

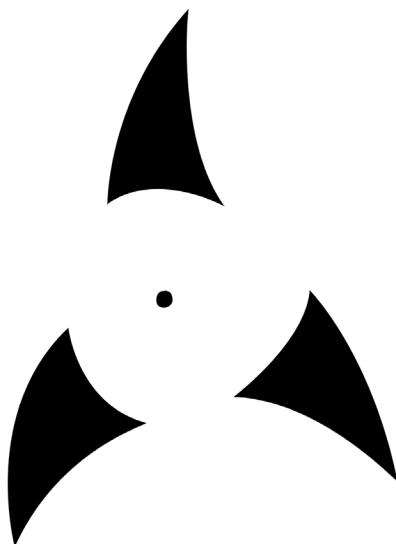
Legend of the Elements



Max Hervieux

Legend of the Elements

by Max Hervieux



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A Logbook Project Game



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What is Legend of the Elements?

Legend of the Elements is a tabletop roleplaying game, a standalone hack of *Apocalypse World* that emulates supernatural martial arts action.

That is a *lot* of information to take in. What does it actually mean?

***Legend of the Elements* is a tabletop roleplaying game.**

This means that it is a game played by a small group of interested people where everyone sits down for a few hours and pretends to be characters in a fictional world, using the rules in this book to aid in telling a specific type of story. No experience with roleplaying games is necessary to play this game, though one person (the MC) must read this entire book.

Tabletop roleplaying games leave a lot of the particulars up to the imaginations of the players, instead providing structure to guide the creation of those specifics. To differentiate between the structures in the game system and the specifics of your own game, the former will be referred to as “the game” and the latter as changes made “at your table”.

***Legend of the Elements* is a standalone hack of *Apocalypse World*.**

Apocalypse World is another tabletop roleplaying game that was written by D. Vincent Baker. If you are not familiar with that game, don’t worry, this book contains everything you need. If you are, much of the framework of this game will be recognizable to you!



***Legend of the Elements* emulates supernatural martial arts action.**

The rules of this game will help you to play a game of supernatural wuxia, a genre characterized by a world where the supernatural is heard of, if not common, and where both martial arts skill and control of the supernatural are normal for heroes. Wuxia is associated with Chinese literature, but the setting of *Legend of the Elements* is not a real-world place. The assumed setting for the game is a fictional world with a pan-Asian culture, but there is no reason this must be the case at your table.

The largest inspirations for this game are the Nickelodeon cartoons *Avatar: The Last Airbender* and *The Legend of Korra*. This game is not associated with those shows, but they are an excellent guideline for tone, style, and pacing in *Legend of the Elements*. Other inspirations can be found in the Mediography at the end of this book.

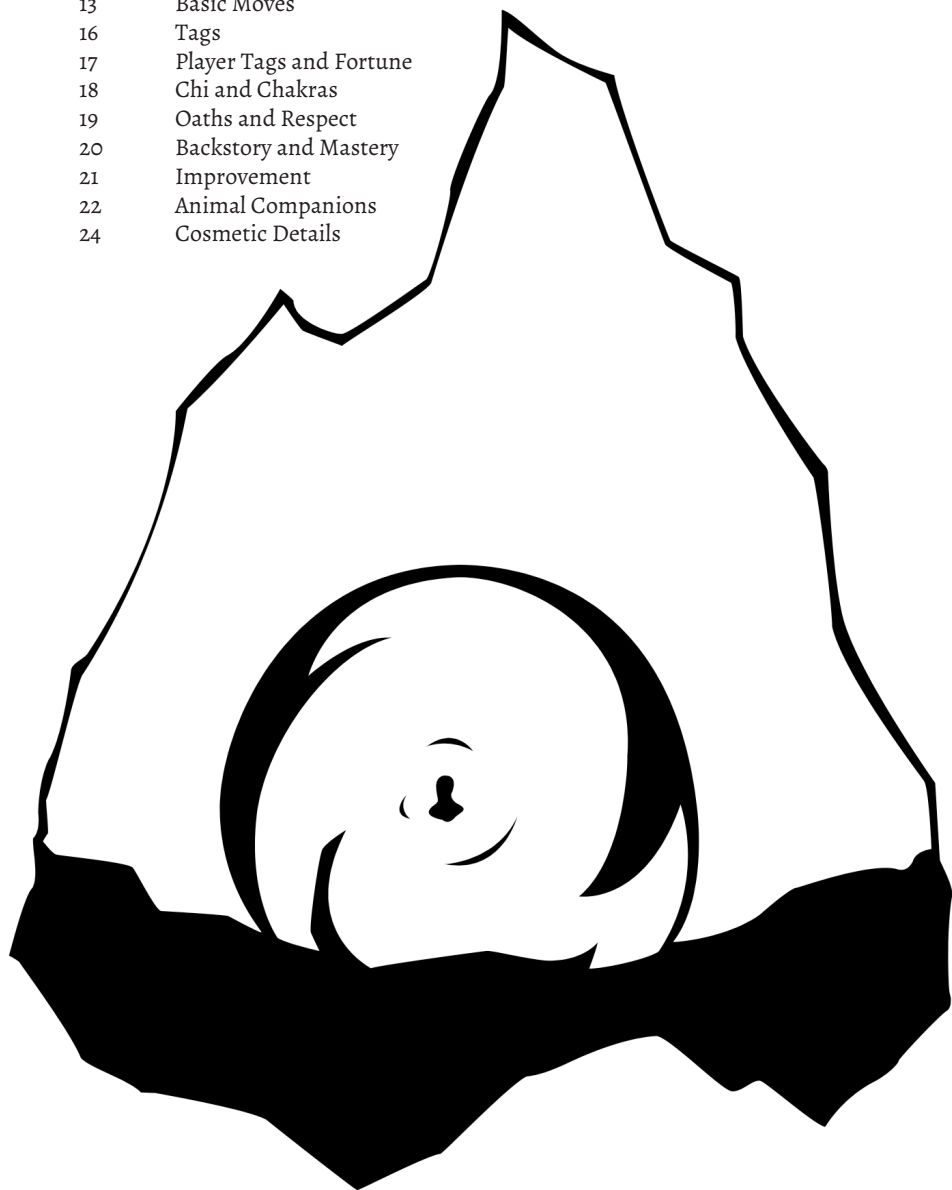
Legend of the Elements requires several things to play:

- ~ This book and a copy of all the associated reference sheets.
- ~ Three or four people in addition to yourself.
- ~ About four hours set aside to play in. The game is meant to be played over several four hour sessions over a longer period of time, but a satisfying and complete game can be experienced in a single session.
- ~ Two six-sided dice. A set of two per player is ideal, but two for the table is the minimum.
- ~ Some paper or index cards and writing utensils.
- ~ One participant must be willing to take on the role of Master of Ceremonies (MC), a special role described later in the book.



The Basics

8	The Structure of Play
9	The Two Roles
10	Characters and Playbooks
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12	Stats
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The Structure of Play

The rules in this book are structured to be used to aid in telling stories. It is a conversation between friends, with the goal of creating the most interesting story possible. However, stories generally require some form of antagonist or opposition. *Legends of the Elements* achieves this by assigning roles to the participants.

One player will be the “Master of Ceremonies”, or “MC”, while the rest will be “players.” The players each control one character, each of whom will be one of the main characters in the story. They will dictate the actions of their characters and pursue their own goals. The MC is also playing the game, controlling the world itself and all of the supporting characters and antagonists, rather than just one character. The MC has an entirely different set of responsibilities and goals than the players.

Once roles are decided, the players create their characters. Each player chooses a playbook, which is a two-sided sheet folded into a booklet that contains everything necessary to play a character of a chosen archetype from the wuxia genre. Players will follow the prompts on the playbook to customize the archetype into their own unique character.

The conversation begins after creating characters, with players narrating their characters’ actions and the MC responding, then turning the altered situation back to the players. Occasionally, moments of uncertainty will arise where the game could go several ways. Most of those moments will have the MC make a decision, but some are governed by the game’s main tool, Moves.

By advocating for their characters’ goals, the Moves managing risk and uncertainty, and the MC giving the characters real obstacles against which to struggle and ultimately triumph, you create a true *Legend of the Elements*.

The Two Roles

The first step of play is to separate the Master of Ceremonies from the players. Their roles are distinct in four major ways.

The players control one character each; the MC controls many.

This may make the MC's job seem more intimidating, but each player takes a very deep look into their character, while the MC is much more shallow. Their characters are easily relinquished and simpler in nature. In this way, the players are more invested in their characters, while the MC must be able to come up with many different characters fairly quickly.

The MC is purely reactive, but never relies on luck to act.

The MC controls everything else, but can never dictate a player characters' actions. However, in those moments of uncertainty when Moves are triggered, the players must roll the dice to get what they want. The MC never needs to roll the dice; the MC only reacts, but when given the opportunity to act on their own, they are able to declare what happens without question.

The MC's behavior is restricted, while the players are free to act.

The MC only acts at specified moments, and even then their behavior is governed by a set of Principles and their own list of MC Moves. Their power exists on a grander scale than the players, but is limited by opportunity and the Principles. The players, on the other hand, have more risk in their individual actions, but can do anything they desire.

At the table, the MC is a manager and a mediator of the rules.

The MC is responsible for calling for Moves, for managing the "spotlight," for presenting information about the game and what the situation is like in the story, and for knowing the rules of the game. They needn't have the book memorized, but they should be generally familiar with it. This is the largest way in which being the Master of Ceremonies is a responsibility and not just a different role.

Characters and Playbooks

Each player begins controlling one character. The characters the players control are sometimes referred to as “player characters,” to differentiate them from the MC’s characters.

Each player character starts with a playbook. A playbook is a booklet that contains all the rules and instructions needed to play a character of the chosen genre archetype.

There are 11 playbooks.

- ~ The **Airshaper**, as flighty as the wind they wield.
- ~ The **Aristocrat**, a master of conversation and subtlety.
- ~ The **Earthshaper**, a dependable person who controls stone.
- ~ The **Fireshaper**, a volatile and passionate controller of flame.
- ~ The **Hunter**, a quiet stalker, exploiting nature or balancing it.
- ~ The **Monk**, a calm soul in tune with the world.
- ~ The **Peasant**, a hard worker just trying to carve out their place.
- ~ The **Scholar**, a genius inventor or brilliant bookworm.
- ~ The **Spiritshaper**, a shaman who deals with the Great Unknown.
- ~ The **Warrior**, a soldier of great skill or renown.
- ~ The **Watershaper**, flowing and adaptable.

By following the instructions on the playbook, it is easy to customize the archetype to create a unique character.

The 11 playbooks represent the core archetypes of the genre. However, there are other archetypes. Most of these are either not major enough to warrant complete expansion or are inherently subordinate to other archetypes. They aren’t ignored by *Legend of the Elements* though!

Instead they’re modeled as sub-playbooks, smaller sets of moves that have prerequisites to take. It’s totally fine to take moves from sub-playbooks at character creation as well.

The Conversation and Moves

Playing *Legend of the Elements* is a conversation between the players and the MC. The MC usually starts this conversation, describing the situation that the player characters find themselves in. After a brief explanation, the MC turns control over to the players. Sometimes the MC will specify who they want to hear from, and sometimes it'll just be an open table for anyone to chime in. The players describe their characters' actions and the MC responds with how the world changes in response to those actions before returning control to the players. This continues until someone triggers a Move.

Moves are the game's main mechanism for navigating moments of uncertainty. Each Move has a trigger. If a player's action matches up with a Move's trigger, the rest of the Move resolves in accordance with the Move's description. Usually, this means rolling dice to determine the success of the action.

Moves have several parts:

- ~ First is the trigger, stating what fictional actions activate the Move. The trigger is absolute; the fictional action must occur for the Move to happen, and if the trigger happens, the rest of the Move must be resolved.
- ~ The second part is the roll, usually phrased as "roll +[Stat]." This means the triggering player rolls two six-sided dice, adds them together, and adds the indicated Stat. The total of those numbers will be used to determine the success of the Move.
- ~ The third part is the result. On a total of 10 or greater, the Move is a complete success, as dictated by the Move. On a 7, 8, or 9, the Move is a partial success or a success with complications, and the Move will tell you what that means. On a 6 or less, the Move is not necessarily a success, but the character making the Move gains a point of Chi, and the MC is able to make one of their MC Moves, which are almost always bad for the player characters.

Once the Move is resolved, it points right back into the fiction, and the conversation resumes.

Stats

Every character has five Stats. Stats are a numerical representation of the important aspects of a character's personality. Characters have more personality elements than just the five Stats, of course, but the Stats are the aspects that are important in the genre and will be used in Moves. Higher values indicate a stronger presence of that aspect. Stats are valued somewhere from -1 to +3, depending on the playbook and the player's choices.

The Stats are Natural, Hot, Solid, Keen, and Fluid.

Natural characters are well-connected: with people and with the world. The Natural character is a talented speaker, wise about the ways of the world, and feral in their self-control.

Hot characters are intense and excitable. They are volatile and quick to act on their emotions, and while it is often channeled into violence, just as often it manifests as passion and enthusiasm.

Note: If you've played Apocalypse World or Monsterhearts, those games use a stat called Hot for attractiveness. This game uses a different connotation of the word Hot, referring instead to temperament.

Solid characters are reliable and strong. They are difficult to rile up and rarely lose control over themselves. Their dependability isn't restricted to any particular field; the Solid character can react to any situation.

Keen characters are the sharpest people around. They're intelligent and perceptive above all others. It's hard to catch them off guard, and even when they are at rest, they are alert.

Fluid characters are mobile and graceful, in complete control of their motions. They have no trouble changing to meet new challenges and are quick to adapt. They control their surroundings as easily as they control their own bodies.

Basic Moves

Any player character can trigger the Basic Moves. They describe the types of actions most iconic to the genre. Most of the Moves involve rolls, though not all of them.

Speak Honorably (+Natural)

When you speak honorably to persuade, convince, or manipulate an NPC, tell the MC what you want and roll +Natural. On a 10 or greater, you get what you want and can Tag the NPC as long as you promise them something they'll get in return. On a 7, 8, or 9, you get what you want but there are immediate and troublesome strings attached.

When used against another player character, roll +nothing. If they Respect you, add +2. On a 10 or greater, both of the following apply. On a 7, 8, or 9, choose just one:

- ~ If they promise to do what you want, they gain a point of Chi.
- ~ They must Stand Fast to deny you.

Meditate (+Natural)

When you spend time in uninterrupted contemplation, say what you're thinking about and roll +Natural. On a 10 or greater, declare a detail about that subject to be true. On a 7, 8, or 9, the MC declares a relevant detail about the subject.

Act Dishonorably (+Hot)

When you act in a threatening way to get what you want, roll +Hot. On a 10 or greater, they need to choose whether to give in or face your wrath. On a 7, 8, or 9, you might not get what you want, but you've pushed them to: (MC chooses 1)

- ~ Escalate with a counter-proposal.
- ~ Flee in cowardice.
- ~ Provide what they think you want.

Commit Open Violence (+Hot)

When you strike out violently with intent to kill or incapacitate, roll +Hot. On a 10 or greater, your attack is successful; Tag the target appropriately. On a 7, 8, or 9, choose one:

- ~ You don't Tag them.
- ~ You're left in a disadvantageous position.
- ~ You're left open to their counterattack.

Stand Fast (+Solid)

When you act in reaction or under pressure, roll +Solid. On a 10 or greater, you do it, no problem. On a 7, 8, or 9, the MC will offer you a tough choice, hard bargain, or dangerous outcome.

Observe Carefully (+Keen)

When you pay close attention to something, whether it be a person or a situation, roll +Keen. On a 10 or greater, ask 3 questions from the list below. On a 7, 8, or 9, ask only 1. After you hear the answers, you can add a Tag or Environment Tag describing the situation.

- ~ What do I need to do to be at an advantage here?
- ~ What here is not as it appears to be?
- ~ What is about to happen?
- ~ What should I be watching for?
- ~ Who is in control here?

Move With Intention (+Fluid)

When you move deliberately to gain a position of strength, roll +Fluid. On a 10 or greater, choose 2 of the following. On a 7, 8, or 9, only choose 1.

- ~ Add 1 to your next roll.
- ~ Add an Environment Tag to the scene.
- ~ Place a Tag on the target you're gaining a position on.
- ~ You're safe from imminent attack.

If used against another player character, add this option to the list:

- ~ The target needs to Stand Fast to act against you.

Help

When you help another player character's Move, roll +nothing. If they Respect you, add +2 to the roll. On a 10 or greater, add +2 to the other player character's Move. On a 7, 8, or 9, the same, but you get yourself in trouble in the process.

Always make this Move before the Helped character rolls the dice.

Chi and Oath Moves

When playing to your Chakras causes trouble for the other player characters, gain 1 Chi.

When you take advantage of a Tag or Environment Tag when triggering a move, after seeing the roll you may give 1 Chi to the MC to upgrade the result to the next tier of results.

When an MC character Respects you and you make a Move against them, spend that Respect to upgrade the result to the next tier of results.

You can spend 5 Chi at any point to take an option from your playbook's Improvement list.

When you make an oath, write it, and who it is to, down under the Oaths section on your playbook.

When you fulfill an Oath to someone, they now Respect you and you gain 1 Chi.

When you break an Oath to someone, roll +nothing. If they Respect you, add +2 but they no longer Respect you. On a 10 or greater, nothing more than that happens, though you aren't exempt from the personal consequences of going back on your word. On a 7, 8, or 9, choose 1:

- ~ They intuitively know you broke the Oath, regardless of where they are, and immediately act on that knowledge.
- ~ You must make a new Oath to them to try and redeem yourself.
- ~ You also lose the Respect of someone else who knows you broke your promise.

Tags

Tags are small descriptive words or phrases that are applied to characters, and Environment Tags are phrases describing the state of a location. They needn't be witty or concise, though it's easier to keep track of simple Tags. Many moves apply Tags, and using Chi to improve Move results relies upon them. However, they are not purely mechanical in nature.

In one sense, Tags do nothing on their own. They have no mechanical weight outside of using Chi to take advantage of them. They don't change the numbers at all until Chi is spent.

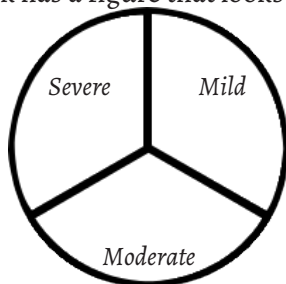
However, mechanical weight isn't the only important type of weight in *Legend of the Elements*. All the mechanics in the game flow from the fiction, and Tags are fictionally binding. If a soldier has the *Trapped In Ice* Tag, just because the numbers haven't changed doesn't mean the MC can just describe them breaking free and running. They're trapped, after all! The MC would need an opportunity to use one of the MC Moves to have that soldier break free.

Similarly, with some moves it would make sense to apply lethal Tags. For example, if the Warrior swung his battle-axe and rolled a 10 on their Commit Open Violence roll, it makes perfect sense that they could apply the *Mortally Wounded* Tag or even the *Dead* Tag. That's how MC characters are taken out of the action, not by any loss of a mechanical resource but when they fictionally aren't participating any more.

Removing Tags is simple and not mediated mechanically. When it no longer makes sense narratively for a Tag or Environment Tag to apply, remove it. When an MC Move involves the soldier *Trapped In Ice* being broken out by his friends and rejoining their ranks, that Tag no longer makes sense and can no longer be taken advantage of.

Player Tags and Fortune

Players can get Tags too! However, it's a little more involved than with MC characters so player characters don't get sidelined by a single action. As a matter of protection for player characters' agency, every playbook has a figure that looks something like this:



When a player character would get a Tag, whether inflicted by the MC or as the result of a Move, it must be a degree appropriate to the figure. For example, a new player character's first Tag is Mild in scope, their second Moderate, and their third Severe. Mild Tags should not greatly restrict the sorts of actions a character can take. Severe Tags can be powerful enough to remove a character from the action. However, MCs should never kill a player character unless the player consents to it as the most interesting and dramatic event.

Tags needn't be physical states! *Distracted* or *Angry* are just as legitimate as *Tied Up* or *On Fire*.

If it helps, consider Mild, Moderate, and Severe to be prefixes on whatever Tag is being applied.

The MC cannot take advantage of player character's Tags the same way players can. On player characters, Tags are just narrative. They don't provide any mechanical penalty to making Moves.

All characters have a Fortune value, determined by their playbook, and increased by certain Moves. At any time a player character would be Tagged, they can spend 1 Fortune to ignore the Tag. Whatever action was happening still happens, but they aren't bound by the Tag and can narrate around it however they feel.

Fortune is restored to maximum at the beginning of each session.

Chi and Chakras

Chi is a resource that all the players, including the MC, keep track of. It doesn't represent anything specific in the fiction; the closest approximation would be a reserve of energy or ability, but even that is not a particularly complete explanation.

Chi comes from a variety of places. Players can:

- ~ Roll a 6 or less on a Move.
- ~ Fulfill an Oath.
- ~ Cause trouble or tension by roleplaying to their Chakras.
- ~ Some playbook moves provide other ways to gain Chi.

Chi can be spent by players in two main ways. Players can:

- ~ Give 1 Chi to the MC to upgrade a Move result from a "6 or less" result to a "7, 8, or 9" result, or upgrade from a "7, 8, or 9" result to a "10 or greater" result, so long as they are taking advantage of one of the target's Tags or a relevant Environment Tag.
- ~ Spend 5 Chi to pick an option from their playbook's Improvement list.

MCs use their own pool of Chi to further the schemes and plots of their own characters, meaning that players "upgrading" their rolls results in an immediate benefit in return for long-term consequences in the future.

Chakras are an element of every playbook. They are pairs of adjectives that players should use to guide how they roleplay their character. Every character starts with two Chakras, providing four separate adjectives they can play to. In many cases Chakras are just guidelines for different ways that archetype can act in this genre, but they all have a side that can cause trouble between player characters. When this tension or trouble arises, each player character whose Chakra is conflicting gains 1 Chi. This reward for dysfunction should be emphasized when players choose to write their own Chakras.

Oaths and Respect

Characters in *Legend of the Elements* are bound to each other by Oaths, promises to other characters to do something. A few Oaths are established at the end of character creation when players fill out their Backstory, and they will make other Oaths in play through conversation or as the result of Moves such as Speak Honorably.

When Oaths are fulfilled, the person the Oath was made to gains Respect for the fulfilling character. Respect is a binary state; you either have someone's Respect or you do not. When a character Respects another, it makes it easier for them to work together. Respect isn't necessarily mutual, it can be in one direction.

When an Oath is made, the promising character writes it down under Oaths, including to whom the Oath was made.

When an Oath is fulfilled, the character it was made to now Respects the fulfilling character. The fulfilling character gains 1 Chi.

When an Oath is broken, the oath-breaker rolls the associated Move.

Respect can also be won or lost as a result of the narrative conditions, but to avoid trivializing the mechanic it should only be changed if there is a drastic change in the nature of the relationship of the characters.

Mechanically, it is more important for each player to keep track of who Respects their character, but they should also track who they Respect as well. There is a place on the playbooks for both. In general, Respect is mostly important when an Oath needs to be broken or when Helping another character. As this is not helpful with regard to MC characters, their Respect can instead be spent to improve a Move's result against them. When spent, the Move result upgrades one tier, in the same way as when Chi is spent to upgrade rolls.



Backstory and Mastery

At the end of character creation, all players will go around and introduce their characters to each other, then fill out the Backstory questions on each of the playbooks. These statements establish some starting Oaths and Respect and will help flesh out the way that the characters know each other before the conversation begins.

If Backstory is the part of the playbook concerned with the past, Mastery is the part concerned with the far future. A common goal for members of all the playbooks is to find a master to train with. Whenever any playbook trains with a master of their discipline, they trigger their Mastery Move, which permanently changes some function of the character – improving them forever.

If players find another master after they've already trained with one, the Move doesn't trigger again. The MC should write some new Move unique to the character and their situation; after all, if a character has managed to train with two masters, the MC should be familiar with who that character is and what they want.

Improvement

Over the course of the game, characters are expected to grow and improve as they experience conflict and adversity. On the back of each playbook is a list of Improvements. At any time, a player can spend 5 Chi to gain the listed benefit permanently, crossing that option off the list. The list is very similar on all playbooks:

- ~ There are four bonuses to various Stats. Through these Improvements, Stats cannot advance beyond +2; only certain Moves can Improve a stat to +3 at the beginning of the game.
- ~ There are the Move advancements: two from that playbook, two from any other playbook, and two from a sub-playbook that the character qualifies for.
- ~ There is the option to take an additional Chakra.

After taking five of the above Improvements, the Advanced Improvements are available to be selected in the same way as the others.

- ~ One is a bonus to any Stat of the player's choice. This bonus can bring a Stat to +3, the only way to do so without taking specific Moves.
- ~ One is a +1 bonus to the character's maximum Fortune. For many characters, this is the only way they will get Fortune.
- ~ There are three playbook-changing Improvements. One retires the character to safety, keeping them forever safe from the MC's machinations but removing them from active play. Another creates a second character to play simultaneously. The third changes the existing character's playbook, carrying over any moves that make sense to still have.
- ~ There is an option to change one of the character's Chakras. This should be used to reflect some sort of character development.
- ~ The last option grants an Animal Companion.

Animal Companions

Each playbook comes with an Advanced Improvement that gives them an Animal Companion of some kind. The exact nature of the creature is not specified, and the player should be allowed to come up with whatever they think is most interesting. Of course, any character can have an animal friend, but only those who gain an Animal Companion have a mechanical impact.

When a character gains an Animal Companion, they receive the Animal Companion playbook. This is not a full playbook, but a sort of supplemental partial playbook.

Animal Companions have one Stat, Animal. This Stat always starts at +1.

Animal Companions start with a couple of Moves, depending on how the Companion is obtained. Some of its Moves are considered Hunting Moves, while others are Riding Moves, and some sources will only allow an owner to take a Move from a certain category.

Animal Companions can get Tags too, just like player characters. However, they do not gain Mild Tags, and jump straight to Moderate Tags.

Narratively, the Animal Companion is an extension of its owner. It can make Basic Moves using its owner's Stats and is fully under the control of its owner.

The Animal Companion is generally assumed to be loyal and does not need to be convinced to take commands that are intuitive and non-suicidal. However, the MC can use MC Moves to interrupt that relationship.

Animal Companion Moves:

Wild (Riding or Hunting Move)

Your companion has an Animal Stat of +2 instead of +1.

Hound (Hunting Move)

So long as you have some recent physical link to a subject, you can spend 1 Chi to find them (though it may not be fast or stealthy).

Pack Mentality (Hunting Move)

When your companion is an equal participant in your maneuvers, roll +Animal in addition to rolling your own move. On a 7 or greater, you may choose to use that result instead for your move.

Unstopping (Riding Move)

Choose one type of terrain your companion can easily traverse: clouds, sea, or solid stone.

Zephyr (Riding Move)

When you ride with haste, roll +Animal. On a 7 or greater, you reach your destination swiftly. On a 7, 8, or 9, choose one:

- ~ Trouble finds you there.
- ~ Your companion is *Exhausted*.
- ~ Your arrival causes a big scene.



Cosmetic Details

On the front of the playbook are two lists of Looks. When creating the character, players choose one option from each list for their character. They may not write their own options, but the lists are flexible and easy to interpret in many different ways.

These Looks have no mechanical impact on the character. They are simply narrative elements to create a more interesting and complete image of the character.

The Gear list on the playbook provides information on what the character has in terms of possessions. With consent from the MC, the characters may own a bit more, but the Gear describes what they own as their main items. Many of the Gear entries are vaguely-worded, requiring input from the player to shape their character's equipment. Some playbooks ask that players make choices about their gear.

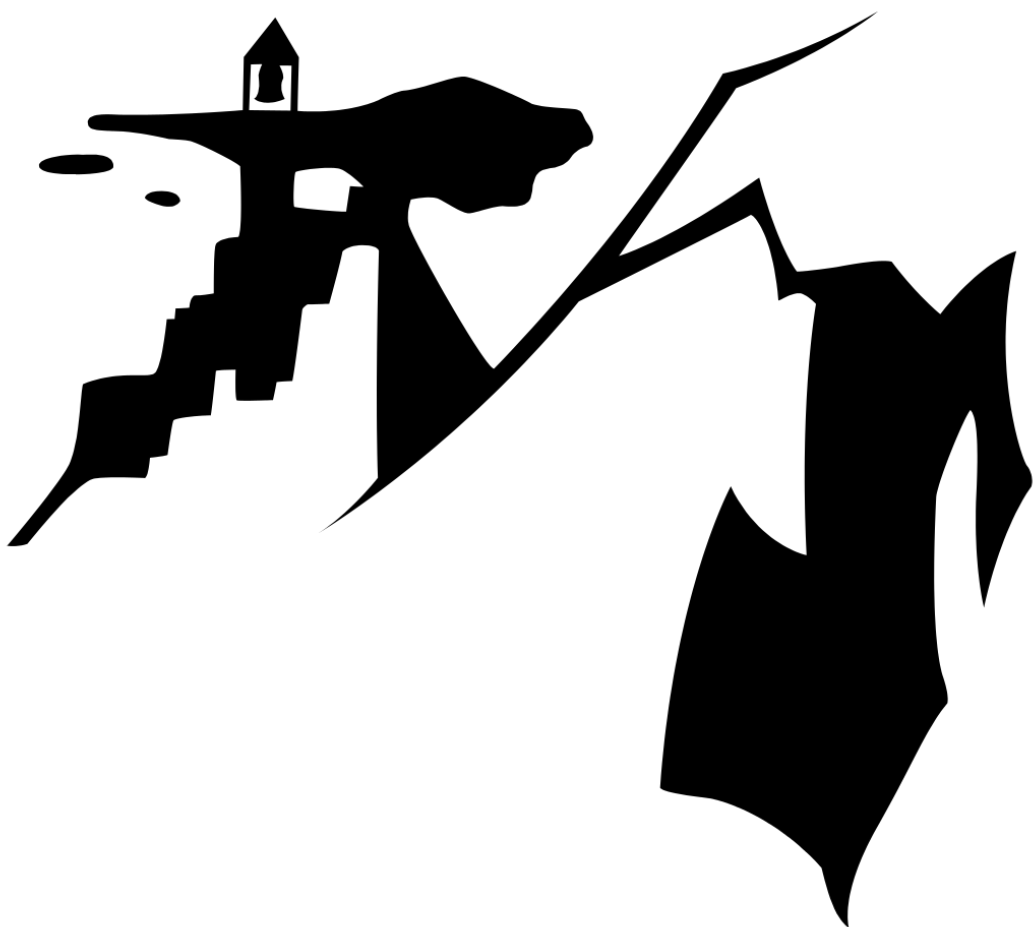






The Playbooks

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34	The Earthshaper
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40	The Hunter
43	The Monk
46	The Peasant
49	The Scholar
52	The Spiritshaper
55	The Warrior
58	The Watershaper





The Airshaper

The wind is a fickle force, prone to changing direction on a whim. So too with the airshaper: swift, always moving, quick to decide, and slow to commit.

Look:

- ~ Hairless, short and well-maintained hair, tattooed body, wild and unkempt hair.
- ~ Commoner's clothes, loose meditation clothes, temple clothes, traveler's clothes.

Chakras:

- ~ Emotional and sensitive.
- ~ Fickle and indecisive.
- ~ Hasty and quick-to-react.
- ~ Spacey and whimsical.

Gear:

- ~ A staff that allows gliding and flight through airshaping.
- ~ You have 0 maximum Fortune.

Stats:

- ~ Natural +2, Hot -1, Solid +0, Keen +1, Fluid +1.
- ~ Natural +2, Hot +1, Solid -1, Keen +0, Fluid +1.
- ~ Natural +2, Hot -1, Solid +1, Keen +1, Fluid +0.
- ~ Natural +2, Hot +0, Solid -1, Keen +1, Fluid +1.

Backstory:

- ~ You made _____ a promise a long time ago, but have made no progress. What was it?
- ~ _____ is a close friend, we Respect each other.

Mastery Move:

Once you've trained with a master airshaper, add the following to the Move With Intention list of options:

- ~ Roll your next Move with Natural instead of its usual Stat.

Improvement:

- ~ You have +1 Hot (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Solid (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Keen (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Fluid (max +2).
- ~ Take an Airshaper Move.
- ~ Take an Airshaper Move.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a new Chakra, or write your own.

Advanced Improvements:

- ~ You have +1 to any Stat (max +3).
- ~ You have +1 Fortune.
- ~ Retire your character to safety.
- ~ Change to a new playbook.
- ~ Create a second character, played side-by-side with the first.
- ~ You have an Animal Companion with two Moves.
- ~ Replace one of your Chakras.

Moves:

You start with Airshaping and 1 other Move.

Airshaping

When you manipulate the air to control the area, roll +Natural. On a 7 or greater, choose one:

- ~ Immobilize a foe.
- ~ Move as fast as the wind.
- ~ Perform a great feat of acrobatics.
- ~ Reposition the battlefield.

On a 10 or greater, as above, but also add 1 to your rolls until you stop moving.

Other actions can involve airshaping but are treated as whatever Move would be appropriate.

Attuned

When you are outdoors, you have +1 Natural (max +3).

Nomad

When you Meditate about some facet of the world (natural or Spirit), on a 7 or greater you may also ask the MC one related question that they must answer.

Redirection

When you change the target of an attack, roll +Fluid. On a 10 or greater, it strikes a new target of your choice. On a 7, 8, or 9, you redirect it and it strikes a new target of the MC's choice.

Soundshaping

You can manipulate sound as just another facet of the air. When you use this to mimic, amplify, or reduce noises, roll +Keen. On a 10 or greater, you can convincingly project any sound you've heard. On a 7, 8, or 9, the replication is pretty close, but you are also exposed to danger.

Unburdened

So long as you have no unresolved Oaths, add 1 to all Act Dishonorably and Move With Intention rolls.

The Aristocrat

Naturally at home in the courts of kings, you're not the same as all those other nobles. You're smarter than them. You're more cunning than them. And you're infinitely more ambitious.

Look:

- ~ Courtly clothes, fancy but practical, humble garb, very excessive.
- ~ With accessories, with intricate designs, with regalia and emblems, without adornment.

Chakras:

- ~ Commanding and inspiring.
- ~ Honorable and trustworthy.
- ~ Insufferable and privileged.
- ~ Manipulative and treacherous.

Gear:

- ~ A small, easily-concealed weapon.
- ~ A substantial amount of money.
- ~ Some indicator of your authority.
- ~ You have 0 maximum Fortune.

