and an interval of a turn. If you've got the Hardiness to pull it off, you can stick the leg back on and heal the wound with Jade Chi — but it's far more likely that you'll roll a 30 and the GM will say, "So, interested in a critical failure?"

Curing Conditions

Characters can cure most Chi conditions with a Medicine roll. Successful Medicine rolls contribute towards Recovery. Everyone who's both tried and failed to cure the condition that interval must oppose this attempt, as per the "too many cooks" rule. The doctor takes a -10 modifier if they don't use an appropriate, believable, mundane cure.

For example, Mummy Demon breaks his leg. He rolls 20, 22, 24, 20, and then 18 to recover. He now has to wait until the next session before he can try again to get that last recovery roll. If Bufon Jou attempts to fix the leg sooner, he can make a Moderate (20) Medicine roll to complete the cure — but Mummy Demon has to oppose that roll with his Hardiness. Mummy Demon is tough, so if he can't cure it on his own, it's harder for a doctor to try! If Bufon Jou attempts to cure the leg with moxibustion, he's going to have a -10 modifier *and* Mummy Demon will oppose him — the GM doesn't buy that burning herbs on top of the leg is going to help the bone recover.

Chi Weakness

A Chi weakness is a medical condition that can weaken the character. It's not necessarily bad—sometimes a Chi weakness encourages virtuous behavior. Weaknesses can shape a person and their life in a positive fashion. On an immediate tactical level, though, Chi weaknesses never help achieve any of the character's goals.

Characters with a Chi weakness must behave in a certain way or suffer a penalty. Some examples follow.

- *Broken arm.* You shouldn't use or put weight on the broken arm.
- *Drunkenness.* You must act drunk, reckless, and confused.
- *Cold, flu, or pneumonia.* You must cough, sniffle, and limit daily activity.
- *Shyness.* You shouldn't speak up around strangers or authority figures.

The penalty for violating the appropriate behavior varies. Fighting all day with a cold isn't so bad for a Third Rank Warrior, but even First Rank Warriors should limit their activities if they have pneumonia.

Action Penalty

Action penalties make certain rolls harder. Minor action penalties give a -5 modifier. Major penalties give a -10.

When a character ignores the Chi weakness for a single roll, they suffer a penalty on that roll. If they ignore it for more than a few minutes, they start suffering that penalty on *all* rolls until they can rest and recover.

For example, an arm fracture might inflict an action penalty. Rolls that use that arm suffer a -5 modifier. If the character keeps using that arm anyway, pain, distraction, and the aggravated injury ensures that they suffer a -5 modifier on every roll. Pain and nausea distract them for a while no matter what they do.

Attribute Reduction

Each time a character ignores their Chi weakness, they suffer a temporary one-point reduction in an Attribute and its associated Chi. It does not return for the rest of the scene. Minor Attribute reduction removes at most two points of an Attribute. Major Attribute reduction removes at most five points, possibly divided among multiple Attributes.

If Attribute reduction would reduce an Attribute below 1, take the point from the next Attribute in the five-element cycle instead — reduce Speed instead of Might, Presence instead of Speed, Genius instead of Presence, Wu Wei instead of Genius, or Might instead of Wu Wei.

For example, a Hundred Devil wine drunk risks a five-point Speed reduction. If the character has Speed 2, Presence 3, and Genius 5, they lose a point of Speed every time they try to focus and act rationally. Five turns of rational action reduces their Speed to 1, their Presence to 1, and their Genius to 3 until the next scene.

What can you do with This?

If you're a doctor, maybe you'll work on someone's arm so that they don't suffer the penalty of an arm fracture.

If you practice the secret arts, maybe you'll inflame two enemies' hearts against one another. They'll suffer an action penalty when working together.

If you cast Daoist curses, maybe you'll curse a warrior to abandon his ancestor's sword — if he refuses, he'll suffer bad luck while using it! This might inflict an action penalty, or it might sap his Wu Wei with Attribute reduction.



Loss of Breath

When a character ignores their Chi weakness for a single turn, it makes them lose their breath. Minor weaknesses cost them their breath in one or two specific Chi types. Major weaknesses cost them their breath in three to five. When a character ignores the weakness for fifteen minutes or five combat turns, it causes them to suffer actual Chi flow loss in one or two Chi types. This is scene-length for a minor weakness and lasts either a day or a session for a major weakness.

For example, characters with a minor lung infection naturally cough and struggle for breath on a regular basis. If they want to sneak around quietly or fight without revealing their weakness, their weakness costs them their breath in White Chi. If they overexert themselves during the day, or suppress coughing for more than a few minutes, they suffer scene-length White Chi flow loss. A major infection might cost them their breath in all five Chi, with session-length White and Jade Chi flow loss if they push it.

What does Loss of Breath Mean?

Jade breath is basically your sense of physical well-being. Crimson breath is your grace in motion. Gold breath is your “cool” — if you lose it, you get agitated. White breath gives clarity to your thoughts, and Silver breath makes you alert and in tune with the world.

If you don't do kung fu with that Chi, then losing your breath doesn't hurt you very much in combat or in life. You won't take a penalty on rolls, or become instantly sick, or anything that your player *has* to care about. But you'll still feel the effects!

Loss of Destiny

When a character ignores their Chi weakness, they must set aside one point of Destiny — a point they have or a point they earn for the current session. They cannot access this Destiny until they recover from the Chi condition. A minor Chi weakness reserves up to two Destiny a session. A major weakness can reserve up to 5 Destiny a session.

For example, someone who's temporarily shy because of a minor Chi weakness might set aside a Destiny whenever they intrude on the conversations of strangers or talk back to their Clan head. They don't get it back until they recover from their shyness.

Hyperactive Conditions

Hyperactive Chi conditions are sicknesses that can strengthen the character. It's not necessarily good — sometimes Chi hyperactivity leads to stupid decisions. The wrong kinds of strengths can shape a person's life in negative ways. On an immediate tactical level, though, Chi hyperactivity is usually a good thing.

Characters with hyperactive Chi receive some benefit for behaving in a certain way. Some examples follow.

- *Drunkenness.* The character must act drunk, reckless, and confused.
- *Cold, flu, or pneumonia.* The character must cough, snuffle, and limit daily activity.
- *Shyness.* The character shouldn't speak up around strangers or authority figures.
- *Vigorous heart.* The character should focus on things associated with the heart, small intestine, and tongue: bitter foods, speech, thought, growth, fire, and Crimson Chi.

The benefit received from appropriate behavior varies. It all depends on what causes the Chi condition.

Attribute Improvement

The character temporarily improves their Attribute ratings and the associated Chi. They lose this benefit for the rest of the scene if they behave inappropriately. Minor Attribute improvement adds two points to an Attribute. Major Attribute improvement adds five points, divided among two to five Attributes.

For example, a doctor works with a drunken fighter to find the perfect alcoholic beverage. Most drinks still inflict weakness, but the perfect drink actually gives the drunkard a minor Attribute improvement. As long as they're staggering and semi-rational, they add two to their Speed and Crimson Chi.

Destiny Bonus

The character receives an extra Destiny when their Chi condition gets them into trouble. You can get at most one extra Destiny per session from all your minor conditions combined. Major conditions don't have this limit.

For example, if someone's shy because of a recent tragedy, it may actually be a good thing. In the long term, it's unhealthy because it's not natural for them. In the short term, it gives them the space they need to accept their Destiny.

Improved Breath

The character improves their breath in a given Chi. In every turn where they behave appropriately, a minor improvement gives them an additional breath in one Chi. A major improvement gives them an extra three points of breath. If they've behaved appropriately the whole scene,

What Can you do with This?

If you're a doctor, maybe you'll help someone understand how to work with their hyperactive condition.

If you practice the secret arts, maybe you'll bind your faithful lieutenant to you with a Destiny bonus. If she gets in trouble by being loyal to you, she'll get a bonus Destiny!

If you cast Daoist spells, maybe you'll improve your bodyguard's breath in Crimson Chi when he's defending you.

they can't suffer Chi flow loss in that Chi.

For example, a character suffers from a flu that includes chills, pain, and a cough. This is bad, but it can also act as a backup reservoir of cold and watery silver Chi. The character improves their breath in silver Chi as long as they're shivering, coughing, wrapping themselves in blankets, drinking tea, and acting miserable. They probably also have a Chi weakness, but it's not necessary—if they're a very watery person, or under a doctor's supervision, some chills now and then can be good for them.

Utility

Useful Chi hyperactivity gives a positive modifier on certain rolls. Minor conditions give a +5 modifier or improve a weapon's Strike by +5. Major conditions give a +10 or improve a weapon's Strike and Damage by +5 each.

For example, a vigorous heart might give a bonus on Presence skills, cooking bitter foods, Crimson Chi kung fu, and setting or enduring fires. Since it's an unnatural condition, it might lead to a heart attack one day, but it's an advantage while it lasts!

External Conditions

Some conditions, particularly supernatural conditions, are external. They affect others' behavior, not the character's. For example, someone could have a Chi condition that makes the wrong people love them, or that causes poisonous serpents to nest in their home. These conditions are never pleasant. The character can stave off or avoid the effects for a scene, either through active effort in play or by declaring the desire to do so. Doing so inflicts the penalty for the weakness or costs them the hyperactivity benefit.

For example, a courtier's hyperactive White Chi might attract insects and spiders to live on her skin and hair. This unpleasant condition increases the character's breath in White Chi. She can subdue the hyperactivity, causing the insects to depart, or bathe thoroughly and force them to do so. This costs her that extra breath until the condition reasserts itself.

As another example, Dark Jester's weak Gold Chi

might attract theft. Spirits, rats, or servants tend to make off with his smaller possessions. If he manages to put a stop to this, his weak Chi manifests internally, reducing his Gold Chi breath or imposing an action penalty on Presence Skills.

Changing Chi Conditions

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 0

The holistic arts of Shen Zhou use the following techniques.

Elemental Progression Transformation

(Story)

"I need your help, Teng Lai."

Teng Lai brushed back her hair. "Last time we met, you called me a 'snappish woman too weak for the Wulin.'"

"I was incensed," said Bu. He gave her a pleading smile, and then winced. "Ah!"

The pain in that word caught her attention; she looked up and studied him. She stepped a bit closer and smelled

Exploiting the System

This system lets you set up long-term helpful effects on your friends and long-term harmful effects on your enemies. How much should you manipulate this for tactical gain and how much should you use it to serve the story?

From a tactical perspective, players should get away with one outright power-grab of a Chi condition for each Rank that they've achieved—whether it's a near-permanent condition or an ever-changing temporary condition, and whether it's on their character or on an important ally. Beyond that, the focus should be on the story, using these arts as seems "right."

The characters can still exploit their powers. They can, they should, and most of them will. But for players, a number of conditions equal to achieved Rank is the point where they should stop sitting at home plotting better Chi condition uses and start saving them for when it seems inspired during the game. For GMs, it's the point where you can start invoking the infinite options these rules give you for keeping Chi conditions under control.

Think of it as the lenience of Heaven: you get a certain amount of rope for tactical magic. After that, if you want to use the secret arts, you must properly entertain the gods.





his breath. She tilted her head to one side. She poked him here and there, palpating one or two of his pressure points.

"It's a terrible headache," he said. "I can't fight if I can't think of anything else!"

She laughed. "If you thought more often," she said, "you wouldn't have this pain. It's your impetuous nature that's damaged the metal Chi of your lungs. How can I fix that? I can give you medicine, but I can't make you less reckless!"

"Lai!" he pleaded.

She rubbed the bridge of her nose. "I can progress it to your kidneys," she said. "They're the water element. Then you'll still be sick, but you won't have this pain."

"Please," he said. So she set to work with her needles and craft, and after a long few minutes, he smiled with great relief. "It's gone!"

She worked for a while longer, and then took the needles out. "I'm done," she said.

He pushed at his stomach. "My kidneys don't feel bad."

She packed up her supplies. She put them in a bag. She slung it over her shoulder. She walked to the door.

"The kidneys are responsible for fertility," she said. "If you don't want pain, don't sleep around."

She began to run.

(Concepts)

An elemental progression transformation drives a Chi sickness forward through the cycle of elements. This uses the "Ho-T'u" progression of elements, where each element gives rise to the next — wood to fire, fire to earth, earth to metal, metal to water, and water to wood.

Doctors use elemental progression to move imbalances through the various organ systems of the body. Ideally, this transfers the imbalance to the organs best suited to deal with it. A weak liver may be unable to cast out its tainted blood, but if the tainted blood moves to the spleen, the patient might find balance.

Daoists use elemental progression to remake the patterns of spells and fortune that give shape to the world. From the death energy of water they can make the birth energy of wood, or transform the violent power of a rising flame into the gentle heat of earth.

Courtiers use the elemental progression to transform the emotional character of a situation — anger becomes love, love becomes obsession, obsession becomes loss, loss becomes fear, and fear becomes anger.

(System)

Most Chi conditions have a strong elemental association. Scholars and courtiers with the appropriate lore can change some of these conditions to similar conditions, related through the elemental cycle. For example, heart conditions progress to spleen conditions, because the heart is associated with fire and the spleen with earth. Anger progresses to joy, because anger is associated with wood and joy with fire.

Elemental progression **does not** create a new condition. It simply changes the requirements and the penalty or benefit of an existing Chi condition.

When you perform an elemental progression, you get to define the new penalty of a Chi weakness condition or the new benefit for a hyperactive Chi condition. These are chosen from the list of possibilities starting on pg. 274, and they need to fit the condition in question. Elemental progression never changes the severity of the sickness, makes a weakness into a hyperactive condition, or makes a hyperactive condition into a weakness.

You also choose the general nature of the new condition's requirement. For example, when cursing someone to suffer harm, a Daoist can choose to make them accident-prone, inflict a cough, or give them burning pain in their foot. The GM translates this into a specific requirement — for example, "don't walk on your foot, and moan about it a lot." If the Daoist tries something that's a bit too much, like "Die instantly," the GM has to perform a bit more adaptation — perhaps the target becomes prone to psychosomatic heart attacks, which don't actually kill but feel an awful lot like dying when they happen.

Elemental progression doesn't change the Recovery, Duration, or Interval of the new condition. Because elemental progression changes an existing condition, progress towards a cure remains — if someone has mostly recovered from a spleen sickness and a doctor progresses it into a lung sickness, the patient remains mostly recovered.

The difficulty of an elemental progression is usually equal to the Recovery of the condition. Using the Recovery suggestions on pg. 276, this makes it a Moderate (20) task to brace a broken leg so that the character can move freely but with blinding pain — making it a liver/vision condition instead of a kidney/bone condition. It's an Impossible (60) task to progress someone's lost leg to a missing stomach. Like most Impossible tasks, it crosses the border from normal medicine into an essentially supernatural effect.

Inflaming and Soothing Conditions

(Story)

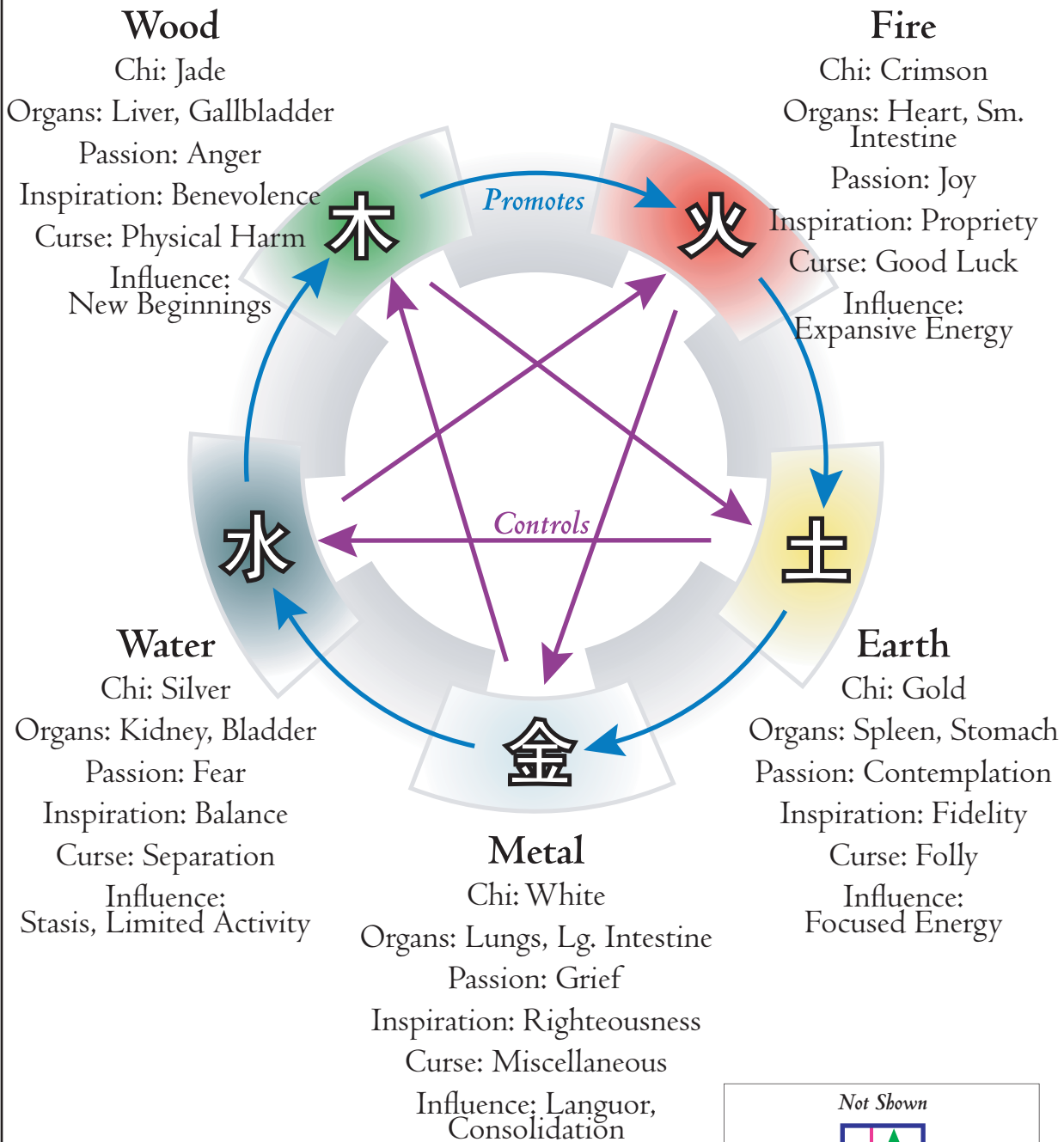
"I can't afford a broken leg, Lai! I attack Hell Clan tomorrow!"

Lai raised an eyebrow.

"Technically," Bu admitted, "I raid that bastard Older Dog's farm and have grand dreams about the day I attack Hell Clan. But the premise is sound!"

神兵玄奇

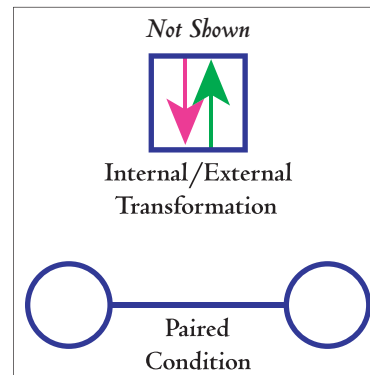
Wheel of Dharma



Elemental Progression →

Yin-Yang Technique →

For more information, see
Detailed Explanations in
the text for these four.



"I suppose I could give you a wooden leg," Lai said. "Then you could practice powerful Jade kicking."

Bu sulked. "You owe me, Lai. I didn't sleep with a girl for three months! Heaven observed my chastity in awe! When I finally dared seek the clouds and rain, it was as if Gong Gong had rammed the mountains again — earth and sky shook together!"

Lai looked down, embarrassed. "I'll make you a deal," she said. "I'll try to strengthen it so it's not so bad for you to fight, but you can never make that analogy in my presence again."

"Analogy?" Bu said, confused.

(Concepts)

Inflaming a trivial condition makes it — temporarily or permanently — into a minor condition. Inflaming a minor condition makes it a major condition. Soothing a major condition reduces its strength to minor, and soothing a minor condition reduces it to a trivial condition.

Doctors soothe their allies' sicknesses to help them recover. Sometimes they will inflame a hyperactive condition to give a friend or themselves a necessary edge in a fight. Unethical doctors sometimes aggravate an enemy's weakness — it's a mildly dirty trick in combat but a foul Deed if done under the auspices of medical treatment.

Daoists inflame trivial conditions to make their curses and elemental influences more efficacious. Sometimes they soothe others' good or bad luck by balancing the influences in their life.

Courtiers inflame passions and inspirations to make small emotions and troubles into large ones. Soothing hearts and easing the troubles of society are a more virtuous' courtier's arts.

Healing Injuries with Medicine

Treating the wounds acquired in battle is a simple enough matter for a doctor trained in the subtleties of Medicine. Say one of your companions, with 15 Health, has taken 20 points of damage. This would drive him down into the **Injured** Health Level... and indeed would also be suffering from the Injured Weakened Chi Condition. So to treat him, our Doctor would have to roll against a **Recovery** Difficulty of 20 (the current damage), the **Severity** of the condition would be Minor - for the Battered Level is a Trivial Condition; the next two levels is a Minor Condition and the last two levels are the Major Severity Condition. The **Duration** (the number of successful Medicine rolls needed for a full cure) is the number of Health levels to be healed would be 2. It should be noted that Medicine is the only way to cure **Profound** wounds!

Bear in mind that a fighter can heal over time simply using their Jade chi - but that their Hardiness still limits how much healing they can do in a day - so sometimes it's a good idea to prevail on a doctor to finish the job, even though they have to be opposed by the Hardiness of their patient!

(System)

For characters with the appropriate lore, it usually requires a Hard (30) roll to inflame a trivial condition or soothe a minor one. It requires a Legendary (40) roll to inflame a minor condition or soothe a major one. Failure means that you have to wait for the Interval of the sickness before you can try again.

Inflaming a condition generally increases its Recovery difficulty by one step — from Trivial (5 or 10) to Simple (15), Simple to Everyday (18), Everyday to Moderate (20), Moderate to Hard (30), and Hard (30) to Legendary (40). Soothing a condition does the reverse. If the condition has an odd Recovery difficulty, round it down before increasing or decreasing it. Inflaming a condition never increases the Recovery difficulty to Impossible (60), nor can soothing a condition lower the difficulty of an Impossible Recovery. It does not affect the condition's Duration or Interval.

Internal-External Technique

(Concepts)

The internal-external technique makes a Chi condition manifest in a broader, more physical context. This is usually a Daoist technique. Sages use internal-external techniques to shape emotions and virtues into spells. For example, Daoist sorcery can turn a betrayed wife's grief into a curse on her unfaithful husband.

(System)

Characters with appropriate lore can perform the internal-external technique on certain Chi conditions. This creates another, external version of that condition. Passions have an internal-external relationship with curses. Inspirations towards virtue have an internal-external relationship with elemental influences. So Daoists can use the emotions and virtues of the human heart to make their spells.

When two conditions have an internal-external relationship, the external condition depends upon the internal one. If the requirements for the internal condition are violated, the external condition shuts down for a scene. If the internal condition is pacified for an entire story, the external condition fades away into nothingness. An internal condition can only give rise to one external condition, although a new external condition can arise if the existing condition fades.

For example, a Daoist can use a friend's strong inclination towards righteousness to fuel a special metal spell — metal is the element of righteousness. If the friend turns aside from the path of righteousness, that spell fades away.

When you perform an internal-external technique, you make the same choices as for an elemental progression. You can define the penalty for a new Chi weakness condition and the benefit for a new hyperactive Chi condition. You also define the general nature of the new condition's requirement. The new sickness is a weakness of the original condition was a weakness and a hyperactive



condition if the original condition was hyperactive. It has the same severity, Duration, Interval, and Recovery as the base condition.

The difficulty of the internal-external technique is usually equal to the Recovery of the condition. If someone has a world-shaking anger that's Impossible (60) for them to recover from, it takes an incredibly powerful Daoist master to convert that into an Impossible (60) Recovery curse. If recovering from the anger is Simple (15), then it's easy to spawn a curse — but the curse probably goes away quickly when the angry person recovers.

Paired Condition Technique

(Story)

The massage took an hour, reaching from the back of An-Feng's scalp to the base of her feet. Lai sat back, exhausted; and it was half an hour before An-Feng moved again.

"Ah," An-Feng murmured. She sat up and stretched. "They say that it's good to know a doctor, but it's better to know a doctor well."

Lai blushed. "It was just bodywork," she said.

An-Feng grinned at her.

"Next time I'll use the needles," Lai muttered. "And I'll heat them!"

"It's sad," An-Feng said. "You can invigorate me, but you can't make me a better fighter. Unless you know techniques for cultivating the Chi?"

Lai considered. "There's no doubt I could strengthen your breath," she said, "but it probably wouldn't be very good for your spleen."

An-Feng laughed. "That's not what I meant."

Lai went crimson. "N-no," she stammered. "I don't know those."

(Concepts)

The moon is a source of great yin energy, and the sun is a source of great yang energy — but these things are in balance, because both share a larger world. Creating paired conditions is like giving birth to the sun and the moon. Instead of the Chi flowing in undifferentiated balance, harmony comes from paired yin and yang conditions that give at one and the same time a weakness and a strength.

Doctors generally create paired conditions as part of medical experimentation. Carefully paired conditions let them emphasize the strengths of the new Chi balance and de-emphasize its weaknesses. The Demon Army of monstrous human-animal hybrids created by Earth Lord are an example — their animalistic traits help them in combat but hurt them in life. Since Earth Lord doesn't care whether they have a happy life, this is a win-win situation for him.

Daoists create paired conditions to shape someone's life to their specifications. Although

somewhat less gross and physical, this boils down to the same sort of experimentation — if Earth Lord had a register of Daoist secrets, he'd no doubt perform equally bizarre experiments on people's luck. He might have made a warrior cursed to shun the touch of the ground, but incredibly powerful while perched on a mute slave's back — it's not good for the warrior or the slave, but it'd be a good addition to Earth Lord's army!

Courtiers use paired conditions to shape others' goals and drives. Courtiers tend to work with natural emotions, so this is more like mentoring an ally or poisoning an enemy's mind than performing social experiments — but a courtier with a sufficiently twisted mind could probably reach the same level of evil sophistication and manipulation as a Daoist or doctor.

(System)

Characters with the appropriate lore can create two paired conditions from nothing — one minor Chi weakness and one minor hyperactive condition. These two conditions are forever linked, and to cure, soothe, or inflame one is to do the same to the other.

When you perform this paired condition technique, you provide the game mechanics for one condition. The GM defines the penalty or benefit for the other. In addition, you give a general description of one condition's requirement, which the GM formalizes. Normally, the GM defines the requirement for the other condition entirely on her own — but if you roll a critical success when creating the conditions, you can give a general description of both conditions.

The following chart determines how difficult it is to induce a condition, based on the recovery, duration, and interval that the doctor wants. Characters recover from both paired conditions simultaneously — they're really one condition, inextricably linked, unless the target spends Destiny to preserve one and lose the other.

With some obvious exceptions, such as hacking off someone's leg to maim them, the best way to create permanent conditions is to maintain the treatment until the victim critically fails a Recovery roll. Since critical failure is a narrative device, it's not possible to force a Chi condition on a player's character in this fashion — but most characters twisted by a legendary doctor, courtier, or Daoist eventually accept and even embrace their fate.

(Example)

Sometime after the story, Lai wants to inflame An-Feng's Crimson Chi to prepare her for a tough fight. She takes her inspiration from the **Sick** condition (pg. 275) and creates paired conditions, one a

Difficulty	Recovery	Duration	Interval
Moderate (20)	Moderate (20)	I	One hour (or less, if desired.)
Hard (30)	Hard (30)	I-3	One session (or less, if desired.)
Legendary (40)	Hard (30)	I-5	One story (or less, if desired.)

神兵玄奇

weakness of the Silver Chi and one a hyperactivity of the Crimson. This technique fills An-Feng's body with hyperactive fire — An-Feng becomes lightning-quick and full of boundless energy, but she's also burning up and somewhat blind to the world.

Lai picks one condition to specify the mechanics for. She specifies the hyperactivity — An-Feng gets a bonus to Speed and Crimson Chi. The general requirement for the hyperactivity is that An-Feng act appropriately sick — feverish, a bit delirious, and full of manic energy. The GM decides that the appropriate weakness is impairing perception. An-Feng can't keep track of time or recognize people from more than a few feet away, and trying to do so exhausts her breath in Silver Chi. Her hand-to-hand techniques are better, but her ranged techniques suffer somewhat.

Yin-Yang Technique

(Story)

"You're both drunk," Lai said flatly.

"Drunk, but ready to fight!" Bu announced.

"Yes," An-Feng admitted.

"Did either of you think that maybe, when we're in a small cave surrounded by enemy soldiers who are going to attack at dawn, that it wasn't the best time to get drunk?"

It took them a moment to think about it.

"No," they both agreed.

Lai set down her pack. She began to sort through her herbs. Finally, she chopped some up with a small knife, shoved them together, and passed one bunch to Bu and the other to An-Feng. "Eat."

"It won't sober me up, will it?" Bu asked.

"No," she said. "But with your liver drenched in wine, I can safely heat up your spleen with foul-tasting herbs."

An-Feng looked sourly at the herbs in her hand. "Couldn't you have found some that taste good?"

"Could have," Lai said. "Didn't. Eat up."

(Concepts)

A yin-yang technique creates a hot Chi condition to balance a cold condition or vice versa.

Doctors use yin-yang techniques to help find balance in severe sickness. If a patient suffers from a cold waterlogged yin sickness, bogging them down, the doctor uses that sickness to light a powerful yang fire. If a patient is burning up with hot yang fire, the doctor nurtures a cool yin power in them to cool them down.

Daoists use yin-yang techniques to make curses from positive influences and vice versa. With a yin-yang technique, a Daoist can bless someone unlucky in finance with fertility

and romantic success, or create physical frailty from an unhealthy obsession.

Courtiers use yin-yang techniques to shape passion into inspiration and vice versa. Their words can drive the emotional to seek virtue or send the virtuous into mad excesses of passion.

(System)

Many Chi conditions have a yin-yang relationship with some other kind of Chi condition. Bad luck has a yin-yang relationship with good luck — if someone's lucky, someone else is unlucky, and vice versa. Emotion and virtue have a yin-yang relationship — emotions express the yin aspect of a person's mind, and inclinations towards virtue express the yang aspects. Cold and watery sinus congestion is the yin to a raging fever's yang — either condition can easily lapse into the other.

Characters with appropriate lore can perform a yin-yang technique on certain Chi conditions. This creates the mirror version of that condition — a hot mirror to a cold sickness, or a cold mirror to a hot sickness. This uses the same general rules as an internal-external mapping. However, the mirror is a hyperactive condition if the base condition was a weakness, and a weakness if the base condition is hyperactive.

Stealthy or Quick Work

(Concepts and System)

Performing any of these arts is usually both obvious and time-consuming. A doctor must perform obvious medical treatment; a Daoist must perform observable Daoist rituals; a courtier must spend time talking to the victims on the subject at hand.





The default time frame to use Medicine, Secret Arts, or Daoist Magic is one scene. Rushing the job — using the secret skill in five turns — imposes a -5 modifier. Performing medicine, a secret art, or a Daoist spell in a single full action gives a -10 modifier.

Witnesses can notice people using these secret skills and recognize their actions as medicine, sorcery, or secret arts with a Trivial (10) or a Simple (15) Awareness task. People whose Chi conditions the work affects can recognize the effect and its source with a Hard (30) Awareness roll.

Some lore allows the performance of medical, social, and magical techniques in a shorter time frame — as specified by the lore — or more stealthily. If a character can perform stealthy medicine, secret arts, or magic, this means that they can oppose the Awareness rolls mentioned above with their Stealth.

Medicine

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 0

Medicine in Shen Zhou has two uses. You can restore someone's natural balance. You can also distort it. Restoring balance is the heart of healing others. Changing someone's balance is a set of secret techniques with terrifying potential.

The Medicine skill includes practical treatment, such as bandages and splints. It also includes knowledge of the Four Medicines: herbal remedies, moxibustion, surgery, and acupuncture. To use the Four Medicines, the doctor evaluates the energy and Chi flows in the patient's body, then administers a holistic treatment that adjusts those flows.

Herbal remedies relate to the element of Wood. The doctor chooses herbs based on the energetic balances of the plant. Taking the remedy introduces the selected influences into the patient's system.

Moxibustion relates to the element of Fire. The doctor burns special herbs next to the patient's skin, removing them just before the patient suffers injury. This fire draws out and feeds the patient's inner yang fire, so it's most appropriate for patients whose fire is deficient.

Surgery relates to the element of Earth. The doctor cuts the patient open and makes changes, relying on knowledge of the patient's Chi balance to keep the patient alive and stable through the process.

Acupuncture relates to the element of Metal. The doctor introduces needles into the hollows of the body, adjusting the Chi flows that pass through those points.

Bodywork relates to the element of Water. The doctor uses therapeutic massage to unlock and strengthen the Chi. This technique has yet to flourish, and is not included among the traditional Four Medicines, but doctors can still use it with the Medicine skill.

Secrets of Diagnosis

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 3

Study Difficulty: Medicine (40)

You must be able to purchase Secret Arts to have this lore.

Know the seven injuries

And the eight advantages

And bring the two principles into harmony.

Without this knowledge,

Your life is doomed to early decay.

Seek wisdom beyond the natural limits,

And your body will remain light and strong.

Like the ancient sages,

You will not rush into the affairs of the world.

In pleasures and joys, you will be dignified and tranquil.

And all powers will be yours to command.

— The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Medicine

The basic medical techniques are known throughout Shen Zhou. Those obtaining skill from great doctors or old treatises may learn secret arts of diagnosis to assist in their practice. These are the "four approaches," allowing the doctor to gain much more information from a basic study of the patient than an ordinary person. Characters with this lore can use these tools to assist them with Medicine rolls.

Doctors who use any of these tools can get a sense for any passions, inspirations, curses, or influences connected to the physical conditions they might treat. For example, if someone's liver-based sickness is tied to their benevolence, both of them expressing a mild imbalance in the wood element of their body and mind, the doctor can see this before attempting treatment.

Inspection

Diagnosis in Shen Zhou begins by inspecting the patient.

Limitations: Jargon, takes 15-30 minutes

Modifier: +5



Description

The patient's overt signs of vitality suggest the severity of their condition. The color of their skin (reddish, pale, yellowish, or bluish) suggests its type. Reddish skin shows a dominance of the fiery yang principle; pale skin the cold yin principle; yellowish skin a general deficiency in the Chi; and bluish skin suggests yin excess combined with poor energy flow. A dark complexion suggests damaged Chi. The color of bodily secretions and the appearance of the sense organs also have diagnostic meaning.

Doctors often analyze the tongue and any coating upon it. Tongues vary between pale, red, deep red, and purple in color. A sick person's tongue is often swollen, thin, cracked, thorny, deviated, rigid, or flaccid. The coating is thick, thin, moist, sticky, or peeling, and its color is generally white, yellow, gray, or black.

Inspection is a tool for diagnosing and treating Chi conditions. The doctor must have time to study the patient and must use appropriate jargon in the diagnosis. If the GM wants to describe the results of the inspection and what it means, that's okay. Usually, though, unobvious diagnostic information is entirely provided by the player, in comments such as, "Ah! A swollen tongue with a yellowish coating. Very bad!"

Listening and Smelling

Diagnosis isn't just visual — doctors can diagnose patients with their ears and their nose!

Limitations: Jargon, close proximity, patient must speak

Modifier: +0 (but removes any blindness or darkness penalty)

Description

Doctors assign meaning to quality of the patient's voice, the sound of their breath or cough, and the patient's scent. Voices are vigorous or feeble, hoarse or strong, coherent or incoherent. Breath and coughs are feeble, forceful, or coarse. Smells are strong, mild, or foul.

Listening and smelling is a tool for diagnosing and treating Chi conditions. The doctor must listen to the patient speak and breathe and smell the patient, using appropriate jargon in the diagnosis. The GM can describe the results, the results and their meaning, or just let the player declare the quality of the patient's voice and scent.

Inquiry

Good doctors always inquire as to the patient's experience of their condition.

Limitations:
Patient must

cooperate, takes 30-60 minutes.

Modifier: +10

Description

A standard investigation asks the patient about the quality of any chills or fevers; the frequency and quality of their sweating; their appetite; their thirst; any unusual tastes in their mouth; the frequency, location, and quality of their pain; and the quality of their sleep.

Inquiry is a tool for diagnosing and treating Chi conditions. The patient must be willing to talk to the doctor, honestly and at length.

Palpation

Doctors often feel the pulse and palpate the various acupuncture points.

Limitations: Jargon, must touch patient, takes 15-30 minutes.

Modifier: +10

Description

Doctors know six points for feeling the pulse, three on each wrist. Two of them correspond to the kidney. The other four reflect the health of the heart, liver, lung, and spleen.

A superficial pulse is easily felt—it requires only a gentle touch. It indicates an early stage disease or condition, still fighting its way into the body.

A deep pulse requires heavy pressure to feel. It indicates an internal syndrome.

A slow pulse indicates cold syndromes: an excess of cold yin, or a shortage of fiery yang. In the presence of this cold, the Chi stagnates and the blood slows.

A fast pulse indicates heat syndromes: an excess of hot yang, or a shortage of the cooling yin. Heat quickens the pulse and makes it forceful.

If someone's Chi is insufficient to the vigor of their life, the blood flow may weaken. This produces a "deficiency pulse."

If someone's vigorous metabolism generates more Chi than they need, they may accumulate waste Chi. This produces an "excess pulse."

Doctors also associate many other qualities with the pulse. A pulse can be surging, thready, rolling, hesitant, string-taut, tense, soft, weak, abrupt, knotted, or intermittent.

Palpation is a tool for diagnosing and treating Chi conditions. It requires touching the patient's six wrist points, or corresponding points in one-armed or armless patients. The player must use appropriate jargon. The GM can provide additional information for some cases by specifying superficial, deep, slow, fast, deficiency, or excess pulses for the various organs; otherwise, pulse

diagnosis is just an excuse to say things like, “Hm, a deep surging pulse. Your liver Chi must be too hot!”

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Victory:** you find a Quality manual of one of these diagnostic tools. This increases the bonus for using that tool by +5.

Physical Conditions

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 0

Physical Conditions

Everyone’s body has special protective Chi that helps fight off disease, sickness, and the effects of wounds. When something slips past the protective Chi and alters the natural processes of the body, it’s a physical condition — something classically medical, like a broken nose, burn, or malaria.

Detection and Recovery

Spotting an existing physical condition and estimating its severity is an Everyday (18) Awareness task, which the target can oppose with Stealth or Hardiness.

To recover from physical conditions, you roll Hardiness. To help someone else recover from physical conditions, roll Medicine.

Relationships

Each element has an associated organ system. This contains one yin (*zang*) organ and one yang (*fu*) organ. The five yin organs are the liver, heart, lungs, spleen, and kidneys; the five yang organs are the gallbladder, stomach, large intestine, small intestine, and bladder. These organ systems work together, yin and yang, for the health of body and spirit.

Physical conditions are the result of debilities or hyperactive Chi in these organ systems. For example, getting burned by a fire might be a gross physical effect, but pain, weakness, and suppuration follow only if that fire overcomes the defenses of the fire system and throws its organs (the heart and small intestine) out of balance. A cold or flu is usually a problem with the earth or water organ systems — it comes from hyperactive kidneys or a weak spleen.

Physical and mental conditions are often related. Sometimes, they’re even the same condition. Physical sickness can affect the mind, and passion can make people sick! If you’re an unethical doctor or a courtier with medical training, you might use the internal-external technique to give your enemies physical manifestations for their troubled hearts. Even if you’re ethical, it’s important

to remember that someone’s sickness might relate to their emotional state.

When two physical conditions come in pairs, one must control the other. The organ systems affected must be two steps apart in the elemental cycle. Earth controls water, so the earth-system spleen controls the water-system kidneys. If spleen Chi is too strong, it makes the kidney Chi weak; if kidney Chi grows too strong, it overpowers the spleen! That’s why some doctors can make paired earth/water conditions, matching a hyperactive spleen to a weak kidney or vice versa.

The short parenthesized explanations of the elemental systems are just there to give a better idea of what that system’s organs are all about. It’s not additional game terminology.

Wood System

The liver and gallbladder form the “wood system,” governing Might and Jade Chi. The liver is also important for Chi flow, vision, and emotion!

Elemental Progression: moves to the Fire System (Mind and Heart)

Yin-Yang: stirs the Earth System (Chi and Blood)

Balances: can pair with the Earth System (Chi and Blood)

Balances: can pair with the Metal System (Breath)

Classic Wood Condition Symptoms: Dizziness, vertigo, unbreakable stance, eye irritation, night blindness, keen vision, tendon spasms, hysterical strength, amenorrhea or dysmenorrhea, sexual issues, buzzing or ringing in the ears, abdominal pain, distension, breath loss or improved breath.

Description

The liver serves as a blood reservoir. The body needs more blood for vigorous activities than for sleeping. The liver reservoir stores extra blood during rest, then releases it during exertion. Liver function is crucial to Chi flow, regulates emotional activity, and helps produce bile for digestion. A strong liver ensures a regular, balanced blood supply, strengthening the tendons and nails.

The liver meridian opens to the eye. Thus, vision relates to the liver. The eye reflects disorders of the liver with dryness, irritation, blurriness, and pain.

Chi meridians connect the liver, gallbladder, and the eyes. The gallbladder stores bile and pours it into the intestines to aid in digestion.

Fire System

The heart and small intestine form the “fire system,” governing Speed and

神
兵
玄
奇



Crimson Chi. It's also important for thought, memory, speech, and blood flow!

Elemental Progression: moves to the . . . Earth System
(Chi and Blood)

Yin-Yang: stirs the . . . Metal System
(Breath)

Balances: can pair with the . . . Metal System
(Breath)

Balances: can pair with the . . . Water System
(Fundamental Yin)

Classic Fire Condition Symptoms: Palpitations, insomnia, sleepiness, vivid dreams, poor memory, flashbacks, eidetic memory, lassitude, mania, aggression, passivity, stammering, eloquence, alertness, obsession, and chest pain.

Description

The Chi in the heart pumps blood through the body. A strong heart nourishes the body. It makes the face rosy. It makes the pulse strong. Thus, a sick heart leads to a pale complexion and a weak pulse.

The mind lives in the heart organ. It regulates spirit, thought, awareness, and memory. Sleep and awakening come from the heart. Blood connects the mind and the body.

The heart opens to the tongue. Thus, taste and speech relate to the heart. The tongue reflects disorders of the heart with discoloration, stiffness, odd tastes, numbness, or coatings.

Chi meridians connect the heart, tongue, and small intestine. The small intestine receives food from the stomach, performs additional digestion, separates clear and turbid substances, and passes on the wastes.

Earth System

The spleen and stomach form the "earth system," governing Presence and Gold Chi. The spleen is the source of blood and Chi, nurturing the body and the spirit!

Elemental Progression: moves to the . . . Metal System
(Breath)

Yin-Yang: stirs the . . . Water System
(Fundamental Yin)

Balances: can pair with the . . . Water System
(Fundamental Yin)

Balances: can pair with the . . . Wood System
(Chi Flow and Vision)

Classic Earth Condition Symptoms: Hunger, disinterest in food, Chi reduction or improvement, withdrawal, outgoingness, dryness, dampness, digestive issues.

Description

The spleen manufactures blood and Chi from food and water. It also regulates dryness and moisture, keeping organs and muscles and tissue damp but not waterlogged. A healthy spleen leads to long-term physical health, nourishing and maintaining the muscles and limbs. Learning kung fu and increasing Chi ratings requires a strong spleen.

The spleen meridian opens to the mouth and lips. The spleen affects taste and appetite. The luster of the lips reveals the health of the spleen and the character's current potential for learning kung fu.

Chi meridians connect the spleen, mouth, and stomach. The stomach receives and decomposes food, providing the spleen with the essential substances it needs to generate Chi.

Metal System

The lungs and large intestine form the "metal system," governing Genius and White Chi. This system is the gateway between the body and the world!

Elemental Progression: moves to the . . . Water System
(Fundamental Yin)

Yin-Yang: stirs the . . . Wood System
(Chi Flow and Vision)

Balances: can pair with the . . . Wood System
(Chi Flow and Vision)

Balances: can pair with the . . . Fire System
(Mind and Heart)

Classic Metal Condition Symptoms: Cough, shortness of breath, weakness, chills, fever, headache, hyperventilation, sensitivity, hypersensitivity, withdrawal, involvement in the world, strong relationships, weak relationships, poison resistance.

Description

Heaven assigns each person a fixed number of breaths,

circulating Chi between their body and the world. People use this breath to live in the world and affect it. Proper lung function draws strength from the world and cleans stale Chi out of the system, enabling the warrior to accomplish great things. The lungs also coordinate the body's defense against hostile influences, nourishing the skin, the hair, and the protective Chi.

The lung meridian opens to the nose. Lung disorders often cause sinus troubles with the nose, and the lungs control the sense of smell.

Chi meridians connect the lungs, nose, and large intestine. The large intestine absorbs fluid from body wastes.

Water System

The kidneys and the bladder form the “water system,” governing Wu Wei and Silver Chi. The kidneys are the most important yin organ — they govern the essential life force, reproduction, hearing, and the health of a person's bones!

Elemental Progression: moves to the . . . Wood System
(Chi Flow and Vision)

Yin-Yang: stirs the . . . Fire System
(Mind and Heart)

Balances: can pair with the . . . Fire System
(Mind and Heart)

Balances: can pair with the . . . Earth System
(Chi and Blood)

Classic Water Condition Symptoms: Systemic weakness or hyperactivity, sexual and fertility issues, hearing issues, filial impiety, filial piety.

Description

The kidneys store the life force inherited from the parents. They mingle this Chi with the Chi generated by the spleen and the Chi drawn in through the lungs. This process gives rise to a person's essential Chi. The kidneys manage reproduction—they generate sexual interest, nurture themselves on the partner's yin or yang energy during sex, and enable men to sire children and women to bear them. The kidneys are also responsible for generating marrow and strong bones—they're an important organ!

Kidney meridians connect to the ear and the bladder. The quality of a person's hearing depends on the flow of kidney Chi to the ears. The bladder's ability to store urine for long periods of time without poisoning the tissues also depends on kidney Chi.

Extraordinary Fu Organs: The Brain and The Uterus

In the medicine of Shen Zhou, the brain is almost irrelevant. Doctors are very much aware that it serves as the seat of consciousness and intellect—but, although that's a true theory, it's not a very useful one. Brain surgery requires more advanced tools than they have.

Manipulating the consciousness and intellect through the heart, liver, and kidneys works, so they do that instead.

The uterus governs menstruation and nourishes fetal children. It connects primarily to the water system.

Secrets of Treatment

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

You must be able to purchase Secret Arts to have this lore.

A Simplified Secret Art

In some ways, Medicine isn't quite as flexible as the courtiers' and Daoist's arts. This is deliberate. Disfiguring people, making them sick, or curing their sicknesses—compared to what courtiers and Daoists do, it's very visceral, and closer to the absolute but inflexible effects of kung fu. There are probably ways for doctors to get quicker effects and other secret art advantages—but these things are rare medical secrets known only to high-rank doctors.

This secret art teaches heightened skill with the Four Medicines (and bodywork). The essential Chi of the kidneys resists an ordinary scholar's meddling, but if you have these special arts, the human body becomes as malleable as clay!

This secret art relies on the Medicine skill. When making the necessary skill rolls, roll Medicine. All of these techniques require direct interaction with the target—you must either give them a herbal remedy or perform acupuncture, bodywork, moxibustion, or surgery on them. The target can choose to oppose these techniques with their Hardiness. **These techniques are secret arts. Secret arts cannot be combined with attacks in a complex full action.**

The rules for physical conditions are found on pg. 287.

You can also make physical conditions from nothing by drugging people with non-lethal poisons—you don't need secret medicine to make a captive dizzy if you've got black lotus to burn!

Yin-Yang Technique

(Story)

“Bloody poisoner,” An-Feng muttered. “That's not the way to fight in the Wulin!”

She kicked the man's corpse with her foot. Then she reeled. Lai leapt to catch

神兵玄奇

her, but An-Feng shoved her away and dropped into a crouch.

"I'm all right," she said. "I'll ride it out."

"I could fix it---"

"I'll ride it out," An-Feng underlined.

"At least let me use it to stimulate your Chi," Lai said. "I could . . . I could try to balance a wood poison with some spleen work . . ."

"Fine," An-Feng said. "Maybe it'll brace me for the victory celebration."

(Example)

An-Feng has suffered the touch of a rare poison. The Recovery (Lethality) for it is 30. She has five dice of Hardiness and a bit of stubbornness when it comes to a doctor's assistance in a fight, so she wants to take care of it herself. However, she lets Lai roll Medicine against the Lethality to create a yin-yang mirror of that condition.

Lai knows, and the GM confirms, that this poison affects the wood system — for one thing, it produces a sickness that makes An-Feng's wood-aspected Jade Chi weak. For another, it affects the liver. For a third, Lai's looked at the dead man's weapon, and it smells like a plant poison. That's why she's confident that this is a wood condition.

