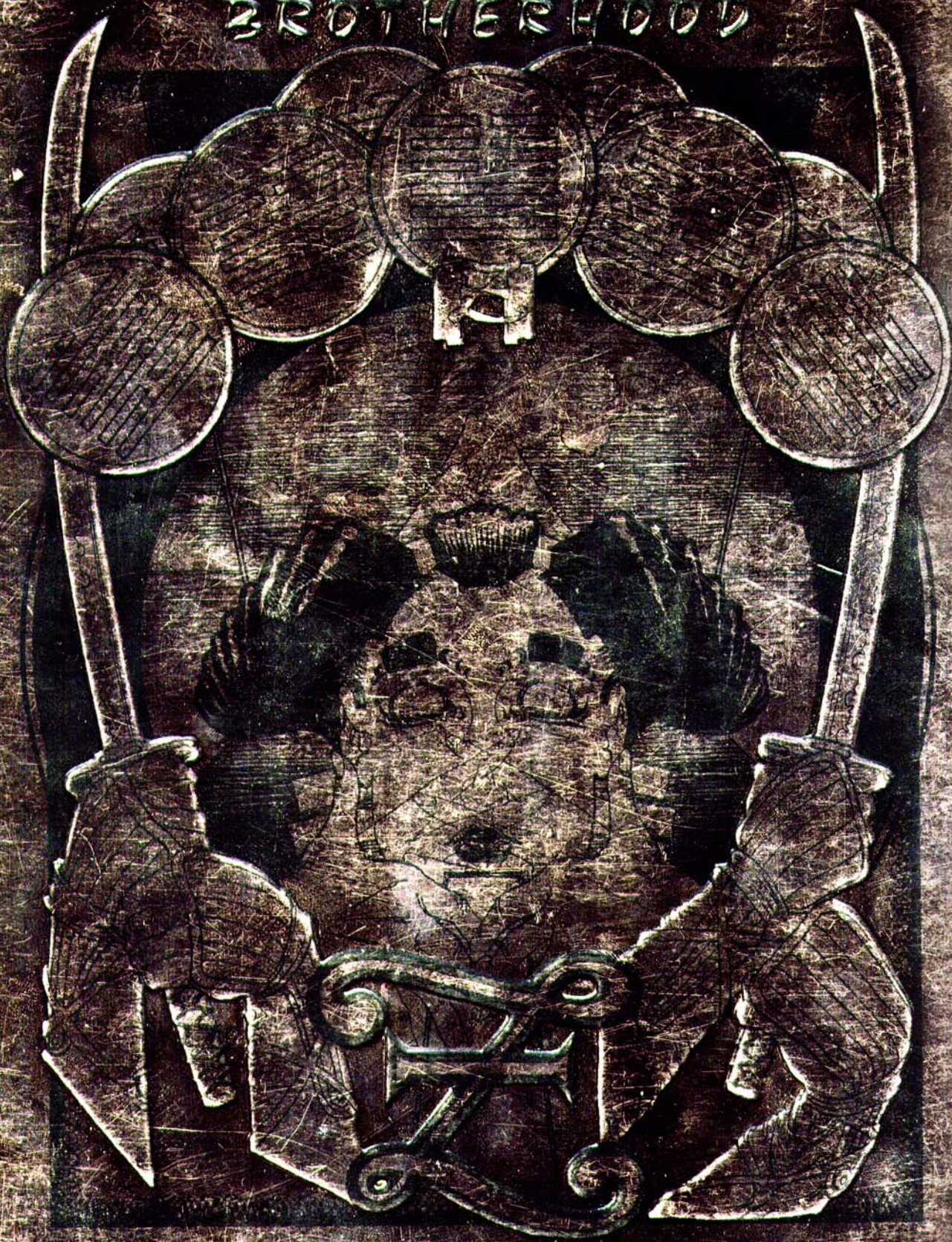


AKASHIC

BROTHERHOOD



Akashic BROTHERHOOD™

Balance, Ascension and the Cosmic All



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Due to mature themes and subject matter, reader discretion is advised.

Author's Dedication

To those who don't know what they are looking for: it was probably in the rough draft.

Special thanks to my Wheel Brothers, Bruce Lee, Chang Cheh and the fabulous actors who worked with him on films, and especially to all those people throughout the world who practice martial arts and have the understanding in their hearts.



Akashic BROTHERHOOD™

A world at peace is a vision so rare, its symbols have hardly been invented.
— Maxine Hong Kirgton

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Prelude: The Cycle of Avatars

...give him the power to call to mind his various temporary states in days gone by; such as one birth, two births, three, four, five, ten, twenty, forty, fifty, a hundred, a thousand, or a hundred thousand births; his births in many an eon of renovation; to call to his mind his temporary states in days gone by in all their modes and in all their details...

— Robert Tralins, Belmont Productions, *The Cosmozoids*



With a piercing scream that shattered the quiet of the forest, a hawk dove toward its prey. Fall Breeze watched as the outstretched talons took hold of the fleeing mouse-child and the hawk took flight once again.

As her eyes followed the hawk, the sight within her mind focused upon the hawk's nest. The snake had worked its way up the tree and across the limb. The mouth, opening many times larger than appeared possible, slowly began to engulf an egg.

A hand slammed down, clutching her.

"Thus is the way of Drahma."

The arm that followed wrapped around her. A leg immobilized her torso. The weight of a body forced her to the ground.

But Fall Breeze's mind quickened. Sought. Found. Two men. No more. Both purified by the ancient ways of the Brotherhood.

It could be a trap. Best make sure.

Fall Breeze started as her magicks were dissipated by a will greater than her own.

With a third thought, she recognized the grasp as Raging Eagle's.

"Is that all you intend to do?" A second familiar voice rippled through her mind.

"Stop coaching her." Raging Eagle released his grasp. Fall Breeze rolled into a full lotus position to look up into Gentle Mountain's smiling face.

"Don't look at me." Gentle Mountain held out the sign of peace. "He's over there."

Fall Breeze's eyes followed the Master's prompting to the form of Raging Eagle, arms crossed, standing in a nearby tree. He laughed, and his voice came from behind her.

"I'm here as well." Raging Eagle looked down into her eyes as she spun about.

"How did you do that?" Fall Breeze asked. "It's like you're two places at once, and you totally stopped my magicks."

Raging Eagle signed her to remain silent. "Don't forget that your vision of reality can influence others' magicks. It is a very powerful tactic. As for being two places at once — do you think that we've taught you everything there is to know?"

Fall Breeze smiled, leapt to her feet and laughed. "It is good to see the two of you. I mean really see the two of you — with my eyes and everything."

"We understand." Gentle Mountain spoke without words as always. "If things weren't as confusing as they always are, we would be here more often, I assure you."

"I'll never get used to that myself," she said as Raging Eagle began to walk off. "Come on," he said, "We have an important task ahead of us. We'll explain to you along the way what's going on."

Seeing Gentle Mountain following Raging Eagle, Fall Breeze did the same. The elder mage stopped after a few paces and signaled her to stop as well. Raging Eagle stood rigid, concentrating. His arms moved so fast that the wind screamed.

"What help could I be to you?" the younger Brother asked, puzzled and entranced by Raging Eagle's magicks.

"It is not so much that we need you, but that a common friend needs us." Gentle Mountain's words coursed through reality as Raging Eagle's hands parted the fold in the Tapestry. With another pass of his hands, there appeared a cinder block hallway. The echo of a crowd rang through the mystick gate.

"Please, step through the portal." Raging Eagle waved his hands for the others to enter.

• • •

Battering Ram shifted her weight to her back foot. Her arm shot out like a rocket. The gloved fist collided with its target so hard that her opponent's mouth guard flew free and skittered across the canvas to the dirty concrete floor.

The ball of her foot soared up to tear into exposed throat and chin. Her opponent's head rocked.

With a sudden glance, Battering Ram caught sight of three oddly dressed spectators. One Asian wore an orange robe. The other man sported the build of a professional fighter. The woman looked oddly familiar. Disturbingly so. Battering Ram hesitated.

The bell rang.

Battering Ram backed into her corner and sat down.

"What gives? You had her!" Bill Bookman coughed around his cigar.

"Eh? Leave me alone." Battering Ram held her head in her hands. She knew something strange was going on. Bill wasn't himself.

The bell rang again.

"People are going to say that *you're* betting on this match, girl!" Bookman hollered after her. "Take that bitch out, and now!"

• • •

Fall Breeze glared down at the spectacle before her. "This is an organized sport? It seems very brutal." Fall Breeze couldn't keep her eyes from the conflict.



"Yes," Raging Eagle replied. "Matches like these are held all over the world. People watch them at the arenas themselves and television audiences around the world watch similar matches to their hearts' content. Though it's illegal, gambling often occurs." Raging Eagle suddenly rose to a more alert stance. He scanned the audience with mystickally enhanced senses; "We are not alone."

"Hey, you sissy! What's with the dress, old man? You look like my stepmother!" A tobacco-chawing, beer-guzzling, cap-wearing scruff-beard bellowed insults down at Gentle Mountain.

The three Brothers pivoted. "He beats his wife and children." Fall Breeze spoke softly and calmly. Gentle Mountain's eyes bored deep down into the core of the man's being through the scruff-beard's widening, red-veined eyes.

Gentle Mountain spoke aloud:

"You will never touch your children or wife again. If you do, you will no longer have the will to live. You will kill yourself. Do you understand? What you have done shall return to you one thousand times through the cycles of Drahma! This is the curse that you have brought upon yourself.

"Seek inner tranquillity and you will find peace with yourself and the All."

The light in the stadium seemed to suddenly dim. Some intangible darkness seethed in the surrounding air, bubbling up out of the scruff-beard. The man's face grew limp and slack, his face flushing with sudden panic.

The shock of Gentle Mountain's voice began to fade into the garbled echoes of the stadium crowd. Fall Breeze looked at him oddly. It had never occurred to her before that she had imagined Gentle Mountain's voice for so many years. His real voice sounded so strange to her. Scruff-beard scrambled to his feet and started to leave. His buddies looked evilly down at the trio, but only helped their friend from his seat and out an exit arch.

"Over there." Raging Eagle pointed down at the coach beside the ring. "Iteration X."

"A what?" In the crowd below, Fall Breeze saw the man who had the Awakened light within him.

"Fall Breeze. Stay with me!" Raging Eagle turned toward Gentle Mountain: "You know what to do."

"As always, Brother. May things go well," Gentle Mountain's thoughts murmured.

"Peace, and power to your inner Self." Fall Breeze saluted, her hands forming the symbol for active power held within by passive energies; a symbol of her respect.

• • •

Flashbacks of a prior existence streamed into Battering Ram's mind. Information surged through her, cutting out new synaptic pathways with millions of tiny bolts of lightning. Another life... another body... She was suddenly in Egypt, practicing the dance-like Questing Style steps of

something called "Do" as the modern Battering Ram caught her opponent squarely with a vicious backhand. Spit flew and the woman's head bounced from side to side.

Suddenly Battering Ram's view of reality transposed. She found herself within a stone courtyard, walking with another, older woman. There were cats everywhere. Siamese cats. Very large Siamese cats. Hundreds of them. "These are all things that you must remember..." her teacher's voice trailed off. "Battering Ram?"