Stats:

- ~ Natural +2, Hot +0, Solid +1, Keen +1, Fluid -1.
- ~ Natural +2, Hot +1, Solid -1, Keen +1, Fluid +0.
- ~ Natural +1, Hot -1, Solid +0, Keen +2, Fluid +1.
- ~ Natural +1, Hot +0, Solid +1, Keen +2, Fluid -1.



Backstory:

Always do your Backstory last.

- ~ Gain the Respect of as many characters as you desire. For each character you cause to Respect you, make an Oath, though it needn't be to that character.

Mastery Move:

Once you've trained with a master politician, choose 1:

- ~ You're better at juggling many engagements; when you have at least 3 Oaths and take an additional Oath, gain 1 Chi.
- ~ You're most skilled at handling one thing at a time; when you have exactly 1 Oath, add 1 to any roll when making actions directly related to completing it.

Improvement:

- ~ You have +1 Natural (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Hot (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Keen (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Fluid (max +2).
- ~ Take an Aristocrat Move.
- ~ Take an Aristocrat Move.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a new Chakra, or write your own.

Advanced Improvements:

- ~ You have +1 to any Stat (max +3).
- ~ You have +1 Fortune.
- ~ Retire your character to safety.
- ~ Change to a new playbook.
- ~ Create a second character, played side-by-side with the first.
- ~ You have an Animal Companion with 1 Riding Move and 1 other Move.
- ~ Replace one of your Chakras.

Moves:

You start with two Moves.

Currency of Favors

Whenever you Help someone, you can demand a favor of them first. If they agree, they gain 1 Chi.

Henchmen

You have a small force of loyal henchmen. They can be sent out with commands or aid your efforts as you wish, though their obedience is not absolute.

Intrigue

When you Act Dishonorably but disguise it in polite conversation, roll +Natural instead of +Hot.

Mastermind

When you scheme and plan a future plot, roll +Keen. On a 10 or greater, the MC will pick 2 of the following conditions, only one of which must be addressed to succeed. On a 7, 8, or 9, the same thing, but you'll need to address both.

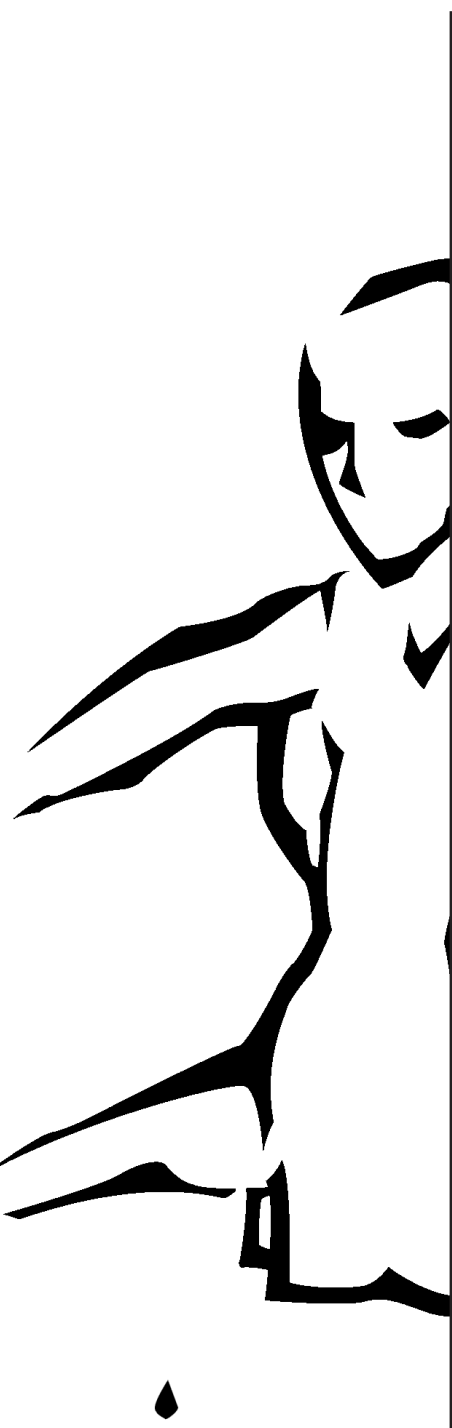
- ~ It will be very expensive or resource-intensive.
- ~ It will take hours/days.
- ~ You're going to need _____'s help.
- ~ _____ stands in the way of success.

Silver Tongue

Whenever you roll a 10 or greater to Speak Honorably, the target must also offer something extra they think you want.

Web of Commitments

When you take an Oath contradictory to another you've made, you may give up one of them without it counting as breaking an Oath (for purposes of the move), though there will still likely be social consequences to not fulfilling it.



The Earthshaper

Hardy and centered, earthshapers form the backbone of civilizations. They are the plow that shatters their enemies and the wall that stands between their friends and their foes.

Look:

- ~ High quality robes, muscles exposed, peasant's clothes, worn and dirty clothes.
- ~ Rough eyes, scheming eyes, stony eyes, unflinching eyes.

Chakras:

- ~ Dedicated and stubborn.
- ~ Dependable and hard-working.
- ~ Unmoving and cautious.
- ~ Vengeful but forgiving.

Gear:

- ~ A weapon, heavy and blunt.
- ~ You have 1 maximum Fortune.

Stats:

- ~ Natural +0, Hot +1, Solid +2, Keen +1, Fluid -1.
- ~ Natural +1, Hot -1, Solid +2, Keen +0, Fluid +1.
- ~ Natural -1, Hot +1, Solid +2, Keen +1, Fluid +0.
- ~ Natural +1, Hot +0, Solid +2, Keen -1, Fluid +1.

Backstory:

- ~ You don't let people down, usually. Every character has Respect for you, except for _____.
- ~ What have you promised them to try and gain their confidence?

Mastery Move:

Once you've trained with a master earthshaper, whenever you pass up an opportunity for action or resist opposition without reaction, gain 1 Chi.

Improvement:

- ~ You have +1 Natural (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Hot (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Keen (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Fluid (max +2).
- ~ Take an Earthshaper Move.
- ~ Take an Earthshaper Move.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a new Chakra, or write your own.

Advanced Improvements:

- ~ You have +1 to any Stat (max +3).
- ~ You have +1 Fortune.
- ~ Retire your character to safety.
- ~ Change to a new playbook.
- ~ Create a second character, played side-by-side with the first.
- ~ You have an Animal Companion with 1 Riding Move and 1 other Move.
- ~ Replace one of your Chakras.

Moves:

You start with Earthshaping and 1 other Move.

Earthshaping

When you alter the battlefield's topography, roll +Solid. On a 7 or greater, add an appropriate Environment Tag. On a 10 or greater, anyone taking advantage of this Environment Tag when making a Move add 1 to their roll.

Other actions can involve earthshaping but are treated as whatever Move would be appropriate.

Bulldozer

When your actions lead to the immediate destruction of (or relief from) an Environment Tag, gain 1 Chi.

Defender

Whenever you are in your element, you can protect yourself from an attack (and associated Tag) by spending 1 Chi. If it was a player attacking you, give them the Chi. Otherwise, give it to the MC.

Metalshaping

You can control metal that you are in contact with. When you do, it's the same as Earthshaping but roll +Keen instead of +Solid. When you metalshape against someone, on a 7 or greater you can Tag the target as well as the environment.

Rooted

When you are in firm contact with the ground, you have +1 Solid (max +3).

Vibration Sense

You can see and feel anything in contact with the ground (within reasonable distance). When you Observe Carefully, add the following questions to the list of options:

- ~ Are they telling the truth?
- ~ What does their body language betray about their plans?
- ~ What is unseen but in contact with the ground?

The Fireshaper

Fire is the great destroyer and the giver of life, and you have trapped it in your soul. You're quicker to be emotional than anyone else, but disciplined enough to stay in control. Most of the time, that is.

Look:

- ~ Exposed muscles, intimidating clothes, obvious burns, simple garb.
- ~ Burning eyes, lively eyes, smoldering eyes, warm eyes.

Chakras:

- ~ Excitable and energetic.
- ~ Honorable and disciplined.
- ~ Restrained and peaceful.
- ~ Volatile and explosive.

Gear:

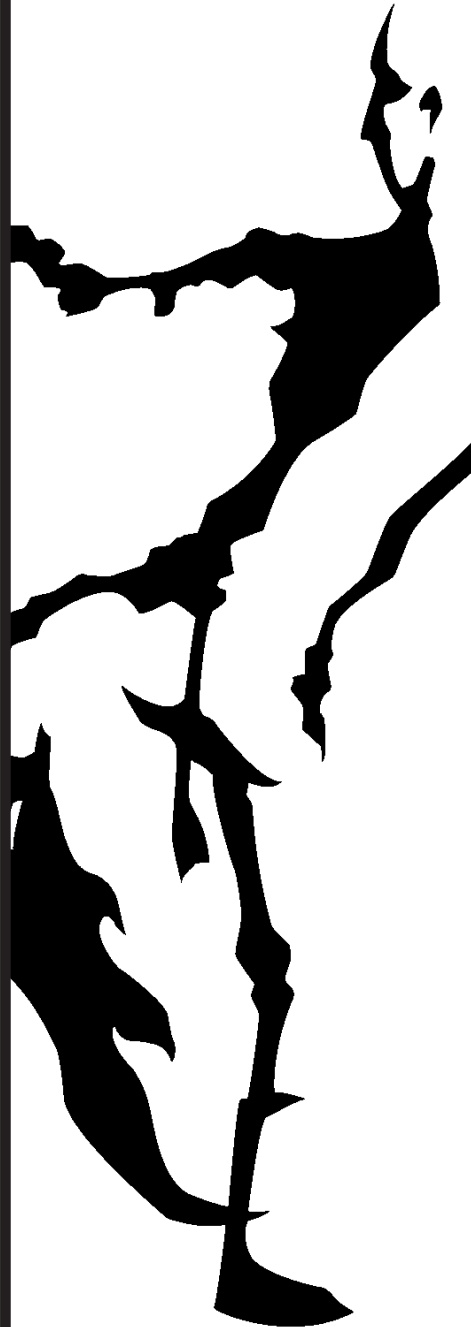
- ~ A family heirloom, treasured by your ancestors.
- ~ You have 0 maximum Fortune.

Stats:

- ~ Natural -1, Hot +2, Solid +1, Keen +1, Fluid +0.
- ~ Natural +0, Hot +2, Solid -1, Keen +1, Fluid +1.
- ~ Natural +1, Hot +1, Solid +1, Keen +0, Fluid -1.
- ~ Natural -1, Hot +2, Solid +1, Keen +0, Fluid +1.

Backstory:

- ~ Make two Oaths: one making up for past failures, and one made to ease another's burdens.



Mastery Move:

Once you've trained with a master fireshaper, never again can you be Tagged by being burned by natural fire or your own magical fire.

Improvement:

- ~ You have +1 Natural (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Solid (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Keen (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Fluid (max +2).
- ~ Take a Fireshaper Move.
- ~ Take a Fireshaper Move.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a new Chakra, or write your own.

Advanced Improvements:

- ~ You have +1 to any Stat (max +3).
- ~ You have +1 Fortune.
- ~ Retire your character to safety.
- ~ Change to a new playbook.
- ~ Create a second character, played side-by-side with the first.
- ~ You have an Animal Companion with 1 Hunting Move and 1 other Move.
- ~ Replace one of your Chakras.

Moves:

You start with two Moves.

Fireshaping

When you create or manipulate open flame to attack, roll +Hot. On a 10 or greater, it does what you want, Tagging targets as appropriate. On a 7, 8, or 9, you lose control of it in some manner (choose 1):

- ~ The flames are larger and more taxing than intended. They burn hot and strong, but take -1 to the next roll you make.
- ~ The flames explode into being, injuring all nearby, including the Fireshaper. Add Tags as appropriate.
- ~ You set fire to the area. Add a relevant Environment Tag.

Other actions can involve fireshaping but are treated as whatever Move would be appropriate.

Driven By Honor

When you fervently pursue the completion of an Oath to someone who doesn't Respect you, add 1 to all Stand Fast and Speak Honorably rolls.

Hot-Headed

When you are treated disrespectfully and respond by Acting Dishonorably, add 1 to your roll. If you respond by Committing Open Violence, gain 1 Chi instead.

Inner Passion

Decide and inform the MC of what emotion fuels your shaping. If the emotion is destructive or negative (such as anger, arrogance, or fear) you may Stand Fast with Hot instead of Solid.

If the emotion is a positive or constructive one (such as harmony, discipline, or hope) you may Move With Intention with Hot instead of Fluid.

Lightningshaping

When you channel lightning, roll +Fluid. On a 10 or greater, you succeed at projecting or redirecting the lightning strike. On a 7, 8, or 9, choose 1:

- ~ Some power rebounds, shocking and Tagging the shaper as well.
- ~ The lightning doesn't strike the target, but all that can see it gain the *Dazed* Tag.
- ~ The blast misses but causes explosive and chaotic damage; the MC adds an appropriate Environment Tag.

Sunsoul

When the sun is in the sky, you have +1 Hot (max +3).



The Hunter

Some people fear the wilderness, worry about the beasts and spirits that hide from the eyes of civilization. You, on the other hand, have nothing to fear, for there is nothing you cannot calm, catch, or kill.

Look:

- ~ Dull clothes, fur-lined clothes, leather clothes, stealthy clothes.
- ~ A collection of pelts, a crude amulet, a frightening mask, a heavy cloak.

Chakras:

- ~ Brash but wary.
- ~ Passionate and cocky.
- ~ Predatory and secretive.
- ~ Wild but kind.

Gear:

- ~ Choose one: a bow and arrow, trapping equipment, an Animal Companion with 1 Hunting Move and 1 other Move.
- ~ You have 0 maximum Fortune.

Stats:

- ~ Natural +1, Hot +0, Solid -1, Keen +2, Fluid +1.
- ~ Natural -1, Hot +0, Solid +1, Keen +2, Fluid +1.
- ~ Natural +1, Hot -1, Solid +0, Keen +1, Fluid +2.
- ~ Natural +0, Hot +1, Solid -1, Keen +1, Fluid +2.

Backstory:

- ~ You regularly bring back trophies of your prey, grisly or otherwise. _____ has shown Respect for your talents.
- ~ _____ has been kind to you when you were in need, and you Respect them for it. What promise have you made to them to show that Respect?

Mastery Move:

Once you've trained with a master hunter, whenever you Tag a foe who is not aware of your presence you may immediately add an Environment Tag describing the current situation.

Improvement:

- ~ You have +1 Hot (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Solid (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Keen (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Fluid (max +2).
- ~ Take a Hunter Move.
- ~ Take a Hunter Move.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a new Chakra, or write your own.

Advanced Improvements:

- ~ You have +1 to any Stat (max +3).
- ~ You have +1 Fortune.
- ~ Retire your character to safety.
- ~ Change to a new playbook.
- ~ Create a second character, played side-by-side with the first.
- ~ You have an Animal Companion with 1 Hunting Move and 1 other Move, or one of your existing Animal Companions gains a Move.
- ~ Replace one of your Chakras.

Moves:

You start with 2 Moves.

Ambush

While a foe is marked by a Tag indicating that they are not aware of your presence, you can spend 1 Chi to immediately defeat them and remove them from the action.

Friend of Nature

One of your Animal Companions may select a new Move.

Guerrilla Tactics

When hunting in the wilderness, you may Commit Open Violence with Keen instead of Hot. On a 10 or greater, if you take advantage of an Environment Tag in the process also choose one of the Move With Intention options.

Stealth

When you conceal yourself from view, roll +Fluid. On a 7 or greater, enemies can't see you and are Tagged as *Unwitting Prey*. On a 7, 8, or 9, also select one of the following:

- ~ Someone is on alert now.
- ~ You can't keep track of everyone from your hiding place.
- ~ You can't stay undetected here for long.

The Path

When you seek the way to someone or something you've been searching for, roll +Keen. On a 10 or greater, you find a route that is safe to use, at least this once. On a 7, 8, or 9, choose one:

- ~ Something has to get left behind on the way.
- ~ You are followed by something dangerous.
- ~ Your travel is obvious to all.

White Stag

When you name a quarry your White Stag, swear an Oath to capture or kill them (your choice). You always intuitively know if your White Stag is near, and while they are, you add 1 to Commit Open Violence and Move With Intention rolls. You can only have one White Stag at a time. Break your Oath when you give up.

The Monk

The world has secrets even the brightest scholars cannot fathom, secrets of the spirit and the soul. The cosmos saw fit to whisper to you, and now, more than ever before, you understand.

Look:

- ~ Carefully maintained beard, hairless, symbols of your order, unkempt.
- ~ Brightly-died robes, tattered rags, temple clothes, simple clothes.

Chakras:

- ~ Calm and reserved.
- ~ Faithful and preachy.
- ~ Hard and jaded.
- ~ Sensitive but disciplined.

Gear:

- ~ You have nothing but the clothes on your back and the mark of your Order.
- ~ You have 1 maximum Fortune.

Stats:

- ~ Natural +2, Hot +0, Solid +1, Keen +1, Fluid -1.
- ~ Natural +2, Hot -1, Solid +1, Keen +0, Fluid +1.
- ~ Natural +1, Hot -1, Solid +2, Keen +1, Fluid +0.
- ~ Natural +1, Hot +1, Solid +2, Keen +0, Fluid -1.



Backstory:

- ~ The Oath you made to _____ takes priority above all others. Why?
- ~ You restored _____'s faith in you recently. Gain their Respect.

Mastery Move:

When you study under an enlightened soul, renew your monastic vows. Set a condition: You will never (choose 1)

- ~ Afford yourself any luxury.
- ~ Cause intentional harm.
- ~ Tell anything but the truth.

Treat this vow as a Chakra. If you break the vow, the Master knows and sends people for you.

Improvement:

- ~ You have +1 Natural (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Hot (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Solid (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Keen (max +2).
- ~ Take a Monk Move.
- ~ Take a Monk Move.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a new Chakra, or write your own.

Advanced Improvements:

- ~ You have +1 to any Stat (max +3).
- ~ You have +1 Fortune.
- ~ Retire your character to safety.
- ~ Change to a new playbook.
- ~ Create a second character, played side-by-side with the first.
- ~ You have an Animal Companion with two Moves.
- ~ Replace one of your Chakras.

Moves:

You start with two Moves.

Calm Stability

Until you personally show aggression toward your enemies, whenever you are still and unflinching in the face of imminent harm roll +Solid. On a 10 or greater, you still come through unscathed. On a 7, 8, or 9, the same, but you must act immediately against your attacker.

Chi Blocker

When you assault your foe's pressure points, roll +Hot. On a 10 or greater, name a type of action that foe is now incapable of. On a 7, 8, or 9, name two or three types of action and the MC will pick which one the foe can't do.

Clarity of Senses

When you find yourself in a tense situation, you can immediately apply an Environment Tag describing the situation.

Guru

You teach others the path to self-improvement. Whenever you Help another character in an instructive or guiding capacity, they gain Respect for you. If they already Respect you, they gain 1 Chi.

Spiritual

With effort, you can contact entities of the Spirit World. When you meditate to call upon a spirit, roll +Chi spent. On a 10 or greater, that spirit appears to you. On a 7, 8, or 9, choose two:

- ~ The correct spirit appears.
- ~ The spirit is benevolent.
- ~ The spirit doesn't want something in return.

You cannot spend additional Chi to improve the results of this roll, even when taking advantage of a Tag.

Stillness

When you are subtle with your motions or settle into a defensive posture, you Move With Intention with Solid instead of Fluid.



The Peasant

Every healthy society needs a strong foundation. Without you, nobles could not rule and armies could not survive, even if they don't acknowledge you. It's not glamorous, but with a little bit of luck and a lot of hard work, you can stop supporting the world and start running it.

Look:

- ~ Cheap finery, common clothes, old and tattered, working outfit.
- ~ Dull eyes, hopeful eyes, rough eyes, tired eyes.

Chakras:

- ~ Cautious and superstitious.
- ~ Generous and faithful.
- ~ Quick-to-anger but forgiving.
- ~ Ignorant but sly.

Gear:

- ~ The tools of your trade and the clothes on your back.
- ~ You have 1 maximum Fortune.

Stats:

- ~ Natural +1, Hot +2, Solid +1, Keen -1, Fluid +0.
- ~ Natural -1, Hot +2, Solid +1, Keen +0, Fluid +1.
- ~ Natural +0, Hot +1, Solid +2, Keen +1, Fluid -1.
- ~ Natural +1, Hot +1, Solid +2, Keen -1, Fluid +0.

Backstory:

- ~ You owe _____ big, and have sworn to make it up to them. Decide whether you Respect them or not.
- ~ What did you and _____ each swear that has brought you so close together and earned your mutual Respect? (if there are no other player characters so inclined, create an MC character instead).

Mastery Move:

There are no masters for what you do. Instead, when you receive training from a master of another discipline, you may take the Mastery Move from the appropriate playbook. When you do, you may spend 1 Chi to immediately transfer to that playbook (as if you had taken the Advanced Improvement to change to a new playbook).

Improvement:

- ~ You have +1 Natural (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Hot (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Solid (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Fluid (max +2).
- ~ Take a Peasant Move.
- ~ Take a Peasant Move.
- ~ Take a move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a new Chakra, or write your own.

Advanced Improvements:

- ~ You have +1 to any Stat (max +3).
- ~ You have +1 Fortune.
- ~ Retire your character to safety.
- ~ Change to a new playbook.
- ~ Create a second character, played side-by-side with the first.
- ~ You have an Animal Companion with two Moves.
- ~ Replace one of your Chakras.

Moves:

You start with two Moves.

Fool's Luck

Your maximum Fortune is increased by 1. You can only spend Fortune if you're not intentionally attempting to defend yourself.

From the Gutter

When you Move With Intention while in a town or city, roll +Hot instead of +Fluid. If you do, add the following to the list of options:

~ Take something of value from the target.

Loyal Servant

When you make an Oath to someone above your station, add 1 to any rolls directly related to completing it. When someone above your station fulfills an Oath to you, if you did not Respect them, gain 1 Chi.

Martyr

If someone near you would take a Tag and you intervene, you may take it yourself instead of them taking it (the Tag's specific nature may change in the process). If you do, gain 1 Chi.

Stalwart Presence

When you Help someone, on a 7 or greater you may spend 1 Chi to improve the result of their modified roll by one step, so long as you both are already Tagged.

Out of Focus

When you act like you belong to avoid drawing attention or to give commands, roll +Solid to Observe Carefully or Speak Honorably.

The Scholar

The halls of academia and its workshops have always been a place of sanctuary for you, but eventually everyone needs to step into the world. Whether it's for practical experience or to escape the workshop confines, now is your opportunity.

Look:

- ~ Billowing robes, a large bag, high-quality robes, many pockets.
- ~ Flawless skin, pallid sunken skin, scarred skin, tanned rough skin.

Chakras:

- ~ Absent-minded and unaware.
- ~ Detail-oriented and haughty.
- ~ Excited and reckless.
- ~ Quiet and reserved.

Gear:

- ~ Choose 1: Long stick, small knife, thick book.
- ~ Say two supplies you're carrying.
- ~ You have 0 maximum Fortune.

Stats:

- ~ Natural +1, Hot -1, Solid +0, Keen +2, Fluid +1.
- ~ Natural -1, Hot +0, Solid +1, Keen +2, Fluid +1.
- ~ Natural +1, Hot -1, Solid +0, Keen +2, Fluid +1.
- ~ Natural +0, Hot +1, Solid +1, Keen +2, Fluid -1.



Backstory:

~ _____ once saved your life, earning your Respect. In return, what did you promise them?

Mastery Move:

When you learn from a master inventor, choose a small object. You never need to spend Materials to produce this tool.

Once you've learned from a master sage, when you Observe Carefully you may also choose to ask the following question:

~ What does my research reveal about this?

Improvement:

- ~ You have +1 Natural (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Hot (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Solid (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Fluid (max +2).
- ~ Take a Scholar Move.
- ~ Take a Scholar Move.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a new Chakra, or write your own.

Advanced Improvements:

- ~ You have +1 to any Stat (max +3).
- ~ You have +1 Fortune.
- ~ Retire your character to safety.
- ~ Change to a new playbook.
- ~ Create a second character, played side-by-side with the first.
- ~ You have an Animal Companion with two Moves.
- ~ Replace one of your Chakras.

Moves:

You start with Always Prepared and one other Move.

Always Prepared

When you begin the session, roll 1 die +Keen. The result is the number of Materials you have for that session. Spend Materials 1-for-1 to produce a small, simple tool of your choice. You may spend a second Material to produce a small, complex tool instead. Lastly, you may spend 1 Material at any point to ask a single question from the Observe Carefully list.

Construct

When you take your time to build a complicated contraption, spend a number of Materials and roll +Materials spent. On a 10 or greater, you build it all up, maybe with one complication. On a 7, 8, or 9, the MC will choose two or three of the following conditions needed to perfect the contraption:

- ~ You needed extra resources; the project takes an extra Material.
- ~ It'll take significantly longer to build.
- ~ The best you can do is a lesser version, unreliable and limited.
- ~ Finishing it attracts attention.
- ~ You can't do it alone.

Fight With Your Head

When you Commit Open Violence or Move With Intention after watching a foe for a moment, you may add the *Observed* Tag to the target before the roll.

Ingenious

So long as you have any Materials, you have +1 Keen (max +3).

Think It Through

When you use rational thought to Meditate on a subject, you roll +Keen instead of +Natural. If you spend 1 Material to consult your books in the process, you can Meditate quickly as well.

Trained Observer

When you Observe Carefully, you may ask an additional question, regardless of result (even on a failure).



The Spiritshaper

You were once afraid of the monsters in your people's legends. They were ethereal and strange, but you've visited their world and come back stronger. You're not afraid anymore.

No, those monsters are afraid of you now.

Look:

- ~ Cheap clothes, many tattoos, totally covered, totems and icons.
- ~ Captivating eyes, empty eyes, frightening eyes, strange eyes.

Chakras:

- ~ Arrogant and zealous.
- ~ Intimidating and secretive.
- ~ Pacifistic and understanding.
- ~ Principled and immovable.

Gear:

- ~ A talisman against spirits. Choose its purpose: Sealing, Summoning, Destroying, Befriending.
- ~ You have 0 maximum Fortune.

Stats:

Add 1 to one stat of your choice.

- ~ Natural +1, Hot -1, Solid +0, Keen +1, Fluid +1.

Backstory:

- ~ You have the Respect of a Great Spirit and thus you know its True Name. What is it?
- ~ You Respect _____ and have shown them the Spirit World.
- ~ What spirit have you summoned for _____? What went wrong?

Mastery Move:

Once you've trained with a master spiritshaper, you may use any spirit's True Name to summon it at any time, without a roll, though it may not be happy or forgiving of this. A True Name must come from the spirit itself to be used this way.

Improvement:

- ~ You have +1 Natural (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Hot (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Solid (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Fluid (max +2).
- ~ Take a Spiritshaper Move.
- ~ Take a Spiritshaper Move.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a new Chakra, or write your own.

Advanced Improvements:

- ~ You have +1 to any Stat (max +3).
- ~ You have +1 Fortune.
- ~ Retire your character to safety.
- ~ Change to a new playbook.
- ~ Create a second character, played side-by-side with the first.
- ~ You have an Animal Companion with two Moves.
- ~ Replace one of your Chakras.

Moves:

You start with two Moves.

Astral Projection

When you step outside of your physical body, roll +Natural. On a 10 or greater, you can observe or converse beyond your own body. You may return instantly but can still be hurt, and your physical form is unconscious and helpless. On a 7, 8, or 9, the same, but you are quickly noticed, either in spirit or physical form.

Binding Contracts

When you make a bargain with a spirit, it is obliged to grant you an additional boon upon completion. When you break an Oath to a spirit, subtract 1 from all Speak Honorably and Act Dishonorably rolls until you reconcile with the spirit.

Communion

When you summon a spirit to bargain for services, roll plus the number of conditions you fulfill:

- ~ You present an offering.
- ~ You've previously met and established a price with the spirit.
- ~ You are in a place of power.

If you attempt to perform the summoning hastily, subtract 1.

On a 10 or greater, the spirit fulfills the bargain before payment is needed. On a 7, 8, or 9, payment is required up front.

Medium

When you channel the ghosts of the dead, roll +Solid. On a 7 or greater, you may ask 1 question that they must answer. On a 10 or greater, you may choose to embody the ghost. Take a Chakra in line with the ghost's personality and you may appear as the ghost did in life.

Mindwarp

When you exert your will over a being's essence, roll +Fluid. On a 10 or greater, it falls under your influence (perhaps with resentment). On a 7, 8, or 9, it contorts your command, fights you for control, or has some influence over you in return.

If used against another player character, treat the command as an Oath.

Whispering Spirits

When you Observe Carefully, you may choose to answer questions instead of asking them. If you do, the MC chooses the question and you may answer it as you choose. You may mix asking and answering. If you answer any questions, the MC places an Environment Tag instead of you.

The Warrior

Death is never to be taken lightly, but there are always those who simply deserve to die. Who better than you to put them down, or to keep your friends from meeting the same fate?

Look:

- ~ Gleaming armor, humble clothes, obviously armed, uniform.
- ~ Cold eyes, cunning eyes, dangerous eyes, relaxed eyes.

Chakras:

- ~ Honorable and fair.
- ~ Intense and unflinching.
- ~ Ruthless but respectful.
- ~ Violent and frightening.

Gear:

- ~ A specialized weapon, described as (choose one): Deadly, Infinite, Ranged, Renowned.
- ~ You have 1 maximum Fortune.

Stats:

- ~ Natural -1, Hot +2, Solid +1, Keen +0, Fluid +1.
- ~ Natural +1, Hot +2, Solid +0, Keen -1, Fluid +1.
- ~ Natural +0, Hot +1, Solid -1, Keen +1, Fluid +2.
- ~ Natural -1, Hot +1, Solid +1, Keen +0, Fluid +2.



Backstory:

- ~ You've sworn to never harm _____, even though you do not trust them.
- ~ _____ has earned your wrath. Name this MC character and swear to bring about their downfall.

Mastery Move:

Once you've trained with a master warrior, when you enter battle you may immediately challenge one foe to single combat. If they deny you, gain 1 Chi.

Improvement:

- ~ You have +1 Natural (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Hot (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Solid (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Fluid (max +2).
- ~ Take a Warrior Move.
- ~ Take a Warrior Move.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a new Chakra, or write your own.

Advanced Improvements:

- ~ You have +1 to any Stat (max +3).
- ~ You have +1 Fortune.
- ~ Retire your character to safety.
- ~ Change to a new playbook.
- ~ Create a second character, played side-by-side with the first.
- ~ You have an Animal Companion with 1 Hunting Move and 1 other Move.
- ~ Replace one of your Chakras.

Moves:

You start with two Moves.

Improviser

Everything in your surroundings is a weapon in your hands. When you eschew your usual armament in favor of using the environment for the first time during a conflict, gain 1 Chi.

Memories of Battle

When you spend Fortune you may choose to immediately Meditate on the situation by remembering something from your past, either as a flashback or just as a recollection.

Outlaw

When you go outside the law or the morals of your community and Act Dishonorably, add +2 to your roll if you lose (or do not have) their Respect. If they are a player character, on a 7 or greater you may demand an Oath from them.

Samurai

You have +1 maximum Fortune, and answer the following:
To whom have you sworn your loyalty? Are you still loyal to them?
Make an Oath reflecting your commitment to them.

Survivor

When you Commit Open Violence while you have a Moderate Tag, add 1 to the roll. If you have both a Moderate and a Severe Tag, instead gain 1 Chi.

Wire-Fu

When you perform an implausible feat of athletics or physics-defying acrobatic stunt, Move With Intention. On a failure, you still choose one of the options.



The Watershaper

Trickling, flowing, crashing; water is a force of nature, sustaining life before grinding it away. You can harness that energy, but it's up to you what you want to do with it. Will you be a gentle stream or a crashing waterfall?

Look:

- ~ City clothes with furs, jungle clothes, light and non-restricting clothes, thick winter clothes.
- ~ Empty eyes, soft eyes, stern eyes, stormy eyes.

Chakras:

- ~ Calm and kind.
- ~ Enthusiastic and impatient.
- ~ Mothering and parental.
- ~ Vindictive and tempestuous.

Gear:

- ~ A waterskin of some variety.
- ~ A simple weapon such as a knife, club, or staff.
- ~ You have 0 maximum Fortune.

Stats:

- ~ Natural +0, Hot +1, Solid -1, Keen +1, Fluid +2.
- ~ Natural +1, Hot -1, Solid +0, Keen +1, Fluid +2.
- ~ Natural +0, Hot +1, Solid +1, Keen -1, Fluid +2.
- ~ Natural +1, Hot +0, Solid +1, Keen -1, Fluid +2.

Backstory:

~ Despite past failures, you are dedicated to your Oath to

_____.
~ _____ is beloved by my people, and so is Respected by me too.

Mastery Move:

Once you've trained with a master watershaper, you are more efficient about your water use and may carry 1 additional Water.

Improvement:

- ~ You have +1 Natural (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Hot (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Solid (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Keen (max +2).
- ~ Take a Watershaper Move.
- ~ Take a Watershaper Move.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a new Chakra, or write your own.

Advanced Improvements:

- ~ You have +1 to any Stat (max +3).
- ~ You have +1 Fortune.
- ~ Retire your character to safety.
- ~ Change to a new playbook.
- ~ Create a second character, played side-by-side with the first.
- ~ You have an Animal Companion with two Moves.
- ~ Replace one of your Chakras.

Moves:

You start with Watershaping and one other Move.

Watershaping

You have a small supply of Water. You can carry up to 3 Water, which is replenished whenever you come across a sufficient body of water.

When you manipulate water in combat, spend 1 Water and roll +Fluid. On a 10 or greater, choose two from the list. On a 7, 8, or 9, just one. You may pick a single option multiple times.

- ~ Impose a Tag on a foe.
- ~ Impose an Environment Tag.
- ~ Get the spent Water back.

Other actions can involve watershaping but are treated as whatever Move would be appropriate.

Healer

When you take time to cover a wound with your element and lay hands upon it, roll +Natural. On a 10 or greater, the wound is visibly cured and the subject refreshed. On a 7, 8, or 9, serious wounds are healed but superficial ones remain. Remove Tags as appropriate.

Iceshaping

You can control ice as if it were liquid water, and can shift between the two freely. When you shape ice in combat, roll +Keen instead of +Fluid, and on a 10 or greater you can make a third choice from the list of options.

Moon-Chosen

When the moon has risen, you have +1 Fluid (max +3).