Lai rolls against the difficulty 30, using some medical tools and a point of joss to help her out. She succeeds, so she looks at the description of wood system conditions on pg. 287. They yin-yang transform into earth system conditions. She can use this minor wood system weakness to produce a minor earth system hyperactivity. She'd normally use this to improve one of An-Feng's Attribute ratings, since the spleen is the source of raw power. But An-Feng is a little shy around crowds, and there's a huge celebration coming up. Earth conditions can also make someone more outgoing — so that's what Lai wants to do.

She defines the basic requirement for the condition: "be outgoing." The GM expresses this more precisely as "participate in whatever conversation comes your way." Lai decides to give An-Feng a +5 to social rolls as long as she cooperates.

The two conditions combine, in character, like so: An-Feng is weak and dizzy from the poison, but can practically just listen to herself talk, and smile, and charm people all through the celebration — it's like a euphoric daze, up until the poison hits her stomach and she has to go throw up for a while.

(Rules)

You can buy the **Yin-Yang** technique for Physical Conditions for 3 Destiny. This lets you use a weakness to create a matching hyperactivity or vice versa. Each body system

lists the system it yin-yang balances with on pg. 287.

Elemental Progression Technique

(Story)

"I can't afford to stammer," Ssu said. "Not when I'm ordering troops."

Teng Lai hesitated. She chewed on the back of a finger. "I'd treat it," she said, "but your stammer is tied to your ferocity. The yang rushes to your head in battle and makes you fierce — that's why you stammer. But if the yang didn't rise, you'd be too weak! So all I can do is try to make it a bit easier for you."

She poked at Ssu carefully, touching his acupuncture points, feeling his pulse, looking at his tongue. "I'll progress it from your fire Chi to your earth Chi," she said. "When you get fierce, you'll lose your appetite, but at least you won't stammer."

(Example)

Stammering is a fire condition (pg. 288). Teng Lai suspects that the stammer is tied to Ssu's inspiration towards the Ba (Force) Virtue — so she's reluctant to cure it outright. Instead, she uses an elemental progression technique to push it forward one element, fire to earth. This roots his imbalance in the spleen and stomach — impending battle gives him butterflies in his stomach, instead of a stammer. She rolls her Medicine against the Recovery (30) for the condition, succeeds, and defines a new spleen-based condition accordingly.

(Rules)

You can buy the **Elemental Progression** technique for Physical Conditions for 1 Destiny. This lets you transform wood conditions into fire conditions, fire conditions into earth conditions, earth conditions into metal conditions, metal conditions into water conditions, and water conditions into wood conditions.

Inflaming and Soothing Conditions

(Story)

"All I have is a single drop of wine," Bu mourned. "I can't get drunk off this!"

Lai grinned, suddenly. "Drink it," she said. "Let me show you a trick."

Bu downed the last of the wine, and Lai went to work, touching his pressure points in sequence. Bu's head spun. "I'm drunk!" he cheered. "Lai! Lai! May Heaven crown her the new Immortal Emperor!"

(Example)

Bu only has enough wine to inflict a trivial Drunk condition on him — even with that last drop, he's practically sober! But with a bit of bodywork and a Hard (30) Medicine roll, Lai inflames this to a minor Drunk.

(Rules)

You can buy the **Inflaming and Soothing Conditions** technique for Physical Conditions for 1 Destiny. This allows you to increase trivial conditions to minor conditions, minor conditions to major conditions, or vice versa. It's normally better to just cure a condition instead of reducing its severity, but circumstances or a high condition Duration or Recovery can change that.

Internal-External Technique**(Story)**

"You're too hateful," Teng Lai said flatly. "It'll damage your liver."

Fire Scar writhed in his bonds.

Lai walked over. She began to set the needles in him, one by one.

"After what you did to An-Feng," she explained, "I think I'll help."

(Example)

Fire Scar has an anger condition. It's encouraged him to take unpleasant actions, prompting Lai to slip into cruelty and exact a corrupt revenge! She rolls against the Recovery (20) for his anger condition, transforming it with the internal-external technique into a physical condition affecting his liver. She defines the condition like so "The smell of blood will make his tendons spasm and his head reel." The GM decides that the actual effect resembles the Drunk condition.

(Rules)

You can buy the **Internal-External** technique for Physical Conditions for 2 Destiny. This lets you create physical conditions from emotional conditions and inspirations. Each passion and inspiration lists the kind of physical condition it can create, on pg. 307 and 309. The new condition affects the passionate or inspired person — doctors can't transfer conditions from one person to another.

Paired Condition Technique**(Story)**

"He'll kill me," said Teng Yong, "if we don't have a son. I know it. Or he'll take another wife — that's even worse!"

"I could push him off a cliff," Lai said. "I've been studying kung fu, and there's a special kata for that."

"Or you could make me more fertile!"

Lai covered her face in her hand. "You're my youngest sister," she protests.

"That's why it's shameful for you to push my husband off a cliff," Yong explained. "I have to keep you from

such disreputable ideas!"

Lai calculated. "I could stimulate your reproductive Chi," she said. "But there might be some effects on your spleen."

(Example)

Lai elects to create a paired earth/water condition for her sister. The hyperactive water condition, affecting kidney Chi, will help ensure fertility. Lai rolls a 31, and successfully crafts an enhanced fertility condition — but it's not a critical success, so the GM defines the corresponding earth system weakness. Since the GM rather likes Teng Yong, all that happens to her is that she becomes very hungry — her stimulated essential Chi needs lots of food to rev her system up to maximum fertility.

(Rules)

You can buy the **Paired Condition** technique for Physical Conditions for 5 Destiny. This lets you create two matching physical conditions from nothing — one weakness and one hyperactivity. Each system of the body lists the systems it can match — for example, you can pair fire with metal or water. If you make someone's heart (a fire organ) weak, you can use the energy to strengthen their lungs or kidneys, corresponding to metal and water respectively.

Stealthy Work**(Rules)**

You can buy the ability to use Stealth to conceal these techniques for 3 Destiny.

Predictionism***(A System Topic)*****Destiny Cost: 0**

In the world of *Weapons of the Gods*, tactical genius, matchmaking, magical divination, and political prediction all boil down to the same science — "predictionism," which is nothing more or less than the art of understanding the world.

The core technique of prediction is insight. Many of its effects seem supernatural from a modern perspective, but very few are "magical" in the context of the setting. Just as it's hard work and discipline rather than magic when a kung fu master sets his fists on fire, a predictionist's art is really just observing the world and thinking carefully about what one sees. It's the same thing that makes Judge Dee, Fu Manchu, Sherlock Holmes, and Master Li Kao so formidable — the conscientious cultivation of the mind.





It's also important for a good predictionist to understand the world. In modern America, a predictionist would be a polymath with deep knowledge of most of the hard sciences and more than a few soft ones; in Shen Zhou, a predictionist is often well-versed in yin-yang and five-element theory.

Predictions

(Story)

The sage looked up from the yarrow stalks.

"If you go to Wangmang's house," he said, "great sorrow will follow."

Thousand-Killer Li slammed his hand down on the table. "I won't accept this prediction! I asked you to advise me on capturing the criminal Wei Tsu!"

The sage shrugged. "The I Ching has shown me the current — the river of events that carries us all along. To defy the prediction is to swim against the current. Assuredly, for the great Thousand-Killer Li, such things are possible — but are they wise? A man in opposition to the Dao won't live out his natural years!"

(Rules)

Predictions function like Chi conditions. When a Daoist or courtier makes a good prediction, it describes the natural course of events. When they give good advice, it means that the recommended behavior is suitably harmonious. Their insight reveals to them the way the world of mortal interactions or political affairs wants to evolve. People can struggle against this flow and even defeat it, but the prediction still defines the proper direction for the world.

Like most natural courses of events, predictions don't necessarily have anything to do with what actually happens later in the game. The GM isn't obliged to make them come true. But each prediction has a weakness or hyperactivity associated with it. If it's a weakness, then people who deviate from the flow of events it describes suffer an appropriate penalty. If it's a hyperactivity, people who go along with the prediction gain some hyperactivity benefit.

Predictions have a certain natural lifespan. They last until they've inflicted their penalty or bonus in three separate scenes, or for one full story, whichever is longer. They may become irrelevant far sooner.

(Example)

In this case, when Thousand-Killer Li ignored the sage's advice and went to Wangmang's house, he lost his breath in Crimson Chi and was slain.

Making Predictions

(Story)

Zhu Chen hesitated. "I don't think the Filth Cult will move yet," he said. "The leader's in love; it'll slow her down."

(Rules)

When a character with this art wants to make a prediction or give advice, they first decide on their divination tool. If they're just using raw insight, they study the situation and think about it for a while. If they're using something like the I Ching, they perform the divination with it.

Having done the divination or studied the facts, the character decides on the general advice they want to give or the general prediction they want to make. They make a skill roll to decide whether it's a good prediction, according to the skill choices above and the difficulty chart below.

Predictionism normally takes a scene of effort and study. Reducing this to five turns imposes a -5 modifier; reducing it to a single turn imposes a -10. In addition, each successful prediction costs a point of Xia or Corrupt Joss — it's not so much that it uses up your luck as that it *is* your luck.

Difficulty	Prediction
Trivial (10)	There's already a similar prediction out there, and it has a major weakness or hyperactivity associated with it.
Simple (15)	There's already a similar (minor or trivial) prediction out there.
Everyday (18)	It's a very obvious and straightforward reading of the data you have.
Moderate (20)	It's a straightforward reading of the data you have, but you did have to extrapolate and fudge a little.
Hard (30)	There are some indications that your prediction might be accurate or your advice good, but it's not really the most sensible reading of the evidence.
Legendary (40)	You can make a case that your prediction or advice fits the situation and the evidence you have, but it's a fair stretch.
Impossible (60)	There's already evidence in the game — known to one of the players or absolutely certain in the GM's mind — that your prediction or advice is wrong. (So . . . when Hong Dong and Bufon Jou shared a bed, they were really just making arrangements for their duel? And they were naked to show that they had no weapons?)

This is a secret art. Secret arts cannot be combined with attacks in a complex full action. Divination methods (such as the I Ching) apply.

The world is full of a thousand predictions, and many of them may contradict yours. You only have to care about the ones made “on camera” — that is, the predictions made by your allies, your enemies, yourself, and possibly by famous predictionists whose auguries gave rise to the current story. Don’t worry about the predictions of people who aren’t important to the plot — their insights into the world aren’t relevant either. If someone important made a prediction that contradicts yours, however, the person responsible automatically contests your roll with their own relevant skill. This is the “too many cooks” rule applied to prophecy.

Opposed or not, if you fail the roll, you can opt for one of two choices — realizing that the whole prediction or advice is a bad idea, or letting it stand. Either way, you can’t try again on that particular issue until the GM decides that enough time has passed that the situation has changed. This provides a certain balance for sweeping versus targeted predictions. If you make a sweeping prediction about the general defensive readiness of an entire Clan, it’s very powerful, but failure means you can’t try again at all. If you make a prediction about the security of their fortress, it’s less powerful, but if you fail, you can turn around and investigate the security of their outlying holdings.

If you succeed, you’ve made a good prediction. The GM fills in the details of the prediction or advice, based on your general description, boiling it down to a specific requirement. You can choose whether you want the prediction to come with a minor weakness or minor Chi hyperactivity condition. If you have the Ultimate Prediction technique, and roll a critical success, you can also choose major weaknesses or major hyperactivity conditions. You also choose the penalty tied to a weakness condition or the benefit associated with a hyperactivity condition.

Everyone who cooperates with the prediction — whether or not they know of its existence — gains the benefits of a hyperactivity prediction. Everyone who fights it suffers the penalty of a weakness prediction, unless they can successfully oppose the prediction roll



with their Awareness. Even people who aren’t consciously aware of the prediction still have a sense for its effects on them — it feels good to go with the flow, and bad to oppose it.

(Example)

Zhu Chen rolls Politics and gets a 35. The roll succeeds, and he spends a point of Corrupt Joss to slow the Filth Cult down.

In the morning, the leader of the Filth Cult and her lieutenant wake up amid tangled sheets. The lieutenant makes an Awareness roll, rolling 37, and can ignore the prediction entirely. “Should we make our move today?” he murmurs, kissing her.

She rolls her Awareness, getting a 28. If she decides that the Filth Cult makes its next move today, she suffers the minor weakness associated with the prediction — an action penalty on her rolls to plan and implement that move. She grins at him and says, “As Confucius said, the key to governance is making those close to you happy. Why don’t I work on that for a while longer?”

Secret Arts of Genius

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

You must be able to purchase Secret Arts to have this lore.

This is the style of predictionism suitable for characters with a specific genius — tactical, bureaucratic, or social prodigies. Predictions made with this lore are specifically limited to hyperactive conditions. You can use them to advise others in a way that helps them, or to make plans useful for yourself, but this lore cannot penalize others with weaknesses.

Advice Skills

(Story)

“If you want to impress the girl, wear white,” said Zhu Chen.

“White?” protested Biao. “But that’s the color of mourning!”

Zhu Chen smiled. “She likes to think that life is sorrow,” he said. “So she writes sad poetry, wastes time sulking, and likes gentlemen in white.”

(Rules)

Anyone can give sound advice or develop sound plans based on their skills. This lore elevates your advice to the realm of inspiration and genius — in short, it gives you a leg up on people who might have better luck on their

神
兵
玄
奇

rolls or smarter out-of-character plans.

The appropriate skill to roll when giving advice varies. Some examples follow.

Success on the associated divination roll (see pg. 300) lets you spend a point of Joss and make a prediction.

Skill	Gives Good Advice On
Crafting	Managing a state, Clan, or other social structure.
Grace	Succeeding socially.
Initiative	Auspicious times to do something.
Medicine	Keeping up your health.
Tactics	Military matters.

(Example)

Zhu Chen already knows the girl in question, and — while she's never actually stated her preference for men in white — it's a reasonable idea. Using the rules below, this makes it a Moderate (20) Grace roll to see if he's given his friend Biao good advice. He makes it — so it is.

Naturally, anyone can roll Grace to give good social advice. However, since Zhu Chen has this lore, his advice acts as a prediction. If Biao follows his advice, he'll pick up a hyperactivity bonus — such as a +5 on Grace rolls when trying to impress the girl in question. However, because of the limitations on this lore, Zhu Chen can't use his prediction to impose a Wu Wei penalty on the girl — which is a pity, because Biao has more than one flaw that she might notice!

Advice Techniques

(Rules)

These are techniques that enhance your predictive skill.

Good Advice Technique (3 Destiny)

You are a harmonious source of plot possibilities. If you give advice and don't bother making a prediction roll, people can still profit by following it. If they follow your advice and do well, they did well. If they follow your advice and get in trouble, they earn one Destiny. This is effectively a minor hyperactive condition, so it's not cumulative with Destiny earned from other minor hyperactive conditions.

Legendary Genius (3 Destiny)

You have a **Quality Advice Skill**. Pick one advice skill — normally, Crafting, Grace, Initiative, Medicine, or Tactics. You get a +5 modifier when making predictions with that skill.

Secret Art of Prediction

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 20

You must be able to purchase Secret Arts to have this lore.

This is the style of predictionism suitable for characters who actively look into the future — Daoist sages, scholars of the I Ching, and courtiers who try to predict the political landscape of Shen Zhou.

Prediction Skills

(Story)

"Ah!" Wu Zhao exclaimed. "Do I fight the evils of Hell Clan, or retreat to a far mountain and dedicate myself to pleasure and the study of the Dao?"

Wu Zhao cast the I Ching. "K'an indicates peril. Ch'ien calls for decisive action. And both become Chen, demanding vigor in the future."

He hesitated.

"Clearly," he said hopefully, "the I Ching recommends that I dedicate myself to pleasure."

He stared down at the prediction and sighed.

"Or not."

He swept the broken yarrow stalks away.

(Example)

Wu Zhao reads the I Ching, and attempts to interpret the results in an extremely surprising fashion. Making "you should retreat from the world" a magical prediction is extremely unlikely with the evidence he has — the GM rules that it takes an Impossible (60) roll, although Zhao could probably find some evidence in the reading to scrape it down to Legendary (40). Zhao rolls a 38 — either way, not enough!

(Rules)

Anyone can speculate about the future — but if you have this lore, the future is transparently obvious to you. You can see the path it wants to take.

The appropriate skill to roll when giving advice varies. Some common examples follow.

Skill	Helps Predict
Awareness	How people will behave.
Learning	Anything, when using the I Ching or a similar tool.
Politics	What social groups (Clans, sects, cities, families, marriages) will do.
Tactics	Military matters.

Success on the associated divination roll (see pg. 300) lets you spend a point of joss and make a prediction.

Predictive Techniques

(Rules)

These are techniques that enhance your predictive skill.

Passion and Inspiration Technique (3 Destiny)

You can use your knowledge of an existing passion or inspiration as a tool. You extrapolate it in an internal-external fashion, seeing how it troubles an entire social group. When you make a reasonable reference to your knowledge of that passion or inspiration during a political prediction, you receive a +5 modifier.

Ultimate Prediction Technique (5 Destiny)

You can make powerful predictions. If you roll a critical success when making a prediction or giving advice, you can attach a major condition to the prediction rather than a minor one. You can only use the Ultimate Prediction Technique once per session, but you can use it after rolling the critical success.

Tools of Divination

(A System Topic)

**Destiny Cost: 5
Study Difficulty: Learning (40)**

You must be able to purchase Secret Arts to have this lore.

Fables of the Trigrams

(3500 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

The Northern Trigrams

Three brothers came to the north to live as equals. But K'an declared himself their lord, saying, "When three stand at odds, one must decide." The brothers could not overrule K'an's power, but remained defiant. Thus, Ch'ien urges the northern people to strive and Ken counsels them in the ways of endurance.

The Eastern Trigrams

Two brothers and a sister came to the east to live as equals. But sister Sun and brother Ken always yielded to their brother Chên. "Why make me your ruler?" Chên asked. "I'm no better than either of you."

"You're the elder," said Ken.

"I'd love to rule," answered Sun, "but to serve a humane King, and have all things in their proper order — that's the essence of goodness!"

The Southern Trigrams

Three sisters came to the south to live as equals. But Li despaired of her sisters Sun and K'un. "K'un," she said, "you're nothing but passion; Sun, you're nothing but sentiment! So I'll be the lady of the south, and inspire the south to virtue." Yet Sun still teaches people to love beauty, and K'un to throw themselves into enjoyment of their lives.

The Western Trigrams

K'un and Ch'ien had a daughter, Tui. Her father Ch'ien taught her to obey Heaven, but her mother K'un gave her a sword, and said, "Go to the west and hold our lands against the enemy."

And Tui laughed, and said, "I shall joy in your enemies' deaths."

Story of the I Ching

(System and Story)

The Book of Changes defines the marvelous divinations of the I Ching, bringing Heaven and Earth together in infinite wisdom. Not even the First Emperor would defile this glorious Classic — the works of husbandry and divination escaped his flames!

When using the I Ching, chance and destiny provide six choices — each a broken line, an unbroken line, or a line in one state that is transitioning into the other. Three lines combine to form a trigram; two trigrams combine to form a hexagram. The trigrams are the symbols of wind, sun, earth, thunder, marsh, mountain, moon, and heaven. The sixty-four hexagrams are the messages of Heaven.

Because individual lines can transition from one state to the other, trigrams and hexagrams also contain transition — every I Ching reading shows both the world as it is and the world after any impending changes.

Using the I Ching

(System)

The **I Ching** is a tool for divination. Characters with this lore can use the I Ching to get a +0 on divination rolls or +5 with a Quality copy of the Book of Changes. When using the I Ching, one always rolls Learning — no matter what the issue at hand.

To make an I Ching reading, roll 1d10 four times. Each die picks a trigram. If one of the players is an I



Ching purist, you can use the traditional number system; otherwise, the trigram you roll equals the number listed in parentheses under the trigram picture.

The first two trigrams represent the present situation. They may call for a certain kind of action or suggest something about the influences on the situation. In addition, to give you more flexibility in interpretation, they each have a direction, a meaning, an elemental

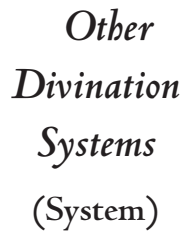
association, and a tie to certain parts of the family.

The second two trigrams represent the future. They may give indications about future influences on the situation, or make a recommendation for action — not something that one should do now, but something that should be done when the situation changes.

You can consult the I Ching for information on your own life, someone else's, or a general situation.

Meaning of the Trigrams (Divinatory Tool)

Ch'ien  (1) NW Element: Metal Meaning: Heaven Family: Father Calls For: Decisive Action	K'an  (2) N Element: Water Meaning: Water/Moon Family: Middle Son Indicates: Peril, Wisdom	Ken  (3) NE Element: Earth Meaning: Mountain Family: Youngest Son Calls For: Rest, Delay
Tui  (4) W Element: Metal Meaning: Marsh Family: Youngest Daughter Indicates: Pleasure, Quarrels	5 – Roll Again 10 – Pick Any	Chen  (6) E Element: Wood Meaning: Thunder Family: Eldest Son Calls For: Vigorous Action
K'un  (7) SW Element: Earth Meaning: the Earth Family: Mother Calls For: Submission	Li  (8) S Element: Fire Meaning: Brightness/the Sun Family: Middle Daughter Indicates: Beauty, Fire	Sun  (9) SE Element: Wood Meaning: Wind Family: Eldest Daughter Calls For: Flexibility



Yin-Yang Theory

Destiny Cost: 5
Study Difficulty: Learning (40)

The Sage of Medicine

(3 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

Deep in Lor's Forbidden Territory, there is a cage, with a thin young man in it. His name is Shun. He rarely eats, and he shivers in the cold.

"Is fire yin or yang?" he said.

"Yang," said the shivering man.

“Find the yin in it, and you’ll get a meal.”

Shun shook his head, mutely.

When Dark Jester came, Shun spoke as follows: “The fire is warm. But I am not warm. I tell it, ‘Burn, fire, burn higher.’ But it does not make me warm.

“The fire is bright. But it cannot brighten my heart. I tell it, ‘Shine, fire, and make my heart glad.’ But it does not bring me hope.

“The fire is free. But its light dances on the walls of a cage. It is a deep fire, a dark fire, a cold fire. That’s why it’s yin. I thought it was yang, but if you put it next to the sun, it wouldn’t seem very hot. It’s so cold it has to be a yin fire.”

"Wait!" called Shun after him. "Please — please tell me. There's still a sun, isn't there?"

When Dark Jester came, Shun spoke again: "The fire is burning energy. It's heat. That's why it's yang. But it's also potential. It's waiting. It's something I can use to get a meal. When you feed me, you'll put out the fire — I don't ever have light down here. So the fire is like yin. It's substance. It just sits there, holding its possibilities. This answer's like yang — it uses up the fire, to bring me food."

Dark Jester narrowed his eyes, then nodded. "Good."

He put out the fire as he left.

"I won," whispered Shun. "I'll get to eat again."

In the long silence of Lor's Forbidden Territory, he wept.

Two years ago, Dark Jester came and urinated by the edge of Shun's cage.

"It's a good color," Shun murmured to himself. "Your kidneys function well — it must be your superior *jing*. But it's a bit reddish. Maybe your liver's cold."

“Is my water yin or yang?”

"Yin," said Shun.

"Find the yang in it and I'll show you the sun."

“The yang is a dry, hot energy,” Shun said. “It floods the body and stirs it to action. You don’t want your yang in your body’s water — it might sizzle, but you’d turn chill.”

Dark Jester shrugged and turned away.

“But it’s not pure water,” Shun said. “There’s nothing that’s just water in all the world — not even in the sea. Water everywhere is part of the cycle: it’s the son of metal and the mother of wood. It’s held back by the earth and it holds back fire. Because it has all these things in its nature, it has a dryness too. From the moment you drank the water into your system, you gave it dryness; you heated it and disturbed its flow. It’s not still — it’s moving. It’s not frozen — it’s hot. Its yang side is the energy of it. If it didn’t have any heat, it couldn’t leave your bladder — it’d just turn to Void Chi and you’d die.”

“Good,” said Dark Jester. He struck the stone wall, and the cavern trembled; and for a full second a crack ran up the ceiling and sunlight poured into Shun’s cage. Then the earth trembled again and closed; and Dark Jester left.

"I know what you want me for," said Shun. "I could smell it in your body."

I could see it in your pulse. You're training me. You want me to be the sage of medicine."

Seconds passed, ticking by as slowly as a happier man's days.

Footsteps. Dark Jester returned.

"There's a tablet in Earth Lord's garden," he said, "with answers to the Sixty-Four Classic Questions of Medicine. You've found thirty of them. Another thirty-four, maybe Earth Lord will accept your loyalty."

"Ask me another," begged Shun.

"Later," promised Dark Jester. "The next time I'm bored. Then I'll ask."

"Please."

"It's offensive," said Dark Jester. "Here I am, a marvel of achievement, and my own brother doesn't even know kung fu! I'll make something from you, don't worry about it, but you're such an embarrassment to me — you'll have to understand if I make you suffer."

"I understand," said Shun. "It's your imbalanced liver."

"I wouldn't rush to a diagnosis," said Dark Jester. "Hatred and love — they're complicated. Yin and yang in perfect balance, stirring my Chi to greatness — that's what makes me the Dark Jester of Earth Lord's court!"

Yin and Yang

Yin has the basic properties of water. It is cold, still and dark. It descends and moves inwards. It is restrained, fearful, and weak. Women, darkness, and nighttime have yin energy associations. Yin is your reserves of strength and power.

Yang has the basic properties of fire. It has heat, motion, and brightness. It moves upwards and outwards. It's excited, joyful, and powerful. Men, light, and the sun have yang energy associations. Yang is your energy and your ability to use power.

Yin-Yang Predictions

(Story)

The Yellow Emperor asked: "Does the theory of Yin-Yang have practical applications?"

Qi Bo answered: "A barbarian horde scouring the land might seem unstoppable, but a scholar sees that their fierceness comes entirely from yang. Without the nourishing yin, they cannot sustain their advance. They must take food from the lands they

pillage. Fight them with flaming arrows to deny them cooling yin. Evacuate villages and their food in advance of the hordes' coming so that they cannot feed themselves. Then they will suffer for lack of yin, and their own heat will blind them to the world."

The Yellow Emperor asked: "But is it as useful in a person's private life?"

Qi Bo answered: "Once, the Plain Girl was just a scholar. She had great fighting potential, but she wouldn't come out of the library! Then a scholar showed her the benefits of a warlike lifestyle. With basic exercise and killing one enemy per day, she raised her yang fire. Her yin power deepened, and she became a better scholar."

(System)

Yin-Yang Theory is a kind of Predictionism. You calculate the yin-yang balances of an enemy, ally, group, or yourself. This takes a scene of observation and thought, although you can reduce it to five turns with a -5 modifier and to a single turn with a -10 modifier. Based on your insights, you can make a Moderate (20) Learning roll. If you succeed, you can spend a point of Xia or Corrupt Joss to make one of the following predictions — the GM chooses which. **This is a secret art. Secret arts cannot be combined with attacks in a complex full action. Divination methods (such as the I Ching) apply.**

Too Much Yang Prediction

You realize that the person or group in question has a lot of yang! It's burning through their yin. You choose whether this is a weakness or a hyperactive condition. You predict the following: "This person or group must keep their yin in mind and replenish it with lots of rest, food, water, meditation, and possibly cold temperatures and darkness. Otherwise, they'll run out!"

Weakness: If they don't tend to their yin, they'll burn through it. Individuals who refuse to tend their yin suffer a minor Attribute reduction in Wu Wei. Large groups have a -5 penalty when someone in the group rolls to decide their tactics or gather information.

Hyperactivity: If they are extremely mindful of their yin-yang balance, their yang will burn brightly. Individuals gain a two-point Attribute improvement to Speed. Large groups gain a +5 modifier when someone in the group rolls to help the group expand its influence.

Too Much Yin Prediction

You realize that the person or group in question is too quiet and restrained. Their yang is fading away! You choose whether this is a weakness or a hyperactive condition. You predict the following: "This person or group must keep their yang in mind and incite it with sufficient exercise, activity, passion, sunlight, and hot temperatures. Otherwise, they'll get sick!"

Weakness: If they don't tend to their yang, it'll fade. Individuals who refuse to tend their yang suffer a minor Attribute reduction in Speed. Large groups have a -5

penalty when someone in the group rolls to help the group expand its influence.

Hyperactivity: If they are extremely mindful of their yin-yang balance, their yang will support their yin. Individuals gain a two-point Attribute improvement to Wu Wei. Large groups gain a have a +5 modifier when someone in the group rolls to decide their tactics or gather information.

(Examples)

Qi Bo's plan for the barbarian horde imposes a Too Much Yang weakness on them. That's why it's good to deny them adequate yin.

The unknown scholar imposed a Too Much Yin hyperactivity on the Plain Girl. When she tended her yang, she gained sagacious insight!

Five-Element Cycle Theory

(Secret Arts)

Destiny Cost: 10
Study Difficulty: Learning (30)

You must be able to purchase Secret Arts to have this lore.

Classic of Five-Element Kung Fu

(10 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

"You're a useless daughter," said Kung Wang. "I told you to learn kung fu, so you can carry on the legendary Kung Wang legacy, but all you do is read old scrolls. You're not even learning scroll-reading kung fu! I've been watching you read for three hours and you haven't broken or killed anything."

Feng reached down and squished a beetle with her finger.

Kung Wang looked slightly mollified. "It's still not kung fu," he said. "Unless that was a scholar-defying demon beetle assassin from the Avici Hell!"

"I'm sorry, father," said Feng. "It might have been, I suppose, but it's too late to ask."

"It's like this," said Wang, sitting down next to her. "If you can't show me what good all this studying is to a kung fu warrior, I'll have to tell you to stop."

Feng went to her calligraphy table and stood for a moment in thought. Then she wrote two characters: "five elements."

"Meaning?"

"You know the elements of Chi," she said. "But you do not know the elements of the Wulin fighters. Someone

with this secret can defeat a warrior many times her strength."

"Could you defeat me?"

Feng studied Wang, then shook her head. "I am in your shadow. I look up: you stand between me and the sun. You are the model and template for what I can accomplish, father, but I should not surpass you if I lived a tortoise's lifetime. Fight hard, and increase your martial arts legend; then I may learn from your example, and grow strong."

Wang dipped his head. "Come, then; explain this secret."

"The illustrious Yao Di aligned to the element of wood," she said. "A warrior of wood is a warrior of spring. He plants seeds. He creates opportunities. Virtuous spring warriors fight to create hope. Corrupt spring warriors weaken and poison others' will for fun. The taste of spring is sour. The color of spring is green. Anger and vengeance sicken a spring warrior's heart. When a spring warrior seeks revenge, it can poison him."

Wang shook his head. "I do not see the relevance."

"The glorious emperor Yu Shun represents the element of fire," she continued. "A warrior of fire lives in the summer. Her strong organ is the heart. She is a warrior of growth. She is a builder. Virtuous summer warriors build strong empires. Corrupt summer warriors craft monstrous cults. The color of summer is red. Joy can make a summer warrior sick—it's too easy for them. It makes their heart beat unsteadily."

"It's all well and good to say that," said Wang, "but if you want to defeat kung fu warriors by making them angry, that's not so original, and if you fight summer warriors by making them happy, I won't be able to show my face in the Martial Arts World."

"Hm," said Feng. "I'll have to tell you one more to explain what I mean. Xia Yi was an earth warrior. An earth warrior lives in late summer. He's from a season of change, so he seeps into things and changes them. He uses words, kung fu, Daoist magic—it's all the same. He doesn't want to build and he doesn't want to destroy. He wants to fix things so they match his vision. Virtuous earth warriors heal the world. Corrupt earth warriors take pieces of the Land of the Gods and remake them into Hell. The color of late summer is yellow. Too much thinking is what makes an earth warrior sick. They think a lot naturally. If they meditate, it sinks into their spleen and makes them feel poorly. And now, the secret."

Wang shrugged.

"If Yao Di fought Xia Yi, who would win?"

Wang shrugged again.

"It's known that wood limits earth; fire limits metal; earth limits water; metal limits wood; and water limits fire."

神兵玄奇



Against Yao Di, Xia Yi has no virtue — he's helpless. The wind of spring blows away the dampness of summer's end. An earth warrior can only transform what grows from the wood warrior's planting; so the spring warrior controls the fight. If I fight an earth warrior, I must be like the spring, thinking always of hopes and not tactics; then he can't touch me."

Wang frowned. "But is that efficacious?"

"You're an earth warrior," she said. "I can't defeat you if you go all-out, but perhaps you could try one of your smaller techniques on me?"

Wang shrugged. His sword blurred from his sheath, coming up to cut her scroll in half; but she closed it around his blade and it did not tear. Her foot came up and slammed into his stomach; startled, and gaping like a fish, he took three steps back.

"I thought like a spring warrior," she said. "That's why this scroll has thin metal wires woven all through the paper. Your move was stronger than mine, but I planted the seed for it. The child can't defeat the parent; so your attack couldn't defeat my plan!"

Wang sat down again. "I see."

"The illustrious emperor Shang Tang, who seized the Mandate from the Zhou—he was of the metal element. An autumn warrior. Like me! An autumn warrior's from a time of reaping. She gathers what has come before. That's why autumn is a scholar's season. An autumn warrior gathers lost glories, hidden secrets, and wounded and uncertain men. She nurtures them, makes them strong, and then uses them as her weapons against her enemies. Grief is autumn's weakness. If I grieved too much, my lungs would get sick. That's why I don't regret my life."

"Why are you an autumn warrior?" asked Wang. "You should be an earth warrior. Like me! Then we'd be an unstoppable team!"

"Wood begets fire; fire begets earth; earth begets metal; metal begets water; water begets wood. Each to each; and each makes its child stronger." Feng smiled. "It can't be helped. You sired me. You trained me. You shape me. So I don't become earth; I become earth's progeny. I become the season that follows, the harvest, when one can gather the earth's fruits. I become autumn, or metal. That's why I'm scholarly."

Wang frowned. "You can't say that my kung fu bred a scholarly and bookish girl! That's disrespectful!"

"It's natural for things to balance," answered Feng. "If I didn't think about you, I'd grow into a spring girl — I'd have no history, only a future. Or maybe, because your kung fu's so strong, I'd become an earth warrior just like you. But I can't do kung fu without thinking about you, so I can't be an earth warrior. I can't set out on my own to transform the world — I want to understand how my father's changed it!"

"I see," said Wang. He didn't.

"Bi Gan," said Feng. "He was a courtier, but his element was water, and his season winter."

"Why do you mention a courtier?"

"It seems a fair test of the theory," Feng said. "Could he have defeated the fire emperor Yu Shun?"

Wang snorted. "Not likely."

"A winter season warrior," Feng said, "comes from the time of storing — of keeping and clinging. His taste is salt. He fights to preserve fading glories. He defends order and history. He stands at the Emperor's side when a Dynasty begins its crumbling, fighting off chaos and protecting the mandate of Heaven. In winter, corrupt and virtuous warriors share a fire — it's too cold for that kind of distinction. The color of winter is black, like the ice. Winter's weakness is fear. If a winter season warrior fears too much, his bones grow weak and cold. He shivers by the fire and cannot earn victory."

"Why would a virtuous warrior fight for a crumbling Dynasty?" Wang shakes his head. "I think they're all just corrupt!"

"I don't know such things, honorable father. But water promotes wood, so maybe they're really fighting for a better spring."

"Bah. So how would Bi Gan defeat Yu Shun?"

"Yu Shun's a summer warrior. He wants to build. If Bi Gan wasn't a threat, then Yu Shun wouldn't give him a finishing blow—he'd want to cultivate his enemy, make him into a friend. So he'd toy with Bi Gan. He'd use his unsurpassed excellence to prove his point — that Emperor Yu Shun, heir to the Yellow Emperor's magnificent techniques, deserved Bi Gan's allegiance!"

"That's not much of a victory for Bi Gan."

"Well, not if he's right," said Feng. "Which he would be. But if he was wrong, then it's a guaranteed win for Bi Gan. If Bi Gan didn't attack, and he didn't feel fear, then Yu Shun could never defeat him — he'd fight on and on to prove his point. But the more you fight the winter, the more tired you become. The fire in Yu Shun's heart would burn lower and lower, and then, after a few years of fighting, it would just go out. Bi Gan's winter. He'd go on and on. He'd laugh at Yu Shun's exhausted corpse. That's how I'd fight an invincible fire warrior; and for Bi Gan, that's natural."

Elemental Predictions

(System)

Five-Element Cycle Theory is a kind of Predictionism. You calculate the dominant elements of an enemy, ally, group, or yourself. This takes a scene of observation and thought, although you can reduce it to five turns with a -5 modifier and to a single turn with a -10 modifier. Based on your insights, you can make a Moderate (20) Learning roll. If you succeed, you can spend a point of Xia or



Corrupt Joss to make one of the following predictions regarding them — the GM chooses which. **This is a secret art. Secret arts cannot be combined with attacks in a complex full action. Divination methods (such as the I Ching) apply.**

Note that the requirements for these conditions are a bit harder to avoid than usual — being able to skip past the GM's adjustment of the requirements and apply a prediction that *could* entirely ruin an opponent is the primary advantage of this lore over other divination techniques.

Strong Wood Prediction

You realize that the person or group in question is driven by wood! They're a spring person or group — dedicated to planting seeds, creating opportunities, and fighting to create hope or despair.

Weakness: You can predict their weakness: "You should avoid direct conflict with metal techniques!" If someone gathers and nurtures lost resources to oppose them, they can't face those resources directly. If they do, this gives a -10 penalty to oppose them.

Hyperactivity: Or you can predict their strength: "You should bring new things into the world!" This major hyperactivity gives them a bonus Destiny when they overcome meaningful obstacles to bring something entirely new to the world — such as a child, a city, or a worthwhile idea.

Strong Fire Prediction

You realize that the person or group in question is driven by fire! They're flush with the heat of summer — dedicated to building and helping things grow. They fight in the name of expansive energy, increasing either their own influence or someone else's.

Weakness: You can predict their weakness: "You shouldn't fight water!" When someone stands against them to preserve old and dying glories, this prediction gives your target a -10 penalty in the fight.

Hyperactivity: Or you can predict their strength: "You should fight to make things bigger and better and brighter!" When they're working towards this fire-principle goal, this minor hyperactivity improves their breath in Crimson Chi.

Strong Earth Prediction

You realize that the person or group in question is driven by earth! They're the late summer kind, dedicated to changing the world to match their vision. They fight in the name of making things *right* — or, of course, wrong.

Weakness: You can predict their weakness: "Your style is weak against wood!" They can't afford to walk into a trap, even if they know it's there and can plan for it — this major weakness will give them a -10 to escape.

Hyperactivity: Or you can predict their strength:

"Bring change for the better to the system you belong to." Whether they're Earth Lord trying to take over the Hell Clan or a minister fighting to purify the bureaucracy, this minor hyperactivity gives them a +5 modifier to all related rolls.

Strong Metal Prediction

You realize that the person or group in question is driven by metal! They're cast in the mold of the autumn warrior — someone who gathers lost treasures.

Weakness: You can predict their weakness: "You yield to the techniques of fire!" When fighting someone driven by a passion or inspiration to oppose them, they must strive to pacify that passion or inspiration or suffer a -10 penalty.

Hyperactivity: Or you can predict their strength: "Seek out what is lost!" When they overcome obstacles and recover something long believed lost — whether an ancient kung fu technique or a bitter man's soul — this major hyperactivity gives them a bonus Destiny.

Strong Water Prediction

You realize that the person or group in question is driven by water! Their realm is snow and winter — they fight to preserve fading glories.

Weakness: You can predict their weakness: "The earth warrior can defeat you." They should only fight to protect their charge against destruction — when fighting someone who wants to change the things dear to them, rather than harm it, they're at a -10.

Hyperactivity: You can predict their strength: "Protect things that face serious danger." When actively doing so, they receive a +5 modifier on all rolls.

Story of the Self

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

You must be able to purchase Secret Arts to have this lore.

This is the art of insight into the conditions of others and social groups. It stands between the art of Predictionism and the Secret Arts of Intrigue — useful in building an understanding of the world, but even more useful to those who can exploit the information they receive with Daoist magic or courtier techniques.

This lore helps spot subtle existing Chi weaknesses. This is considered a matter of prediction because directly fighting a Chi weakness is inauspicious — one must resolve, avoid, or accept it. Similarly, characters



afflicted with hyperactive Chi need to use that condition without allowing it to use them. These two insights are the core of using this lore as a Predictionism technique. Characters who can identify passions, inspirations, and social complications know which behaviors are auspicious, and can give advice and make predictions accordingly.

Spotting usefully exploitable personality traits in others is a fine art and can be somewhat difficult in play. Rather than forcing the GM or the player of the targeted character to provide useful insights, this lore lets the courtier or scholar's player define the Chi conditions of the person under study. The difficulty depends on how well the diagnosis matches obvious, observable behavior in play.

The rules for passions and inspirations are found on pg. 307 and 309.

Spotting Passions

(Story)

"Sorrowful Pine?" Biao said. "Why would I care about her?"

Zhu Chen sipped delicately at his tea.

"She was pretty and delicate," Biao said. "But far too unruly."

Chen smiled. "It's just strange," he said. "You have the look of a man in love."

Biao set down his cup and glared.

(Rules)

Courtiers can create passions, but people are more than capable of developing emotional imbalance on their own. When people have unresolved desires, it throws their Chi out of whack. This means that characters in the game can suffer passion conditions even before the GM or players explicitly create them — if an emotion's too strong, it can mean that the person involved has a passion condition.

If you have this lore, and you notice an interesting

pattern of emotional behavior, you can make an Awareness roll to discover (declare) that it's a passion. You can only make this roll once for a given set of observations — if you fail, you have to wait for more displays of emotion before you can try again. If others have tried to diagnose the target behavior before, they oppose this roll. This is based on the "too many cooks" rule — if the Most Astute Judge of the Seven Quarters studied your target and found no passion, then you're less likely to.

This is a secret art. Secret arts cannot be combined with attacks in a complex full action. Divination methods (such as the I Ching) apply.

On a normal success, unless the GM already knew about a passion, you've found a trivial weakness — that is, a real Chi weakness, but one too minor to provide measurable benefits or penalties in play. On a critical success, you can discover a more interesting passion — a minor Chi weakness, or a trivial form of Chi hyperactivity, as you like. You define the general nature of the passion's requirement and the type of penalty or benefit it offers; the GM fills in the remaining details. The GM also specifies a circumstance under which the passion naturally fades — this is mostly a check against powerful courtiers filling their friends' hearts with hyperactive passions.

The Recovery difficulty for this passion equals the value of your skill roll, even if that's not ideal for you. You can choose between a Duration of 5 and a one-scene Interval or a Duration of 1 and a one-story Interval.

(Example)

Zhu Chen investigates his friend Biao for signs of a love (technically, a joy) passion.

Arguing that Biao "protests too much," he convinces the GM to set the difficulty at Hard (30). He floods the roll from his river, built up earlier in the conversation when the two of them fought filthy cultists intent on disturbing their tea. He rolls a smooth 45 and discovers a trivial, hyperactive Chi condition. He chooses a duration of 1 and a one-story Interval — Biao has low Confidence, and is unlikely to shake off the Legendary (45) Recovery passion any time soon. The GM decides that this passion fades if Sorrowful Pine formally rejects Biao; that way, the GM can maintain the passion as long as it's interesting, and then cut Biao off if it stops feeding the storyline of the game.

Difficulty	Passion
Trivial (10)	The GM already knows there's a Chi condition, and it has a major weakness or hyperactivity associated with it.
Simple (15)	The GM already knows there's a minor or trivial Chi condition.
Everyday (18)	The emotion is extreme, noticeable, and associated with physical symptoms — stammering, fever, apoplexy, and so forth.
Moderate (20)	The emotion is a powerful force driving the character, but any physical symptoms are subject to dispute.
Hard (30)	You can make a case for a profound suppressed passion, but it seems more like a minor emotion.
Legendary (40)	There's at least some emotion there.
Impossible (60)	So . . . Hong Dong is concealing a secret grief passion for the loss of Jade Swallow?

Spotting Inspirations

(Rules)

Similarly, while courtiers can create inspirations, people inclined to virtue are capable of developing them on their own. This uses the same detection system.

This is a secret art. Secret arts cannot be combined with attacks in a complex full action. Divination methods (such as the I Ching) apply.

On a normal success, unless the GM already knew about an inspiration condition, you've found a trivial hyperactivity — that is, a real Chi condition, but one too minor to provide measurable benefits or penalties in play. On a critical success, you can discover a more interesting inspiration — a minor form of Chi hyperactivity, or an inspiration that manifests as a trivial weakness. You define the general nature of the inspiration's requirement and the type of penalty or benefit it offers; the GM fills in the remaining details. The GM also specifies a circumstance under which the inspiration naturally fades.

The Recovery difficulty for this inspiration equals the value of your skill roll, even if that's not ideal for you. You can choose between a Duration of 5 and a one-scene Interval or a Duration of 1 and a one-story Interval.

Difficulty	Inspiration
Trivial (10)	The GM already knows there's a Chi condition, and it has a major weakness or hyperactivity associated with it.
Simple (15)	The GM already knows there's a minor or trivial Chi condition.
Everyday (18)	The character has five Deeds of the associated Virtue.
Moderate (20)	The character has four Deeds of the associated Virtue.
Hard (30)	The character has two or three Deeds of the associated Virtue.
Legendary (40)	The character has only one Deed of the associated Virtue.
Impossible (60)	So . . . Earth Lord is driven to commit altruistic deeds?

Story of Fortune

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

You must be able to purchase Secret Arts to have this lore.

This is the art of insight into others' luck — the curses and influences governing their lives. Daoists use this art to identify trends for magical exploitation, but it also has an important predictive purpose. Calculating the curses and influences applying to a person is important in ordering and planning their life.

Rather than forcing the GM to come up with the expected fortunes of the various characters, this lore lets the Daoist's player define the Chi conditions of the person under study. The difficulty depends on how well the diagnosis matches obvious, observable events in play.

The rules for curses and influences are found on pg. 318 and 321.

Spotting Curses and Influences

(Story)

Wu Zhao stood six and a half feet tall, a willow of a man with severe features and Daoist garb. Yet his expression was kind.

"Did you come to steal," he asked the thief, "or to make inquiries of the Dao?"

Disreputable Pin flushed. "I wouldn't bring my sister," he said, "if I wanted to steal. She's not much for that sort of thing."

Zhao nodded. "Then ask."

"Well," said Pin, "as you said, I'm a thief. But it's not working out for me. I'm sneaky as a rat, but somehow, people are always spotting me! Ever since you caught me yesterday, I've been thinking — it's not right that you should notice a cunning thief like me when you're asleep like that. It must be my bad luck!"

Wu Zhao smiled. "Look at your sister," he said. "She's flushed. She can't meet my eyes. It's obvious that she's afraid that you'll embarrass the family by stealing. That's why you're having such bad luck in taking things, but good luck in getting away."

(Example)

Disreputable Pin has notable bad luck as a thief. Wu Zhao attempts a divination. As discussed below, he can make a Moderate (20) Learning roll to figure out why. Getting a critical success, he decides that it's a water curse that keeps Pin from being successful as a thief — it imposes an action penalty on stealing, breaking, and entering,

神兵玄奇

but only when that penalty doesn't actively endanger Pin. For completeness, Wu Zhao uses *Story of the Self* (pg. 301) to spot the source of the curse — Pin's sister's fear.

(Rules)

Not every curse requires magic. Ordinary bad fortune is often the result of a curse — someone's unresolved desire creates a curse without any direct supernatural influence. This means that characters in the game can suffer curses even before the GM or players explicitly create them — a run of bad luck often means that the person in question is cursed, whether it comes from bad dice rolls or unexpected interactions between the players' and the GM's plans.

Similarly, influences can occur in nature. Good luck is usually the result of an influence — the elements of the natural world grace someone with unusual accomplishment. Notable good luck often means that the person in question is under a spell, even if it comes from good dice rolls or beneficial synchronicity.

When you notice an interesting pattern of bad luck — such as someone who rolls terribly every time they attempt a Stealth roll, or an interesting villain or hero whose plans never work out as well as they should — you can make a Learning roll to discover (declare) that it's a curse.

When you notice an interesting pattern of accomplishment — that someone is never noticed when he doesn't want to be, or remarkably lucky in love, or has better timing than her Initiative would suggest — you can make a Learning roll to discover (declare) that it's an influence.

You can only make this roll once for a given set of observations — if you fail, you have to wait for more freakish luck before you can try again. If others have tried to diagnose the events in question before, they oppose this roll. This is automatic and doesn't require an action — if the five greatest Daoist sorcerers didn't find a spell, you probably won't find one

either.

This is a secret art. Secret arts cannot be combined with attacks in a complex full action. Divination methods (such as the I Ching) apply.

On a normal success, unless the GM already knew about a curse or influence, you've found something trivial — a curse of trivial weakness or a trivial hyperactivity influence. This is a real effect, but too small to provide measurable benefits or penalties in play. On a critical success, you can discover a more interesting spell — a curse that's a minor Chi weakness or trivial hyperactivity or an influence that's a minor Chi hyperactivity or trivial weakness. The advantage of spotting a curse of trivial hyperactivity or an influence that's a trivial weakness is that it's easier for Daoist magic to use such conditions to turn someone's luck around.