Her focus snapped into the frame of reference. "Why do you call me that?"

"That is what you are. You always charge forward like a ram in battle. You butt with your head. Baahhh Baaa!" The old woman poked her in the head. "You must learn to use your mind. You are Awakened now. No blindly running head-first into things, little one."

The ring spun. The audience's voices fell into a discernible, almost rhythmic, pattern.

She wanted to dance around, to humiliate her opponent, but suddenly caught control of herself. She must think of her opponent's feelings as well — this is sportsmanship. She had the ability to end the fight quickly; it would be wrong for her not to exercise it. Smoothly, she stepped up along side the woman, sweeping her off her feet. Her hands caught the woman's center of balance and laid her gently onto the mat.

The crowd booed. Battering Ram rose triumphantly above her opponent and quickly helped the woman to her feet. The defeated boxer stood dizzily with her head held forward. Battering Ram helped her to her own corner.

• • •

Fall Breeze followed Raging Eagle through the artificial stone walkway. The bluish flickering lights plagued Fall Breeze's vision to no end.

"You need to get out the way we got in." Raging Eagle strode down the hallway effortlessly with long quick strides. "We are about to encounter a mechanically-enhanced human from the Technocracy. You had better leave."

"What do you mean? What are we about to do?" Fall Breeze blurted.

"Listen." Raging Eagle guided her into the entranceway to the public restrooms. "This was meant to be a routine pick-up of a recycled Avatar. That woman is Battering Ram."

The name rang in Fall Breeze's head. She remembered being in Egypt centuries ago. *The fruitfulness of the Nile left a smell of sweet freshness in the air. She felt the weight of jewelry on her arms, around her ankles, in her hair, and from her ears. She walked with Battering Ram in a grain field. The stalks blew with the gentle wind that rolled in across the water.*

"Do you think that we will remember each other in future lives?" Fall Breeze stopped for a moment, suddenly bewildered.

"What's wrong?" Battering Ram rested her hand against Fall Breeze's shoulder to steady her wobbling. The hand felt strong and reassuring.

"I suddenly feel I've seen this before." Fall Breeze smiled. "Do you think we will? I mean, see each other again... after we die?"

"I hope so." Battering Ram held Fall Breeze tightly to her. "I'll miss you. Our studies have made our mentors quite proud. I'm sure they will do their best to see that we will meet each other again in future lives if we ask them to."

"Fall Breeze, it is time for you to leave."

She was running with Raging Eagle through the concrete hallway once again. "Who are we fighting?" Fall Breeze tried to steady her mind.

"Iteration X. We are sworn to destroy them, and they us. They are here to kill Battering Ram before she can Awaken..."

• • •

The door to the woman's locker room crashed back off its hinges and smashed to the floor, followed by the body of Battering Ram's opponent. Like a bloody rag doll, she lay limp and lifeless upon the floor. Battering Ram fell to her knees. The blood gushing from the missing section of the woman's head pooled out onto the floor. "*Santo Sangre!*" Battering Ram screamed.

Bill Bookman, Battering Ram's manager, slowly walked out of the woman's locker room, his right hand running with blood. "I've been looking for you." Bookman's eyes locked onto Battering Ram, targeting. "People're sayin' that you rigged the fight. Somebody's gotta pay."

"How could you kill her?" Battering Ram's eyes welled with tears. The sticky blood covered her legs and feet. She slipped around in it, clutching the woman's body to hers. Here, for the first time in this incarnation, Battering Ram sensed mortality with all her being, felt the void of a human death. A cold breeze ran across the fires of her newly Awakened Avatar. "She's dead!"

Blades popped out of Bookman's hand and came spinning to life. The sound of the whirling blades tore through the echoing tunnels.

"Fall Breeze, help the woman out of the building. I'll meet you outside." Raging Eagle took a running start and soared into the air. His foot slammed into Bookman's head with a grinding scream of metal.

The younger mage pulled Battering Ram away from the bloody body. Her eyes connected with the boxer's. A thousand thoughts surged through her: lives that had gone before, feelings of friendship in other countries, colors and shapes long forgotten, the passage of time, and Death in all its forms swooping down from the horizon, its tattered black clothing sailing in the wind. She grabbed Battering Ram and ran.

"Down this way. There is a secret passage." Fall Breeze felt along the wall for the hidden handle as she channeled her thoughts into the Tapestry. She knew it was there — knew she would make there be a secret passage leading outside the building. Her vision was already outside, making sure that the parking lot was clear of Sleepers.

"I've played here since I was ten! There aren't any secret passages!" Battering Ram shouted at Fall Breeze.

There was no handle. There was no secret passage.

A security guard locked a fence at the end of the hallway. "You ladies are going to have to go around the other way. This area is off limits," he said as he dropped the padlock against the fence and turned to walk away.

"Thanks," Fall Breeze grabbed hold of Battering Ram's hand. "I guess we'd better go back the way we came."

• • •

Raging Eagle's kick tore the leg free from the decapitated body. Sparks from disconnected wires scorched the cyborg's flesh. Its head lay on the floor, one eye spinning about wildly as the other stared off into empty space. In the cyborg's mind, he still stood in a wind-blown meadow with Gentle Mountain. *I must report this to the Comptroller*, he thought. *He'll know what to do.* The cyborg attempted to access his neural interface.

"He can't help you," the mage said. "Your path in this life is complete. I hope that in the next life you will not side with the Technocracy again. Peace be with you." Gentle Mountain gestured to the cyborg as reality crumbled about him.

• • •

"This must be a dream..." Battering Ram began to go numb from it all. Her manager, who had been a killer robot, was now a bunch of broken parts strewn about the floor by a man who chopped through steel with his bare hands. The stench of charred flesh filled her nostrils. Once again, a sea of red flowed out before her. The broken form was clearly half human and half machine.

"We can't get out that way." Fall Breeze kept watch down the hallways. "She knows this place too well."

"Stand back. I will make us a way." Raging Eagle began to stare intently at a wall. Slowly he prepared; calling upon the power of the "repeating strike," he began to throw a series of punches. With a loud *kiai*, Raging Eagle threw the final blow, shattering the wall like a sledgehammered eggshell. Fountains of water shot from snapped pipes and alarms sounded throughout the hallways.

"You possess the power of God! How did you do it? You are a Saint, no?"

Smiling, Raging Eagle turned and replied, "Ancient Chinese secret."



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JOSHUA GABRIEL TIMBROOK
M C M X C I V

Introduction: A Master Informs

*Somanytimes,
I was the one who stopped
Myself from doing things.
Somanytimes,
I was the one who stopped
And clipped my wings.*
— Donovan, "New Year's Resolution"



Remove the clutter from your mind.
Block out the thoughts that distract you.
Feel the Cosmic All course through you.
Think of nothing.
Relax until it all passes away.
Breathe.
Become one with what you are.
Become one with what you are not.
Focus.
Feel the flow.
Feel the flow around you.
Ride the flow through the Cosmic All.
This is the path of least resistance.

How to Use this Book

*I've heard of you. You're the man they say cuts through
men's torsos as if they were dead wood.*

— Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima, *Lone Wolf and Cub*

Welcome to the Akashic Brotherhood. Unlike many Masters of other Traditions, I will try not to hammer our history into your head before you are ready. You may never want to know what has come on before, for we know it all — both the beautiful and the vile. Is this not Dharma? For that same reason, I will not verse you in the many other things that could cloud your mind or distract you from your studies. When the time comes, you will know to ask.

Outside the walls of our Xiudaoyuan, confusion and imbalance fill the world. Within these boundaries rest peace of mind and time to focus oneself into the power-coherent form that one was meant to be. We will teach you



what is within you before taking you out to battle in the so-called Ascension Wars.

Ah, yes. I knew that you had heard about them.

Yes. I laugh.

You wish to battle in these wars, do you not? I can see it in your eyes, mind, heart, spirit and soul.

And, if I may step beyond myself and my purpose, I will also define for you many of the things that make up this little world in which I and, soon, you will exist. These elements — the rites, Kemian, and maneuvers that we keep hidden within our Xiudaoyuan — can be found at the end of this book. It is a mode of the Drahma that they appear here — that fact cannot be denied.

Drahma, Balance, and the Cosmic All

Do you really want to know? Once an evil deed is done, it never ends. It keeps on going forever.

— Sun Chien as the Scorpion, *Five Deadly Venoms*

The Cosmic All

Look you upon the times before now. Things were as harmonious then as they are fractured now. Pure Ones in their truest forms held sway over the multitude and the Self

was as one. The Self is the Cosmic All — the knowing, realizing essence. Its form is all things, and, in thought, the only thing. Even as we struggle to recombine what we once thought was lost, so still it remains, for it is all things. We have, and will always be, small pieces of that which is, so completely encompassing is the Cosmic All.

Balance

The Cosmic All teeters on a focal point at its very center, the whole of the self constantly tipping to and fro. The key to balance is understanding Do and how it reacts within Drahma. The forces that make up the Cosmic All must find an equilateral existence, or the All will be thrown off into oblivion to right itself again.

Drahma

What comes around goes around.

You reap what you sow.

Ideas and occurrences tend to spiral back upon themselves.

The man who conquers his mind is truly powerful. The man who understands Drahma can predict his future. The woman who directs her Drahma can outwit destiny. To speed up Drahma weakens its looping grasp. The Avatar who directs Drahma in all things is a truly powerful being indeed.

Drahma is both the cycle of “action causes reaction” and the Path of truth and egoless righteousness. Do not be distracted from that which is within you. Allow Do to help you travel your Drahma until it has reached completion.

So we live our lives.

Theme and Mood

*When you are poor,
You have got to struggle.*

— Alexander Fu Sheng as Tan Tung, *Chinatown Kid*

Brother, you're here for one reason — to find and develop your inner self. It is of the utmost importance to remain calm and serene even in the face of turmoil. We control our Drahma beyond the death of our physical forms as our Avatars pass into other incarnations. Do not fear. Believe in Do, and you will pass though life as it was meant to be.

Once you are at peace with yourself, you will be at peace with the world and attain that which you strive for — though it may not be in the form or essence you expect to find.

Do not forget what you are searching for; otherwise you will be too preoccupied with the search to recognize the treasure.

Our theme is balance. Our mood is one of exotic mystery. Explore. Enjoy. Learn.

Terminology of the Brotherhood

Akasha — The Ascended Avatar credited with the development of writing and the formation of the Akashic Record.

Akashic Record — An outline of the Tapestry. Composed partially of written text, the largest part of this Record derives from a collective mind/spirit pool formed from the memories and subconscious of the Akashic Brotherhood as a whole.

Blue Skins — Mages of the Primordial Essence who focus their lives in the pursuit of Ascension. Legends say that as the mage nears Ascension his skin becomes blue with Quintessence saturation.

Brother — A sworn comrade who will side with you throughout this incarnation, no matter what the cost. This term is not gender specific.

Calculating — Making an educated assumption based on known facts through the extrapolation of information, especially when utilizing the Spheres of Correspondence, Mind and/or Time.