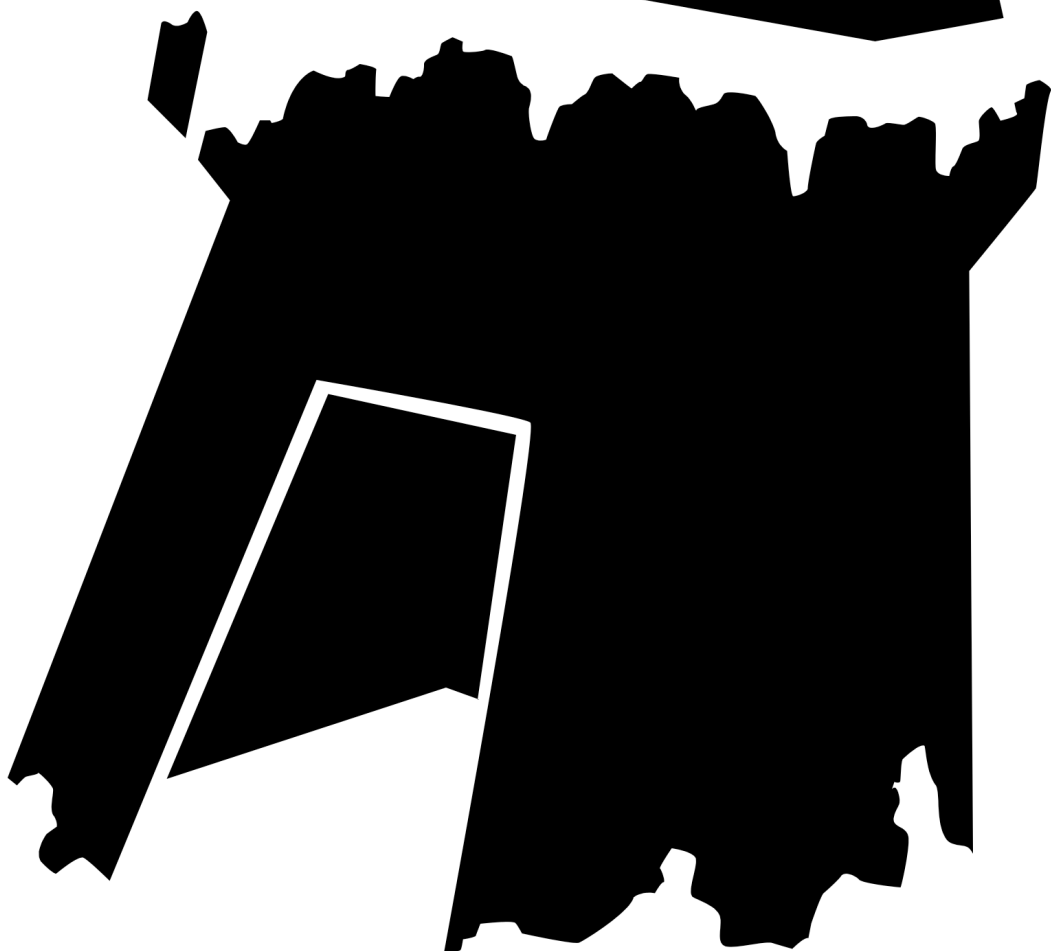
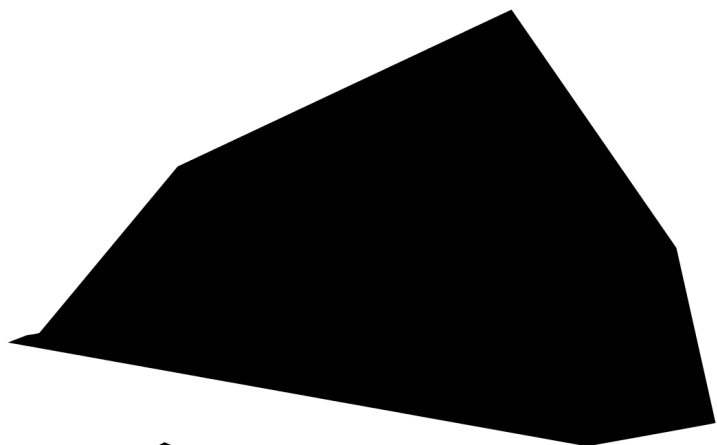
Shaping Stance

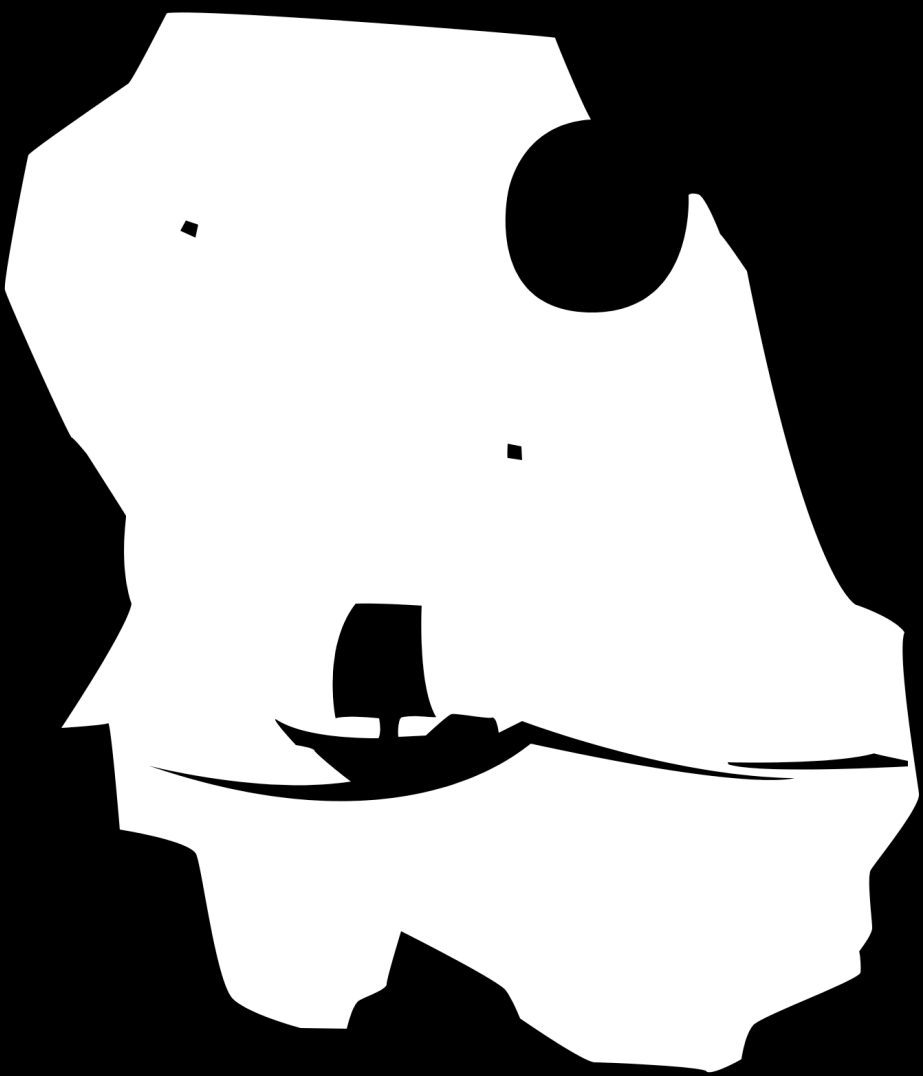
When you set into a shaping stance, Move With Intention and add the following option to the list:

- ~ Use the result of this Move as the result of your next shaping roll.

Ubiquity

Spend 1 Chi to refill your Water from any environment, be it from water vapor, plants, or some other source other than an actual body of water.





Sub-Playbooks

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What Are Sub-Playbooks?

A sub-playbook is, in many ways, simply another type of playbook. It represents another character archetype in the genre and has Moves to allow players to represent that archetype mechanically. However, they have a few key differences.

Sub-playbooks are either minor archetypes or dependent archetypes. Each of the full playbooks is a major type of character in the genre, but the sub-playbooks feature those archetypes that are not so important as to be fully written up as a playbook. The sub-playbooks are also the way that several subordinate archetypes are expanded upon, such as specialized forms of shaping.

Because of this, sub-playbooks are not allowed to be taken on their own. Every character embodies their playbook first but may take Moves from a sub-playbook they qualify for to expand on that part of their identity. Because one cannot start with only a sub-playbook, they do not have many of the elements required of a standard playbook, narrowing the sheet down to three components:

- ~ The Concept.
- ~ The Entry Conditions.
- ~ The Moves.

The Concept

The Concept is simple, consisting of an image, a name for the sub-playbook, and a bit of italicized flavor text to give a feel for the archetype.

The Entry Condition

The Entry Condition is the requirement to take any Moves from the sub-playbook. Some have prerequisite Moves, while others require certain conditions in the fiction. Once the entry condition is fulfilled, a character can take Moves from the sub-playbook using the relevant Improvement option.

The Moves.

Each sub-playbook has three Moves unique to it. For some sub-playbooks, one of these Moves must be taken before the others can be accessed. For others, all the Moves are available immediately upon fulfilling the Entry Condition.


Sub-playbooks are a strong tool for an MC who wants their game to feel unique. Writing a sub-playbook that is specifically tied to the world of your game is a great way of linking the players to the world and is substantially easier and less fundamentally unbalancing than writing a full playbook.

Sub-playbooks are an advanced level of play. Unless a player comes to the MC with the intention of pursuing one of the archetypes represented, it is fine not to show them off until after a couple sessions if the players are new to the game.

Characters can absolutely take Moves from multiple sub-playbooks!



The Artist



The finest things in life can't be bought. They need to be made with passion and emotion. You can provide those things, and that makes you valuable to both high society and the masses alike.

Entry Condition

You must be a practitioner of some renown of an art, be it visual, auditory, or performance-based.

Moves:

Adoring Fans

When you first meet an admirer, roll +Natural. On a 7 or greater, they make you an offer (with strings attached) pertaining to your work. On a 10 or greater, they Respect you as well.

Crowd-pleaser

When you present a piece to an audience, you may roll +Natural. On a 10 or greater, choose two of the following. On a 7, 8, or 9, choose only one.

- ~ Tag an audience member based on their reaction.
 - ~ Place an Environment Tag describing the wide reaction.
 - ~ One audience member promises something to you afterward.
 - ~ Name an audience member who did not Respect you before.
- Either they now Respect you or you gain 1 Chi (their choice).

Virtuoso

So long as you are performing or creating your art, anyone watching cannot look away. MC characters are Tagged *Enraptured*, and player characters must Stand Fast to tear themselves away.

The Bloodshaper



Boiling, raging, flowing; blood is water, people are blood. They say all these words about free will and liberty, but you know better. People are water, and that makes them yours to command.

Entry Condition

You must have the Watershaping or Spiritshaping Move. You must take Bloodshaping before you can take Crimson Moon or Blood-Curdling.

Moves:

Bloodshaping

When you manipulate an MC character's blood to control their body, roll +Hot. On a 10 or greater, your hold is firm and lasts until you release your concentration. On a 7, 8, or 9, your hold lasts for but moments, enough time for an action or two at most.

You only get to command their body, never their mind.

Bloodshaping takes total mental and physical concentration.

Blood-Curdling

Bloodshapers are reviled, but more importantly they're feared.

When you Speak Honorably or Act Dishonorably and they know you are a Bloodshaper, roll +Fluid instead of the usual Stat. If you're Bloodshaping them while you do it, treat any result less than 7 as a 7.

Crimson Moon

When the moon is full, spend 1 Chi to use Bloodshaping against any MC character under the light of the moon, so long as you know where they are. While you do so, you can see through their eyes.

The Doctor



Even the most respectable of scholars knows that their studies are often trivial at best; the doctors are the masters of applying their knowledge to help.

Entry Condition

You must have the Always Prepared Move. You must take Physician before you can take Field Medic or Scavenge.

Moves:

Physician

When you take time to heal the troubles of another, spend up to 3 Materials and roll +Materials spent. On a 10 or greater, remove their Mild Tags then reduce their other Tags by one stage of severity. On a 7, 8, or 9, remove any one Tag from them.

Use common sense in determining if a Tag simply couldn't be removed by the Doctor. Rename any Tags that don't make sense once moved to a lower severity level, but keep the concept in the same vein.

Field Medic

When you heal another character, you may spend an additional Material to do so quickly.

Scavenge

When you scan and search an area and Observe Carefully, add the question:

~ What raw materials are here that I could make use of?

If you gather it up and take it with you, gain 1 Material.

The Lavashaper



Pressure changes things. It can crush coal to diamond, temper patience to anger, or melt stone to lava – the molten blood of the earth itself. You've built up a lot of pressure, and you're ready to let it out.

Entry Condition

You must have the Earthshaping or Fireshaping Move. You must take Lavashaping before you can take Equilibrium or Weight Of Expectations.

Moves:

Lavashaping

When you convert the environment to lava to cut off mobility, roll +Hot. On a 7 or greater, add an appropriate Environment Tag indicating the area's impassibility. On a 10 or greater, you may also Tag any trapped characters in an appropriate fashion.

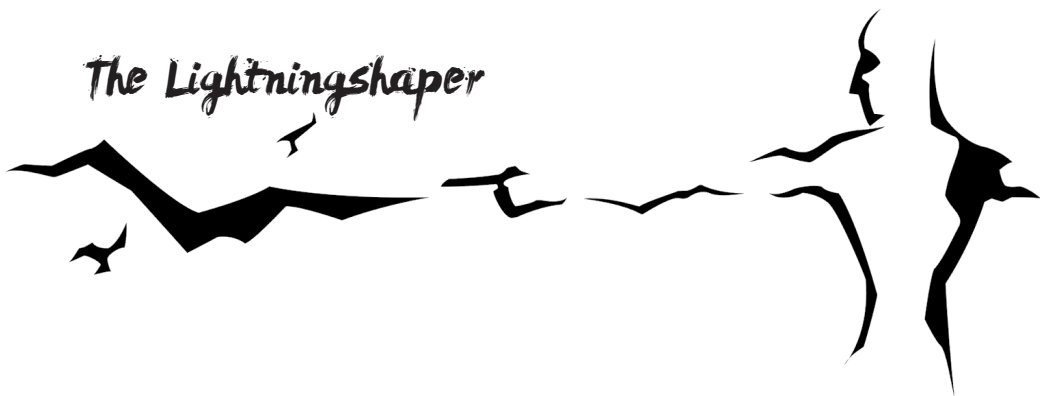
Equilibrium

You can control your own body heat, raising it to burning temperatures or down to very low metabolic levels. You can use this to ignore ambient temperatures, avoid detection, melt through substances, or even become a human weapon. However, it does not protect against actual controlled shaping.

Weight Of Expectations

When an Oath drives you to actions you would not have otherwise taken, you may take the *Mounting Pressure* Tag in your lowest unfilled category to add +2 to one roll.

The Lightningshaper



To master the reckless abandon of the most volatile element requires total discipline, lest you fall victim to its power yourself.

Entry Condition

You must have the Lightningshaping or Metalshaping Move.

Moves:

Charge

When you spend time generating and storing energy, roll +Fluid. On a 10 or greater, you have 2 Charge. On a 7, 8, or 9, you have 1 Charge. Spend 1 Charge to:

- ~ Add 1 to any roll.
- ~ Pull something in or push something away.
- ~ Experience a burst of energy and strength.

If accompanied by an unintended discharge of electricity that causes undesired consequences, gain back the Charge spent.

Magnetism

Small pieces of metal move however you will them to. If there is some resistance or the piece is particularly large, Stand Fast to do so.

Stormchild

When you spend time Meditating under a flashing storm, roll +Hot instead of +Natural. Add 1 to all shaping rolls until the storm passes.

The Masterless Wanderer



Masterless. A simple word, but it holds so much meaning to you. It is the shame of failure, it is the fear of death, and it is freedom from obligations.

Entry Condition

You once were in the service of a lord in an official capacity, but they died dishonorably. Alternatively, they purged you from their ranks for a perceived failure.

Moves:

Hardened

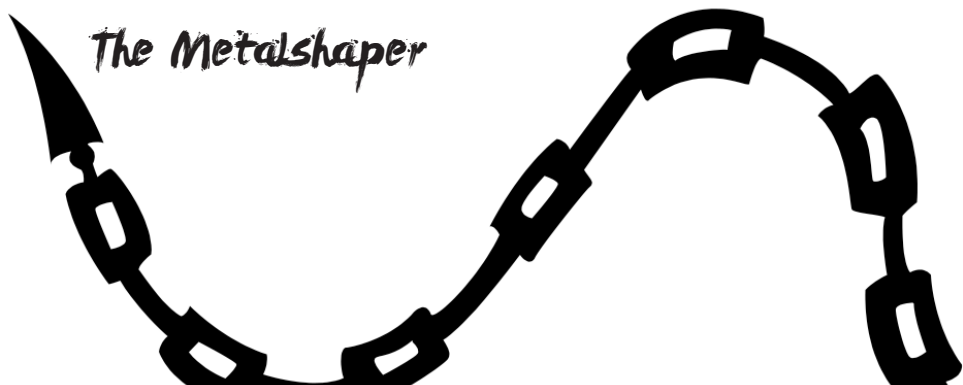
You have a point of Weariness. Spend your Weariness when you would take a social Tag to instead take the Tag *Jaded*. Regain your Weariness when you have time to yourself to reflect on your experiences.

Traveler

When you return to a community you once visited, roll +Natural. On a 7 or greater, the locals remember you favorably. On a 10 or greater, the community Respects you.

Unreliable

When you break an Oath to someone, you can make them a new promise. If they accept, they gain 1 Chi and you do not roll for breaking the Oath. If it was to an MC character, the MC gets the Chi.



Harder than rock, sharper than stone, shinier than sand; metal is earth perfected. When you grasp it you take on that perfection: razor-edged, impenetrable, and shining.

Entry Condition

You must have the Metalbending or Mindwarp Move.

Moves:

Make My Own Luck

Your maximum Fortune is one higher, but you cannot spend Fortune unless there is metal within your reach.

Shine and Glitter

When you adorn yourself with metal and jewels, you roll +Solid when Speaking Honorably or Acting Dishonorably.

Transmutation

You may spend 1 Chi to convert a handful of earth into metal or to change one type of metal into another.

The Plantshaper



To hold the water flowing through root, stem, and leaf isn't to rule nature, but to become one with it.

Entry Condition

You must have the Watershaping or Spiritshaping Move. You must take Plantshaping before you can take River of Leaves or Swamp Monster.

Moves:

Plantshaping

When you bend the water in plants to grow or move them, roll +Solid. On a 10 or greater, choose two from the list to define your plants. On a 7, 8, or 9, choose only 1.

- ~ Thick and sturdy.
- ~ Overgrown and obscuring.
- ~ Lithe and flexible.

River of Leaves

All Stand Fast and Plantshaper Moves roll +Fluid instead of +Solid.

Swamp Monster

When you gather many plants around yourself into a great beast, roll +Solid. On a 10 or greater, you have 3 Plant. On a 7, 8, or 9, you have 2 Plant. Spend 1 Plant to:

- ~ Weather any blow.
- ~ Cause massive carnage, with collateral damage, adding Tags as appropriate.
- ~ Manipulate plants as if you'd rolled a 7 on a Plantshaping roll.

The Sandshaper



Stone is not always solid. Sometimes it is like clouds in the sky, sometimes like a vast ocean of never-ending grains.

Entry Condition

You must have Airshaping or Earthshaping Move. You must take Sandshaping before you can take Dust in the Wind or Earthflow.

Moves:

Sandshaping

When you craft something solid from sand, roll +Fluid. On a 10 or greater, choose 2 from the following list. On a 7, 8, or 9, only choose 1.

- ~ It is just as effective as the genuine article.
- ~ It will last for a while.
- ~ Unless inspected thoroughly, one cannot tell it is made of sand.

Dust in the Wind

When you throw sand into the air, roll +Natural. On a 7 or greater, sand and dust are suspended in the air and in contact with everything. On a 10 or greater, you can obscure anything within the cloud from the view of anyone in the cloud.

Earthflow

When you entrap a foe in sand, roll +Fluid. On a 10 or greater, Tag them appropriately. On a 7, 8, or 9, they are trapped and Tagged appropriately, but only for as long as you maintain your focus.

The Shaping Master



Hard work pays off, and you've certainly worked hard. Now a master in your own right now, your skills are among the best in your field. Only one question remains: to what heights shall you climb next?

Entry Condition

You must have trained with a Master and gained a Mastery Move. Any Mastery Move is sufficient. You also must have at least 1 “-shaping” Move.

Moves:

Gift of Opportunity

Your maximum Fortune increases by 1. You may spend your Fortune as if it were Chi to improve the results of your Moves, without giving any Chi to the MC.

Natural Mastery

Gain any two -shaping Moves you qualify for, from playbooks or sub-playbooks.

Teacher

When you and another player character who Respects you have an extended amount of downtime together, you may spend 5 Chi to teach them one of your Moves (other than this one) so long as they also fulfill any requirements for that Move.

The Spy



Any real politician knows that fairness and honesty only gets you so far. After all, a kind word and a knife in the dark gets you further than a kind word alone.

Entry Condition

You have unraveled some authority's power through subterfuge. Tell the MC two secrets the Spy keeps from everyone. (You can and should tell the other players, but their characters do not know.)

Moves:

Blade in the Dark

When Observing Carefully in conversation, add the following questions to the list:

- ~ How can I get them alone?
- ~ In what ways are they vulnerable?

Ear to the Wall

When you eavesdrop on a conversation to learn secrets, Meditate, rolling +Keen instead of +Natural.

Faceless

When you disguise who you are to people who know you, roll +Keen. On a 10 or greater, you can pass among them undiscovered. On a 7, 8, or 9, anything beyond a cursory look reveals who you are. To disguise yourself as a specific person, your disguise must incorporate some iconic element of theirs.

The Worldshaper



You harbor the World Spirit, the Great Spirit of Balance. You are the bridge: between elements, between man and spirit, between the world and its denizens. It is a great responsibility and a vital one.

Entry Condition

You must have been called upon to re-balance the world.

Moves:

Balanced Scales

Whenever you Tag another character, you may take the same Tag yourself. If you do, gain 1 Chi.

Chosen of the World Spirit

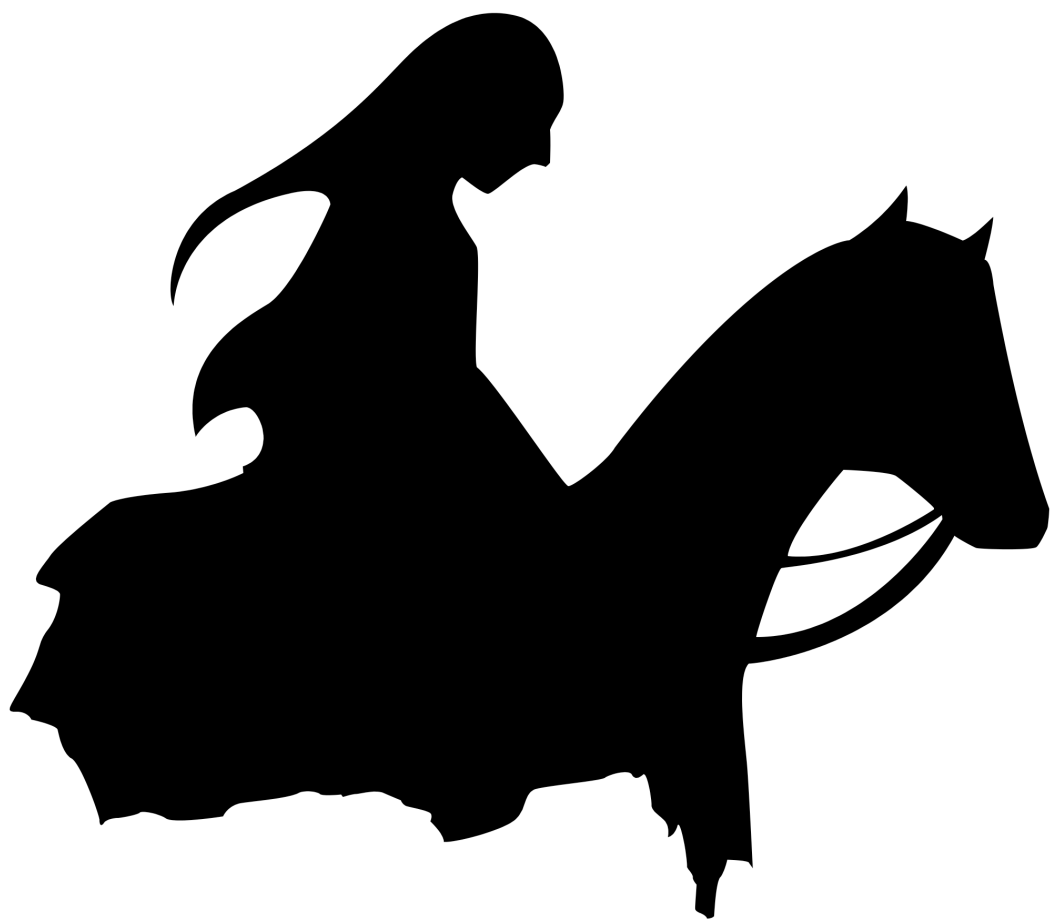
You have a sixth stat, called Spirit. This stat starts at +0. Whenever you restore peace, increase your Spirit by 1 (maximum +3).

Whenever you commit serious bodily harm, decrease your Spirit by 1 (minimum -1). At any point you may manifest the World Spirit.

While you are doing so, you are capable of shaping any element and use your Spirit stat for any rolls. When you release the World Spirit or at the end of the scene (whichever comes first), reduce your Spirit to +0 and take the *Fatigued* Tag.

Sealed

At any point, you may clear away all other Tags on your character and become Sealed. Sealed characters cannot shape any elements and may face other consequences. The MC will tell you what happens when you seal away the World Spirit, and possibly how to release the seal.



The Master of Ceremonies

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The MC Role

The Master of Ceremonies is a very special position in *Legend of the Elements*. The Master of Ceremonies exists to introduce and highlight the characters, setting them up as the stars and giving them opportunities to succeed. Like in the performance industry, the MC introduces the main act (meaning the players and their characters) and keeps everyone engaged as the action transitions from one event to the next. Their role is brief and concise, but vital.

The MC is also a manager, making sure that the stage is sufficiently set for the players and that the rules are all in place and being followed. The MC may have a plan they're pushing toward, but they certainly don't control the stars and need to be ready to react when those stars inevitably go off into unknown territory.

The MC handles multiple perspectives simultaneously. They handle bad guys and the environment and bystanders and allies and anything else that isn't the player characters. The role requires multitasking.

The MC does not rely on luck. When they get the trigger to make MC Moves, they just make things happen. They never need to roll the dice. However, the MC should always remember to keep their MC Moves focused on highlighting interesting situations for and characteristics of the player characters.

The MC is limited and reactionary. While powerful, they cannot actively pursue their trigger for making moves, relying on the players to give them their chance.

The MC is responsible for the rules. They call for Moves, meaning they need to recognize the Move triggers. They manage the player characters, so they need to know their abilities. They are expected to be the most well-informed person at the table, and to act as an arbiter of the rules.

The MC as Presenter

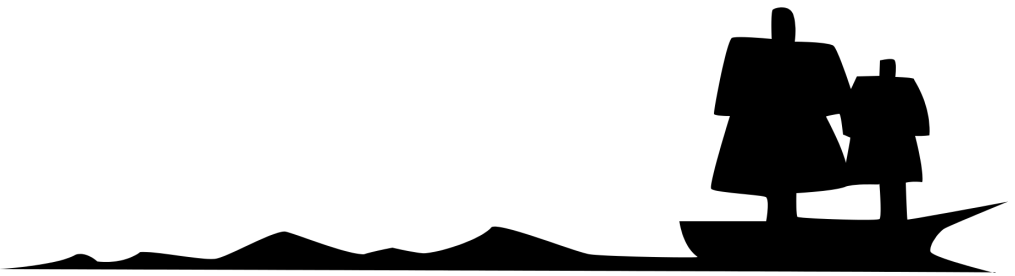
The MC must understand one thing very clearly: they should not be the star of the show. They are a critical figure, and will probably speak more than any single player, but they are not the star of the action.

How should that be reflected in their behavior? The MC should be there to present opportunities for the players.

Their first job is to present the opportunity to act. They do this by setting a stage for the player characters, establishing a situation for the characters to act within. Stages should be set in a way that the players' and characters' strengths or weaknesses are highlighted in some way, and where there is likely to be conflict or interesting conversation of some kind.

Don't set stages where nothing happens or where the events are inconsequential. If a scene doesn't change or affirm a relationship or provide important new information, it is entirely reasonable to not show it. In particular, characters in-transit are not particularly riveting scenes. Personal character scenes while in-transit are often interesting, but travel itself is usually best left to narration.

The MC should tailor the things they present to focus on the players' choices with their characters. This means both their strengths and their weaknesses, which translates roughly into their Moves and Chakras but also any other personality choices. Focus on what matters to them.



The MC as Manager

The MC takes on a role of responsibility. Not responsibility for the fun produced by the game (every participant shares that task), but instead a responsibility to be familiar with the rules and to follow their Principles fairly and to keep the players on-task and contributing.

The MC should know the rules. They don't need to memorize this whole book, of course, but they'll need at least passing familiarity with everything to know when it is time to consult the rules. Most importantly, the MC should know the triggers for all of the Basic Moves. Knowing the Move triggers for the players' chosen Moves is also helpful. While the MC can keep their MC playsheet in front of them (and thus memorization isn't absolutely required), it is also important for the MC to have the Principles in their mind while playing.

It's totally fine to delegate some of this management! The big one to delegate is recognizing when players are gaining Chi for playing to their Chakras; the MC doesn't need to keep track of the 12 to 30 personality adjectives the group might have. However, they should have players check in with them when they think they apply. The MC may be the final arbiter of the rules, but they don't need to carry the entire burden themselves.

The MC must be a fair manager. The Principles are meant to help with this, but even with the limitations, the MC's power is capable of utterly destroying the characters. Fairness is important in mediating the rules, in acting against the player characters, and in managing the players' opportunities to contribute.

The MC has a tool informally known as the spotlight. In short, this is their ability to choose who speaks next. The spotlight will be examined again later, but it is important to understand that the MC is responsible for making sure everyone has their chance in the spotlight.

The MC's Rules

The MC has four types of rules: Agendas, Always Says, Principles, and MC Moves.

The **Agendas** are the MC's goals. The MC's actions should pursue these objectives. They answer the question "Why does one play *Legend of the Elements*."

The **Always Says** are a set of instructions for what to say to MC the game. They are rules for how the MC engages in the game's conversation.

The **Principles** are similar to the Always Says but are not just rules about what to say, but also how to make decisions fairly and in an interesting and genre-appropriate way.

The **MC Moves** are the MC's tools for interacting with the characters directly. They are almost universally negative for the characters, but because they provide interesting circumstances against which to struggle, they are actually positive for the players themselves. When used, the MC gets to take the narrative authority back from the players and introduce elements they want to see. It is by struggling against MC Moves that the players' triumphs gain weight.

It cannot be overstated that these four aspects are not just guidelines to the MC or advice on how to play well. They are rules and must be followed. Breaking the rules is just as serious for an MC as it is for players, so don't do it.



Agendas

The MC has three Agendas in the game.

- ~ Be a fan of the player characters.
- ~ Explore a mystical world grounded in the mundane.
- ~ Play to find out what happens.

Be a fan of the player characters.

Even as the MC puts giant monsters and slippery politicians in the path of the players, they are on the players' side. The MC does not play to defeat the player characters but to give them the opportunity to struggle for greatness. Success without difficulty makes for an uninteresting game, and the MC is there to provide those obstacles. They are the good villains to make great heroes, but they must never forget that the players are the main characters of the story. The MC is there to highlight what makes them interesting and create dramatic situations. The MC Move list allows for some extreme consequences to be placed on the players but remember that just because they can make a very intense move doesn't mean they should. The MC should make the interesting move, not the cruel one.

Explore a mystical world grounded in the mundane.

The world of the game is a place to explore as a group. Go fantastical places, meet larger-than-life people and creatures, and overcome incredible danger. A big part of what being the MC entails is filling up the empty spaces in the world that the players leave open, inserting incredible things that exude the magical and bizarre fantasy that permeates the wuxia genre. One of the most important elements to making the world itself feel unique is to take the ordinary and the mundane and infuse it with the strange. Spectacular instances are interesting and fun, but it's the "normal" stuff that helps to define the world, so make up hybrid animals, show magicians in their day jobs, and fill the dark corners of the world with ghouls and ghosts. Sometimes the world is especially weird, such as the arrival of a great spirit, but the key to making the world feel mystical is to bring the supernatural into the everyday people, animals, and landscapes, and then treat it as normal.

Even the threats are ultimately normal. Confronting nature, environmental calamity, war, prejudice, poverty, and other problems are the real root of the problems. Magical-ness is not villainy in and of itself. The supernatural is just how those threats are expressed and realized.

It's not just the MC's job to do this, but the players will expect the MC to start this conversation.

Play to find out what happens.

The MC is not telling a story; the whole group is creating a story together with the rules. Don't cheat and come up with a story ahead of time to walk them through (which is indeed a form of cheating), and remember that as much as the MC can do with their MC Moves, the players are in charge of their actions and the path the characters will take. Don't talk about what will happen, play to find out.

Always Say...

There are 6 things for an MC to always remember to say. Always Say:

- ~ ...what flows from the fiction.
- ~ ...what honesty demands.
- ~ ...what the rules demand.
- ~ ...the characters' names, not the players'.
- ~ Whenever you're stumped, say the "obvious" thing.
- ~ After every Move, ask someone "What do you do?"

...what flows from the fiction.

Everything in the game flows from the fiction, meaning the imagined world and characters and interactions the group creates. Actions should always happen because it makes sense that it would actually happen if that world was real. People don't make decisions based on what the people at the table are saying out-of-game.

The rules all flow from the fiction. Moves start with the fiction, translate into an interaction with the game's mechanisms, and say what the results mean to the fiction. Everything the MC does should also be fictional, not just mechanical. When players try to make Moves, always ask what that looks like because a Move without the fiction isn't a Move.

...what honesty demands.

The MC should never lie, or omit with intent to deceive. The MC is not there to play "gotcha!" or be a surprising element. If something is apparent, deliver that information!

...what the rules demand.

The rules are absolute and not to be bent and twisted. Broad interpretations of specific wordings are fine, but ultimately everyone is bound by triggers, by Move results, and by Principles and Agendas. They are not guidelines. They are rules and should be followed as such.

...the characters' names, not the players'.