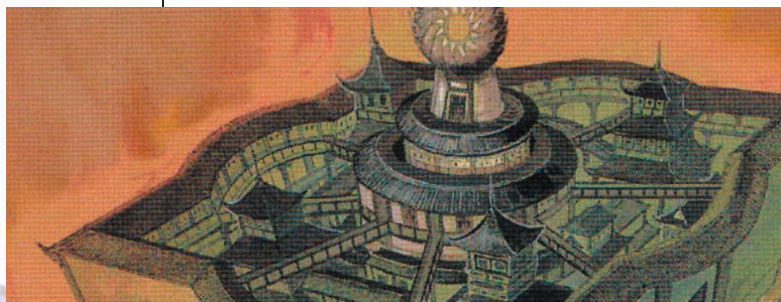
When you discover a curse or influence, you can define its associated element, the general nature of a weakness' penalty or a hyperactive condition's benefit, and the general nature of the restriction. For example, after noticing that

someone's unlucky when fighting at night, you might decide that it's an earth curse — they get more aggressive when they can't see their opponents. If they don't go all out in a nighttime fight, they suffer an action penalty. That's why they're doing poorly — if they fight tactically and carefully, they have a penalty, and if they don't, they make mistakes. The GM defines the details of the requirement, and can specify a circumstance under which the curse or influence naturally fades.

The Recovery difficulty for the curse or influence equals the value of your skill roll, even if that's not ideal

for you. You can choose between a Duration of 5 and a one-scene Interval or a Duration of 1 and a one-story Interval.

Difficulty	Fortune
Trivial (10)	The GM already knows there's a spell, and it has a major weakness or hyperactivity condition.
Simple (15)	The GM already knows there's a minor or trivial spell.
Everyday (18)	This luck is so extreme that it's intuitively obvious that there's a curse or influence, regardless of the real-world explanation.
Moderate (20)	The streak of luck is notable and kind of impressive.
Hard (30)	You could build a case for a spell, but, really, it's probably just a few (un)lucky rolls or coincidences.
Legendary (40)	If there's a curse or influence, it's pretty subtle — you'd expect this person to do better or worse, is all.
Impossible (60)	So . . . the Unrighteous Emperor Hu is cursed to suffer poverty and disrepute?



Secret Arts of Intrigue

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

You must be able to purchase Secret Arts to have this lore.

Have I been disloyal?

Have I been untrustworthy?

Have I failed to practice as I preach?

Where a superior man walks, all things come into harmony.

He does not waste energy.

He is not timid or reckless.

He is polite on all occasions.

In this fashion he brings the world into accord.

Am I courteous?

Am I generous?

Am I honest?

Am I persistent?

Am I kind?

I have slain the dragon and the tiger.

*The faces of the slain turn towards me as I pass,
and say,*

"The world hails you as a superior man."

— Meditations of Mao Yen-Shou

The Secret Arts of Intrigue are the natural outgrowth of government and society. Their seeds come from Legalism, Confucianism, and even Daoism — whenever great minds developed a philosophy of government, the Secret Arts followed. These are the techniques of good governance and proper relationships, but also their dark mirrors — the skills of undermining the order of things.

Throughout Shen Zhou's history, courtiers have applied themselves to fully understanding the consequences of the prevailing social philosophies. They codified their insights into secret techniques for manipulating society and the world. Some of these tricks they recorded in classic manuscripts of social thought. Most remained in the hands of their creators, special courtier's magic that they surrendered only in exchange for the most meaningful favors.

The Confucian Virtues

Characters with this lore can learn the secret arts of

the courtiers. Confucian courtiers codify the common methods of intrigue according to the Confucian virtues, which, as the great sage pointed out, are the keys to government and social influence. The five key methods of the Secret Arts of Intrigue follow. Courtiers must use at least one of these methods, or a Secret Arts of Intrigue method learned via some other lore, to perform the Secret Arts of Intrigue. Most of these methods give positive modifiers to secret art-related skill rolls.

Benevolence

Courtiers express benevolence by thinking of others.

Association: Wood

Limitations: Must show helpfulness.

Modifier: +5

Description

You demonstrate your helpful desires and benevolent intentions to the target. This method cannot be used when obviously hypocritical — in combat or during a difficult task, you must actually help out before you can use this method. In a more comfortable environment, including right before a possible fight, expressing positive wishes suffices. For example, the courtier Dark Jester greeted Tian Wen by praising the fighter's kung fu skill and explaining the wonderful quarters he had prepared for the visiting hero.

Propriety

Courtiers express propriety by behaving according to the proper forms.

Association: Fire

Limitations: Uses one hand and a free action each turn.

Modifier: +0 (+5 with a Quality tool)

Description

You behave in all manners according to the proper fashion. There is a propriety for all things, even the Wulin; as the Kiào Theh Sang says, "An ordinary knife might be employed to kill, but that fitted with bells is better. There is a harmony of sound when the cutting work is done." With the proper behavior, you can align yourself with the fundamental governing spirit of humanity. Acting with propriety uses up one free action each turn. It also requires one free hand; this is a simplified game description of the physical limitations it imposes. You can use Quality clothing or Quality manuals of propriety, reviewed daily, to increase the benefit from this practice.

神兵玄奇

Fidelity

Courtiers express fidelity by accomplishing things as they have stated.

Association: Earth

Limitations: Promises must be made in advance.

Modifier: +5 (+10 for a formal agreement)

Description

When you act to fulfill your agreements, you show that your words are also reliable. You promise to accomplish some difficult or at least time-consuming task — deciding on a use for the secret arts at the time of that promise. When the promise is fulfilled, and your target knows of its fulfillment, you make the appropriate skill roll. You must interact with the target when making the promise, but not when making the roll. If the target voluntarily accepts the promise, making a deal with you or expressing honest gratitude for the offer, this method's bonus increases to +10.

Righteousness

Courtiers express their attention to righteousness by citing the classics.

Association: Metal

Limitations: Jargon

Modifier: +0 or +5

Description

Dropping Confucius' name or some other reference to classic philosophers and wisdom helps ground your statements in authority and tradition. The simplest way to use this tool is to mention Confucius, Mencius, the Book of Odes, or the Book of History in support for your argument. It doesn't have to be a real reference — you can shame a man who neglects his horses with, "Even Confucius took up charioteering!" Legalist courtiers may also wish to reference Han Feizi.

Your player is not expected to actually read the classic texts. The GM can veto any deliberate attempt to break genre ("Confucius says, 'Knock you out!'") but otherwise, just add, "As Confucius said," before one of your points and you'll be fine. Interesting and evocative citations, accurate or not, get a +5.

Wisdom

Courtiers express wisdom by showing their innate good character.

Association: Water

Limitations: Must use kung fu.

Modifier: +0 to +15

Description

If your kung fu is weak, how can you be a superior person? Courtiers must be prepared to demonstrate their arguments in battle. That's why a person of wisdom has strong kung fu — they bolster their innate good character with hard work, discipline, and exercise!

It costs one Chi of any color to perform a martial technique in such a way as to allow the use of a secret art. Two Chi of the same color give a +5. Five Chi of the same color give a +10. Six Chi of one color and four of any other give a +15. You're free to combine this with other kung fu techniques. Secret arts count as attacks, so you can't actually combine the secret art with mundane attacks — instead, you use the special move, and then on your next action explain it and use the secret art.

For example, when Han Feizi argued with Qin Shihuangdi, he would pause after each move to explain its implications — he was probably using his own special secret arts.

Extraordinary Courtier Techniques

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 0

This lore comes with "Secret Arts of Intrigue"

If you're not sure how Chi conditions work, or you don't have much use for slow, flexible, long-term techniques in a brutally-paced kung fu action game, simplified versions of the courtier skills are described below. You have to purchase each technique individually for the listed Destiny cost, but you can perform any one of these techniques in a single round without penalty.

These techniques are Secret Arts of Intrigue. Secret arts cannot be combined with attacks in a complex full action. The courtier must use at least one Secret Arts of Intrigue method (e.g., Righteousness.) All Extraordinary Techniques require a full action to employ.

Lassitude, Joy, and Love Technique (1 Destiny)

Make a Moderate (20) Inspire roll, opposed by the

target's Confidence, to make someone relaxed and slow. If you succeed, they suffer a -10 penalty on their Initiative until they take a full action to snap out of it.

Anger-Inspiring Technique (2 Destiny)

Make a Moderate (20) Inspire roll, opposed by the target's Confidence, to inspire a blinding anger in the target. If you succeed, they suffer a -10 penalty on all actions until someone takes a full action to resolve that anger — for example, the target could “accidentally” hit the person they're angry at, or that person could make a Grace roll to apologize as (part of) their next full action.

Instant Inspiration Technique (2 Destiny)

When you behave according to the five virtues, everything goes your way! You can pick any two courtiers' methods — such as righteousness and benevolence — to gain a +5 modifier on the roll for your next full action. This includes reciting Confucius and declaring good intentions before climbing a cliff; depending on how you present this, it will probably make you look pompous, ridiculous, austere, dedicated, insane, or startlingly traditional.

Exploitation of Sorrows Technique (2 Destiny)

Make a Moderate (20) Inspire roll, opposed by the target's Confidence, to make someone doubt their reasons for a fight or conflict. This encourages them to withdraw and sulk instead of participating. This gives them a -10 penalty on non-defensive actions for the next round. In future rounds, they have no penalty, but should still consider sulking. If they can make their withdrawal interesting — either as a dramatic character point or by increasing the tactical challenge for themselves without damaging the other players' fun — they get a bonus Destiny.

Fear-Inspiring Technique (3 Destiny)

Make a Moderate (20) Inspire roll, opposed by the target's Confidence, to make yourself fearsome. For the next five rounds, the target suffers a -5 modifier when directly opposing you.

Distracting Suggestion Technique (5 Destiny)

Make a Moderate (20) Inspire roll, opposed by the target's Confidence, to plant a nagging worry or stress in someone's mind. This reduces their Presence, Genius, Gold Chi, and White Chi by one for the remainder of the scene. You can attempt this repeatedly, but cannot reduce any of these ratings below one.

The Four Practices

The four practices of the secret arts are **manipulation** and **leadership**, **divination**, and **self-cultivation**. Self-

cultivation refers to increasing Chi and skills; the character may meditate at length on social theory and proper behavior, but in play, one simply spends Destiny. Divination — particularly **Story of the Self** — lets the courtier understand the people and groups around them. Manipulation and leadership allow the courtiers to rouse the passions and virtues of people and groups, achieving all manner of effects. The techniques for manipulation and leadership are explained below, beginning with a description of the Chi conditions associated with emotions and virtues.

Passions

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 0

Passion Conditions

Passions are emotional Chi conditions. Many characters in the Wulin have strong emotions — but when those emotions are too strong, they become unhealthy.

Aspect: Yin.

Element: Wood.

Taste: Sour.

Classic Passion Symptoms: Dizziness, stupor, mania, palpitations, sorrow, agitation.

What is a Passion?

A passion means that one of your emotions is out of control. It's not just a strong motivation — it's making you sick. It's the difference between love and obsession, desire and need, noble aspiration and consuming hunger, dedication and stress.

Most passions are Chi weaknesses, but some are hyperactive conditions. Either way, if you give in to uncontrolled and unbalanced emotions, they'll eventually destroy you — although it might be dramatic enough that your player won't mind.

Detection and Recovery

Spotting an existing passion and estimating its severity is a Moderate (20) Awareness task, which the target can oppose with Stealth or Confidence. Recovering from passions rolls Confidence. Helping someone else recover from passions rolls Confidence or (with appropriate techniques) Medicine.

Relationships

Each element has an associated Confucian virtue and an associated passion. The passion





is the yin of that element in the human mind, and the virtue is its yang. Using an internal-external technique on a passion creates a physical condition afflicting that element's organ system or a malevolent elemental curse associated with that element. Paired passion/inspiration conditions cross the yin and yang of that element — since both anger and benevolence are associated with Wood, some courtiers can create paired anger and benevolence conditions.

When two passions appear as paired conditions, one must control the other. This means that they appear two steps apart in the elemental cycle. Fire controls metal, so joy controls grief. That means that strong happiness makes it easier to deal with the pain of loss, but a strong grief makes it harder to be happy. If one emotion is too strong, the other becomes weak. In turn, water controls fire, so fear controls joy. Again, if one emotion is too strong, the other becomes weak. That's why these emotions appear in pairs — a weakness in one becomes a hyperactive condition in another.

A yin-yang technique works the same way. Wood controls earth. If the yin of wood is strong, then the yang of earth is strong. So a wood yin condition, inspiring anger, creates earth yang through the yin-yang technique. Strong earth yang inspires people to suit actions to deeds — it's a fidelity inspiration, pushing ordinary people towards sharp honesty and warriors towards violence. That's why an anger passion lets courtiers create fidelity inspirations — fidelity is the inspiration of earth, and so it's only natural that anger breeds sharp words and violence.

The short parenthesized explanations of some curses, inspirations, and organ systems are just there to give a better idea of what that reference means in context — it's not additional game terminology.

Anger Passions

Anger, hatred, rivalry — these passions make you scheme against a foe!

Internal-External: becomes a Wood Curse
(Ill Health)

Internal-External: afflicts the Wood System
(Liver, Gallbladder)

Yin-Yang: becomes a Fidelity Inspiration
(Violence)

Balances: can pair with Contemplation or
Grief Passions

Balances: can pair with a .. Benevolence Inspiration

Elemental Progression: becomes a ... Joy Passion

Description

An excess of anger causes the Chi to rise, floating upwards to produce dizziness and flushed cheeks. Such conditions are detrimental to the liver and to Jade Chi. Characters with an anger condition

cannot ignore safe opportunities to express their anger, and must regularly find time to scheme against or bitterly rant about the subject of their rage.

As a weakness, most anger conditions inflict an action penalty. This usually triggers on actions that ignore the anger — making small-talk in the enemy's presence, doing favors for them at a superior's command, and so forth. If the character continues to ignore their anger, this escalates into a penalty on every action they take.

As a hyperactive condition, anger usually gives a positive action modifier when doing or planning nasty things against the subject of enmity.

Joy Passions

Love, mania, satisfaction, pleasure — these passions make you dizzy and weak!

Internal-External: becomes a Fire Curse
(Good Fortune)

Internal-External: afflicts the Fire System
(Heart, Small Intestine)

Yin-Yang: becomes a Righteousness Inspiration
(Duty)

Balances: can pair with Grief or Fear Passions

Balances: can pair with a Propriety Inspiration

Elemental Progression: becomes a Contemplation
Passion

Description

Euphoric states such as new love and an opium high slow the Chi of mind and body. Such conditions are detrimental to the heart and to Crimson Chi. Characters with a joy condition cannot ignore safe opportunities to express that joy, and must regularly waste time on a stupor of happiness or a mania of exultation.

As a weakness, a typical joy condition inflicts an Attribute reduction — most often to Speed or Presence. Characters presenting a calm or morose aspect while internally bubbling with joy tend to stumble on their words and their actions.

As a hyperactive condition, joy usually improves Speed and Crimson Chi. Flushed with unhealthy levels of happiness, the character dances through life.

Contemplation Passions

Discipline, dedication, worry, stress — these passions make you obsessed!

Internal-External: becomes a Earth Curse
(Folly)

Internal-External: afflicts the Earth System
(Spleen, Stomach)

Yin-Yang: becomes a Balance Inspiration
(Wisdom)

Balances: can pair with Fear or Anger Passions

Balances: can pair with a Fidelity Inspiration

Elemental Progression: becomes a Grief Passion

Description

Contemplation passions are passions of excessive focus. This focus makes the Chi knotted and stagnant, damaging the spleen and Gold Chi, even when the character is obsessed with positive things. This disorder is common among young monks and ministers, whose virtue, peace, meditation, and self-discipline flows not from spiritual calm but from compulsive worrying about proper behavior. Characters stressed about their life circumstances, obsessed with a specific fad, or plagued with guilty memories are also vulnerable to this disorder. Characters with a contemplation condition cannot ignore safe opportunities to express their fixation, and must regularly waste time either fretting over it or discussing it with others.

As a weakness, a typical contemplation condition inflicts loss of breath — most often in Gold or White Chi. Obsessed characters use their fixation as a mental crutch, and without it they lose their balance.

As a hyperactive condition, contemplation usually improves breath in Gold Chi. When the character focuses on their particular obsession, it becomes a source of power.

Grief Passions

Sorrow, grief, regret, and angst — these passions make you mourn what's lost!

Internal-External: becomes a Metal Curse (Trouble)

Internal-External: afflicts the Metal System (Lungs, Large Intestine)

Yin-Yang: becomes a Benevolence Inspiration (Generosity)

Balances: can pair with Anger or Joy Passions

Balances: can pair with a Righteousness Inspiration

Elemental Progression: becomes a Fear Passion

Description

An excess of grief absorbs and drains the Chi, like a blotter soaking up ink. Such conditions are detrimental to the lungs and White Chi. Characters with a grief condition cannot ignore reminders of that grief and must regularly waste time in sulking, sorrow, dwelling, and trying to recapture whatever it is they have lost.

As a weakness, a typical grief condition inflicts a loss of Destiny. To bear up under their sorrow, the character must set aside a certain amount of Destiny, which they cannot recover until the grief passes. They are held in shadow by the autumn of their loss; when it passes, they are swift to achieve greatness.

As a hyperactive condition, grief usually offers a Destiny bonus. Driven by loss, the character takes a vow of revenge or otherwise gets into trouble, pleasing the gods and earning extra Destiny.

Fear Passions

Whether you're scared of death or scared to fail, these passions prove your fear!

Internal-External: becomes a Water Curse (Separation)

Internal-External: afflicts the Water System (Kidneys, Bladder)

Yin-Yang: becomes a Propriety Inspiration (Respect)

Balances: can pair with Joy or Contemplation Passions

Balances: can pair with a Balance Inspiration

Elemental Progression: becomes an . . . Anger Passion

Description

Sustained terror, whether pathological or well-justified, wounds the kidneys and the Silver Chi. It draws the Chi of the body and mind sluggishly downwards. Characters with a fear condition are paralyzed when facing the object of their fear and must regularly waste time worrying about it and making ineffectual plans to escape it.

As a weakness, most fear conditions inflict an action penalty. This usually triggers on actions that ignore the fear — casual or defiant behavior in the face of the character's dread.

As a hyperactive condition, fear usually gives a positive action modifier when taking positive action to alleviate the fear without directly confronting it. That is, the character receives the bonus when pacifying, serving, escaping, or passively neutralizing the dreaded enemy.

Inspirations

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 0

Inspiration Conditions

Inspirations are Chi conditions that encourage the Virtues.

Aspect: Yang.

Element: Earth.

Taste: Sweet.

Classic Inspiration Symptoms: Obsession, wounds (inflicted by those who disapprove of excess).





What is an Inspiration?

Inspirations are calls to a higher (or lower) duty. They're a nagging voice in the back of your mind pushing you towards ever-greater heights of glory. They demand that you make yourself better than you are. This is in many ways a good thing, but inspirations are still a form of sickness. They're the driven urges of clotted or hyperactive Chi, not the clarion call of the heart and mind drawn naturally to virtue.

Most inspirations are hyperactive conditions, but a few are weaknesses. Either way, they encourage a certain intemperance of virtue. As Confucius noted, "If humaneness is your love, but you do not study to understand it, then you will be foiled by ignorance." People driven to virtue by inspiration rather than wisdom or righteousness are prone to embarrassing excess.

Detection and Recovery

Spotting an existing inspiration and estimating its severity is a Moderate (20) Awareness task, which the target can oppose with Stealth or Confidence. Recovering from inspirations rolls Confidence. Helping someone else recover from passions rolls Confidence or (with appropriate techniques) Medicine.

Relationships

Each inspiration focuses the mind on a single Confucian virtue. This in turn leads the sick person towards a particular Xia or Corrupt Virtue.

Each element has an associated Confucian virtue and an associated passion. The passion is the yin of that element in the human mind, and the virtue is its yang. Using an internal-external technique on an inspiration creates a physical condition inflaming that element's organ system or a beneficial elemental spell associated with that element. Paired passion/inspiration conditions cross the yin and yang of that element — since both anger and benevolence are associated with Wood, some courtiers can create paired anger and benevolence conditions.



When two inspirations appear as paired conditions, one must control the other. This means that they appear two steps apart in the elemental cycle — wood controls earth, so benevolence controls fidelity. If one is too strong, the other becomes weak. In turn, metal controls wood, so righteousness controls benevolence. If one is too weak, the other becomes strong. That's why these things appear in pairs.

A weakness in one virtue

becomes a hyperactivity in another.

A yin-yang technique works the same way. Metal controls wood. If the yang of metal is strong, then the yin of wood is strong. So a metal yang condition, inspiring people towards righteousness, creates wood yin conditions through the yin-yang technique — it lets courtiers create anger passions, since anger is the passion of wood. Righteous people become angry, or make others angry.

Xia and Corrupt Virtues

An inspiration towards a Xia Virtue inflames the yang fire. The Chi rises and the body becomes hot. An inspiration towards a Corrupt Virtue strengthens the essential yin. The Chi sinks and the body becomes cold.

Benevolence Inspirations

These inspirations call fighters to Kuan (Altruism) or Si (Individualism).

Internal-External: becomes a Wood Influence

Internal-External: afflicts the . . . Wood Organ System

Yin-Yang: becomes a Contemplation Passion

Balances: can pair with Fidelity or Righteousness
Inspirations

Balances: can pair with an Anger Passion

Elemental Progression: becomes a Propriety Inspiration

Description

The inspiration that calls an ordinary citizen to show good will and good heart encourages members of the Wulin towards Altruism or Individualism. Each inspiration draws a character either towards the Xia Virtue Kuan or the Corrupt Virtue Si.

Characters under these effects focus their attention on benevolence. The benevolent person spares no effort to help others. When helping others, a Kuan-inspiring hyperactive condition assists and a Si-inspiring Chi weakness inflicts its penalty. The benevolent person must not wrangle with others or seek harm out of envy or anger. When engaging in wrangling and spite, a hyperactive Si inspiration gives its benefit and a Kuan-inspiring Chi weakness interferes.

Propriety Inspirations

These inspirations call fighters to Zhong (Loyalty) or Hen (Ruthlessness).

Internal-External: becomes a Fire Influence

Internal-External: afflicts the Fire Organ System

Yin-Yang: becomes a Grief Passion

Balances: can pair with Righteousness or Balance
Inspirations

Balances: can pair with a Joy Passion

Elemental Progression: becomes a Fidelity
Inspiration

Description

The inspiration that calls an ordinary citizen to behave with ritual propriety encourages members of the Wulin towards Loyalty or Ruthlessness. Each inspiration draws a character either towards the Xia Virtue Zhong or the Corrupt Virtue Hen.

Characters under these effects must think about proper behavior towards others — in particular, the proper behavior that maintains society and its hierarchies and keeps all things in order. A person of propriety displays respect for superiors, encourages inferiors towards righteousness, and treats everyone with humaneness. A Zhong-inspiring hyperactive condition assists in these harmonious interactions, while a Hen-inspiring weakness interferes with them. A person of propriety must not violate social norms to achieve their goals; this encourages chaos and poverty. When deliberately violating propriety to achieve a personal goal, a Zhong-inspiring weakness interferes and a hyperactive inspiration towards Hen assists.

Fidelity Inspirations

These inspirations call fighters to Force (Ba) or Ferocity (Bao).

Internal-External: becomes an Earth Influence

Internal-External: afflicts the Earth Organ System

Yin-Yang: becomes a Fear Passion

Balances: can pair with Balance or Benevolence Inspirations

Balances: can pair with a Contemplation Passion

Elemental Progression: becomes a Righteousness Inspiration

Description

The inspiration that calls an ordinary citizen to honesty encourages members of the Wulin towards violence — for a fighter, kung fu is the ultimate method of communication. Each inspiration draws a character either towards the Xia Virtue Ba or the Corrupt Virtue Bao.

Characters under these effects must think of fidelity. A person of fidelity acts with heart, mind, and body in unison. A forceful person expresses their will with limitless and unrestrained violence; a fierce person does the same, but with cruelty in the mix. In either case, a hyperactive inspiration towards Ba or Bao assists with over-the-top violence of the appropriate sort. A Ba- or Bao-inspiring weakness proves detrimental whenever the character tries to “hold back” — acting with restraint in a confrontation.

Righteousness Inspirations

These inspirations call fighters to Righteousness (Yi) or Obsession (Chan).

Internal-External: becomes a Metal Influence

Internal-External: afflicts the ... Metal Organ System

Yin-Yang: becomes an Anger Passion

Balances: can pair with Benevolence or Propriety Inspirations

Balances: can pair with a Grief Passion

Elemental Progression: becomes a Balance Inspiration

Description

Everyone can be righteous, whether citizen or fighter — these inspirations draw characters either towards the Xia Virtue Yi or the Corrupt Virtue Chan.

Characters under these effects focus their attention on fulfillment of duty. The righteous person desires to fulfill the duties of their highest positions and trusts; the obsessed person is concerned with fulfilling the duties they have chosen to prize. In either case, a Yi- or Chan-inspiring hyperactivity assists when doing so. A weakness proves detrimental whenever the character sets aside their duty or obsession in the name of their own interests or some other, higher cause.

Balance Inspirations

These inspirations call fighters to Justice (Xia) or Revenge (Chou).

Internal-External: becomes a Water Influence

Internal-External: afflicts the ... Water Organ System

Yin-Yang: becomes a Joy Passion

Balances: can pair with Propriety or Fidelity Inspirations

Balances: can pair with a Fear Passion

Elemental Progression: becomes a Benevolence Inspiration

Description

For an ordinary person, these inspirations strengthen their innate good character. They inspire humaneness and a strong internal sense of right and wrong. For members of the Wulin, it's not quite as virtuous — each of these inspirations draws a character either towards bloody Xia justice or a corrupt fighter's Chou-based need for revenge!

Characters under these effects must think of balance. A just person seeks to balance the scales of the world whenever confronted with philosophically displeasing behavior; a vengeful person seeks balance whenever confronted with personally displeasing behavior. Of the two, Justice is the higher goal, but also the more destructive. In either case, a Xia- or Chou-inspiring hyperactivity assists in balancing the scales. A weakness interferes with attempts to cooperate with or serve people against whom one should be taking revenge.

神兵玄奇

神 兵 奇 Controlling Passions

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

This lore requires "Secret Arts of Intrigue"

This secret art uses cunning words and a keen understanding of the nature of humanity to unlock hidden desires. The liver strives always to regulate and balance emotion — but not even the strongest liver can stand against a courtier deeply versed in the Classics!

This secret art relies on the **Inspire** skill. When making the necessary skill rolls, roll Inspire. The target can choose to oppose these techniques with their Confidence.

These techniques are **Secret Arts of Intrigue**. Secret arts cannot be combined with attacks in a complex full action. The courtier must use at least one Secret Arts of Intrigue method (e.g., Benevolence.)

The rules for passions are found on pg. 307.

Yin-Yang Technique

(Story)

The illustrious courtier Zhu Chen, whose name they praise even in Heaven, strode into Zhong Tang's hall. He walked with grace and with glory. His clothing shimmered with rare fabrics, and none of Tang's servants dared halt his path — they only looked at him in awe. Gently, he opened the door to the dining room, and looked in on Zhong Tang, who hurled a plate of sticky rice full into Zhu Chen's face.

"Go away, Snake-Tongue Chen."

Chen brushed rice out of his hair. "You're needed, my friend."

"Where were my friends when the Filth Cult killed Lan?"

Chen hesitated.

"Perhaps you were too busy shopping for those robes."

"If you want to honor her memory," Chen said, "help me fight the cult."

Zhong Tang hesitated.

"Please?"

"I should stop my ears," Tang said. "I should fill them full of iron and wax, when my friend Zhu Chen comes home."

(Example)

Zhong Tang has a
grief weakness
— he has

to spend much of his time petulant and sulking at his loss, or suffer a penalty. It has a Moderate (20) Recovery, Duration 3, and an interval of a story.

Zhu Chen wants to perform a yin-yang technique on Zhong Tang's grief. He rolls Inspire against the Recovery difficulty of 20. He succeeds, and looks at the description of grief weaknesses on pg. 309. Grief weaknesses yin-yang transform into benevolence inspirations, so Zhu Chen can create an altruism or individualism inspiration. Because the grief is a minor weakness, the inspiration will be a minor hyperactive condition.

Zhu Chen specifies the requirement in general terms — "I want him to be more helpful." The GM translates this into an altruism inspiration: "you must spare no effort to help others to receive this hyperactive condition's benefit." Zhu Chen also specifies the benefit: improved breath in Jade Chi, which boils down to physical well-being and health.

This inspiration doesn't force Zhong Tang to help. It doesn't even make the grief go away. But he realizes that helping will make him feel healthy and good and physically *right* — that's a powerful lure!

(Rules)

You can buy the **Yin-Yang** technique for Passions for 3 Destiny. This lets you use an passion to create an inspiration. Each passion lists the kind of inspiration it can fuel on pg. 308. You can pick whether the target is inspired towards the Xia or Corrupt Virtue.

You must interact with both the passionate person and the target, and the two of them with one another — normally, in a three-way conversation. You can stir up an inspiration in the passionate person or in someone else — even yourself!

Elemental Progression Technique

(Story)

Zhu Chen settled in for the night.

"This hospitality," said his host. "It's too bad! I have to apologize."

Zhu Chen poked the bed. He looked at his plate and the discarded bones of his supper. "It seems well enough," he answered.

"It's because we're so terrified of Earth Lord," the old man said.

Zhu Chen's eyes narrowed. "Ah so." He judged the old man with his gaze. Then he smiled. *This old fox — he's apologizing because he has to tell Earth Lord I'm here.*

"It's such a shame," he said. "But I didn't think even Earth Lord could turn my venerable host into a worm."

His words bit deep, for he was the masterful Zhu Chen; and he could see that fear becoming anger.

(Example)

The old man has a fear condition — it gives him an action penalty when he dares defy Earth Lord. It has Hard (30) Recovery, Duration 5, and an interval of a scene. Zhu Chen makes a Hard Inspire roll, transforming this condition into an anger condition. He wants the old man to suffer a Might reduction whenever he goes along with Earth Lord's plans — the old man will suffer such apoplexy if he lets Earth Lord turn him into a fearful worm that it might actually make him sick!

(Rules)

You can buy the **Elemental Progression** technique for Passions for 3 Destiny. This lets you transform your target's anger condition into a joy condition, joy condition into a contemplation condition, contemplation condition into a grief condition, grief condition into a fear condition, or fear condition into an anger condition.

You must interact with the target — normally, in a conversation, but a battle or a series of letters suffices.

Paired Passion Technique**(Story)**

"He terrifies me," giggled Dao-ming. "So stern! So severe! It is important to be very polite, when you talk to Zhu Chen!"

"You do not seem terrified," Fei observed dryly.

"Ah, well," said Dao-ming. "It's the good kind of fear."

(Example)

Here we see a moderately unethical courtier's technique: Zhu Chen used secret arts to create a paired fear hyperactivity and joy weakness in his mistress Fan Dao-ming. He wants her to bubble with joy, and she suffers a reduction in Gold Chi — and thus, both Presence and balance — when she does not. The GM defines the precise conditions of the fear hyperactivity. It's a light-hearted game, and it's a hyperactive condition, so the GM defines it as a combination of awe and fear of losing the magnificent Chen. In a nastier game, it might represent the fear component of a twisted and somewhat abusive relationship — even if Zhu Chen treated her well, it'd be reasonable for her to seek medical or martial help in breaking away.

(Rules)

You can buy the **Paired Condition** technique for Passions for 5 Destiny. This lets you create two matching passions from nothing — one weakness and one hyperactivity. Each passion lists the passions and inspirations it can match, but you can only create passion/inspiration pairs if you have this technique for both Inspirations and Passions.

Inflaming and Soothing Passions**(Story)**

Zhu Chen's hands and feet were tied. He was trapped in Evil Dog's lair. The creature's sword plunged into Zhu Chen's side. It whipped out again. Evil Dog shook off the blood, laughing.

"You're callous with my blood," Zhu Chen said, sulkily. "My spleen worked so hard to make it, and you splash it on the ground!"

"I don't want it dirtying my sword," Evil Dog explained.

"Ha," Zhu Chen said. "My blood can't dirty that sword; it's already as grimy as a pig!"

"Is not," Evil Dog countered.

"It's your ancestor's shame in you," Zhu Chen said. "If your parents don't love you, it's hard to keep things clean!"

Evil Dog snarled, shoved Zhu Chen away, and began to groom himself with a fury.

(Example)

Zhu Chen spots a trivial passion in Evil Dog — an obsession with cleanliness! So he makes a Hard (30) Inspire roll and inflames it into a minor weakness. If he can't keep clean, Evil Dog loses his breath in Gold Chi — that is to say, his cool.

(Rules)

You can buy the **Inflaming and Soothing Conditions** technique for Passions for 1 Destiny. This allows you to increase trivial passions to minor passions, minor passions to major passions, or vice versa.

Stealthy or Quick Work**(Rules)**

You can buy the ability to use Stealth to conceal these techniques for 1 Destiny.

You can buy the ability to perform these techniques in a single turn without penalty for 5 Destiny.





Controlling Inspirations

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

This lore requires "Secret Arts of Intrigue"

This secret art uses traditional and modern wisdom to lead others to the path of Virtue. The lungs, governing the transfer of Chi between the self and the world, control a person's inclinations towards Virtue — but the power of breath cannot compare to the traditional wisdom of Confucius!

This secret art relies on the **Persuade** skill. When making the necessary skill rolls, roll Persuade. The target can choose to oppose these techniques with their Confidence.

These techniques are Secret Arts of Intrigue. Secret arts cannot be combined with attacks in a complex full action. The courtier must use at least one Secret Arts of Intrigue method (e.g., Fidelity.)

The rules for inspirations are found on pg. 309. When creating or replacing inspirations, you can pick whether the target is inspired towards the Xia or the Corrupt Virtue.

Yin-Yang Technique

(Story)

Evil Dog carefully took out the tools of torment, one by one.

"I can reassure myself," he said, to the illustrious courtier Zhu Chen. "You keep taunting me, but I remember the truth. If I hurt you, your words won't hurt me!"

Zhu Chen nodded. "An Evil Dog should be fierce and cruel!"

Evil Dog frowned.

"Cruelty is your yin," Chen explained. "It draws the yang fire of your inevitable punishment. As Confucius said, when good men govern, they do away with the cruel and the killers! So when you hurt me, you're just helping the world find its dog-killing balance."

Evil Dog carefully put away the tools of torment, one by one.

(Example)

Evil Dog has a Bao inspiration — it makes him feel better when he's cruel. It has an Everyday (18) Recovery, Duration 2, and an interval of a few hours. He'd have gotten over it long ago, but Earth Lord's training in cruelty gives him a -5 to recover and he doesn't have any dice of

Confidence. Zhu Chen performs a yin-yang technique, fueling a fear weakness. He makes Evil Dog afraid of being punished for his cruelty; this weakness inflicts an action penalty when Evil Dog inflicts more pain than necessary.

(Rules)

You can buy the **Yin-Yang** technique for Inspirations for 3 Destiny. This lets you use an inspiration to create a passion. Each inspiration lists the kind of passion it can fuel on pg. 309.

You must interact with both the inspired person and the target, and the two of them with one another — normally, in a three-way conversation. You can stir up a passion in the inspired person or in someone else — even yourself!

Elemental Progression Technique

(Story)

Kuo Ssu asked Zhu Chen, "Is it all right that I would die for you, but not kill for you?"

"A man concerned with propriety is loyal; a man honest with himself and others does not shy from force. Yet propriety without sincerity — as Confucius said, it's sure to bring problems!"

Kuo Ssu meditated on this for some time.

(Example)

Recent events have inspired Kuo Ssu towards Loyalty (Zhong). This condition has Moderate (20) Recovery, Duration 1, and a one-story Interval. Zhu Chen could transmute this into an inspiration towards Force (Ba) or even Ferocity (Bao) with a Moderate (20) Persuade roll.

(Rules)

You can buy the **Elemental Progression** technique for Inspirations for 3 Destiny. This transforms benevolence into propriety, propriety into fidelity, fidelity into righteousness, righteousness into balance, and balance into benevolence.

You must interact with the target — normally, in a conversation, but a battle or a series of letters suffices.

Paired Inspiration Technique

(Story)

Zhu Chen stopped and looked at the sentry. The man was slumped. His eyes were hollow. He would watch the keep, but he would not watch it well.

"Who died?" Chen asked.

The sentry shrugged.

"Everyone," he said.

Chen looked him up and down. “Even the children?”

The sentry looked down. Then he sighed, squared his shoulders, and looked up. His eyes became clear and his posture firm. “Not all of them,” he said. “Not yet.”

(Example)

Zhu Chen has both the **Paired Passion** and the **Paired Inspiration** technique, so he can make a paired condition that crosses the boundaries.

Chen wants to inspire the sentry towards duty and righteousness — he specifically wants a hyperactive righteousness (Yi) inspiration. He doesn’t have a hugely significant reason for this, except that he’s Zhu Chen and the GM has thrown a lax sentry at him, and making the man reform is part of the Zhu Chen legend. He looks at the description of righteousness inspirations on pg. 311, and sees that they can balance against grief passions, benevolence inspirations, or propriety inspirations. Grief is pretty logical in context, so he decides on a paired grief/Yi condition.

Chen can work this from either angle — since he has both techniques, he can roll Inspire to make a grief passion with a paired Yi inspiration, or Persuade to make a Yi inspiration with a paired grief passion. His Persuade is higher, so he rolls that. He wants a reasonably durable condition. He looks at the difficulty chart on pg. 11 and decides to try a Hard Persuade task — creating conditions with Hard Recovery, Duration 3, and a one-session Interval. He succeeds, but does not roll a critical success.

Zhu Chen specifies the hyperactive condition. “Fulfill your duty as sentry.” The GM thinks about adding some details to this, but it seems pretty reasonable as is. Chen defines the condition’s benefit: the sentry gets a +5 modifier to actions in line with this requirement. He’s now better at being a sentry.

The GM has free rein with the grief passion. She decides that if the sentry doesn’t mope enough, he has to set aside Destiny — this is the autumn of his life, and he won’t have an easy time growing as a fighter until the spring.

(Rules)

You can buy the **Paired Condition** technique for Inspirations for 5 Destiny. This lets you create two matching inspirations from nothing — one weakness and one hyperactivity. Each inspiration lists the passions and inspirations it can match, but you can only create passion/inspiration pairs if you have this technique for both Inspirations and Passions.

Inflaming and Soothing Inspirations

(Story)

“I want to hurt him,” admitted Shun. “I think about it regularly.”

“Has he hurt you, then?” Zhu Chen asked lightly.

Shun smiles. Chen blinks, and frowns.

“Yes,” Shun admits, “but that’s not why. It seems to me that my brother offends against what is right with everything he does.”

“Ah,” said Chen. “You are a man of justice.”

Shun nods.

“And yet,” Zhu Chen said, smiling, “you wait, and do not consult the calendar for auspicious days on which to strike.”

(Example)

Zhu Chen, assuming that Shun has an anger passion, attempts to inflame it. This fails, since Shun actually has a trivial inspiration towards Xia (Justice). Once he figures this out, Zhu Chen makes a Hard (30) Persuade roll and inflames the inspiration into a minor hyperactivity.

(Rules)

You can buy the **Inflaming and Soothing Conditions** technique for Inspirations for 1 Destiny. This allows you to increase trivial inspirations to minor inspirations, minor inspirations to major inspirations, or vice versa.

Stealthy or Quick Work

(Rules)

You can buy the ability to use Stealth to conceal these techniques for 1 Destiny.

You can buy the ability to perform these techniques in a single turn without penalty for 5 Destiny.

神兵玄奇



Daoist Magic

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

You must be able to purchase Secret Arts to have this lore.

On a certain day, of a certain month, in a certain year,

In the temple named,

In the county named,

This candidate is ready to receive the Magical Register from a Perfect Man.

I am honored to come before you

And receive the Secret Register and the Perfect Books.

I swear to cultivate myself and treat man and material things

According to the mysterious rituals within.

If I break my oath,

I am willing to suffer punishment

And to thank the Three Officials of Heaven, Earth, and Water without hatred.

Promptly, promptly,

In accordance to the Supreme Mysterious Ritual, Statutes, and Ordinances.

— Oath Sworn to the Heaven Clan

Daoist sorcery is transmitted through registers. These are secret mystic books describing the five methods and four practices of Daoism. It usually takes membership in and training from a Daoist sect to understand a register's secrets.

The Five Methods

Characters with this lore can learn the arts of Daoist sorcery, performing them according to the following methods. To use Daoist magic, the scholar must use at least one of these methods — or a Daoist method learned from some other lore — and can use more than one. Most of these methods give positive modifiers to magic-related skill rolls.

Incantations

Incantations are spoken orders to the natural world.

Association: Wood

Limitations: Jargon

Modifier: +0 or +5

Description

Incantations command the spirits according to traditional Daoist methods. Most end with “in accordance with the statutes and ordinances,” explaining to the spirits that they will suffer harsh penalties for non-compliance. If you use incantations, your player should provide the words; this can be as simple as “I bid evil spirits to infest this wretch” or “I command the fire element to rise,” but interestingly embroidered descriptions that reference the time of day, the stars, the many merits the Daoist possesses in Heaven, the authority of the Immortal Emperor, and harsh threats against defiant spirits can earn a +5 modifier.

Finger Gestures

Finger gestures are the ritual hand gestures of Daoism.

Association: Fire

Limitations: Uses one hand and a free action each turn

Modifier: +0 (+5 with a Quality tool)

Description

Finger gestures are ritual motions that attune the Daoist to the world and establish their mastery over the processes of earth and Heaven; for example, ‘calculating the odds’ by counting out factors on your fingers. Daoists sometimes use Quality tools — swords, ribbons, and other tools designed to augment ritual action — to enhance their finger gestures. (Quality ritual weapons do not also receive combat benefits, but a Perfect sword could have Quality weapon traits and Quality ritual properties.)

Talismans

Talismans are written orders to the natural world. They command the spirits in the name of the Daoist master.

Association: Earth

Limitations: Talismans are fragile and must be drawn in advance.

Modifier: +5 (+10 for a Quality talisman)

Description

Talismans use special “cloud writing” techniques to evoke the magic inherent in the Shen Zhou characters



and the natural world. Each talisman is both a spirit, a piece of fragile paper, and a spell. It takes minutes or hours to prepare. Once prepared, it allows a Daoist to invoke its effect at some later time. Each talisman invokes a single Daoist technique.

Creating a Quality talisman costs 1 Destiny. Neither Quality or regular talismans are reusable.

Breath Sorcery

Breath Sorcery expends the Daoist's vital breath to power their magic.

Association: Metal

Limitations: Chi cost

Modifier: +0 to +15

Description

Breath Sorcery expels the Daoist's Chi, bringing power to their arts. One point of spent Chi allows the performance of effects. Spending two of the same color gives a +5 modifier. Spending five of the same color gives a +10. Spending six of one color and four of any other gives a +15. This is not the same process as kung fu, but it does draw on the same pool of Chi.

Pacing the Constellations

The Daoist walks in a pattern that symbolizes the spirit's flight through Heaven.

Association: Water

Limitations: The Daoist cannot also cover ground while pacing the constellations — the scholar can only move within a narrowly defined area.

Modifier: +5

Description

This Daoist method relies on pacing out ritual patterns. In metaphor and spirit, the Daoist flies through the nine Heavens and patrols the nine regions of the earth, subduing evil and commanding righteousness.

Extraordinary Daoist Techniques

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 0

This lore comes with "Daoist Magic"

Simplified versions of the Daoist techniques are described below, along with a few special Daoist tricks. You have to purchase each technique individually for the listed Destiny cost, but you can perform any one of these techniques in a single round without penalty.

These techniques are Daoist Magic and secret arts. Secret arts cannot be combined with attacks in a complex full action. The scholar must use at least one Daoist Magic method (e.g., Pacing the Constellations.) All Extraordinary Techniques require a full action to employ.

Great Benison of Fire Technique (1 Destiny)

You can assist people, giving them good fortune; this uses a full action and you must succeed on a Moderate (20) Learning roll, but it gives them a +10 modifier instead of the normal +5.

Grievous Act of Metal Technique (2 Destiny)

You can use minor supernatural effects to interfere with others' actions. This uses a full action and you must succeed on a Moderate (20) Learning roll, but it gives them a -10 modifier instead of the normal -5.

Instant Influence Technique (2 Destiny)

You command the elements. If you use any two Daoist methods — such as incantations and finger gestures — you can get a +5 modifier on any mundane roll.

Terrible Rising Water Technique (3 Destiny)

Make a Moderate (20) Learning roll, opposed by the target's Awareness. If you succeed, then the target cannot come within fifteen yards of someone or something of your choice next round. You can define what effect prevents them from doing so, whether it's slipping on the ground or struggling against an intangible miasma of magic.

Sheltering Water Intercession (4 Destiny)

Make a Moderate (20) Learning roll. If you succeed, then only targets who can successfully oppose your roll with their Awareness can look at you — anyone else simply refuses to see you, as if you were invisible, for the next five rounds.

Swift Curse of Wood Technique (5 Destiny)

Make a Moderate (20) Learning roll, opposed by the target's Awareness, to inflict a minor **Injured** or **Sick** condition (pg. 275) on someone. It lasts for five rounds, so a twisted ankle is more likely than a broken leg.

Summoning the Earth's Folly Technique (5 Destiny)

Make a Moderate (20) Learning roll, opposed by the target's Awareness. If you succeed, they suffer Chi flow loss in the color of your choice until they commit an act of folly — something the GM agrees is a plausible but really stupid move on their part. The GM must ignore the tactical benefit of restoring Chi flow when deciding whether something is sufficiently foolish.

Dancing Metal Intercession (5 Destiny)

The sage has a terrible power. You may use the Lift or Fight skill at a range of 10 yards for each rank you have achieved, moving objects with your suasion over the elements.

Rising Flame Intercession (5 Destiny)

When using any two Daoist methods, such as incantations and finger gestures, you halve the Chi cost of your Lightfoot skill for the next round.

The Four Practices

The four practices of Daoism are prayers and exorcism, divination, and self-cultivation. Self-cultivation refers simply to increasing Chi and skills; the character may perform significant meditations and intense rituals of cultivation, but in play, one simply spends Destiny. Divination lets the Daoist determine auspicious and inauspicious things, as well as reading the future. Prayers and exorcism allow the Daoist to command spirits and the natural world, creating and controlling all manner of curses and influences.

Curse Spells

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 0

Curse Spells

Curse spells transform desire and passion into bad fortune.

Aspect: Yin.

Element: Fire.

Taste: Bitter.

Classic Curse Symptoms: Poor health, good fortune, disaster, trouble, unusual fates.

What is a Curse?

A curse means that some part of your life is broken. You aren't getting all of the things Heaven plans for you. This can seem like a good thing. After all, Heaven might have horrible luck in store! But a curse always means that something in your life isn't working quite right — maybe you needed that terrible luck, or maybe it led to better and brighter things. If you get a positive curse, try to remember — your goal is to succeed in life and prove your glory to Heaven, not stumble around under the sway of someone else's passion.

Most curses are Chi weaknesses, but some are hyperactive conditions. Either way, their net effect is to disrupt some natural process of your life. For example, a silver curse might keep you asleep most of the time. As a hyperactive condition, it would give a Destiny bonus when sleepiness gets you into trouble. It wouldn't help you find safe places to sleep or avoid the anger of your superiors — that kind of condition makes it easier to get sleep, rather than harder to stay awake.

Detection and Recovery

Spotting an existing curse and estimating its severity is a Moderate (20) Awareness task, which the target can oppose with Stealth or Awareness. Recovering from curses rolls Awareness. If you have the insight to understand your curses, the hazards of your life melt away like dreams. To

help someone else recover from a curse, roll Learning and meditate upon the yin-yang balances of their life.

Passions and Curses

Each passion has an internal-external relationship with a specific kind of curse. For example, metal curses are internally-externally related to grief. Daoists can use passion to fuel curses. Each passion condition can give rise to a single curse; to make a new curse from a given passion, the scholar must first break the old one.

Every curse reflects a passion, even curses discovered with divination or made from nothing as part of a paired condition technique. There's no such thing as a curse without an unresolved desire at the root of it — usually, a human desire, although sometimes curses reflect emotional qualities of the natural world.

When a scholar discovers or creates a curse, the GM should think about the desire that serves as its source. Placating that desire for a full story breaks the curse. In addition, should the person with the passion condition violate its requirements, the curse fades for a scene. That's why even unlucky people can have good fortune sometimes — the person whose passion created their bad luck is sometimes distracted from their emotion.

It can be difficult to placate some passions — “I hate you because you're older than I am” is a passion difficult to tame, as is unconditional love or obsession. Daoists recommend disappearing for a while or faking death if one cannot have such a curse magically removed.