Ch'i (Qi or Chi) — (Chinese) A model of Quintessence that so precisely follows the weaving of the Tapestry that it gains the momentum of the flow through the Cosmic All. For the most part, internal in origin.





Choppy-Socky — 1) The act of performing martial arts, specifically Do, in an improper fashion. 2) A martial arts or Asian action-adventure film. Often considered derogatory.

Dojang (also Dojo) — 1) A training hall used for the practice of martial arts. 2) A lesser Xiudaoyuan.

Dragon — 1) The aspect of the Celestines of the Shard Realms of Correspondence, Mind, Prime and Time with which members of the Akashic Brotherhood interact. 2) Someone who has achieved the skill of the third rank of Do training. 3) A person fueled by an indomitable spirit and will, usually a Questing or Primordial mage.

Fist — 1) The hand when clenched into a form usable for striking blows. 2) The whole of that which a martial artist puts to use when in combat (i.e. her entire body).

Flow — The underlying current of the Cosmic All.

Fruit of Sarasvati — 1) Tass. 2) Sections of the Akashic Record.

Intrinsic Internal Energy — That which is chi, both internal and external.

Kamikaze — 1) Divine Wind. 2) One who aligns one's self with both the Flow and Drahma in order to achieve a goal even if it leads to death. 3) Often a mage who aligns himself with the Phoenix Incarna.

Kemian — Talisman; literally Quintessence "tap."

Ki — That which is chi, mainly referring to the externally summoned.

Lingxiu — Deacon.

Magick Papers — Slips of yellow paper inscribed with characters in red ink. The inscription determines the type of powers that the paper possesses. The size of the paper indicates the strength. Often, the blood of the practitioner is blended into the inks to yield even more strength.

Orange Robe — A Sleeper or Awakened initiate of the Akashic Brotherhood who resides full-time in a Chantry. Such mages tend to be of the Pattern Essence and seek to excel at the Sphere of the Mind.

Others, the — A derogatory term for Awakened beings who are not mages.

Paladin — The champion of an Akashic Brotherhood Xiudaoyuan; usually the highest-ranking Questing Essence mage.

Pangu — 1) The architect who constructed the universe and whose body became the substance of the universe upon his death. Seen by many to be an equivalent to the Western Gaia. 2) Nature, used to refer to all creation.

Phoenix — 1) The aspect of the Celestines of the Shard Realms of Drahma, Entropy and Spirit with which members of the Akashic Brotherhood interact. 2) A person who visits the Penumbra often and goes through long periods of Quiet. Usually refers to Dynamic Stylists.

Record, the — The Akashic Record.

Saint — 1) One who nears Ascension. 2) One sworn to fight for a cause, with all of her being, unto death.

Sar — 1) Tass. 2) Abbreviation of the Fruit of Sarasvati.

Sarasvati — 1) The river that, with the Ganges, replaced the Sindhu as the most holy river of India. 2) The Indian goddess of speech, wife of Brahma. 3) To the Akashics, Sarasvati is the Ascended Avatar of the founder of complex communication.

Scales of the Dragon — Mages of the Questing Essence who specialize in the militant aspects of Do. It is said that their combined number makes up the physical body of the Dragon Celestine. Also called Dragon's Scales.

Sect — A branch of the Brotherhood that specializes in the study of specific Spheres of magick and usually has a particular agenda for its teachings and philosophy.

Sensei — Pedagogue.

Sensing — Using Life, Forces and Matter to extrapolate information about the nearby surroundings.

Shaolin Temple — Two Buddhist monasteries located in China, one northern and one southern. These temples are historically described as the birthplace of modern Chinese martial arts.

Sifu — Mentor.

Simiao Zhuchi — 1) The leader of a Chantry, usually concerned with general Chantry operation. 2) The most learned Pedagogue of a Chantry.

Style — 1) A specific form of Do. 2) A particular pattern or mode of Do that relies upon a certain attitude and, usually, a set energy source (internal or external).

Sword Saint — A member of the Akashic Brotherhood who has chosen the sword as her dedicated focus for the Spheres of Life and Matter, and who has sworn to battle in the Ascension Wars.

Thumb — A master's top student and/or assistant.

Tiger — 1) The aspect of the Celestines of the Shard Realms of Life, Forces and Matter with which members of the Akashic Brotherhood interact. 2) Someone who has achieved the skill of the third rank of Do training. 3) A person of steady nature, who knows when to be calm and when to strike (usually refers to a Primordial Stylist).

Xiudaoyuan — A Chantry.

Yogi — Among the Akashic Brotherhood, a Dynamic mage specializing in the Spirit Sphere.





JOSHUA GABRIEL TIMBROOK
MCMXCIV

Chapter One: Above the Surface (Culture)

Release yourself, and you will be free.

— Nagi Shota, Orange Robe Xiudaoyuan, Japan



"What is this place?" Battering Ram's eyes opened in awe as she scanned the surroundings. "My God, it looks so familiar." Wedged back between two large cliff faces, the sloping red roofs of the Xiudaoyuan reached out to touch the tall pine trees. Orange Robes stood in meditative stances, guarding the large, open doors.

"Follow me." Raging Eagle directed the initiate forward across the courtyard's huge slabs of rock, toward the entrance of the temple.

"Wait a minute. I think that I'm starting to catch on about all this. You guys are like the characters in those old chop-sockies, right? I must have been hit in the head in the ring," she babbled nervously. "Did you ever see those films? Cool! I think I can deal with this for a little while... I'm probably at a hospital somewhere trying to get through a concussion. Right. Sure. What about the ten-thousand-year-old ginseng and power pills and stuff? I know it's true here. Am I right? I mean look at this place. It would make a great set! *Por dios!* I'm psyched."

"You are quite correct about the ginseng." Raging Eagle reached out with his mind to calm Battering Ram's thoughts. "We call such objects that contain distilled essence of the Cosmic All 'Kemian.' But I assure you that you are not unconscious. We brought you here for this is your Destiny. It has been for many of your incarnations.

"I know it may take you a while to adjust, but you will. Focus yourself upon the basics of Do... the rest will follow. Have patience. You'll see." Raging Eagle signed to the Orange Robes at the door. Both nodded to him in unison and resumed their meditations.

Battering Ram walked through the gateway. "What are you talking about?"

Gentle Mountain and Fall Breeze trailed several steps behind them, deep within their own conversation: "I remember waking from the Sleep. I understand that this does not happen to everyone." Fall Breeze's face took on a serious cast. "How can you tell when someone is about to Awaken?"

The elder Brother pointed to Battering Ram. "She Awakened because you were with us. My hobby is studying

people's previous incarnations. Some of our brethren and sisters do this as a full-time occupation, as part of their Path. There are ways to Awaken the Avatars, but we of the Brotherhood wish for people to Awaken on their own.

"You see, we have found through the countless centuries that lives travel through preordained cycles. We try to teach ourselves how to avoid the same pitfalls we fell into in previous lives.

"I merely studied Drahma, the Balance and the All to find Battering Ram. Were you not the one to teach me of these principles in your own past life?" The smile that bloomed on Fall Breeze's face answered Gentle Mountain's question.

"You went to the Record?" she asked. Gentle Mountain nodded. "I'd like to see it myself. I wish I could remember more of my other incarnations," she continued. "It gets so confusing sometimes. I recall so little. How did you discover so many details about her in the Record? Books can only tell so much."

The Mentor smiled. "The Akashic Record is compiled and stored only loosely within books. A secret mind-hold deep within the Realm of Dream and the Shard Realm of Mind contains the essence of all the recollections of the Brotherhood. Such memories are not always literal, but may, if read correctly, tell the inquiring mind much. One of the Record's uses is to track the course of our lives, as we have just discussed. In its larger form, the Record is the

history of existence as we of the Brotherhood know it.

"As Drahma works to preserve the Balance, so does the Avatar reAwaken in a like pattern as it finds rebirth. Those who have truly Ascended have risen above the Drahma and escaped the cycle of death."

"Is Ascension so hard to attain?"

"If I knew," the Mentor replied, "would I be here to tell you?"

Sleepers and the Brotherhood

Highest good is like water. Because water excels in Benefiting the myriad creatures without contending With them and settles where none would like to be, It comes close to the way.

— Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching* (Book One, Verse VIII)

Once again, the four Brothers walked together, passing through the many halls of the great Xiudaoyuan, the Temple of Inner Truth. Orange Robes stopped to bow now and again. Several novices asked questions of both Raging Eagle and Gentle Mountain.

"Many of these people are Sleepers," Fall Breeze said in English, puzzled, scanning the Avatars of those about her.

Few are ready for our Path. Most seek. They wander about aimlessly, like a chariot dragged by wild horses unchecked by the sleeping driver. What good is such a chariot? Surely it will become smashed to pieces before it arrives at its destination.

Are you actually looking for something from life?
Are you letting yourself be led, or do you think?

When an obstacle comes along, do you lose interest?
Surely you must learn to find the key to this.

Go through, go around.

This is the simple lesson.

The line is the shortest distance.

The straight the most powerful strike.

The circle rolls away from harm.

The curve travels around boundaries.

When you decide to look for peace within,
It will be time to come and learn from us.

You must be open and like clay.

Do not forget that the world has hardened you.

It is difficult to become the block of wood
After a life spent achieving the tempering of metal.

Do you remember that spark in your mind?
Or was it like a searing wave of fire

Rushing up your spine?

Focusing, you could feel that something.
There it began.

The first steps are hard to detect without probing;
This is not our place.

The next steps are easier to see;

Watch the step, the action, the thought.

People change, seeking something more.

It may be martial arts. It may be perfection.

It may be meditation. It might be nothing.

But this is where you must find most of them.

With the third step, they Awaken and become known to us.

How can the blind hide the light of a candle
When they do not see it?

Now the Others come like moths to the flame.

Speed is important.

They will be plucked like ripened fruit.

Luckily, if that soul is very important,
We will aide you with the Record.

Follow the path of Drahma

And you too will learn the cycles.

The ever-returning wheel of life.
The recurrent underlying theme.

"How do you mean, 'Sleepers'?" Battering Ram asked.

Raging Eagle signaled Fall Breeze aside. "Gentle Mountain, please escort Battering Ram to the Grand Hall. I will join you shortly."

"Of course... Why don't we start from the beginning, shall we? Come along. This way." Gentle Mountain gently took hold of Battering Ram's elbow and led her onward through the quiet courtyard. The kickboxer's confused gaze panned back to Fall Breeze.

"It will be all right. I will see you soon." Fall Breeze motioned a handsign to Battering Ram. "It is strange, Raging Eagle," she said in Cantonese; "I have the strangest feeling that I have met her before."

"I know. You are a very special one, Fall Breeze. I always appreciate your company." Raging Eagle walked into the rock garden and sat in full lotus position. "Why I remember previous incarnations, when... well, hmm..." Fall Breeze sat beside him, but he said no more.

Several of the Sleepers busied themselves moving the large stones, taking great care to rake the smaller pebbles into their proper places. Upon completing their tasks, they bowed, showing the handsign of respect to Fall Breeze and Raging Eagle.

Raging Eagle and Fall Breeze did likewise.

"Look at the beauty that they have created." His hand slowly swept in a smooth gentle motion from one side of the garden to the other. Raging Eagle motioned the Sleepers to leave while Fall Breeze's mind absorbed the garden. "It is a study in the flow of the Cosmic All and Balance, is it not?"