As simple as it sounds, using the characters' names and not the players' when around the table helps hold everyone's minds in the fiction of the game. The players aren't constantly reminded of their own life and their separation from the game, improving the focus and reducing diversions from the game, and it helps to give the characters a life of their own.

Whenever you're stumped, say the "obvious" thing.

Nobody needs to be clever or witty or creative to play Legends of the Elements. Everyone's brain is different, so what is obvious to one person may not be obvious to another. If everyone just says the most obvious thing to them, it will likely still be fresh or new for the other participants without bogging down the pace and energy of the game while someone thinks of exactly the right thing to say.

The MC should share this advice with the players. It is helpful for everyone to understand it.

After every Move, ask someone "What Do You Do?"

Two of the MC's most important roles are to keep the action driving forward and to control the game's spotlight.

To accomplish the former, whenever a Move concludes (either with a player's 7 or greater or with an MC Move), ask what happens next. If someone jumps in and obviously has something they want to do, this step can be skipped sometimes, but in almost all cases it's best to ask.

The latter role is to control who is getting the game's attention at that moment. The player in the spotlight is the one speaking (the one making a Move). Sometimes certain players might have a lot of ideas or just spend a lot of time in the spotlight, and it's the MC's job to make sure the other players are getting attention too. The easiest way to do that is to ask someone specific what they're doing after a Move. Don't try to put people on the spot, but do give everyone an opportunity to play.

Principles

Principles are general instructions for how the MC should behave.

- ~ Ask provocative questions and build on the answers.
- ~ Be melodramatic.
- ~ Give everyone a motive.
- ~ Never prioritize the game over the players.
- ~ Sometimes, disclaim decision-making.
- ~ Think ahead, and off-screen too.
- ~ Treat everyone equally, like people.

Ask provocative questions and build on the answers.

Ask questions, about relationships, about methods, about histories, about anything, then reincorporate what the players say later on.

Ask a lot of questions at the beginning of arcs, and use those answers to color your MC Moves.

Be melodramatic.

Don't go halfway with playing over-the-top. Realism is less interesting than drama. Be real when you must, but whenever possible, be theatrical. Gesture, overact, ham it up a bit. Do it in your narration too, not just dialogue. Be a storyteller; you may not know how it's going to go, but deliver what you do know boldly and with great enthusiasm.

Give everyone a motive.

Not everyone needs a name. Sometimes, the henchmen really are just that unimportant. However, even those henchmen need a reason to oppose the players, and that makes their actions more real and interesting. Even if the reasons are simple, without them they cease to be characters and just become obstacles.

Similarly, no one fights for the sake of violence. Fights are always over something else: jealousy or anger or justice or anything but not just to commit violence. Of course, once combat breaks out the rest is often about survival, but starting fights is more complex than that.

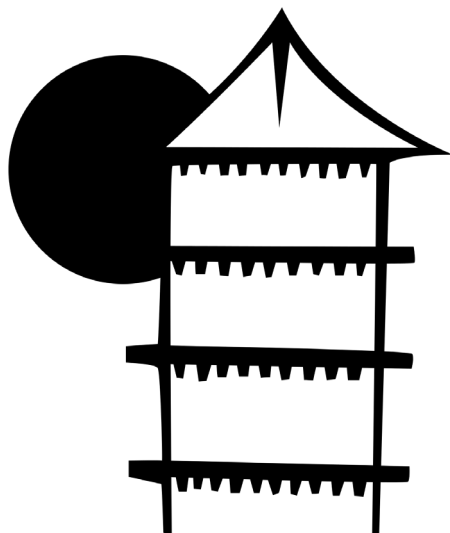
Never prioritize the game over the players.

The game may be the reason you're getting together, but never ever value the game over the well-being of the players. Check in regularly and make sure that the players are all okay and that no one is having any trouble with any content. Whenever a player asks for something to be taken out for their own comfort, do it without hesitation or questioning. If someone has to stop, just do it. Make sure the players understand very clearly that they should always feel empowered to cancel things out if they need to. In fact, it should be the first thing you let them know when you start to play. (The MC also has this right to comfort, not just the players!)

Because this tool is ever-present, play without fear. Say the interesting thing to you, and if it's a problem, a player will tell you. Of course, if they've already told you about a certain problem, don't go touching it again. That's just cruel.

Sometimes, disclaim decision-making.

The players are the largest resource of ideas the MC has available to them, so sometimes tap into that well of enthusiasm and have them answer the questions that come up. What is that statue a figure of? Where would a tiger-bear be found? What do you need to appease the ghost of the king? If you don't have ideas at hand, check if anyone else has any. It deepens player investment into the world and lets them help in crafting the world. Of course, don't do it all the time; the MC is here to keep their lives interesting, and there's little less interesting than getting to determine both an obstacle and then immediately come up with the solution to that same challenge.



Think ahead, and off-screen too.

Whenever things are happening, always try to keep in mind how that can be used again in the future. Think in terms of how to build on the answers to questions but also in a more long-term sense. Be careful not to predetermine anything since you're playing to find out what happens, so don't get attached to any of those ideas. Still, think about it constantly; come up with ideas for how things can go wrong or get more interesting or dramatic.

Just because the characters are off at the mountain investigating the temple doesn't mean the revolutionaries at the city stop fighting. The Plots will remind you how things are marching along elsewhere, but it's a good idea to keep track of what's happening outside of the player characters' immediate line of sight. Knowing what has been happening elsewhere in the world lets you drop clues and build up to events rather than springing them suddenly on the players.

Treat everyone equally, like people.

MC characters aren't precious creations to be protected and preserved, they're tools to use to make characters' lives interesting. That usually means standing by and letting the players defeat them, throw them aside, or ignore them. That's okay. The MC shouldn't be handling their characters with kid gloves.

Of course, they're also people. There'll be extras and mooks who don't matter, but anyone who matters should act like a person, not like a caricature of a villain. Help the players understand the consequences of their actions.

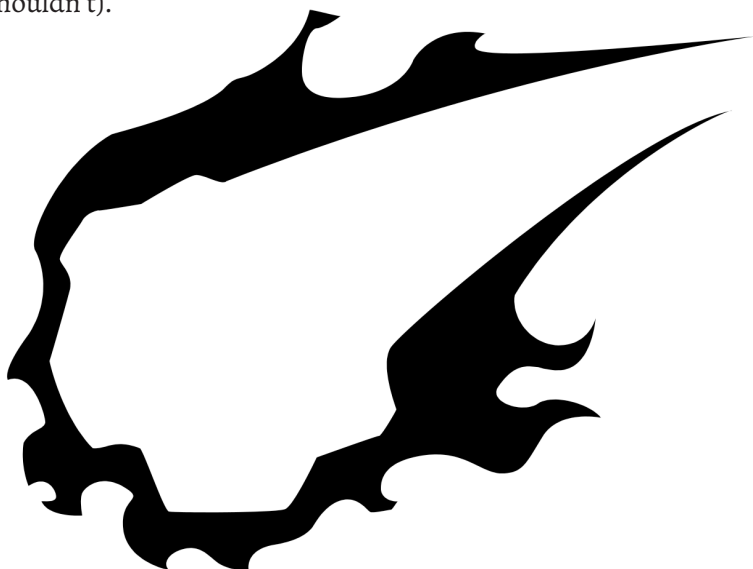
Using MC Moves

MC Moves are the tools the MC has to actually cause conflict for the players. There are some things to consider when making MC Moves.

MC Moves are not Moves in the same sense as the players' Moves. MC Moves simply cause things to happen, and that doesn't require a roll. However, just like player Moves, they should always occur in the fiction, not just the mechanics.

There are two triggers to allow an MC to use their MC Moves. The first is whenever a player rolls a Move and gets a result of 6 or less. The second is whenever the table turns to you with anticipation or expectation. The former pushes the fiction forward even when the players don't get what they want, while the latter keeps the game from stalling when people don't know what to do. The latter scenario tends to warrant less harsh MC Moves, but there aren't rules regarding the severity of Moves.

Making MC Moves shouldn't seem like a mechanical process, it should feel like the fiction is just moving forward. Don't call special attention to the fact that it's an MC Move, and you don't need to say the name of the Move you're making (and in fact you probably shouldn't).



MC Moves

Whenever a player rolls a Move and gets a result of 6 or less, or when the players look to you with expectation, do one of the following:

- ~ Bring the world down on them.
- ~ Challenge their Oaths.
- ~ Expose the bigger picture.
- ~ Inflict harm, as established, with Tags or without.
- ~ Make them promise.
- ~ Offer an opportunity, with or without a cost.
- ~ Put someone in a spot.

Bring the world down on them.

The world is scary. It's big and uncaring, and for all of its wonder, it's ultimately a dangerous place out there in the wild. Angry spirits manifest in the forgotten places, wild beasts roam just off the beaten path, and fate moves the environment whichever way on a whim. When at rest, make the players marvel at how amazing and strange everything is, but when things start to go bad, show them just what the world is capable of.

Challenge their Oaths.

Drive hard to stick a wedge between a character and the other player characters, MC characters, or even their own goals. Make abandoning goals seem lucrative in the short term, and present conflicts of interest associated with their goals.



Expose the bigger picture.

Reveal what's happening off-screen somewhere or what's been set in motion that will come down in the future or who is really in control of a situation. This is among the mildest Moves in the MC's arsenal and is great for when the players aren't sure what to do.

Inflict harm, as established, with Tags or without.

The simplest Move in the MC's toolbox. Throw around a Tag or two, as the fiction would dictate, or just cause them problems.

Remember to check how many Tags they already have to determine the severity.

Make them promise.

A lot of people are willing to do a lot of things if they feel assured that they can get something out of it. Remember that all promises go down as Oaths on the players' playbooks and that there are consequences for ignoring them.

Offer an opportunity, with or without a cost.

Sometimes it's nice to show the players just what they want, and maybe even give it to them! More often, show them what they want, and then tell them what they'll need to do, where to go, or what to give up to reach it.

Offering an opportunity without a cost is the softest MC Move in the list, but is also the best tool the MC has to direct player where the MC wants them to go – after all, what players would pass up free opportunity?

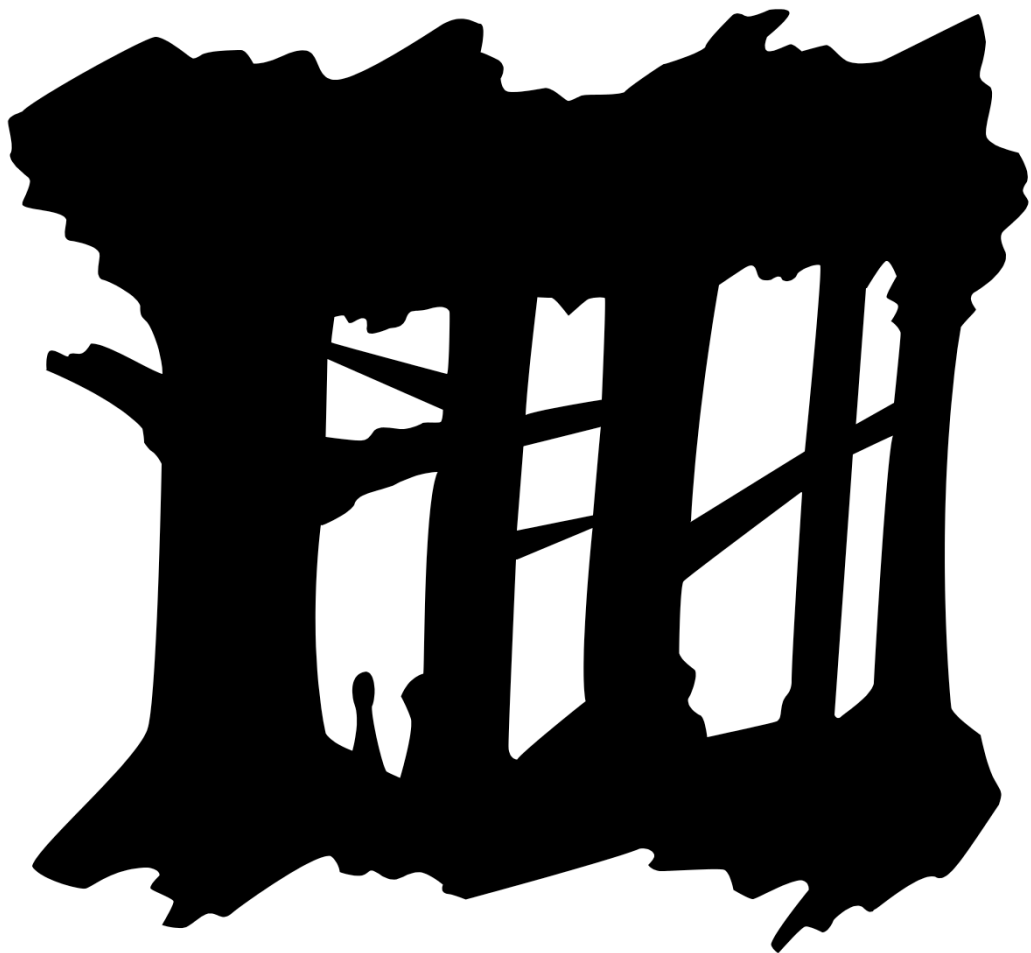
Put someone in a spot.

The most versatile MC Move. Use it to put players where they don't want to be. Pull them away from their friends, pair them up with someone they'd rather not be with, leave them somewhere vulnerable, or anything else that involves getting them into a troublesome situation. Don't just have the bad stuff come immediately though, at least most of the time. Give them a chance to react and interact and prepare for the imminent awfulness.



Plots and Threats

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What Are Plots?

Plots are the MC's mechanism for making things happen over the course of the game. As the MC is mostly a reactionary role in *Legends of the Elements*, they can't always rely on players to provide the opportunity to set them up for the MC Moves they want to make. Setting up long-term events is difficult without having to repeatedly use the Expose The Bigger Picture MC Move, which is definitely not a good solution as it frees the player characters from any immediate consequences of failure.

Plots are the solution to that problem.

Plots are also how the MC keeps tabs on all of the persistent forces that get in the way of the players. Plots are one of the best way for the MC to draw in elements they're interested in seeing in play and are one of the few ways for an MC to take the initiative themselves.

Before going forward, it's important to understand what is meant by the word "Plot." Plots are best thought of as story arcs, connected events that happen in sequence to tell a larger story. The most important thing to understand is that the MC is not writing what will happen. Never use Plots as a means of pre-playing.

There are three components to all Plots:

- ~ Concept.
- ~ Plot Track.
- ~ Threats.

The MC and Chi

The MC accumulates Chi along with other players but cannot do it independently. Instead, the MC can only gather Chi when the players spend it to improve the results of a roll. Each time they do so, the MC gains 1 Chi, which they will then spend on their Plots to advance them. This creates a flow of play where the players must struggle enough to use their Chi for immediate results (rather than on Improvements) in order for Plots to advance, and add additional future consequences when the players prioritize the short term.

Plot Concepts

The concept is as simple as it sounds. Every Plot needs an idea that defines it.

Regarding the scope of Plots, they come in a variety of sizes. There might be Plots that last many sessions, moving slowly but surely. Others might be small enough that they will only last one session. Plots should also be thwart-able at any point. An MC should think about what the players can do about the Plot and about what will happen next.

The exact rate that Plots progress depends entirely on the players and how often they spend their Chi to improve Move results. As such, after a session or two one should understand how to calibrate Plots for that group. Also, expect that early on, groups will spend their Chi more on Improvement than on their Move results. As the game progresses and their characters gain the Moves important to their character concepts, they'll spend it on moves a little more freely.

Example Concept: The Haunted Village

Throughout this chapter, an example Plot will be created in each step to illustrate how to actually use the Plot mechanic.

The first step is to create a concept. Ghosts haunting a village the characters come across while traveling could be a fun concept!



The Plot Track

Plot Tracks are the most complicated element of the Plot system. They are, in essence, a string of escalating events, each with a Chi cost associated with it in order to govern pacing.

This is the basic building block of a Plot Track.



This is a single 1-Chi event, not really a Plot Track on its own. It represents one step of a story arc, a single thing that happens that moves the story forward.

Being 1-Chi means that, when placed in sequence with other events, the MC must spend 1 Chi to force this event to happen.

There are variations upon this building block, like this 2-Chi event, which costs more Chi. More Chi means the players need to find themselves in a struggle more times in order for that event to come to pass.



These single events can be strung together into full Plot Tracks, such as the one at the top of the next page.



This is the simplest Plot Track, consisting of four 1-Chi events linked together. They happen sequentially, each one an escalation of the last.

Building this track is a matter of taking the initial concept and breaking it down into four stages that lead into each other should they continue unchecked. The last event should be the climax, where if the Plot isn't confronted it will change the nature of the game world in some way. Not all Plots need affect general life as a whole, especially if your game's tone doesn't warrant it, but the Plot should be significant to the players' world at the very least.

Each event requires that a few decisions be made:

- ~ What is the event? What happens? What changes in the world? Remember that the MC cannot prescribe player behavior. This is something that happens somewhere around the players – maybe close, maybe far.

- ~ What is the Chi cost for this event?

The standard event is 1-Chi. Changing this will alter the pacing and make certain events longer than others (or make the lead-up to the following event take longer). Some of the repercussions of certain arrangements of higher Chi costs will be discussed on the following pages.

- ~ What happens if this is left unchecked?

If the players don't deal with the issue, or if they do but are not successful, what happens? Phrased another way, how does this event connect to the next in the track?

If player action makes the next event unreasonable, rewriting the later events on the Track is acceptable.

Variant Plot Tracks

There is no need to make all Plots out of four 1-Chi events. Other combinations have specific effects on the pacing of the game.



This is a front-loaded Track, requiring a lot to happen before the Plot even kicks into gear. If this were the first Plot of the game, it means that character drama has to come first before all the big bad stuff the MC has set up in the Plot can begin.

In general, this isn't a very useful track. If the purpose of Plots is to bring in elements that the MC is interested in, having a 2-Chi event at the start just prevents the MC from bringing in their desires for longer.



An end-loaded Track, in which the Plot progresses but takes a little more effort to trigger the climax. This is representative of a lot of stories in general, where there is the greatest amount of struggle just before the final challenge becomes apparent.



This Track has a lot of struggling in the middle. It starts easily and progresses slowly until the third event, where things accelerate toward the climax.



A Plot Track with five events is a long Plot, even if they're all 1-Chi. Coming up with how to break a Concept into five important events is difficult! This works best with Plots that operate on a grand scale, the sort that would stretch over a whole “season” of play.

While having multiple Plots running most of the time is encouraged, it is especially useful with these very long Plots in order to make it feel like things are actively happening at the same time as the larger Plot is slowly moving along.

Be careful with a Plot longer than five events, especially if some are not 1-Chi; many games simply don't last that long. Two Plots back-to-back is a bit better than a single very long Plot.



Tracks with three steps are just right for most Plots, especially if the last event is 2-Chi. thinking in television terms, a three-step track is an excellent model for a “two-episode arc.” Some groups will use Chi enough that they can burn through a three-event Plot in a single session, though that requires them to aggressively use their Chi.



Two-event Plots might be good for a single session's story, but at this size it is probably better to just handle the events without a Plot. It makes a good tool for playing one-shots or demo games, where having larger Plots is unreasonable.

Example: The Haunted Village's Plot Track

This isn't a particularly complicated Plot, so let's call it two or three events long. For example purposes, let's extend it to three events.



We need three significant events that can occur as the haunting progresses, and they need to not determine anything for the players. Let's make the first one, the kick-off point for the story, the sudden disappearance of Shaman Alma, the spiritual leader of the community. The second can be Damien, a hotshot young fireshaper, running down into the catacombs under the town to try and confront the ghosts. The third can be a possessed Alma returning to deliver the ghosts' demands, which I see no reason to determine right now.

This is a simple Plot, so we'll leave the costs at 1 per event.

To summarize:

[1] Shaman Alma is kidnapped by ghosts.

[1] Damien hastily attempts a rescue.

[1] Possessed Alma returns with the ghosts' demands.



Threats

The third essential element of a Plot is the Threats associated with it. Threats are the characters and obstacles that the players can encounter to interact with the Plot.

There are four categories of Threats:

- ~ Great Spirits.
- ~ Landscapes.
- ~ Predators.
- ~ Silvertongues.

Each of those Threat categories has four individual types of Threats that fit in the category. Each type has an Instinct attached to it as a guide for what that type of Threat does on its own, in the absence of conscious agendas.

The names of the Threat types are all animals or environments, but these names are metaphors; a Fox Threat needn't literally be a fox.

Additionally, each category has an additional three MC Moves that can be made when that Threat is present and relevant.

Every Event in a Plot should have 1 or 2 Threats associated with it. Events can share Threats, but moving through the Plot provides an opportunity for the Threats to evolve along with it. Events are abstract, meaning that the Threats are the primary way that players get to encounter the Plot, so never leave them at a loss for Threats to talk to or fight.



Great Spirits

Some Threats aren't just little things in the way but are themselves a force of nature. Make the Great Spirits amazing and terrifying at the same time, and make them seem like nothing could possibly threaten them (even if the players should absolutely be free to try).

Dragon (*Instinct: to condescend, to covet*)

Dragons are the kings of the world and are rulers of all they see.

Phoenix (*Instinct: to destroy indiscriminately*)

Phoenixes are uncaring and awe-inspiring; they are cleansing and rejuvenating through sheer destruction.

Tortoise (*Instinct: to withhold secrets*)

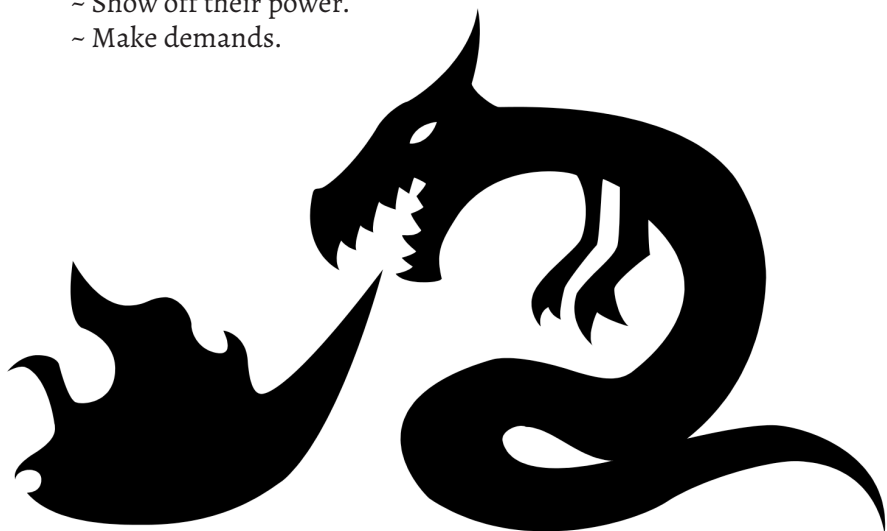
Tortoises are old and wise; more like obstacles to progression than direct threats to players' safety.

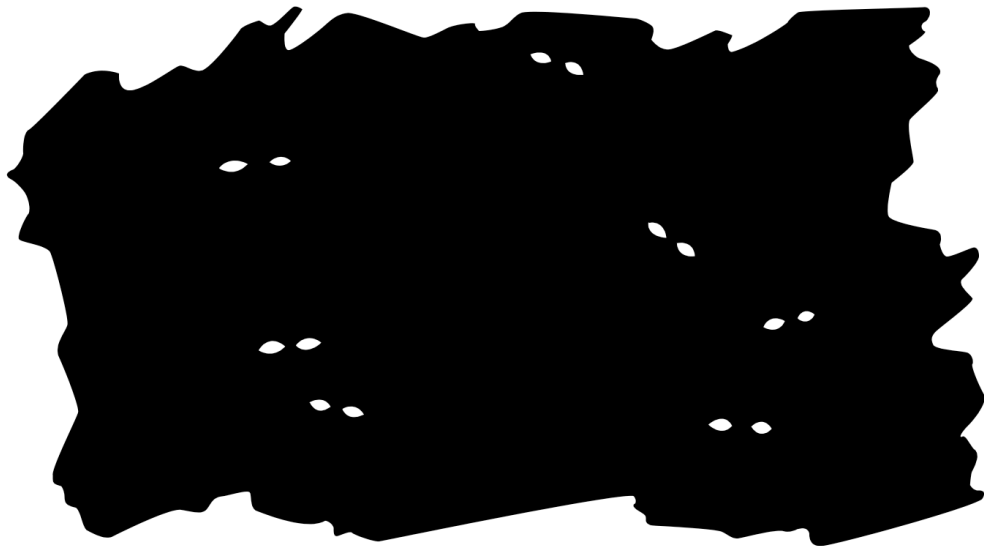
Unicorn (*Instinct: to tempt, to manipulate*)

Unicorns are the ultimate tempters, desirable but un-graspable; everyone wants a unicorn, but no one is willing to take it.

MC Moves For Great Spirits:

- ~ Be cryptic.
- ~ Show off their power.
- ~ Make demands.





Landscapes

The land itself is often a Threat, making travel difficult and hiding the characters' foes.

Darkness (*Instinct: to conceal danger*)

Many landscapes are full of scary things, but Darkness is known for being threatening at any moment. Caves are the iconic Darkness.

Mist (*Instinct: to confuse, to disorient*)

Mist can also be things like mazes or tunnels. Directions seem useless in a dense mist, and before you know it you're right where you started.

Mountain (*Instinct: to forbid passage*)

Mountains are problems because they simply demand players find another way through. Dealing with a Mountain directly is difficult, but sometimes the alternative is even worse.

River (*Instinct: to carry away, to separate*)

Anywhere that makes it easy to split the characters away from each other can make a good River. Cities are great Rivers.

MC Moves for Landscapes:

- ~ Reveal something surprising.
- ~ Unleash trouble.
- ~ Make them lost.

Predators

Predators are aggressive Threats that actively and physically harry the players' actions.

Boar (*Instinct: to charge*)

Boars are blunt and straightforward, lacking in tact and finesse. They tend to be very strong though and are fearless.

Panther (*Instinct: to hunt, to ambush*)

Panthers hide in shadow until the right moment to take down their prey.

Rat (*Instinct: to backstab*)

Rats are dangerous because they do not seem at first to be dangerous at all. When playing a rat, make them seem like they shouldn't be completely trustworthy; just catching the players off guard with sudden betrayal can be unpleasant if it seems like a break in the character. Understanding a rat's motive is particularly important.

Wolf (*Instinct: to overwhelm with numbers or fear*)

Wolves rely on their presence and their teamwork to end conflicts before they even begin.

MC Moves for Predators:

- ~ Appear suddenly.
- ~ Ignore suffering.
- ~ Take someone away.



Silvertongues

Silvertongues aren't imminently dangerous to most characters' health but are cunning and manipulative, taking what the players have for themselves.

Eagle (*Instinct: to observe and report*)

Eagles are usually there to make other Threats more dangerous but are more likely to encounter the players than other hands-off Threats.

Fox (*Instinct: to lure and entrap*)

Foxes are tricky, giving players what they want in order to put them in a position of weakness.

Monkey (*Instinct: to trick, to pilfer*)

Monkeys are treacherous and often don't think much further than what they're currently doing. Their schemes aren't large, but are certainly problematic for the characters.

Tiger (*Instinct: to rule fiercely*)

Tigers may not seem like a problem for the players, but their plans are rarely for the good of the people.

MC Moves for Silvertongues:

- ~ Make a costly offer.
- ~ Escape cleanly.
- ~ Distract their attention.



Example: The Haunted Village's Threats

Three Threats overall sounds right: Damien, Possessed Alma, and the Ghosts.

Each one goes into a Threat category and subcategory. I usually just look through the list of Threat types and pick one that seems to have the right Instinct and MC Moves for what I want. Alternatively, sometimes I look through and pick Threat types first and then build characters from them.

Damien: Damien's an odd Threat because he's supposedly on your side. I'd call him a Predator - Rat. While his Instinct to backstab needs to be interpreted a little loosely, making actively bad decisions makes him hard to deal with.

Possessed Alma: Silvertongue - Eagle. She's here on behalf of the Ghosts and still capable of Making A Costly Offer as a move, which is what she is sent to do in the third act.

Ghosts: Great Spirit - Dragon. The ghosts assume they're in control and make demands from that position of power.



Plot and Threat Moves

One significant way of making an event or Threat seem more special is to write a custom Move for it. This can take a couple of different forms:

Write a custom MC Move.

This is the least work. Simply come up with something special that this Threat can do when the players roll a 6 or less or something that could happen during the event. However, this is also the least significant of the types of Plot and Threat moves, as many of the things an MC could do with it could already be done through ordinary MC Moves.

Write a custom passive Move.

Writing a passive move is just something that is true about a character or during an event. Perhaps while the Comet is in the sky, all fireshapers have +1 to all rolls. Maybe trying to Speak Honorably to the Face Stealer is a roll +Keen instead of +Natural. These shouldn't be too powerful so as not to offset the balance of the game, but can be a strong tool to make it clear that a given character or time period can't be handled normally.

Write a custom active Move.

Maybe coming face-to-face with the Silver One requires players to roll +Solid to maintain their composure. Or perhaps the characters need to roll +Keen when confronting the prince and his doppelganger to distinguish which is which. These are examples of places where there are unique triggers to moves that are specific to a Threat or event.

Writing them requires writing a trigger, choosing a Stat, and coming up with the results. On a 10 or greater, it should be some form of a full success. On a 7, 8, or 9, it should be a partial success or a success with complications. A 6 or less should result in the MC making an MC Move and the player getting 1 Chi.

There is no reason to go overboard with writing custom Moves. A single Move for a Threat or for a significant event in a Plot is more than enough.

The process of writing a Move is fairly simple in concept, but is largely intuitive. There is no formula or magic balancing equation. One of the simplest custom Moves is simply to trigger one of the Basic Moves off of a special trigger, but using a different Stat.

Example: The Haunted Village's Custom Moves

Damien

I don't think Damien really needs a custom Move.

Possessed Alma

What's the most interesting interaction the players could have with Possessed Alma that could be special with this Threat? I have two ideas. I'd be interested in Alma's demands, or in what happens if the players attack despite the ghosts being in Alma's body. I like the latter more.

When you do something that could endanger Alma's body, choose 1:

- ~ One of the villagers sees your recklessness.*
- ~ Alma's body comes to some harm.*
- ~ Stand Fast to do it safely.*

Because there's no roll, this is a passive Move.

Ghosts

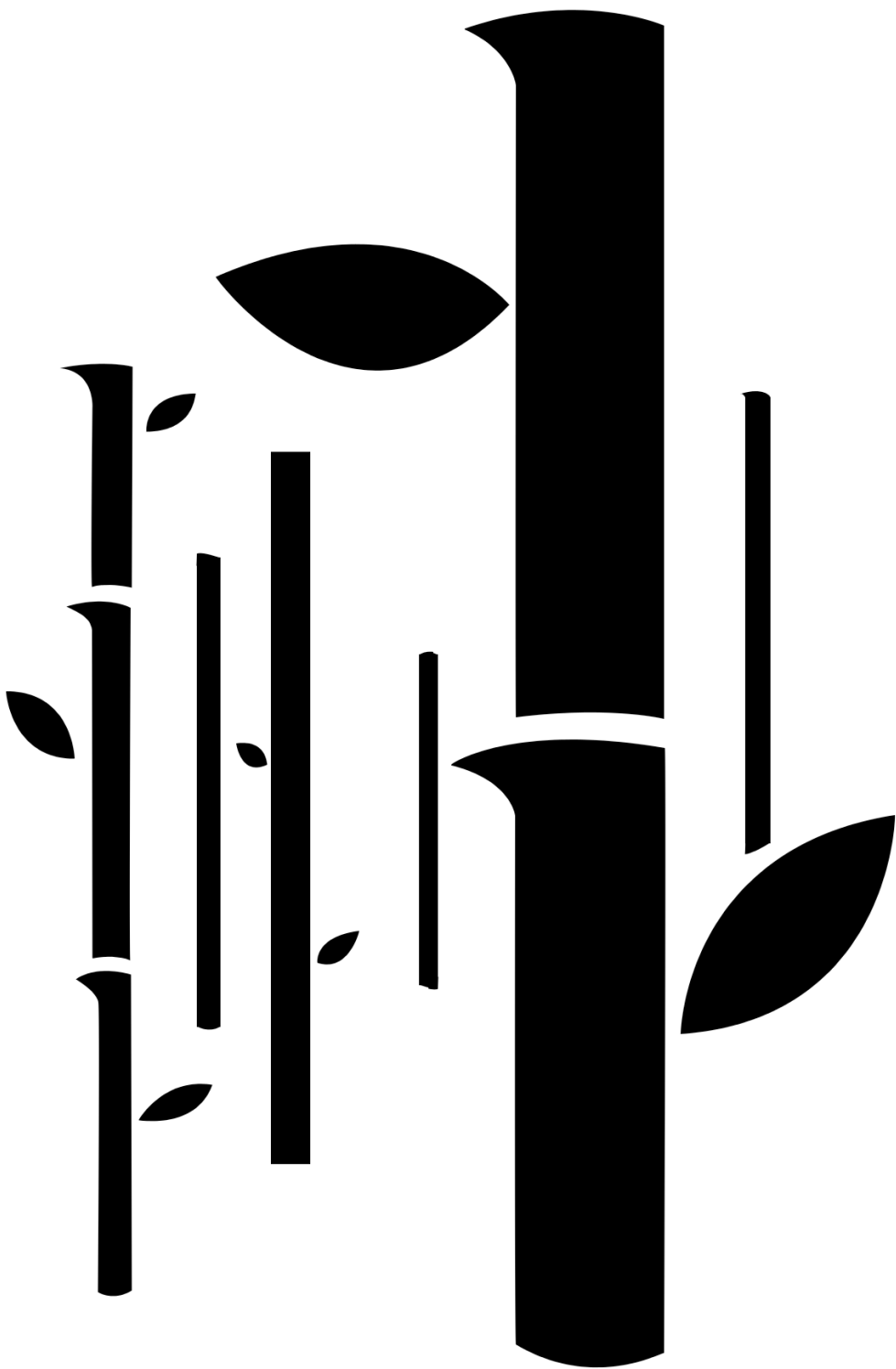
The ghosts can have a Move too.

When you are possessed by a ghost, roll +Natural. On a 10 or greater, you feel fine and the ghost is rejected. On a 7, 8, or 9, the ghost passes through you, leaving you with the Tag Death-touched.

This is an active Move.