Other Relationships

Every person is part of a larger system — a set of interacting elemental forces that includes society, nature, and the will of Heaven. In a person's life, curses represent the yin side of this great pattern, and influences the yang side. Paired curse/influence conditions cross the yin and yang of that element — for example, some Daoists can create a paired wood curse and wood influence, each compensating for the other.

When two curses appear as paired conditions, one must control the other. This means that their elements occur two steps apart in the elemental cycle. For example, wood controls earth. Wood curses define how the world expresses its desire to hurt someone. Earth curses inflame people's obsessions to the point of folly. When someone's a target of the “will to hurt,” it makes it harder to focus on their obsessions. When someone's driven, dedicated, and obsessed, it makes them laugh off the world's attempts to hurt them. That's why these curses can appear in pairs — a weakness in one makes the other hyperactive.

A yin-yang technique works the same way. Earth controls water. If the yin of an earth curse is strong, the yang of a water influence is strong. People under a water influence need to remove certain activities from their life. Since the obsessive focus of an earth curse helps with this, and vice versa, the two conditions form a harmonious whole. They're a good yin-yang match, and an earth curse lets Daoists create water influences.

The short parenthesized explanations of some influences are just there to give a better idea of what those influences mean in context — it's not additional game terminology.

Wood Curses

Wood curses manifest the “will to hurt.”

Source: can be created from Anger Passions

Yin-Yang: becomes a Earth Influence (Focus)

Balances: can pair with Earth or Metal Curse

Balances: can pair with an Wood Influence
(Beginnings)

Elemental Progression: becomes a Fire Curse

Description

Sometimes, particularly when an angry Daoist meddles, the balance of the world requires that someone suffer. That's the “will to hurt” — a wood curse.

Wood curses degrade the target's health. The Daoist can make the target sick or impose a curse likely to bring the target physical harm. For example, wood curses can weaken the target's spleen Chi, wound the target's leg, or make them a target for painful accidents.

Wood curses come from anger, and always fall on the target of that anger. They usually inflict weakness and not hyperactivity.

Fire Curses

Fire curses manifest “the will to make things easy.”

Source: can be created from Joy Passions

Yin-Yang: becomes a Metal Influence (Languor)

Balances: can pair with Metal or Water Curse

Balances: can pair with an Fire Influence
(Expansion)

Elemental Progression: becomes an Earth Curse

Description

Sometimes, the world wants to shelter someone from the darker side of fate. This isn't really healthy, but it is good luck, and it's also a fire curse.

Fire curses encourage good fortune. These are often hyperactive conditions that bring actual benefits. The rest are Chi weaknesses, for which the traditional requirement is “you must revel in the good fortune you have.” From a metaphysical standpoint, fire curses make people lazy, encourage corruption, and bore the gods; other than that, though, they're pretty much all good.

Fire curses manifest joy. It is the nature of joy to bring generosity and the desire to help others. When you make a fire curse from



someone's joy, it falls on an appropriate target for their benevolent impulses.

Earth Curses

Earth curses manifest "the will to folly."

Source: can be created from . . . Contemplation Passions

Yin-Yang: becomes a Water Influence
(Limited Activities)

Balances: can pair with Water or Wood Curse

Balances: can pair with an . . . Earth Influence (Focus)

Elemental Progression: becomes a Metal Curse

Description

Sometimes, the pattern of events encourages someone towards folly. Life helps them put all their attention on the wrong things and behave foolishly. For example, a bad gambler trying to quit might find herself meeting gullible or recently-victorious gamblers everywhere she goes and never encountering the right places to spend her money. Even if it seems that the whole world is pushing her to play, it's still a bad idea to go risk her cash — the encouragement is an earth curse, not a sign from Heaven.

Earth curses bring about a specific disaster, such as disharmony, burglary, fire, or discord. Earth curses have a natural rather than a supernatural manifestation — they achieve their effects by impairing the target's wisdom. For example, a curse of burglary might require the following of the target: "you must brag about your wealth in inappropriate circumstances and neglect the defenses on your property." Most earth curses are weaknesses, but hyperactive forms are plausible.

Earth curses come out of passions for contemplation, obsession, dedication, and the will to inflate something's importance. They fall on the obsessed character or the object of their obsession.

Metal Curses

Metal curses manifest the chaos of loss and mourning.

Source: can be created from Grief Passions

Yin-Yang: becomes a Wood Influence
(New Activities)

Balances: can pair with Wood or Fire Curse

Balances: can pair with an Metal Influence
(Languor)

Elemental Progression: becomes a . . Water Curse

Description

Sometimes, the world falls out of order. Something crucial is lost — either in a single person's life or in the whole pattern of things. A metal curse uses the victim to repair that gap. This is sometimes as simple as shoving an orphan together with a childless family, but metal curses are also the catchall for weird curse effects — if the world needs bees to live in someone's hair to provide overall balance of the five elements and yin and yang, that's a metal curse.

Metal curses bring a specific kind of trouble. They are often supernatural rather than natural in their manifestation — if a metal curse attracts burglary, it can actually convince mice and insects to raid the target's house and carry its little treasures away.

Metal curses develop from grief and the will to reclaim what has been lost. When Daoists craft metal curses from grief passions, they fall on someone appropriate to answer that loss — for example, the metal curse of an abandoned lover falls on the abandoner, but a widower's metal curse might fall on someone who looks or acts like his dead wife. The metal curse of a mother after miscarriage might fall on her sister's living infant.

Water Curses

Water curses manifest "the will to separate two things."

Source: can be created from Fear Passions

Yin-Yang: becomes a Fire Influence (Intensity)

Balances: can pair with Fire or Earth Curse

Balances: can pair with an Water Influence
(Limited Activities)

Elemental Progression: becomes a Wood Curse

Description

Sometimes, it's important that two people or things stay apart. When the world tries to keep someone from doing something, going somewhere, or meeting someone, that's a water curse.

Water curses "sever" two fates — they do something to keep the target away from something else. Sometimes, this just gives an action penalty on attempts to find somebody, but water curses can also be malicious and terrible spells that use injury, misfortune, and supernatural horror to keep two things apart.

Water curses come from fear and the will to escape a terrible situation. When a Daoist makes a water curse from a fear passion, it falls on the person who incites the fear passion and keeps them from doing the thing that is feared.

Influence Spells

(*A System Topic*)

Destiny Cost: 0

Influence Spells

When one of a person's elements becomes agitated, it exerts a greater influence over their life. This is an influence spell.

Aspect: Yang.

Element: Metal.

Taste: Pungent.

Classic Influence Symptoms: Spontaneous new plans, excessive vigor, unusual focus, absence of worry, abandoning old habits or tools.

What is an Influence?

An influence is a powerful positive energy in your life that isn't really natural to your Chi. It's like having a Weapon of the Gods or being friends with an Emperor — if you're wise, balanced, and in control of the situation, it's an asset. If not, it'll consume you.

Most influences are hyperactive conditions, but some are Chi weaknesses. Either way, their net effect is to help you achieve something. For example, a water influence might urge you to sleep more. As a Chi weakness, it would require that you "take every opportunity for sleep." It wouldn't punish you for waking up early when necessary — that's hurting your ability to be awake, rather than giving you positive encouragement to spend more time in bed.

Detection and Recovery

Spotting an existing influence and estimating its severity is a Moderate (20) Awareness task, which the target can oppose with Stealth or Awareness. Recovering from influences rolls Awareness. Characters of strong *wu wei* move through the world in balance with all things, and the powers of the elements are straw dogs before the insight of a sage. To help someone else recover from an influence, roll Learning.

Inspirations and Influences

Each inspiration has an internal-external relationship with a specific kind of elemental influence. For example, benevolence inspirations are internally-externally related to wood influences. Daoists can use inspirations to fuel influences. Each inspiration condition can give rise to a single influence; to make a new influence from a given inspiration, the scholar must first break the old influence.

Every influence reflects an inspiration towards virtue,

even influences made from nothing as part of a paired condition creation or discovered via divination techniques. It's the yang fire of inspiration that invigorates the elements — usually, the fire of a human's inspiration, but influences can also reflect the natural world's inclinations towards virtue and harmony.

When a scholar discovers an influence, the GM should think about the inspiration that serves as its source. The influence ends if that inspiration falters for a full story, and fades for a scene if the inspired person violates its requirements. In addition, the two must interact — unless the influenced person has a direct relationship to the inspiration, the inspired person and the influenced person must interact at least once per story for the influence to remain. For example, a wood influence, encouraging new projects, might come from a mentor's benevolence inspiration. The mentor's radiant humaneness helps the student embrace new ideas without fear. If the student spends a whole story without talking to the mentor, the influence will fade.

Other Relationships

Every person is part of a larger system — a set of interacting elemental forces that includes society, nature, and the will of Heaven. In a person's life, curses represent the yin side of this great pattern, and influences the yang. Paired curse/influence conditions cross the yin and yang of that element — for example, some Daoists can create a paired metal curse and metal influence, each compensating for the other.

When two influences appear as paired conditions, one must control the other. This means that their elements occur two steps apart in the elemental cycle. For example, metal controls wood. When metal falters, wood rises to counter it; when wood is weak, metal acts aggressively upon it. Wood influences bring new growth; metal influences, decay. It's rare to see both of them strong at the same time — if someone has impulses both towards new growth and towards decay, it's only natural that one influence is a weakness and the other a strength. That's why Daoists can pair wood and metal influences.

A yin-yang technique works the same way. Fire controls metal. If the yang of a fire influence is strong, the yin of a metal curse is strong. Fire influences encourage growth and expansion; metal curses make a character a pawn to the world's needs. Daoists can make metal curses out of fire influences because the two are a yin-yang match: the fire influence helps the character expand to fulfill their new role.

The short parenthesized explanations of some curses are just there to give a better idea of what those curses mean in context — it's not additional game terminology.

神兵玄奇



Wood Influences

Wood influences encourage new activities.

Source: can be created from . . . Benevolence Inspirations

Yin-Yang: becomes an Earth Curse (Folly)

Balances: can pair with Earth or Metal Influence

Balances: can pair with a Wood Curse
(Physical Harm)

Elemental Progression: becomes a Fire Influence

Description

When a character comes under a strong influence of elemental wood, it urges them to start feeling something or start doing something. It either helps them do so or punishes them for holding back.

Some wood influences make it easier to start a new project or activity — to begin a journey, construction project, or try something unusual and new. Others spur new emotions, adding violence, happiness, lust, or the desire to spend money to a situation. Daoists can use these influences to encourage specific activities, such as “make friends with me.”

Fire Influences

Fire influences encourage excess, vigor, and expansion.

Source: can be created from Propriety Inspirations

Yin-Yang: becomes a Metal Curse

Balances: can pair with Metal or Water Influence

Balances: can pair with a Fire Curse
(Good Fortune)

Elemental Progression: becomes an . . . Earth Influence

Description

When a character comes under a strong influence of elemental fire, it urges them to do “what you were doing, only more so!” Fire influences provide extremely strong motivation, but only to existing projects — fire never starts anything, it just kicks an emotion, project, or situation into overdrive. They help the character out with over-the-top actions or punish the character for doing something specific with subtlety.

People who come under a fire influence might fan each anger into hatred, each passing interest into desperate love, or their dedication to a specific task into an all-consuming obsession. Fire influences make a polished socialite better at the game but won't help a wallflower blossom; they help a violent situation explode into war, but won't turn a sleepy village violent. Daoists can use these influences to encourage specific activities, such as “go on at length when talking about things that interest me.”

Earth Influences

Earth influences, like most earth effects, encourage dedication.

Source: can be created from Fidelity Inspirations
(Violence)

Yin-Yang: becomes a Water Curse (Separation)

Balances: can pair with Water or Wood Influence

Balances: can pair with a Earth Curse (Folly)

Elemental Progression: becomes a . . . Metal Influence

Description

When a character comes under a strong influence of elemental earth, it urges them to proceed with care and dedication in some matter. Like earth curses, earth influences focus the mind — but where an earth curse might encourage a poor gambler to play more often and for bigger stakes, an earth influence would push them to spend more time thinking about their strategy and practicing for small antes.

Earth influences make people vulnerable to specific fads, fashions, ethical ideas, and anxieties, but also encourage wisdom in their pursuit. These influences help the character methodically pursue their new obsession or — as weaknesses — punish the character for missed opportunities. Daoists can use these influences to encourage specific activities, such as “be careful with my money!”

Metal Influences

Metal influences encourage languor, scaling back, and consolidation.

Source: can be created from Righteousness
Inspirations

Yin-Yang: becomes an Wood Curse
(Physical Harm)

Balances: can pair with Wood or Fire Influence

Balances: can pair with a Metal Curse

Elemental Progression: becomes a . . . Water Influence

Description

When a character comes under a strong influence of elemental metal, it fills them with the atmosphere of autumn — the Chi of withering, decay, harvests, and introspection. This urges the character to proceed in an understated or careful manner in some activity — “don't burn too much energy” and “protect what you already have” are the messages of Metal. Some metal influences help avoid the consequences of halfhearted behavior or lapses in duty; others assist in consolidating gains; a few punish the character for throwing themselves into an activity fully or trying to expand their operations. Used in one aspect, metal could urge a Clan Fortress guard to indolently neglect his duties; used in another, a metal influence could heighten his attentiveness to the things he seeks to protect.



People under a metal influence sometimes fight lazily, particularly in aggressive battles. They might lose interest in love, or simply focus on aspects of their relationships that are already strong. They might hold a specific principle such as filial loyalty in lower regard, or spend a great deal of time reviewing studies already complete. Even when encouraging languor, metal influences can subdue behaviors and reactions but cannot shut them down — they breed sloth, not immobility. Daoists can use these influences to encourage specific activities, such as “don’t work too hard at keeping me out of this fortress.”

Water Influences

Water influences discourage behaviors.

Source: can be created from Balance Inspirations
Yin-Yang: becomes an Fire Curse (Good Fortune)
Balances: can pair with Fire or Earth Influence
Balances: can pair with a Water Curse (Separation)
Elemental Progression: becomes a . . . Wood Influence

Description

When a character comes under a strong influence of elemental water, it fills them with the yin principle. It encourages inaction — the target retreats into themselves, into stillness, into quiet, into calm, into the inner dark. Water influences are the influences most resembling curses — they urge characters to set aside a certain behavior or emotion. They help the character survive without it, or punish the character for clinging to it when unnecessary.

People who come under a water influence become more reluctant to behave in the relevant fashion — they might have trouble waking up and starting their day, initiating violence, getting angry, or falling in love. Warriors with a self-imposed handicap — someone who wears a blindfold in all save the most terrible fights, for example — are often under a water influence. Daoists can use these influences to discourage specific activities, such as “don’t wake up.”

Crafting Curses

(Secret Arts)

This lore requires “Daoist Magic”

Destiny Cost: 5

This magic uses Daoist prayers and exorcisms to control and inflict curses. The passionate heart creates bad fortune!

Curse magic relies on the **Crafting** skill. When making the necessary skill rolls, roll Crafting. The target can choose to oppose these techniques with their Awareness.

These techniques are Daoist Magic and secret arts. Secret arts cannot be combined with attacks in a complex full action. The scholar must use at least one

Daoist Magic method (e.g., Incantations.)

The rules for curses are found on pg. 318.

Internal-External Technique

(Story)

Apprentice Li worked on a curse talisman. He had the corner of his tongue stuck out the side of his mouth. He was intent.

“Li?” Feng asked. “Could you step out to the market and find me some herbs?”

Li stood up. “What kind?”

“Any herbs will do,” Feng said, and pushed Li out the door.

In the silence of the room, he shivered. “An apprentice! It’s too much work! Spirits of Heaven and Earth, all things under Heaven, with the power of wind and water, keep this boy away from me. Supreme Sovereign! Promptly! In accordance with the statutes and ordinances!”

Trembling, Feng sank down and muttered incantations to himself.

(Example)

Feng isn’t afraid of Li, but he’s afraid of the hard work teaching an apprentice involves. He uses **Story of the Self** and discovers a trivial fear passion in himself, rolling a 22 on his Awareness. That means that the Recovery difficulty for his fear is 22. He chooses a Duration of 1 and a one-story Interval.

Now Feng uses the fear to create a curse. He rolls his Crafting against the Recovery difficulty for the curse, which is 22. He succeeds, and can now create a water curse that falls on Li, by the internal-external technique.

Feng specifies the details of the water curse: it’s a trivial weakness, that “keeps him away from me.” The GM refines this: “don’t try to find Feng or his house.” Feng decides that this curse gives a negative modifier when Li tries to do so. Because it’s a trivial weakness, it only gives a -0 — but it’s still a real curse, and Li will notice that Feng has become somewhat difficult to find.

Feng plans to escalate the curse to a minor curse when Li gets home. The curse would normally only add a few minutes to the time it takes Li to get there — he might trip, or get mildly confused, and then straighten himself out, but that’s all. Li’s player,





however, likes playing things for comedy, so he makes an Awareness style roll to see how long he takes and rolls a 15.

It'll be a while.

(Rules)

You can buy the **Internal-External** technique for Curses for 3 Destiny. This lets you create curses from people's passions. Use your target's anger to fuel a wood curse, joy a fire curse, obsession an earth curse, grief a metal curse, or fear a silver curse. The curse descriptions on pg. 324 explain whom the new curse falls upon.

You must interact with the passionate person — normally, by performing Daoist rites near them.

Yin-Yang Technique

(Story)

Wu Zhao looked up from the child's bed.

"I'm sorry," he said.

Mother Foh sighed.

"I'm too bad with curses," Wu Zhao said. "I can't fix this. So she'll be sick her whole life, and then she'll die. But I'll make you a better guardian for her."

"She's just a girl," Foh said.

Wu Zhao rose. He dusted off his knees. "Ah," he said.

Then Foh knelt, and sighed, and brushed back her daughter's hair. "But do it."

So Wu Zhao gathered his Chi and issued the external vital breath.

(Example)

Wu Zhao fails to break the sickness curse on Foh's daughter, so he applies a yin-yang technique to create an earth influence from it. He rolls Crafting against the curse's Hard (30) Recovery, spending five Chi to power his external vital breath and gain a +10 modifier.

He successfully performs the technique and applies the new earth influence to Mother Foh — giving her the wisdom and dedication she needs to protect the sick child in a social and financial environment hostile even to healthy girl children. As long as she devotes herself with care and strong intentions, Foh will have a bonus on attempts to nurture the child, keep her safe, and keep her husband's intentions towards their child benevolent rather than angry.

The anger responsible for the curse is actually the Clan Head's — he's upset that his Clan has too many daughters. But his anger is balanced by a certain

inspiration towards benevolence in some of the people of the Clan, such as Mother Foh — so it's likely that the influence connects to her own inspiration towards goodness. If she grows bitter, or the curse fades, or the Clan Head's anger goes away and stops fueling the curse and her inspiration, the influence dies as well.

Since Wu Zhao just wants to do a good deed and move on, he doesn't really have to care about all of this. There was a wood curse; he made an earth influence, which the wood curse writeup on pg. 319 lists as the yin-yang technique's result. If he wanted to put the earth influence on himself or one of his friends, though, he'd have to start paying attention — because he'd have to make sure that the Clan Head stayed angry, Mother Foh stayed benevolent, and the child stayed sick, in addition to interacting with Mother Foh and the child at least once a story to maintain the influence.

(Rules)

You can buy the **Yin-Yang** technique for Curses for 1 Destiny. This lets you use a curse to create an influence. Each influence lists the kind of curse it can fuel on pg. 321.

You must interact with both the cursed person and the target, and the two of them with one another. You can apply the influence to the cursed person or someone else — even yourself!

Elemental Progression Technique

(Story)

"There are many angry men in the world," Wu Zhao said. "That's why painful curses are so common."

Biao looked glumly down at his swollen foot. "I don't suppose that this makes you angry enough to curse whomever it is back."

"No," Wu Zhao said. "I am not inspired to curse people simply for swelling up your foot. That is not the way of the Dao."

"It also has sores."

"I could change it," Wu Zhao said, "into a 'good luck' curse."

"What's a good luck curse?"

"It's a curse that makes you value your good luck."

Biao hesitated. "That does not sound so bad."

Wu Zhao held two fingers just below his mouth and murmured incantations. He paced the constellations. Biao's foot sank down to its normal size. Biao looked at in wonder.

"See?" Zhao said. "It's good luck!"

Biao rose. He walked around. He paced in circles. Then, as he paced, he began to frown. "It's not good luck to get a curse and have it broken," he said. "It's good luck not to get a curse at all!"

"Ah . . ." Zhao said.

There was a loud thump of flesh against wood, and a spatter of blood across the floor.

"Don't walk into your desk," Zhao added.

"Ah! That's a lucky lesson in irony," Biao said, through tightly grit teeth.

(Example)

Wu Zhao transforms Biao's wood curse of ill health into a fire curse of good luck. He rolls Crafting against the Recovery (18) of the curse. Being a poetic soul, albeit someone bad at curses, he spends a point of joss to succeed.

Most curses of good luck are hyperactive conditions, but since he transformed this out of a Chi weakness, it's still a Chi weakness. If Biao doesn't revel in his good luck and the pleasures available to him, he suffers the penalty. He loses his breath in Crimson Chi — that is to say, his grace.

This curse is still dependent on the original anger passion. Supposing that his lover Sorrowful Pine is the woman angry at Biao, the anger probably changes slightly; instead of thinking, "I wish that man would suffer," she thinks, "I wish that stupid man would appreciate what he has!"

(Rules)

You can buy the **Elemental Progression** technique for Curses for 1 Destiny. This lets you transform your target's wood curse into a fire curse, fire curse into an earth curse, earth curse into a metal curse, metal curse into a water curse, or water curse into a wood curse.

You must interact with the target — normally, by performing Daoist rites near them.

Paired Curse Technique

(Story)

"You want archery lessons?" The old man practically hopped up and down with rage. "Who comes to Filthy Curse Master Feng for *archery lessons*?"

Yi looked down. She grit her teeth. "I want you to make me a better archer."

"No! A thousand times no! I am a curse master!"

"I-want-you-to-make-me-a-better-archer," hissed Yi in one long breath.

Feng sighed. "Why?"

"My father was an archer. But he died. My mother missed him so much she named me Yi! But I'm no good. If I don't get better, she'll kick me out of the Wulin with her kung fu and make me marry a boy!"

"Fine," Feng said. He sat down. He drew up a talisman. He gave it to her. "Now you're cursed, la. Get out."

Yi walked outside. She pulled out her bow. A sparrow took flight. She followed it with a nocked arrow.

"Agh!" she screamed, as her hands went into spasms of white-hot pain, and the arrow flew through the bird's heart like a bolt from Heaven.

(Example)

Feng's under a curse that makes it difficult for him to refuse a persistent request. So he makes a paired curse for Yi — one metal curse, from her mother's grief, and one wood curse, from Yi's anger at herself. He defines the metal curse as a hyperactive condition — her father's spirit guides her archery and gives her a Strike bonus, but only when she's using archery to try to honor her Clan and her family. The GM defines the wood curse — when she tries to use her hands too carefully, pain flares up and interferes with her Wu Wei, costing her breath in Silver Chi. In combination, Yi can get off a few incredible shots at the beginning of any battle, but if she keeps it up, she risks Silver Chi flow loss from the fiery pain.

(Rules)

You can buy the **Paired Condition** technique for Curses for 5 Destiny. This lets you create two matching curses from nothing — one weakness and one hyperactivity. Each curse lists the curses and influences it can match, but you can only create curse/influence pairs if you have this technique for both Curses and Influences.

Inflaming and Soothing Curses

(Story)

"Master Feng! Why can I no longer find your home?"

Feng muttered under his breath. "I cursed you, you prat."

"But I'm your apprentice!"

"Nothing but trouble!" Feng declared. "How'd you find your way here?"

"I tied myself to a guide."

"I'll have to make the curse stronger!" Feng declared.

Feng's apprentice Li looked at him with wide, soft eyes. "Is this a test, Master?"

". . . yes," Feng said, after a long moment. "A test. Now go fetch me Earth Lord's tongue."

He shoved Li out the door and closed it behind him, and, hard as he tried, Li could not find his way back in.

(Example)

Li is under a trivial curse that keeps him from troubling Feng — but since it's trivial, it won't keep him at bay





forever. Feng rolls a Hard (30) Crafting task to inflame Li's trivial curse into a minor one. It now has a Recovery difficulty of 30 and can impose actual penalties when Li tries to make his way into Feng's house. Of course, since Li is a scholar, he has a decent chance at recovering once he's wandered a bit and put on some Destiny.

(Rules)

You can buy the **Inflaming and Soothing Conditions** technique for Curses for 1 Destiny. This allows you to increase trivial curses to minor curses, minor curses to major curses, or reverse the process to reduce a curse's potency.

Stealthy or Quick Work

(Rules)

You can buy the ability to use Stealth to conceal these techniques for 1 Destiny.

You can buy the ability to perform these techniques in five turns without penalty and a single turn with a -5 modifier for 5 Destiny.

You can improve this, buying the ability to perform these techniques in a single turn without penalty, for an additional 5 Destiny (for a total of 10.)

Manipulating Influences

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 5

This lore requires "Daoist Magic"

This magic uses Daoist prayers and exorcisms to control and inflict influences. The virtuous spleen rouses the power of the elements!

Influence magic relies on the **Learning** skill. When making the necessary skill rolls, roll Learning. The target can choose to oppose these techniques with their Awareness.

These techniques are Daoist Magic and secret arts. Secret arts cannot be combined with attacks in a complex full action. The scholar must use at least one Daoist Magic method (e.g., Breath Sorcery.)

The rules for influences are found on pg. 321.

Internal-External Technique

(Story)

Wu Zhao dreamed of his ancestor, founder of the Wu Clan — the illustrious Ji Wu!

"The Clan
Head of

the Wu makes assiduous sacrifices," said his ancestor. "It is harmonious that he should know great good fortune."

Then Zhao saw a golden bird fly and alight upon the coffers of Wu Clan.

"Ah!" he said, on waking. "The Clan Head is inspired towards Propriety; and I shall use this inspiration to bless the chief trader of our Clan."

(Example)

Wu Zhao visits the Clan Head and performs the proper rituals. A propriety inspiration — in this case towards the Xia Virtue Zhong — can fuel a fire influence. Zhao applies this to the Clan's greatest merchant, making him even better at the mercantile game.

(Rules)

You can buy the **Internal-External** technique for Inspirations for 3 Destiny. This lets you create influences from people's inspirations. Use benevolence inspirations to craft wood influences, propriety inspirations to craft fire influences, fidelity inspirations to make earth influences, righteousness inspirations to make metal influences, and balance inspirations to make water influences. The influence falls on someone mutually agreeable to yourself and the inspired person — you don't have to ask them in character, but it has to be someone they'd want to have fall under that particular influence.

You must interact with the inspired person — normally, by performing Daoist rites near them.

Yin-Yang Technique

(Story)

Minister Ling handed Wu Zhao a cup of wine.

"Drink!" he said. "Hell Clan's got the best wine."

"I'm a prisoner," Zhao said. "Not a guest."

"You're an esteemed Daoist sage, commanding ten thousand excellences; and look what a party they've thrown for you!" Ling frowned at Zhao. "Really, sir, you're too resistant."

"You'd serve Hell Clan, Minister?"

The Minister stuffed a chunk of meat in his mouth, chewed, and swallowed. "They don't seem so bad," he said.

"In the next room," Zhao said, "they've piled the bodies of butchered children."

"That's the next room," Ling said. "I haven't seen it. Maybe it's not there! It's easiest to go through life if you don't investigate too hard."

Zhao set his jaw and held two fingers stiffly extended at his side. "May you see the thousand hells that await a man of such callous disregard," he said, in a tone of supreme disgust. "Promptly, promptly, and in accordance



with the statutes and ordinances.”

On the other side of the room, Iron Duke looked over, and adopted a slightly puzzled frown. To a servant, he asked, “Did someone start Ling’s torture early?”

(Example)

Wu Zhao is aware of a metal influence that makes Minister Ling lazy — he’s so lazy he hasn’t even bothered rolling the Everyday (18) Awareness tasks to recover from the influence! But Wu Zhao didn’t realize just how morally lax it made him. Now that he does, he’s pretty angry. He rolls Learning against the Recovery difficulty, creating a wood curse. “Like the Drunk condition,” Zhao’s player specifies, “only with pain instead of alcohol.”

His nerves and mind’s eye ringing with the torments of a thousand hells, Ling begins to scream.

(Rules)

You can buy the **Yin-Yang** technique for Influences for I Destiny. This lets you use an influence to create a curse. Each influence lists the kind of curse it can fuel on pg. 321.

You must interact with both the influenced person and the target, and the two of them with one another. You can apply the curse to the influenced person or someone else — even yourself!

Elemental Progression Technique

(Story)

“I should warn you,” Wu Zhao said, “that it is my duty to punish you for your unrighteousness.”

“Bah,” said Filthy Curse Master Feng. “We should make friends, instead! In accordance with the statutes and ordinances governing our elite brotherhood.”

Stars glittered around Feng. He was bright and shining — what better friend could Wu Zhao have? Yet, as they paced around one another in the sacred diagram of the constellations, Wu Zhao narrowed his eyes. “It is my duty and *my pleasure*,” he corrected, “to punish you with great severity. For that is also in accordance with the statutes and ordinances.”

Feng eyed Wu Zhao, who was burning with a righteous fire. “But you’re a man of etiquette,” he pointed out. “Surely, coming into my home and punishing me is just too rude!”

Wu Zhao felt a wave of panic. Surely, he must observe the proper etiquette —

“Stop that,” he ground out, through grit teeth.

(Example)

Feng crafts a wood influence from Wu Zhao’s benevolence, urging him to “make friends.” This minor weakness influence has a Recovery difficulty of 20.

Zhao wants to progress the weakness along the element wheel to a fire influence, urging himself to seek justice with great vigor. He attempts a Moderate (20) Learning task and succeeds. The wood influence goes away, and now Zhao has a minor weakness fire influence. He defines it in general terms: “I inflame my desire to punish him.” The GM gives the exact requirement: “You can’t hold back from seriously hurting him when you attack.” Zhao can also redefine the weakness; he decides on an action penalty.

As it turns out, this doesn’t matter; Feng immediately rolls a Moderate (20) Learning task to convert this fire influence into an earth influence, urging Zhao to focus with more firmness and dedication on his etiquette. Finally, Zhao calms himself by transforming it into a metal influence, drowning his own natural benevolence towards Feng as a fellow Daoist under a wave of dispassion.

(Rules)

You can buy the **Elemental Progression** technique for Influences for I Destiny. This lets you ignite your target’s wood influence into a fire influence, bank their fire influence into an earth influence, sink their earth influence into a metal influence, rot their metal influence into a water influence, and convert their water influence into a rising wood influence.

You must interact with the target — normally, by performing Daoist rites in their presence.

Paired Influence Creation

(Story)

“Great yin-yang master of a thousand excellences!” declared Loh Cheng, clinging to the hem of Wu Zhao’s robes. “I beg your assistance!”

“Ah?”

“It’s my son!” Cheng explained. “He wants to be a scholar. Not a brave warrior! I need you to help him before he loses his way!”

Wu Zhao’s eyebrow twitched. Its hairs were gray and long.

“Illustrious master!”

“I’ll see what I can do,” Wu Zhao said.

(Example)

If Wu Zhao doesn’t cooperate, Loh Cheng will drive both his son and Wu Zhao mad with his frenetic worries. So Zhao crafts a paired fire/metal influence to drive the man’s son away from scholarly pursuits and into the martial arts. But since he’s a scholar himself, Wu Zhao doesn’t want to shut the boy’s studies down. He makes a hyperactive metal influence that encourages the boy to study with a certain understated languor — by helping him get more insight

神兵玄奇

out of scattered occasional moments of study than he would out of his full dedication! The GM balances this with a Chi weakness fire influence — it requires the boy to study the martial arts with great enthusiasm, lest the influence punish him with withheld Destiny. The result is a child who could become a great warrior/scholar if he shows dedication, but will remain eternally petty if he's just too lazy for the martial arts.

(Rules)

You can buy the **Paired Condition** technique for Influences for 5 Destiny. This lets you create two matching influences from nothing — one weakness and one hyperactivity. Each influence lists the curses and influences it can match, but you can only create curse/influence pairs if you have this technique for both Influences and Curses.

Inflaming and Soothing Influences

(Story)

"What will happen to him?" Cheng asked, after the ritual was complete.

Wu Zhao cast the I Ching. He glanced at the yarrow stalks. He saw what would come.

Ingrate! he thought indignantly. *Dowsing my special influences with his own magic! Lob Cheng is right. Scholars are nothing but trouble!*

"I expect he'll be fine," Zhao predicted aloud.

(Example)

Zhao attempts to predict that the boy will turn out well. He makes a successful prediction, but the GM elaborates: "When he's earned secret wisdom, he'll soothe your influences down to trivial conditions so he can concentrate on his books and become a legendary Daoist."

Later in his life, the boy rolls a Hard (30) Learning roll and soothes the influences back to trivial conditions.

(Rules)

You can buy the **Inflaming and Soothing Conditions** technique for Influences for 1 Destiny. This allows you to increase trivial influences to minor influences, minor influences to major influences, or vice versa.

Stealthy or Quick Work

(Rules)

You can buy the ability to use Stealth to conceal these techniques for 1 Destiny.

You can buy the ability to perform these techniques in five turns without penalty and a single turn with a -5 modifier for 5 Destiny.

You can improve this, buying the ability to perform these techniques in a single turn without penalty, for an additional 5 Destiny (for a total of 10.)

Manifesting Spirits

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 15

This lore requires "Daoist Magic"

The Toad

(180 Years Before Tiger Soul's Return)

The Daoist whispered over his fingers and paced out the forms.

"What is she doing?" asked the Emperor, irritably.

"She's whispering over her fingers and pacing out the forms," minister Heng explained.

"Yes," agreed minister Guan.

"Supreme Sovereign!" shouted the Daoist. "Promptly! Promptly! In accordance with the statutes and ordinances!"

There was a wet noise.

"She's summoned a toad!" Guan snapped.

"A blind toad! To cure the Emperor's blindness!" Heng confirmed.

"Ah!" the Emperor said, and leaned forward.

"Blindness spirit," said the Daoist, in a tone of firm command, "release your grip on the Emperor!"

There was a long silence, followed by a croak. The toad hopped once. It said, softly, "He is an angry man, the Emperor. He does many things in rage. Thus I am born, in beneficence, that the Emperor need not witness the consequences of his acts. Why should I release him? I am his dearest friend."

"Toad," said the Emperor, "It is my command that you should release me."





The toad inflated the bladders of his neck defiantly. "I am a virtuous blindness spirit. Though the Emperor himself commands it, and backs that command with one hundred demon-scourges, still I will stand by my cause."

"How many demon-scourges do we have?" Heng asked of Guan.

"Only seventy-eight," Guan answered.

"Inauspicious," moaned Heng.

"Perhaps," the Daoist said, "you could make someone else blind."

"Ah," said the toad, "show me a person of supreme anger — whose rage can shake the pillars of the world! Then I would know I had found someone more suitable for my work."

"... is there such a man?" asked the Daoist, looking up.

"The bandit!" cried Heng, gratefully. "The bandit, Silver River Killer!"

"Executed," moaned Guan. "Torn limb from limb by the emperor's men."

"Dig up his corpse," commanded the Daoist. "Such an outrage will stir his spirit to anger, even in the next life! Then the toad will give his blindness to the Silver River Killer's body."

Manifesting Spirits

(System)

This technique is Daoist Magic and secret arts. Secret arts cannot be combined with attacks in a complex full action. The scholar must use at least one Daoist Magic method (e.g., a Talisman.)

One of the rare Daoist arts is a peculiar form of the internal-external technique. It lets the scholar manifest a condition entirely outside of someone's body, making a minor or major passion, curse, influence, inspiration, or even sickness into a manifest spirit. Characters with this lore can perform this transformation with a Moderate (20) Learning roll.

In this age and time, spirits are not powerful fighters. They have the basic traits of a 5th rank fighter and an appearance reflecting their nature. In addition, they have the following special skills:

- They know their own history and nature — a curse spirit would know the passion it comes from, the reason for that passion, the location of the passionate person, and whether nature or a Daoist transformed it from passion into a curse.
- They can choose to transfer their associated condition to someone else by touching them. They can only attempt this once per target, and the target can refuse physical conditions with a Hardiness roll, mental conditions with a Confidence roll, and spiritual conditions with an Awareness roll. The difficulty is

the Recovery difficulty for the condition.

- They gain the benefits of their own condition as if it were a hyperactive form, whether or not it is.
- They can transform into a talisman and vice versa. Some can also turn into a small animal, insect, or plant.

Killing the spirit doesn't destroy the condition, but it does give a +5 modifier on any attempts to treat the condition.

For example, a man might go blind because he's damaged his liver with too much anger. If a Daoist evokes that blindness as a blindness spirit, it takes form as a cloud of darkness, a blind man, a milky-eyed toad, or something else appropriate. It doesn't have to cooperate with the Daoist, but it's vulnerable to ordinary persuasion, as noted in the story above. Beneficent conditions often take employment with the Daoist, in gratitude for the bodies given to them.

The Ghost

(Story)

"It's like I've been cursed by someone's grief," sulked Feng. "All my books shuffle around when I'm not looking."

He glared at his shelf. "Grief spirit! Manifest!"

The world spun. Feng saw the ghost take shape.

"Li!" he said.

"It is I, Dead Apprentice Li!" declared the curse spirit. "Speaking from the ghost realm to mourn that I have lost my great master the Filthy Curse Master Feng!"

Feng walked forward. He poked Li.

"You're not dead," he said. "You're asleep."

Li looked embarrassed.

"Now go back to your body," Feng said. "If your grief curses me again, I'll make your eyes fall out and have swallows nest in the sockets!"

"I like swallows," Li said.

"Bats?"

Li hesitated a long moment, and vanished.

"Huh," said Feng. "I guess I'm not such a bad teacher after all."

(Example)

Curses and influences can be ghosts of people who are sleeping, daydreaming, or dead — their desires and inspirations play out in the world. Feng succeeds on a Moderate (20) Learning task to manifest the metal curse that he's suffering from. It's surprising, but not shocking, when it turns out to be not just Li's passion but also Li's sleeping spirit.



Roleplaying in the Land of the Gods: Gamemastering The Scroll of the Sage

What's In This Section –

On Being the Wulin Sage

Getting Started
Keeping The Flow
Quick Campaign Generation
Relationship Charts
Character Advancement
The Rights of Rank
My Loyal Followers
Poison Use in the Land of the Gods
Wealth, Possessions and Treasures

Advanced Lore

Tiger Soul
The Way of the Wulin
The Transformation of the World
Formless Techniques
Slaughter and Sacrifice
Designing Your Own God Weapons
The Weapons of the Gods

Building a Reputation in Hell

The Dark Side of Chi
Corrupt Chi
Black Void Treasures
Existence Hating Radiance

Canon Setting Characters

Appendices

On Being the Wulin Sage

Welcome to the GM Section for *Weapons of the Gods* – a fast and dirty primer to getting your own game on the road. We'll assume you've watched the movies, and of course the comics will help, too – whether WotG itself or other kung fu comics like Storm Riders, Heaven Sword & Dragon Saber, you name it; any and all of these will help. Since the roleplaying game is based on wuxia fantasy, it helps to have seen as many of these sources as you can!

Getting Started

Firstly and most important for a Wulin Sage – What is the **scope** of your game? To put it another way, how big are the characters going to get, and how fast? You should consult with your players about how long you want your game to run. . . not in months (in this writer's experience, people just don't game for years anymore), but in number of sessions. Sit with your players and talk to them, and make an estimate based on how often you meet and how many times minimum you'd like to play the game. This way, you can plan out how fast characters develop from how much Destiny they achieve, and your Game Master can get a basic idea of around when the Big Finale will happen, and how powerful the players must be to face it.

*Example: Chris Kaomera has a grand game of Weapons of the Gods in mind: he wants to have the players confront the Master of the Hell Clan himself – The Dread Dominion. Since his players are all starting in Rank Four (they're new), he figures they have to be at least all Rank Two to even attempt challenging Dominion. . . and probably should be First! All players start with 50 points, and the minimum he wants them to be is 175 points. . . so they have to each earn at least 125 points in play, over the course of the campaign. He decides for such a game, it pretty much has to be **At the Movies** (see below). The challenges and the combat flows thick and fast, as his players battle for supremacy in the Wulin and to obtain several Weapons of the Gods for themselves; just raw kung-fu isn't likely to cut it against someone as powerful as Dominion! He also keeps the 'Destiny for Every Deed' default below, so if his players are having a good time, they'll be earning anywhere from 6-8 Destiny per session, perhaps even more on occasion.*

So for his plan to work, he must engage his players by making the story conflict-ridden, so they earn around 7 points per session. At two sessions a month (they play every other week), in about eight months' time -- give or take a few sessions depending on circumstances -- they'll be ready to go up against Dominion. Of course, whether or not they survive that encounter is another matter entirely. . .





Once you've had that conversation, talk about what kind of things your players want to see in the game, and ask them to make characters accordingly. If you end up with an all-Warrior group, that will automatically limit the things you and the players have to think about at the outset. Of course, they'll eventually find out the hard way -- later as various people try to manipulate them into doing what they want -- that a more balanced group has its benefits. ... But the way of kung fu is hard; politics of some kind or another are always involved, even if it's only behind the scenes! Encouraging at least a couple players to take at least a few of the Lores from the history and society sections will often suggest possible stories. For example, a good big-scale world-threatening storyline could do with the return of Gong Gong, the Sky-Breaking Demon, and his kung-fu trained Hordes!

Keeping the Flow

Once you've got your plots (and plotters!) underway, there's the question of ongoing play. There's what you can do before the game, and what you can do during the game -- a short discussion on the tools at hand and how to use them.

Before Play Begins

First, see if the Warriors have remembered the Rule of Thumb for Chi: every Color of chi used by a style of kung fu should be two points more than the highest level technique. This is a big one, particularly for the frontline fighters. As the combat wears on, a Warrior will tend to have a larger River, but will be fighting for breath; this can be unnerving, and it's best to ensure that the warriors take the Rule of Thumb into account. Also point out that it's worth investing some Destiny in *Possession* -- *Armor*. While every Warrior starts out with Light Armor for free, it's worth considering getting Medium if they can afford it.

Secondly, Courtiers and Scholars should consider getting the appropriate Divination, whether *Story of the Self* or the *Story of Fortune*. Skipping these will make your Scholar less effective; they must guess, rather than look and discern, what the emotional state of a possible target is or whether they have any curses and/or influences already in place! On top of that, kung fu is an absolute necessity for Courtiers and Scholars both. For Courtiers, it's one way they can demonstrate their excellence (and invoke their Secret Arts!), while Scholars will have something to fall back on when they get in trouble (which is *guaranteed* -- many are the forces that don't want nosy Daoists poking around in their business!).

Thirdly, you should decide whether the campaign you're playing is shorter term and more breakneck in pace, or longer-term and more detailed. The former option is called "At the Movies" and has a span of months of real time, usually 6-8; the latter is called "In the Comics" and can span to well over a year.

See below (pg. 340) for more details. This decision is important because it governs how easily Destiny is earned via Deeds, as well as other considerations.

During Play

Joss is the Wulin Sage's friend. While the River is dependent purely on what kind of rolls the players get (and will most likely be more effective later in the battle), Joss comes from three sources: Rolls of '10' during play by the players; Awards from the GM and the other Players; and from Deeds. As Wulin Sage, you have little input on the random chance factor in both rolls of '10' and in the Deeds. You have the most influence about awards, as you can give more Joss when you see fit, while players can only grant a single point in a given session of play. It is recommended you are moderately liberal in your granting of Joss; in particular, hand it out for flavorful description, especially when a player fails or is getting beaten... Wuxia is full of such reverses, which makes it only more dramatic when they bounce back, beaten and bloody, to win the day! Besides, given that Joss Contests tend to be common (in which much Joss of both kinds is expended), it doesn't hurt to give it out whenever it seems appropriate; it WILL get used.

Note that Corrupt Joss can only be used against someone in direct conflict with you; in essence, you are pitting your Destiny against that of your opponent. There is no using your Corrupt Joss to take dice out of somebody's dice pool when they're in combat with someone else across the room.

Deeds are the currency of play, earned by people having fun and living up to (or down to) the Martial Arts World's virtues. They grant both Destiny and Joss for succeeding in some really big or really effective way.

The two main criteria are that they are *Impressive* (successful in some big way; this doesn't just mean a high die-roll... a well-made tactical decision can certainly count as a Deed!) and *Virtuous* (aligns with one of the Ten Virtues). 'Impressive' isn't so hard to gauge -- if the players are having a good time, it should be obvious (people hooting is usually a good hint!). However, the Virtues necessarily require some interpretation. This is, as it must be, a Judgment Call; it's usually best to check the Impressive aspect first, then decide if it aligns with one of the Xia or Corrupt Virtues. There is also the social/community contribution aspect of the Deeds system, though this can be ignored if you don't feel it suits your style.

A Word on Critical Failures

Critical Failures are a useful tool in *Weapons of the Gods*. Given the tradition and genre the game emulates -- that of fantastic wuxia fiction -- failure must be taken into account, given that many of the heroes will suffer serious setbacks and reversals on their path to martial arts excellence.

As Wulin Sage, you should explain the expectations about failure and the rules at the outset, so everyone's

ready to roleplay the occasional gaffe. While many will be the wonderful successes, it's important to occasionally mark the possibility of failure, via clever roleplay. Between the Critical Failure Rules and the **Toys of the Gods** rule, actual death of player characters should be uncommon; martial artists are resilient creatures, able to take horrific beatings and eventually recover.

So if a player falls horribly short of a goal (say, more than two degrees short), the Wulin Sage can offer a suitable bribe. Examples include: a point of Destiny in exchange for describing the failure in either dramatic or amusing terms (some wuxia movies are notable for slapstick – Jackie Chan, anyone?); an NPC might change their viewpoint on the character (a shift in Passion or Inspiration); or a point of Corrupt Chi, if the failure is at a particularly portentous and horrifying moment. (For more on Corrupt Chi, the benefits it grants and the price it exacts, see *Building A Reputation in Hell*, pg. 367).

Quick Campaigns for Weapons of the Gods

So your players have made their characters, you've read the comic books and watched the movies... read the setting chapters and familiarized yourself with what a Wulin Sage should know. Where do you go from here?



The theme of the game is being larger than life and meeting the Challenge of the Martial Arts World... indeed, the world itself! So where to start? Well, first look over your players' characters, making notes of their Advantages and Disadvantages. Record important information like Affiliation (Status is particularly important); that information will soon come in handy. You might also make a copy for yourself of the Courtiers Lore (pg. 163) – the one that defines the Six Key Relationships and the Five Derivative Relationships. It'll come in handy to have it on hand, where you can easily refer to it without a lot of page-flipping. Plus, you can scribble on it.

In the back of each volume of the *Weapons of the Gods* comics, there is always a Relationship Chart – a handy reference for letting you know where the different players stand in regards to one another. This is also a great means to create stories – because no matter what the players do

(unless it's staying in a noodle house and getting drunk every day), they're going to get in somebody's way or upset somebody's carefully laid plans!

So here's what you need:

- A.) Three dice – 1 white (or light), 1 black (or dark), and 1 die of a nice bright color, like red.
- B.) A piece of graph paper for the Relationship Chart and a pencil.

Then follow these steps:

- 1.) Check for the Status ratings of your players or any relevant Disadvantages. Pick the single highest Status rating, and subtract one from that number. This is the number of boxes you draw in the middle of your graph paper. Make sure one box is in the middle and larger than the others. Alternatively, don't subtract anything, but instead pick multiple Plotters, one for each eligible character. Note that Plotters don't necessarily have anything personally to do with your characters; instead, this process is just to determine that they're *there*, up to no good of some sort.
- 2.) Starting with the big box, roll the three dice. Record the results in this fashion: Red (#), Black (#) and White (#).
- 3.) The **Red Die** represents the *Passion* that dominates the Plotters' (what we'll call the movers and shakers on the Map) thoughts and plans. If the number is odd, pick the first, more negative emotion; if even, choose the second, more positive emotion.
- 4.) The **Black Die** represents the *Inspiration* that motivates the Plotter. This is the Xia or Corrupt Virtue that will guide their tactics. For example, if a Plotter is guided by Bao (Ferocity), he just might send a force of fighters to slaughter all the players in their sleep.
- 5.) The **White Die** determines the Plotter's *Archetype*, which also tells you something of their eventual **Goal**. For example, Warriors usually have 'conquest' or 'vanquishing an enemy' as their Goal. Courtiers want power, and more of it... be it a throne, or simply a place behind it. Scholars want information – whether for a huge spell or just the dirt on people; again, it depends.
- 6.) Make a choice – whether you want multiple Plotters, or a Plotter and his lieutenants. You can always add more of either or both later as you wish, but it's good to have a starting point.
- 7.) Determine the Rank of the Master Plotter (or multiple Plotters); one or two above the characters is a good rule of thumb, especially since they're not going to battle him right away.
- 8.) Repeat the process for each of the Lieutenants (t h e

smaller boxes), and place their Rank as equal to the players', or perhaps one above.