"It is a study in Drahma as well." Raging Eagle sat for a moment in quiet contemplation.

Eventually Fall Breeze spoke again: "Is this why 'Sleepers' are here?"

"Why are they here?" Raging Eagle responded.

"Because they too are part of the Drahma, the Balance, and the Cosmic All," she replied.

"Well said." Raging Eagle sat for several breaths. "Some seek that which they will never achieve. If these Sleepers' lives flow around us, just as the patterns flow around the larger rocks within this garden, should they not be here with us? Are they not part of the larger Pattern?"

"All are continuing aspects of Drahma." Fall Breeze set her mind into the totality of the work before her.

• • •

Let the sleeping lion lie.
He sleeps and harms no one.
He is at peace in his restful state.
Freshly awakened out of cycle,
The lion is wild with rage
And will slay all
Within grasp of claw and fang.
— Thundering Spring River Sparrow, historical Blue Skin

"Here, have some tea." Gentle Mountain held his sleeve back while he poured. Battering Ram nodded, picking up her cup. The bustling Xiudaoyuan dining hall distracted her. The people were all in excellent physical condition. "Your Akashic name is also Battering Ram," said the Mentor. "We have been charting your cycles and incarnations for many lifetimes. I know that things have happened quickly for you, and that it's all probably quite a shock, but you need to decide soon whether or not you will stay with us and learn our ways. I would rather you stayed." Gentle Mountain sipped his tea.

"Look. I've got a really bad headache." The boxer rubbed her temples. "I just want my own life back. This must be a dream. Why am I here?"

"A more profound question than you know." He smiled. "Listen: there is something inside you that makes you different from other people. Your inner self has Awakened; it is only a matter of time before that Self begins to exercise the ability to manipulate reality. This is what we call magick. Surely you must already sense something different inside of you. This place, this Xiudaoyuan, is here to teach people how to understand the inner self. We want to help. You have already met those who wish your death."

"You mean my manager?" Battering Ram pulled at her clothing, remembering the clotted gore, the blood of her opponent. "God, what was he? A robot?"

"Forget that for now. There was nothing you could have done." Gentle Mountain coaxed the tension and guilt from her mind with his magicks. "Would you like to stay here?"

"Yeah," Battering Ram drank down her cup of tea with a quick swallow. "I might as well."

"Good. Then let us find some fresh clothing for you. I will explain the rituals that you must perform when you are brought before the Simiao Zhuchi." Gentle Mountain lifted the tea pot. "But first another cup or two of tea. I'm quite thirsty."

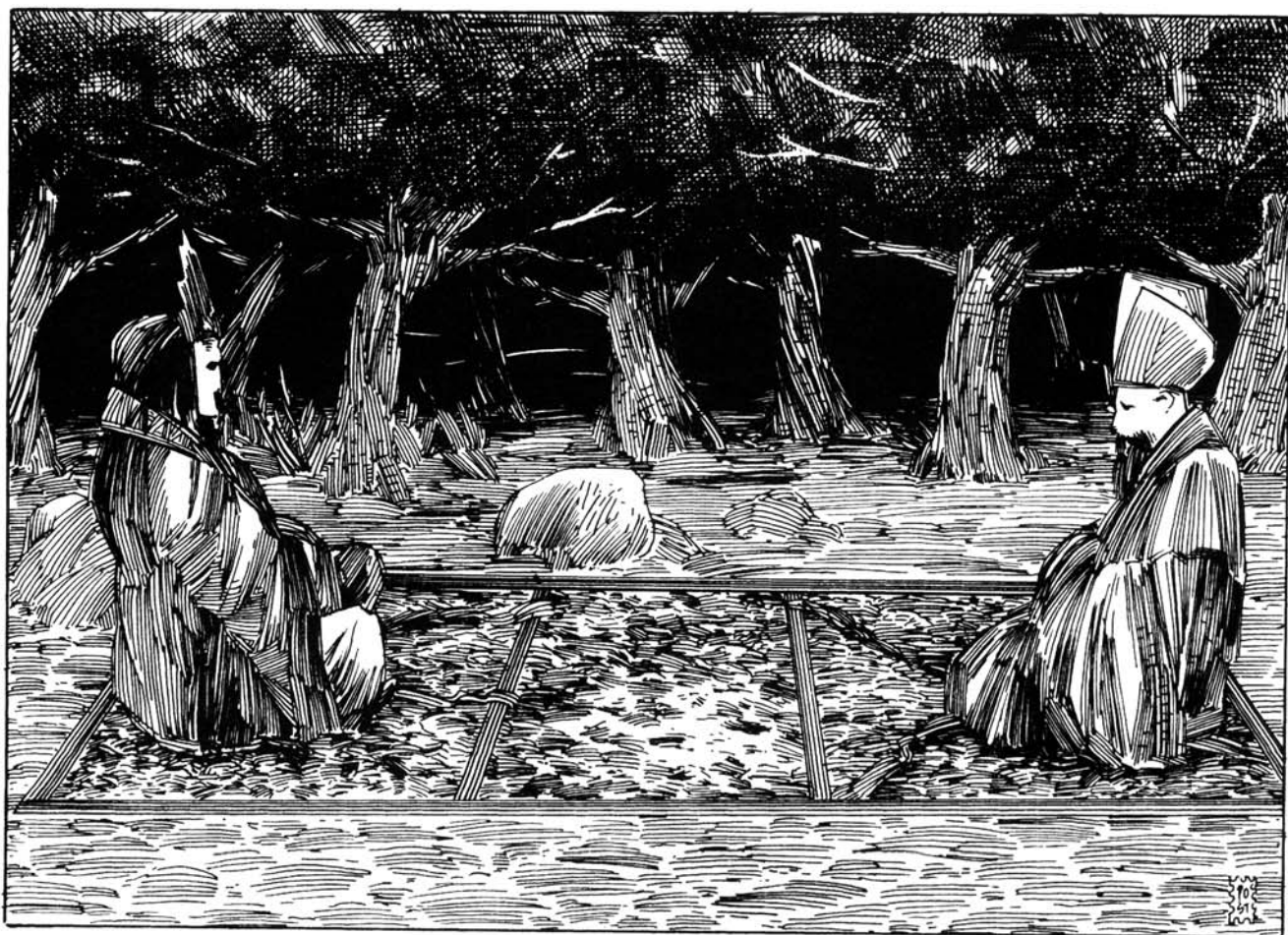
Initiation and Foci

Focus... 5) a center of activity, attraction, or attention...
— Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary

"Are you prepared?" Gentle Mountain stood beside Battering Ram. The rhythm of wooden gongs filled the air with their constant tapping. Mantras resonated with the power of a hundred voices. Centering herself as best she could, she bowed sharply to the Orange Robes at the large gate before her. "Yes."

With Gentle Mountain's handsign, the gates opened. All sound stopped.

The Orange Robes of the Xiudaoyuan faced one another in two parallel lines. At the back of the Temple sat the Simiao Zhuchi, with the Lingxiu and Sensei of the Xiudaoyuan on either side; the boxer noticed Raging Eagle among them.



Slowly and calmly, she walked forward between the rows of Orange Robes. At the end of the hall the Simiao Zhuchi swept out his hand and the doors to the hall closed. Battering Ram lowered herself to her knees: "I humbly request that you accept me as a member of this sacred Brotherhood."

"It is good to see you again." The Simiao Zhuchi saluted with a handsign. "Raging Eagle has been selected as your Sensei. It is the hope of all those assembled that you learn to connect with your inner self and find peace. Strive to achieve this goal."

"I'll try." Battering Ram mumbled under her breath. A sharp poke nudged her right arm.

"I will." She spoke with greater clarity.

Raging Eagle emerged from the crowd. In his hands was the belt that she had received from Master Song Vu when she had studied in Korea. "Remember this. It is now presented to you anew. It does not mean what it did before.

"Once this was a symbol of your skill. Now you will be the symbol, and it will direct the power that rages within you. Do not lose it; if you do, you will lose a part of yourself as well."

Battering Ram took the belt and tied it in place. "Thank you, Sensei."

Raging Eagle bowed to the Simiao Zhuchi. "Thank you for allowing me the honor of teaching such a respected student."

The Master directed Raging Eagle to withdraw to the ranks of Sensei and Lingxiu. "We must all remember to be true to ourselves and to others. We must remain calm in our lives and in our actions. We must have patience to learn the cycles of our Drahma, and our place within the All. This is the Path to Ascension.

"We must always work to achieve and maintain the Balance of all things: our selves, our Xiudaoyuan, and our world. Peace go with you all."

Slowly the Orange Robes of the temple filed out, followed by the Sensei and Lingxiu, then finally the Simiao Zhuchi. Raging Eagle and Battering Ram alone remained.

"Are you prepared for the next stage?" Raging Eagle asked.

Battering Ram rose to her feet, bowed, and followed Raging Eagle out through the back of the hall. A narrow corridor led to four gates, each engraved with a strange symbol in red. *Déjà vu* suddenly overwhelmed her. The walls seemed to lean inward. "Sensei, that one." Battering Ram pointed to a door: "It's that one, isn't it?"

"Yes. You are a Scale of the Dragon, Battering Ram." With a key from the string about his neck, Raging Eagle

opened the door and motioned Battering Ram inside. "Choose one weapon from this room," he said.

"I don't understand." Battering Ram looked about the room. At the dozens, the *hundreds*, of weapons hanging within.

"Do not understand." Raging Eagle said. "Just do."

• • •

Battering Ram studied the ornately carved surface of the scabbard, its wood hardened and finished with age and brilliant artistry. The metal bindings had been crafted into the shapes of a tiger, a dragon and a phoenix. "I like this one. I mean, is it all right for me to pick this one? It looks very old."

"If you feel so guided, then this blade is for you." Raging Eagle smoothly signified the vastness of the room with a sweeping gesture of his arms. The flickering of unseen candles lit its expansive recesses. The glittering of rack upon rack of polished steel played tricks on her eyes. "Out of every weapon within this room, you are drawn to this one. It part of your Drahma. Draw it."

Slowly she drew forth the shining blade. It seemed to glow with an inner light. The weight felt good in her hand, its balance fluid and natural. She threw several strikes. As Raging Eagle watched, a wave of exhilaration surged through him.

"What does this say?" Battering Ram held the sword so that she could study the etchings on the blade. Raging Eagle stepped closer to examine the tadpole characters. His face altered noticeably.

"I'm sorry. I'll put it back. It's okay if I pick another one. I understand." With a snap of her wrist the blade shot back into the scabbard.

After a moment, Raging Eagle spoke. "I have studied Drahma for many years, but still there are things that I have not adjusted myself to.

"It says 'Battering Ram' upon the blade."

Battering Ram held the sword away from her, staring at it with vague annoyance. "Yeah, right. I'm not buying it."

"I didn't know it was here, I assure you. It is from an older time and has been missing for several of your incarnations. I have studied your past lives in the library." Raging Eagle walked over to Battering Ram and placed his hand gently upon her shoulder. "I had no idea it was here. You must believe me. There are many things that you are going to have to adjust to. This is your Drahma. How else could you have picked this blade from all the others? There are hundreds of them."