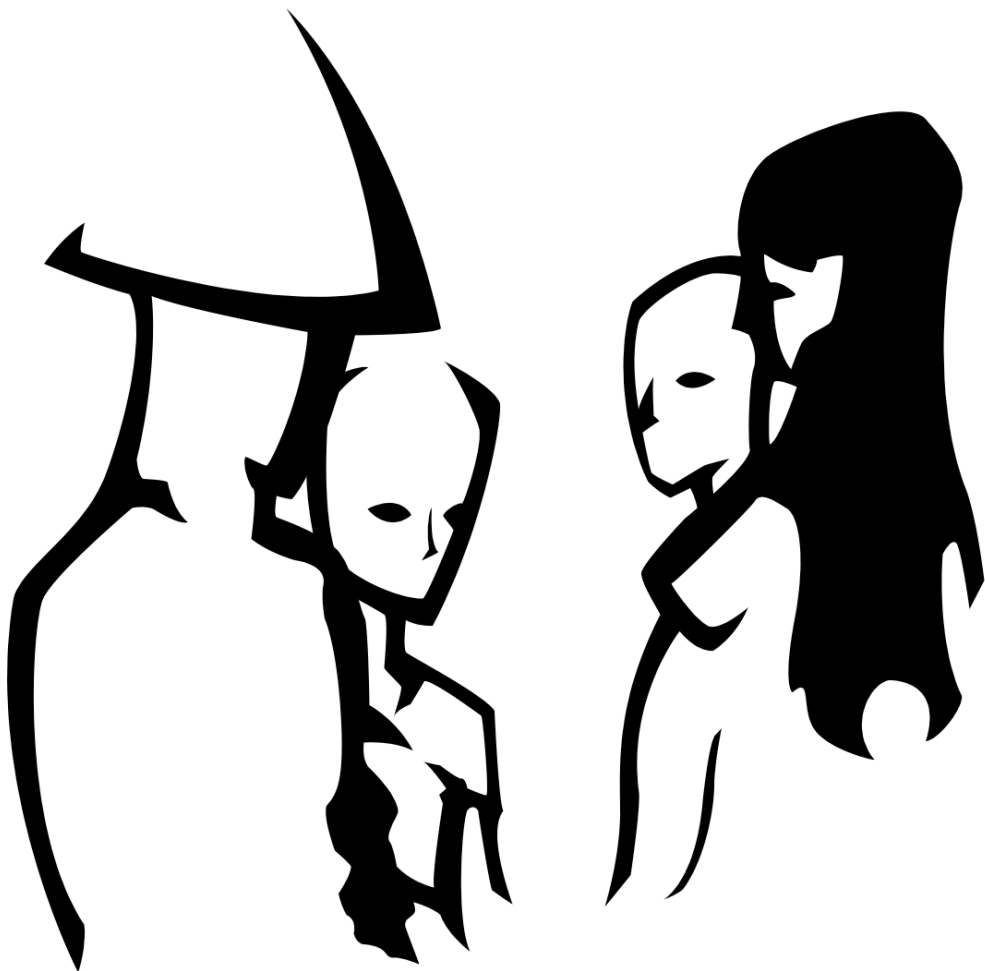
You might instead (or additionally) choose to write up the catacombs in the second event as a Landscape, probably a Mist or Darkness depending on your interests. But other than that, this is all that's involved in making Plots! They're a versatile and simple tool once you start to understand them, so make the most of them.





The First Session and the One-Shot

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First Sessions and One-Shots

The First Session and the One-Shot are two special circumstances for playing *Legend of the Elements*. The First Session refers to, well, the first session of a game that intends to stretch over multiple sessions. A One-Shot is a game that is only intended to last for a single session, such as one meant for a convention or just to try out the game. In many ways, the First Session and the One-Shot are quite similar. They both have to include character creation and some kind of introduction, but the fundamental difference is in the pacing of the session. In order to reflect some of the differences in how First Sessions and One-Shots run, this chapter includes special Principles, a guide to beginning a session and facilitating character and setting creation, and then a pair of quick-start scenarios.

First Sessions

The first session of any game is a time for discovering who the characters are and what they're all about, both for the MC and for the players themselves. There are no Plots in a First Session, and the session might even involve some of the characters meeting each other for the first time.

One-Shots

A One-Shot is about having a complete experience in a single session. Because the game won't last long, an extended Plot is a poor tool, but small two- or three-event Plots allow an MC to bring some material to the table and get things rolling quickly. This is essential because most settings where One-Shots are played have time limitations.



Special Principles

For a First Session or a One-Shot, use the following set of Principles:

- ~ Ask questions constantly.
- ~ Describe with rampant imagery.
- ~ Give them characters to talk to and bargain with.
- ~ Have a fight!
- ~ Springboard off of character creation.
- ~ Turn questions back on the askers.
- ~ MC the game.

Ask questions constantly.

Even more than usual, the beginning of the game is where the most questions should come up. Define things and flesh out the world, the past, and the characters' motivations. Questions let the players participate in the world-building and let the MC guide the path of the game's development even when they can't dictate actions.

Describe with rampant imagery.

Making the world evocative is especially important in the first session, when setting the tone of the game is paramount. Think about how much is too much, and don't break up the flow just to come up with more description, but give more than usual.

Give them characters to talk to and bargain with.

Oath-swapping and making hard decisions is one of the centerpieces of the game. Especially if the game is heavy on Monks and Scholars and Aristocrats and Spiritshapers, having MC characters around to talk is essential to their fun.

Have a fight!

High-energy action sequences are the other main feature of the game! Regardless of the mixture of playbooks, a fight showcases what the game is capable of, as well as providing good practice to get used to the Tag system, which can seem unconventional to some players.

Springboard off of character creation.

The players gave a whole swath of details when creating their characters and answering questions, so make use of them. Draw on that well of ideas that the players have already shown an interest in.

Turn questions back on the askers.

Just as the MC is asking questions constantly, take some questions the players ask and turn them into opportunities for the group to compose the setting and the shape of the plot. The MC will have a chance to craft things with their description and in long-form games with their Plots. If you're running a One-Shot, this is probably not your first exposure to the game, but it likely is for at least one of the players, so relinquish control when you can afford it.

MC the game.

It might be the First Session or a One-Shot, but everyone's still playing the game, including the MC. Just play. Remember the Principles, remember the Agendas, and relax and just have fun with it. MCing is intimidating, but just keep calm and everything will go fine.



Starting the Game

The following process applies to both First Sessions and to One-Shots.

Before The First Session

The MC, or whoever is hosting the game, needs to print and assemble a complete set of the character playbooks. The MC needs to be familiar with them, though there's no need to have committed them to memory.

Alongside the playbooks, the MC should also have a Basic Moves sheet for each player, including themselves, as well as a copy of the MC Playsheet.

The MC needs to have read this book. Skim some parts if necessary, especially the section on Plots as it will not be necessary for the initial session, but The Basics and The Master of Ceremonies chapters are critical reading.

Understanding the rules for Plots can still be helpful. In a One-Shot it can be helpful to make a two- or three-event Plot, but it is by no means required.

The MC should think about and brainstorm and daydream about the genre, about elemental magic and fantastic animals and landscapes and the devious people that want to rule it all or tear it all down. Don't commit to anything, everything is just potential fuel for the session's fire. Checking some of the things in the mediography might lend insight into the game's intended tone. I personally recommend *Avatar: The Last Airbender* and *The Legend of Korra*.

It should be obvious, but make sure to set aside enough time for the game. Four hours is a good amount of time for a first session where the rules are still being learned.

Character Creation

After everyone is sitting at the table, the MC should re-introduce the concept of the game to everyone there. It can be an easy shorthand to ask if people are familiar with various media in the genre, but of course none of that is required. You can also use the text about what this game is (from the beginning of this book) to present it to people.

First, introduce the roles of the game, of MC and player, and what each of them do. This might be familiar to a lot of players, but it's always good to make sure everyone understands that division of power. To simplify that discussion:

The players each create a single character to play and direct through the obstacles that come up in the story. They are responsible for driving the action of the game forward. The Master of Ceremonies, or MC, doesn't have a single character, instead playing all the supporting characters and villains, as well as the world itself. They are responsible for providing the obstacles in the way of the players in order to make their struggles significant and their triumphs real.

The MC should introduce the idea of the playbook. Here is a reasonable script for how to describe playbooks:

Playbooks are a sort of self-contained character archetype specific to this style of game. Each one represents a single archetype, though there will be ways to blur the lines between them a bit. Each playbook is a series of lists and instructions to guide the creation of a character of that archetype, though the elements are broad enough to allow a wide range of character concepts.

Put the playbooks on the table, saying the name and concept of each of them as you place it down.

The Airshaper, as flighty as the wind they wield.

The Aristocrat, a master of conversation and subtlety.

The Earthshaper, a dependable person who controls stone.

The Fireshaper, a volatile and passionate controller of flame.

The Hunter, a quiet stalker either exploiting nature or balancing it.

The Monk, a calm soul in tune with the world.

The Peasant, a hard worker just trying to carve out their place.

The Scholar, a genius inventor or brilliant bookworm.

The Spiritshaper, a shaman who deals with the Great Unknown.

The Warrior, a soldier of skill or renown.

The Watershaper, flowing and adaptable.

Have each player pick one. Technically there are no rules against multiple people choosing the same playbook, but it is discouraged.

When all the players have a playbook, guide them in filling it out:

- ~ Inside the box with the art is a bit of italicized flavor text.
- ~ Each characters will need a name. No need to pick right away.
- ~ The Look section has two lists. Pick one option from each list to be true of the character. Players cannot go off-list for the Look, though everything else about their look not defined by their choices here is up to them.
- ~ The Chakras are pairs of adjectives that will guide the way the character is played. Each character has two Chakras, meaning a total of four adjectives. There is one option to write their own, but they will still have to pick at least one from the list. Tell the players that when they roleplay their Chakras in a way that gets them or the other characters into trouble or causes tension, they will get Chi, which they can use to improve their rolls or their characters.
- ~ The characters have everything on their Gear list unless otherwise indicated. Characters should now make choices about their Gear if prompted, or they can wait until filling out the rest of the playbook.

Have everyone turn to the inside pages.

Introduce the players to the five Stats: Natural, Hot, Solid, Keen, and Fluid. Tell them very briefly what each of these means – there is a short description under each Stat on the playbooks. Point them toward the Stat arrays above the stats and tell them to pick one. However, before having them actually choose, introduce the idea of Moves. Here is a short script if you're at loss for words.

Moves are the game's main mechanic. Most of play will be you, the players, saying what your characters do and me reacting and telling you how that goes. Sometimes you'll say something that aligns with the triggers for these Moves.

Pass out the Basic Moves sheets, then continue.

These Moves are the sorts of actions iconic to the genre, and when your action lines up with one of the triggers, you roll 2 six-sided dice and add the indicated Stat. On a 7, 8, or 9, you achieve partial success as defined by the Move. On a 10 or greater, a full success as defined by the Move. On a 6 or less, you aren't guaranteed any success and instead I get to make one of my MC Moves that will make your characters' lives more difficult. You get 1 Chi whenever you roll 6 or less though, and my MC Moves are still interesting story developments.

Let the players peruse the Basic Moves, then have them pick one of the four Stat arrays.

Point out the spot where they can keep track of Chi, and explain the diagram under Tags. Here is a script for explaining Tags.

Tags are small phrases that define some thing's current condition in the fiction. They might be as mild as 'Tired' or as intense as 'Knocked Unconscious,' and are binding in the fiction. You have a lot of ways to put Tags on your foes using the Basic Moves, but I can put Tags on you as well. To keep me from immediately removing you from the action, I can only put a Tag on you in the mildest unfilled section of that diagram. For example, if you only have a Mild Tag, I can't put a Severe one on you without adding a Moderate one first.

Point out the Fortune section, and remind them that they can find their base Fortune value under the Gear section on the front.

On the right are their playbook Moves. Tell them to look through and choose which ones they want as the playbook instructs.

At the bottom of the sheet is the Oaths section. Inform the players that all the Oaths they make are important and that fulfilling and breaking promises has mechanical impact, as indicated on the Basic Moves sheet. Being Respected by someone gives a player bonuses to dealing with that character. Respecting someone doesn't have a mechanical benefit, but is valuable to keep track of anyway.

On the back of their playbook is their Improvements. Explain that they can take one option at any time by spending 5 Chi. This is a good time to also tell them the other use of Chi: to take advantage of Tags to improve "6 or less" results to "7, 8, or 9" results or "7, 8, or 9" results to a "10 or greater" result.

Tell them to read but not to fill out the Backstory section. Also have them read the Mastery Move, but inform them that it won't be a factor in the game for while, or at all in a One-Shot.

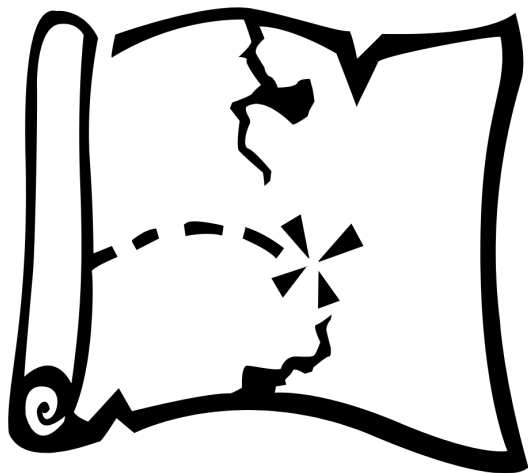
Wait and allow everyone to finish filling out their playbook.

OK, now that everyone has characters, we're going to do character introductions. We're going to go around the table three times. The first time, we'll introduce our playbook type to the others, saying what the playbook is and reading the italicized text in your most dramatic voice. The second time, we'll introduce our characters by their name, their look, their Chakras, and their general outlook. I'll ask some questions during these introductions to get a better feel for your characters. The third time around we'll fill out the Backstory section of your playbooks to create some starting ties between the characters.

While introductions are happening, start asking questions. Ask about the things you're interested in or the characters' pasts or who they are.

Here are a few subjects you can ask about for each playbook.

- ~ *The Airshaper*: How far have you traveled? Who have you met?
- ~ *The Aristocrat*: What is the system like where you have power? How powerful are you?
- ~ *The Earthshaper*: What is the greatest feat of shaping you've ever performed? What is your family like?
- ~ *The Fireshaper*: What mistakes have you made before? How much self-control do you have?
- ~ *The Hunter*: What is your relationship like with nature? With cities and civilization?
- ~ *The Monk*: What is your Order like? Where is it? How faithful have you been to its tenets?
- ~ *The Peasant*: What jobs have you held? What do you think of your social class? What are your aspirations?
- ~ *The Scholar*: Where did you study? Are you well-known?
- ~ *The Spiritshaper*: What is your relationship with the Spirit World?
- ~ *The Warrior*: What do you think of violence? What do you love enough to protect?
- ~ *The Watershaper*: What friends have you made in your travels? What enemies have you made back home?



Setting Creation

Creating the setting can be a bit intimidating, but it's easier when everyone understands that they only need a couple pieces to start out with. The easiest method is just to do a group brainstorm, but if a more ordered procedure is desired, follow this.

Pull out a blank piece of paper. Maybe throw a couple squiggles down to break up the page a bit - you can figure out what those lines actually mean later. Ask the shaping players if their people live in harmony with other cultures or if they live on their own. Either way, have them show you on the map where that is, and have them tell you about it a bit.

If no one is playing a shaping playbook, ask everyone if there's shaping in the world, at all, as a cultural identity. If there is, ask them which of the elements is largest and where they congregate. Ask them where nonshapers congregate, and have them put it on the map. Ask someone else who hasn't answered yet if there's any stigma between the two.

After you have a major population center somewhere and the general regions that define the elements (if such a thing matters), ask about the landscape features around that center and have the players mark them on the map. Point to one of them and ask everyone why they're all gathered there. When an answer has been reached, play can begin. The rest can be figured out later, as you play to find out what happens.

The Red Mountain

A sample quick-start scenario.

The Red Mountain is a towering peak at the center of the world, visible from all across the land, stretching into the sky like a crimson spear capped with a silvery tip of snow. The source of magic in the world, its summit is said to hold the passage to the Spirit World.

Legends tell of Sel the Gatekeeper, who lives atop the mountain. Sel is said to be a granter-of-wishes, if you agree to its price. You, along with a small group of other seekers, are on the mountain aspiring to meet Sel, have your wish fulfilled, or perhaps continue beyond the gate.

The path has gotten cold and snowy, but finally seems to end here, where a long-past avalanche left the area impassable. This is where play begins.

Each character has a small number of questions to fill out in addition to the usual procedure of filling out the playbook.

Across the following pages are the questions that each playbook will fill out, followed by a page directed at the MC.



The Red Mountain Questions

To The Airshaper:

Why do you seek the peak of the Red Mountain?

You're an Airshaper, and if there's one thing airshapers know, it's the peaks of the world. This one is special though, important.

Why aren't you familiar with the landscape of the Red Mountain?

Additionally, climbing mountains by foot usually isn't your style.

What's keeping you from just flying up to the top?

To The Aristocrat:

Why do you seek the peak of the Red Mountain?

It is rare for a noble to go on such quests themselves, but you had no choice but to obey the command of your superior, King Thann.

What does Thann want from Sel?

However, Thann knows that the Red Mountain is a treacherous path for a diplomat and has sent people along with you.

Who did King Thann send with you? If it was another player character, ask them what Thann has promised them in return for going with you?

To The Earthshaper:

Why do you seek the peak of the Red Mountain?

Stone is usually a comforting and stabilizing force for you, but something about the feel of the Red Mountain is unnerving.

What's different about the mountain? How has it been affecting your earthshaping?

Your people have always told legends about this place.

What were some of the more fantastical stories about the Red Mountain?

To The Fireshaper:

Why do you seek the peak of the Red Mountain?

Why were you previously forbidden from climbing the Red Mountain?

*Was the ban removed, or are you here despite those who would restrict you?
If it was lifted, why? If not, why choose now to break the rules?*

To The Hunter:

Why do you seek the peak of the Red Mountain?

*The wilds of the Mountain are full of strange creatures.
What creature is most tempting for you to hunt?*

*You spend more time roughing it than most.
What have you prepared to handle the journey up the mountain?*

To The Monk:

Why do you seek the peak of the Red Mountain?

*Your original monastery is here, slightly further up the mountain,
and you've met Sel before, though only briefly.
What terms are you on with your monastery? With Sel?*

Why did you leave the monastery in the first place?

Why didn't Sel grant your wishes in the past? What's changed since then?

To The Peasant:

Why do you seek the peak of the Red Mountain?

Who did you leave behind to climb the Red Mountain?

Why are you determined not to return until completing your task?

To The Scholar:

Why do you seek the peak of the Red Mountain?

Lore regarding the passage to the Spirit World that lies atop the mountain is a specialty of yours.

What do you know lies beyond the gate? Why haven't you told the others?
(Still tell the other players, it's only their characters that do not know.)

Additionally, a Scholar is nothing without their preparation.

What contraption or tool did you bring along to aid your quest?

To The Spiritshaper:

Why do you seek the peak of the Red Mountain?

Sel has spoken to you before your journey through a vision.

What did Sel warn you about?

You know another spirit is said to live somewhere on the Red Mountain.

What is their nature? Why would you prefer not to cross their path?

To The Warrior:

Why do you seek the peak of the Red Mountain?

You are uniquely capable among this group in your ability to fight spirits, and they know your name.

What can you do, or what do you have, that scares even the Great Spirits?

How did you gain that ability?

To The Watershaper:

Why do you seek the peak of the Red Mountain?

This is not your first time on the Red Mountain; you've tried to reach Sel before.

Why did your previous trip fail? What are you doing differently now? Why is your quest so important that you're mounting a second trek to Sel and the gate?

To The MC:

The MC has a few questions they can answer fairly quickly. The first is to think about Sel's nature. The Earthshaper, Monk, Scholar, and Spiritshaper all provide players the option to weigh in on what Sel might be, but aside from that you should think about what Sel and the Gate are exactly. You can wait until they get up to Sel to reveal this, but if you know ahead of time you can give hints by describing the Mountain in a way appropriate to them.

Second, think about what the players want. All of them have declared why they're climbing the mountain. Think about how to challenge their convictions, but also think about what price Sel might put upon their wishes.

Third, consider the inhabitants of the monastery. If no one is playing the Monk you should still include the monastery, as it provides a break from the exploring and danger of the Mountain to explore human interactions instead.

Plot: Climbing the Red Mountain



Event 1: A tunnel into the mountain with a gate around it can be seen up ahead on the path.

Threats:

Twisting tunnels. Landscape: Mist (*instinct: to confuse, to disorient*). Wolf-bats. Predator: Wolf (*instinct: to overwhelm with numbers or fear*).

Event 2: A monk appears in the dark, calling them to the Master.

Threats:

The Master of the monastery. Silvertongue: Tiger (*instinct: to rule fiercely*).

Sel the Gatekeeper. Choose a Great Spirit Threat to represent Sel.

Sel Move: When you confront Sel, choose to Stand Fast to hold your composure or Observe Carefully. You cannot do both.

Festival of the Four

A sample quick-start scenario.

Every fourth year on the fourth week of the fourth moon the communities of the world gather together at the Dais of the First. While the gathering was originally a spiritual ritual, it grew into a chance to celebrate and meet with other cultures. Now it is the grandest festival in all the land.

Many decisions are made at the festival, and there is a tournament of champions to honor the elements. Unfortunately, this year there is a good deal of unrest at the Festival, as the earthshaper leaders never arrived, and all the groups are suspicious of everyone else.

The dawn of the second day has arrived and tensions are high; something must be done to figure out what happened. This is where play begins.

Each character has a small number of questions to fill out in addition to the usual procedure of filling out the playbook.

Across the following pages are the questions that each playbook will fill out, followed by a page directed at the MC.



Festival of the Four Questions

To The Airshaper:

What do you think happened to the earthshaper leaders?

The airshapers have a longstanding feud with the earthshapers, and so to suggest their innocence they've volunteered you to be at the earthshapers' disposal.

What have the earthshapers asked you to do? Have you done it?

You came in second in last year's tournament.

Why are you sure you could win this year if you tried?

To The Aristocrat:

What do you think happened to the earthshaper leaders?

Your group was to join up with the earthshapers on the trail to the Festival, but they never showed.

What was the condition of the rendezvous site in when you arrived? Were there any hints regarding what happened?

Officially, what is your purpose here at the Festival? Do you have any unofficial purposes?

To The Earthshaper:

What do you think happened to the earthshaper leaders?

Why weren't you traveling with the same group from the Earthlands?

Who do you think is responsible, and what actions have you already taken against them?

To The Fireshaper:

What do you think happened to the earthshaper leaders?

The fireshapers have a reputation for acting out.

Has anyone singled you out yet for the trouble?

Several of your friends have been pressuring you to compete in the tournament, despite what happened last time.

Have you made a decision to compete or abstain?

To The Hunter:

What do you think happened to the earthshaper leaders?

Woodsmen are a rare sight at the Festival.

What prompted you to come this year? How have you been received?

Whose land and culture are you most familiar with?

To The Monk:

What do you think happened to the earthshaper leaders?

Your monastery attends to the Dais of the First, and carries out the rituals. You're also the designated 'neutral party' and mediator. Only one day has passed and you already helped ease a charged situation.

Who was that charged situation involving, and do you think it's really resolved?

The Festival has long distracted from the rituals critical to the world's spiritual health, and the monks fear a reckoning is coming.

What are you afraid might happen should the rituals continue to be ignored?

To The Peasant:

What do you think happened to the earthshaper leaders?

You were a part of the set-up of the Festival and thus should be beyond suspicion, as is the group you came with.

What was this group, and are they still being suspected anyway?

What part of the Festival are you proud of having created?

To The Scholar:

What do you think happened to the earthshaper leaders?

You were already here before the Festival, studying the Dais and the resident monks' practices.

What is your relationship to this order of monks? Do they appreciate your interest or resent your lack of faith?

You received an anonymous note last night.

What did it say?

(It doesn't have to be about the earthshapers.)

To The Spiritshaper:

What do you think happened to the earthshaper leaders?

What have you foreseen about the Festival?

What form did that premonition take?

You are the central shaman of the Festival's ritual this year.

Have you done this before? Did you prepare anything special for this purpose?

To The Warrior:

What do you think happened to the earthshaper leaders?

Active soldiers aren't usually permitted at the Festival if they're not competing in the tournament.

Why are you allowed here?

Last night there was a group of suspicious people you noticed.

What were they doing, and why was it suspicious?

To The Watershaper:

What do you think happened to the earthshaper leaders?

This is your first time to the Festival but you've heard stories from others who have been.

What were you most excited to see or do here?

Why couldn't you be here during previous Festivals?

To The MC:

The Festival has a lot of possible plot points to pursue, such as neglected spirits, the tournament, an anonymous note, or a suspicious group, all on top of the missing earthshapers. The earthshapers are the core conflict, but the situation is broadly defined so as to accommodate any of those other ideas. Each player will have their own idea of what happened, so draw on those.

All the characters may not even start around each other and may only know each other from prior Festivals. Put them together early. Let the characters enjoy the Festival early on! Paint a rather lighthearted picture; this is not a very dark scenario – it isn't meant to be somber and serious.

If it looks unlikely that the players will be fighting to solve the problems, nudge them toward participating in the tournament. This is an action game, so if you're using this scenario to show off the game it's important to see the action rules in play.

Plot: The Missing Earthshapers



Event 1: A fireshaper leader loudly and openly accuses the head airshaper of being behind the incident.

Threats:

Tacha, fireshaper leader. Predator: Boar (*instinct: to charge*).

Sall, airshaping guru. Great Spirit: Tortoise (*instinct: to withhold secrets*).

Event 2: To ease tensions the tournament begins early, against tradition.

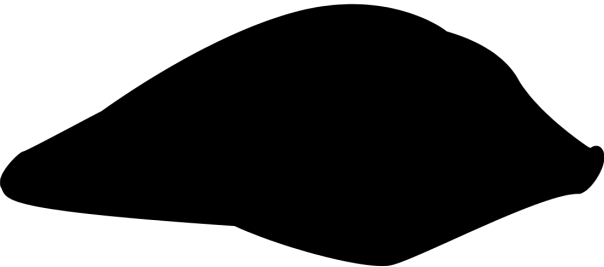
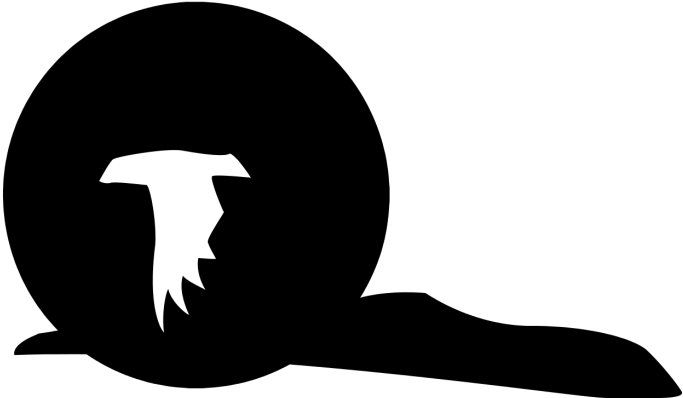
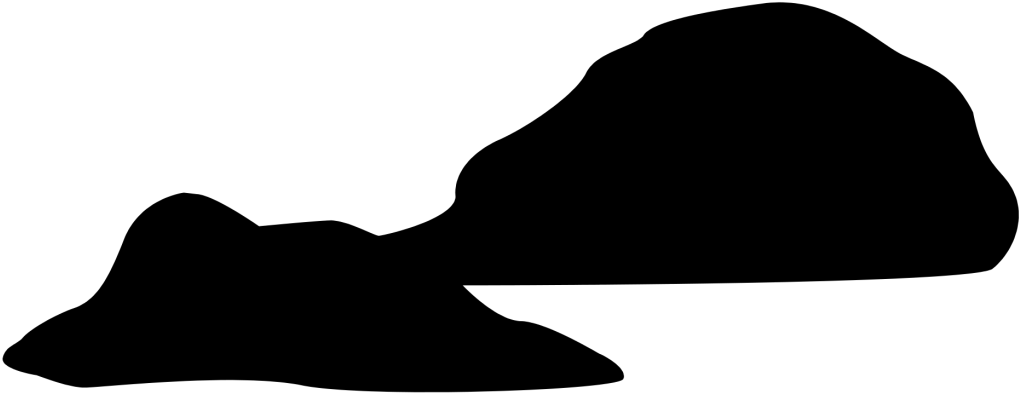
Threats:

Oma, master shaper. Predator: Panther (*instinct: to hunt, to ambush*)

Wronged spirits. Great Spirit: Dragon (*instinct: to condescend, to covet*).

Event Move: When you discover what happened to the earthshapers, gain 1 Chi. When you deal with the culprits, gain an Improvement.





Example of Play



The Example of Play

To provide a sense of the general flow of play in *Legend of the Elements*, this is a lightly edited transcript of a scene from a session of the game. This session used the Red Mountain Quick-Start Scenario provided in the previous chapter, and had four players in addition to the MC.

The game featured:

Mao Fang, a cat-themed Watershaper pirate who had lost her ship and crew to mutiny. Her moves were Watershaping and Iceshaping, and her main characteristic was impatience. Mao Fang's player has a lot of *Legend of the Elements* experience.

Kekitani, the Spiritshaper, was brought back from the dead by Hegemane, the Matron of the Wrongfully Dead. Kekitani knew of a dark entity on the Mountain called Paradise, known for its trickery. Kekitani's player has a bit of *Legend of the Elements* experience, but plenty of roleplaying experience.

Su Zen, the Monk, was returning to the mountain to seek her final step on the path of enlightenment. She is bound by honor to walk the path with Sed. Su Zen's player has some roleplaying experience, but no experience with *Legend of the Elements*.

Sed was a Peasant who wanted to go beyond the gate and leave this world behind. Sed's player is playing his very first roleplaying game.

This scene took place early on, soon after bypassing the avalanche that blocks the path at the beginning of the scenario.

MC: So you've found your way to the other side of the avalanche, and there's a noticeable difference: where on the other side people had been trampling the ground and making a clear path, this side is just flat ground. It's even pretty easy to walk along for the first little bit, and the path is easy to follow until you come up to a clearing ahead. The snow is melting, and the air feels actually nice! There's even a pool of clear, pristine water with steam wafting gently off the surface. The water is crystal clear with the red rock visible on the other side as you can see straight through.

Mao Fang: I'd like to Observe Carefully.

MC: Alright then, Observe Carefully! So what are you actually doing?

MF: Since I guess everyone's following me, I get there first and they find me crouched down, like really flexibly dropped into a squat, and sniffing at the water.

MC: So you're Observing Carefully about the water specifically? Great. Roll the dice!

[Mao Fang rolls the dice and gets snake eyes]

Table: Oooh, ow.

MF: Okay, that's a three, but I still get Chi for the 6 or less result, right?

MC: Absolutely, but it also means I get to make one of my MC Moves!

[brief pause as the MC checks their list of moves]

So yeah, that water looks great! Pure, clear, clean, nothing in your watershaping instincts tells you that there's anything wrong with this water in the slightest! Just pure, clean, delicious water. In fact, everyone should have some!

The players know that because that information came from a miss, it means the water probably ISN'T safe, but Mao Fang remains convinced that it is. The chosen MC move was "Expose the bigger picture" by revealing information to the players that complicates the situation, even if their characters are unaware.

Kekitani: So I take out an empty water jug, like an empty gourd I guess, and gather up some of the water.

MF: I just stand up and dip my toe in the water.

MC: Yeah, it's not as freezing as water should be on a mountain like this. It's actually quite warm and comfortable!

MF: It's been kind of a long walk, I could use a bath. I just shuck off my clothes and hop in and start paddling around. I think that counts as being "enthusiastic and impatient," right?

MC: Yeah, and given that you know this water probably isn't as safe as Mao Fang believes (since that info came from a miss), I'd say that's probably going to mean trouble for you, so take a point of Chi.

KE: I walk up and ask Mao Fang, "Aren't you cold?"

MF: "No, it's quite nice! I can sense water, I think it's fine!"

Su Zen: I think I need to Meditate about this situation...

MC: That's a great idea! But would you be alright letting their conversation finish playing out, or is it absolutely imminent?

SZ: No, I can wait a minute.

KE: Ok, so responding to Mao Fang, I say "Well, that makes sense. You're a very cold person after all."

MF: Ooh, mean! I just float backwards and say "Oh, you have no idea! I can be very hot-blooded, in the right situation *wink*."

MC: So Su Zen, what are you actually doing to Meditate?

SZ: I just sit down by the pool, staring out across the water. The light and snow are glinting in just the way that it causes this perfect reflection, and my mind just seems to disappear into space.

MC: Excellent. Roll plus Natural.

[Su Zen rolls the dice and gets a total of 10]

MC: So, on a 10 for Meditate you get to say something about the subject, the pool, and get to declare some true fact about it! Tell me about the pool, what comes to you about the pool?

SZ: The water has healing qualities and we should take some with us, it has the ability to cause healing. In fact, looking at Mao Fang, it certainly seems like someone's feeling the rejuvenating quality! We should fill up all our containers to the top.

MC: Okay, Mao Fang, now that you know the water is special do you empty out your containers and fill it up with this special water?

MF: No, I tell her "Don't tell me about water! I've seen more water in one year than you'll see in your entire life! This is ordinary water." Of course I, the player, know it isn't, but Mao Fang is stubborn.

SZ: I hold my tongue. No response.

MF: "I don't even know why I'm traveling with you fools. If you want to go on ahead, fine! Maybe you'll have cleared the path for me by the time I follow up."

MC: Sed! What are you doing during all this?

Sed: I'm just observing everyone, trying to get some kind of meaning from people's reactions to the water.

MC: You're probably standing closest to the continuing path, right? Given that you seemed eager to move on, and the others are all fairly close to the pool.

SE: Sure.

MC: You feel a warm wind coming down from the path. It almost feels like it's beckoning to you... Also, no one else feels it.

SE: I announce "I don't know about the rest of you, but we should get going! I am positive that this path is where we must go."

SZ: Is that a roll? To try and convince us to go, that would be Speak Honorably, right?

MC: It could be! However, I want to hear how they respond first; if there's no resistance to your proposal, it wouldn't be a move, it's just talking.

SZ: I agree, I'm ready to go.

MF: However, I'm not quite ready to move on yet, I'm content to let you all go on. If you want to convince me to go on *now*, that would require you to Speak Honorably to me.

MC: If you're willing to leave her behind though, you could just go on. Remember that rolling is always a risk.

SE: "Mao Fang, I know your instincts have served you well, but I would urge you to proceed, I feel it's time to move forward."

MC: Sounds like Speak Honorably! Make the roll.