- 9.) Draw lines between the Lieutenants and the Master, and pick emotions (not necessarily the same as the Passion of the Master or the Lieutenants) to describe how the parties relate to one another. Alternately, just draw in lines from your multiple Plotters to the box that represents the players' band of heroes, and call it good. The Plotters will end up conflating their personal objectives (relating to the player character from which they were derived) with that of the whole group ("that annoying band of meddlers!") They will seeking the entire player character band instead of just the one person. Why? It's easier that way, at least for the start of a campaign.
- 10.) Come up with names and genders for your Plotters, and you're good to go! (Yes, Plotters can be cousins, family members, you name it.)
- 11.) Based on the results from the Wheel, think of some plots for them to pursue, and then make sure said

plots have access points for your players to trip over or discover... and go from there!

When you've created the starting Relationship Chart, make sure there's some space for a box in the middle that represents the players' Wandering Band of Heroes. Don't put anything in it yet, but be sure to ask the players to think about a suitably cool name and a spot for the group's Status (this will start at zero, but will wax and wane as time goes by). Then it's a simple matter of eventually filling in the lines between the hero-group and the Plotters, as the characters gradually (or quickly!) make waves, friends and enemies.

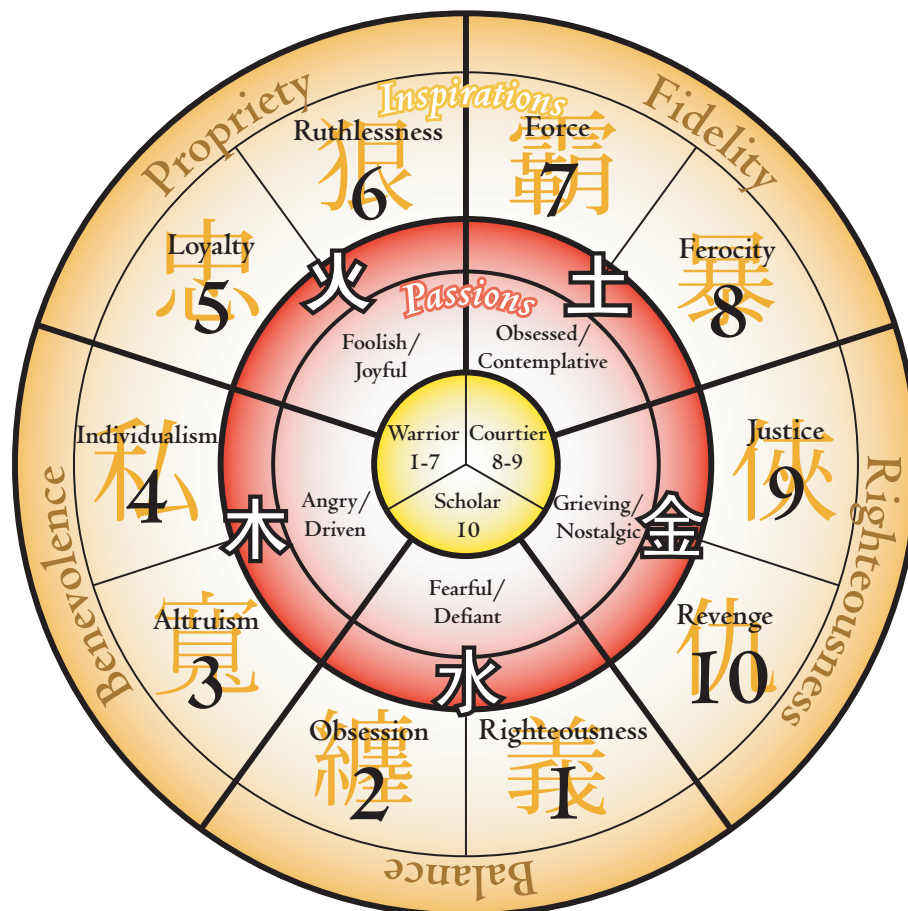
Finally, draw in the lines and assign the ways the various Plotters feel about the group or individual. As noted earlier, once the Plotters learn that this annoying person is hanging out with a bunch of people, their ire is going to be aimed at the entire group; this is another reason why the **Loyalty** Virtue (*zhong*) is so important to wuxia heroes!

Let's have a look at how it works.

Campaign Generation Example

Brad has his group all together, and characters made – Megan has Jung Xiang-Li (her Mulan-like Warrior),

The Wheel of Karma





Mark has Liu Shao, the Former Bandit Lord (another Warrior), Bill has his rascally Monk Courtier, Lu Hui, and Don has his Scholar of the Dali Clan, Wide Sky Ocean.

With their first real session in the game still a few weeks away, Brad sits down with his copies of their character sheets and starts scribbling – writing down a quickie reference for everyone's backgrounds, clans, and Status ratings and looking at their back stories for inspiration.

Megan – *Jung Xiang-Li* has Status 2 in a Small Clan. But her background's rich – she has big political ambitions to impress the Emperor down the line, and wants to better herself in general and restore her family to wealth and prominence. A Plotter? Absolutely. Brad makes notes.

Mark – *Liu Shao* has no Status at all, though his former crime connections offer some interesting possibilities for later. His character's all about becoming the best swordsman in the Wulin and assuming his rightful position in the Ten Greats! But he's still a nobody, and as such hasn't made any enemies... yet. Brad saves him for later.

Bill – *Lu Hui* is a disgraced Zan Monk; he is now a Courtier, generally going through life trying to improve his poor circumstances. Though no longer really a Zan monk (even if he dresses like one), he does try to help people, albeit in his own way... which as often as not, involves him fleecing those that treat poor folk badly of their money and fortune! Looking at his sheet, Brad notes that Bill has the **Hunted** Disadvantage at level 2 – he's pissed someone off! Definitely a Plotter against Bill's character somewhere nearby!

Don – Wide Sky Ocean is a benevolent Daoist Scholar, a student of Medicine and Predictionism. Fairly new on the scene, he's acquired some Status as a wandering wise man who helps the people – it's a reputation that might even get him recognized... mostly for good, but possibly some ill, too!

So from the characters, we have three Plotters. Brad draws the boxes on a piece of paper (the better to build the Relationship Chart over time, of course!), and gets to work with the Wheel of Karma, rolling the dice once for each Plotter.

Megan	
7 – Obsessive Passion	
10 – Revenge Virtue	
8 – Courtier (Power)	

Brad thinks about Megan's Plotter – it's not a hard jump to guess at motivations and position.

Obsessive – This person's obsessed with something – oh, the power and prestige of her family. Revenge – a bit of a stretch, but basically the plotter's going to get revenge on Xiang-Ling for what she MIGHT do.

Courtier – Power, in this case, she's going to manipulate others against Xiang-Ling to prevent her quest from succeeding. So, to translate into gameable terms:

The Plotter is from the Family that displaced the Jung Clan, back in Jin (from Megan's Character Background). Of course, that personage, being a Courtier, has spies and other resources and has guessed that Xiang-Ling is determined to return 'his' family to prominence, which of course would dethrone hers.

Bill	
6 – Joyful Passion	
3 – Altruism Virtue	
2 – Warrior (Conquest)	

Brad now turns to Bill's Plotter – right off, it looks like Lu Hui has a pursuer. But of what kind? Well, it's a dedicated professional – someone who takes joy in their work. Furthermore, they're acting from the Kuan Virtue – this person isn't a villain, though they are in opposition. Finally, it's a Warrior; this person will use force as a means to do something unpleasant and untoward.

Again, Brad doesn't have to think for long – it's a Constable, coming after Lu Hui for crimes committed (probably real, but you never know). Said Constable will track Lu Hui and collect evidence, and then at some point will attempt to arrest him! Or send deputies to do the dirty work... who knows.

Don	
3 – Driven Passion	
6 – Ruthlessness Virtue	
10 – Scholar (Knowledge)	

Finally, Brad turns to Don's Character, and thinks that here he's found the Nemesis, the 'Big Bad' for the game. Driven and Fiery in his Anger Passion, acting through Ruthlessness... and a scholar to boot. He remembers that in the setting, there's a Secret Society called the 'Demon Scholars'. Its members defy Heaven and use unrighteous kung fu and magic to reach its ends, which is the failure of civilization (this would most likely be a huge invasion, if social order was lost). Brad starts making plans to develop this Nemesis, a Demon Scholar who intends to shake the pillars of Shen Zhou itself and rain chaos on the Sixteen States... He will use his many minions to start sewing the seeds of destruction, including right in the area where the players are starting their game.



A Sample Relationship Chart

A few notes on the map below: The Karma Wheel numbers are left in the boxes for easy reference — the Arrows are marked with the relevant Key or Derivative Relationship (Derivative Relationships are italicized), along with the overall Passion governing the relationship in question. Such passions are usually Minor—if they were Trivial, the Plotter literally wouldn't care enough to get involved! Naturally, the Sage can modify the Passion to be Major if it seems warranted; for example, Constable Zhu Ming could be moved to pursue Lu Hui (and his friends, aiding and abetting a criminal!) in a fashion similar to Javert, the policeman from Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. Of course, these Passions can also be influenced by other factors... such as a Courtier's Arts. Also note the slight shifts in the descriptions for the Plotters, to better fit their evolving concept. At this stage of the game, they don't need stats... unless of course, you want them to meet the characters at the start of their careers!

Notes: This nasty character is almost certainly going to be interested anything the players become involved in, once he gets wind of their existence... which depends on their success. If he meets them personally, he'll definitely test them and then escape. (Invoke the Toys of the Gods rule if necessary!)

The Relationship Arrows all go one way purely because this is the outset of the campaign. Once the players start getting mixed up in things, they'll develop feelings of their own for these currently unknown personages, and will add more boxes to the chart... for both enemies and friends alike!

Evil Doctor Yang

3 – Driven

6 – Ruthless

10 – 3rd Rank Scholar

Rivalry

(Anger: Driven to Succeed, will not tolerate disruption of plans.)

The Benevolent Wayfarers Society

Status

The Benevolent Wayfarers Society is a working title that Don comes up with after a few minutes of thought — the rest of the group agrees it'll do for now, until they can think of a cooler name or something else suggests itself.

Ruler & Subject

He represents the Ruler and bears his Authority

(Joy: at the thought of Lu Hui's Capture)

Yin Mei

7 – Obsessed

10 – Vengeful

8 – 3rd Rank Courtier

Notes: The Mei Family is based in Jin, but she has a long reach! Agents and spies will probably show up soon — anything to prevent the rise of the Jung Clan!

Constable Zhu Ming

6 – Joyful

3 – Altruistic

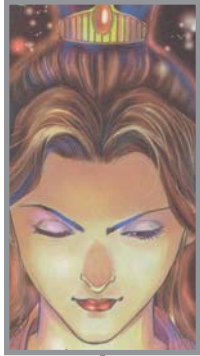
2 – 3rd Rank Warrior

Notes: The Constable works for whatever State the band of heroes is based in. If they leave the state, he'll be slowed down somewhat.

The Relationship Chart from the Comic (Volume I)

This map is not as detailed as the sample above, but you can see the entries in the Canon Comic Characters section below. The Five Derivative Relationships are italicized to distinguish them from the Six Keys. The numbers correspond to the Passion/Inspiration/Archetype on the Karma Wheel as shown; an 'X' means a person not of the Wulin. Grey means Deceased, though their lives still have repercussions on the characters in the Relationship Chart.

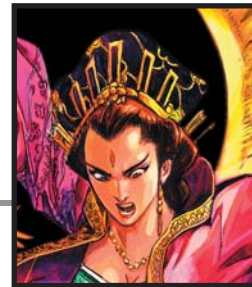
Jade Swallow



Yi Nangong



Hong Dong



Husband & Wife
(Love)

Husband & Wife
(Anger)

3
8
8

(Orphaned)

Parent-Child
(Love)

Tian Wen



Family Members
(Love)

Rivals (Anger)

4
5
II

Romantic Interest
(Affection/Annoyance)

Ironheart Nan



4
7
II

Cha Wen



5
5
X

Rivals
(Anger)

Rival
(Envy
<Fear>)

Snow Bei



2
5
II

Parent-Child
(Love)

Great Oak Xi



7
3
II

Thunder Bei



2
4
II

Parent-Child
(Mild
Disappointment
<Grief>)

Zheng Bei



7
2
II



Character Advancement

Of Rank and Destiny

According to the Legendary Text, *The Wulin*, Thoughtless Wen, the Ascended Minister of the World of Martial Arts, declared:

"The mortals who follow the ways of the gods shall receive good fortune: their Chi shall wax strong, their forms prosper, and their techniques become in all ways immaculate!"

This pronouncement, stated by Heaven's Minister empowered by the Immortal Jade Emperor himself, instantly became law for the Land of the Gods – the world was so Ordered, and gained harmony there from. For those humans who found themselves unable to remain in their ordained places in life, there was now an option that would not havoc the Earth or Heaven – the World of Martial Arts, sometimes known as the Circle of Warriors. The Wulin exists as a structure of conditions that humans who wish to excel can use to do so, by following the paths of Virtue – whether the high paths of Heavenly Virtue, or the low paths of Corrupt Virtue. So it would be, all under heaven.

Destiny is literally sought after by martial artists; it is gained by right action, though this by itself is not enough; one must be immaculate in their accomplishments to truly excel in the eyes of Heaven and earn the highest privileges! Hence the system of Rank was born, and was built into the Wulin itself; only by doing great Deeds of Virtue could one ascend the Ranks of power, climbing closer to Heaven (or descending downwards to Hell, as the case may be).

So what does all of this mean? Quite simply, it's not enough just to earn Destiny points, and merely climb up in Rank. That would

be too easy; indeed, that is the way it was before the advent of the Wulin! Old Man Kuafu learned and practiced his Divine Kung Fu style, the Light-Body Form, and once he mastered it, knocked down Heaven's Door! Thoughtless Wen knew that if any such ever happened again, not only would Humanity be extinguished from existence, but he'd be flogged and out of a job. So: If you earn

Destiny through good works but not Deeds, then you will not increase in Rank. You might master
s o m e

kung fu, but because Chi Attributes are limited by your accomplishment in the Wulin (see below), you will never build up the Chi necessary to disturb the peace of Heaven... for only truly amazing kung fu can threaten the gods in their skyborne home.

Of Rank and Virtue

In the *Weapons of the Gods* comic, there is constant reference to 'Level Four Fighters'; other levels are sometimes mentioned as well. To clarify matters, we'll shift some of the terms (since the comics are translated into English, we can easily pick a word that's more appropriate for what we mean and avoid confusing duplication). Instead of 'Level', we'll use the term 'Rank'.

Quite simply, Rank is a quick guide to general power level of characters within the comic universe; in the game, it relates to how many points were spent in creating a playable character (it also relates to Destiny earned over the course of play; see 'Gaining Rank', below). All characters in the game are built with 15 points in Stats (with an equal amount of Chi), 15 points in Skills, and 15 points in Archetype skills... along with a certain number of Destiny points to use for customization.

Have a look at the scale below; it'll set the (rather loose) limits of the Ranks. Below each is a sampling of characters from the comics that are within that rank.

The Ranks of the Wulin

		<i>River/Chi Aura</i>	<i>Chi Maximum</i>
RANK ONE	<i>200+ Destiny Points</i>	5	9+
	Lords of Earth and Sky, Zheng Bei.		
RANK TWO	<i>150 – 199 Destiny Points</i>	4	8
	Ironheart Nan, Hong Dong, Bufon Jou.		
RANK THREE	<i>100 – 149 Destiny Points</i>	3	7
	Tian Wen, Niu Lan, Great Oak.		
RANK FOUR	<i>50 – 99 Destiny Points</i>	2	6
	Snow Bei, Thunder Bei, Uncle San Bei.		
RANK FIVE	<i>less than 50 Destiny Points</i>	1	5
	The Dirty Ting Brothers, Earth Lord's Demon Army Soldiers.		

The Benefits of Rank in the Wulin

As you can see here, ascending the Ranks has very real benefits – your Chi Aura and River go up, along with your Maximum Chi Possible; this opens you up to greater and greater power in Kung Fu; plus you earn Destiny and Joss for every Deed you accomplish.

Finally, the strict limitations of the Ranks can be discarded if you want to have a more free-form game with less concerns about Rank advancement; this system was put in place to reflect that many wuxia heroes tend to plateau at given ranks due to their drive (or lack of it).



The Benefits of Being Baneful

If you somehow have become a baneful human (discussed earlier in this book), the main benefit is that you do not have to hew to any standards of virtuous accomplishment, instead simply going up in Rank as you earn enough Destiny. In addition, you can more easily gain Transcendent Destiny than Wulin Warriors can, simply because you are already outside the bounds of heaven!

So what's the downside? There are two consequences - one system and one social. The system consequence is that you will never gain Joss from rolls of ten ever again; furthermore, when you do Deeds, you can only ever earn Joss from Deeds of Benevolence (Altruism/Individualism) or Deeds of Fidelity (Force/Ferocity), and only a single point of Joss from each such Deed. While you can earn Destiny from other Virtues, you will never gain Joss from them.



The social consequence is that you will always have the Unwholesome Disadvantage (Baneful), which can be detected with an Everyday (18) Awareness roll; you will also have a Status rating commensurate with your Deeds as a Baneful Human.

Generally speaking, xia heroes will always find you if you go amongst the people, for the Wulin Sage is always interested in the doings of a baneful human, and will use his mastery of the flows of luck and chi in Shen Zhou to guide warriors to you.

Gaining Rank

Increasing in Rank is not so simple as just spending the Destiny points you earn; the Laws of The Wulin are written into the Universe itself, and must be acknowledged. There are two factors in the game setting that all Martial Artists know: that their rank is determined by their Deeds and Virtue, as monitored by the Martial Arts World (the community of martial artists in the Land of the Gods)

and the Wulin Sage (everyone knows his -- or her? -- title but not their name and location). This peerless personage is the final arbiter of Rank in the Wulin; she (or he) monitors the flows of Chi in the Land of the Gods, and it is the Sage's opinion that secretly swings the day from fame to infamy... or even more likely, obscurity.

Advancing in the Martial Arts World, where each member is capable of marvels, is no small thing; rather than just stories fuelling your fame, instead it is your **Deeds** that make all the difference. A Deed is a heroic action of some kind, in line with one of the five Xia Virtues that define a Chivalrous Hero of the Land of the Gods.

Recording your Deeds

As noted previously in *The Art of Battle* (pg. 67), when you accomplish a Deed, you gain joss. The more momentous the Deed, the more joss you can gain! The Sage asks three questions - How exciting, how effective and how virtuous was it? For each of these criteria met, you gain a joss point... you can gain up to 3 in a single Deed. Again, the joss gained is reflective of the nature of the Deed - a Deed of xia virtue yields xia joss, while a corrupt Deed yields corrupt joss.

Deeds are usually marked by high excitement, high -- or low -- purpose (what you do aligns with one of the Virtues), and occasionally, high rolls. When a Deed is accomplished, make a check in the appropriate track. When you acquire the right number of Deeds (see below) to advance in Rank, circle the highest box in each Virtue Track in pen, then erase them all - the Deeds Chart 'resets' to zero every time you advance in Rank.

Not Enough Deeds?

If you have not yet accomplished enough Deeds of Virtue to advance in Rank, then you're 'locked under' the lower limit of the next highest rank in how much Destiny you can spend. In other words, you plateau... and go no further. Any Destiny you earn while locked under the limit is banked, and you may not spend any of it until you free it up by achieving enough Deeds to move up to the next Rank. Furthermore, if you continue earning Destiny and gain enough to ascend to just below the next Rank (if you're eligible for third Rank but have more Destiny than you need) then you will stop earning Destiny itself once you reach one point underneath the threshold of the next Rank! So in the hypothetical case, say a Fourth Rank Warrior and have enough Destiny (but not enough Deeds), then once you hit 99 points of Destiny... any more you get is set aside until you gain the Deeds necessary. If you gain a total of 149 points (just under the limit for Rank Two!), then you stop earning Destiny entirely. The gods' unhappiness with the warrior's lack of virtuous accomplishment is made manifest. (As always, GMs may choose to not use this rule - but this setup explains why many martial artists in the movies and comics go only so far and no further!)

Rank Gain via Xia or Corrupt Virtue

Gaining Rank via Xia or Corrupt Virtues works exactly the same way – the moment you perform the required number of Deeds to advance, you do! The Virtue type (Xia or Corrupt) that got the right number of the Deeds is the one in which you will gain Rank; that is, either of the two but not both will count. So you can't go up in Rank if you need ten Deeds, but get five in Xia Virtues and five in Corrupt; only if you get ten Deeds in either Xia or Corrupt Virtue do you advance.

Advancing via Corrupt Virtues, rather than Xia, has no direct rules effect; instead, it has social consequences. If you gain Rank via Corrupt Virtues, then you'll have the taint of a 'Selfish Hero'; you'll be less trusted by Virtuous Heroes in the Martial Arts World, though they won't be overtly hostile to you unless you join the Hell Clan.

Each time you gain Rank via the Corrupt Virtues, your Sage will send a Hell Clan representative by at some point to try and recruit you. Expect some intense roleplaying OR intense dueling... or both! The Heaven-and-Earth Alliance has a reputation for being... unhappy... when rejected.

Pacing Options: or, How Many Deeds?

There are two ways to mark the progress in your **Weapons of the Gods** game. As mentioned in the introduction to the game, Roleplaying games don't usually last for years anymore; many last a span of months, with some sort of climactic windup. So presented below are two separate pacing options – the first is fairly breakneck (the default); the second is a little more drawn out, with more opportunities to roleplay, build up connections, and play out events over a longer period of time.

At The Movies

In this option, already detailed, the game moves along fairly rapidly – you go out, you kick butt, take names, have a helluva windup and a final battle (The Benevolent Wayfarer Society takes on Gong Gong and his invading demonic hordes!), and at the end, the group calls it a day until they feel the urge to go kick ass with their mighty kung fu once more. The possible span of such a game might be six to eight months of play.

When your game's **At the Movies**, each player needs ten full Deeds to ascend to the next Rank. They can acquire this eligibility in two ways – they can follow the Virtuous Path and gain at least two Deeds in each Virtue, proving their balance and temperance. This requires much discipline to consider the five virtues in all things... but allows one to gain rank faster.

The more common and easily followed path is the Passionate Path, in which

you must achieve ten Deeds, with at least five in one virtue and the rest in any others. This takes longer but requires less discipline. As one could guess, many Warriors prefer the *xia* and *ba* virtues, but any will do.

In the Comics

But wait – what if you and your players are traditionalists who wish to roleplay over a longer period, detailing out games that have long-running storylines, with much political maneuvering behind (and in front of) the scenes? Perhaps your story has wide-ranging effects with more subplots, and the action, while still occasionally intense, is more about some sort of larger goal... say, your band of heroes intends to challenge the Unrighteous Emperor Hu for the throne, and replace him with a ruler that will return the Mandate of Heaven and end the Time of Chaos.

When your game's **In the Comics**, each player needs to earn successively more Deeds to gain the next Rank than the one before. The Two Paths – Virtuous and Passionate – remain the same; but the Deeds required to ascend in Rank are: From Fifth to Fourth (not usually played, but you could!) you would need Five Deeds (graduating from your Discipleship in the Clan to full Clan Member), from Fourth to Third, Ten Deeds; from Third to Second, Fifteen Deeds; and from Second to First, Twenty Deeds in all would be needed to reach that revered Rank in the Wulin.

Note that you need at least *two* Virtues of Five Deeds each to ascend to First Rank from Second using the Passionate Path; **In the Comics** gives you more opportunities to roleplay your virtues and display your excellence!

Here's a sample Deeds chart from the character sheet; this is Lu Hui the Rascally Monk's.

DEEDS	Xia Virtues		Kuan		Yi		Zhong		Ba	
	俠		寬		義		忠		霸	
	☐	☐	☒	☒	☐	☐	☒	☒	☐	☐
	☒	☐	☒	☒	☒	☐	☒	☒	☐	☐
	Justice		Altruism		Righteousness		Loyalty		Force	
	Revenge		Individualism		Obsession		Ruthlessness		Ferocity	
	Chou		Si		Chan		Hen		Bao	
	☐	☐	☒	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Corrupt Virtues		私		暴		狠		纏	
	仇		私		暴		狠		纏	

Example: Bill, Lu Hui's player, looks at his Deeds chart. He seriously wants to move up in Rank; he's earned 58 points of Destiny (for a total 108!), but has only been able to spend 49, as he's not allowed to spend any further points until he moves up to Rank Three. He muses:

"Well, it's not like I was ever a very good monk... and it doesn't help that I have a high regard for my own skin. But I still always pull



through in a crunch, even if I hate long pointy things being swung at me. I've been very good at helping those in need, and been incorruptible when people try to bribe me (though of course I always try to cheat them out of their bribe money in dice games later). I actually managed the killing blow on that bounty hunter that was after my friend, and always keep my promises. . . so I'm pretty close.

Too, I really should lay off trying to swindle money out of people all the time — that's how I've gotten that Deed of Individualism — being a little too selfish. And Lu Hui's tendency to try to always improve himself at other people's expense has shown up in that Deed of Chan. I'll have to watch that. But! I'm pretty close to making my goal. I'll just have to look out for opportunities for Lu Hui to stumble into a situation where he can help an innkeeper being blackmailed by bandits or something, so I can score that final Deed of Kuan and move up."

Achieving your Destiny

Rather than refer to advancement as 'Experience Points', instead *Weapons of the Gods* refers to you gaining **Destiny**. When you advance your Destiny, you are granted gifts by the gods in the form of opportunities to improve yourself, both in social standing and sheer power (to learn why, read the lore on *The Wulin*, pg. 99.) As well as being 'character build points,' Destiny represents how much of your life you have invested in your character's capabilities and backgrounds.

Destiny is, in a sense, your reward for playing the game well (or just playing at all) — for getting out in the world and daring to take part. Accordingly, your Game Master may opt to give you Destiny for just about anything that enriches the game or makes it more fun. But below is a basic guide for when you gain in Destiny.

Attendance: Just for showing up for a game session, you get 1 Destiny. Even if all you do in a session is seek your Destiny, at least you did that much, instead of stay inside the noodle shop and drink yourself unconscious.

Deeds: If you achieve amazing things (as defined by the Virtues) successfully, then you earn more Destiny by living as an excellent individual ought, according to the plans of Heaven. So you can look forward to picking this award up if you're having a good time and pulling off amazing stunts! Generally, you earn a point of Destiny every time you pull off a Deed, as well as the aforementioned 1-3 Joss.

However, if your GM is using the pacing option of "**In the Comics**", then progression can be slowed to a less breakneck pace by having only one of the Deeds you achieve in a session earning the additional Destiny point — usually the most impressive. But you'll get joss from every Deed, so it's always worthwhile.

Disadvantages: The Gods like a story with some struggle to it; it's boring if things are too easy for the heroes. As described under "Disadvantages" on page 50, you can get 1 Destiny for any session in which one of your troubles messes with you or makes your life difficult in some way.

Dramatic Plot Alteration: Any session in which a really dramatic, climactic (or abysmal) plot event occurs is worth 1 Destiny, if it was the PCs who spurred this event.

This could kick in when you finally overcome a hated foe, or when you conclude some lengthy plot episode. In any event, this is not an award you can expect every session, but it is one that should go to every player who was present when it does occur.

Out-of-Character Enhancement: There's more than one way to entertain the Gods. You can add to the ambiance other ways. You don't have to kick ass or be a sword-swinging warrior to wax in Destiny. If you're artistically inclined, draw dramatic (or humorous) images of the characters or events. If you like to write, keep an in-character journal or an out-of-character chronicle. Anything along these lines enhances the fun and is, therefore, deserving of a Destiny award. *Weapons of the Gods* is all about living with distinction; nowhere is it written that it has to be **positive**.

Passion: If you roleplay your character so engagingly, so winningly, so convincingly that your GM or fellow players are tempted to burst into spontaneous applause, you get an additional Destiny. The gods like it when heroes do and feel things strongly with distinction, as opposed to someone who acts timidly or tepidly... or not at all!

With these factors in play, you can expect to earn between 2-6 Destiny per session, and it's likely to run at least 3 points per session; your GM will moderate the awards, both depending on the pacing of their game and the Option they've chosen. In high-threat games, with lots of furious action and equally high-level passionate feuding, it could go double that!

Kinds of Destiny

There is more than one kind of Destiny; more than one way to stand out in the eyes of Heaven. Indeed, there are three!

Xia Destiny and Corrupt Destiny are gained from following the appropriate Virtues, below. The two types of Destiny spend exactly the same — however, one should keep careful track of how much you've accumulated and from which source. This reflects the overall opinion of how you'll be treated in the Martial Arts World — if you have much Xia Destiny, and only some Corrupt, you'll be respected and loved by not only those in the Wulin but by Ordinary Folk. If you have mostly Corrupt but only some Xia, you'll be respected and feared... and if your reputations spread far enough, you will eventually be visited by the Hell Clan for recruitment (see **Gaining Rank**, below, for more details). Be aware that the Heaven-and-Earth Alliance is notoriously poor at taking 'No' for an answer. After all, you might threaten their interests, and that they will not allow. Sure, you might defeat the Four Dukes... but if Dominion comes calling, you'll never be seen again, not even in Hell.

The third kind of Destiny is Transcendent Destiny; and a most marvelous Destiny it is. To have earned any of it is

神兵玄奇

to have, even in the smallest way, altered the course of history (for good or ill!) or gone outside the scheme of Heaven in some profound way; it's *not* a small thing. Transcendent Destiny can be used to advance your character, but more importantly it can make possible the greatest feats – like repairing a Weapon of the Gods! The easiest way to describe Transcendent Destiny is that it is a way of invoking the favor of the universe – that is to say, the GM. Each point of Transcendent Destiny is in effect a 'small wish' that can be made upon the GM, who will do her best to honor it as long as it does not destroy her storyline in progress. The following is a list of possible ways Transcendent Destiny can be used. If you have the points on hand, you can invoke a single Favor (or one of your own devising) from the GM at a dramatic juncture.

<i>Transcendent Destiny Points</i>	<i>Examples of possible Favors that can be Granted</i>
1	<i>Increase</i> an Attribute by one point instantly at any time. <i>Lower</i> your Time requirement to learn a Martial Arts technique by one step.
2	<i>Automatic Success</i> on a Kung Fu Marvel Roll (for whatever purpose). <i>Finish Mastering</i> a Kung Fu Technique you've been learning in the middle of Combat, instead of only during Downtime.
3	<i>Repair</i> a damaged Class III Weapon of the Gods to 'like new.' <i>Make</i> a Chi Condition permanent that already exists on you permanent. <i>Add</i> a Lesser Power to a Weapon of the Gods at its Forging.
4	<i>Erase</i> some major damage you've taken – regenerate an organ or limb, remove a Chi Condition or Curse. <i>Add</i> a Greater Power to a Weapon of the Gods at its Forging.
5	<i>Add</i> an Effortless Power to a Weapon of the Gods at its Forging. <i>Advance</i> to the next Rank regardless of



your current Deed rating (this does not affect your Destiny points, nor can you get anything but the privileges of the next Rank, and your Deeds do not change!)

- 10 *Become Immortal* – this doesn't mean you can't die, but you won't die from old age, and you may roll Hardiness against any potency of disease or poison, as well as against Chi Conditions. *Ascend* to Heaven.

As always, these are only suggestions. Your GM will probably have her own opinions on how Transcendent Destiny can be used.

Destiny as Advancement

Now it's time to spend the Destiny you've gained - and advancing your character's Attributes and Skills is done exactly the same as during Character Creation. That's right, no multipliers, no big fees - it's just the same.

Improving Attributes: You can permanently raise a stat (and increase your Chi!) by paying 5 Destiny. Every 5 Destiny you spend raises the Attribute one level. You can never raise an Attribute by more than one in a session (barring Transcendent Destiny), and your Game Master may rule out increasing multiple Attributes in a single session. Considering how important Chi is, you can expect to spend half of your Destiny per rank on improving your Attributes – this is normal, if you want to have the inner strength needed to reach the pinnacle of powerful kung fu! Note that Rank (below) may limit how far you can raise a given Attribute.

Downtime Guideline: At least a full month of Downtime is required to raise an Attribute, which doubles to two months once the Attribute has gone past the normal human limit of 5 (again, barring the use of Transcendent Destiny). Note that Downtime is always entirely devoted to the training; you cannot participate in the Wulin during that time, save to hear stories.

Improving Skills: Spend one Destiny to gain a new skill or another die in an existing skill, as long as you justify it during play. You can't skip levels doing this – you can only advance a Skill by one point at the end of any given session, and you must have used it, too. Succeeding or failing isn't as important as putting it to use.

By spending Destiny, you *can* raise a mundane skill to 5, but no higher. While it is possible through certain lores to get more than five dice, in general, you can only roll higher than five dice via Specializations (and of course through the effects of Kung Fu).

Downtime Guideline: At least two weeks of instruction spent in Downtime is required to increase a skill. Without instruction, Downtime doubles.

Buying Specializations: Specializations are bought just as they are in Character Generation, but there's a quirk: While you can spend a Destiny point to gain two Specializations, you can only add one Specialization at a time to a Skill. The other half-point/Specialization is held until you either spend the time to continue fully specializing in the Skill, or else apply it to another.



Downtime Guideline: At least a week of intense instruction spent in Downtime is required to acquire a Specialization. Without instruction, Downtime doubles.

Buying Advantages: You can buy advantages by paying their price in Destiny... if they're available. It's up to the Game Master to decide if the plot has made it possible for you to gain a given advantage by buying it. For instance, your PC is unlikely to become heart-wrenchingly gorgeous overnight just because you decided to spend 6 points on the Good Looks Advantage. However, if you get along well with a NPC and want to spend some Destiny to make him a Friend, that's perfectly reasonable.

The flip side of this limited availability is that the Game Master may (at her discretion) give you advantages for free. If you organize the orderly retreat from an earthquake-devastated town, you could well wind up with some followers from the deal. Or if your escort company repels a fierce Hell Clan attack, not only would you gain Status (as an effective force), but your Wealth might also go up a point (you can charge higher prices because of your sterling reputation). However, it's good to be aware that an increased Status as 'tough' and 'able to defeat the Hell Clan' means you go on that organization's 'Make a Painful Example of Them' list.

You usually can't gain the Wealth or Possession Assets by spending Destiny. Your Game Master might allow it in specialized circumstances where it actually makes sense, but by and large those things must be gained (and lost) through play.

Downtime Guideline: Totally variable and subject to the best judgment of your GM; consult her and come to a mutually-acceptable consensus of how long a given Advantage might take to acquire.

Buying Kung Fu Techniques: To buy a technique, all you have to do is pay the stated costs (gateway cost for the style, and then for each technique in sequence) while keeping the following things in mind:

- 1.) **You must have a teacher.** The only exception to this rule is where Kung Fu manuals and the like are concerned. Generally speaking, no sifu, no kung fu. While training does take time, it depends on how much effort the student and the teacher put into it – it is possible to acquire kung fu fairly quickly, but only if a teacher is available. Only prior study and Transcendent Destiny allow super-fast acquisition of martial arts techniques.
- 2.) **Your combat skill must be at least equal level to the level of the technique you're attempting to learn.** If Ironheart Nan wants to buy the Level Seven Technique, 'Kindness: Elegant Blade,' he'd better have his Melee maxed out at 5 with a double specialization in Longsword, so he has seven dice in his pool; then he can use the technique. If he attempts the technique without the skill, he's increasing his risk of lethal backlash (see that technique for what that means).
- 3.) **Downtime Guideline:** A good general rule for acquiring a martial arts technique is to look at the level – two weeks to acquire a Level I Technique; a month to

acquire a Level 2; a season (three months) for a Level 3; two seasons for a Level 4; and a year for a Level 5. Level 6 Techniques take up to five years to acquire, and Level 7 techniques can take a decade! This can all be shortened down to the next lowest timestep with really good Learning (or Expertise: Teaching) rolls on the part of your teacher, as well as good Learning rolls on your part... and there's always Transcendent Destiny to make things move even faster (if it can be acquired)!

Formless Techniques are a bit different – to learn a Formless Technique, you must have Kung Fu knowledge and techniques up to at least one level less than the formless technique in question, as well as the usual requisite instruction, whether from a sifu or a manual of some kind. Assume that a Formless Technique requires the same amount of Downtime needed to learn a similar ordinary technique of the same level.

Buying Lore: To buy a Lore, you merely need to be in the right place at the right time and have the Destiny on hand to acquire the Lore in question. If you don't yet have enough Destiny, then you can always come back later... and hope that somebody hasn't dragged off or otherwise removed that opportunity. Consult with your Sage.

The Rights of Rank

Summoning the Wulin: Virtue, Status, and Hero Invitations

The Wulin is a community like any other; it has social conventions -- greetings, honorable dueling, yearly and bi-yearly contests, and large-scale gatherings to respond to specific threats. All of these except greetings are handled through **Hero Invitations** – letters that are sent between reputable members of the Circle of Warriors (yes, the Hell Clan can and will respond to properly made Hero Invitations. It's what they do *after* they arrive that tends to be the problem).

Generally speaking, Hero Invitations only become truly effective for a Martial Artist once they've hit Third Rank; Fourth Rank Fighters haven't earned enough face in the community to be taken very seriously, though someone might respond to such an Invitation if it suited them. An important consideration to keep in mind is that interacting with the larger Wulin Community always costs Virtue points, straight off the Deeds Chart on your character sheet. You should note that your Maximum Virtue Earned (The circle you make on the sheet showing the high point of the points you've earned in a particular virtue), does not change when you do this; on top of that, when you spend Virtue to make Wulin-related rolls, that Virtue is never transferred or traded to another; it is expended in the effort to get others to recognize your worth.



A properly-made Hero Invitation can be written for the following purposes:

- 1.) **Duel Challenges:** these can call someone within your own Rank for a duel. Such duels are generally not to the death, and it's considered a Corrupt Deed (usually of Ferocity) to ever kill in such a duel. Time and place are established, and the reason stated – duels are used to test skills, settle grievances; you name it. Generally, the loser forfeits a point of Status only if they fail to honor the duel request. However, Deeds achieved during a Duel only grant Joss, not Destiny – you're playing it safe within the bounds of the Duel. Hero Invitations that are Duel Challenges do not have to be honored from outside your Rank; it's not seen as righteous to challenge someone of lower Rank, and fighters of greater Rank only need answer such a Challenge if they feel like it.

System: Roll your highest Status rating as a skill against a Sage-determined difficulty (usually Everyday to Moderate), and spend a point of Xia Virtue; if successful, your opponent will meet you at the determined place and time.

- 2.) **Contest Calls:** less commonly seen, these are general summonses that call all Wulin members in a general area for a Contest. These operate much like Duels above, but are more about socializing, fun, and sizing up the kung fu of potential opponents. Contests are otherwise like Duels; because they're controlled, you don't get Destiny for any Deeds done at a contest. You can, however, acquire Advantages like Friend, Mentor or Status (simply track the Deeds done; when the Destiny you would have earned equals the rating needed for the Advantage, then the Sage can rule in your favor to acquire it). As always, consult with your Sage. Contests are big social affairs, and wonderful opportunities for Courtiers to practice their Arts, Scholars to find bits of information and clues, and Warriors to show off their excellence.

System: Roll your highest Status rating as a skill against a Sage-determined difficulty (usually Moderate to Hard); you need at least four successes over an Interval of a week. If successful, you may spend Virtue points up to the levels of your Rank achieved to determine the attendance as if the total number of attendees were Followers (see the chart on the next page).

- 3.) **Army Summons:** Really only effective for Second Rank and above, this is a mass call for organizing a severe response to some huge threat. Generally speaking, they don't happen on a grand scale very often – the last one was when Zheng Bei invoked the Wulin Summons to combat the Western Fire Doctrine Clan (a fierce and deadly organization that originated in India and was set on conquering Shen Zhou). The

resulting army ended up electing Yi Nangong as its leader, showing that people will sometimes do what you don't expect! Zheng Bei was very upset at being so snubbed...

System: Roll your highest Status rating as a skill against a Sage-determined difficulty (usually Hard to Legendary); you need at least eight successes over an Interval of a month. If successful, you may spend Virtue points to determine how big the largest organization you can get to attend – this is done by spending enough Virtue points to equal the Status Level of the Clan size you want to attend (see Status, pg. 49) – so if you want the Jin Empire to represent or the other Great Clans, then you have to spend the 6 Virtue. The good news is, if you do spend the points, you will get representatives of the 'lower levels' automatically... after all, if all those Bei Clan luminaries are heading off to a big meeting, you can be sure the other smaller organizations will want to send members... if only to keep track of what's going on! Furthermore, the quality of your roll will determine how big the names you get actually are! (You get a Critical Success against the difficulty, you get one of the upper-level 'Named' characters of a given Clan!)

I'm Slowing My Character's Progress!

You can notice instantly the implication of spending a lot of time in the life of the Wulin – you're spending your precious Virtue points, which determine your progression in Rank. Now, if you're having over-the-top adventures in At the Movies style, then you're going to have some Virtue points to burn... and since the Wulin is all about earning Virtue in the eyes of Heaven. So as long as you don't spend too much time politicking, you'll easily move up in Rank. Note that those people who get carried away in the Wulin, tend to expend their Virtue a little too freely, and as a result will tend to stay at the same level... which happens quite frequently in the Martial Arts World. With In the Comics, you're more likely to be more conservative in your dealings, and thus not spend too much Virtue. As always, your Sage may wish to try their own variants of the rules given above.

Characters and Aging

While Wuxia Heroes usually don't die in bed, it could be useful to know how they age, for long-term games or 'sequel stories'.

Members of the Wulin have a significant advantage when it comes to long-term health; as long as they cultivate their Chi, they will age slower than ordinary humans. As long as they keep their Chi flowing vigorously (by meeting the Challenge of their Archetype), they will gain this benefit.

For each Attribute over 5, divide each year that passes by that factor – in other words, if a character has two



Attributes over 5, then for each year that passes, they will only age a half of a year. If all Five Attributes are over 5, then they will only age 1/5 of a year for every year that passes. Furthermore, when they do age, their appearance remains appropriate to the actual time aged... not their calendar age, but the age of time passed. Note that if enough time passes, a fighter's Attributes will still decline... and once they start going below 5, the aging process slowly sets back in again. Unless they acquire some other source of power, martial artists are still mortal and will eventually age and die.

If they retire from the Wulin, quitting their challenge, then they simply age normally, though they will probably take a little longer because of their higher Attributes.

My Loyal Followers

Followers. Minions. Cultists. Gangsters. They are all soldiers of the enemy, regardless of what you call them. Many movies (and games, including this one!) have scenes in which the heroes are beset on all sides by these enemy forces. This of course means that you have thrill-filled situations where your players must negotiate for their lives... or, as is usually the case, use spleen-crushing kung-fu to defeat an entire army and save the day!

When players fight other 'named characters' who are measured by Rank, it's fairly straightforward; you just fight it out under the normal rules. But there may come a time wherein Iron Duke deploys his dozens of Hell Clan Disciples around your party's camp in the dead of night; situations like this require rules to handle what could otherwise be a tedious time-consuming situation.

Let's look at the full chart for Followers, expanded from the Advantages Section:

LEVEL OF MINION

<u>Point Cost</u>	<u>Mob</u>	<u>Gang</u>	<u>Faction</u>
1	5	2	1
2	10	5	2
3	20	10	5
4	30	15	10
5	40	20	15
6	50	25	20
7	60	35	25
8	70	50	30
9	80	60	35
10	100	65	40
11	---	70	45
12	---	75	50
13	---	80	65
14	---	85	80
15	---	100	100

Followers come in three strengths: Mobs (the weakest), Gangs (competent) and Factions (the toughest). All Followers basically fight the same, unless they have absolutely no leadership whatsoever; they divide up into as many equal groups as there are selected targets, and

attack them. Their attacks are based on the rating of the force of Followers in play; they roll as many dice as they have points in their rating. (Example: using Iron Duke's personal entourage of Hell Clan Disciples, roll six dice for each attack they make in a round). Their base value is the number of followers in the group doing the attacking, possibly modified by the Presence of their leader (only Gangs and Factions can get this benefit, never Mobs). In the aforementioned example, Iron Duke's force is attacking three heroes; it breaks up into three groups (of 7, 7 and 6 respectively) with the following base values of 11, 11 and 10 (number of followers plus Iron Duke's Presence rating). Minions roll their defense based on their Leader's Tactics skill, subject to the notes below on which die results they may read.

Mobs are the easiest to beat. They can only use Earthly rolls (the highest die) from their attack pool, which is equal to their Follower rating (the points spent). The base number for their attacks is equal to the number of Followers in the mob; this can get pretty nasty indeed when you're facing an army of them! (Luckily for the players, the maximum strength a given mob can bring to bear on a single person is 15). Mobs can only focus one attack versus each opponent per round, though a good leader can improve that with a Tactics roll; each degree of success adds an additional attack per target per round, but only for that round. Finally, a Mob's leader can Inspire them to roll additional dice for their attacks; this requires a Hard (30) roll, but they can add one die for each degree of success if they make it; this only lasts for their Presence in rounds.

Mobs: Attacks 1 per Target per round Base Value: # of Minions in a Unit

Gangs are tougher than mobs. Motivated and better armed, they know they belong to something larger than themselves. They may use Heavenly die rolls (sets or matches up to two dice apiece). Attack pools work the same, but the base value for their strength is determined by their numbers and the Presence of their Leader, which is added in. If their leader falls (and there is no one to take his place), then they collapse into mobs and can no longer use Heavenly Rolls. The maximum strength a given gang can bring to bear on a single person is 20. Be careful though – their leader can improve their base number of attacks per player (2) with a Tactics roll! A Gang's leader can also Inspire them to roll additional dice for their attacks; see Mobs, above.

Gangs: Attacks 2 per Target per round
Base Value: # of Minions in a Unit + Leader's Presence.

Faction Fighters are tough, period. Factions may use all die rolls, including the dreaded Divine rolls (sets of three dice or higher per unit). The good news is that they may only use sets of three dice apiece; larger sets must be broken up. The maximum strength a given faction can bring to bear on a single person is 25. They may make three attacks per player in a combat round,

which thankfully can be reduced with Tactics (finding defensible positions, etc.), but of course Tactics can be used to upgrade that figure as well!

Factions: Attacks: 3 per Target per round
Base Value: # of Minions in a group + Leader's Presence.

Damage to Followers

When you attack a unit of Followers, you always disregard the Damage bonus of your weapon; instead, count the result dice. Each result die of damage that you would have done to an individual is not rolled; each die is instead used to neutralize a Follower in some fashion (knocked out, killed, etc.; you decide). Note that this does not include Strength or Weapon bonuses; this is because you're attacking numbers of minions in the round, rather than individuals.

For each minion removed from play, reduce the Strength of the Follower group by one, thus weakening their attack gradually.

Minion Defense is simple; their leader's Tactics skill is their defense pool, though the leader states whether they're dodging or defending with weapons. As with their attacks, their base value is the same as determined above.

If the Followers are a **Rabble** (completely leaderless), then they have no defense and are fairly easy to drive off. They have no one to motivate them, or to help resist intimidation attempts or Morale Attacks. Rabbles are otherwise like Mobs, but will gradually lose strength over time, losing 1 Minion per round until dispersed.

Poison Use in the Land of the Gods

What guns are in the West, poisons are in the East: the great equalizers. You can use them with minimal training (at least, compared to years of kung fu instruction and practice), and they weaken your opponent even to the point of death, saving you the risk of possibly being wounded or killed yourself.

In Shen Zhou, poisons are considered dishonorable, suspect and more than a bit unrighteous... but still end up being used. Wuxia Fiction (from which this comic and game is derived) is rife with poisons evilly (and/or cleverly!) used to bring down a superior foe – or more commonly a righteous hero!

Generally speaking, poison use is a Corrupt Act; most Xia Heroes will not consider using it... at least, not lightly. Among Selfish Heroes, it is more acceptable to use poison (up to a point).

The Hell Clan's stance on poison typifies that of most Selfish Heroes, in as much

as anything can for such a group. Their policy is best described as: "Use poison sparingly. Any weapon dulls from overuse." This convention is followed fairly closely within the Clan; as foul as the Heaven-and-Earth Alliance can be, it does have its own values, primary of which is that struggle strengthens and tests the strong while weeding out the weak.

Poison undercuts this position; hence, if a Clan member uses poison to advance themselves too regularly and gets caught at it... well, the results aren't pretty. Inveterate poisoners who get caught red-handed are subjected to a special month-long torture; the details involve being stripped naked and thrown into a pit of centipedes, then retrieved before death and being carefully maintained in writhing agony by expert doctors before finally being allowed to die. Such unfortunates are usually kept in cages hung from the doors of Hell Clan strongholds; so each time one enters and leaves an encampment, they are reminded of the fate that awaits those who use poison too often, never proving their strength against another.

All that being said, poison use is usually considered a Corrupt Deed of *Si* Virtue, though your Sage may well assign it to another Corrupt Virtue depending on the circumstances of its use. It's worth remembering that it's not enough to simply kill all witnesses or be super-secretive about your poison use; a mysterious and powerful figure, the Wulin Sage, witnesses all the Deeds of those who use kung fu under heaven... so eventually, the truth of a poisoner always becomes known.

Poison Characteristics

Poisons come in as many forms as they have origins; serpent and insect venoms, mineral and herb compounds, and so on. They are many, and corrupt doctors are always inventing more. Therefore, we have a system that defines





how they work; it's up to you and your Sage to determine what they're named or how they're made.