Battering Ram looked into Raging Eagle's eyes. "I'll trust you as much as I can. I..." Her hand played with the hilt and the top of the scabbard. She felt the carved wood and metal. She felt the connection that had first drawn her to the sword.

"Come. I'll teach you the purification exercises and meditations that will allow you to cleanse both your mind and your spirit. Such cleansing will help them to connect, and, through this, you will find understanding." Raging Eagle slowly closed the gateway behind them.

Purification

Do not enter the dining hall until you are fully cleansed.

— Shaw Brothers, Master Killer

"I hope that you enjoy this simple fare. I know it is not what you are used to eating, but it's the best we can offer." Gentle Mountain passed the bowl of rice and millet to Battering Ram.

"It's fine," she replied wearily, looking around the room at Gentle Mountain, Raging Eagle and Fall Breeze. They had been allowed to eat away from the main dining hall.

"You do not look like it is fine." Fall Breeze wasn't used to the luxury of the variety of foods before her. The motion of her chopsticks blurred from her mouth to her bowl.

"Well, pardon me!" the boxer exploded. "I saw someone get killed today, my manager turns out to be a psycho robot, I get here, wherever here is, blindfolded, and everyone talks in either Chinese or mind games. Then I'm forced to either join your Brotherhood or leave... It's been a bad day!" Battering Ram put her chopsticks down and walked away from the table, then stopped. "I'm sorry," she said in a softer tone, "No one's forced me to do anything. I feel like I'm supposed to be here. I know you, Fall Breeze, but I've never seen you before in my life. The whole thing is weird and it's gonna take me some time to get used to it."

"You will have time," Gentle Mountain said. "The study of our arts will allow you as much time as you need to learn and adjust."

"I already know martial arts. What's going to take so long?"

"Your name fits you so well." Raging Eagle breathed a sigh. "Bear with me as I attempt to explain to you the difference between martial arts and Do..."

Purification is achieved through abstinence and sharp focus of will, and works both for cleansing and for fortifying the inner self. Each Sect has its own ritual purification processes.

"Weeding out" flaws in the thought process allows the Orange Robes to think with enhanced clarity. The Scales of the Dragon seek to drive toxins from their physical forms to eliminate stiffness and sickness of the body. Yogi strive to remove all things that bind them to the physical world. Blue Skins wash their beings clean of impurities at strong sacred sites.



Do: More than Martial Arts

...the Dao can not be named or defined, for to do so is to make distinctions and thereby miss the totality which is Dao.

— Conrad, Schiro, and Kauer, *A Brief History of Chinese and Japanese Civilizations*

"Do training will teach you to open your mind, allowing it to react much faster than you are presently accustomed to." Raging Eagle guided Battering Ram back to the table. "You will not progress to the next stages of your training until you have mastered the basics of Do. For some this takes ten years or more. Your skill in other martial arts may actually hinder your progress. The harder you cling to your old techniques, the longer your new studies will take.

"Remember these teachings are not simply martial arts. Do is the refining of the being. This encompasses not only the physical aspect of the self, but also the mental, spiritual and primal aspects of one's existence."

"I understand your frustration." Fall Breeze laid her chopsticks down across her emptied bowl and took up her tea cup. She tried to meet Battering Ram's eyes but could not. "I wish to be with you as well. We have much to talk about, but learning Do is more important. We'll have plenty of time to live our lives once your training has begun." She reached out and touched the kickboxer's shoulder. "I know that it is hard to understand, but you are newly Awakened. It is very important for you to master the basics of Do now, before your psyche is polluted."

"We will try to explain the basics to you," Raging Eagle added. "Hopefully, this will allow your training to progress quickly. You might even understand why this training is important if you listen to what we're saying." He served himself a grouping of vegetables and directed Fall Breeze to continue.

"Mastery of Do relies on advancement of the following goals: breathing, purification, limberness, strength and focus." Fall Breeze's words came out slowly and precisely; they seemed to echo within Battering Ram's mind. "There are no levels, and no one to combat other than the self. Things that are first hard become easy. Things that seem impossible will bring you back to yourself. Your will can shape reality, and shall." Fall Breeze stopped to take a sip of tea.

"Do, in its simplest form, finds its roots in the actions of a newly-born child. Without a grasp on the world around them, they exist through instinct alone. They rely directly upon what works. They must yield to the simplest path, for they have no other option. With their minds unclouded by preconceived perceptions of the world, children can react immediately and commit completely. Though limited, the child has the skills to learn external knowledges quickly. Human nurturing, however, quickly dulls these skills."

Breathing

We can last only a few minutes without breathing, while it's possible to live quite a while without eating or drinking. However, it isn't just breathing, but breathing correctly, which is the key to performing well in all our varied functions.

— Soo Se Cho, "Breath Control and the Martial Artist," Tae Kwon Do Times

"One must relearn how to breathe properly," Gentle Mountain said. "In order to do this, you must forget the current practice of 'lazy' breathing and return to the state of 'prenatal' breathing. By returning to this early stage of breathing, we link into the spark-of-life that brought about our birth. This primal power is the force that moves our lives. We deplete this source of energy throughout our lives. When it is spent, we live no longer."

Raging Eagle took up where Gentle Mountain stopped; "Circulate the rejuvenating force through the whole of your being. Breathe deeply with the whole of your being from that which is the Cosmic All. Replace the stagnant 'air' within with fresh 'air'."

"This is part of the purification that we talked about earlier. We must be washed clean of that which has become lodged within us. To Sleepers this purification can become a mere symbolic formality without inner truth. We must look past the pure physicality of 'cleansing' and embrace the smooth flow of the Cosmic All.

"One who tries to become like rock will find herself eroded away by the rushing waters of life. Become one with those

Giving way, holding solid, cleansing oneself in the Cosmic All, and rejuvenating the life-force which courses through all things cannot be accomplished without focus of the mind. Concentrating the will to the finest point yields the purest light of the brightest shining soul. Focus gives us direction, and this is the quickest way to reach a goal.

If we know not where to strike, how can we hit the target? If we know not which way to turn, how can we yield to conflict? If we know not which poisons cloud the six senses, how can we purify ourselves? If we know not that we are dying, how can we come to grips with life?

All this is Do. What is not Do? Do is.

rushing waters and you shall find that you are the one who slowly dissolves stagnation. This is the process of purification."

"Oh, yes, Wise One," Battering Ram sarcastically retorted, toying with her food. "I see it all so perfectly now. *Por dios!*" she exploded, "You speak in riddles and platitudes like some 'Karate Kid' film! Can't you understand how I'm feeling? This mystic *merde* that you're trying to hand off on me makes sense, but I've heard it all before. My whole life's been screwed up. Where do I go from here?"

"You still don't believe what is happening, do you?" Raging Eagle placed his chopsticks against the table and slowly pushed them through so that they stuck out beneath the table. "For the first time in this life, you are seeing the world as it really is."

Repetition breeds mastery. It is only repetition of the forms which yields any understanding on a personal level. Do it again and again. Do it until you are no longer doing it. You have lost control. Action becomes mere lashing out. Your mind will then transcend.

Understand!

Think.

Focus your will.

Mystickal energy swirls down through us. This is what the unAwakened call "chi" or "ch'i." Chi is a model of the flowing motion of the Prime Force that mages call Quintessence. Sleepers cannot feel the flow of Quintessence, but ancient masters discovered a set of motions which, when executed by the practitioner, amplify the energies of this flow. The Doist links into a matrix of accelerated blows, direction of attack, point of injury, internal and external strikes, distancing, timing — the list could rattle on for days or weeks.

Think to the way that the water pushes and runs.

Picture the shining metal that does not bend.

Hear the wood of the trees creaking in the wind.

The wind that blows, yields and surrounds everything.

As the ground is beneath all, it holds us down.

But the water element pushes. The metal tempers.

The wood bends. The wind yields. The ground holds.

Be like the water that carves paths through every body of land. Be like the earth that holds matter down and yields to the birth of all things. Become the air that is everywhere and nowhere. Become the wood, growing, gaining both flexibility and natural might. Temper yourself until you are metal that hardens to shape and retains its form and edge. These are the five elements. Each style of Do bases itself upon these building blocks of the Cosmic All.

Battering Ram looked under the table at the chopsticks poking through. She reached over and attempted to pull one of them free, but to no avail. It snapped in her grasp. She sat back, stone-faced. "Okay," she said. "I guess I'm listening."

Raging Eagle continued:

"It is said in karate, 'one should strike with a thousand pounds of force.' It is said in kung fu, 'deflect a thousand pounds with two ounces of force.' Know your goal and approach it through both circular and linear advancement, for both are equally valid. All things have their place in Do.

"One must have strength to travel through life. The energy summoned within oneself is useless if it cannot be applied through the being. This is the hardness of the self,

which you know so well. Become the exerting force. Build your strength evenly throughout your being. Exercise to refine the 'form' so that it will stand up to repeated battery."

Fall Breeze poured herself another cup of tea after refilling the cups of the others. "Hold to your nature and to truth; this is inner strength — the only true strength. Bend when you run into things during life." Gentle Mountain motioned with his hands. "This is the giving, yielding nature, the flexibility that one must develop to stay whole through any conflict. Snap back into shape when you have passed beyond obstacles. Never hold firm under pressure, for rigid things snap. The greater your limberness, the more force you can distribute."

Work



The next years went by swiftly as you became the star pupil of Lei Kung the Thunderer — and you achieved mastery of the martial arts. But that was not enough. Your thirst for revenge drove you to strive for more.

— Marvel Comics, *Power Man and Iron Fist*

Over several years, Battering Ram learned the basic steps of Do through countless exercises and daily readings of the sacred texts. Her mind began to open and her discoveries seemed like fresh water to her parched mind. The joy of awareness filled her, and the world seemed to bloom into a new creation. With patience, Battering Ram attained a true understanding of Do, and her studies progressed rapidly. She grasped the basics of Cantonese and Mandarin, though mind-speech eluded her in all but its simplest form. Still, for all she understood, questions remained.

"Look to Do as a map of the Cosmic All." The old master's voice rolled out of his mouth like the never-ending cycle of day and night. "There are shortcuts to any point. Along many paths danger awaits. To those well-versed in Do, these paths are obvious and easily avoided through other routes. This learning teaches the secret of the flow; for as it runs, it follows the course of least resistance.

"Do is being. Discussion. Gardening. Book copying. You can project yourself into these modes of thought and attack. You are in control of your actions. You can empower yourself by noting your direction.

"If you don't take control of your life, someone else will."

Battering Ram sat alone with the old man. Both held the full lotus posture, with their hands in the sign of peace. Silence filled the practice hall. The worn bricks of the floor were empty. "Teacher, how will I know when the time comes for me to break from tradition and carry on with my

own life?" Battering Ram asked. So many years she had spent in learning, yet so many questions remained unanswered. "I like it here, but this is not my home. I want to leave and return to the States. May I?"

"If that is the direction that your inner self wishes to take." The old man's eyes closed.

"I'm sorry if I disappoint you," she said.

"You do not," he answered. "It is not your place to stay here. Your inner self cries out for release."