[Sed rolls the dice and gets a total of 6]

MC: I get an MC Move! But you get a point of Chi. Mao Fang, from the pool you too feel the touch of warm air, but it seems to be circulating right around you, making where you are *far* more comfortable than moving on. You shouldn't go anywhere."

MF: [with biting sarcasm] "Oh, of course, I'll do what the *peasant* thinks! Because of his many years of learning and education, clearly he knows best!" She kinda does a dive, shows you her butt disrespectfully.

KE: I'd like to Observe Carefully before I respond... Actually no, I want to Astrally Project into the spirit world here! Back in the Backstory I learned that the trickster spirit Paradise lives on the mountain, and all this seems too good to be true. I sit down and hold my hand up and go into a meditative state.

MC: Just right here at the edge of the water? Cool. Do it.

[Kekitani rolls the dice and gets an 8]

KE: So I'm quickly noticed either in physical or spirit form.

MC: What does the world look like in your vision as you project?

KE: I have this visual of me standing and my spirit falls backward from my body and the world is turning, and my spirit passes through onto the other side of the world and everything looks kinda the same, but slightly different, altered by the tone of the place. Like, if it's a bad place everything is all twisted and dark.

MF: And like the outlines are blurring and like a line painting?

MC: Yeah, that's cool. So that's what happens, but this particular place when you come through? Well, the landscape looks EXACTLY the same. The colors are brighter, the snow more vibrant, the mountain's stone no longer a dull crimson but now a blood red, but all the pieces are in the same spots.

KE: I think if a powerful spirit lived here the environment would bend to them as well.

MC: Indeed! But the Red Mountain is special. As the center of both the physical and spiritual realms, it stands firm in both spaces.

KE: Is the pool of water still there?

MC: It's there, but it's no longer a crystal pool but is now a pond. It's teeming with plant life, little orange and purple flowers. Grass grows along the edge. There's koi swimming in the pool, there's two of them, one purple and orange and the other yellow and white. They're circling around this humanoid cat floating in the pool, obviously Mao Fang, and the koi are just circling her. It doesn't take long for you to see that no matter where they are, spinning around her, they're watching you.

KE: I want to Observe Carefully.

MC: Sure, do it.

[Kekitani rolls the dice, gets a total of 5]

MC: Alright, here's a question. Did you drink any of the water before? Remember that it was long climb up.

KE: I did. Only a little, but I did have a bit.

MC: Looking down at the water, you're distracted for a moment by a glow, and you can see the veins in your arm are a glowing orange shining through your skin, and you are *Marked*. That is the Tag I am giving you. And of course it's a Mild Tag because it's the first one you're receiving.

KE: Can I see if the others are glowing too?

MC: Did anyone else drink any water?

SZ: I didn't. I filled up my containers but didn't drink any.

SE: I did.

MF: Yeah, I guess I had a bit.

MC: Then Sed and Mao Fang, you are also *Marked*, as a Mild Tag!

SZ: So what does it actually mean to be *Marked*?

MC: You don't know yet! But they are definitely marked, and at some point I may be able to take advantage of that. If nothing else, until they somehow free themselves from it, I will be free to start putting Moderate Tags on them, which is frightening in its own right.

KE: So these koi fish, I speak to them. "What is this place, spirits? What have you done to me?"

MC: You hear in a burbling voice that sounds like it comes from beneath great depths but at the same time you can feel warm breath against you as it speaks: "Why, this is the Red Mountain!"

KE: "And this pond?"

MC: “This, too, is the Red Mountain. This is ALL the Red Mountain.”

KE: “And what are your names? I am Kekitani.”

MC: Do you want to try to Commune with the spirits? Or are you trying to Speak Honorably? Obviously not just for their names, but for information in general - it seems like now would be a good time for the roll.

KE: Yeah, Speak Honorably makes more sense.

[Kekitani rolls the dice, gets a total of 10]

KE: I get what I want, which I guess is info. I could Tag them if I promise them something. I want them to honestly tell me who they are and what their intentions are.

MC: “We are Am and Om, and we are here to guide you to what you want!”

KE: “We seek Sel.”

MC: “No you don’t.” **spoken in a smug, I-know-better tone**

KE: “How would you know?”

MC: “No one seeks Sel for Sel. Sel is just a means to an end. *We* will bring you to what you *want*. What is it that you want?”

KE: Suspiciously, “Who do you work for?”

MC: “Oh, this isn’t work at all!” And I think that in the meantime, while this is going on, let’s check in with the others. So it’s been like five minutes and Kekitani is just sitting there motionless, and you’re not leaving like you’d planned.

KE: Yeah, I didn’t explain what I was doing or anything to you all.

MF: “You two can go ahead, I won’t hurt her.” **sly grin**

SZ: “No, I’m not ready now! I can feel that Kekitani is in touch with the spirits and I want to wait to hear what she’s learned. It might be really important.”

MF: After just a few minutes of total nothing, I’m impatient, I’m just gonna go! I huff and get out and just leave up the mountain.

MC: Does anyone follow her?

SE: “We should all proceed together! Let’s wait.” I’m going to try to Speak Honorably to get her to stay now.

[Sed rolls the dice, gets a total of 4]

MF: I just put my knife in my belt, make a rude noise, and leave.

MC: I get to make an MC Move, so I think time is passing at a different rate for Kekitani, so Sed and Su Zen are going to be waiting for like an hour before Kekitani can get back. Mao Fang might get into danger if you let her go off on her own for that long. Do you still wait?

SZ: Yeah, I’m not worried about her. She can manage herself.

MC: So let’s hear a bit more from Mao Fang before we get back to Kekitani.

MF: So as soon as I’m dressed, I just void the water from myself and fix myself up and walk off on my own.

MC: You’re walking along, and it’s just a rocky path for a bit, and you round a bend so they’re not in sight any more. You keep walking for a little longer and notice that there’s little orange and purple flowers along the side of the mountain, flanking you and forming a path. You’ve no choice but to follow them for a little bit, as it’s the only route, but you soon come across a fork. One path has flowers, and the other is barren. Down the latter, you can see the snow starting up again.

MF: I'm gonna Meditate! I drop into the lotus position, but like where I'm holding myself off the ground with my arms.

MC: A very athletic lotus position! Sure thing, make the roll.

[Mao Fang rolls the dice, gets a total of 4]

MC: Wow. Dice aren't going your way tonight.

MF: Well, I meditate anyway, so what happens.

MC: It's weirdly easy to get into sense of trance. Thoughts of your past bloodshed and terror intrude upon you, and you have a passing sense that those should be breaking you from your trance, but you just brush them aside. You know that down the flowered path you will find what you're looking for, what you want. Take the Moderate Tag *Entranced*.

MF: I am moderately entranced.

MC: Now back to Kekitani.

KE: I say, "Don't take me for a fool. I know to be suspicious when someone else tells me what I want."

MC: "We don't want to tell you what you want, we just want to give it to you."

KE: "Sounds like you promise paradise."

MC: "Paradise is what you make it."

KE: "I admire your cleverness."

MC: "No cleverness, just honest words."

KE: "You can be honest but misleading at the same time."

MC: I think you're Observing Carefully through conversation here, what with being so cautious and attentive to every little phrase.

KE: I agree.

[Kekitani rolls the dice, gets a 10]

MC: You get three questions from the list.

KE: Who is in control here?

MC: Am and Om are, but they don't seem to be doing anything with it. They're not using that control to limit you, but they could.

KE: What should I be watching for?

MC: You should be watching for those flowers - they're starting to crawl up your legs as you talk.

KE: What do I need to do to be at an advantage here?

MC: Leave. Leave the spirit world. They can't take anything from you if you don't engage with them. This is their home, and whatever you do, don't step in the water.

KE: I tell them that they should be careful not to make an enemy of me and return to my body.

MC: As you're jumping back to your body, all you hear from the spirits is the bubbles rising to the surface from them, causing the water to burble, almost like laughter. And then you're back in your body, all of you ready to follow after Mao Fang!

And from here the game continued on for another couple of hours before wrapping up in a big climactic encounter with Paradise.

Our group dynamic will clearly be different from yours, but this should give you a better feel for what it means for the game to be a conversation between the players and the MC.

Thank you very much to my generous players Orion, Gideon, Susan, and Steve for allowing me to record our session and include this scene in the book.





Extra Information

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Making Moves

The question inevitably arises: is the current action a Move, and if so, which one?

The answer to the first question is quite simple. Is there a risk of failure, and would interesting things happen on a failure? The cardinal rule of Moves in most of the other hacks of *Apocalypse World* is that when a Move's trigger happens, you make the Move, period. On the rare occasion, it's okay to just let someone slip by and just do their action, assuming success. Save this executive privilege and use it sparingly, but don't feel like the rules should be engaged if they wouldn't do anything but distract from the fiction. Chances are, if someone looks and says, "shouldn't this action be a Move or something?" then it probably should be. Interpret the triggers flexibly.

Which Move to use can be a bit tougher. Most of the time, the answer is clear-cut. However, there are several groups of Moves that have their triggers slightly overlapping.

Act Dishonorably vs Speak Honorably

It can occasionally be ambiguous which of the two conversation Moves is being engaged. After all, some actions, such as lying, could be considered impolite while also being considered persuasion or manipulation. To be frank, Speak Honorably is a much, much broader move. Act Dishonorably's outcomes cover a narrower range and apply when the action is a threat, either subtle or overt.

However, always be looking for an opportunity to have the players make the Act Dishonorably Move. Put simply, Speak Honorably is a very strong Move when used repeatedly. Look for places where Act Dishonorably makes sense to use because players will often want to Speak Honorably instead.

Move With Intention vs Stand Fast

Many situations in combat will arise where the outcomes of both of these Moves might make sense. If Solid and Fluid are equal, players are going to want to Move With Intention, so it's up to the MC to actually weed out which trigger is happening.

The basic guideline is that Move With Intention is proactive, while Stand Fast is reactive. If they are making their action in response to pressure, they are Standing Fast. If they are acting before the enemy gets the drop on them, it's Move With Intention.

It's not the worst thing ever if players usually end up rolling Move With Intention in combat. It makes them more likely to avoid any consequences of failure, but Stand Fast is easily applied almost anywhere in the game, as it is the most flexible Move both in terms of trigger and outcomes.

Meditate vs Observe Carefully

These are the two information-gathering Moves. Both involve a lone character thinking about some element. Meditate can consider anything, while Observe Carefully looks at the environment around the character. Sometimes, it will be very clear that Observe Carefully is being used. Meditate is rarely so obvious, and the MC usually will need to read context clues and ask if the player is Meditating.

In some situations, both could be applicable. Unlike some of the other Moves conflicts, where one is clearly more beneficial to the player, Meditate and Observe Carefully merely offer different things. Meditate is more freeing, and potentially offers the player the ability to author details about the situation, but only ever offers one detail. Observe Carefully always places the information in the MC's hands, but potentially offers more details, along with the option to apply a Tag, an option that should not be underestimated. It's often okay to just let the character pick which one they would prefer in that situation.

Managing Complex Moves

Some Moves have more complex implications than others or require special care. Here is an explanation of many of the Moves that are expected to be a bit more complex.

Basic Moves

Speak Honorably (+Natural)

This Move is the go-to move in social situations. If the MC isn't careful, it can be extraordinarily powerful; after all, even on a 7 the player gets what they want. It's perfectly reasonable to say that just a statement by the player is likely insufficient to completely reverse a deep-seated opinion, but they'll definitely change their tune somewhat. For example, it is quite unreasonable for a character to confront the evil king and tell them they should just stop what they're doing because it's wrong, roll the dice, and end the campaign right there. This is a matter of putting the fiction before the mechanics.

Put another way, never roll this Move unless the target can actually be persuaded, convinced, or manipulated into doing what the player wants. If it's completely ridiculous, just say that. That's why they say what they want before rolling!

Another thing to try and always remember is that they do *not* roll +Natural if it is against another player character! The rules are different for player characters, and forgetting this leads to characters prying agency away from each other.

With both Meditate and Speak Honorably, Natural is one of the best Stats to have at +3. Characters will notice that they fail a lot less often with just this one Stat at +3. When a player has this Stat at +3, throw plenty of opportunities to Speak Honorably at them, but it is even more important to put them in harm's way, as that's the only thing that Natural can't handle: open combat.

Meditate (+Natural)

One of the two information-gathering Basic Moves, Meditate is unique among *Apocalypse World* hacks for how it allows the players to author details about the setting without requiring the MC's consent. Players shouldn't introduce anything that directly contradicts the current fiction, but there is nothing sacred in the MC's prep that the players cannot invalidate. For this reason, Meditate can be an intimidating Move for the MC.

On the other hand, the MC is often under a lot of stress to come up with a lot of things, and nothing puts the MC on the spot quite like "come up with a detail about this thing!" Sometimes Meditate will make the MC do that, but other times it takes that burden and shifts it back onto the player. Chances are, the player had an idea they wanted to implement anyway, so feel free to hear their suggestion and build on that.

"Uninterrupted contemplation" is the most ambiguous Basic Move trigger. It can mean a lot of things! There's no reason that a character needs to be alone or unmoving. Three major elements mark a character that might be Meditating: safety, silence, and obliviousness. A Meditating character can't be under immediate attack, as that would most certainly interrupt their contemplation. They do not need silence to Meditate, but must be silent themselves; conversing is not contemplating. Admittedly, it needn't be actual silence, as repeating a mantra or talking themselves through something are perfectly valid, but they cannot participate in discussion. Obliviousness means that they are unaware of their surroundings during the process. This trait is a great hook into MC Moves if they fail the roll.

How long does Meditating take? Well, it shouldn't be instant, but other than that there's no real restrictions. Time length can be an interesting factor to consider in each individual situation!

Characters can meditate without Meditating! Think hard about if there are any interesting consequences for failure before making the Move.

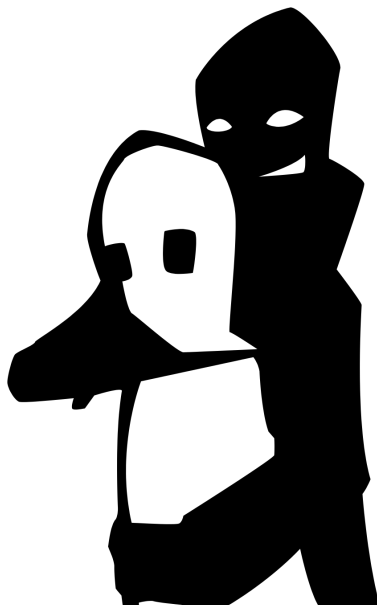
Act Dishonorably (+Hot)

Easily the most situational of the Basic Moves, Act Dishonorably boils down to threats. However, a lot of threats are implicit or subtle, and those are still made with this Move; MCs should keep a careful ear out for players making threats and trying to pass it off as Speaking Honorably.

Depending on the threatening character, “give in or face your wrath” very well might mean “give in or call your bluff.” The latter might not feel like a success if the player isn’t willing to follow through, but that’s their problem; they could get what they want if they did what they threatened.

On a 7, 8, or 9, giving in or facing the characters’ wrath are still options. The options unique to the partial success are usually milder for the threatened character, but sometimes they’re simply not willing to give in at all and will still choose to face the player’s wrath. Don’t give in too often off of a 7, 8, or 9 though, as this downplays the partial nature of the success.

“Escalate with a counter-proposal” might not seem like success, but changing the nature of the bargain sometimes puts things on more firm footing for the players, especially if it means it’s fight time, as all characters have something they can do in that situation. Of course, players can always decide that the act of proposing that alternative amounts to saying no, and then just drop the hammer.



Commit Open Violence (+Hot)

For an action game, you would probably be surprised how little this Move is made! It still happens a lot, but most fights actually focus on the setup and the back-and-forth of Moving With Intention and Standing Fast. Because the intention is to kill or incapacitate and success permits a Tag, that Tag is usually enough to conclusively remove a character from the fight.

Of the 7, 8, or 9 options, the first is the easiest to handle. Everything goes right, but no Tag! It's up to the group whether it makes more sense in-fiction for the attack to not have struck at all, or if the attack went through just fine but it just wasn't enough to leave the Tag. In fact, the action can be the exact same for Tagging and not Tagging! The difference is that if the foe was not Tagged, they aren't fictionally bound by anything. They can stand up immediately after being knocked unconscious or a wound just looked worse than it was or any number of other possibilities.

The other options are also somewhat obvious, but what is not immediately clear is how they differ from each other. After all, "open to their counterattack" certainly might sound like a "disadvantageous position." Here's an easy way to distinguish the two: the disadvantageous position is an offensive issue, while the counterattack is a defensive one. When open to a counterattack, they're suddenly exposed and cannot defend themselves as well. When in a disadvantageous position, they've been left somewhere that makes it difficult to immediately continue contributing to the action. Perhaps when they slammed the pirate up against the edge of the ship, the railing breaks and they both fall into the water. The pirate was still hit (and gets Tagged appropriately), but now the character has to get out of the water and back onto the ship to continue the action.

Stand Fast (+Solid)

The catch-all Move; when something looks like a Move and you can't figure out which one it is, it's probably okay to call it Stand Fast. This is why Stand Fast is the only Basic Move for Solid; the ability to react to anything and stay stable in any situation is valuable for every character. Stand Fast is entirely plausible in battle, in conversation, or even just when faced with something truly awesome and terrible.

"Tough choice, hard bargain, or dangerous outcome" are not actual options that the MC must pick from. No need to actually try to pick one. Just come up with some way in which success is possible at a cost. Maybe that cost is that the success won't be as good as hoped, or maybe it's entirely doable if they put something into the firing line. This may not come naturally at first, but the ability to come up with partial success ideas is the central concept for designing custom Moves, so Stand Fast is a great chance to practice and figure out what types of partial success choices are interesting and fun. It gets easier with practice.

There are four main triggers for this Move: acting in reaction, acting under pressure, to act against a player character that has Moved With Intention, or to deny another player character's Speak Honorably demand. In the Move With Intention and Speak Honorably situations, rolling a 6 or less on the Stand Fast doesn't necessarily mean you don't get to act or can't deny the other player! It just incurs an MC Move in the process, meaning a player gets to keep their agency at the cost of consequences from external forces (the MC).

Acting under pressure is usually when the players try to do something simple under duress, such as moving between cover places or running through a burning building. If it would ordinarily be another Move, that takes precedence in most cases. Acting in reaction is often the result of an MC Move, and in those cases characters must Stand Fast before they're able to take their own action, adding another roll to the process.

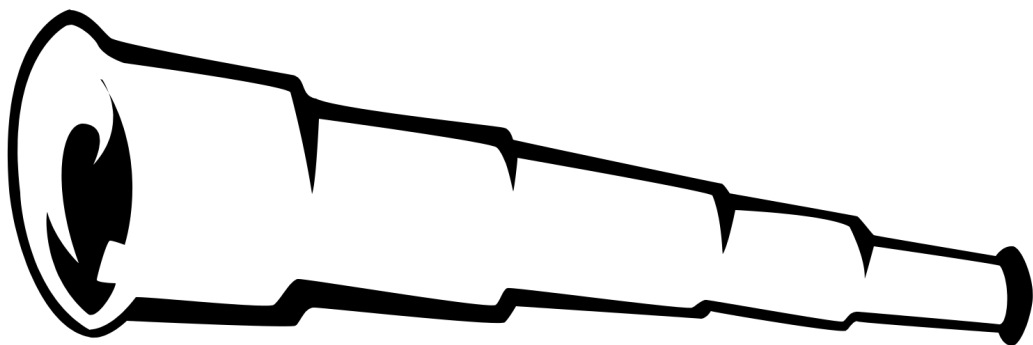
Observe Carefully (+Keen)

No doubt, this is the most useful Basic Move in the game. The Move can be made in just about any circumstance, takes almost no time, gathers information, and places a Tag. It is usually the first thing a group does when they enter a new situation, and the Tag from this Move is usually the one that gets taken advantage of when spending Chi.

Do not let them deviate too far from the list of questions. They can ask whatever they like, but interpret it as one of the listed questions and answer as best you can. As a warning, “what here is not as it appears to be?” will likely be the most popular question by a lot. On the rare occasion it’s okay to answer that everything is as it appears to be, but try not to, it’s kind of a cop-out.

Try not to answer questions with something obvious that the players already know. However, if it’s the only real answer to a question don’t shy away from it. The rolling player will still get to place a Tag related to that answer, so it isn’t a wasted roll.

When writing your own custom Moves or sub-playbooks, do not write a Move that allows Observe Carefully to be rolled with Natural instead of Keen! It will break the game. Putting Speak Honorably, Observe Carefully, and Airshaping all under the same stat is more or less unstoppable. There are very few combos that are game-breaking in this fashion, and this is the one to avoid. Even a Move that allows Speak Honorably to roll with Keen is not as strong.



Move With Intention (+Fluid)

Move With Intention is the proactive to Stand Fast's reactive. It is very flexible and one of the few sources of gaining unconditional bonuses on subsequent rolls. It can place Tags, act defensively, or simply make your next Move more likely to succeed.

Technically a character can gain a position on multiple targets and thus could Tag multiple characters, but consider phrasing such actions as Environment Tags.

Unlike Watershaping, Move With Intention doesn't allow the same option to be picked twice.

Move With Intention is the best way to defuse physical tension between characters, as it allows an obstacle to be placed in the way of further conflict without actually becoming the aggressor.

Beware writing custom Moves allowing Move With Intention to be rolled with Natural. While not as game-breaking as Observing Carefully with Natural, it is still quite disruptive to the balance of the game and should be reserved for custom Threat Moves rather than for a custom playbook or sub-playbook.

Help

Unlike other *Apocalypse World* hacks, there is no Hinder action, only Help, and it provides quite the bonus to Moves.

Help should be rolled before a character makes the Move that is being helped. This prevents situations where the helping character decides not to help after seeing the action's roll (since Helping only really matters when the receiver rolls a total of 5, 6, 8, or 9).

A 7, 8, or 9 result doesn't have to result in the same trouble as the character being helped is getting into. In fact, the recipient may avoid trouble entirely, while the helper character gets themselves into a spot!

Playbook Moves:**Airshaper Moves:****Airshaping (+Natural)**

Airshaping has a narrower trigger than the other shaping Moves, only triggering when the intent is to control the area. Any other uses of airshaping are just other Moves.

“Immobilize a foe” is very specifically for one foe. It may have influence upon a great many, depending on the fiction, but only one can be definitively stopped with a Tag.

Both of these restrictions help prevent Airshaping from completely taking over the role of the combat Moves. This is important because Natural is already keyed to a powerful social Move and a good information Move, and with a Natural starting at +2 the Airshaper can rapidly just stop failing Moves.

The “reposition the battlefield” option allows an Airshaper to rearrange all of the individuals on the field. It does not allow elimination of foes, as there is no Tag associated with it, but it can place allies into advantageous positions. The only limit on rearranging the field is what the airshaper’s action can fictionally justify.

The 10 or greater result is very strong if its end condition is not well-regulated. End it when they stop moving, no exceptions.

Soundshaping (+Keen)

Encourage creativity with this, and embrace all the lovely things that an amplified sound can do! Break glass, trick guards, deafen communications, and more! Without some creativity this Move lags behind in usefulness.

Airshaper Mastery Move

This is very strong, but requires that they roll +Fluid regularly. Try to have them justify how their actions are more Natural than the normal Stat to introduce a fictional element to this mechanic. Note that if the next Move they roll already uses Natural, the effect is simply wasted, it does not follow through to another Move.

Aristocrat Moves:

Henchmen

This Move doesn't have a mechanical advantage, instead creating a new in-fiction resource for the Aristocrat. The henchmen are assumed to be both competent and loyal, but obviously sacrificial actions might still give them pause. They may require convincing to do something potentially suicidal, but they shouldn't need much persuading. Have the Aristocrat name the henchmen that are with them and come up with their motives for service; this will help make them into characters in their own right, rather than just extensions of the Aristocrat's will.

Mastermind (+Keen)

Feel free to play around with the exact conditions. Let the Aristocrat make these plans fairly regularly, as the Move doesn't actually provide a benefit to pursuing the objectives. The Move's purpose is to act a bit like a premonition – if players know what sort of situations will arise, they can plan and act in a way that will make those situations interesting.

It's generally a sign of good faith to let the plan succeed if they meet all the conditions.



Earthshaper Moves:

Earthshaping (+Solid)

This Move is used to alter the physical state of the battlefield. Even on a 7, it adds an Environment Tag, which means that the change can be cemented into both the fiction and the mechanics.

Altering topography means raising things up or breaking them down. It may be small in scale, drawing up a small wall to shield the character, or it might be to drag down the foundation of an entire building. The scale of such changes is essentially unregulated, so use common sense to determine what seems reasonable. In general, destruction is easier than construction, but it's best to just run with whatever the player is saying. However, if combined with lavashaping and/or metalshaping, unrestrained scope of the Earthshaping Move can make it hard to put any physical obstacles in a player's path without them being able to literally tear it all down.

Be careful with rampant use of this Move. With numerous 10 or greater results, the book-keeping for Tags gets more complicated because the Earthshaping Tags must be kept separate because of their bonus. I like to just put little stars next to Earthshaping Tags to keep track of them.

One last restriction is that the trigger specifies "battlefield." If used in a non-combat setting, earthshaping is just another Move with earthshaping as fictional flavoring.

Bulldozer

Sometimes a Tag just no longer applies. The earthshaper's actions should have directly relieved or destroyed the Environment Tag to trigger this Move. Also, if one action would remove several Environment Tags all at once, the Move only triggers once.

Metalshaping (+Keen)

This may not seem like a huge bonus on the surface, but the potential to add two Tags simultaneously (one to an individual and one to the environment) is very valuable. Additionally, metal itself is a lot more capable both offensively and defensively, making the fictional value of metal significantly higher than just soil and stone.

Vibration Sense

This is not always active. They may have an impression of the area at any given moment, but they must concentrate and activate their vibration sense to get a proper view of the surroundings, just like how players can see but not analyze without rolling Observe Carefully.

Earthshaper Mastery Move

This is, in essence, an additional Chakra.

Fireshaper Moves:

Fireshaping (+Hot)

The Move only triggers on an attack! Anything else is another Move.

Make the larger and more taxing flames into a consequence. There's a lot of temptation to make that seem like it performed even better than expected, but it's meant to be a negative thing. Don't make it too negative though; it's a partial success still, not a failure.

Due to its violent nature, it can be confusing whether an action is Fireshaping or Commit Open Violence. If controlling fire is involved, choose Fireshaping – playbook Moves should have priority over Basic Moves.

Sunsoul

The Fireshaper need not be able to see the sun for the bonus to apply.

Fireshaper Mastery Move

Magical fire from other characters can still hurt the fireshaper! They should be okay with even moderate amounts of enemy fire, but it's not complete immunity.

Hunter Moves:

Ambush

Beware the consequences of this Move. Literally no character is safe without a custom Move. It does not mandate death! In fact, encourage non-lethal defeats.

White Stag

This Move creates a nemesis for the hunter. It's an excellent resource for the MC as well as the player. It also signals interest in a character, so flesh them out a bit more. The White Stag makes an excellent Plot character.

Monk Moves:

Calm Stability (+Solid)

This is an interesting Move in that it favors inaction. That may make it seem less appealing to some players. However, as it requires inaction in a situation in which action would be normal, it creates a different-than-expected take on the situation, and that can be very interesting. Additionally, the power of the Move combined with the likely chance of being forced into action mitigates the lack of initial action. Note that “unscathed” does not rule out Tags referring to emotional states, just physical harm.

Chi Blocker (+Hot)

“Assault” is a very violent term, but the action needn't be overtly harmful. For example, a series of rapid pokes around the foe's body might be an assault on their pressure points!

The purpose of this Move is mostly to exert some control over what the enemy is capable of. Remind players that creative choices like forbidding lying are just as viable as preventing, say, shaping.

Clarity of Senses

Without a doubt one of the most beneficial Moves in the entire game. Almost every character will want this Move if they have Improvements to spare. To prevent this from running the game off-track, if multiple characters have this Move and enter a tense situation, they collectively add an Environment Tag, not one each.

In many ways, this move obsoletes one of the main functions of Observe Carefully. Without this move, Observe Carefully will very often be the first Move rolled in a scene, as it allows for the establishment of a Tag, which will then allow the players to spend Chi to improve their rolls. With this Move, that's no longer necessary; so long as a character with Clarity of Senses is around, the group is never without at least one Tag to take advantage of.

Guru

The instruction should be both genuinely helpful and instructive, but neither the Help roll nor the Move being Helped need to actually succeed for this Move to trigger.

Spiritual

This is the only Move with the written limitation that you cannot spend Chi to improve it. However, there is no limit to the amount of Chi one can spend on this roll (which is actually a practical limit of 8, as that guarantees a 10 or greater result 100% of the time).

Remember that if the wrong spirit appears, it is still benevolent and does not ask for compensation. If the spirit is malevolent, it is the correct spirit and asks for nothing. If the spirit has a price, it is the correct spirit and is benevolent. Why would a benevolent spirit have a price? That's up to you.

Compared to the Spiritshaper's Communion, Spiritual's roll and summoning is less consistently reliable, but is a benign interaction with the spirit rather than a confrontational one.

Peasant Moves:

Fool's Luck

The limitation from this Move applies to spending *any* Fortune, not just the one you get from the Move. To some characters, such as Warriors, that makes the Move a lot more of a liability than a benefit. However, for a character not particularly suited for the battlefield, such as a Peasant, Monk, or Aristocrat, this Move can greatly increase their durability.

Stalwart Presence

Both characters must already have at least one Tag before the rolls are made in order to make this Move. The basic premise of this Move is to spend Chi instead of another character, presumably so they can keep their own Chi. The MC still gains 1 Chi from this interaction. However, this can be done without taking advantage of a Tag or Environment Tag.

Scholar Moves:**Always Prepared**

The Scholar playbook is divided into two main character types: the genius and the inventor. Always Prepared lets a character pull out nearly anything, which is helpful for pretty much anyone.

The object must be small and easily stored in whatever pocket, pouch, or bag it was being carried in. The object doesn't come from a metaphysical hammerspace or pocket dimension in a bag unless such a thing has already been established.

Producing a complex tool can create be nearly anything, but consider whether the object is so complex that it would take Invention to create. If it would, it's probably too complex.

Spending a Material on a question does not come with a Tag like Observe Carefully normally does. It's just the question.

The minimum number of Materials is 3. The maximum is 9. The average is 5 or 6.

Invention

Almost anything can be built with this Move assuming enough resources are available. Ask the Scholar where they learned to create their invention, whether it's a brand new contraption, and if they expect it to have any odd side effects or functions.

Feel free to come up with additional condition ideas if they make sense. Increasing size, making noise, or only functioning one time are a good set of starting points for writing new conditions.

Trained Observer

They do not get to place a Tag on a 6 or less result, only ask a question.

Spiritshaper Moves:

Spiritshaping

Beware this Move's potential for abuse. It is not mind control! At best, it is a strong influence that is difficult to deny. Even weak-willed characters could probably avoid overtly suicidal commands, and strong-willed ones might be capable of withstanding significantly more. However, remember the Principles: the players are the important characters, and make their successes feel real. Don't undercut them by having characters merely ignore a Spiritshaping roll.

Against player characters, the targeted character effectively swears an Oath involuntarily but is still bound by it.

Astral Projection

How visible the projection is and what its exact capabilities are (such as flight or moving through walls) is up to the group. However, both the body and the projection are vulnerable to physical harm; perhaps a muted amount of it, but they are not invincible.

Communion

What counts as an offering or a price or a place of power or a hasty summoning, all depends on the circumstances. The MC is in charge of these distinctions.

The summoned spirit has no requirements for its demeanor or nature but must be willing to make a bargain if its price is met. At least, that is the case on a 7 or greater. On a 6 or less, everything's up to the MC Moves, like usual.

Compared to the similar Move Spiritual, Communion is more reliable but often more costly.

Medium

This Move specifies the ghosts of the dead. The distinction between “ghosts” and “spirits” is entirely undefined; perhaps your group might choose to allow channeling of spirits this way, but it’s intended to be used with human ghosts.

The Chakra goes away when the Spiritshaper dismisses the ghost, which they can do at any time.

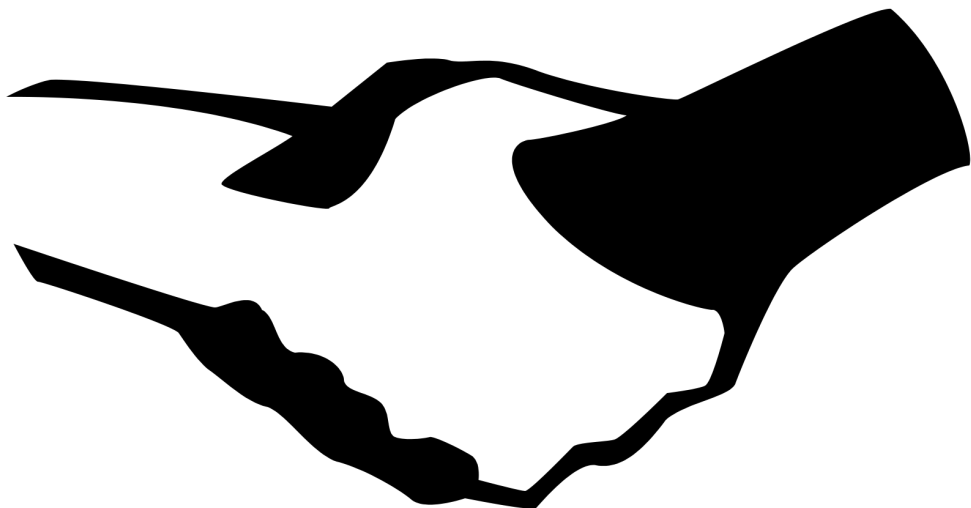
Whispering Spirits

The players can gain a lot more control out of this Move. When the MC is asked to choose a question, they should pick the one that interests them, not whatever seems least useful to the players; they are a fan of player characters, after all.

This Move specifies that it is an Environment Tag the MC places, not a character Tag. Regardless of what it is, the Environment Tag can still be taken advantage of by the players, so it still represents a mechanical advantage even though it is a relinquishing of control.

Spiritshaper Mastery Move

Summoning is not the same as Communing! The spirit does not need to be in any mood to bargain, so the players should be prepared with something to offer.



Warrior Moves:

Improviser

The definition of “your usual armament” is entirely context-sensitive. However, if they usually have no armament but choose to use the environment offensively, it would absolutely trigger this Move.

Note that “environment” does not mean Environment Tag. This Move can trigger before any Environment Tags are placed.



Samurai

The Oath of commitment can not be resolved normally in the way many Oaths of commitment can (in effect, by showing commitment when it is significantly detrimental to do so). Instead, the Samurai’s Oath will hang over their head without an end in sight, just waiting for them to falter. However, in exceptional circumstances, it is okay to release them from this Oath.