True poisons – as opposed to poison-like effects inflicted by Kung Fu – have ratings in **Lethality** (Recovery), **Potency** (Duration), and **Interval**. These function like the ratings for Chi conditions. The Lethality measures the difficulty of treating the poison with Medicine or recovering from it with Hardiness. The Potency measures how many successful Hardiness or Medicine rolls are necessary to cure the effects of the poison, as well as to the maximum length of time that the poison will persist in a victim's system, measured in days (so a Potency 3 poison will stay in the blood for three days). The Interval measures how often the character can roll to flush the poison from his system; for poisons, this is either once a day (outside of combat) for as many days as the poison has Potency or once a round (in combat).

Poison Effects

Poisons have two standard effects; most poisons inflict both.

- 1.) Depending on when the poison is administered, the victim starts taking damage. When the poison takes hold, the victim can try to make a Hardiness roll (requiring a full action!) to resist it – if failed, they take the damage, but if made, take no damage and may lower the poison's Potency by one. (Yes it IS possible to 'burn through' a poison by huge exertion and making Hardiness rolls... but too many failed rolls, and you're going to die.) Xia Joss is a perfectly good option to help rolls against a poison, but the River is useless against poison. But there is a terrible thing about poison damage, and why it is so used so often - **Poison damage cannot be cured with Jade Chi**. That's right: there is no spending Jade Chi to heal poison damage; it requires a doctor to even heal a victim's poison damage, much less cure the poison itself. Poison Damage should be marked off to the right of the Health chart in a different color to distinguish it from more easily-handled injuries.
- 2.) The Victim immediately suffers the **Sick** Condition (see pg. 275 for more details), usually the Jade weakness version – thus blocking Jade Chi recovery for as long as the condition persists. They may use whatever Jade chi they have left, of course.

When a poison is successfully administered and takes effect, your victim will take a die of unblockable damage every Interval; during combat, this is every round! (they're exerting themselves dangerously, so take damage more quickly as a result!).

Out of combat, they usually take a die of unblockable damage for every day of Potency the poison has. Your Sage may simply pick a random time every day to hit you with the damage, or else she might make the roll and apportion the damage over the course of the day – whatever seems best. So a Potency of 7 means you will be taking damage daily (or whenever you get into combat!) for seven whole days. There are some poisons – called **Virulent** – that prevent typical treatments from working,

but thankfully these are not often found.

To cure a Poison, either the victim must make the requisite number of Hardiness rolls, or a Doctor must make Medicine rolls against the listed Lethality (Difficulty) below, and gain a number of successful rolls equal to the Potency of the venom, thus ending its effects within the body of the victim. Bear in mind that attempting to use your own Hardiness to throw off a poison has difficulties of its own; if a doctor later tries to cure you, they will suffer the 'Too Many Cooks' penalty (see pg. 14).

Fortunately, Martial Artists do have an option – they can attempt to use their chi to Expel Poison; as that is essentially a Kung Fu Marvel, it is not listed here, but on pg. 231.

Sample Poisons

Common – The poison has Everyday Lethality (18) and Potency 3-5.

Examples of Common Poisons: Easily-Found Herbal Concoctions, most poisonous plants, Really Bad Cooking.

Uncommon – The poison has Moderate Lethality (20) and Potency 3-5.

Examples of Uncommon Poisons: Hard-to-Find Herbal Concoctions, Really nasty poisonous plants and certain mushrooms, Mercury-based (Cinnabar), Centipede Venoms.

Rare – The poison has Hard Lethality (30) and Potency 5-10.

Examples of Rare Poisons: Rare Insect Venoms, Alchemical Compounds.

Priceless – The poison has Legendary Lethality (40) and Potency 10+.

Examples of Priceless Poisons: Alchemical Compounds with Rare Ingredients, Writting Sickness Poison.

Nonesuch – The poison has Impossible Lethality (60) and Potency 10+. Additionally, you are not in the **Sick** Condition, but instead are in the **Dying** Condition!

Example of a Nonesuch Poison: Voidsbreath (a dry, tasteless cool dust found only in places of very strong Existence-Hating Radiance).

Wealth, Possessions, and Treasures

Wealth is the relative worth of all your possessions and, to some extent, the ability to purchase new goods and services beyond what you need to get by. Even if a character has a Wealth of 0, and effectively no purchasing power, that doesn't mean he's starving and naked. It just means his clothes and meals aren't as fashionable or sumptuous as the finery and feasts of a character with the Wealth Advantage.

This advantage allows for an abstract system of ownership and commerce that doesn't rely on the bookkeeping of one's cash... which, considering that going to the bathroom is mentioned more often than money in the comic, is a good thing. Instead, each point represents the level of resources available to the character due to assets and income.

The Wealth of Individuals

The Wealth Advantage is reprinted here for discussion.

0 – Poor: You have enough to get by and that's about it. In game terms, this means your character doesn't own much beyond her Starting Gear. You wear ragged hemp clothing and straw shoes, if you have shoes at all. You may not have a permanent residence, or a landlord owns the hovel you call home. Poor professions may include: Beggar, Buddhist Sage, Daoist, Disgraced Wife, Dispossessed Noble, Monk or Nun, and Student.

1 – Adequate: Your character has some savings that he replenishes through occasional odd jobs. You don't starve, but your meals are of the millet and vegetable variety (or lack thereof). You can buy hemp clothing on a regular basis, before they become raggedy. You may live in a one-room structure, hut in a village, or apartment in the city. Adequate professions may include: Farmer, Righteous Rebel, Soldier, Dispossessed Noble, Merchant, Tax Collector, Poet, and Village Predictionist.

2 – Comfortable: Your character has some income, either from a decent paying occupation or support from a family, clan, or patron. You can afford some cotton clothes, some decent shoes, and a meal with beef and rice. You may own that little village hovel or rent a nice apartment in the city. Comfortable professions may include Convoy Escort, Farmer, Former Bandit, Gangster Gone Straight, Righteous Rebel, Soldier, Censor, Tax Collector, and Craftsman.

3 – Well-Off: You've got some cash, some property and are doing all right for yourself. You can afford cotton clothing, as well as meals with rice, pork, and seafood. Your home houses three generations of your family and a servant or two. It's quite possible you have a farm in the country, which supports your home in the city. Well-Off f f



professions may include: Convoy Escort, Dispossessed Noble*, Former Bandit*, Gangster Gone Straight*, Circuit Judge, Constable, Lady of the Court, Merchant, and Tax Collector.

*Assuming you've kept some of the wealth from your previous profession.

4 – Affluent: You've got gobs of cash and silver. You own a few houses filled with plush furnishings and a decent staff on hand. You eat fine meals with rice wine. You even, on occasion, dress in silk. Affluent professions may include: Proud Prince, Lady of the Court, Imperial Courtier, Imperial Eunuch, Merchant, Minister, Noble House Member, Imperial Advisor.

5 – Wealthy: You are truly financially independent, your wealth most likely the result of being some kind of landed noble. That is, others use the resources of your land to make you money, either through farming, mining, or housing. You may, instead, be a very successful merchant. You own a posh manor, fully staffed and filled with fine furnishings and artifacts. No one in your family wants for anything as they are always dressed in the finest silks, and feasting on the finest foods. Wealthy professions may include: Proud Prince, Lady of the Court, Imperial Courtier, Imperial Eunuch, Merchant, Minister, Noble House Member, Imperial Advisor.

Only these first five ranks of wealth are available to player characters. The higher ranks of wealth require ever-increasing levels of staff and infrastructure. After all, somebody has to manage all those resources! These higher ranks don't allow for an individual to pick up and go adventuring, which is why player characters can't have a Wealth above 5. Example: Great Oak of the Xi Clan has Wealth 5; he never wants for anything, and always stays at the finest inns. His father, Ho Xi, Master of the Xi Clan, has a Wealth Rating of 14... but you won't see him wandering the countryside, as his vast wealth requires much of his attention.

The higher wealth ranks demonstrate the combined resources of groups and institutions. Wealth levels 6-10 represent the Wealth of Clans, which may be families, secret societies, businesses, bandit organizations, or kung fu clans. Levels 11-15 represent the Wealth of Empires, which may include extremely wealthy clans (as described just previously), or any other group that has control within a specific sphere of life on a national scale. For example, the Bei Clan controls a weapon production empire, the Dong Clan a shipping empire, and Emperor



Hu controls the Jin Empire. The GM can use these values to approximate the resources of ultra-powerful individuals and institutions.

Wealth and Commerce

It's a common virtue among wuxia heroes to bear a healthy contempt for wealth. They are much more concerned with honor, bravery, and justice than accumulating material possessions. As a result, *Weapons of the Gods* does not go into great detail about the actual costs of goods and services or the exact number of coins in a character's pocket. This is, after all, a game of kung fu, not accounting. It is just assumed that all characters have the basic resources necessary to live. Since kung fu warriors aren't especially concerned with the loss and accumulation of wealth, neither are we.

What's presented in this section is a list of goods and services that are given a Wealth level. The Wealth level also helps determine a Destiny cost if the item were acquired by using the Possession advantage (see pg. 49). Once play begins, the rank also determines if a character may purchase the item by using her Wealth Advantage (assuming she has one).

Buying Stuff

If the wealth rank of an item is less than the rank of the character's Wealth advantage, he may easily purchase the item. If the item's wealth rank is higher than that of the character's Wealth, then the character cannot afford the item. If both ranks are the same, then you must make a Persuade roll (add an extra die if you have the Haggle specialization) to see if you can talk the merchant down to a reasonable price. This is an opposed roll made against the merchant's Confidence. To reflect the bad luck of dealing with unscrupulous business people, the GM may also give the merchant up to 3 points of corrupt Joss to use. If you make the roll, you easily acquire the item. If you fail the roll, you have two options. One: acquire the item, but your wealth rank goes down by 1 point. You must then spend a point of Destiny to return your wealth to its previous rank. Two: decide the item's too pricey and decline to buy it at this time. If you can find another merchant, you may try again.

The following is a list of modifiers to the roll when attempting to purchase something.

+5 – Item is overstocked or imperfect. Market is flooded for the service.

+10 – Item or service is plentiful in this area.

+20 – Your status or affiliation gets you a discount from a favorable or intimidated dealer.

-5 – Item or service is rare in this area, or possibly illegal. Dealer is of an affiliation that doesn't like the character's clan, family, etc.

-10 – Item or service is extremely rare, normally not for sale, or garners a harsh penalty if caught purchasing this. Dealer is friendly with enemies of the character.

Modifiers for Buying Multiple Items

If you *don't* normally need to roll to acquire the item but want up to 5 of them, then you need to roll.

If you *don't* need to roll to acquire the item but want up to 10 of them, then you need to roll with a – 5 modifier.

If you *don't* need to roll to acquire the item but want up to 20 of them, then you need to roll with a –10 modifier.

If you *do* need to roll to acquire the item and want up to 5 of them, then you need to roll with a – 5 modifier.

If you *do* need to roll to acquire the item and want up to 10 of them, then you need to roll with a – 10 modifier.

Buying People (Bribery)

- Only works with unnamed characters.
- Wealth level equals the status level of the NPC. Example: you need to bribe a Town Warden, who has a Status of 2. You must make a Persuade roll if you have a Wealth of 2. If your Wealth is 3 or higher the Warden takes the Bribe.
- Issues of loyalty are the same as with any purchased help, i.e. there is none. A bigger bribe or more intimidating figure can motivate the bribee to betray the initial briber.
- The GM should apply appropriate modifiers for affiliation and intimidation.
- Bribes only suffice for Simple tasks, or turning a blind eye. More elaborate requests involve role-playing, use of one's Presence, or the Secret Arts.

Money

Because residents of Shen Zhou don't stand around talking about their "wealth ratings," the following paragraph describes how money works in the Land of the Gods. This way you can speak in character about money when haggling with merchants, purchasing a bowl of something at the noodle shop, or discussing the price of a night's stay at a wayward inn.

Outside of bartering, the most common currency is "cash", a copper coin with a hole in its center that allows a person to thread several coins along a string for convenient carrying. One hundred cash along one string is simply called a "string". Merchants and folks buying expensive items will also trade in "taels". A tael is a flat silver ingot that weighs a little more than an ounce. (When Jet Li in the movie *Hero* drops some flat coins in the blind ku-ching player's bowl, those are silver tael – a small fortune! Obviously he really wants the player to stay...) Ten strings equal one tael. The very wealthy also use gold tael,



usually for exorbitant purchases: ships and palaces, for example. Ten silver taels equal one gold tael. Gold taels are standardized in shape across all of Shen Zhou, and resemble a cut-open avocado made of gold.

Wealth, Possessions, and Followers

Although there are different advantages that allow a character to acquire goods and services, they have different uses.

Anything you purchase using the Wealth Advantage may be considered temporary or prone to loss. The GM may not consider the item anything you are expected to keep on a long-term basis. Armor can be battered or shredded, weapons broken, animals can die, and followers can betray or desert you.

If you wish for more permanent items, they must be Possessions. Possessions are granted a modicum of plot immunity by the GM because they aren't mere purchases. As Destiny was spent to acquire them, Possessions are seen as aspects and extensions of the character. A signature weapon, a recognizable style of clothing, or an animal companion are all examples of Possessions.

Services can be purchased with the Wealth advantage, but the people who provide such services will not have any loyalty to you. They may bow to your status, if you have any, but beyond this, they have no real relationship with you. The Friends and Followers advantages are necessary to have NPCs who are loyal and friendly to your character.

Put simply, things acquired with Wealth allow you to get through an adventure, but may not last after that. Possessions, Friends, and Followers are useful and reliable throughout an entire campaign.

Equipment

Wealth Level Required to buy

Armor

Light (cloth or leather)	2
<i>(Free to Warriors at Character Creation)</i>	
Medium (chain or scale)	3-5
Heavy (Bronze or steel plate)	5-7

The variance in Armor prices reflects several things – condition and distinctiveness. A Cost 3 set of Medium Armor is obviously used (or even battered!) and has no distinctive design; Cost 4, a little less damaged and more distinctive; and Cost 5, clearly a unique and individual suit of Armor that identifies its wearer. These prices already reflect the fact that Armor above Light is considered Quality.

Perfect Armor costs a *minimum* additional 3 levels of Wealth, and that's assuming it's even available for sale. (It's probably a bad idea to ask Dominion how much he wants for his armor!)

Only the most expensive and distinguished suits of Armor are Possessions.

Clothing

Hemp clothing	I
Cotton clothing	2
Wooden shoes	I
Leather boots	2
Wool coat	3
Silk clothing	4

Personal Accessories

Calligraphy set	I
-with colored inks	2
Paper	I for 3 sheets
Qin (lute)	2
Ku-ching (zither-harp)	2
Flute	I
Playing cards	I
Dice	I
Mah jong set	I
Kite	I
Rain Hat (Poor Quality)	I
Hairpins	2
Rain Hat (Good Quality)	2
Court Hat (Fine Quality)	3
Xiangqi (or liubo) set	3
Mirror	4
Forehead Jewels	4-6
Jeweled nail guards	5-7
Abacus	I
Candle	I for 12 candles
Fan	
- paper	I
- cloth	I
- metal	2 (Suitable for Combat)
- ivory	3
Lantern	2
Rope	I
Teapot	2
Backpack	I
Gourd (for holding water)	I
Purse	I
Firecrackers	I for string of 20
Colored Flares	I for a bundle of 5

Personal & Professional Services

Courier services	- ½ cost of item plus I for every 10 miles
Ferry Ride	I
Funeral (Cheap)	I
Funeral (Lavish)	4
Lodging	I – 5
<i>(each wealth level represents the typical room for a character of that level)</i>	
Medical Care*	minimum 2
Negotiable Affection	I – 3
Skilled labor*	minimum 2

*Each wealth rank equals the appropriate skill of the person hired



Property & Housing

Peasant Home	Build*	Buy*	Staff**	Furnish***
Typical Home (houses 3 generations)	5	3	3-5	2-7
Modest Home	5-8	4-6	4-6	2-7
Plush Manor	7-9	5-7	5-7	3-8
Mansion	8-10	6-8	6-9	4-9
Palace	10-12	8-10	8-10	7-12
Fortress	12-14	10-12	8-12	8

*level range represents range of size

**level range represents bare bones to full staff

***wealth level determines quality and elegance of furnishings

Travel & Adventuring Provisions

Rope, 20'	1
Basic meal	1
(millet, wheat, barley, beans, turnips, onions)	
Decent meal	2
(beef, rice; standard noodle house fare)	
Extravagant meal	3
(pork, chicken, seafood)	
Millet beer	1
Rice wine	2
Tent	1
Torch	1
Lantern	2

Tools

Hammer	1
Fishing Pole	1
Flint stone	1
Carpentry tools	2
Metalworking tools	2

Standard tools allow you to use the skill without penalty.

Quality tools give +5 to Crafting roll and cost a 3 additional Wealth Levels.

Perfect tools give +10 to Crafting roll and cost a 6 additional Wealth Levels.

Transportation

Horses (Riding and Warhorses can be bought as Quality at 3 additional Wealth to the listed price)

• Farm	2
• Riding	4
• War	6
Camel	4
Cart	3
Wagon	4
Sampan (small riverboat)	2
River Junk (medium boat)	4
Kiangsu Junk (large boat)	5

Weapons

All weapons are Wealth Level I in cost, except for the following, which cost Level 2:

Big Club / Melon Hammer
Wolf-Teeth Staff
Battleaxe
Greatsword
Long-handled Saber (Kwan Dao)
Blade Wheel
Seven Sectional Chain
Three-Section Staff
Crescent Moon Shovel

Quality weapons cost 3 additional levels of Wealth. See page 77 about adjustments to Quality weapons.

Treasures

The magic items of the Land of the Gods are manifold; they have many origins, whether from the workings of Daoist Sorcerers, the passionate forgers of the Weapons of the Gods, or one of the many descendants of Huangti, known for their crafting of marvelous devices and toys. Note that not all Treasures are necessarily 'magic,' many of them are just anachronistic technology, such as devices or inventions like explosives or drill bombs. Given space considerations, this is only a sampling of possible Treasures. Treasures are *always* Possessions; while Weapons of the Gods are technically Treasures, they're accounted for separately. (* denotes a Treasure detailed in full). Treasures, if they're for sale at all, are treated as two points higher than their level for Wealth cost purposes (not counting Beyond Price, of course. Those you can only barter for!)

Level One Treasure – Mandrake Tonic*, Nine-Devil Wine, Quality Items.

Level Two Treasure – Brotherhood Wine, Drill Bomb, Explosives, Snow Lotus Potion*.

Level Three Treasure – Alchemical Skin Mask*, Father and Son Swords, Lesser Classic of Great Peace.

Level Four Treasure – Common Style Kung Fu Manual, Potent Shang Tortoiseshells*, A Thousand-Sword Statue Warrior.

Level Five Treasure – Hidden Sky's Matchless Sedan Chair (armored battle chariot), Uncommon Style Kung Fu Manual, Head of Zhu Yin, All-in-Chaos Bells*, (*Class III Weapons of the Gods*).

Level Six Treasure – The Sun Stone, the River Stone Lord (*Class II Weapons of the Gods*).

Beyond Price - The Dragon-Tooth Wheel, The Million Style Manual, Pure Pieces of the Void. (*Class I Weapons of the Gods*)

Sample Treasures

1: Mandrake Tonic – Drinking this tonic after being wounded will reduce your Wound penalties by -5. Drinking more than one dose in 24 hours, or drinking it while uninjured,

rolls an unblockable die of poison damage to you.

2: Snow Lotus Potion - This balm, rubbed on the body, grants a +10 bonus to all Hardiness and Medicine rolls for a day's time, greatly aiding in recovery from wounds - if one uses this potion, they will suffer no disfiguring battle scars.

3: Alchemical Skin Mask - These hideous items are made from real human skin and scalps. They naturally cling to the user's face and head and conceal their true identity while worn; this gives a +10 bonus to skills like Perform or Expertise: Disguise. (It is rumored that the mysterious Lor's Forbidden Territory is the place where these horrid things are made.)

4: Potent Shang Tortoiseshells - These rare shells are of such potency that they will add +15 to any single Divination when they are used in the classical style (cracked with the tip of a hot poker), but will also add +5 to any

other divination method they are worked into! (Bufon Jou uses one of these to do I-Ching coin divination, for example.)

5: All-in-Chaos Bells - These massive temple bells are magic items of great power! If rung by a Qin bloodline Descendant, their tone will roll out across the battlefield and force all who hear it to spend an additional Gold Chi on any kung fu technique they want to succeed (when the bell is heard, a successful Awareness roll will inform the listener of the nature of the tone; otherwise, they find out the hard way). If the additional Gold Chi point is not spent, then the hearer is hit with *Chi Poisoning* to the primary color of the kung fu they were attempting to use - see the Three Powers Kung Fu Technique **Black Rain** for more details; see pg. 269.

Advanced Lore

Tiger Soul

Destiny Cost: 5

For a month, there was a strange phenomenon on the peak of Mt. Tai Shan: a golden column of light shot into the skies, and went out for a quarter of an hour. The strange sight caused a great sensation throughout the land. In the kung-fu world, the following lines of verse quickly became widespread:

After the eclipse, Tiger's Soul will reign supreme.

Its only rival is the Crystal from Heaven.

—from *Weapons of the Gods*, by Tony Wong

The first plot arc of the *Weapons of the Gods* comic deals with Tiger Soul, a terrible weapon forged by Chi You. Its impending return catalyzes the Martial Arts world—its wielder will reign supreme, and only Heaven's Crystal will compare!

The following Destiny costs assume that these events take place in your game. The Game Master is encouraged to supplement or replace this advanced topic with information relating to Tiger Soul's role in her game; note that this entry concerns Tiger Soul alone, instead of the canon comic storyline where the fate of it and Heaven's Crystal are tied together.





DESTINY COST

- 1 **Fortune:** involve yourself in a major Clan's quest to retrieve Tiger Soul.
- 1 **Fortune:** involve a major enemy in the quest to find Tiger Soul.
- 2 **Secret:** learn key information helpful in finding Tiger Soul.
- 3 **Fortune:** lead a major Clan's quest to retrieve Tiger Soul.
- 5 **Entangled Destiny:** involve yourself with Tiger Soul.
- 25 **Fortune:** obtain Tiger Soul.

The Way of the Wulin

Destiny Cost: 10

Many characters participate in the martial arts world. Only a few understand it and give it shape.

Many martial artists dream of being one of the Ten Greatest Heroes of All Time, the Ten Greatest Young Heroes of All Time, the Ten Greatest Warrior-Scholars of All Time, and so forth. Decisions regarding these titles come from two sources: consensus emerging from the Clans, and the verdicts of the Wulin sage, the great student of the martial arts who—by observing the flows of Chi in the world—knows of all great struggles across Shen Zhou.

DESTINY COST

- 2 **Victory:** increase Clan awareness of your great accomplishments.
- 2 **Victory:** decrease Clan respect for an enemy's accomplishments.
- 3 **Discovery:** your character was once apprenticed to the Wulin Sage, and you know more than you should about the fighters of Shen Zhou.
- 5 **Entangled Destiny:** your Destiny will touch that of the Wulin Sage.
- 5 **Technique:** you have an opportunity to learn the Level Five *Sage Eye Disruption* Formless Technique, which can deceive the Wulin Sage. This can give you a false reputation for power or weakness (see pg 367). (Note: You can only choose one of the last two Destinies in this list; they are mutually incompatible).

The Transformation of the World

Destiny Cost: 5

Huangti came to earth to civilize Shen Zhou. He brought uniformity and order, the perpetual enemies of chaos. His strong governmental and moral principles

helped bind the world together. He brought the Mandate of Heaven.

When the social order is weak and the rulers lose the Mandate of Heaven, then monsters and demons trouble the world. It is easy for baneful humans and heroes alike to learn the most powerful kung fu techniques; these are symptoms of the imbalance in the world.

When the social order is strong and the rulers have the Mandate of Heaven, this chaos recedes. In the Time of Chaos, there is no single Emperor to bear Heaven's mandate, but some of the Clan Leaders and local powers still wield their rule in a righteous fashion. As long as this remains true, Heaven shall shield the world from most interference of the demons and the gods. Similarly, most of the monsters that once plagued Shen Zhou have retreated to shadowed corners of the world.

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Xia Victory:** Through righteous advice to its ruler, increase the harmony in a region. This requires a ruler willing to listen. You can use this to fight back general moral decay, exposing the more specific sources of problems, or increase the character's moral authority and reputation for wisdom.
- 3 **Corrupt Victory:** Through deceptive advice to its ruler, decrease the order in a region so that you and your associates may acquire power. This also requires a ruler willing to listen.

Formless Techniques

Destiny Cost: 0

The hidden treasures of the Land of the Gods, Formless Techniques are to be found in strange and hard to access places... in ancient temples on high mountaintops, or inside reclusive Kung Fu Masters' heads. Formless Techniques can be of any level, requiring only the prerequisite amount of training in Kung Fu (though of course you need the right amounts of Chi to activate them). In order to learn one of these techniques you must have already acquired a kung fu style and worked up to techniques of at least one level below, or you won't have the fundamentals necessary to practice it on your own. As in all things, however, there is a downside to the interesting and often unique powers that formless techniques can offer – a significant minority of them are Corrupt, darkening their user's chi and steering their destinies in a baneful direction.

Corrupt Techniques are simple enough – you learn them just as always (though more commonly from manuals or engravings, as teachers for them aren't terribly common). But there's a kicker: just learning a Corrupt formless technique means your inner strength is corrupted and is no longer entirely your own. For more information on this topic and **Demon Chi**, see *Building a Reputation in Hell*, pg. 367.

Perpetual Awareness (Level One Formless Technique)

[1 Destiny]

When invoked, this technique allows you to know your spouse's exact location, even in the dark, and to coordinate perfectly for a round, as long as you are within a range equal to your Favored Chi in yards (outside of this range, you know what direction your mate is, but not their location). You both roll Initiative, but you each act on the better of the two rolls, and either of you gain the **Reliable Cavalry** Specialty to your Initiative skill when you come to each other's rescue. If both know the technique and invoke it, then it permits Perfect Coordination – which allows you to come to assist in each other's Tactical Opposition, and gives a +5 bonus when both of you double-team a single foe. Cost: 1 Silver Chi.

Xia Pregnancy (Level One Formless Technique)

[1 Destiny]

This kung fu concentrates powerful Jade Chi in the placenta. Using this technique provides the following: it allows you to remain in perfect fighting form throughout pregnancy, minimizing its inconveniences; protects the fetus from any attack that does not kill you; in the third trimester, protects the fetus from attacks that *do* kill you; limits labor to a few hours at most; and it gives you a three-day warning of the time labor will begin. To use this technique, you must invest 1 Jade Chi; this lowers your Jade Chi rating by one for as long as you maintain this technique (generally the span of the pregnancy). Though your Jade Chi is lower and you are weaker than usual, you are unaffected by Chi Flow Loss. This technique remains in effect unless you release it by an act of will. Cost: 1 Jade Chi.

Chi Harmony (Level Two Formless Technique)

[2 Destiny]

If you use this Formless Technique in a combat where you and your spouse work together, you can spend two points of any Chi and better harmonize your spirit with that of your mate. The more often you do this, the more powerful and heroic your children will be. Ten uses and they'll certainly make you proud; one hundred uses, and they'll shake the Martial Arts World! Use this technique while fighting alongside your spouse and accomplishing a *Deed*; you must be fighting side by side with your mate against a foe for this technique to be effective. Gain no destiny for the *Deed*, though you will still gain *Joss*. Set aside the Destiny; it will then one day be available to your child, whether to spend as a bonus during character creation, or to use for buying Advantages (if a non-player character). This technique is truly only of particular use in a long-term or ongoing campaign. If you and your mate both know this technique, then it is twice as efficacious; both

of you may invoke it, and if done in
each other's presence, every five
Destiny set aside by both
partners (ten
total, five

from each) will become a point of Transcendent Destiny!
Cost: 2 Any Chi.

Jade Reverence (Level Two Formless Technique)

[2 Destiny]

When performed in the same way as a *Deed*, this technique transfers the Destiny you would have received to your parents instead, extending and enhancing their lives. This has the in-game effect of gradually relieving any tension between you and your parents, as you are fulfilling Filial Piety by giving them part of yourself. (The GM should rate from 1-10 the amount of tension to your relationship with your parents; each use will decrease that tension by one. Note that this does not mean that said tension won't return – particularly if you're not listening to their wishes! Cost: 2 Any Chi.

Buddha's Eye (Level Three Formless Technique)

[3 Destiny]

A beneficial but rare technique, Buddha's Eye has the singular effect of countering any techniques or powers based on Demon Chi. When the technique is invoked, you can Channel any color of Chi (but only one color!) to remove result dice from an opponent's Demon Chi-based use or technique; if all result dice are canceled, then the technique or chi use fails. Note this technique can still only be invoked once per round, and it can only operate on a kung fu attack against the user; it is unable to protect others. Cost: 3 Gold Chi. *Channel: As noted above.*

Thousand-Poison Mist

(Level Three Formless Technique)

[3 Destiny]

This technique is considered to be more than a bit dishonorable in Shen Zhou, though not as bad as if you'd used actual poison. When used, the Silver Chi expended becomes a cloud of slow-moving purplish mist that forms and is directed from the tips of your fingers; this mist is a Potency 5 **Poison** that will affect any one person it touches (or a single unit of minions), though it can be Dodged or even Dispersed. It persists for one round after its use, and is approximately one yard wide. Finally, knowing this technique inflicts a unique temporary Disadvantage on its user – they acquire **Poison Nails** for a scene after it used. While it's true they can be used as weapons, it's a distinct drawback to have nails that inflict a Potency 5 Poison on the slightest scratch... even on you! Cost: 2 Silver and 1 Demon Chi.

Silken Thread Assassin (Level Four Formless Technique)

[4 Destiny]

A technique for those who like to kill with hideous surprise, this technique allows you to wield even the most slender of threads like the sharpest of knives. Spend 3 Silver and 1 Demon Chi, and make a Ranged attack with a silken cord or thread. While this technique is active, it gives the thread the following statistics: +10 Speed, Strike +10, Damage +10; a Standard Success is **Disorienting**, while a Critical Success inflicts dismemberment (though



for it to work, at least one point of damage must get through to the target, and does one entire health level's worth of damage; one entire health level; note that this technique can only target the neck after the limbs are gone, and all actions following the severance of the limb are lost.) This technique allows you to attack with **Surprise** each time it is used, but this advantage can be negated by a successful Awareness or Senses roll on the part of your target. You can only make one Attack per round using this technique; no additional attacks are permitted whatsoever, nor can you make Called Shots with this technique. Cost: As noted. Channel: 2 Crimson (maintains the technique for another round).

Barred Armor Shield (Level Four Formless Technique)

[4 Destiny]

Breathtakingly simple in its application and execution (though not in its chi manipulation), this formless technique grants near-immunity to harm. Invoke this technique; you gain your Favored Chi modifier to your Armor, but this additional armor is only effective against Artful Attacks, Acid, and Burning. This technique has, unfortunately, a *Vulnerable Spot* – a single point where this protection can be completely bypassed and ignored, if so struck (via a Called Shot), this technique's benefits do not apply (It requires a Hard [30] Awareness roll or divination to detect). Cost: 2 Invested Gold Chi to maintain.

Sacred Zhu Fire Fist (Level Five Formless Technique)

[5 Destiny]

This technique is one of the inner secrets of the Western Fire Doctrine Clan – the second of the Fire Sutras of Zhu Rong. Wielding this technique, your hands blaze with the Fires of Heaven! If you strike your opponent and inflict damage, you can set one of their Chi Attributes on Fire, which has the following effects: First, at the end of the round, the Chi Attribute on Fire will instead ignite the point of Chi the target breathes in, denying chi regeneration and inflicting a die of unblockable fire damage! Now, that is bad enough – but the Attribute will continue burning a number of rounds equal to the rating of the Attribute! (Note that each Attribute can be so ignited once.) So if you have a Might (Wood Element) of 4, then the flame will burn for four rounds before going out. Worse, each time you're struck with this technique, you can have another Chi Attribute set aflame with one limitation – your Wu Wei (Silver Chi) Attribute cannot be set afire, as it is the ultimate Yin energy, and too watery to burn. Indeed, anyone hit by this technique should make an Everyday Awareness roll; if successful, they will know they can extinguish themselves by spending a Full Action and a point of Silver Chi to make a Hardiness roll and put out the fire of a single burning Chi Attribute! Of course, this isn't always easy to do in the midst of battle. This technique is only thought to be known by Sky Lord of the Flame Cult, and he never teaches it... so you would have to somehow obtain the Fire Sutra itself to learn this mighty technique! Chi Cost: 5 Any Chi – except for Silver.

Sage Eye Disruption (Level Five Formless Technique)

[5 Destiny]

This technique is much beloved by the most devious and dangerous of martial artists in the Wulin (Baneful Warriors just don't care about the Wulin Sage, really). Every time you commit a Deed of either type (Xia or Corrupt), spend the Chi Cost; it will be masked from the eyes of the Wulin Sage (highlight or otherwise mark the 'masked' boxes on your Deeds chart). You still get the Destiny for the Deed, but you won't get the joss; such is the price for going unseen in the eyes of Heaven. By performing this technique selectively as you progress through your career, your Deeds will only register in the eyes of the Wulin in exactly whatever form you choose, as long as you have the chi to perform the technique, of course! The power of this technique comes at a price: see *Building a Reputation in Hell* (pg. 367). Chi Cost: 1 Demon Chi + 4 Any Chi.

Zenith Destroyer (Level Five Formless Technique)

[5 Destiny]

This rare and deadly -- and very corrupt -- technique brings a huge surge of Chi into the kung fu warrior's system; using this chi, it is possible to employ techniques that are ordinarily out of reach. For each point of Demon Chi spent, 2 points of a single Chi color (any; your choice) flow into your system... and this can exceed your chi mastery! (Mark the new points in your temporary chi track.) The power of this technique comes at a price: you instantly gain several Chi flaws, the most obvious being Eerie Aura. Chi Cost: Special.

All-Things-Ordering-Energy

(Level Six Formless Technique)

[10 Destiny]

The marvelous technique of the Celestial Goddess, this energy harmonizes kung fu with your other skills. Channel six Gold Chi and four Any Chi through your body and mind. If you can succeed on a Hard (30) Awareness roll, you fill your river with 9s. If you spend these river dice on a skill roll, you don't need to use ordinary techniques – talking for Inspire, hitting someone for Fight, swimming to part the waves, and so forth. You can accomplish the task with nothing more than a spark of All-Things Ordering Energy. The Celestial Goddess' energy is not for ordinary mortals; if you roll a critical failure on the Awareness roll, you'll turn into a dragon-tailed monster who hungers for the flesh of your loved ones. (Critical failure is, as usual, a dramatic device – in this case, as noted under **The Celestial Goddess** [see pg. 94], you'll usually receive 2 Destiny for this result.) Chi Cost: As noted.

Six Ultimate Ghost Spell (Level Six Formless Technique)

[10 Destiny]

This formless technique is – to the best



of anyone's knowledge – only held and taught by the Hell Clan, though they almost certainly did not invent it; the implications of this powerful chi manipulation method are both chilling and profound. Simply put, this 'Spell' allows you to ravage the Po souls of the victims you kill; as they die, you drain the chi from them, which is then stored in one of six reservoirs within your own body created specifically for this purpose by the spell. You may not add more chi to a given reservoir until it is completely empty, as the chi you take is 'flavored' by its former owner and will not tolerate being mixed with chi from another.

When in a combat, spend the chi cost; if you manage to kill an opponent within the next ten rounds, then you gain all of their 'base chi' (equal to a single Health level) and add it to one of your empty reservoirs (you choose). If you have no empty reservoir, the chi is lost and you've wasted the Chi Cost. This so-called 'base chi', for the sake of this technique, is considered 'colorless' and may be spent as any color (though not as Demon Chi for purposes of any techniques that use that particular type).

For ease of use, assume that Killed opponents yield the following chi amounts: Minions = 1 point each; Rank 5 characters = 5 points each; Rank 4 = 10 points; Rank 3 = 15 points; Rank 2 = 20 points; and Rank 1 = 25 points. Chi Cost: 3 Demon Chi + 7 Any Chi.

Slaughter and Sacrifice

Destiny Cost: 10

Slaughter and self-sacrifice are great sources of power – why this should be is a mystery; perhaps it is the legacy of the Void, its lasting curse, that not even the Immortal Emperor can lift. If this were the case, this would explain the Enchanted Demon's knowledge of it; for he, like his father before him, was a willing and knowing Servant of the Void. But though the Demon is dead and unmade, the knowledge that he taught does not so easily go away; knowledge of this terrible secret allows one to turn death itself into a terrible form of energy that can shake the heavens.

For it is known to a few: to kill one's enemies brings one great power; to kill one's family or friends, even more; if a friend or family member sacrifices their life, it can make a martial artist invincible!

This is the Secret of the Xi Clan – Master Forgers with this lore, taught by Ho Xi himself and enforced with terrible curses – regularly participate in battles against barbarian invaders that would enter Shen Zhou. As they kill, they dedicate the resultant slaughter's energies to the construction of more Class III God-weapons, to expand and replenish Ho Xi's treasure trove.

[This is an Advanced Lore that the GM might well wish to prevent any player from starting play with – the

implications are something to consider carefully. To even invoke this hellish lore is to commit a Corrupt Deed, which one depending on the circumstances of its use.]

DESTINY COST

- I **Bonus:** Each time you commit a terrible slaughter (wherein dozens of people die), you receive 1 Transcendent Destiny. A Hated Foe is worth 2 Transcendent Destiny.
- I **Bonus:** Each time you kill a friend, family member, or loved one, you receive 3 Transcendent Destiny.
- I **Bonus:** Each time a friend, family member, or loved one willingly sacrifices their life for your power, you receive 5 Transcendent Destiny.

Making Weapons of the Gods

Destiny Cost: 5

Love and hate are the most powerful forces in Shen Zhou. Even the All-Things-Ordering Energy quails before the Enchanted Demon's hate! Nor are his other passions far behind—with lust and pride, he let the Celestial Goddess live, and with compassion and anger she would strike back.

To forge even a Class III Weapon of the Gods – or *God-Weapon* -- a human must be driven by a great, terrible desire. To make a Class II Weapon, you need a world-shaking passion out of legend! Only the greatest heroes can even dream of such love, hate, or anger.

DESTINY COST

- 3 **Victory:** Craft a Class III Weapon of the Gods. You must first have a minimum of the Crafting Skill of 4, with Full Specialization in Weapons. The forging always takes place near the culmination of a multi-story arc that drives you to extreme emotion.
- 5 **Victory:** Craft a Class II Weapon of the Gods. You must first have a minimum Crafting Skill of 5, with Full Specialization in Weapons and magical ingredients; the latter will determine the quality of the weapon, whether Earthly (no magical ingredients), Heavenly (some magical ingredients) or Divine (you literally have some part of a god's personal regalia). Note that spending Transcendent Destiny (see below) during the forging will automatically drive up the quality of your weapon!

You must be wracked by legendary emotions—love, hate, anger, compassion, jealousy, lust, devotion, or some other drive worked to a fever pitch over the course of the game. This normally takes place near the culmination of a long campaign. Your Weapon can stand against even Class I Weapons in the narrow

area of focus appropriate to the circumstances of its forging.

Designing Your Own God-Weapons

The comics, as has been said before, are hardly exhaustive – so you should be able to make up your own Weapons of the Gods, right? This is how it's done, in five easy steps.

1.) Concept. You should have some idea of its origin – this is crucial to knowing exactly how powerful it will be. Not all Weapons of the Gods are made by deities, after all. Humans can make them; indeed, one of the Xi Clan's biggest secrets is being able to reliably forge Class III God-weapons! So you should first come up with an illustrious history, for the Weapons of the Gods are virtually characters themselves.

2.) Weapon Type. Pick what type of weapon your new creation will be. Weapons of the Gods can be virtually anything, from a lute, to a flute, or even a bow; you name it. Record its statistics on a piece of paper.

Example: Sky Ghost is based on a staff: Speed +10, Strike +5, Damage +5.

3.) Apply Modifiers. Once you have your weapon type picked out, refer to the table below; select the Class (III, II or even I), and the Level (Earthly, Heavenly or Divine; remember the level is determined by what materials were available to forge the weapon). Then take the points for that weapon (say, 15 for a Class III Heavenly Weapon) and apply them to your weapon's Speed, Damage and Strike – bearing in mind you may only apply them in 5 point packages. Want a really fast Melon Hammer? Apply all the points to the Weapon's Speed. Want it to hit really hard? Put them all in Strike. Want the weapon to be vicious in the harm it delivers? Put it all in Damage. Or, as is more likely, spread the points out, making the weapon better than average across the board.

are: Speed +20, Strike +10, Damage +15.

4.) Create Powers. Now for the best bit: you get to create the powers. God-Weapons have three levels of Power available to them. Lesser Powers cost up to Three Chi of a single color, and cannot exceed a Common Kung Fu technique beyond Level 4. Greater Powers cost more than Three Chi of a single color, and can range up to the full levels of an Uncommon Kung Fu Technique. Effortless Powers require no Chi at all, and can be any power level whatsoever, great or small. Note that only Class I God-Weapons can have powers that equal Rare techniques!

The actual number of powers a God-Weapon may have varies. A good rule of thumb is that Earthly God-weapons usually only have at most one Lesser power, while Heavenly God-weapons can have one or two of either or both Lesser or Greater (usually only one of the latter). Divine God-weapons might have two or three powers of any combination of Lesser or Greater, or they may have one Effortless Power and perhaps only one or two Lesser or Greater powers. Note that you can add additional powers beyond this rule of thumb at the time of forging, but this is only possible with the expenditure of Transcendent Destiny (see pg. 341); the cost is one point to add a Lesser power, two to add a Greater power, and three to add an Effortless power to the Weapon.

Good examples of Lesser Powers would be: using a given Combat Effect (see pg. 74 for a list) at will as a Critical Success, or a Potency not exceeding 5. This is a much cheaper version of a Common kung fu technique.

Good examples of Greater Powers would be: using a given Combat Effect (see pg. 74 for a list) at will on a Standard Success, or at a higher Potency than 5. This is a much cheaper version of an Uncommon kung fu technique.

Effortless Powers can be most anything – they cost nothing and can be startling in scope, or just not found anywhere else. Examples of this kind of power would be the Buddha's Edge Blade's ability to permanently reduce Demon Chi, or the Silver Eagle Sword's ability to strike first every round. Effortless Powers should be counted as two powers when determining such things and should be limited in some fashion, given that they require nothing from the wielder save a free action to evoke.

Example, Continued: Sky Ghost can have up to three powers as a Divine Weapon, but we want it to have an Effortless Power, which takes up two possible power 'slots'. So we choose a Lesser Power, based on the kung fu technique 'Coruscating Flame', and a massive fire attack that the Sage

herself designs.

GOD-WEAPON MODIFIERS

	Points	Quick Point Allocations (Samples Only)		
CLASS III		Speed	Strike	Damage Add
1. Earthly	(10)	+0	+5	+5
2. Heavenly	(15)	+5	+5	+5
3. Divine	(25)	+5	+10	+10
CLASS II				
1. Earthly	(30)	+10	+10	+10
2. Heavenly	(40)	+10	+15	+15
3. Divine	(45)	+15	+15	+15
CLASS I	(50 Minimum)	var.	var.	var.

Example, Continued: Sky Ghost is a Class III Divine Weapon, with 25 points to assign, in five-point parcels. Modifiers (in parentheses, after the starting values): Speed +10 (+10), Strike +5 (+5), Damage +5 (+10), for 25 God-Weapon points. Sky Ghost's final weapon statistics

神
兵
玄
奇

5.) **Determine Background.** Because God-Weapons are often ancient and only found in remote hard-to-reach places, it's important to give them a sense of rarity and history. Come up with a story for your God-Weapon; where it fits in, how old it is, who made it, etc. Then once that's done, assign the following Destiny Costs appropriate to the Background you've come up with; these work exactly as defined in the Setting chapter under Lore (see pg. 85).

	Entangled	Defense	Obtain*
CLASS III	Destiny		
1. Earthly	I	I	4
2. Heavenly	I	I	6
3. Divine	I	2	8
CLASS II			
1. Earthly	3	2	10
2. Heavenly	3	2	12
3. Divine	3	3	14
CLASS I	5	3	25

*Note: The Wulin Sage is never obligated to let anyone Obtain a God-Weapon simply because they want one and want to blow a huge amount of Destiny – the needs of the story are paramount, and generally Class I God-Weapons are the object of an entire storyline. On the other hand, perhaps it is a veteran campaign and you're taking on Dominion, so starting out with a Class I Weapon is simply a part of the plan; talk to your Sage.

Example, Completed: The Wulin Sage first consults the comics to see if there are any references to Sky Ghost's origins; there aren't any. She decides that Sky Ghost was one of the many sacred artifacts of Zhu Rong's Temple, fallen to Earth in the mists of prehistory, and brought by the Western Fire Doctrine Religion when Flame God brought his followers over the passes into the Land of the Gods.

The Weapons of the Gods

Destiny Cost: I

Everyone in Shen Zhou (or just about) knows of the existence of the Weapons of the Gods, as well as the names of the most famous ones. Having this Lore means you've researched God-Weapons obsessively; you know many of their names, their ranks and orders,

and perhaps even some of their secrets. While Scholars are the most likely to have this knowledge, anybody driven enough can possess it; while Kung Fu is powerful, the combination of Kung Fu and God-Weapon is mighty indeed, and what warrior does not dream of being able to contend with the greatest of opponents? Sometimes skill is not enough; you must combine skill with the might of the gods themselves!

It is important to remember that while a given Weapon of the Gods might offer potent mystical techniques (as opposed to Kung Fu techniques, they are inherent in the weapons and cannot be acquired separately!), these powers can **only** be used one at a time in a round. (**Boldface** Weapons are detailed fully in this book; **Boldface Underlined** are weapons directly from the comics!)

DESTINY COST

* **Bonus:** You gain the Genius Skill of *Expertise: God-Weapons* at level I. With it, you may make educated guesses on individual Weapons of the Gods – where to start looking for them, perhaps a hint at what they can do, or how to defend against them; and you have general knowledge of the following list. (The underlined weapons are detailed in this book; the others may appear in future supplements or on the www.eos-press.com website!) Note that there are always people looking for these wonderful treasures, and that rumors can always be false!

Class III Weapons

	Grade	Type of Weapon
1.) Anguished Lover	Heavenly	Crescent Moon Shovel
2.) Bone Bows Before The Steel	Earthly	Battle Scythe
3.) Four-Virtue Sword	Heavenly	Longsword
4.) Frog Fist	Divine	Paired Gauntlets
5.) Incomparable Sun Weapon	Heavenly	Dragon-head Whip Club
6.) Infinite Accomplishments	Earthly	Tang-ba
7.) Infinite Power	Earthly	Blade Wheel
8.) Jie Bian	Heavenly	Sectional Steel Whip
9.) Lunar Soul	Heavenly	Staff-Flail
10.) Leaf Tip	Heavenly	Nine-Ring Saber
11.) Mad Staff	Earthly	Club
12.) Sky Ghost	Divine	Staff
13.) Thunder Horse	Earthly	Two-Pronged Fork
14.) Wind Eye Saber	Earthly	Saber
15.) Winter Sorrow	Heavenly	Battle Axe

Frog Fist

Class III Divine Pair of Gauntlets

(Speed +15, Strike +15, Damage +10)

Entangle Destiny: 1 point.

Defense: 2 point.

Obtain: 8 points.

Description: A beautifully made pair of silver gauntlets that leave one's fingertips free (only covering up to the knuckles), these items are chased with intricate patterns. They will automatically adjust their size to fit any wearer.

Techniques:

Frog God's Gift (Effortless Power) When these gauntlets are worn, the wielder becomes completely amphibious. They can breathe easily underwater and move as if they were in the air, swimming and/or fighting without the usual penalties. This power will operate even if you wear only one of the gauntlets.

All-Consuming Wave (Greater Power) By spending 4 Silver Chi and making a Fight roll, the wielder can unleash a wall of water that will inflict an additional 4 bonus dice of damage. On a standard success, it will inflict Knockback; on a Critical Success, a full Downing. If there is already water present, then the attack does more damage – less than a foot, add a bonus die of damage; more than a foot, then double the Damage from +10 to +20, as well as gaining two bonus dice to your damage roll. (Note: You must have both gauntlets to use the All Consuming Wave. If only one gauntlet is worn, then you only have a hard-to-destroy weapon, with no access to this power.) Cost: As noted.

Four-Virtue Sword

Class III Heavenly Longsword

(Speed +10, Strike +15, Damage +10; Base Only – See Below)

Entangle Destiny: 1 point.

Defense: 1 point.

Obtain: 6 points.

Description: Permanently stained with the blood of an emperor, this weapon is thought to have originally been Class II in power – but when it was used to strike a Son of Heaven down, the wrath of the gods reduced it greatly. It could be argued that Heaven had its reasons... for a blade that expressed the full power of its wielder's virtues – xia or corrupt – could, if they were virtuous enough, slay even the gods themselves. Of the truth in this matter, we do not know.