"When can I go?"

"For centuries upon centuries, we have studied the primal forces that drive each and every one of us. Why do we do what we do? None of us can truly say. However, we have noted through our study of Dharma that there are four certain types of 'Essence,' or directions in living. For this reason, we have devised ways — Sects — to hone the specific directions of these primary archetypal yearnings of the inner self."

"Teacher, please answer my question." Battering Ram bowed deeply.

"You are finished here, but you must now train within your Sect before you will be permitted to leave the Xiudaoyuan." The old man smiled. "Or you can attempt to leave through the Exit Hall once again."

Battering Ram winced. The wooden dummies in the Exit Hall had given her quite a beating on previous occasions. Training wasn't as bad, but the beating had actually improved her technique. "I'm bruised enough already," she said.

"Ah, am I treating you too harshly?" A thin smile crossed his lips. "I know you miss the outside world. Take time to relax; then we will go onto the next phase. You will be able to return to the hectic life of the modern world soon enough. Be calm; don't rush it."

"Thank you, Sensei." With a bow, Battering Ram left the chamber and entered the stone walkway leading to the Xiudaoyuan's central dining hall.

A new female Orange Robe rushing toward her stopped suddenly to stare at the boxer with Awakened eyes. "Do I know you?" she whispered, amazed.

Battering Ram looked at her closely. Her face was unknown, but oddly familiar. A chill ran up her spine. "I don't think..."

"I do know you. You're Fall Breeze's lover!" The woman stepped aggressively into Battering Ram's personal space, her voice brittle and venomous.

"What the hell are you talking about? Be at peace." Battering Ram gestured a handsign and sidestepped away.

"You know it's true." The woman jeered. "I've seen the two of you in the Record. You've been lovers for lifetimes. You still make eyes at each other when you think no one is looking. It's just sick! You shouldn't be allowed in the Brotherhood!"

Battering Ram stopped. The idea repulsed her. Her deep feelings toward Fall Breeze since she had spotted her in the audience that day years ago had no sexual overtones... did they? She would never be part of such a thing. Would she?

"Do you think that you're a female in every incarnation?" The Orange Robe continued. "Come with me. I'll prove it to you. You can see for yourself in the Record. You might even manage to equalize your Drahma before it's too late."

• • •

Raging Eagle sat on the edge of the cliff looking down upon the Xiudaoyuan. Gentle Mountain slowly fanned himself with a large fan. The clouds rolled into the distance. The blue sky glowed with the power of the sun.

"Battering Ram has finished her studies in record time. I am greatly happy with her advancement." Raging Eagle spoke so that his feelings bled out with his words. "I'm almost ashamed that she fell into a bout of Quiet so easily."

"Is that 'hubris' I sense?" Gentle Mountain asked. He saw Fall Breeze storming up the cliff's near-vertical face.

"Not 'pride,' no. It is joy that I feel. I am happy for her. She will have her freedom again." Raging Eagle looked down at Fall Breeze's angered form. "Once she can regain her Balance within the All."

"They will both learn their lessons." Gentle Mountain turned to smile at Fall Breeze as she stepped up onto the outcropping.

"I've been talking to Battering Ram. I know that you haven't taught me much of what she has learned. Only the basics of Do!" Fall Breeze's voice quavered over her trembling lip. "Why haven't you begun my advanced studies, Sensei? I've been here longer than she has! I even taught you, once!"





"There will always be much for you to learn. To lead one or to teach one a single thing is to leave the whole multitude of creation unknown, but for that one." Gentle Mountain fanned himself slowly. "But we can only teach things well when we teach them one at a time. The rest clutters the mind and breaks the focus.

"And as for whether it is good or bad, long before the Gauntlet rose between our world and the spirit realms, we of the Brotherhood wielded great magicks to ensure that the human mind could not be reprogrammed in an instant by the prying of external forces. Why, once we were... have you ever heard of the collective unconscious?"

Fall Breeze's eyes narrowed. "What does this have to do with specialized training?"

"Let me finish my story if you wish to know." Gentle Mountain looked up into the blue sky. "Now where was I? Oh, yes...

"We were able to form a great union of minds. Large numbers of initiates linked to one another by their thoughts alone. What one Brother learned, all learned. When one was in pain, the others could lend reassurance and strength.

"Later you will learn more of this if you have time to study the ancient records and learn more of our history. You will learn how to access the knowledge of the Akashic Record, for it is comprised of the remains of that great linking of minds."

"I would like to do that very much." Fall Breeze broke easily into Gentle Mountain's slowly flowing speech pattern. "I've been kept in seclusion for so long... The stories that Battering Ram tells me of the outside world make it sound so wonderful and glorious."

"Listen to Gentle Mountain. He is talking to you." Raging Eagle gestured toward Gentle Mountain.

Fall Breeze suddenly realized that Gentle Mountain *was* talking to her; not thinking into her mind but speaking aloud. She struggled to contain her anger and frustration.

"She is overwhelmed, Raging Eagle. Battering Ram's emotions are very strong, and they are still not under the constraints of a Do master. Our friend here feels them a bit too keenly, perhaps." Gentle Mountain slapped his fan shut. "Sit down and free your mind. I will take you to that place which is the Akashic Record." Gentle Mountain assumed the Posture of the Calm Mind. Fall Breeze did the same. The trip took no time at all.

The Akashic Record

The Infinite Library: built outside of time by unknown hands. This fabled library's volumes store the history of everyone and everything in every timeline.

— Tom McCraw, *Legion of Super-Heroes*

Then I will go to the library... read the book of continuous writing. Everything that happens here in this temple is instantly transcribed into the book.

— Doctor Strange

Silent Orange Robes walked here and there, pulling and returning books from their locations within the monumental library. "This is it. The Akashic Record. The history of all things." Fall Breeze's eyes looked off into the distance but she could see only the library, continuing on beyond sight.

"It is incredible, isn't it? Such a vast storehouse of knowledge." Gentle Mountain's thoughts spoke within Fall Breeze's mind once again. "Much of the information of our prior lives is stored here. All to help us Ascend. But then, this is only the physical manifestation of the Record. The true Akashic Record resides chiefly within the minds of the Brotherhood."

"It is not just the lives that we lead." Raging Eagle stood beside her. He must have been standing just behind the rows of books next to Gentle Mountain and herself: "It is the story of every Avatar we have encountered."

"We are very good at gathering and storing information." Gentle Mountain took on the discussion and directed Fall Breeze to walk with him. "I'm sure that the Virtual Adepts say otherwise, but I assure you, the information they have had time to accumulate within their Technocratic computing devices is nothing compared to the extent of this." He swept his arms to encompass the massive library.

"Didn't you always tell me not to let hubris overcome me?" Fall Breeze's eyes slanted, and she glared at Gentle Mountain.

"Well, it's just the scope of it all." Gentle Mountain signed his greeting to several passing Orange Robes who did likewise. "I'm sorry. It fills these old bones with such energy just to gaze upon the shelves! And to feel the link to all the knowledge that the Record holds! Think of it..."

The shelves of books ended and a great sphere of pure light filled the field of vision.

"What is this?" Fall Breeze could feel the Quintessence running through her. Unable to stifle her excitement, she moved as close to the light as she dared. "A great Node within the Record?"

"This is where the physical aspect of the Record ends and the mental aspect of it begins. This is our history. All of us, Fall Breeze."

She stared down into the light that had no form or substance. "How does one access it?"

"When you link into the Record, it accesses you; you do not access it." Gentle Mountain took hold of Fall Breeze and held her closely. "Battering Ram has fallen into it. She has lost her Balance."

Fall Breeze pulled away from Gentle Mountain. "Sensei, I don't understand."

"She has entered a Quiet within the Akashic Record. On her own, it would take weeks, maybe months, to find her way out of the Record. She does not have the preparation that you have had. Your Avatar is very strong. Let it guide you."

"This isn't making any sense." Fall Breeze looked back toward the written tomes.

"It is Dharma. This is what makes up our lives. This is what you wanted, isn't it? An adventure into the unknown? Into the world that Battering Ram has known? This will reveal lifetimes." Gentle Mountain began to fade from view. "It is all in your mind. All of this. All that you remember. All that you are. Dive into this. Save your friend."

All of wood. Musty pages.

Aged as old as paper itself.

All of history through our eyes is here.

Praise those who keep the order!

Book upon book, shelf upon shelf,

Layer upon layer, section upon section,

Wings, buildings, complexes.

It is a city unto itself.

And while there are those who know every shelf.

The whole of this knowledge is known by no one.

Who could hold such vast knowledge?

The truth is far harder to find.

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GUILLERMO GABRIEL TIMBROCK
MEXICO



Chapter Two: The Living Tome (History and Inner Relations)

Cord sighed and followed him in silence. A short memory: what did that mean? "You will not have the patience to stay in contact with the pattern of events," Ah Sahm had said. "You will see things and judge them before you know what they mean."

— Robert Weverka, *Circle of Iron*



The Record speaks of a time before we were broken completely away from the Pure Ones and the whole of the Prime. Everything since is illusion, and in this world illusion fills our minds.

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Fall Breeze fell through it all. The information about her seemed like the water of a rolling stream, but was light and sound instead. The closer she came to a spinning rivulet, the more she realized that all of her senses were saturated, alive. She could feel her mind yielding in the Record's gentle guiding paths. Concentrating, she called upon her inner strength to hold fast to her identity as she became one with the path of knowledge.

The Celestial Pacts

We called upon the forces of Dragon, Tiger and Phoenix to fill the Cosmic All. We understood we were about to undertake the Drahma and carry it until it was meant to end. It was our Destiny to live our lives in balance and our place to maintain the strength of emerging humanity. There was a time when many were One; we were all One. There was only oneness until space and time began.

Everything began as a small village. From its genesis, by thought alone, the Cosmic All began to unfold like a giant lotus blossom opening its many petals; it floated upon the water and stared up into the sunny sky.

Then Dragon came to us, projecting itself into the whole of reality. It ran like water — rushing and covering and encircling. And Dragon said, "I claim you as my children. You shall be the nephews of both Tiger and Phoenix. You must remain ever

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contemplative and wise. Hold within yourself that which is your strength and power. This is the secret that I shall teach you."

The ground rumbled beneath the whole of our Brotherhood that was only one being, yet many, and rose up to form a giant Tiger, the earth on which we tread; "Hear me, seekers of inner peace and perfection," Tiger said. "I give you the right to live here upon my back. You are bonded never to hurt any of my kind. And for this boon I will give you the strength of the animals. If you mimic their actions, so shall you inherit their might. Peace be with you, hairless ones."

Then the air became as flames, and the squawking of a great bird rippled through the air like snapping embers. Wings beat with a mighty thumping and the flames were replaced with a smooth spring breeze that even now surrounds us. Phoenix spoke: "You are an important part of mankind. I give you the Fire of Knowledge within your mind so that you may think faster than any man. You will be masters of the emotional fires that plague humanity's minds — you whose bodies are just puppets. Your passions shall not be stilled — only mastered. For this gift, you will not harm the birds of the air. This you must promise to me."

The Brotherhood bowed. The world unfolded and creation expanded in the way that things replicate themselves. From nothing, there was something; from something, there were many; from many, the shards fractured until they were shards no longer.