Survivor

Using this Move can be exceptionally dangerous for a character. It can result in a lot of Chi, but it can also quickly remove a character from the fiction. They will want to save their Fortune until they already have a Severe Tag, so make their Tags undesirable in such a way that they will want to spend Fortune early, even though it would be beneficial to spend it later.

Wire-Fu

Push players to make the actions truly incredible and awe-inspiring. As long as they're going implausible, might as well go all the way, right? They should still state who they're gaining a position of strength on.

Watershaper Moves:

Watershaping

Threaten a Watershaper's supply of Water with MC Moves when possible. However, never take away their last Water if they have yet to watershape in a given scene; taking away a character's signature Move makes the game less interesting.

Watershaping has two main "competitor" Moves and it is sometimes hard to decide which one is most appropriate to trigger: Commit Open Violence and Move With Intention.

When the choices are Commit Open Violence or Watershaping, trend toward choosing Commit Open Violence. Otherwise the Basic Move is nearly obsoleted, and the character will almost always be rolling +Fluid. Consider that losing Water is a good consequence for the 7, 8, or 9 result of Commit Open Violence.

When the choices are Move With Intention or Watershaping, trend toward Watershaping. It is more specialized, uses the same Stat, and they are meant for similar purposes.

Watershaping has the special ability to choose options multiple times. Placing up to three Tags on a scene, in any combination of character and Environment Tags, is a very powerful ability.

Healer

This is worded in such a way that any elemental shaper can use it quite easily. Note that this move doesn't automatically remove any Tags, but the healing may leave a character relieved of some of their Tags regardless.

Iceshaping

There is a trade-off in using a non-primary Stat but the benefit is usually worth it; three simultaneous Tags can cause a truly astounding amount of change on a battlefield.

Moon-Chosen

The Watershaper needn't be able to see the moon for the bonus to apply.

Shaping Stance

The purpose of this Move is to effectively "bank" a roll. This is useful for a character who wants to guarantee later successes or to deal with the roll when consequences are potentially lighter than they would be in the midst of a fight. Additionally, it allows a Watershaper to automatically succeed on one of their other shaping moves by rolling +Fluid, a profound benefit for them.

Ubiquity

When a Watershaper has this move, the MC must be even more aggressive about draining their Water away from them in order to make the Move come out in play. A Move that never gets made is a Move that might as well have never been taken!

Sub-Playbook Moves:

Artist Moves:

Note: While they may practice several types of art, the Artist should choose one upon taking to playbook that they specialize in above any other.

Crowd-pleaser

The audience must be receptive to the presentation; it is unlikely that most soldiers would stop their mortal combat just because of a piece of art.

Virtuoso

The Artist must be able to capture the attention of people for this to work. It does not draw their attention, it just holds it tightly once they have it.

Bloodshaper Moves:

Bloodshaping

Do not let the player forget just how frightening this move is to onlookers. It is a moral lapse to even consider using it.

Despite Spiritshapers being able to take the move, characters cannot Mindwarp characters they are Bloodshaping. The latter takes complete concentration. However, a Spiritshaper and Bloodshaper working in tandem could feasibly do so, although they should be warned that there may be consequences to their reputations if other characters discover such a reprehensible act (given that it is effectively enslaving someone's body and mind).

Crimson Moon

The player still has to roll the Bloodshaping Move! The benefit of this Move is the extra capability to see through their eyes and to use it across spectacular distances. The MC should set scenes under the full moon on a somewhat regular basis.

Doctor Moves:

Physician

This Move can repair any sort of Tag, regardless of whether it's social, mental, or physical! Discuss what that might mean – perhaps the character was comforted enough that an issue doesn't matter to them anymore, or they talk through an emotional block.

Lavashaper Moves:

Lavashaping

This only triggers when used to cut off mobility! Otherwise it should be treated like Fireshaping or Earthshaping.

Do not ignore the overwhelming danger that comes with creating lava. Just about anything melts in contact with lava, and even water will evaporate right off of it if not applied in large quantities. Without careful attention, unattended lava will destroy whole environments unintentionally.

Equilibrium

This Move doesn't do anything without creativity. Use common sense and the fiction to define the limits of the Move, but err towards permitting whatever the player is suggesting.

Weight of Expectations

The Tag is not necessarily a very detrimental one on its own, but keep in mind that having it means the MC can jump to the next severity when they add Tags. Keep in mind that *Severe Mounting Pressure* is unlikely to be contained for long.

Lightningshaper Moves:

Charge

The temptation to retrieve Charge will be great, so the consequences of the unintended discharge must be clear and significant. Charge can be held until it no longer makes sense.

Magnetism

There is no mechanical benefit to this Move, but the fictional benefits more than make up for it.

Masterless Wanderer Moves:

Hardened

Jaded usually has significantly less consequences than the Tag being replaced, but is difficult to remove. Give the *Jaded* character something to be genuinely surprised or amazed by.

Traveler

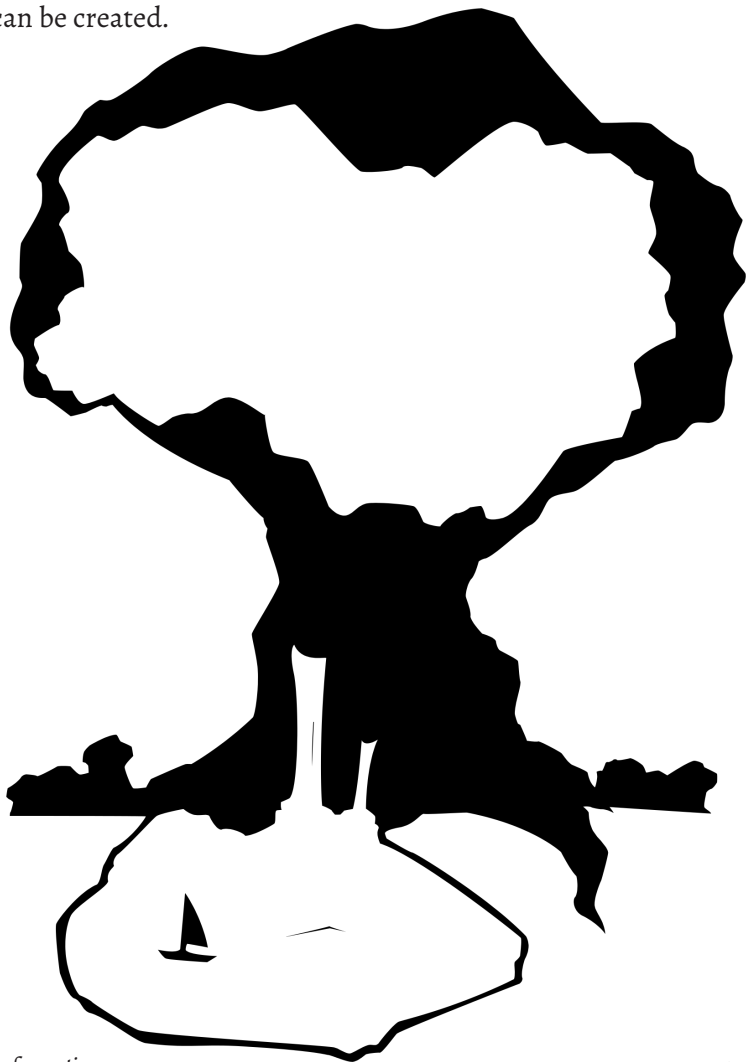
Most of the time, this is a community the character visited before the game ever began. That's the intention.

Plantshaper Moves:**Swamp Monster**

Be careful with the potential power of this Move. It truly requires many plants, and not all the Tags it causes are positive.

Sandshaper Moves:**Sandshaping**

This Move allows for supplies to be temporarily created out of sand. Combined with a Move like Invention, it is a useful resource, and it fills some of the same roles as Always Prepared. The chief benefit of Sandshaping as opposed to Always Prepared is the size of objects that can be created.



Shaping Master Moves:

Natural Mastery

This can be any shaping Move (including blood-, lava-, or plant-), but the prerequisites for any sub-playbook shaping Moves still apply. If one of the Moves you choose would qualify you for further Moves, you may choose one of those as your second.

Teacher

This Move can cause characters to become extremely powerful, as it bypasses the limit the Improvement list imposes on the number of Moves a character can learn. Enforce the “extended amount of downtime” requirement, and if the players try to abuse this mechanic make it clear how consequential a period of extended downtime will be. Teacher also only works on one character at a time; it cannot be used to instruct whole groups.

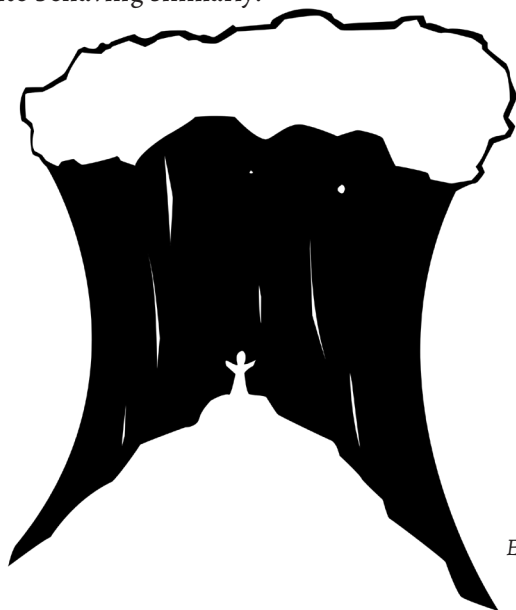
Worldshaper Moves:

Chosen of the World Spirit

The Worldshaper does not gain all the shaping Moves necessarily! They can control all of them fictionally, but are left with their own moves. Whatever else it means to manifest the World Spirit is up to the player and the MC.

Sealed

Sealed is not a Tag and does not react with other Moves like a Tag would, despite behaving similarly.



Names

Here is a sample of 54 names, 27 male-oriented and 27 female-oriented, though there is no need to always treat them as gendered. They are inspired by a variety of Asian cultures, and some are merely fantasy, but I don't intend for any of them to be representative of any specific language or culture. Use this list as a reference when you need a name and draw a blank.

Female:

Ahmna
Aspen
Baya
Cheyenne
Eimar
Emity
Fenn
Iha
Jie
Ki
Kols
Lia
Maruata
Meiwa
Misaki
Neem
Owa
Rai
Rou
Sadat
Sek
Shula
Tara
Thess
Tokk
Xia
Zuwa

Male:

Chen Yi
Dai
Goum
Gra
Hei
Kahm
Kanya
Kiri
Koppa
Jin
Lo
Min
Omak
Osamo
Paan
Rom
Ru
Shan
Sung
Tamriel
Tar
Tolva
Tomo
Veren
Wan
Yuan
Zha

Shifting Characters

There are three ways to change characters: retirement, adding a character, and changing playbooks. All three are Advanced Improvements.

Retirement

Retiring a character to safety means they leave the game and are no longer a part of the story. Safety guarantees both their physical security and their narrative existence – the MC cannot make use of a safely retired character without explicit permission. Once retired, the player simply makes a new character and introduces them to the story as usual. They may choose not to answer certain Backstory questions immediately if one does not make sense for their character. However, they should try to get attached to the Respect and Oath interactions of the other characters as soon as possible.

Players also have the unwritten option of *unsafely* retiring their characters. This can be done at any time that the player no longer is interested in playing their character, no Improvement necessary. The player just needs to pass the playbook to the MC, after which the character becomes a non-player character completely under the MC's usual control, meaning they can continue to participate in the story as an ally or a villain.

Adding a Second Character

It's really not that hard to play two characters at once. Just spend the Chi, pick up another playbook, and write up the new character! There are a few special circumstances for second characters. The two characters share a single pool of Chi. The MC shouldn't frame scenes with just the two characters; roleplaying with yourself isn't particularly fun, or easy for that matter.

A player cannot play three characters at once. It just gets too complicated. Once a player is playing two, it's time to start thinking about retiring the old one. It's by no means necessary, but it's likely getting to the end of that character's story.

Changing Playbooks

The playbook change should be supported fictionally, as well as mechanically. However, the character needn't give up the elements of their old playbook.

A character in a new playbook keeps their old Name, Look, Gear, Chakras, and Stats. Their existing Oaths and Respect do not change, and they do not answer Backstory questions.

They gain one new move from the playbook, either the required move (i.e. the shaping moves and Always Prepared) or, if there are no required moves, one from that playbook. They do not lose all of their old moves! They keep all moves that are still relevant to their character, though, if they actually changed playbooks (rather than adding a playbook) they might lose moves. Use the fiction as a guide.

Any benefits from Mastery Moves stays, but the old Mastery Move can no longer be gained. For example, a watershaper who becomes an airshaper no longer gains a move by training with a master watershaper.

The character's Improvement list clears, allowing them to take all of the options again. They must take 5 more Improvements before they once again have access to Advanced Improvements.



If a character is changing to their third playbook, inform them that they should consider how they want to end their characters' story. While there is no rule against it, characters should not usually change to a fourth playbook.

The Chi Economy

The ebb and flow of Chi can be difficult to get a handle on. It differs with every group, and sometimes from session to session. This certainly doesn't make it easy to form Plots!

Usually, the pace of Chi is irrelevant. The MC isn't demanding more rolls when Chi gain is high or anything, they're going with the fiction.

If Chi gain is happening constantly, there are a few possible causes:

- ~ The players are failing a great many rolls.
- ~ The MC is being flexible with Chakra triggering.
- ~ The players have found an exploit in the system.

The first cause is unsolvable. Just keep playing, and maybe switch out dice just in case. The rolls will even themselves out eventually.

The second cause means the MC should just get a little stricter. In a One-Shot, it's acceptable to be very loose with Chakra triggering, but in a long-form game the MC should tighten it up a bit in order to better pace the progression of the game.

The third cause is uncommon, but it can happen. There are spots in the game where players can craft their characters to aggressively accumulate Chi. Some players find fun in this! If it's not disruptive to the game, just grin and bear it. However, if they're unbalancing the game, find a way to patch the hole. Perhaps ask them if they'd be willing to switch one of their Moves or alter one slightly so that it doesn't interact with others.

Don't worry if the players use most of their Chi on Improvements in the early sessions. This is normal, as they get their characters to the state they desire them in. After a few Improvements, they will likely switch over and start spending more on upgrading rolls.

Hopefully, after a few sessions, the MC will have a decent grasp of how their players are spending Chi and can set up Plots accordingly. It can take some trial and error, so augment as needed through the course of the game.

Writing Moves

Creating Moves is daunting! However, it can also be the most rewarding part of preparation work. But how do you start making them?

This is a non-comprehensive guide to writing Moves. I should note that I did not use such a guide to write this game; the Moves this guide creates might seem formulaic or simple, but they will function.

The Trigger

The core of the Move is not the roll or the results but the trigger. The trigger is how the Move ties itself to the fiction. Custom Moves allow for very specific triggers. Unless you intend to pass the Move around to the players to have in front of them, you don't need to be precise with the wording, but it's good practice to do so anyway.

Some sample trigger formats:

- ~ When [a character] does [an action].
- ~ When [a character] does [an action] while [certain circumstances apply].
- ~ When [a circumstance occurs], even without an action.



The Roll

Not all Moves need a roll, but some call for it! There are two types of calling for rolls.

The first type is where it's an entirely new roll, picking a Stat and then providing a new set of results. Pick the most appropriate Stat and go with it. While you can mess with the "roll two 6-sided dice" part of the formula, it's not recommended. Some games like to use occasional Moves that have you roll minus a Stat, but I've never really found those satisfying personally, hence their absence here in *Legend of the Elements*.

The second type is to have the trigger invoke another Move, essentially adding a special trigger to another Move's normal text. A modification of that is to trigger another Move, but to use a different Stat than usual. Another possible modification is to add another option to any lists of options on a Move. Moves that shift into other Moves at this point don't need further results of their own.

The Results

If the Move calls for its own set of results (meaning it does not redirect into another Move), you need two sets, one for 10 or greater and one for 7, 8, or 9. You don't need one for a 6 or less result as the result is always the same.

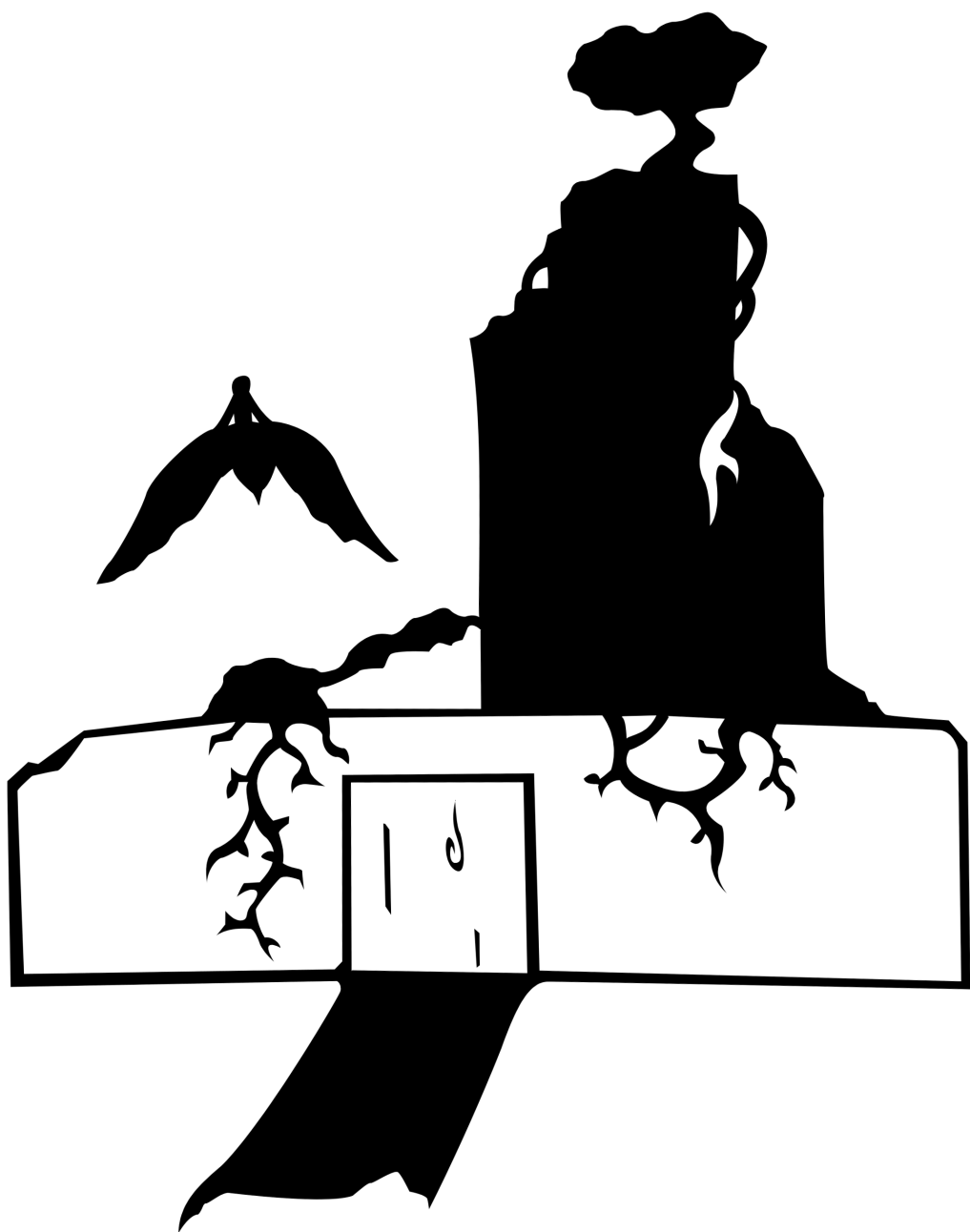
Here are some basic mechanics that are simple but effective.

- ~ Ask questions.
- ~ Call for details.
- ~ Change the fictional circumstances.
- ~ Gain Chi.
- ~ Inflict Tags or Environment Tags.
- ~ Modify another roll, for other players or the roller.
- ~ Provide a list of options.

To come up with 7, 8, or 9 result instructions, one easy way to go about it is to combine an element from the 10 or greater list and an MC move.

You're now fully prepared to play and run *Legend of the Elements*!





Stretch Goals

184	The Creature
189	The Forecaster
190	The Last Dowry
196	Wuxia, Cartoons, Age & Gender
200	Channeling The World Beyond
204	The Wielder
205	The Merchant
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207	Shipping Moves





The Creature

Sometimes the humans forget that they're not alone in the world. Life comes in all shapes and sizes, and you're ready to show them all what non-humans are capable of.

Look:

- ~ Weasel-sized, dog-sized, horse-sized, bison-sized.
- ~ Bright colors, thick fur, streamlined shape, unusual eyes.

Chakras:

- ~ Aggressive and bestial.
- ~ Impulsive and easily distracted.
- ~ Lazy and confident.
- ~ Temperamental and moody.

Gear:

- ~ Choose one: Easily accessed pouches and straps, saddlebags, simple weapons, unknowable compartments.
- ~ You have 1 maximum Fortune.

Stats:

- ~ Natural +2, Hot +1, Solid +1, Keen +1, Fluid -1.
- ~ Natural +1, Hot +2, Solid +0, Keen +1, Fluid -1.
- ~ Natural +0, Hot +1, Solid +2, Keen +1, Fluid -1.
- ~ Natural +1, Hot +1, Solid +0, Keen +2, Fluid -1.

Backstory:

- ~ You've been among the humans for a while and have formed a particular connection with _____. You Respect each other.
- ~ Humans, but especially _____, do not display their Respect the same way as your kind. Regardless of what they've done, you do not accept their Respect. (Ignore what their playbook says; they do not Respect you).

Mastery Move:

Once you have learned from a creature of legend, you are able to take both Hunting and Riding moves.

Improvement:

- ~ You have +1 Natural (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Hot (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Solid (max +2).
- ~ You have +1 Keen (max +2).
- ~ Take a Creature Move.
- ~ Take a Creature Move.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a Move from another playbook.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a sub-playbook Move.
- ~ Take a new Chakra, or write your own.

Advanced Improvements:

- ~ You have +1 to any Stat (max +3).
- ~ You have +1 Fortune.
- ~ Retire your character to safety.
- ~ Change to a new playbook.
- ~ Create a second character, played side-by-side with the first.
- ~ Replace one of your Chakras.

Moves:

You start with Inhuman and two other Moves.

Inhuman

When you Speak Honorably, roll +Keen instead of +Natural. When you Move With Intention, roll +Natural instead of +Fluid. Choose either Hunting Moves or Riding Moves; you may not take Moves of the other category.

Colliding Worlds

When you take humans among your own kind, roll +the number of the humans that you Respect. On a 10 or greater, they are accepted, though not fully understood, and have the Respect of your kind. On a 7, 8, or 9, one of the leaders of your kind takes an immediate disliking to one of your humans that must be resolved before they will accept your friends.

Crossing Over

With a brief but important ritual, you can open the Veil to enter the Spirit World. Crossing alone is effortless but becomes more difficult with each person you try to bring with you; choose one of the following for each additional person you bring:

- ~ Your physical bodies lie unconscious for the duration of the trip.
- ~ You all flicker back and forth between worlds without any consistent pattern.
- ~ The crossed Veil alerts one of the worlds of your location.
- ~ A certain type of action (shaping, fighting, lying, or similar; determined by the MC) punctures the Veil and doing so ejects the violator from the Spirit World.
- ~ Your link to your body is visibly manifested and vulnerable.

Any more than five people is too strenuous for you to do alone and requires greater ritual work.

Extraordinary

When you present yourself before an MC character for the first time, roll +Natural. On a 10 or greater, say how they react to you and Tag them appropriately. On a 7, 8, or 9, say what they do but don't Tag them.

Linked Souls

Choose 1 character to be your Bonded Human. This move replaces the Help move when helping them, or when they Help you. When you Help your Bonded Human, roll +1. Add 1 more if you Respect them and 1 more if they Respect you. On a 10 or greater, treat their move as one result tier higher than they roll and you Respect each other if either of you did not already. On a 7, 8, or 9, add 2 to their roll. On a 6 or less, you may choose to lose your Respect for them but still provide one of the following bonuses:

- ~ Add +2 to their roll.
- ~ They gain 1 Chi after their move resolves.

You may change your Bonded Human whenever you take an Advanced Improvement or when your current Bonded Human is no longer being played.

Hunting Moves

Hound

So long as you have some recent physical link to a subject, you can spend 1 Chi to find them (though it may not be fast or stealthy).

Pack Mentality

When you are hunting in sync with someone you have mutual Respect with, roll +Hot whenever they make a move. On a 7 or greater, they may choose whether to use your result or their own for their move.

Riding Moves

Unstopping

Choose one type of terrain you can effortlessly travel through: clouds, sea, solid stone.

Zephyr

When you carry someone with haste, roll +Solid. On a 7 or greater, you reach your destination just in time. On a 7, 8, or 9, choose one:

- ~ Trouble finds you there.
- ~ You are Tagged *Exhausted*.
- ~ Your arrival causes a big scene.

The Creature on The Red Mountain

Why do you seek the peak of the Red Mountain?

Long-standing mountain customs have made it taboo for non-humans like yourself to do what?

How much respect do you hold for these customs? If you respect them, who respects you for your restraint? If you do not believe those customs, how do you think the taboo came to be?

The Creature at the Festival of the Four

What do you think happened to the earthshaper leaders?

To be able to participate as normal members of the festivities, non-humans such as yourself need a sponsor to vouch for you – and take responsibility for your actions.

Who did you convince to take on this burden?

Make an Oath to them to respect the rules of the Festival.

Which rule seems like it will be most difficult for you to obey?

Managing the Creature's Moves

Inhuman

The Creature has little-to-no use for Fluid right out of the box! The Basic Move reshuffling makes The Creature seem very unlike other characters. It also means that they basically have no bad Stat.

Unfortunately, Creatures don't happen to be very good at Watershaping.

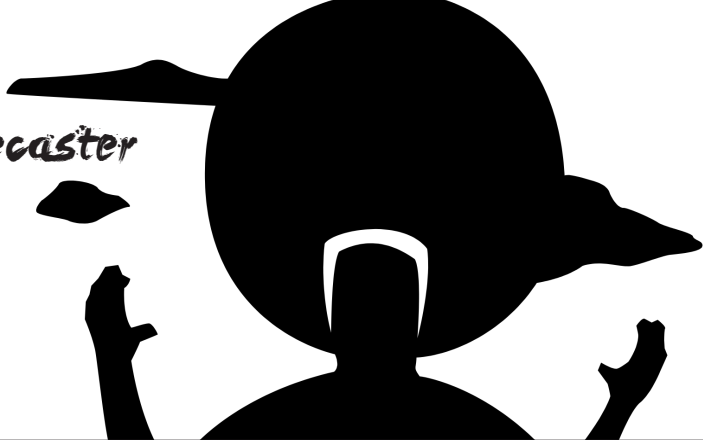
Extraordinary

There is a difference between appearing before an MC character and presenting yourself. Consider that before applying this Move to every MC character.

Linked Souls

On a 6 or less the player still gains 1 Chi and the MC still makes an MC Move as usual.

The Forecaster



You'll always remember the sky bellowing and booming. Sometimes you can still hear it roaring. Sometimes you can make it roar for you.

Entry Condition

You have meditated under the force of a unique weather event.

Moves:

Weathercall

When you call one of the following weathers, roll +the associated Stat. On a 7 or greater, Tag the weather. On a 10 or greater, gain 1 Chi the next time you roll the corresponding Stat.

Weathers: Stormy gusts (Natural), Blazing sun (Hot), Dead calm (Solid), Crisp cold (Keen), Relentless downpours (Fluid).

Sky's Wrath

When you spend time calling great weather, roll +nothing. You may offer the MC the opportunity to assign Tags (to characters or environments). For each Tag you offer (maximum 3), add 1 to your roll. On a 7 or greater, the storm hits at full power, Tagging as appropriate. On a 10 or greater, choose 1 target that definitely gets Tagged and 1 target that is definitely spared.

Omen

Once, when you turn skyward while surrounded by people or power, a great omen appears in the skies; roll +your number of Forecaster moves. On a 10 or greater, choose two of the following. On a 7, 8, or 9, choose only one.

- ~ You and allies gain 1 Fortune.
- ~ Tag all foes as *Under a Bad Sign*.
- ~ Visions and revelations come to all who witness.

You may call a new Omen only after you next take an Improvement.

The Last Dowry

By Andy Munich

A sample quick-start scenario.

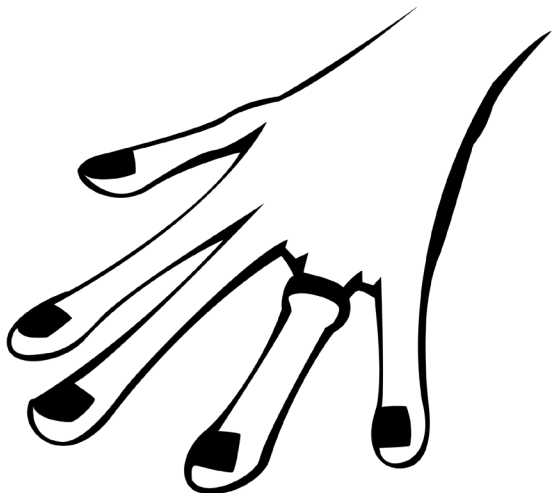
The tradition of the dowry has long since gone out of fashion, now only practiced in the most extremely orthodox of families. So it is no wonder that Minister Wu Yun, though blessed with both wealth and power, has failed to find a match for the eldest Wu heir. It is said the dowry demanded is so great that it would bankrupt anyone, including the sitting monarch.

A rumor has begun to spread that the Wu family no longer requires such a ransom but has in fact discreetly made it known that they will pay handsomely if a proper match is proposed. Those in the know have begun to make their way to the village bordering the Wu estate, hoping to find fortune within this sudden reversal.

Fortune seekers are not the only parties interested in the Wu situation. All sorts are arriving to bear witness to what could become a powerful, if peculiar, union.

Each character has a small number of questions to fill out in addition to the usual procedure of filling out the playbook.

Across the following pages are the questions that each playbook will fill out, followed by a page directed at the MC.



The Last Dowry Questions

To The Airshaper:

You've never even considered marriage or having a family before.
Why are you thinking about it now?

You've lost or given away most of your wealth over the years.
What would you even do with such a large sum?

An adaptable spirit is something your people aspire to, but they also have many longstanding traditions.
How do you feel about these outdated ways of forming unions?

To The Aristocrat:

This isn't the first you've heard of the Wu family, and in fact they are quite well known to you.
Why are the Wu so vital to your future plans?

A union of wealth and station should suit your ambitions just fine.
Why are you still so hesitant to consider one?

Your great grandparents were brought together by a similar situation.
Why were they the last in your line to have done so?

To The Earthshaper:

Where you're from, a hand in marriage is often won by an act of valor.
What renown have you gathered to your name?

You were raised by more than just your parents; the whole community was involved.
What keeps you traveling so far from that place and those people?

You've never been that lucky with financial endeavors.
What do you have planned to increase your fortune?

To The Fireshaper:

You were arranged to be married once.
Who called it off, and why were you relieved?

Your parents argued constantly when you were young.
What kept them together despite that, and how did you cope?

Your family once had financial dealings with the Wu.
Why did you get the poor side of the bargain?

To The Hunter:

You've trespassed on Wu land many a time.
What did you encounter that made you stop?

You've been engaged, but it didn't last.
Why did the passion die out?

A smaller, rival family has you on retainer these days.
What won't you do for them?

To The Monk:

You've presided over quite a few unions in your time.
Why aren't you qualified to officiate this one?

Monks are known for abandoning earthly attachments.
What is keeping you so tethered to yours?

You've heard that another monk of your order is advising the Wu.
Why aren't you pleased by this?

To The Peasant:

You've been poor all your life.
Why doesn't that bother you in the least?

You left your old home to settle nearby the Wu estate.
What caused you to leave your friends behind?

You once won a fight with a person of noble birth.
What do they owe you now?

To The Scholar

The Wu estate is said to contain a staggeringly extensive library.
What tome do you need to return to it before it is noticed as missing?

You've studied law in many jurisdictions.
What seems wrong with the legality of this situation?

Your divorce was swift and relatively peaceful.
Why was your marriage the exact opposite of that?

To The Spiritshaper:

The spirits seem very quiet in and around the Wu estate.
Why does this unnerve you so?

You've fallen in love very deeply before.
What kind of spirit was the object of your affection?

You had a sibling that died very young.
What do you two talk about when you see each other?

To The Warrior:

You fought on the behalf of the Wu family once before.
Why would you do it again?

Your warrior code prevents you from settling down.
What is tempting you to break that code?

You carry the weapon of another warrior with you at all times.
Why did you slay them?

To The Watershaper:

A fortuneteller once told you that you'd never marry, nor have any children.
Why did you believe them?

The Wu family have need of your unique talents.
How do you plan to convince them this is the case?

You put out a terrible fire that was raging in the nearby forest.
How did you start that fire?

To The MC:

The first order of business might appear to be determining the nature of the Wu heir, but allow the players to help shape the final answer. It's not necessary that the reveal be a huge twist, but it should carry some impact. Having the heir's situation be sympathetic can be a strong play.

The village is a great meeting place and can be brought alive with vivid descriptions of the various parties gathering there to seek their fortunes. A mix of glamorous (or desperate) suitors and unsavory fortune hunters, along with the overwhelmed villagers, can add to the scene or create exciting encounters themselves. Don't forget these details when the spirit arrives to wreak havoc!

The Wu estate should require some effort to gain entrance to. Once inside, dealing with the monk is a great opportunity for social sparring, but don't be afraid to escalate the situation into a physical (or spiritual) confrontation as well.

The climax can go one of several ways, depending on the groundwork laid before. If the encounters with the spirit and monk both escalated into fights, it might be wise to allow this situation to be resolved via different means. Oaths, obligation and desires should come into play. A romantic or tragic angle (or mixture of both) concerning the heir will add some much needed pathos.

Plot: The Secret of the Wu Family Heir.



Event 1: An angry spirit rampages through the village at night, causing mindless destruction.

Threats:

Angry spirit. Great Spirit: Phoenix (*instinct: to destroy indiscriminately*).

Event Move: If the players defeat or drive off the spirit, they gain 1 Chi each.

Event 2: An ambitious monk is advising the Wu and will not tolerate interlopers.

Threats:

The Wu estate: Landscape: Mountain (*instinct: to forbid passage*).
Intolerant monk. Silvertongue: Tiger (*instinct: to rule fiercely*).