Technique:

Heart of Virtue Blade (Effortless Power) This powerful blade resonates with the Virtue of its wielder; the very emotions upon which his deeds are based empower the blade, making it far more dangerous than its appearance might suggest.

To determine how much more powerful the Four-Virtue Sword is in the hands of its wielder, look at



his Deeds Chart for the Maximum Virtues attained (the circled box for each type of Deed). Note that for the purposes of this chart, the maximum attained of either Xia or Corrupt Deeds empowers the sword; it is said that the blade originally resonated only with Xia Virtues like *zhong* or *ba*; in these decadent modern times, it works equally well for the selfish heroes and the virtuous!

Read your Hero's Virtues – the current-day Virtues of Righteousness (*yi*) corresponds to the ancient Virtues of Integrity (*de*); though it is perhaps revealing that the Integrity Virtue is no more. One's Virtue of Righteousness grants an additional Combat Effect (usable only on a Critical Success); as usual, one can use an effect granted by kung fu if desired, instead of the sword's.

For the other virtues, read this way:

Balance Virtue (*xia* or *chou*) grants a Weapon Speed bonus.

Propriety Virtue (*zhong* or *ben*) grants a Strike bonus.

Fidelity Virtue (*ba* or *bao*) grants a Damage bonus.

Virtue Maximum	Weapon Trait Modifier	de Virtue Effect
5	+15	(Choose Either)
4	+10	Disorienting
2-3	+5	Stunning
0-1	+0	None

Example: Biao, the Dong Clan Warrior, acquires the Four-Virtue Sword in a treasure trove. He has no idea of the blade's provenance, though he quickly discovers its power. His relevant Virtue Maxima are: Xia 2, Yi 2, Zhong 3, Ba 2. In his hands, the Four-Virtue Sword's stats are now: Speed +15, Strike +20, Damage +15, and it inflicts Stunning when Biao scores a Critical Success! Biao's life just got more interesting – particularly if somebody recognizes the significance of the permanently bloodstained blade...

Infinite Accomplishments

Class III Earthly Tang-ba

(Speed +15, Strike +10, Damage +10)

Entangle Destiny: 1 point.

Defense: 1 point.

Obtain: 4 points + 3 points (for Heartless Blade Quality) = 7 points.

Description: Infinite Accomplishments is a beautiful weapon, crafted from flawless black obsidian from the heart of a volcano – but its maker's passion burned hotter! It is a spear-like weapon with a scythe blade attached near the spearhead.

Techniques:

Perfect Cleaving Edge (Lesser Power): This power may be invoked on a single attack; when so used, Infinite Accomplishments will bypass 10 points of Armor from any mundane



source (in other words, actual Armor, or for that matter, hard Cover); it will not ignore kung-fu created protection, but the mundane armor is destroyed in the strike. *Cost: 3 Silver Chi*

Heartless Blade (Special Property): As noted under Legalism (see pg. 151), Infinite Accomplishments is a Heartless Weapon, quenched in the lifeblood of its maker's heart – so great was his desire to make a Weapon of the Gods, he sacrificed his own life! If facing up against circumstances that would break it, the *Tang-ba's* wielder can spend 3 Jade to keep the weapon intact. Note that this may be done in the same round as the Perfect Cleaving Edge technique.

Infinite Power

Class III Earthly Blade Wheel

(Speed +15, Strike +15, Damage +10)

Entangle Destiny: 1 points.

Defense: 1 point.

Obtain: 4 points.

Description: Well-made but otherwise looking of human manufacture, this mechanical blade wheel is nonetheless a potent Weapon of the Gods. It is quite clearly of the west; only the Xi love such odd weapons that require special training to wield.

Techniques:

Revolving Rainstorm (Lesser Power) By spending 3 Silver Chi and making a Melee roll, a standard success in attacking with this weapon inflicts (in addition to normal damage) a –10 Initiative Penalty for a number of rounds equal to your Chi Aura. Critical Success inflicts both the Initiative Penalty and a full **Downing** (from which you can recover as normal). *Cost: As noted.*

Thunderclap (Effortless Power) When activated by placing both hands on the Wheel's handles and pressing a hidden button, this technique causes the wheel to split open while whirling buzz-saw fast; it fires out a barrage of 'Thunder Spears', guaranteed to inflict horrible – even fatal – wounds on an opponent. Make a Ranged Attack; it inflicts Standard Damage + 5 bonus dice to any target directly in front of the wielder, ignoring standard Armor. Note that this ability can only be used once, after which the spears must be collected and reloaded (a tedious task requiring some time). If the spears are lost somehow, then new ones must be made; however it's only a Simple Task for a skilled Craftsman.

Lunar Soul

Class III Heavenly Staff-Flail

(Speed +10, Strike +15, Damage +10)

Entangle Destiny: 1 points

Defense: 1 point.

Obtain: 6 points.

Description: Lunar Soul is a polished silvery sweeper (Staff-Flail) of flawless construction; it is well known in the Land of the Gods, and is the signature weapon of the Elder of the East, Elder Moon.

Technique:

Impermanent Knack (Lesser Power) When invoked, this power negates all Dodge or Weapon Specialties of the target against Lunar Soul's wielder. This makes Lunar Soul's attacks harder to evade, and its wielder harder to attack, so shapeless and unpredictable are the weapon's movements. *Cost: 2 White Chi.*

Mad Staff

Class III Earthly Club

(Speed +10, Strike +10, Damage +10)

Entangle Destiny: 1 points.

Defense: 1 point.

Obtain: 4 points.

Description: Appearing to be a large steel club with studs, the Mad Staff looks much like a Japanese *tetsubo*.

Technique:

Venom Flame (Lesser Power) A vicious power; when used, the Mad Staff spews hideous greenish-yellow flames that inflict Intensity 4 **Burning** and **Poison** effects on a successful hit, doing two dice of damage per round while in effect. However, both effects may be ended by extinguishing the flame in some fashion, such as by an Athletics roll (rolling on a dry surface) or immersion in water. *Cost: 2 Jade Chi.*

Sky Ghost

Class III Divine Staff

(Speed +20, Strike +10, Damage +15)

Entangle Destiny: 1 points

Defense: 2 points.

Obtain: 8 points.

Description: Made of perfect polished brass with ornate end-fittings, this metal staff fairly glows with its own light, always reflecting a fire in its metal when observed closely.

Techniques:

Lava Brand (Lesser Power) By spending 1 Crimson Chi, the wielder can immolate the ends of the staff with a fire of divine origin; while this flame is active, Sky Ghost will do Intensity 3 **Burning** in addition to normal damage. Furthermore, while Lava Brand is active, the warrior will have Fire Resistance – three additional Chi

Aura per round, usable only to resist fire or heat-based attacks. *Cost: As noted.*

Thousand Miles of Heat (Effortless Power) With this power active, the staff bursts into flame and radiates searing heat out to a radius of five yards from its holder. Invoking this effect allows you to make a Morale Attack with your Inspire skill, adding the weapon's Strike to the roll. Anyone who enters the radius of the flames (without some sort of protection, naturally) is automatically **Burning** with Intensity 5 flames. The staff's bearer takes no damage from fire or heat of any source while Thousand Miles of Heat is active; if attacked with truly high intensities of fire (whether Rare Kung Fu Styles or the breath of a dragon), the wielder can make a Defense roll using their Fight as a free action to resist the heat. This power can only be used for a number of rounds equal to the warrior's Chi Aura each day; while it costs no Chi, one's mastery of Kung Fu (as reflected by Rank) determines how long this power can be maintained.

Class II Weapons

Name	Grade	Type of Weapon
1.) Bile Rain	Heavenly	Wavy-Bladed Sword
2.) Bone Blinder	Heavenly	Greatsword
3.) Buddha's Edge	Earthly	Greatsword
4.) Bronze Dragon	Heavenly	Greatsword
5.) Earth Swallower	Heavenly	Steel Dentures
6.) Faithful Child	Earthly	Longsword
7.) Fulfillment	Earthly	Longbow
8.) Golden Phoenix Blade	Heavenly	Longsword
9.) Green Dragon Kwan Dao	Heavenly	Long-handled Saber
10.) One-Foot Drum	Divine	Battle Drum
11.) One Terror	Heavenly	Staff
12.) Satan's Scepter	Earthly	Staff
13.) Silver Eagle Blade	Earthly	Longsword
14.) Tarnished Needle	Divine	Short Spear
15.) Thunder Cudgel	Earthly	Big Steel Club

Bone Blinder

Class II Heavenly Greatsword

(Speed +15, Strike +25, Damage +25)

Entangle Destiny: 3 points

Defense: 2 points.

Obtain: 12 points.

Description: A gigantic weapon, this blade is just over six feet long and almost a foot wide, and it is made of gritty gray steel. The sword is of such great density and heft that it weighs one thousand pounds – two hundred of which are hideous spines, jutting out warningly from its great blade.



Techniques:

Massively Heavy Blade (Effortless Power) When wielded to bring the blade's weight to bear directly on an opponent, the strike you make is such that the defender gets no benefit from their weapon's Strike when they Defend. On top of that, you gain five bonus dice of damage on any successful hit!

Lagging Image (Effortless Power) When swung to strike quickly rather than firmly, Bone Blinder's image lags behind its actual location, making it seem that it strikes before it should! Anyone whose opponent is using this weapon must halve all Defense pools (rounding down), unless they gain a Critical Success on a Sense roll (which is a free action) against your Attack.

Bronze Dragon

Class II Heavenly Greatsword

(Speed +20, Strike +20, Damage +20)

Entangle Destiny: 3 points

Defense: 2 points.

Obtain: 12 points.

Description: Bronze Dragon seems like nothing more than a well-made bronze saber, identifiable only its distinctive bronze hilt.

Techniques:

Hatred of Water (Effortless Power) The maker of this weapon lost his sons to a flood; he poured his very life into the blade, so it hates the water as much as he did! When its wielder is in danger of being hit by a Silver Chi-based kung fu technique that is likely to kill them, the blade will pulse and utterly destroy the power of the technique, negating it entirely! (It is only possible to evoke this power a number of times per day equal to your Chi Aura.)

Blade Mirror (Greater Power) By spending 4 Gold Chi, all of Bronze Dragon's attacks for a round become **Disorienting**, the blade reflecting the sun brightly (regardless of the time of day). *Cost: As noted.*

Buddha's Edge

Class II Earthly Greatsword

(Speed +10, Strike +20, Damage +25)

Entangle Destiny: 3 points

Defense: 2 points.

Obtain: 10 points.

Description: A huge ornate

神兵玄奇



weapon, Buddha's Edge is carved entirely out of a single piece of flawless green true jade, with a bas-relief of the Buddha himself set into the blade.

Technique:

Buddha's Purging Touch (Effortless Power) This ability may be one of the rarest of any possessed by the Weapons of the Gods – the blade can permanently reduce the Demon Chi that a subject might have accumulated in the course of their martial arts career. It should be noted that if that person continues using corrupt kung fu and engaging in unrighteous acts, they are likely to acquire Demon Chi all over again!

To use this ability, the subject's heart chakra must be pierced with just the tip of the blade, releasing the Demon Chi in the form of smoking black blood that spills forth from the target's chest. Each Health Level of damage inflicted in this fashion removes one permanent point of Demon Chi rating, but the damage inflicted is so severe that any attempts to treat it with Medicinetake a –10 penalty. Finally, extreme care must be taken while this technique is applied, as any disruption could lead to a fatal wound for the subject being so treated.

Golden Phoenix Blade

Class II Heavenly Longsword

(Speed +15, Strike +25, Damage +20)

Entangle Destiny: 3 points

Defense: 2 points.

Obtain: 12 points.

Description: One of the legendary Nan Clan Weapons, Golden Phoenix is fearsome indeed – made of some golden alloy, with its hilt in the shape of a Phoenix with its wings outspread, it is truly a distinctive weapon, particularly in the hand of its wielder, the fierce Hong Dong.

Technique:

Golden Majesty (Effortless Power) This power is great indeed! When the sword is drawn, the wielder will be surmounted by a giant blazing image of golden Chi – the Phoenix itself watches over the sword's owner in combat. The effects of this Totem Image are these: Firstly, none of the following Combat Effects can be inflicted on the wielder: **Knockback**, **Downing**, or **Disorienting**. If any of these effects are attempted, they will simply fail again. Furthermore, the presence of the burning Phoenix image grants a +10 on all Confidence and Inspire skill rolls!

Silver Eagle Blade

Class II Earthly Longsword

(Speed +15, Strike +20,
Damage +15)

Entangle Destiny: 3 points

Defense: 2 points.

Obtain: 10 points.

Description: The Silver Eagle Blade is the signature weapon of Ironheart Nan, the Greatest of the Top Ten Young Heroes. Thus this Longsword is well-known and recognized around the Land of the Gods, feared for its speed and deadliness in the hand of its wielder.

Technique:

Flashing Talon Strike (Effortless Power) This blade is so light and responsive in the hand of its wielder that they may add a die to any and all rolls involving it – Initiative, Attack, Defense, Damage, and so on.

Tarnished Needle

Class II Divine Spear

(Speed +20, Strike +25, Damage +10)

Entangle Destiny: 3 points

Defense: 3 points.

Obtain: 14 points.

Description: A simple-looking weapon, Tarnished Needle is a spear that looks almost sword-like in its construction... its handle is wrapped with a leather of unknown origin, and it has a ring in its hilt that is large enough to slide a finger through. Its metal is always chilly-cold to the touch, and almost looks a bit like ice. (Note: Tarnished Needle is a **Black Void Treasure**; see pg. 369.)

Techniques:

Piercing Stroke (Lesser Power) When invoked, this ability causes Tarnished Needle to pierce (ignore) up to 15 points of any Armor for a single attack. **Cost: 3 White Chi.**

Dolorous Stroke (Greater Power) This power, not commonly known to exist, is one of the most frightening of a non-Class I weapon – when used, Tarnished Needle can strike to a target's heart, damaging their very elemental structure and causing **Chi Bleeding**. On a successful hit (doing standard damage) with this power, the target will begin losing a single point of Chi every round; starting with their Favored Chi, it will literally leak out as blood, each point so lost inflicting 0-9 points of additional damage. (Note that when an Attribute is 'bleeding' it is not regaining chi; in fact, all of the Attributes of the target are considered to have suffered **chi flow loss** while the chi bleeding is going on.) This will continue until that Attribute is 'dry', then the next highest Attribute will 'bleed out', and the next, until the target is either dead or utterly empty of Chi. If the subject manages to survive to the point of being totally drained of Chi, they will gradually recover; generally, it takes a full day to regain chi flow in each Attribute, starting with their Favored Chi recovering first. The Dolorous Wound inflicted by



Tarnished Needle is considered to be a **Profound** wound, and can only be treated by Medicine, working against a Legendary Difficulty; a Standard Success can reduce the time of recovery to hours instead of a day for each level (Sage's call on how much), and a Critical Success can staunch the chi bleeding, though the chi flow loss inflicted by the Dolorous Stroke requires an Impossible test to return even a single color of chi flow. *Cost: 1 Void Chi* (see Black Void Treasures on pg. 369).

Name	Type of Weapon
1.) <u>Heaven's Crystal</u>	Greatsword
2.) <u>Tiger Soul</u>	Greatsword
3.) Soul Biter	Three-Section Staff
4.) Void Wheel	Blade Wheel
5.) <u>God's Ruler</u>	Bludgeon

Class I Weapons

Heaven's Crystal

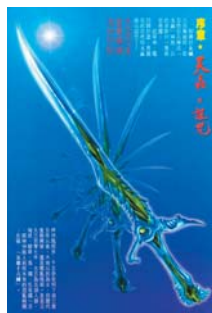
Class I Greatsword

(Speed +25, Strike +40, Damage +40)

Entangle Destiny: 5 points

Defense: 3 points.

Obtain: 25 points.



Description: A beautiful, almost ornamental flawless piece of craftsmanship, Heaven's Crystal was forged from beautiful magic stones, marvels left over from the world's creation. These stones once laid along the banks of the Yellow River, free for anyone to retrieve; but that was long ago, and the stones have all been carried off and stored in treasure troves, and would be surpassingly hard to find now. Be that as it may, Heaven's Crystal is made of no less than seven of these stones of power, and is infused with the power and soul of its maker, retaining its power despite her subsequent death... truly deserving of its title as the Immaculate Monk-King of all Blades. It alone is the only weapon thought to be able to match Tiger Soul power for power, strength for strength.

The Crystal from Heaven is an odd weapon; it is a sword composed of two other swords! When wielded separately, the large but hollow White Crystal Sword grants the first Technique. The Green Crystal Sword, smaller and solid, grants the second Technique (each component Weapon is considered a Class II Divine weapon of its type when separated). Only when the sword is assembled (by sliding the Green within the White) and in the hand of its

destined wielder does it command all of its vast power. Note that all of the Crystal from Heaven's powers **stack**; any or all powers may be employed at will, without regard to the usual 'one power at a time' restriction of other God-Weapons.

Agenda: Safeguard Shen Zhou. Heaven's Crystal is the living embodiment of the Mother of Humanity; as its Maker loved humanity, so does the sword. If the wielder lives up to the Xia Virtues – helping others, defeating evil, keeping loyalty to their friends and word, and forcefully pursuing their goals – then the blade will willingly remain in his hands; otherwise, it will pass from his grasp.

Or so would it be, if not for the Curse of the Enchanted Demon. The Curse makes the blade's powers eventually turn upon its wielder, but not until he achieves some large measure of success – whether in wealth, power, or influence – which **will** eventually happen, sooner or later. Once he achieves that wealth, then the clock begins ticking – and when all is done, he will lose everything dear to him, ending with his life.

Techniques:

Heaven's Favor (Effortless Power) When Heaven's Crystal (or the White Crystal Component of it) is carried, then that individual is considered to have double their normal Chi Aura, which can be used freely for reducing damage or whatever Archetype Skills the wielder may possess.

Celestial Goddess Energy (Effortless Power) When Heaven's Crystal is carried, then that individual is considered to have Improved Breath in all Chi Colors (save Corrupt!), recovering three Chi of every color as long as they remain in contact with the Monk-King of Blades. Wielding the Green Crystal component of Heaven's Crystal separately only grants an additional point of Improved Breath in all colors.

Apotheosis (Unique Power) This unusual power is the Ultimate Weapon of the battlefield; while Heaven's Crystal is a sword, and can be wielded as one, this power defines its existence as the Sovereign of All Weapons. This power has two manifestations, only one of which can be activated at a given time by the Sage. That's right, the player doesn't choose when this power is invoked (though he can suggest it and make a Legendary roll to attempt it); the God-Weapon itself does. The first of the manifestations of this power are: **Sovereign Gesture**, in which the wielder's chi is spent (Any Color will do!) and their attack dice rolled; this acts as an Area Attack for 10 yards per chi point spent. Figure the results from either the *Defeating the Hapless* section on pg. 13, or as per normal with Named characters; those who do not Defend successfully against you are Disarmed, and all weapons that are not Quality (qv) are automatically broken and wrecked.

Monk-King's	All-Conquering
Touch	– The second
	manifestation of the
Apotheosis	
technique	

神兵玄奇

ends battles; to use it requires facing your opponent in melee combat, weapon to weapon. Make a Melee Attack. When the power is invoked, you are placed in such a close connection with your opponent that you can pit your chi against his directly, but it is backed with the divine might of Heaven's Crystal itself. For each chi point you spend, two points of your opponent's chi is forced out of him; so you can spend as much chi as you dare, hopefully bankrupting your opponent's chi reserves. Each chi point driven out of your opponent becomes a die in a massive Area Attack equal to your Chi Aura x 20 yards. All minions (regardless of strength) are wiped out of existence; you can use every set that comes up against the Named opponents, but you may only apply one set per opponent. Additionally, any sets greater than 5 are trimmed down to five automatically... and one of these sets can be placed on your opponent! The target of this technique otherwise only takes the Crystal from Heaven's normal damage bonus to their Health, which ignores both Armor and Chi Aura (it's a very, very Disorienting attack).

Tiger Soul

Class I Greatsword

(Speed +15, Strike +35, Damage +50)

Entangle Destiny: 5 points

Defense: 3 points.

Obtain: 25 points.



Description: The terrifying Tiger Soul is a bizarre sword-like weapon seemingly made of bone and orange amber, its pommel wrapped in what is probably leather made from human skin. Forged from the spine of a celestial tiger and a substance of unknown origin, it was annealed and sealed with the blood and souls of Chi You's very family – great was his slaughter and sacrifice, though it was not complete until he offered up his very own soul! The blade (sometimes named the Hegemonic by spirits, who flee its approach) never chips, never dulls, and will damage and destroy any other god-weapon, save for perhaps the Celestial Goddess' Crystal from Heaven. It is unknown what – if anything – can destroy Tiger Soul, for in a way it has exceeded its maker; where Chi You was a cannibalistic monster, his weapon has become something else – the symbol and artifact of Destruction itself.

Agenda: Bring Change in the Form of Destruction.

It might seem that Tiger Soul is the most evil of God-Weapons; but in truth, it is not evil at all. It simply embodies the destructive aspect of change; just as the Five Tribes of Barbarians brought change to the Han peoples of Shen Zhou, so does Tiger Soul bring the most clear-cut of changes – destruction of anything it is brought against. The blade can serve good or evil equally well, because like a storm, Tiger Soul simply does what it does: destroy things. However, there is one form of change that it will not serve – it will eventually turn in the hands of a Servant of the Void, for Tiger Soul ultimately serves existence, not oblivion. But short of that, the most selfish of heroes can wield it and lay waste to all of Shen Zhou, raining down destruction upon anything and everything; yet out of the wreckage, new life and new changes will come.

Techniques:

Dispassionate Destroyer (Lesser Power): Against other Class I God-Weapons (the only devices under the Heavens that can damage it), the wielder may spend 3 Gold Chi and stave off any single strike that would damage Tiger Soul. Alternately, this power may be employed to make a single strike Disorienting. *Cost: As noted.*

World-Breaking Strike (Effortless Power): Tiger Soul can destroy virtually *anything*. Gods, God-Weapons less than Class I, mountains, buildings, entire swaths of land; you name it. The only thing that it won't destroy (even though it would be technically possible) is Shen Zhou itself; that would bring back the Void, and that is something Tiger Soul will not do. And that brings us to the limitations of this technique, which only works on a

Level of Wreckage	Style Roll Value	Chi Cost	What Gets Destroyed
Jaw-dropping	15	5	Ordinary Humans, most manifested Spirits.
Terrifying	18	7	Low-Rank (5-4) Fighters of the Wulin* or ordinary buildings.
Panic-Inducing	20	9	Mid-Rank (3-2) Fighters of the Wulin* Fortified buildings, large trees, great boulders.
Riot-Provoking	25	11	First-Rank Wulin Fighters*, Castles, Ships, entire small towns or large neighborhoods.
Havoc-Creating	30	13	Entire Towns, Small Cities, Hills.
Chaos-Unleashing	35	15	Small Mountain, Large Cities.
History-Altering	40	17	Large Mountains, entire swaths of land.
World-Wrecking	60	25	One of the Pillars of the Sky.

single target per use. To use this power, you must make a Style Roll. After all, when wielded in this fashion, Tiger Soul will always hit without question, as a Disorienting Attack. When used, a terrible bright-yellow swath of destructive energy sweeps out against the target, wiping it from existence.

Once you've made a sufficient roll, the Style roll total



is also the amount of chi you must spend to destroy it. If you've got the chi (any and all colors except Corrupt, which won't work), spend it – the target is destroyed. (Otherwise, Tiger Soul merely inflicts its devastating damage).

There is, however an exception – any member of the Wulin with chi on hand can oppose the World-Breaking Strike by countering the chi spent needed to destroy them – again, in any color (save Corrupt, which won't work). So if someone uses Tiger Soul to wipe out their martial artist opponent, then that unfortunate person can spend chi in an effort to reduce the blow to an ordinary strike; however, the weapon will always do at least its damage bonus (and 50 points is going to hurt, no matter what).

Tiger Soul and other God-Weapons: If someone has a God-Weapon on hand, then they can oppose Tiger Soul's attack with the weapon, making a usual Defense roll; this can reduce Tiger Soul's Style Roll, hopefully allowing you to survive. Be aware that any God-Weapon less than Class I is only good for a single block to Tiger Soul, as the Hegemonic will wreck the defending blade and make it impossible to use a second time in such a fashion. Against Class I Weapons of the Gods, the battle is equal and the World-Destroying Strike can be fended off; instant destruction of a martial artist is impossible if they're holding another Top-grade weapon.

God's Ruler

Class I Bludgeon

(Speed +20, Strike +25, Damage +30)

Entangle Destiny: 5 points

Defense: 3 points.

Obtain: 25 points.

Description: Rumored by the sages as perhaps the 'weakest' of the Ten Class I Weapons of the Gods, God's Ruler is basically a narrow bludgeon or club with no edge, made of glowing green jade.

Agenda: **Maintain the health of humanity.** God's Ruler was forged by Shen Nong, the god of farming and agriculture. Born of divine and human parents, he truly didn't feel a part of either; still, he found he preferred living amongst humans over living in Heaven. Moved by an urge to help these short-lived midges, he decided to learn everything he could about how to enhance and extend their lives. Following the example of the animals, he sampled every thing he could find for its helpful properties, using his divine constitution to withstand the lethal effects of his experiments. When he found the most helpful and most baneful herbs and compounds, he carefully kept the knowledge, until that day he found a perfect piece of jade – and then steeped it in the essences of every single thing he had memorized. Casting a piece of his very essence into the device, God's Ruler was created – the ultimate tool of life and death, able to even raise the Dead. Its healing power could restore the sick; its death-dealing power could end the lives of those who

threatened the commonweal of the people. For this, he is accorded the title of 'Medicine Man' within the Wulin, and his weapon is much desired to this day.

Techniques:

Sovereign Healing (Effortless Power) God's Ruler is the ultimate healing device – it heals not individual Health points, but entire Health Levels! It has a reserve of twenty-five Health levels at full (untapped) capacity. When someone who is suffering some sort of injury – whether wounding, poisoning, chi-imbalance; you name it – is in full physical contact with the weapon for at least a combat round (or minute, outside of combat), they will be healed an entire health level of damage (or have their poisoning be reduced by 1 in Potency). This drains God Ruler's energy reserve; the weapon recharges over time, regaining its levels according to the chart below, for each of the time periods it is not used to heal someone.

Levels Of Power	Time to Recover	Class of Weapon Equivalent
5	1 level / round	Class I Weapon
5	1 level / minute	Class I Weapon
10	1 level / day	Class II Weapon, Divine Grade
5	1 level / week	Class II Weapon, Heavenly Grade

Note that Sovereign Healing will affect **Profound** damage, **Nonesuch Poisons**, or even the most rare or esoteric of kung fu-based injuries.

However, God's Ruler has a significant limitation – its energy reserve is directly related to how powerful it is in combat. If its energy stores have been significantly depleted, then God's Ruler no longer behaves as a Class I weapon, instead as a lower and less powerful class! See the chart below for how God's Ruler declines in effective power level.

To resurrect the newly Dead, the character can not have left the Dying Condition for too long – said time determined by the GM. The GM can have the wielder of God's Ruler attempt an Initiative roll to reach them in time, the Difficulty based on how long since the ailing person has gone from Dying to Dead. **Yang Channel** (Unique Power) When swung to Attack and infused with Crimson and/or Jade Chi, God's Ruler will unleash an Area Attack Blast, doing standard damage plus a number of dice equal to the number of chi points infused. This attack will affect everyone in front of the wielder, ignoring (and destroying!) standard Armor (Perfect Armor will survive but be damaged); the attack is **Disorienting** as well. **Cost:** *As noted.*

Yin Channel (Unique Power) When infused with Silver and/or White Chi, God's Ruler will unleash an Area Attack that will affect everyone in front of the wielder, ignoring all Armor and inflicting a Rare Poison of a Potency equal to the total number of Chi Points infused. **Cost:** *As noted.*



Building a Reputation in Hell:

The Dark Side of Chi

(A System Topic)

Destiny Cost: 0

Corrupt Chi

Hell Conditions

Black Void Treasures

Existence-Hating Radiance

Corrupt Chi

Corrupt Chi is acquired by fighters of the Wulin who, whether they're aware of it or not, have bargained with demons for power. Demons are an acknowledged part of the Wulin; they watch over humans and offer them power from time to time, if they think a human will serve their purpose. They will tempt that person further into selfishness and the desire for power, and therefore give the virtuous warriors something to fight.

Thus is the compact kept between the Immortal Emperor and Thoughtless Wen, Minister of the Wulin, preventing human extinction; perpetuating the conflict between martial artists, so they do not turn their attention to disrupting universal order and threatening Heaven.

The Benefits of Corrupt Chi: Demon Chi, as it's sometimes called, is tracked on the character sheet just like any other color of chi (see the back page). If it should somehow become visible, its color is dark purple. Corrupt Chi can be spent as any color on a one-for-one basis; its other benefit is that it cannot suffer chi flow loss.

The Drawbacks of Corrupt Chi: It's not your energy you're cultivating within you; it's the breath of a demon. Hence, it has no Element, and so does not contribute to your Health rating. On top of that, you have a Demon now paying attention to your career as a martial artist; this automatically puts your free will in danger, given that your Destiny is now partly owned by another. Finally, you must choose a *Hell Condition* (see the next page) based on the circumstances under which you acquired the Demon Chi in the first place.

Corrupt Chi's Attribute

The Attribute that corresponds to Corrupt Chi is "Hell Reputation"; it's your credit with demons. Corrupt Chi is usually not very useful to living people, which is why it's not on your character sheet. Chi condition effects that improve your Hell Reputation also improve your Corrupt Chi, though, and that's potentially very useful.

Acquiring Corrupt Chi

The Risk

To live in the Martial Arts World is to accept risk. Ordinarily, this is understood to be the foes you face: powerful selfish heroes, the rare monster, or the monster warriors that stand outside the Wulin. To most fighters, whether warrior, courtier or scholar, the threats they face are external ones, with their kung fu skills and their sword and shield.

Would that it were truly so simple.

Kung Fu is the skill of manipulating the chi flows of your body through vigorous physical action;

but the chi you cultivate is your own, breathed into your body through the 'Seven Gates' of your chakra, and distributed through your body via the meridians. (Your organs manufacture chi from food and air as well, but that's used in your very life's processes, and hence is not mentioned here.) But there's a catch – when a martial artist is driven to great extremes and is struggling for breath in the middle of a long combat, a void forms inside his body, from his hunger for chi – and that void can be perceived by other *things* that wait for just such opportunities.

These opportunities occur when strong-willed warriors fight so hard that they forget themselves—either failing so spectacularly that they're desperate to win over all else, or daring to succeed by breaking their own ethics and committing a great deed of corrupt virtue. This is when the greatest risk of all comes into play: they're offered a deal of which they are usually ignorant; if it's taken, they give up something of themselves in exchange for an energy that is not theirs – Corrupt Chi.

If the fighter agrees to the unspoken bargain, he has a second wind, a rush of breath, in the form of chi that answers his call and never falters. The fighter is happy; he's found new depths of power within himself and gives thanks to Heaven. But it's not Heaven that he should thank... it's Hell.

The Truth

When a Demon offers Corrupt Chi, it can happen in one of three ways. For the characters, it's as if time stands still... and they can feel a great power just at their fingertips. If they take it, they've accepted the Unspoken Bargain and all that it entails.

Through a Critical Failure. When a xia hero suffers a Critical Failure, a Wulin Sage may, as one of the choices, offer the player a point of Demon Chi as a bribe for roleplaying their horrible failure (this doesn't mean they lose, just fail; they can still go on to win, after all). The GM can describe the bargain as going something like this: "You've just had a Critical Failure – you can choose to have one of your Chi points corrupted. What it means is this

神
兵
玄
奇



— *something* out there is willing to help you, but only in exchange for one of your chi rating points. The good news is, this other color of chi can never be cut off or suffer flow loss, and can be spent as any color; the bad news is, it won't count towards your Health rating, and you'll be in danger of corrupting yourself further if this sort of situation happens again. Oh, and there are possible side-effects, as well. So what do you say?"

Through a Corrupt Success. If your character breaks their own ethical code and violates the Xia Virtues — in other words, achieving a Corrupt Deed — then you can offer a Corrupt point of Chi, much like the above; you can also just give them one for free if they hit Level 5 in a Corrupt Virtue.

Through learning Corrupt Kung Fu. The most insidious method of all, this is usually done through learning a Corrupt style or technique of kung fu, typically Formless Techniques. Unlike the other two methods, which allow a player to choose, learning corrupt kung fu has no such element of choice. The very process of learning the kung fu (which seems to be like ordinary kung fu in every respect — there's no way to tell if a formless technique is corrupt or not before you learn it) is in itself choosing to acquire the corrupt chi.

How Much Corrupt Chi?

Generally speaking, a character only receives a single point of Demon Chi at a given time, forfeiting a Chi point of their own to acquire it (usually in a color your kung fu doesn't use; if you have so many martial arts that each one is used, then grin and bear it, choosing the one that hurts the least). The sole exception to this rule is any Formless Techniques above Level 5; each uber-powerful Corrupt Technique inflicts two Corrupt Chi points upon its lucky (?) winner.

Hell Conditions

These are some of the conditions that commonly afflict fighters who suffer Corrupt Chi. They're included here as examples of how to use Chi conditions in more unusual ways, particularly on those cultivating demonic powers.

When Demon Chi is acquired, glance at the character's existing Passions or Inspirations — people driven by a passion or inspiration to attempt corrupt or foolish acts can develop a matching Hell condition. A good rule of thumb for the type of chi condition would be that if the character acquired the Corrupt Chi through a Critical Failure, then it should be a weakness; if gained through a Corrupt Deed of startling significance, then it should be a Hyperactivity. Formless techniques should inflict a chi condition that is hyperactive if the original passion or inspiration was a weakness, and a weakness if the original condition was hyperactive. As always, the GM can simply choose these details based on her own intuition or story-based needs.

Yin Saturation

An effusion of yin and water essence has turned your skin blue.

You can draw your yin inwards and look normal, but this makes you suffer the weakness or costs you the hyperactivity benefit for a scene.

Weakness: You lose your breath in Silver Chi. If you keep your skin normal for more than five combat turns or fifteen minutes, you suffer temporary Silver Chi flow loss.

Hyperactivity: The yin effusion improves your Wu Wei by two.

This is a water condition. It often develops in people who acquire Corrupt Chi as a result of their fear or an inspiration towards revenge.

Radiant Chi

Your Chi aura produces freakish effects. When you spend Chi, your eyes might flash the colors of the Chi you spend, or you might flare up with a brilliant aura in that color. People are often uncomfortable around you — your power is both evident and somewhat disconcerting.

When fighting or otherwise interacting with people, you need to regularly mention odd or unnerving effects — special effects without inherent benefit or penalty except to make you unusual and maybe a bit creepy or scary (Master Wu, in the story "Canary and Fish," is an extreme example of this). If you fail to describe these effects, you suffer the weakness or lose the hyperactivity benefit for a scene.

Weakness: This weakness usually imposes an action penalty on kung fu and Grace rolls.

Hyperactivity: The hyperactive radiant Chi condition usually gives a utility bonus for an appropriate kung fu or secret art.

This is a wood condition. It often develops in people who acquire Corrupt Chi as a result of their anger or an inspiration towards individualism.

Monster-Attracting Aura

Your Chi aura is appealing to monsters (including monstrous humans).

This external condition draws evil things to you — usually corrupt fighters, who find you inspiring or appealing, but sometimes monsters, evil ghosts, and the like. (There aren't many supernatural creatures around, and most of them are pretty busy with their existing interests, which is why they aren't a bigger problem for you.) This doesn't give you any control over them, it just makes them happier when they're around you.

You can suppress this aura, but doing so invokes the weakness or costs you the hyperactivity benefit for a scene.



Weakness: Suppressing this aura makes you unappealing to everyone; you suffer Attribute Reduction in Presence and Gold Chi.

Hyperactivity: You have a utility bonus when actively manipulating corrupt or selfish people one-on-one. Alternately, you improve your Hell Reputation and Corrupt Chi.

This is a fire condition. It often develops in people who acquire Corrupt Chi as a result of their happiness, benevolence, or inspiration towards loyalty or ruthlessness.

Demonic Patron

A demon has decided that you are — or can become — the perfect expression of its philosophy; now it's guiding you through the Wulin. If you were a virtuous hero, this condition manifests like an inspiration towards a Corrupt Virtue — normally, Bao (Ferocity), Chou (Revenge), or Si (Individualism). Unfortunately for you, this Inspiration-like effect is invisible to the Secret Arts — it is your Patron's voice in your ear that is the problem, not an actual Inspiration. For corrupt characters, or for characters who have become corrupt under this influence, the rules are as follows.

The demon begins to whisper suggestions to you to commit the most depraved and horrible acts. There is no inspiration towards any Virtue, Corrupt or otherwise; instead, refusing the suggestions now triggers the weakness or costs you the condition's hyperactivity benefit.

Weakness: The specific weakness varies, but it is often a “loss of Destiny” — after all, demons are an authorized part of the Wulin, and can take responsibility from Hell for overseeing your progression as a fighter.

Hyperactivity: Attribute Improvement in Hell Reputation and Corrupt Chi.

This is an earth condition. It often develops in people who acquire Corrupt Chi as a result of worrying too much about something or an inspiration towards ferocity.

Heatless Spirit

Your body no longer produces its own warmth; you need to drink others' heat to survive. Sometimes, you get very cold and must seriously hurt someone to survive — chilling them with a touch or killing them and then bathing in their hot blood. Chilling someone is just an ordinary unarmed attack with an unusual visual description; the target can notice in advance that the touch is going to hurt. You can even use kung fu, although using Holy Fire would be silly — but Blizzard Fist would be terribly apropos!

If you force your body to heat itself, rather than complaining about cold or leeching off the body heat of others, you suffer the weakness or lose the hyperactivity benefit.

Weakness: This weakness usually costs you your breath in Jade and Crimson Chi, or all five Chi for a major weakness.

Hyperactivity: You improve your hands' Strike with any kung fu but Holy Fire. A major hyperactive condition improves your hands' Strike and Damage. Your touch drains the heat from your enemies.

This is a metal condition. It often develops in people who acquire Corrupt Chi in a chain of events that begins with their grief, loss, pain, or an inspiration towards a corrupt obsession.

Black Void Treasures

Pieces of the Void

As recounted in the Legendary Text Pangu (see pg. 88), when the Void was attacked by Pangu, he used his kung fu and marvelous Axe, First Conception, to force form and shape and motion onto the Void, which fought back... by creating limbs and weapons to defend itself. The severed limbs became all the demons; the weapons (and other implements) were the Black Void Treasures. The demons were pressed into the service of Heaven; they became a part of the world and the celestial order, serving their functions unmindful of their ancient origins.

This, then is the primal relationship: while all demons have some dim memory of their origins at the birth of the universe, only a very few of them actively serve the Void's cause — those whose birth or circumstances permit them to recall their origins fully, and remember what came before. Thus the Enchanted Demon's power: he knew what he was and where he came from, and could call upon the strength of the Void that remained in ordinary reality — and worked to restore the Darkness before Pangu.

Now, the Enchanted Demon is dead, and the other demons don't know what they are; all that is left are the Black Void Treasures and those ultimately rare pieces of pure Void that are scattered like pockets of poison in the flesh of Shen Zhou. So the question remains: how could the Void plan to return?

Servants of the Void

The Void has become the world; all of it — or nearly so — has been differentiated into the current substance of existence. So whence come the Servants of the Void — the legendary enemies of the Eight Axe Immortals? The Void can hardly be said to exist anymore; so how can it have any servants? This is where the Black Void Treasures come in. They damn and corrupt those they touch with the Void's agenda; being the last nearly-indestructible fragments of the Primal Egg, each represents a possible ‘seed crystal’ for the original darkness to reconstitute itself. To be corrupted and damned by a Black Void Treasure is to become an Agent of the Nothing, devoted to returning the First Nonexistence, denying the world its being.

Powers of the Void

All Black Void Treasures have certain characteristics in common.

First, they're all as virtually indestructible as Weapons of the Gods. Even the perfect acupuncture needles, the grain threshers, the myriad of minor tools that are also Black Void Treasures... each is at least equal to a Class III Divine Weapon in resilience, having a minimum Utility Bonus of +10 to +15 that must be overcome in order to destroy them (see *Breaking Things*, pg. 72). Note that certain Black Void Treasures are Weapons of the Gods – or so similar as to make it impossible to tell them apart, and are rated in the same fashion.

Secondly, to own one is to automatically have one of each of your colors of Chi be taken by the Treasure and converted into a single point of Void Chi (in other words, one point of each of your Attributes is subtracted and you get one point of Void Chi). Like its weaker cousin, Demon Chi, Void Chi can never suffer Chi Flow Loss; but there the resemblance ends.

Void Chi can power *any* technique, regardless of its Chi Cost; a single point so spent empowers even the highest level of techniques. The price of such power is this: that every technique so used is counted as +20 to the Attack result for the purposes of a Style Roll for Breaking Things; while the Damage inflicted is normal, the additional Breaking Things will ensure that large amounts of damage are done to the locality.

Furthermore, if a target is struck with a Black Void Treasure using Void Chi, they will automatically suffer a **Sick Condition** (see pg. 275), with the Recovery equal to the Attack Roll. So if a Treasure is used to damage a person or a building, either target will suffer the **Sick Condition**...

even though the building isn't alive! A person suffering this

condition will be sick, but can be treated by Secret Arts to return them to full Health, though the Recovery Difficulty is likely to be high. If a non-living target is Sickened, then this becomes a situation where any living thing that spends significant time in the Sickened area (usually at least a day, but determined by the Sage), will develop the same kind of Sickness and must be treated as well. If left Sick, the effect on the area will eventually intensify into the *Existence-Hating Radiance* (see below). Given that only a Daoist Sage or Axe Immortal can sense the damage (or repair it), this might easily happen.

Help! My Character's Become a Monster!

Players that want to dance with the devil that is a Black Void Treasure are certainly welcome to – after all, good stories can be told about a martial artist struggling with the temptation to wield an ultimate destructive power that can wound the earth itself... as long as you (the GM) know what you're getting into.

It's important to remember that any dealings with Black Void Treasures are likely to end in tragedy. Even if the player tames a Black Void Treasure and can avoid corruption and damnation, the device is still going to injure and sicken the world where its power is used to full effect. Eventually, an Axe Immortal is going to track them down and politely request that they give up the Black Void Treasure for destruction! This of course is full of cool possibilities: an ultimate martial arts duel with a Second or First-Rank Warrior with a Rare Style at their command, or perhaps an Axe Immortal offering his place in the Fellowship of Pangu to the (not-yet-damned) player character.

If the Treasure isn't tamed, however... it's going to end badly. Whether Axe Immortals – or even the player character's own companions – put him down like a rabid dog, the wielder of a Black Void Treasure will become a threat that even Baneful Humans would help kill.

Thirdly, any owner of a Black Void Treasure automatically gains a Demonic Patron (as in *Hell Conditions*; see above), which will slowly but surely start working on their free will. The Demonic Patron in question is the Treasure itself; like the Hell Condition of the same name, the bearer will effectively be under an Inspiration towards a Corrupt Virtue (whichever one they're most susceptible to), though no Inspiration actually exists nor can it be affected by a Courtier or Scholar. It is the Black Void

Treasure itself wielding its influence, which cannot be detected by anything not native to the Void.



Existence-Hating Radiance

Chill of the Primal Darkness

So what exactly is the **Existence-Hating Radiance**? It is a sign of the world's sickness – the evidence of the nearness of the Void. Each area of the Radiance is **Sick**, rated as all Chi Conditions are – trivial, minor and major. The Sickness of the Radiance will affect you after you've been in its area of effect for a while, which is only noticeable as a slight chill. Trivial Strength Areas of the Radiance only affect you if you're there for days; Minor Areas will affect you in mere hours; and Major Areas inflict themselves on you within minutes of your arrival.

When afflicted by the Radiance, the affected person will automatically feel as if they're suffering a Weakness Sickness (see pg. 277) based on their Favored Chi – as long as they're in the area of the Existence-Hating Radiance, they must roleplay appropriately according to the color of the sickness. If they forget to do so, then they'll suffer chi flow loss in their Favored Chi, and become literally slightly transparent, as their very existence ails.

The Existence-Hating Radiance occurs in areas that have been damaged by a Black Void Treasure (even just the presence of such a Treasure is enough to damage an area, given enough time!), or a particle of the undifferentiated Void has fallen to earth in that location. In any event, an Axe Immortal will eventually find their way to the location and destroy it, though in the case of very small manifestations that might take a VERY long time... especially given that Axe Immortals don't age as long as they perform their duties, and therefore take a longer view.

Sensing the Radiance of the Void

The Existence-Hating Radiance can be sensed, though only those with the proper Lores can buy Specialties in Awareness for it. Generally speaking, when anyone can feel it, it's already too late – the deathly chill has soaked into your bones and you're already sick.

If you're inside the area of the Radiance, then you must make an Awareness Roll. It's a Hard Difficulty Roll to detect it if it's of Trivial Strength; a Moderate Roll if it's Minor, and an Everyday Success is needed if it's Major.

Outside the area of effect of the Radiance, it's a Legendary Awareness Roll if you're near the area within Long Range, and beyond that, it's an Impossible Roll to detect it from a distance of a mile or more.

神兵玄奇

神

Friends, Rivals...

Bei Clan

Snow

Age: 17
 Height: 5'7"
 Weight: 115 lbs.
 Origin: Clan Princess
 Hooks: Proud & Spoiled
 Passion: Fear – Insecure, Wants



Approval.

Clan: Bei

Rank/Archetype: Fourth Rank Warrior

Background: Zheng Bei's youngest child, Snow is a passionate yet temperamental young woman. There is little hint of what she will one day be... one of the Ten Great Young Heroes, wielder of God's Ruler, one of the Class I Weapon of the Gods.

At first glance, she is a spoiled young woman inclined to fly into dangerous rages, for she was born with an aptitude for Mental Summons... the ability to move objects through the air with naught but her potent will.

It is only through adversity that Snow will grow into her Destiny; until then, she is not the most powerful of warriors, and is more defined by her abiding passion for Tian Wen... which more often than not spills into violence.

Kung-Fu: Lightfoot 2 (Any: Surefoot¹, Run Like a Deer²), Mental Summons 4 (Crimson: Veins of Anger¹, Veins of Rage², Veins of Fury³, Veins of Frenzy⁴)

Weapon (Initial / Future): Quality Saber (Mundane) Speed +10, Strike +10, Damage +5.

God's Ruler (Class I Weapon of the Gods) for more detail, see pg. 365.

Chi: **Jade 2**, **Crimson 3**, **Gold 5**,
 Silver 3, **White 2** - **Destiny 50**

Might 2: Athletics 2, Fight 2, Hardiness 1

Speed 3: Dodge 3, Finesse I, Ride I, Melee (Sword) **3***

Presence 5: Confidence I, Grace 2, Inspire 2, Persuade 2

Wu Wei 3: Awareness 2, Ranged I, Senses (Sight) 2*

Genius 2: Learning 2, Politics 2

Advantages: Affiliation (Bei) 5, Entangled Destiny (God's Ruler) 5, Good Looks 3, Lore: A Woman's Family – Ling Liu 5, Mentor (Zheng Bei) 2, Possession (Quality Saber) 4, Status (Bei Clan) 3

Disadvantages: Temperamental

Passion: Anger - Insecure Rages

Chi Aura/River 2, Joss - 3 Xia, No Armor, Health 15

Snow Bei is a Starting Character with a GM Permission for a Level 4 Martial Art. All Skill Ratings in black get a 1-die boost for Attribute; red get no bonus.

Thunder

Age: 28
 Height: 5'10"
 Weight: 180 lbs.
 Origin: Clan Prince
 Hooks: Self-Confident &
 Devious
 Passion: Fear (Major) – Envy of Others.

Clan: Bei

Rank/Archetype: Fourth Rank Warrior

Background: Zheng Bei's eldest

son is a dissatisfied man, though he takes care not to show it. In actuality, he doesn't show much of what's true about himself: that he's self-serving, cunning, and highly ambitious. Thunder Bei is jealous of Tian Wen to an extreme, for Tian's talent for learning kung fu far surpasses his own. He also covets his father's exceptional martial arts skills and techniques, in particular, the family's greatest secret skill: Limitless Freedom, which he fears will be passed down to Tian instead of himself.

He has sworn that he alone will inherit his family's arts and wealth; what effects this vow will have on his Clan and its territories remain to be seen. What would be the consequences if such an unrighteous man were to become Master of the Bei?

Kung-Fu: Lightfoot 3 (Any: Surefoot¹, Run Like a Deer², Headlong Flying Leap³), Bei Fist Skill 5 (Jade: Living Weapon¹, Arms of Iron², Rainbow Stunning Strike³, Never Weaponless⁴, Breathtaker⁵)

Weapon: Kwan Dao (Quality Horse Saber), Speed +10, Strike +5, Damage +15.