The giant, scaly claw gripped Fall Breeze firmly and drew her out of the coursing path of history. Her senses did not return quickly. The spinning and arranging of the pattern of knowledge that made up the Record distracted her with its writhing and circling. The huge form above her became a face — that of a dragon with teeth larger than her body. Terror mingled with exhilaration.

Do not fear me, little sliver. The sounds of crashing waves and spring storms emerged from Dragon's mouth as their meaning flowed into Fall Breeze's inner self: *I am Dragon; you are part of me.*

Fall Breeze could see that each of Dragon's scales were formed from bodies of Akashic Brothers. Their skins shone in blue and green hues; their beings glowed, for these were their Avatars, stripped of flesh. Looking down at her own six hands, she saw that her own skin was bright blue. The claw released her, and she stood surrounded by the immensity of Dragon.

Dragon spoke: *The Yuga Veda and the Kasha Upanishad speak of the succession of ages of the earth. Each Yuga is said to be a passing communal dream within the minds of the Pure Ones, encompassing an entire creation, history and destruction of the world. Do you know of this?*

The disciple's voice became the sound of a surging waterfall as she began to recite: "All Yugas intersect within the Prior Heaven, which is changeless, beyond time. The Prior Heaven is represented many different ways, but always as a trinity; records often list the Primordial Heavenly, the Elder Lord of Heaven who controls the past; the



Spiritual Heavenly, the Jade Emperor who rules the present; and the Divine Heavenly, Tao-te, also called Lord Lao, who reigns over the future. For the Awakened, the Prior heaven is a deeper state of being, the primal divergence of Do into yin and yang. Extending from the Prior Heaven, each Yuga has its own reflection, the Posterior Heaven. This is the realm of supernal entities who determine the shape of history for a given age. The Stone Sutra, the most ancient chronicle of the current Yuga, identifies the Five mythical Emperors of Asia, corresponding to the five elements, five senses, five mountains..." Her examples rolled on for what seemed like time everlasting.

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Shattering

Battering Ram gripped tightly to the fur of Tiger's back. Her mind raced; her being melted away. Only her feeling of passing events remained. She became the totality of the Brotherhood within herself — her physical being, all existence in this world.

In the early days, humanity lived within caves for fear of the Beastmen, with whom the Tiger had promised allegiance and whom we had promised never to harm. With Do, we battled the creatures when we had to. Still, we held to our pact even when the Beastmen did not. Warring without causing harm taught us subtlety and precision.

A Beastman named Star Walker aided us and helped to build a truce between the two races. In return, we taught his kind the root of the Balance and the ways of Dragon and Phoenix. We gave his people a less violent way to resolve disputes. It made the Beastmen quieter and left humanity time for development. In thanks for our gift of peace, Star Walker in turn taught us the virtue of keeping the tools that we crafted.

We learned to specialize our knowledge of tools, for both peace and the hunt, by each claiming and mastering one. We moved away from the cannibal tribes of humans and wandered towards the land where the sun awakens each day, for it was there that we were sure that the Pure Ones lived in peace and harmony.

Our knowledge of our selves taught us. We built lasting temples. Soon others learned to live together in peace and built dwellings of their own. Even the cannibal tribes could not keep our thoughts from permeating their own.

So began our first period of seclusion. We reveled in cultural and intellectual pursuits. We wished only for peace, and Do ensured that our harmony would not be disturbed. Most of humanity decided it was best to leave us alone and argue amongst themselves...

"I am not we. I am I." Battering Ram pulled herself from the dense fur and Tiger smiled a toothy grin.

Was that your first mistake? Tiger's tail lashed out and reality shattered like a broken mirror, fracturing even its own image. The few became the many. The growling voice

of Tiger permeated the Cosmic All, and history unfolded like a mandala before Battering Ram's unprotected psyche.

There came a time when members of what was to become the Brotherhood quarreled amongst themselves over simple dogma. Those working to perfect a single reality insisted on learning how to build onto themselves from the outside; each carried or harnessed onto his body as many tools as he could manage. Others sought to develop the inner self and maintain ever-changing Balance, believing that each Brother should have only one tool and perfect its use.

As Tiger continued, Battering Ram felt her sword within her hands and sensed the forging of the metal and the sharpness of the blade.

A schism occurred and the two groups separated. Those who became known as the Brotherhood choose the path of one tool. As the Record was written, each Brother bound the Forces Sphere within himself with a sash. Hear this, for this is how you are different from the others — those who wish to control all but will not master themselves.

"But almost everyone in the world wants to manipulate others." Overwhelmed, Battering Ram felt herself being forced down into the mandala of history, whose woven threads stretched out before her limited vision.

Being outnumbered should not strike fear into the heart of one in contact with her inner self. With lashing claws Tiger tore through the Tapestry and rushed forward through infinite levels of concurrent existence.

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Dragon became less corporeal, and the air became thick with an oppressive heat. *It is my turn, Dragon. The voice pierced through thought, and form grew in the distance: Let me clutch her Avatar.*

The Celestial Dragon's body snaked about and Fall Breeze rushed away into nothingness. She felt her being stripped away. Neither woman nor man, human nor insect, earth nor sky, she fell. Talons of raging flame grabbed hold of her remaining essence. Her sense of being slowly returned as the fires of knowledge consumed her.

Thoughts and meanings drifted through the Realm of the Celestials, those who impose order upon the spirit world. The Jade Emperor sat upon his throne and called forward subjects to tell him of the happenings within his domain. Each day in the Realm is like unto ten years on earth; so it has been since a Gauntlet like the Great Wall itself had risen between the worlds. Still, this wall remained thin in points, and across the land now known as Asia the wall between the possible and impossible became blurred. It was there that Sleepers did not succumb to the sciences, which split away from Pangu to fight against him. Instead, they followed oneness with what is creation — peace and violence, nurture and doom.

The Artificers traveled toward the setting sun to see the world that was yet unexplored. Tools crafted of spirits often malfunctioned. Since they would not operate in a predetermined pattern repeatedly upon request, the tool-users sought to drive that which they could not control

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Humanity's Influence on the Three Celestines

The fiber of the Realms within various parts of the Earth are influenced by both the Sleepers and the Awakened within.

In the West, Dragon was torn into three sections, causing disbalance. Dragon's earthly form, water, is now polluted and treated with chemicals before it is consumed by humanity. Crippled Dragon's shards fight amongst themselves, and the community that should be composed through a united bond finds isolation by style and training as a sport instead of a way of life.

Phoenix now finds itself as ordered progress, with its natural cycles. Things must be broken down, named and classified by science. Rising from the ashes, these parts find new meanings in the structures created by humanity. Tiger, which manifests as physicality, strikes fear into humanity, for they fear what they cannot control. The Realm is in order, but finds its appearance twisted into one of bestial rage and unrelenting tyranny.

In the East, however, Dragon narrowly escaped the fate of division through the overpowering belief of the Brotherhood and their Sleeper followers. Dragon remains a symbol of Balance and purity of spirit. Phoenix, linked to Drahma via rebirth and severed by the Gauntlet, took on two aspects; the breakdown of order in both the physical world and in the Celestial Realms where things remain infinitely. Caught between the two, humanity must battle for peace of mind between what changes in this world and what does not change in the worlds beyond.

Tiger unifies the elements that make up the physical world in all aspects and symbolizes the natural order of the Realm. Tiger adopts the attributes of physicality and slowly mutates in form to encompass that which accentuates the Realm. Violence and peace work together to form the world around us. One cannot know one without the other. The Brothers have always understood this; their prowess with both exemplifies their knowledge.

The Himalayan Wars

Ancestor worship, which grew to prominence under the Shang, merged with Tibetan spiritualism to produce a profound understanding of the Awakened Avatar. Drahma, the cycle of the soul throughout all its lifetimes, acquired new meaning. Individual Avatars were recognized and traced. In the *Drahma Sutra*, the names of the most notable Avatars are traced and their archetypal functions discussed.

Millennia ago, scholars became aware that the process seemed to accelerate within the Indian subcontinent. Missionaries from the Temple of Inner Truth noted the high death rate in Hindu countries and speculated that the Drahmic repercussion of shorter life spans was the retardation of each incarnation's progress toward Ascension. Appalled by the situation, the Brotherhood set itself the task of putting India's Drahma back into balance.

It soon appeared that the prevalence of death in India was the work of the Euthanatos. Seeing within the future Euthanatos the same seeds of corruption which had ended the First Kingdom, the Brotherhood swore to obliterate the vile death mages.

The most powerful warriors of the Brotherhood assembled into special hunting teams. Whenever possible, acolytes were hastily pushed into Awakening to meet the demand for recruits. The Brotherhood had a wide base of Sleeper support, and the martial aspects of Do served them well; at first it seemed that the Euthanatos would easily be driven out of India.

Over time, casualties began to pile up. The Euthanatos' part in the entropic Drahma of the Cosmic All eluded the Brotherhood. Sunstroke, disease and lack of sanitation took their toll upon the Brotherhood, just as they had plagued the Sleeper cities of India for centuries.

The Himalayan Wars lasted from about 900 BC to 600 BC. The first hundred years of the war yielded only inconclusive skirmishing, with many honored Brothers losing their lives in what seemed increasingly to be a futile task. Over the next hundred years, Akashic Brothers Awakened at younger ages and with increasing frequency. Orphans spontaneously Awakened among the mortal populace and flocked instinctively to the Akashic Brotherhood. Wise beyond their years, these Brothers quickly distinguished themselves by displaying assurance in battle and an intuitive knowledge of the enemy which should have been impossible for ones so young.

As the final century of the Wars shook Asian magedom to its core, those highly enlightened among the Akashic command began to understand what was happening: the Avatars of the slain were hastening back to rejoin the fray on earth. Because mages on both sides believed so powerfully in their souls' reincarnation, these splinters of the Prime retained their purpose across lifetimes. Rivalries between powerful Avatars on both sides were established and contests between them played out over multiple lifetimes.

As the Himalayan Wars drew to a close, splinter groups fell away from both the Euthanatos and the Brotherhood, the most noted being the Ahl-i-Batin. Scholars secluded themselves to ponder the strange twists of Drahma which the Wars had uncovered while veteran Avatars, incarnating with a thirst for battle, took to roaming the countryside for good or ill.

from this Realm. They set about reinforcing the wall that isolated the spirit world, for the tool-users feared all Spirits.

We stepped in, said Phoenix, to stop their constraint of the Tapestry's woven pattern. High magicks were called upon and our strength was turned against us as Phoenix and Tiger leapt simultaneously upon Dragon with tearing claw and champing maw. We rushed to Dragon's side and saw it being torn asunder — into three separate forms. Our combined strength alone held Dragon from division, but still it cried out among the Shard Realms that composed its being. Now bound to Dragon as the waters are to the earth, we strive to conserve the Balance of the Cosmic All...

But the strengthening of the Gauntlet wounded Phoenix with a madness that built a border not just within the Realms, but within the Celestial Form itself. The aspects of Phoenix were now divided. Tiger ran out of control. Physicality and control of the environment became paramount to all other goals of humanity.