Event 3: The nature of the Wu heir is revealed and must be dealt with (or, perhaps, profited from).

Threats:

Minister Wu Yun. Silvertongue: Fox (*instinct: to lure and entrap*).

Minster Move: Any brazen, unprovoked attack on the minister's person will cause the initiator to lose the sympathy or loyalty of an ally. A well justified attack will not.

Estate Guards and/or Fortune Hunters: Predator: Wolf (*instinct: to overwhelm with numbers or fear*).

More of a complication than a major Threat, include the estate guards and/or other fortune hunters along with any event (or outside one) to make matters worse. A group of smaller Threats can be a useful tool when dealing with several player characters who, if left unchecked, will often gang up on any single major Threat.

Wuxia, Cartoons, Age, & Gender

By Kristine Hassell

Getting older. Depending where you are on your own heroic journey, this is a glass half full/glass half empty situation. Maybe it was the first time you didn't bounce back from a gaming all-nighter or the first time you felt a creaking twinge in your bones when the weather changed. Regardless of where you are on that timeline, it's an inevitability for us all.

As I've gotten older (and slightly creakier), I started to notice an underrepresentation of older people in Western media. This packs more of an emotional wallop when you're looking for yourself in media and come up empty. It's even more of a gut punch when you try to find positive portrayals of older women and see less of a sampling.

Consider the one-dimensional ways that you encounter the elderly in media: dependent on others or as a burden to loved ones, mentally challenged or overly crabby, or reliving a second childhood. These can be facets of characterization but as defining characteristics, it's lazy storytelling, and we can do better than framing them with negative stereotypes that lack nuance representation.

For a myriad of reasons, these negative portrayals are a travesty because old folk are simply shuffled out of sight and othered. With the exception of the Vuvalini of Many Mothers from *Mad Max: Fury Road*, when is the last time you saw older women that far exceeded first glance expectations?

How we perceive the value of the elderly is important in determining whether we respect our seniors. Positive portrayals of those older than ourselves engenders empathy and facilitates better dialogue between generations to keep oral histories alive that might go untold. Their memories are a repository of knowledge, and without that history, we lose personal experience for our society.

You might be asking yourself, “Where does this come together in relation to a role-playing game?” Stay patient, young ones, I’m getting there.

Now I have a definite bias here. My Filipino grandparents lived next door, right across our shared driveway. I saw them nearly every day and did *mano po* from an early age, the traditional sign of respect toward elders. From stories they shared, I learned about my grandmother’s resilience during the Japanese occupation of Manila and about the food stalls she ran in the market. As in most Filipino households, my grandmother was the matriarch and everyone listened to her when she spoke. Neither she nor my grandfather were subclass citizens in our family, they were cherished, respected, and revered.

Stay with me, the overlap is coming...

Without delving into a lengthy etymological history, an easy shorthand definition for wuxia is (wu) martial arts (xia) hero. Chances are you are familiar with wuxia even if you didn’t know it. Have you seen *Kill Bill*; *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*; *Kung Fu Panda*; or anything from the extended Avatarverse? Congratulations! You’ve seen media directly inspired by the genre, if not firmly in the genre itself. You can also find a wealth of wuxia films through streaming services and your local library.

When wuxia rules are applied, aging doesn’t make one obsolete. In fact, when viewed through this fantastical lens, getting older yields a wealth of knowledge and skills that are highly prized and sought out. I don’t know about you, but I’d easily accept Yu Shu Lien or Lin Beifong on my team any day.

Wuxia can set the table for a sumptuous storytelling feast awash with denizens who can bend elements to their will. This gives the MC and the players chances to conjure vivid imagery using fantastical elemental wuxia. Imagine bare toes gripping flat earth, and with a powerful foot thrust, terrain springs up where none existed before. The motion of deft fingers coaxing fire from empty air as protection. The wave of one's hand to draw moisture, creating an obfuscating fog. Anything is possible when you can bend the elements to your will!

If the idea of bending an element doesn't intrigue you, there are other playbooks available where you can create a capable fighter that doesn't shape the elements. The applications are limitless and only restricted by one's own imagination and the rules of the game. You might not have the experience of what it's like to be an old person, but it's all about perspective. Create a complex character of age, who is more than the wise mentor or the token old woman full of sage wisdom. Create an older combatant as equally potent as one of the younger characters, if not more so.



Don't let advanced age hinder your character. Make it a positive rather than a negative. We have all shared the trials of childhood but the converse is not true of old age. Getting older is an acquired situation, at times a privilege and a curse, that only comes to those who have weathered year after year of life. Older characters offer complexities not found in younger protagonists. In game, their experience can offer a player a wealth of backstory, knowledge, and support that a younger character could not.

In our ordinary lives, getting older provides its own set of problems: stiffening joints, weaker bones, and perhaps even the tragic loss of mental faculties. However in this wuxia universe, an older woman doesn't have to be defined by limitations of a physical form. People can shape elements, so plumb the depths of your imagination to make a vibrant older character rather than a contrivance to hasten the story along.

Skip the trope of using an older character as a plot device. No old masters passing the torch to their younger, more skilled, counterparts. Instead consider playing that old master as a valued member of the party. They have survived this long so clearly they know what they are doing! Explore the enormous potential for storytelling and role-play that character with all their personal history and skill set. I think you might discover a genuine appreciation for the silver-hairs and relish the opportunity to flesh out a memorable older character.

Ageism in media is pervasive and with a definite bias against older women. Aging is inescapable, but with age comes wisdom and life experience that can be valuable to your character's backstory! We might not be able to quickly shift the judgment against older women in society, but in this world, we can stop airbrushing the age away from capable women characters.

Channeling the World Beyond

By Jackson Tegu

The narrative power of spirits comes from their mystery. They are ineffable and alien – we get a glimpse and want to know more, but can never truly understand. They have their own world and existence, even those spirits who used to be human have moved on and are, generally speaking, more concerned with their own lives than with ours. When we glimpse them, we are the outsiders.

At least, those are some of the ways I like to look at the secret lives of spirits. Here are three tips to help you bring some of what I love about spirits into the game world you're making for and with your friends.

- ~ The feeling of specialness, of otherness, is key. Spirits are secret and mysterious. Don't explain any of it. Though you can of course hint at their lives and the rules governing their kind (which you'll have to invent if you crave such things), if the players learn enough to create a field guide for spirits, something ephemeral will have been lost. Similarly, spirit locations are places to carefully walk through, not to dwell in or apply science to.
- ~ Keep spirits out of the spotlight. They're minor characters. They're not a main ingredient, they're spice: a little goes a long way. If you use too much, the magical feeling will be lost. Miyazaki knew that we couldn't stay forever in the spirit realm, its ephemeral nature makes it special. Putting in just a touch of spirits helps keep that specialness intact. I feel like this is similar to the first tip, but different enough that it warrants its own mention.
- ~ Use poetic license and the strengths of the spoken medium. We aren't using our eyes to see these spirits, we're using our imaginations. So feel free to mix senses, to be poetic and strange in your descriptions, leaving much for the imagination to fill in. Instead of wearing a blue coat, perhaps a spirit wears a button-up storm cloud or a coat cut from the edge of a soft early frost.

Here are some strange spirits that you might wish to include, or might find inspiring. When I add characters like these, I describe how the players perceive them, I don't generally read these sections aloud.

~ Garjerm, also called Throat-Scratcher. A spirit who looks like a human baby, pudgy and soft. Garjerm hunts by drawing people close enough so that it can reach up and steal their voice. This tricky spirit can then speak with the stolen voice for a couple of days until the voice is completely digested.

~ Ghost Sprouts are, I suppose, a type of spirit. When the seed of a plant is eaten by particular insects, sometimes the seed doesn't understand what happened and tries to grow anyway. Since it's dead, it just pops up a cute little phantasmal sprout.

~ Gire, the rustling shadow. Hiding under every leaf, Gire calls to other spirits by shaking the leaves, occasionally attempting to warn people away from something or draw someone towards something. What does it mean when the leaves rustle on windless days? The rustling shadow is out to play.

~ Harmo. With his tiny ears and his large, wide nose, Harmo looks a little bit funny and a little bit scary. Though his gaze is intense, his intimidating looks are deceptive. He's a little full of himself. If he's nearby, Harmo can't help but accompany anyone who starts singing. He sometimes even sings notes that don't usually exist.

~ Kleeblui, the passion-eater. Kleeblui has huge hands and long muscular arms, which is how he propels himself about. He feeds off of passion and purpose, slowly sapping the energy from those he convinces to stay and lounge in his comfortable abode.

~ Korbesh. A small-statured cart driver who is very strong but whose cart is barely big enough to fit one person. So fast that he can get you where you're going on time, no matter the distance. The fare is one small kindness.

~ Mormnock the ponderer. A spirit who sits beside you as you watch the rain. It seeks to understand basic human impulses. For every question you answer satisfyingly it will also answer one for you. If you turn to look, Mormnock wisps away.

~ Suvrog, the honey shouter. Headless, its mouth takes up most of its body, Suvrog is searching for its invisible slippers which are extremely comfortable but which it is always misplacing. When Suvrog shouts, a bubble-wall of honey spreads out of its mouth and coats everything in front of it.

~ Velcava. A tall, genderless spirit who lives in the grain fields. They come out at night carrying their mahjong tiles, hoping to find someone who will play with them. They look fearsome but are very sweet. They try to stay in the shadows so as not to frighten people, but this often has the reverse effect.

~ A now-nameless spirit, the spirit of a particular festival day in a small abandoned village. This spirit can create memories of the modest festival for people to stroll through. The spirit is lonely and painfully nostalgic. With some help it could perhaps find new purpose.

And now here are some places that people might stumble across. Some of these places are visions of the spirit world (or worlds), others are locations inside this world where the spirit energy is particularly strong.

~ A gigantic bakery, so vast that you are no taller than the rolling pins. The baker is so large that their features are indiscernible. It smells warm and sweet and otherworldly.

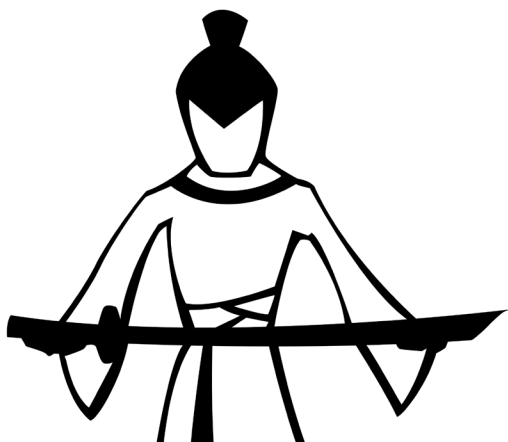
~ An aviary for all of the poems that a particular great writer has recited aloud, poems so light and agile that they sprouted wings when they cleared their speaker's lips. There are various copies of some of the poems. All of the poems look like wind, but they chirp their stanzas merrily.

~ A room that sounds as if it's under a ballroom, with the creak of boards and the scuff of danced steps and the distant pull of bows on strings. But it's not.

- ~ A blossom temple, with giant stone petals that gradually, silently close up every night. Once they're closed they stay that way until morning. A quiet, out-of-the-way place where someone might accidentally give themselves a lot of time for introspection if they don't leave before nightfall.
- ~ A grove of fruit trees, each fruit a memory of you eating that fruit. Happy memories might make you wish to return to the past, memories of hardship might fill you with emotion at the rawness of those times.
- ~ A starlit swamp with really giant toads. The toads are mere animals and don't speak, but their croak sounds like "Who-ARE-you." The water may be crossed by jumping from head to half-submerged head, one placid toad to the next.
- ~ A post office where you can send scents or reactions or feelings by special delivery. The overworked clerks expect you to have all of your paperwork in place before approaching the counter, which seems to entail drawing a picture of the receiver and where to find them. One particular clerk may take pity on you, but for their own reasons.
- ~ House of Flickering Lanterns – the shadows from the lanterns in each room depict silhouettes of scenes that aren't taking place. Room to room, one of the shadows slowly grows up. The scenes appear to be various tragedies, though each reveals itself to be a joyous occasion if you watch it for long enough.
- ~ An old mill which rests on a long sweeping hill, where bad-hearted people are ground down into flies, and good-hearted people are ground down into pleasant dreams.
- ~ A restaurant inside of a turtle shell. The turtle is also still in residence, though some of the shell's sections have been replaced with stained glass. Undersea dining, or having one's restaurant pull itself across the sand of the beach.

The Wielder

by Graypaw



The world is old, and throughout history there are beacons of greatness, and shards of wickedness. The deeds of humanity can shape the elements, but in some rare cases they can make permanent their intentions. Borne of very old and indomitable will are the Relics of ancient times. Immune to Shaping, and set on a course that will see its end.

Entry Condition

When you agree to take on the burden of a Relic, first define that object's Path. Then seal your service to this Relic with an Oath.

Paths: Compassion and Forgiveness, Diplomacy and Peacekeeping, History and Truthspeaking, Bloodshed and Fear.

Moves:

Walking the Path

Treat your Relic's Path as an additional Chakra.

Hallowed Object

Choose one group that knows and respects what your Relic stands for. When you show it to them, they automatically gain one of the following Tags (MC choice): *Awestruck*, *Terrified*, *Inspired*, *Reverent*.

Bound and Bonded

If you are ever separated from your Relic, replace one of your Chakras with one from the list below for each Oath you currently have with your Relic (up to 3 Chakras): *Sorrow*, *Anger*, *Fear*, *Emptiness*. Until you Regain your Relic you have an additional 2 Fortune. Once Regained, your Chakras revert to their original state, and you lose the additional Fortune.

The Merchant

by Henry Branscombe



Money is power. Knowledge is power. Money therefore both gives you knowledge and power when you've got it and takes both to make it. Well, either you've got a bit already or you're going to soon, it's time to get to work! After all, time is money!

Entry Condition

You must acquire a business or begin play with one in order to take Entrepreneur. You must take Entrepreneur before you can take Rich in Kindness or Standards and Practices.

Moves:

Entrepreneur

You own and operate a business! Give it two Tags that detail it, then have the two characters you most and least trust do the same. Whenever a substantial amount of time passes, roll +nothing. If there are more positive than negative Tags currently attached to your business, add 2 to the roll. On a 7 or greater, your business is doing well and hasn't attracted any negative attention. On a 10 or greater, you have a bit of extra cash to burn however you see fit.

Rich in Kindness

If you have 0 max Fortune, increase it by one. You may spend Fortune to prevent others from taking Tags so long as you utilize your business in some way. If you do, the one giving the Tag gives one to your business instead.

Standards and Practices

Write a Chakra for your business. When sticking to it causes trouble or conflicts between it and your own Chakras, gain 1 Chi. If your business breaks its Chakra, the MC may give it a Tag of their choice.

The Romantic

by Henry Branscombe



True love has been described in more songs and poems than could ever be counted, but none yet written describe just how you feel. It's breathtaking, empowering, and hopefully not heartbreaking this time.

Entry Condition

You must Respect someone and be Respected by someone. Unless you are already someone's Love, you must take Red Strings before you can take Loving Touch or Their Rock.

Moves:

Red Strings

You are Loved by someone that Respects you, and Love someone you Respect. (These need not be the same person.) Put a little ♥ by their name to show it. Love is another form of Respect, allowing you to have "double Respect" with someone so long as both are true. Any time you would lose or gain Respect you may instead choose to lose or gain Love.

Loving Touch

With time to rest and recover, you may heal or be healed by anyone you Love or are Loved by. Spend 1 Chi to remove a Mild Tag, 2 Chi to make a Moderate Tag Mild, or 3 Chi to make a Severe Tag Moderate.

Their Rock

When you help someone you Love, add 1 to your roll, in addition to any bonuses for them Loving or Respecting you. If you fail to help but they succeed anyway, gain 1 Chi. If they fail despite your Love, they choose: they lose Respect for you, they lose Love for you, or they give you a Tag relating to how you made things worse.

Shipping Moves

By Orion Canning

About Shipping Moves

These Moves are intended to be soft romance Moves. They are written in a way where they are meant to imply relationships or affect other mechanics that imply relationships in the game. Depending on the players and the desired tone and setting of the game, they can be interpreted in intimate, romantic, or platonic ways. This is by design; in a setting like *Avatar* where all the main characters (and players) can be children, it would be inappropriate to have Moves that triggered solely off of physical intimacy, but it can still be interesting to see friendships and attractions spark between characters. At the same time, a mature group of players is free to interpret the results of these Moves however as they see fit.

Many of the Moves trigger off the actions of other characters instead of your own character. This is because it felt strange to have Moves that are intended to trigger off a moment that would spark a connection or attraction be triggered off your own actions. It seemed more natural to have attraction spark from something someone else does around you, and write the Moves to imply certain personality types that might be attracted to one another. However, it's often true that Moves triggered by other players can be difficult to use, as they usually require other players to be aware of information that's not in front of them and on someone else's page. It can also be frustrating when a player is trying to make a Move happen but can't get anyone else to trigger it and the Move is written in a way where they can't trigger it on their own.

With that in mind, most of the Moves that trigger off the actions of other characters are meant to have a trigger that the player can still play or push towards relatively easily. For example, the Airshaper's *Emotional and Sensitive* Move can be played towards by asking people about their feelings and trying to get them to open up about their sadness or pain. The *Speak Honorably* Move is a useful tool here since it can be used to persuade, convince, or manipulate another character to do something that will trigger your Move. In addition, the *Meditate* Move could be used to add details to the fiction that help your Moves trigger.

Also, it is fine to simply tell the other players that you're trying to trigger a Move. You might say, "Oh hey, this might be a good time for you to trigger my Shipping Move, if you want." or maybe, "My character is acting like that cause I'm trying to trigger my Shipping Move, let me read it." It's also possible that your character will keep trying to get people to open up about their feelings (or whatever) and no one will want to, but that's okay, the Move is still pushing the fiction in an interesting way. And some ships just aren't destined to sail.

Using Shipping Moves

When you create a character or switch playbooks, pick one Shipping Move from the list for your current playbook. You can spend an Improvement to pick another one from your current playbook. The Shipping Moves you pick can be different than the Chakras you selected, but it usually makes sense for them to be the same, and it could help your Chakras trigger if they are.

When a Move says someone or something, it could be a person, animal, spirit, or whatever makes sense. If someone would Respect you as the result of a Move but you already have their Respect, instead gain 1 Chi.

The Airshaper's Shipping Moves

Emotional and sensitive: When someone talks to you about their sadness or pain, they choose either:

- ~ They earn your Respect.
- ~ You make an Oath to them to help them with the cause of their sadness or pain.

Fickle and indecisive: When your attention is caught between two characters (when two characters compete for your attention), gain two Oaths, one to each of them, to spend time alone with them (separately) to get to know them better.

Hasty and quick-to-react: When someone you Respect tells you about a problem they have, gain an Oath to them to solve the problem immediately (within 24 hours). If you complete the Oath, gain an extra Chi.

Spacey and whimsical: When someone tries to make you be more serious or bring you back to reality, gain an Oath to them to teach them how to have fun. If you complete the Oath, you Respect them as well.

The Aristocrat's Shipping Moves

Commanding and inspiring: When someone obeys your commands, they earn your Respect. When they break an Oath based on a command you gave, they must pick an extra option from the 7, 8, or 9 list no matter what they rolled.

Honorable and trustworthy: When you Speak Honorably to a player character, after you roll the dice you may make an Oath to them to add 2 to the roll.

Insufferable and privileged: When you pity someone who has less than you, make an Oath to them to give them a taste of your good life. When you give someone an expensive gift, they must make an Oath to you to repay your generosity.

Manipulative and treacherous: When someone you Respect catches you in a lie or a deception, they can make an Oath to you to not tell anyone. If they do, gain an Oath to them to find out something they want and get it for them. Add 1 to any rolls made to do so if they involve lies or deception.

The Earthshaper's Shipping Moves

Dedicated and stubborn: When you break an Oath and you make a new Oath to try to redeem yourself, gain 1 Chi. If you wish you can make the same Oath over again.

Dependable and hard-working: When you find a leader of an honorable cause, make an Oath to them to work for them and/or help their cause succeed. Add 1 to any Stand Fast rolls you make to do so.

Unmoving and cautious: When someone you Respect is scared, make an Oath to them to watch over and protect them until they are safe. Add 1 to any Observe Carefully rolls you make to do so.

Vengeful but forgiving: When someone hurts someone you care about, make an Oath to the offender to make them regret it. If you show the attacker forgiveness, you gain their Respect.

The Fireshaper's Shipping Moves

Excitable and energetic: When you are bored and someone suggests something fun or exciting to do, gain an Oath to do it with them. When you are bored and you suggest something fun or exciting to do, add 1 to rolls to Speak Honorably when convincing others to join you.

Honorable and disciplined: When you avoid distractions or deny temptation to stay true to a duty or promise, add 1 to your next roll to progress on the duty or promise. When you allow yourself to be tempted or distracted, something goes wrong or gets worse, and the person who tempted or distracted you gains an Oath to you to help fix it.

Restrained and peaceful: When someone makes a first strike against you, and you don't strike back, make an Oath to them to make them a friend instead of an enemy, and add 1 to any Speak Honorably rolls to do so.

Volatile and explosive: When you Act Dishonorably or Commit Open Violence in front of someone you Respect, ask them if they approve or disapprove. If they disapprove, they get an Oath to you to help you learn self control. If they approve, at the next opportunity ask them what they hate, then gain an Oath to them to destroy that thing.

The Hunter's Shipping Moves

Brash but wary: When someone you Respect asks your thoughts, feelings, or opinions, tell them the full unembellished truth. When someone you don't Respect asks, avoid answering, embellish the truth, or tell an outright lie.

Passionate and cocky: You may give yourself the Tag *Headstrong* in order to improve a roll of 6 or less to a 7, 8, or 9 result or a roll of 7, 8, or 9 to a 10 or greater result.

Predatory and secretive: When you watch someone who is unaware of your presence, if it's a player character they can choose to roll +Natural. On a 7 or greater, they tell you how you glimpse a side of them you've never seen before. On a 10 or greater they also gain your Respect. If it's an MC character automatically treat it as a 7 or greater, but you get to choose whether or not you Respect them.

Wild but kind: When you bring someone a trophy or meal made from something you hunted yourself, the next time you make a Move where their Respect would matter, do it as if you had their Respect. If you already had their Respect, get 1 Chi.

The Monk's Shipping Moves

Calm and reserved: Your objectivity helps you with understanding others. When you spend time alone in quiet contemplation about someone, on a 10 or greater you may choose two of the following questions to ask them, and they must answer truthfully. On a 7, 8, or 9 choose 1.

- ~ What are you feeling about ____?
- ~ What do you wish I'd do?
- ~ What do you plan to do next?

Discuss with them what observations led you to this conclusion.

Faithful and preachy: When you debate with someone about the ways in which your beliefs are superior to theirs, gain 1 Chi if you get them to concede the argument, and give them your Respect if you convert them to your beliefs.

Hard and jaded: Say what the worst breaches of your moral code are. Pick some of these, or name your own: Stealing, Lying, Bullying, Killing, Slavery, Infidelity, Usury, Laziness, Greed, Lust, Recklessness, Lawlessness, Filthiness, Compassion, Weakness, Pride, Modesty, Irrationality, Treason. When you witness someone committing one of these breaches, choose:

- ~ They lose your Respect.
- ~ Gain an Oath to your order to bring the one who made the breach of justice, or make them repent or give penance.

Whenever you make a breach of your own moral code, treat it as breaking an Oath to your order.

Sensitive but disciplined: When you go to the spirit world for personal advice, roll +Natural and ask a question. On a 7 or greater, they give you guidance and advice, and on a 7, 8, or 9, add 1 to your next roll to follow through on their answers. On a 10 or greater they stay with you to assist you and you may add 1 to all rolls to follow through on their advice as long as they are with you (until the matter is solved).

The Peasant's Shipping Moves

Cautious and superstitious: When you advise someone based on a superstitious belief, they choose either:

- ~Ignore the advice and have the consequences of an associated failure land on you instead of them.
- ~Follow your advice and add 1 to their next roll.

Generous and faithful: When you give someone a sentimental gift, make a note that you are Faithful to them. Add 1 to all rolls to help anyone you are Faithful to with their moves. If you abandon someone you are Faithful to, or allow harm to come to them without trying to stop it, erase or cross out their name and treat it as if you broke an Oath to them.

Ignorant but sly: Add 1 to your next roll when you blindly follow someone into danger. If you come out of it unscathed, earn their Respect.

Quick-to-anger but forgiving: When someone disrespects you or someone you Respect, gain an Oath to them to help them earn your forgiveness. If you break the Oath by Acting Dishonorably or Committing Open Violence towards that person, add 2 to the roll.

The Scholar's Shipping Moves

Absent-minded and unaware: When you're alone and someone else arrives, they overhear you thinking out loud. Choose one to talk about:

- ~ What you secretly feel about someone.
- ~ An eccentric daydream.
- ~ What you wish you had done.

Detail-oriented and haughty: When someone disrupts your plans or routine by doing the unexpected, choose either:

- ~ You lecture them on the problems they'll cause and add 1 to the next roll +Hot you make.
- ~ You are impressed by their ability to improvise and add 1 to the next roll +Fluid you make.

Excited and reckless: When you initiate a crazy scheme, you have 3 Plans. You can spend a Plan anytime while carrying out the scheme to:

- ~ Have a new obstacle or complication appear.
- ~ Give yourself or someone assisting the plan a Tag.
- ~ When you or another person assisting the plan makes a roll, you may reduce a 10 or greater result to a 7, 8, or 9 result, or reduce a 7, 8, or 9 result to a 6 or less result.

Once you've spent all your Plans, you and everyone assisting you add 1 to all rolls to make the plan succeed.

Quiet and reserved: When you seclude yourself to be alone and away from other people, add 1 to all rolls until you see another person. When someone interrupts your seclusion, make an Oath to them to do something you've never done before.

The Spiritshaper's Shipping Moves

Arrogant and zealous: When someone shows their ignorance of your wisdom or power, you may make a one-time (once each time this Move triggers) use of a Spiritshaper Move you don't have in order to show them their error.

When someone flatters your wisdom or power, make an Oath to them to help them with something beyond their ability. You may make a one-time use of a Spiritshaper Move you don't have to do so.

Intimidating and secretive: When someone seeks your audience, they choose:

- ~ They interrupt a strange ritual and gain an Oath to you to remain ignorant to what you are plotting.
- ~ They find you talking to a spirit who takes an interest in them and begins following them everywhere.
- ~ They choose a secret about themselves that you mysteriously have knowledge of.

Pacifistic and understanding: When you try to break up a fight, pick someone in the fight and choose:

- ~ They accidentally hurt you or someone serving you. Apply Tags as appropriate. They gain an Oath to you to repair the damage they caused.
- ~ You or someone serving you accidentally hurts them and gives them a Tag. You gain an Oath to them to stay out of their affairs next time you have a moral objection.

Principled and immovable: When you stand in defense of someone you care about, you may sacrifice a spirit to negate all harm done to them. If you do, make an Oath to a more powerful spirit to complete the unfinished business of the spirit you sacrificed.

The Warrior's Shipping Moves

Honorable and fair: When you engage someone in an honorable competition or duel, you may choose to subtract 1 from all rolls for the conflict and say how you ensure you play or fight fairly. If you do, the loser Respects the winner, gains an Oath to them to beat them in a fair rematch, and you gain 1 Fortune.

Intense and unflinching: When you knowingly go into a situation where the odds are stacked against you, say what the worst thing that can happen is, and add 1 to all Stand Fast rolls in that situation. Then say who the one character who can save you is. If they don't come to your aid by the time the situation resolves, the worst thing that can happen *does* happen.

Ruthless but respectful: When you ask someone for a temporary truce in order to hold a civil discussion, roll +Natural and add 2 if they Respect you. On a 7 or greater they must accept. On a 10 or greater they bring you a gift in order to show their good will, or concede to at least one of your demands. On a 7, 8, or 9 they choose 1 or both:

- ~ They make an Oath to someone else to betray you.
- ~ They make an Oath to you to continue meeting with you until a lasting truce can be made.

Violent and frightening: When you Commit Open Violence, on a 10 or greater you may also force your target or someone watching to gain an Oath to you to never oppose you.

The Watershaper's Shipping Moves

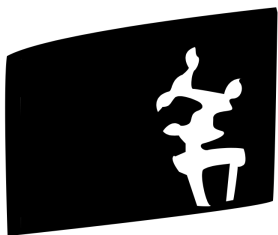
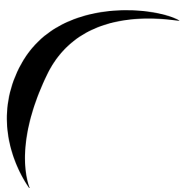
Calm and kind: When you mediate a problem between two other people, suggest a compromise and roll +Fluid. On a 10 or greater you are able to smooth things out for now, and both sides gain an Oath to you to repay your kindness. On a 7, 8, or 9, one side is satisfied with your help and you gain their Respect, but the other is offended somehow; if they Respect you, lose their Respect, and if not, they now see you as part of the problem. Everyone involved should decide which side is offended.

Enthusiastic and impatient: When you work as part of a team to show your support for someone else's plan, you boost morale. Everyone else adds 1 to their next roll to carry out the plan. When you jump into action before your allies are ready, or leave your allies to deal with a problem on your own, choose: you add 1 to your next roll and they all subtract 1 from their next roll, or you subtract 2 from your next roll and they all add 1 to their next roll.

Mothering and parental: When you tend to someone's wounds, they must promise you something they think you want.

Vindictive and tempestuous: When someone betrays you, add 1 to all rolls against them until they make an Oath to never betray you again.





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223	Mediography
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Quinn Turkington
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Robert (Lord Kangarew) Webb
Simon Brunning
Timothy Carroll
Tony Ridgway
Xander

Mediography

Above and beyond any other source, *Avatar: The Last Airbender* and *Avatar: The Legend of Korra* served as the chief inspiration for this game. These cartoons, owned by Nickelodeon, mirror the tone and style that this game is meant to reflect.

Media:

- ~ *Codex Alera* (novel series by Jim Butcher)
- ~ *Fullmetal Alchemist* / *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* (anime)
- ~ *Journey To The West* (classic Chinese literature)
- ~ *Mushi-Shi* (anime)
- ~ *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (classic Chinese literature)
- ~ *Swordsmen 2* (film)

Any media that falls under the shonen anime or wuxia genre.

Roleplaying Games:

Some of these games, especially *Apocalypse World*, have had more influence, but all of these games have adjusted how I thought about designing this game.

- ~ *Anima Prime* by Christian Griffen.
- ~ *Apocalypse World* by Vincent Baker.
- ~ *Feng Shui* by Robin Laws.
- ~ *Dungeon World* by Adam Koebel and Sage Latorra.
- ~ *Golden Sky Stories* by Ryo Kamiya and Tsugihagi Honpo.
- ~ *Inverse World* by Jason Randolph and Brandon Schmelz.
- ~ *Legends of the Wulin* / *Weapons of the Gods* by Eos Press.
- ~ *Monsterhearts* by Avery Mcdaldno.
- ~ *Sagas of the Icelanders* by Gregor Vuga.
- ~ *Wushu* by Daniel Bayn.

Stretch Goal Contributors

Throughout the Kickstarter, I got a bunch of my friends and fellow designers to make some incredibly cool stuff for the game. Check out the previous chapter to enjoy all of their hard work! You can also go check it all out online, it's free for everyone at:

<http://legendoftheelements.com/>

Max Hervieux designed this game, wrote this book, drew and vectored and painted all the art, did the layout, and made the website. When not working on *Legend of the Elements*, he makes Pixel Art (and has released a lesson book on the medium, *Learning Pixel Art*), and runs a blog, *The Logbook Project*.

<http://www.logbook-project.com/>

Henry Branscombe hasn't done much you'll have heard of yet, outside of this book. That will hopefully change in the future, but in the meantime he hopes you enjoy this as much as he enjoyed doing his small part in it.

Orion Canning is a California native who immigrated to the Northwest searching for lower property values, and has dabbled in photography, poetry, film-making, electronic music, and game design. He directed videos for crowd funding campaigns including *The Quiet Year*, *Monsterhearts Second Skins*, and *Legend of the Elements*. His game design work includes *Go Puck Yourself*, *Dragon And Warrior*, The Firestarter skin for *Monsterhearts Second Skins*, and island design for *Fall of Magic*.

Graypawn is a circuitous dreamer and pulp fiction wizard intent on adding more beautiful chaos to the world of shared imagined spaces. By day he does graphic design and project management. By night he's fighting evil with his glyph-spelled Nerf guns, or seeking adventure on whatever horizon his dreams and dice can conjure. Storygames are an amazing way to play pretend, and that's where he has learned a great deal about who he is.

<http://www.graypaw.com>

Kristine Hassell is a Firebender who rolls for initiative as often as she can. A proud Fil-Am from Texas, she enjoys weekly RPGs with her husband and their gaming group. She is the Deputy Director for GeekGirlCon and runs their Twitterfeed. Find her at <http://germancitygirl.tumblr.com> or at @GermanCityGirl.

Andy Munich is a staffer with GeekGirlCon, where his greatest achievement so far has been the @GeekGirlScouts initiative. He is dedicated to play in the most serious way possible and wants you to be too. Andy lives in his own head, which is located in Seattle.

Jackson Tegu enjoys looking out at the weather, often between the sentences he is writing. Through his work, he seeks to create ways for people to share their experiences and outlooks and assumptions with one another, filtered through their creativity. He has looked out at the weather two times while writing this paragraph.

<http://photographsoflightning.com>

<http://patreon.com/jacksontegu>

Michael Wight is a gamer, geek, and freelance designer and illustrator who never knows when to leave well enough alone.

Legal / Thanks

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The Hunter, Peasant, and Artist designed by Henry Branscombe.

Editing by Henry Branscombe.

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- ~ The Olympia, Portland, and Seattle story game crews, who were always there when I wanted to give things a whirl. Special thanks to Robert Bruce, Michael Wight, and Andy Munich, who sat through my most experimental sessions and still walked away to run the game themselves.
- ~ My long-form group: Orion, Becca, Gideon, Henry, and Veles.
- ~ Everyone in the *Avatar World/Legend of the Elements* thread on *Story Games*, as well as everyone who talked about the game around the web.
- ~ Thank you to my many, many playtesters: the original PAX game gang, Jess, Jay, Joe, Andy, Kingston, Sion, Jackson, Mark, Daniel, Aaron, Topher, Jacob, Amanda, Pan, Marc, and everyone else.
- ~ My truest heartfelt thanks to James Fleming on *Story Games*. I hope you realize how important your comments were to me in the beginning; losing faith and steam, your enthusiasm reminded me that it was going to be worth it to forge on.

Thank you. Thank you all.