Chi: **Jade 6**, **Crimson 5**, **Gold 3**,
 Silver 3/5, **White 4** - **Destiny 95**

Might 6: Athletics 3, Fight 3, Hardiness, (Regain Chi) 3*

Speed 5: Dodge 4, Ride 3, Melee (Kwan Dao) 4*

Presence 3: Confidence 2, Grace 3, Inspire 3, Persuade 3

Wu Wei 3/5: Awareness (Chi) 3*, Ranged I, Stealth 2

Genius 4: Learning 3, Politics (Who's Who) 3*, Tactics 1

Advantages: Mentor (Zheng Bei) 3, Possession (Quality Kwan Dao) 5, Status (Bei Clan) 4, Wealth 3.

Disadvantages: Overwhelming Passion (Fear) with Hell, Condition: Yin Saturation (Blue Skin).

Chi Aura/River 3, Joss - 2 Xia/4 Corrupt, Light Armor (-5), Health 23



Tian Wen

Age: 21
Height: 6'2"
Weight: 235 lbs.
Origin: Cook and Blacksmith
Hooks: Courageous & Rude
Passion: Anger – Driven to Excel.



Clan: Bei
Rank/Archetype: Third Rank Warrior

Background: The orphan son of Yi Nangong and his second wife, Tian has no knowledge of his true parentage. San Bei, Third Uncle and Chief Cook of the Bei Clan, adopted him as a fosterling. Tian works equally hard in the kitchen as he does in the forge, and is watched carefully by the Master of the Bei Clan, Zheng Bei.

Tian has become one of the more powerful warriors in the clan, primarily due to his mysterious 'Jade Arm'; his right arm is somehow imbued with fantastic power.

Zheng Bei only took him in because he believed the young boy would prove the key to ultimate leadership of the Martial Arts World.

Taught Zheng Bei's immensely powerful kung fu, Limitless Freedom, Tian sets out on his first mission with two goals – to rescue Snow Bei (the Master's kidnapped daughter), and obtain the most ferocious of the Ten First Class Weapons of the Gods – Tiger Soul.

Kung-Fu: Lightfoot 3 (Any: Surefoot¹, Run Like a Deer², Headlong Flying Leap³), Bei Fist Skill 3 (Jade: Living Weapon¹, Arms of Iron², Rainbow Stunning Strike³), Limitless Freedom 2 (Jade: Streams Between the Sky⁵, Yin-Yang Defense⁶⁺⁴)

Unique Endowments (from Jade Arm):

Heaven's Eye (By spending 1 Silver Chi, Tian can, for a free action, gaze intently and find the single spot needed to destroy any unenchanted object with a single blow, or add Full Sight Specialization <+2 dice> to Senses rolls.)

Jade Vigor Arm When active, Tian's Jade Arm is a Class II Heavenly God-weapon; additionally, Tian can render his Jade Chi Hyperactive (granting +1 Chi Recovery in Jade) when he becomes Enraged. The Jade Vigor Arm's powers only last a scene, and Narcolepsy follows when shut down. Speed +15, Strike +15, Dmg. +15.

Weapon (Initial / Future): Buddha's Edge (Class II Earthly Greatsword of the Gods) Speed +10, Strike +20, Damage +25. Powers: (See GM Section).

Heaven's Crystal (Foremost of the Ten True Weapons of the Gods, pictured above. See pg. 368.)

Chi: Jade 7, Crimson 5, Gold 3,
Silver 4, White 2 - Destiny 145

Might 7: Athletics (Acrobatics) 4*, Fight 4, Hardiness 3

Speed 5: Initiative (Combat) 4*, Dodge 5, Ride 2, Melee (Swords) 4*

Presence 3: Confidence 3, Inspire (Trust) 3*, Persuade 1

Wu Wei 4: Awareness 4, Senses 4

Genius 2: Learning 1, Expertise: Cooking 4, Expertise: Smithing 2

Advantages: Affiliation (Bei) 5, Lore (Entangled Destiny: Heaven's Crystal) 5, Mentor (Zheng Bei) 5, Possession (Armor) 5, Status (Respected Clan Member) 3, Weapons of the Gods [23 points].

Disadvantages: Narcolepsy.

Chi Aura/River 3, Joss - 6 Xia, Medium Armor (-10), Health 22

Zheng

Age: 60
Height: 6'3"
Weight: 190 lbs.
Origin: Clan Leader
Hooks: Virtuous & Ambitious
Passion: Obsession (Major) – Lead



the Wulin.

Clan: Bei

Rank/Archetype: First Rank

Warrior

Background: Inheritor of a distinguished lineage of power, Zheng Bei is the aging but powerful Head of the Bei Clan.

Zheng is a fascinating study of contrasts. A steadfast devotee of the Xia Virtues, he has barely stayed within the bounds of the Wulin – he wields great power, but does not use it; he has boundless ambition, but does not seek it; and instead of seeking out challenges, waits for them to come to him! While he has achieved some great deeds of renown, he has mostly remained within his clan territory's borders.

What almost no one knows is that Zheng Bei is laboring under a massive curse – "The Three Adversities," foretold by Guiji (Bufon Jou's master – The Ultimate Predictionist). Quite simply, if Zheng seeks challenges in the Wulin, his family members will die! Now, he banks everything he has on a desperate gamble: that his curse could be lifted by someone or something with 'Tian' in their name... and that Tian Wen will be that person.

Kung-Fu: Lightfoot 3 (Any: Surefoot¹, Run Like a Deer², Headlong Flying Leap³), Bei Fist Skill 5 (Jade: Living Weapon¹, Arms of Iron², Rainbow Stunning Strike³, Never Weaponless⁴, Breathmaker⁵), Limitless Freedom 4 (Jade: Streams Between the Sky⁵, Yin-Yang Defense⁶⁺⁴, Endless Universe⁷⁺⁸, Eternal Contentment⁸⁺¹²), Wisdom of the Seven Gates 5 (White: Pain-Negating Method¹, Disturb the Jade Leaves², Pruning the Jade Branches³, Shaping the Jade Trunk⁴, Maintaining the Jade Crown⁵), Zenith Destroyer (Level 5 Formless Technique)

Weapon: Green Dragon (Class II Heavenly Kwan Dao of the Gods) Speed +15, Strike +20, Damage +30.

Chi: Jade 7, Crimson 4, Gold 4,
Silver 4, White 4, Demon 4 - Destiny 250

Might 7: Athletics 1, Fight 3, Hardiness 2

Speed 4: Initiative (Reliable Cavalry) 5*, Dodge 4, Finesse 1, Melee (Kwan Dao) 5**, Ride 2

Presence 4: Confidence (Valorous) 3*, Grace 3, Inspire 3, Persuade 3

Wu Wei 4: Awareness 3, Investigation 1, Ranged 1, Senses 3

Genius 4: Learning 3, Crafting (Social Order) 3*, Politics (Clan) 3*, Tactics 2

Advantages: (Bei) [5], Followers 5, Possession (Armor) 5, Status (Clan Leader) 6, Warning of Evil [5], Wealth 4, Weapon of the Gods [12].

Disadvantages: Cursed (Major), Overwhelming Passion: Obsessed (Ambition), Hell Condition: Demonic Patron.

Chi Aura/River 5, Joss - 6 Xia/6 Corrupt, Medium Armor (-10), Health 23

神兵玄奇

Dong Clan Hong

Age: 45
Height: 5'7"
Weight: 120 lbs.
Origin: Clan Matriarch
Hooks: Resolute & Arrogant
Passion: Anger (Major)—Bitterness
at Treatment.

Clan: Dong (Nan by marriage)
Rank/Archetype: Second Rank
Courtier

Background: If there was ever a woman conscious of how poorly her gender is treated, it would be Hong Dong.

Cloud Dong, her father and Master of the Dong Clan, was so dismayed at having a daughter that he trained her as a boy, but from an early age... and Hong did not do well, being beaten on by boys twice her size. Things got worse when her brother Ian was born; he grew to be smug and arrogant in being a son and thus favored, and lorded it over her at every opportunity.

Hong Dong is now determined to prove her worth in the eyes of the Martial Arts World... and the rest of the World, too. Given her drive, ruthlessness and regency of the Nan Clan, no one had better get in her way.

Kung-Fu: Lightfoot 5 (Any: Surefoot¹, Run Like a Deer², Headlong Flying Leap³, High as the Clouds⁴, Infinite Endurance⁵), Heart Sword Skill 5 (Silver: Ambition: Soaring Blade¹, Brutal: Speed Blade², Heartless: Sharp Blade³, Clear: Smart Blade⁴, Anger: Vengeful Blade⁵), Cloud Mastery 3 (Jade: Phantom of the Clouds¹, Moon Covered by Clouds², Flowing Clouds³)

Secret Arts:

Intrigue: Anger-Inspiring Technique, Controlling Passions: Yin-Yang, Inflammation/Soothe, Quick Work.

Understanding: Story of the Self.

Weapon: Golden Phoenix Blade (Class II Heavenly Longsword of the Gods), Speed +15, Strike +20, Damage +15. Powers: (See GM Section).

Chi: **Jade 5, Crimson 4, Gold 5,**
Silver 7, **White 4 - Destiny 185**

Might 6: Athletics 2, Fight 2, Hardiness 3

Speed 4: Initiative 4, Dodge 4, Melee (Sword) **5****, Ride 2

Presence 5: Confidence (Regain Chi) 4*, Grace 3, Inspire 5, Persuade 5

Wu Wei 7: Awareness (Understanding People) 5*

Genius 4: Learning 3, Politics (Clan) 3*, Tactics 2

Advantages: Affiliations (Dong, Nan) [10], Friend (Bufon Jou) [5], Lore (A Woman's Life: Growing Up Female) [0], Secret Arts [24], Status (Nan Clan Regent) 5, Wealth 4, Weapon of the Gods [12]

Disadvantages: Black-hearted, Overwhelming Passion.

Chi Aura/River 4, Joss - 2 Xia/6 Corrupt, No Armor, Health 25



Nan Clan Ironheart

Age: 18
Height: 5'10"
Weight: 160 lbs.
Origin: Clan Prince
Hooks: Courageous & Reckless
Passion: Anger — Arrogant
Pride.

Clan: Nan (Chosen Successor)
Rank/Archetype: Second Rank
Warrior

Background: Ironheart Nan is an angry young man. Trained relentlessly from a very early age, he has surpassed his father in the mastery of the Nan Clan's uncommon martial art, the Heart Moves The Blade Skill. He is very much Hong Dong's son — proud, skilled, dangerous, fast to take offense, faster still to kill.

Lately, though, things have begun to change. Kept from all human relationships by his mother during his development, he is now making contacts with other people out in the Martial Arts World... and beginning to feel the stirrings of other emotions besides cold rage in his heart. Time will only tell if Ironheart lives up to his name... and perhaps reveals the secrets of his birth and upbringing that only he and his mother know.

Kung-Fu: Lightfoot 4 (Any: Surefoot¹, Run Like a Deer², Headlong Flying Leap³, High as the Clouds⁴), Heart Sword Skill 6 (Silver: Ambition: Soaring Blade¹, Brutal: Speed Blade², Heartless: Sharp Blade³, Clear: Smart Blade⁴, Anger: Vengeful Blade⁵, Strong: Fierce Blade^{6+4 Any}), Wisdom of the 7 Gates 3 (White: Pain-Negating Method¹, Disturb the Jade Leaves² Pruning the Jade Leaves³), Cloud Mastery 3 (Jade: Phantom of the Clouds¹, Moon Covered by Clouds², Flowing Clouds³)

Weapon: Silver Eagle Blade (Class II Earthly Longsword of the Gods), Speed +15, Strike +20, Damage +15, Powers: (See GM Section).

Chi: **Jade 5, Crimson 5, Gold 2,**
Silver 8, **White 3 - Destiny 170**

Might 5: Athletics 4, Climb 2, Fight 4, Hardiness
(Regain Chi) **5****

Speed 5: Initiative 5, Dodge (Swords) 4*, Finesse 3, Melee
(Sword) **5****, Ride 3

Presence 2: Confidence 5, Inspire (Fear) 3

Wu Wei 8: Awareness (Chi, Tracking) 5**

Genius 3: Learning 2, Medicine 3, Politics 1, Tactics 2

Advantages: Affiliation (Nan) [5], Mentor (Hong Dong) 5, Status (Ten Great Young Heroes) 4, Superior Sword Specialty [3], Possession (Armor) [5], Weapon of the Gods [9].

Disadvantages: Black-hearted x2

Chi Aura/River 4, Joss - 9 Corrupt, Medium Armor (-10), Health 23



Xi Clan

Great Oak

Age: 23

Height: 6'9"

Weight: 385 lbs.

Origin: Clan Prince

Hooks: Good-hearted & Arrogant

Passion: Obsession (Major) – Snow Bei.

Clan: Xi

Rank/Archetype: Third Rank Warrior

Background: At first glance, Great Oak isn't very likeable. And it's true; he isn't. He's rough on the edges, a snob, rude to his perceived social inferiors, and very aware that he's richer than everyone... and just to make it that much worse, he's stupid and prone to missing the slightest subtleties on every level.

And yet... there is more to him than what you see. While it's true that he's a jerk, he's not an evil one; give him a cause to help, and he will instantly jump to do the right thing, without thinking (he's rather good at that). He is every bit a hero in the truest sense of the word - ready to defend those less fortunate than himself, and willing to fight anyone who is cruel to the helpless... so perhaps the eldest son of Ho Xi is more complicated than anyone thought, after all. If he has a weakness (besides the obvious), it is his obsession to win the love of Princess Snow Bei, who he adores without limit.

Kung-Fu: Lightfoot 4 (Any: Surefoot¹, Run Like a Deer², Headlong Flying Leap³, High as the Clouds⁴), Wind Sweeps Clouds 5 (Gold: Howling Hurricane¹, Like Wind Sweeping², Divided Mountain³, Heaven Burst⁴, Cloudless Sky⁵), Cloud Mastery 3 (Jade: Phantom of the Clouds¹, Moon Covered by Clouds², Flowing Clouds³)

Weapon (Initial / Future): Infinite Power (Class III Blade Wheel of the Gods), Speed+15, Strike +10, Damage +10. Void Wheel (Most Profound of the Ten True Weapons of the Gods, pictured above)



Other Clans

Niu Lan

Age: 20

Height: 5'10"

Weight: 220 lbs.

Origin: Exiled Warrior

Hooks: Skeptical & Violent

Passion: Anger – Driven to Prove himself in the Wulin.

Clan: Heaven Sword (Former)

Rank/Archetype: Third Rank Warrior

Background: "Bison," as he is called by some (because he's bull-headed, to say the least!), is the very definition of the wandering hero. He travels the width and breadth of the Land of the Gods looking for good deeds to perform; in this, he has been more than a bit successful... for he is judged the Second of the Ten Great Young Heroes, just below the cold and dangerous Ironheart Nan.

Exiled from his small clan for insubordination and disrespect to his Master, the Third Rank Warrior Iron Jin, he has since equaled his teacher's ability and rank on his own, hunting down and killing many monsters... human and otherwise.

Pity him and fear what his future holds.

Kung-Fu: Lightfoot 4 (Any: Surefoot¹, Run Like a Deer², Headlong Flying Leap³, High as the Clouds⁴), Heaven's Thunder 5 (Jade: Dragon Wind¹, Lashing Torrent², Crashing Thunder³, Gods-Lightning⁴, Heaven and Earth⁵), Golden Temple Bells 2 (Gold: Bell-Carrying Sinews¹, Hardness of the Bell²)

Weapon : 200 lb. Quality Iron Sword, Speed+0, Strike +15, Damage +15.



神兵玄奇

Chi: Jade 5, Crimson 4, Gold 7,
Silver 3, White 1 - Destiny 135

Might 5: Athletics (Jumping) 4*, Fight 5, Hardiness
(Regain Chi) 4*

Speed 4: Initiative 4, Dodge (Jump Away) 5*, Finesse 2,
Melee (Blade Wheel) 5*, Ride 2

Presence 7: Confidence 4, Grace 1, Inspire (Fear) 3*

Wu Wei 3: Awareness (Chi) 4*, Senses 2

Genius I: Learning 2, Tactics 2

Advantages: Affiliation (Xi) [5], Lucky [3], Entangled
Destiny (Void Wheel) [5], Mentor (Ho Xi) 5, Possession
(Perfect Light Armor) [5], Robust [8], Status (Ten Great
Young Heroes) 4, Wealth 5, Weapon of the Gods [3].

Disadvantages: Overwhelming Passion, Thick as a Brick

Chi Aura/River 3, Joss – 6 Xia, Perfect Light Armor
(-10), Health Level: 20

Chi: Jade 7, Crimson 5, Gold 4,
Silver 5, White 2 - Destiny 130

Might 7: Athletics 3, Hardiness 4, Fight (Palms) 3*, Lift
(Big Wpns.) 4*

Speed 5: Initiative 5, Dodge 4, Finesse 3, Melee (Sword) 4*

Presence 4: Confidence 3, Inspire (Fear) 2*

Wu Wei 5: Awareness 5, Sense 2, Stealth 3

Genius 2: Learning 1, Politics (Who's Who) 2**, Tactics
2

Advantages: Entangled Destiny [5], Fast [4], Good Looks
[3], Lucky [3], Status (10 Great Young Heroes) 4, Superior
Sword Specialty [3], Tough as Nails [3]

Chi Aura/River 3, Joss - 3 Xia/3 Corrupt, Light Armor
(-5), Health 23

神兵玄奇

Bufon Jou

Age: 48
Height: 5'10"
Weight: 170 lbs.
Origin: Soldier
Passion: Fear – Afraid of Failure.
Clan: None (Related to Dong Clan).

Rank/Archetype: Second Rank Scholar-Warrior

Background: The only son of General Shun Jou of Yang, Bufon followed in his father's footsteps, becoming a talented soldier and officer. However, Destiny had other plans for young Bufon – when his father rebelled against the King of Yang, Bufon, just like always, followed.

In the conflicts that followed, he met Ming Huang, the future Earth Lord of Hell Clan, and vanquished him several times; in the last engagement he was wounded in the process, and collapsed unconscious on the bank of a river. When he awoke, he looked up into the face of Guiji – the Greatest of all Diviners. That worthy told him that he had foreseen Bufon's future... as his successor.

Bufon studied hard and took his master's place when he retired, becoming the Guiji, the Ultimate Predictionist. He can be met anywhere in Shen Zhou, by anyone.

Kung Fu: Lightfoot 6 (Any: Surefoot¹, Run Like a Deer², Headlong Flying Leap³, High as the Clouds⁴, Infinite Endurance⁵, Supernal Speed¹⁰), Lunar Darkness 4 (Silver: Hiding Moon Strike¹, Fleeting Moon Shadow², Shadow of the Eclipse³, Hellish Suffering⁴), Wisdom of the Seven Gates 5 (White: Pain-Negating Method¹, Disturb the Jade Leaves², Pruning the Jade Branches³, Shaping the Jade Branches⁴, Maintaining the Jade Crown⁵)

Secret Arts: Predictionism: Passion & Inspiration, Ultimate Prediction Technique.

Tools of Divination: Shang Divination.

Understanding: Story of Fortune.

Daoist Magic: Dancing Metal Intercession, Internal/External Inspiration, Yin-Yang Influence, Elemental Progression Influence, Inflaming & Soothing Influences, Stealthy Work Technique.

Weapon: Iron Fan (Quality Weapon), Speed +15, Strike +0, Damage +5.



... and Villains

Hell Clan

Freaky Bone

Age: 35
Height: 5'8"
Weight: 250 lbs.
Origin: Bandit Lord
Hooks: Obnoxious & Overbearing.
Passion: Anger – Hates the World.
Clan: Hell

Rank/Archetype: Third Rank Warrior

Background: Before he was 'Freaky Bone' of the Hell Clan, he was the lord of a particularly nasty roving group of cannibal bandits, one of the many Green Dragon Gangs of the East.

However, his gang made the notable mistake of interfering in Hell Clan business one time too many, and was slaughtered to a man... and he was that last man. Prostrate and begging forgiveness, he met Ming Huang, the new Lord of the Earth... who saw something useful in him, and spared his life.

Ever since, Bone has faithfully served his master – for Earth Lord permits him everything in his life he ever wanted: people to lord over, regular meals of human flesh, and plenty of opportunities for wanton cruelty. He's a happy man, not that his victims are.

If you meet Freaky Bone, best beware... his partner Dark Jester is never very far away.

Kung-Fu: Lightfoot 2 (Any: Surefoot¹, Run Like a Deer²), Thunder Hammer 4 (Jade: Thunder Strike¹, Rain of Blows², Clap of Thunder³, Lightning Strike⁴), Golden Temple Bells 2 (Gold: Bell-Carrying Sinews¹, Hardness of the Bell²)

Weapons: Mad Staff (Class III Earthly Club of the Gods): Speed +10, Strike +10 (+15), Damage +10

Power: Venom Flame (2 Jade) – Inflicts Potency 4 Poison and Flame on Victim (can be extinguished).

Demon Hammer (Quality Mace), Speed +10, Strike +5 (+10), Damage +10

*+5 Strike, but only when both weapons are wielded as a pair.



Chi: **Jade 3**, **Crimson 4**, **Gold 3**,
Silver 5, **White 7** - Destiny 190

Might 3: Athletics 2, Fight 3, Hardiness 3

Speed 4: Initiative 4, Dodge 4, Finesse 2, Melee 3, Ride 1

Presence 3: Confidence 3, Grace 3, Inspire 2, Persuade (Appeals to Reason) 5*

Wu Wei 5: Awareness (Chi Assess) 4*, Investigation 4, Ranged 2, Senses (Hearing) 3*, Stealth (Ambush) 3*

Genius 7: Learning (Occult) 5*, Crafting 3, Medicine 2, Politics (Clan) 3*, Tactics 1

Advantages: Advantages: Secret Arts [50 pts.], Scholar's Gift [10 pts.], Status (Guiji) 5.

Chi Aura/River 4, Joss - 3 Xia/3 Corrupt, Light Armor (-5), Health 22

Chi: **Jade 6**, **Crimson 4**, **Gold 4**,
Silver 4, **White 2** - Destiny 105

Might 6: Athletics 4, Climb 1, Fight (Blunt) 5*,
Hardiness (Regain Chi) 5*, Lift 4

Speed 4: Initiative 4, Dodge 4, Finesse 1, Melee 3, Ride 1

Presence 4: Confidence 4, Inspire (Fear) 3*

Wu Wei 4: Awareness 4, Ranged 3, Senses 4, Stealth 3

Genius 2: Expertise: Cannibal Cooking 1*, Tactics 2

Advantages: Affiliation (Hell Clan)[5], Status (Hell Clan) 2, Possession (Quality Mace)[4], Robust [8], Tough as Nails [3], Weapon of the Gods [4]. Disadvantages: Temperamental, Unwholesome (Hideous).

Chi Aura/River 3, Joss - 6 Corrupt, Light Armor (-5), Health: 20

Dark Jester

Age: 34

Height: 6'3"

Weight: 175 lbs.

Origin: Imperial Eunuch

Hooks: Polite & Devious.

Passion: Joy – In manipulating others.

Clan: Hell

Rank/Archetype: Third Rank Courtier

Background: Once upon a time, the man who would become Earth Lord's "Dark Jester" was one of the highest of Eunuchs to the Emperor Jin Cheng Di. With his castrated fellows, he happily played the 'Great Game' of politics, pitting the Four Great Families against each other and the Emperor. This all changed with the ascension of Hu "The Tiger" to the throne.

The son of a Han princess and a chieftain of the Hsiung-nu (one of the Five Tribes of barbarians), the new Emperor proved to be better at the Great Game than the existing political factions in the Jin Empire. Hu immediately purged anyone from the court who even seemed likely to challenge his power, and the former Xing-fu Wan fled for his life.

Needing protection from Imperial assassins, he made his way to Hanzhao and sold himself to the Hell Clan... and Earth Lord gave him a new identity and job in exchange for his information.

The renamed 'Dark Jester' hasn't looked back since.

Kung-Fu: Lightfoot 3 (Any: Surefoot¹, Run Like a Deer²), Universal Blow 4 (Jade: Flowers in the Fog¹, Hail of Blows², Cloud-Concealed Strike³, Lighter than Air⁴), Walks in Shadow 2 (White: Awash in Shadow¹, Silent Glide²), Silken Thread Assassin (Level 4 Formless Technique)

Secret Arts: Intrigue: Lassitude, Joy and Love Technique and the Distracting Suggestion Technique (Laughter), Controlling Passions: Inflammation/Soothe Passions, Yin-Yang Technique.

Weapon: Side Splitter (High-Quality Chain Flail) Speed +10, Strike +5, Damage +5. Note 6.



Iron Duke

Age: 36

Height: 5'9"

Weight: 195 lbs.

Origin: Torturer and Executioner

Hooks: Generous & Cruel.

Passion: Joyful – Thrill of Achievement.

Clan: Hell.

Rank/Archetype: Third Rank Warrior

Background: Like so many in the Hell Clan, little is known about Iron Duke's prior history before joining the Clan and taking his current name. All that is known are the persistent rumors that he was Emperor Hu's favorite torturer and executioner, who could prolong lives as easily as keep them in perpetual torment. It is unknown (at least to the courtiers and other gossip-mongers) exactly what offense caused his dismissal... or how he escaped the Emperor's tender mercies, given that unrighteous ruler's proclivities and lack of tolerance for failure.

What is known for sure is that Iron Duke is a stalwart warrior for the Hell Clan and is in charge of their rank-and-file forces. As such, he is always accompanied by a force of well-trained and armed disciples. He has some Standing as a canny and even generous warrior on the battlefield... often willing to let a martial arts warrior go free, to battle him another day.

Kung-Fu: Lightfoot 4 (Any: Surefoot¹, Run Like a Deer², Headlong Flying Leap³, High as the Clouds⁴), Holy Fire 4 (Common Crimson: Flame Strike¹, Seven-Fire Fist², Coruscating Flame³, Endless Immolation⁴), Hell's Disasters 2 (Uncommon Crimson: Eternal Hell¹, Endless Catastrophe²),

Secret Arts: Medicine, Secrets of Diagnosis.

Weapon: Infinite Accomplishments (Class III Earthly Tang-Ba of the Gods): Speed +15, Strike+10, Damage +10.



神兵玄奇

Chi: Jade 6, Crimson 3, Gold 4,
Silver 6, White 3, Demon 1 - Destiny 125

Might 6: Athletics 2, Fight (Chain Flail) 4**, Hardiness 2

Speed 3: Initiative 3, Dodge 3

Presence 4: Confidence 4, Grace (The Classics) 3*, Inspire (Trust) 3*, Persuade 3

Wu Wei 6: Awareness (Chi) 3*, Ranged (Golden Silk) 5*

Genius 3: Learning 3, Crafting (Social Order) 1**,
Medicine 2, Politics 3

Advantages: Affiliation (Hell), Possession (Quality Chain Flail)[5], Secret Arts [26], Special Weapon Training [1], Status (Hell) 3.

Disadvantages: Hell Condition: Monster-Attracting Aura, Unwholesome(Creepy).

Chi Aura/River 3, Joss – 6 Corrupt, Light Armor (-5),
Health: 21

Chi: Jade 4, Crimson 7, Gold 4,
Silver 4, White 5, - Destiny 140

Might 4: Athletics (Cover Ground) 3*, Fight 4,
Hardiness 4

Speed 7: Initiative 5, Dodge (Swords) 5*, Finesse (Acrobatics) 3*, Melee (Tang-ba) 5*, Ride 1

Presence 4: Confidence 4, Grace 2, Inspire 4

Wu Wei 4: Awareness 4, Ranged (Needles) 3*, Stealth 2,
Investigation (Interrigation) 2*

Genius 5: Learning 2, Medicine (Torture) 4*, Politics (Hell Clan) 2*, Tactics (Small & Lg. Unit) 4*

Advantages: Affiliation (Hell)[5], Followers (Hell Clan Disciples) 5, Mentor (Dominion) 3, Status (Hell Clan) 4, Enhanced Crimson Breath (+1 per round. Requirement: Vigorous Heart), Weapon of the Gods [4]

Disadvantages: Egotistical.

Chi Aura/River 3, Joss – 3 Xia /6 Corrupt, Light Armor (-5), Health: 24

Earth Lord

Age: 44
Height: 7'2"
Weight: 340 lbs.
Origin: Former General of Yang
Hooks: Decisive & Perverted.
Passion: Anger – Make Everyone Pay.

Clan: Hell (Third-in-Command)
Rank/Archetype: First Rank Warrior

Background: Born Ming Huang in the Country of Yang, the Earth Lord-to-be was a General of some repute in that country's army.

When Shun Jou, the High General, rebelled against the King of Yang, Ming Huang volunteered to go after him... only to meet in battle the General's son, Bufon. Their meeting would mark both forever; Bufon was set onto the path of becoming the Guiji... and Ming Huang, to a life of crime leading straight into the arms of the Hell Clan.

Earth Lord is now a truly frightening figure. Marked early on with blue skin, he wields untold power from his position in the Hell Clan, complete with his own hidden castle underground and hundreds of loyal disciples and servants. His ambition is unlimited; scarier still, he has been foretold to have a long and vigorous life by Bufon Jou himself... only time or heroes can prove him wrong.

Kung-Fu: Lightfoot 4 (Any: Surefoot¹, Run Like a Deer², Headlong Flying Leap³, High as the Clouds⁴ <all Chi costs doubled for Heavy Armor>), Hell's Disasters 5 (Crimson: Eternal Hell¹, Endless Catastrophe², Endless Execution³, Death Territory⁴, Deadly Reincarnation⁵), Wisdom of the Seven Gates 3 (White: Pain-Negating Method¹), Barred Armor Shield (Level 4 Formless Technique, see pg 355. Chi Cost: 2 Gold Invested.), Six Ultimate Ghost Spell (Level 6 Formless Technique, see pg 355. Chi Cost: Special.)

Weapon: Satan's Scepter (Class II Heavenly Staff of the Gods) Speed +20, Strike +20, Damage +20.

Note on Earth Lord's Attributes

Because of both his use of Barred Armor Shield (which requires Invested Gold Chi) and his Hell Condition of Yin Saturation (which increases his Silver Chi), Earth Lord has adjusted attributes – read the number to the right of the slash.



Sky Lord

Age: 40
Height: 7"
Weight: 250 lbs.
Origin: Cult Leader
Hooks: Confident & Conniving.
Passion: Obsession – Rule Shen Zhou.
Clan: Hell (Second-in-Command)
Rank/Archetype: First Rank Warrior



Background: Not much is known about this enigmatic but passionate religious leader, who made his way into the Land of the Gods with a large number of followers from India: the West Fire Doctrine Clan, devoted to the teachings of Zhu Rong.

Flaming God's goal was quite simple: to conquer the Land of the Gods and make it his own. He was aided in this by his fanatically loyal disciples and the so-called Twelve Star Sectors, each one a powerful and devious warrior in his or her own right.

He proved not to be as successful as he would have liked. His goal was cut short by one man: Dominion... the fearsome Master of the Hell Clan itself. Dominion crushed him easily. Rather than die, Flaming God swore his allegiance to the Hell Clan... and became Sky Lord, Dominion's second-in-command.

For years now, Sky Lord has been secretly plotting and building up his strength and kung fu. His plans require only one last element – Tiger Soul. Once it is attained, he will challenge Dominion for the mastery of the Hell Clan and rulership of the Land of the Gods!

Kung-Fu: Lightfoot 5 (Any: Surefoot¹, Run Like a Deer², Headlong Flying Leap³, High as the Clouds⁴, Infinite Endurance⁵), Hell's Disasters 6 (Crimson: Eternal Hell¹, Endless Catastrophe², Endless Execution³, Death Territory⁴, Deadly Reincarnation⁵, World-Ending Flame⁶⁺⁴), Sacred Zhu Fire Fist (Level Five Formless Technique), Six Ultimate Ghost Spell (Level 6 Formless Technique)

Weapon: Sky Scythe (Class II Weapon of the Gods)

Chi: Jade 6, Crimson 10, Gold 6,
Silver 3/5, White 5, Demon 2 - Destiny 240

Might 6: Athletics 4, Fight 4, Hardiness (vs. Poisons) 4*

Speed 10: Initiative (Combat, Dramatic Entry) 5*,
Dodge 5, Finesse 3, Melee (Scythe) 5**

Presence 6: Confidence 5, Grace 3, Inspire (Trust) 5*,
Persuade 4*

Wu Wei 3/5: Awareness 4, Ranged 3, Sense 3

Genius 5: Learning (Shen Zhou) 4*, Crafting (Social Order) 3*, Medicine 2, Politics 4, Tactics 5

Advantages: Affiliation (Hell)[5], Fast[4], Followers (Flame Cultists) 5, Information Broker 4, Mentor (Dominion) [5], Status (Hell Clan) 5, Tough as Nails (Perfect)[6], Weapon of the Gods[12].

Disadvantages: Chronically Unlucky, Egotistical, Hell Condition: Yin Saturation (Blue Skin).

Chi Aura/River 5, Joss – 3 Xia /6 Corrupt, Heavy Armor (-15), Health: 32

Chi: Jade 6, Crimson 8, Gold 6/4,
Silver 4/6, White 4, Demon 2 - Destiny 230

Might 6: Athletics 4, Fight (Staff) 5*, Hardiness 5, Lift 3

Speed 8: Initiative 5, Dodge 5, Finesse 3, Melee 4, Ride (Giant Bat) 4*

Presence 6/4: Confidence 5, Grace 2, Inspire (Terror) 5*

Wu Wei 4/6: Awareness 5, Investigation 2, Ranged 3, Sense I

Genius 4: Learning 3, Medicine 3, Politics 3, Tactics (Small & Large Units) 4*

Advantages: Affiliation (Hell Clan) [5], Blessed by the Gods [8], Followers (Hell Clan Disciples) 5, Status (Third in Command of Hell Clan) 4, Possessions (Giant Bat, Armor) [17], Special Mount [1], Weapon of the Gods [10].

Disadvantages: Black-hearted, Hell Condition: Yin Saturation (Blue Skin), Unwholesome.

Chi Aura/River 5, Joss – 9 Corrupt, Heavy Armor (-15), Health: 30

Players of the Game

Dominion

True Name: Unknown

Age: Unknown

Height: 7'6"

Weight: 350 lbs.

Origin: Unknown

Hooks: Canny & Domineering.

Passion: Obsession – (Unknown).

Clan: Hell (Master of the Hell Clan)

Rank/Archetype: Beyond First Rank Warrior (!)

Background: Not much is known of Dominion beyond his name and appearance. The most recent Master of the Hell Clan, he rules it as a wise tyrant – he sets policy and expects the Clan to fulfill it by any means possible, up to and including backstabbing one another to succeed. A fierce proponent of self-knowledge, he rewards achievement of objectives without fail, though he is equally... firm in his punishments for failure (he doesn't kill people for failing; that, he saves for people who break his rules or betray him). That being said, he has a gift for delegating authority in such a fashion as to pit his subordinates against each other in ways that test their limits.

What is not open to debate is his power; Dominion is perhaps the single most powerful individual in the entire Wulin. His kung fu involves the creation of whirlwinds, lightning, and fierce hurricane-like gusts; yet he is rarely seen using it, instead relying on his two capable lieutenants, the Lords of Earth and Sky. Indeed, he is not often seen, period. Hell Clan members all know better than to speculate on Dominion's doings out loud, however – the Master of the Hell Clan values his privacy.

Finally, it is important to remember that Dominion is firmly a member of the Wulin... or at least seems to be. He does observe the forms of the Martial Arts World, and while obscenely powerful, does not seem to be a baneful human.

Chi Aura & River: 6 each.

Kung-Fu: Unknown. Definitely multiple Rare styles not seen anywhere else; is definitely known to have taught the 'Six Ultimate Ghost Spell' to both Earth Lord and Sky Lord.

Armor: Huangti's Perfect Armor. Dominion owns and wears one of the only two sets of Perfect Armor found in Shen Zhou, which grants –20 to all damage rolls.

Weapon: Dominion has never been seen carrying a weapon. Given his power, perhaps he doesn't need one... or is only willing to use a weapon fitting to his stature, like the Class I Weapon of the Gods, Tiger Soul.

Destiny: 500?



Ian Dong

Age: 40

Height: 5'11"

Weight: 195 lbs.

Origin: Clan Prince

Hooks: Charming & Calculating.

Passion: Obsession – Power and Influence.

Clan: Dong

Rank/Archetype: Second Rank Courtier-Warrior

Background: The newest Master of the Dong Clan, Ian is the younger brother of Hong – and there is no love lost between the two. Though his sister is now the Regent of the Nan Clan, he is wary of her trying to seize the leadership of the Dong from him, and thus holding sway over not one Clan, but two!

Ian Dong is the consummate politician – always friendly, helpful, diplomatic... and ever seeking his own advantage over everybody else.

Signature Kung Fu & Weapon: One-Man Legion (a Rare Style) and Soul Biter (Class II Weapon of the Gods).

Destiny: 190



神兵玄奇

Ho Xi

Age: 48

Height: 6'6"

Weight: 400 lbs.

Origin: Righteous Warrior.

Hooks: Astute & Greedy.

Passion: Obsession – Wealth and Power.

Clan: Xi

Rank/Archetype: Second Rank Warrior

Background: Ho Xi is the father of the famous Hero, Great Oak – and a popular and powerful hero in his own right. The only Clan Leader who also rules one of the Sixteen States, he is a stellar member of the Wulin, wielding Huangti's own Weapon!

But all is not well in the House of Xi. The most notable descendant of Hui Xi has become obsessed with wealth and power, and he has fallen away from the Xia Virtues to a fair degree. What will become of this, no one knows.

Signature Kung Fu & Weapon: Wind Sweeps Clouds (an Uncommon Style) and Void Wheel (Class I Weapon of the Gods).

Destiny: 170





Appendix A: Shen Zhou

Measurements

(An Advanced Topic)

Destiny Cost: 0

If the Game Master wants to use historically correct units of measurement, she can distribute this sheet. Otherwise, Shen Zhou uses the British and metric systems.

Standard Measurements for Weapons of the Gods

- Li* About .3 miles or 500 meters.
Mu About a sixth of an acre or 650 square meters.
Jin About 1 lb. or .5 kg.

Additional Measurements

- Chi* Slightly over a foot—about 1/3 meter.
Fen 1/10 *mu*—about 65 square meters, or 720 square feet.
Qing 100 *mu*—about 6500 square meters, or 16 acres.
Liang 1/10 *jin*—about 2 ounces or 50 grams.
Dan 100 *jin*—about 100 lb. or 50 kilograms.

Appendix B: Other Starting Points for a Campaign of Weapons of the Gods

Kung Fu Disciples - (5th Rank) 10 or 20 points (the latter for starting with Lores).

Strong Fighters - (3rd Rank) 100 points (Some of these points should be spent on Lores and a Class III God-weapon!)

The Respected - (2nd Rank) 150 points (Some of these points should be spent on Lores and a Class III or II God-weapon!)

The Pre-eminent - (1st Rank) 200 points (Some of these points should be spent on Lores and a Class II God-weapon!)

Appendix C: Influences!

Check out the following if you'd like to see some of the influences that played through the writer's heads - both visual and otherwise. Please note that at this printing, there is an Anime ("Invincible Armor") and a live action ("Sword Searchers") feature are finishing production as we speak!

BOOKS

- 1.) Comics - Weapons of the Gods comic itself (naturally), Heaven Sword & Dragon Saber, Crouching Tiger & Hidden Dragon, The Four Constables, Legendary Couple, others.
- 2.) Three Kingdoms (A Classic across Asia - read in Korea, China, you name it.)
- 3.) Journey to the West (Perhaps THE classic chinese fantasy - featuring the Handsome Monkey King!)
- 4.) Anything by Jin Yong you can find (there are web-based translations of varying quality, but even with that, are still very worthwhile, such as <http://www.spcnet.tv/jinyong/jyreadingroom.shtml>).
- 5.) Barry Hughart's Chronicles of Master Li Kao & Number Ten Ox - Bridge of Birds, the Story of the Stone and the Eight Skilled Gentlemen.

MOVIES

- 1.) The Storm Riders (THE visual reference for how a WOTG might look!)
- 2.) Jet Li's HERO (Beautiful beyond the telling, fantastic sword work and effects)
- 3.) Bride with the White Hair (Another useful reference - and has hair as a deadly weapon!)
- 4.) Liquid Sword (Good ideas, very uneven execution and a bit silly)
- 5.) Chinese Ghost Story (Series) (Cool Daoist Sorcerers and bumbling Tax Collectors)
- 6.) Iron Monkey (featuring Donnie Yen)
- 7.) Master Killer & Return of the Master Killer (At the very low end of power, but an influence on the flow of combat)
- 8.) The Five Deadly Venoms (Demonstration of both political and kung fu complexities!)
- 9.) Drunken Master II (Don't try this at home...)
- 10.) Onmyoji (Yes, it's Japanese - but is a reference for the Daoist Sorcery!)

Appendix D: Probabilities for Weapons of the Gods

Expected Chance of Success with...

Difficulty	1 die	2 dice	3 dice	4 dice	5 dice	6 dice	7 dice
Trivial task	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Simple task	50%	80%	94%	99%	99.9%	100%	100%
Everyday task	20%	44%	66%	83%	93%	98%	99.6%
Moderate task	—	10%	28%	50%	70%	85%	94%
Hard task	—	—	1%	4%	9%	16%	25%
Legendary task	—	—	—	small	small	1.2%	3%
Impossible task	—	—	—	—	—	tiny	tiny

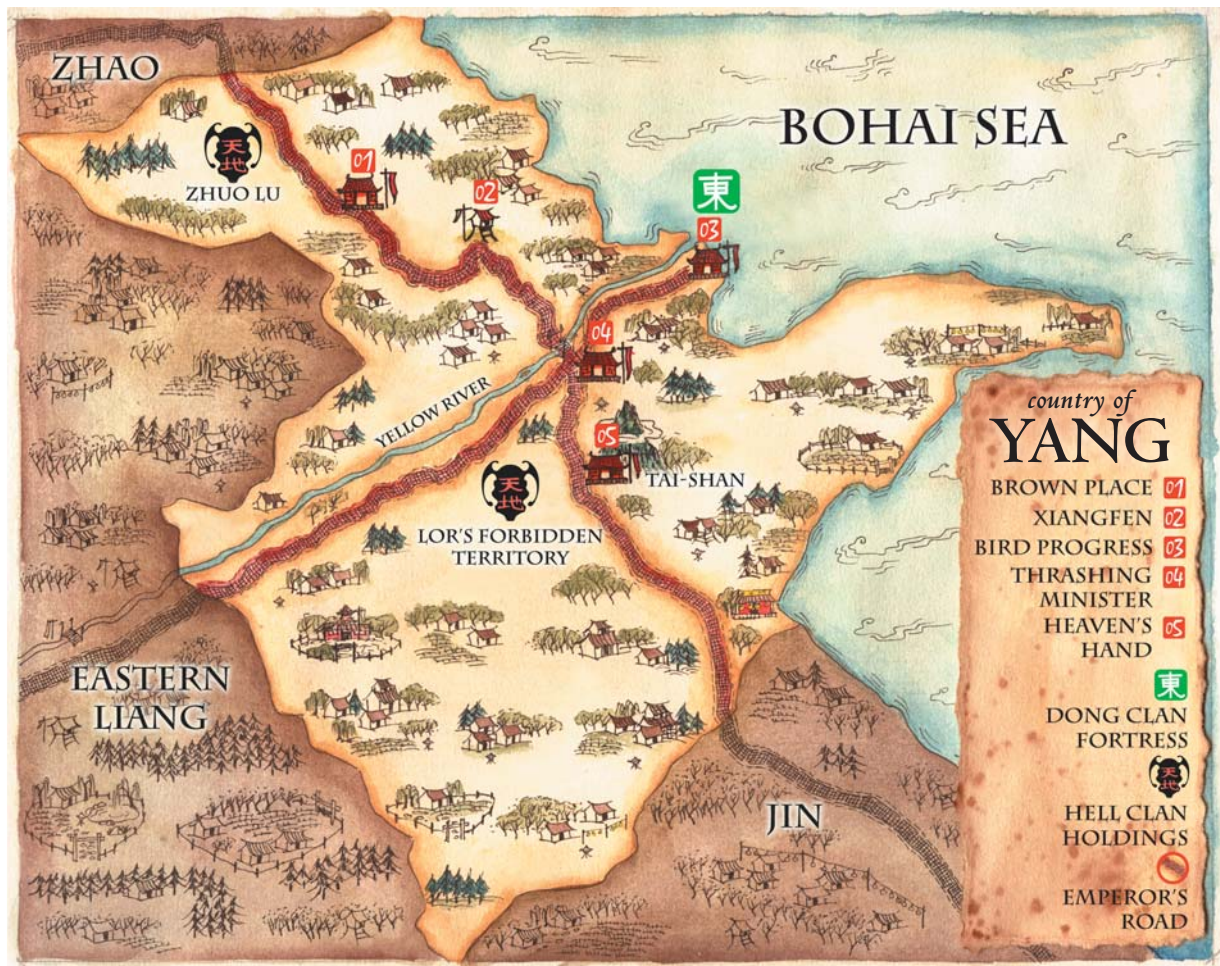
Characters will succeed more often on rolls important to them, because they have joss and the river — these odds reflect situations where the character is willing to fail.

Expected Chance of Success with . . .

Difficulty	1 die	2 dice	3 dice	4 dice	5 dice	6 dice	7 dice
Simple task	50%	80%	94%	99%	99.9%	100%	100%
Everyday task	20%	44%	66%	83%	93%	98%	99.6%
Simple w/ -5	—	10%	28%	50%	70%	85%	94%
Moderate task	—	10%	28%	50%	70%	85%	94%
Everyday w/ -5	—	7%	19%	35%	50%	62%	71%
Moderate w/ -5	—	5%	15%	27%	40%	50%	60%
Hard task	—	—	1%	4%	9%	16%	25%
Hard w/ -5	—	—	small	2%	5%	8%	14%
Legendary task	—	—	—	small	small	1.2%	3%
Impossible task	—	—	—	—	—	tiny	tiny

Game Masters should observe that everyday and moderate tasks with circumstantial twists that impose a -5 penalty are meaningful but manageable challenges for high-skill characters.

Appendix E: Map of Yang



Weapons of the Gods

roleplaying game

Character Name: _____

Rank/Archetype: _____

Origin: _____

SPEED *Fire/Crimson Chi* ☐

Initiative _____

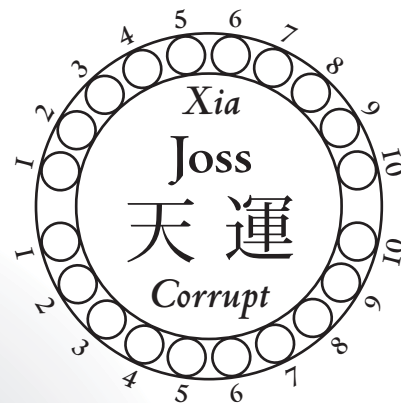
Dodge _____

Finesse _____

Melee _____

Ride _____

火 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐



Destiny _____

MIGHT *Wood/Jade Chi* ☐

Athletics _____

Climb _____

Fight _____

Hardness _____

Lift _____

木 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

RIVER

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

1st: Wash - Empty River

2nd: Float - Move dice into River

3rd: Flow - Move dice from River

PRESENCE *Earth/Gold Chi* ☐

Confidence _____

Grace _____

Inspire _____

Perform _____

Persuade _____

土 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

WU WEI *Water/Silver Chi* ☐

Awareness _____

Investigation _____

Ranged _____

Senses _____

Stealth _____

水 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

GENIUS *Metal/White Chi* ☐

Learning _____

Crafting _____

Medicine _____

Politics _____

Tactics _____

金 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Advantages

Lightfoot _____

(Name/Point Cost)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Weapons	Speed	Strike	Dmg.	Short / Med. / Long
_____	_____	_____	_____	____/____/____
_____	_____	_____	_____	____/____/____
_____	_____	_____	_____	____/____/____

Protection _____

CHI AURA

ARMOR

Health	Remaining	TOTAL	Penalty
BATTERED	_____	_____	NONE
INJURED	_____	☐	-5 to Mobility
WOUNDED	_____	☐	-5 to Actions -10 to Mobility
STAGGERING	_____	☐	-10 to Actions
LAST LEGS	_____	☐	-10 to Actions -20 to Mobility

Weapons of the Gods

roleplaying game

Portrait

Player Name: _____

History: _____

Personal Details Age: _____ Height: _____ Weight: _____
Hair: _____ Eyes: _____ Sex: _____

DESTINY

Xia/Corrupt/Trans.

Achieved (Total): _____

Advanced (Spent): _____

Held Back (Avail.): _____

GOALS

Immediate: _____

Future: _____

Passion: _____

Technique List

(Name & Skill/Chi Cost)

DEEDS	Xia Virtues	俠	寬	義	忠	霸
	Xia	Kuan	Yi	Zhong	Ba	
	Justice	Altruism	Righteousness	Loyalty	Force	
	Revenge	Individualism	Obsession	Ruthlessness	Ferocity	
	Chou	Si	Chan	Hen	Bao	
	Corrupt Virtues	仇	私	暴	狠	纏

Demon Chi 魔 □□□□□□□□□□□□

More Skills & Advantages

(Name/Point Cost)

Treasures

(Story/Details)