The World lost its luster. Our Record held all the dullness of the days and nights that took lifetimes to forget. It told us of the downfall. We should have stopped the Artificers, but perhaps this, too, was a part of Drahma. Drahma reached out to us with this retribution for our tampering, reminding us of the pain that goes with sweetness.

Those who frolicked with the spirits were wounded most of all. They had held these beings so dear to them and had led their lives in tandem. Feeling sorry for them, we gave them refuge from the tool-users who wished to stomp them out along with all memory of the spirits.

The eldest of our numbers, Akasha, ran for time everlasting, and when he came upon the greatest waterfall in all the Realms, he called out to Dragon for forgiveness, tore out the whole of his insides and flung them into the cascading waters.

And there his body fell.

The Gauntlet shuddered as Dragon raced to catch his mind. The world trembled as Tiger sought to rise and catch the body within his gaping maw. Lightning and thunder tore the sky as Phoenix strained to grasp Akasha's soul with flaming talons. But all were bound back by the Gauntlet and held into their Realms in that which lies beyond.

Then came the time when Fall Breeze rose from the ashes that remained. Phoenix's wings beat to a stop, and it strode back and forth with a wobbling walk. Does it make sense to you now? Phoenix's words rippled through reality.

"We went into hiding." Fall Breeze stared forward into nothing, her body solid and unmoving.

In fact, you did. Phoenix extended its wings to stretch and then drew them close to its body.

"We hid ourselves. We were weak. The others were too strong." Fall Breeze stumbled to a sitting position.

That is not true. Phoenix moved closer. The others were becoming a distraction. The Brotherhood knew that to Ascend is the important thing. The Realm often preoccupies the self to such an extent that the Avatar and the physical form never have the time necessary to achieve oneness. Look for the Truth, and you will find it; dwell on evil, and you will live with it.



You can't remember back through your countless lives, can you? Phoenix looked into Fall Breeze's being.

"No. I cannot. I can only believe that which is told me about my prior lives." She struggled with the feeling that her body was new to her once more.

There have been many great fires and rebirths within the history of the Brotherhood. Phoenix began to glow with the inner light that was knowledge. By the end of the Himalayan Wars, the Brotherhood was forced to move the Temple of Inner Truth into the Horizon Realm that the Temple was originally intended to protect when the Euthanatos destroyed a section of the Record.

"How could the Euthanatos destroy the Akashic Record? Surely it was only within the Realm? How could we allow this?" Fall Breeze's mind wandered. With Phoenix present, she accessed her prior lives, and they became one within her.

They burned down a section of the physical library, but their worst attack ate away into the thought network that composed the Record in its mental form. Phoenix fluttered and settled itself on its haunches. The Euthanatos have ever had the ability to eat away at the Truths of others.

"Then why did we ever side with them?" Fall Breeze asked.

That, said Phoenix, is yet another tale...

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The Euthanatos Problem

Tiger's form surged through time. Sinews tightened as muscles propelled the form which encompassed nature forward through history. "What is that?" Battering Ram pointed down into the scrolling Tapestry of existence.

That is the Grand Convocation, where the Council of Nine was formed. Tiger continued to rush onward. We will come back to study those nine years soon, but we must travel onwards now. See how quickly the battles against what would become the Euthanatos led you to finding the other Traditions of the Realms?

"I see it all." Battering Ram could feel the history of the world rushing up through her form like the Flow of Prime.

Ever since that time, the Batini brethren have sought to unify the Traditions. They share responsibility for the convergence and development of the Council of Nine and for the Brotherhood's connection with the other Traditions. We were glad to be a part of it, but soon the others tried to drag us into the Ascension Wars without our consent. The Simiao Zhuchi of the lead Xiudaoyuan decided that the Brotherhood should retreat into hermitage once again. The world was changing, filling with greater and greater illusions. Simplicity was to be the way back to self-awareness and, ultimately, to reunification with the Pure Ones — not cluttering up the Realm with all forms of creation.

Not all Brothers followed his lead, but many stepped away from the western Traditions after the Great Betrayal...

Come back to the surface! Tiger called as its claws dug into Battering Ram's skin and yanked her from consumption within the raging torrents of passing time. Look there! Even now the Artificers increase their hold over the Sleepers by acts of tyranny and imposed education systems, theories and hopelessness; the magick of the lazy man wins out over the ragged path of inner peace. Is this how the world will end?

"No!" Battering Ram shouted. "We must fight against it. We must act as the Ahl-i-Batin do and disguise our teachings. We must hide from the Sleepers to perfect our teachings, and then, when it is time, we will be able to draw humanity forward with our knowledge of Truth and inner peace!"

But what of death? Is that not part of the cycle? Tiger dove down into the sprawling mantra of the Cosmic All. Battering Ram could only watch history reveal itself.

The March of Ages

Once again, centuries later, the Euthanatos plagued the Brotherhood. Allying with the Manchurians and taking advantage of an evil Chinese Court, the most extreme of their fellowship planted a foothold firmly in the Akashic mainlands. Hearing of the monks of Shaolin, the Euthanatos surmised that the Brotherhood had a hand in the study of Buddhist martial arts.

Seeking the weaknesses of Shaolin Temple, the Manchurian forces stumbled upon Ma Yee Fuk, a traitor to our fellowship, in the city at the base of the mountain upon which the Temple rests. His repeated and persistent sexual advances toward both the wife and daughter of the Simiao Zhuchi had led to his banishment from the Xiudaoyuan. Hatred toward Shaolin boiled in his heart and the Euthanatos forces were the support he needed for his revenge. His only request was to gain possession of both the Simiao Zhuchi's wife and daughter for his own corrupt purposes.

With the help of other Brotherhood barabbi, masters corrupted by their inner darkness, Shaolin was set afire, leaving 18 monks to escape into the surrounding forests. Of these, five managed to survive to form a society which latter became known by many terms — the Ming Eternal Society, the Hung Society, the White Lotus Society, and eventually, much later, the Triads.

Battering Ram's form rose from the spiraling paths of knowledge, her smile blissful and radiant. You're beginning to learn. Tiger smiled a toothy grin: Dive in again — there. Battering Ram followed the Celestine's instructions and her form dissolved once again within what had transpired before, but was now.

Now she was of the Righteous Harmony Fists, battling against the corrupters of the West, both mage and Sleeper alike. The Chinese warriors were called the "boxers" because of their advanced pugilistic techniques; the western Sleepers could not recognize Do for what it was. The

divided Council of Nine chose not to intervene, and the Order of Reason called upon the Sleepers of the West to cut down the Awakened of the East by bearing down with their consensual might. Awakened, Battering Ram could deflect the bullets shot at her, but her Sleeper companions fell in droves, thinking themselves as strong of will as their leader.

Many Simiao Zhuchi met their deaths, and Xiudaoyuan fell into the hands of Celestial Chorus mages. The Technomancers laid claim to the Eastern world, and Battering Ram was forced with the others into hiding once again.

Drahma repeated itself. Battering Ram detected it within her being. Now it all made more sense. Things occurred for a reason. Entropy did not hold sway, as the Euthanatos may have wished; the death mages merely worked to ensure that entropy continued its part of the cycle.

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The burning light of Phoenix surged brightly, until the Celestine was consumed and fell into ashes, leaving Fall Breeze alone with the light that shone within her. She rolled back through that which had no form or substance and concentrated upon her naval, the center of her being that shone the brightest. Utilizing her knowledge of the Prime, she sent what Quintessence remained within her along the twisting paths that energized the Nodes of her physical form.

She felt herself splitting in half. For some reason her body divided into two hemispheres. One half split cleanly, the layering of the physical forms with bones and skin playing separate levels of existence. The rest mingled together where the Node points drew Quintessence from her Pattern and sent her mind reeling into action.

The two parts of her body fought to become one. The thought came to her that she had to hide some of herself from the rest of her physical form. Within these hidden points, she could realign her stability and reconstruct herself physically, but all inside was dark and things were hard to discern by the light of her inner self.

From the ashes Phoenix rose with a deep, powerful birth scream, and existence once again had color and definition. *We have often gone through this cycle!* Phoenix cried. *You, I, the Brotherhood, the whole of the Tapestry.*

"We have gone into hiding often, haven't we?" Fall Breeze felt her physical form recombining.

Yes. But still your kind has held the magick of the Eastern world alive while the mages of the West have succumbed to the Technocracy's constant battery. But do not become full of hubris, for even now the Technocracy plants itself into the Akashic heartlands, growing as a weed that ever needs tending, for its roots are deep and hard to sever completely.

"Then it is time for us to do the same. We will implant ourselves within others' psyches, in a hidden form that cannot be discerned, and when the time is right, we will call

upon that linkage to Awaken that which has lain asleep so long."

Yes! And through that the hidden rebirth! Phoenix screeched into the sky. It is time to teach the teachings to those who do not know that they are being taught.

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You have held her to yourself for too long, Tiger. Dragon swept down into Battering Ram's view, and she saw the majesty of which she was a part. For she was now a scale upon the side of the great beast. This was why she had not seen its form — she could not see what she was, for she ignored her true self. Let me have a turn with her waking consciousness, the Celestine murmured, I would tell her more.

I will not let her go, Tiger roared so that the spirit world shook with its thunderous voice, but I will share her with you, if you let me carry her along the way.

So be it, Dragon growled back with steaming breath that opened a window into the world. Through this, Battering Ram could see the horrors of the Second World War transpiring before her. Many Scales of the Dragon leapt into a mystick battle paralleling the struggle between Sleepers of the Allies and Axis. Orange Robes worked to kidnap Avatars of those on the verge of Awakening and hammered into their psyche the goals and aspirations of the Brotherhood as a whole. A vicious split occurred between initiates of the Chinese and Japanese sides of the Brotherhood, and Brother spilled Brother's blood.

As wars raged on, Drahma reincarnated Avatars from one side of the assembled forces to the other. Soon even the common soldier wished for enlightenment, to escape from the endless horrific cycle. The Technocracy seized both sides in its steel grip and vicious machines became the order of the day. What began as a war between nations became an Avatar forge, much like the Himalayan Wars on a larger scale. Finally, the Eastern Brothers met and united against the common threat, but war machines marched on, leaving ruin in their wake. Individual wars ended, but war itself continued.

Let's turn the tide! Howled Tiger, bringing the Akashics out of hiding.

Send them against themselves. They are weakest before their own attacks. Dragon coiled itself until it could consume its own tail. Turn the Technocracy against themselves. Use them to spread your beliefs.

Tiger's claws began to change. They turned into film projectors, televisions, cassette tapes, magazines and newspapers. *We will seize control of their media. The Technocracy is unsuspecting. Let us attack!*

Years passed by like minutes, like seconds. Images from the Record and its lore burst to life in books films and television shows. Hungry for mystery, western audiences and truth-seekers clustered about the living mythology of the martial arts. Battering Ram watched as Tiger's attack forced the essence of the Brotherhood into the minds of

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western Sleepers through these media. Men in Black rose to strike down several Akashic heroes, inadvertently creating martyrs like those who have given the Celestial Chorus power for centuries. Games and complex simulations joined the host of films, books and schools that spread the mystique of the Brotherhood and the philosophy of Balance. Many Sleepers latched on only to the violence of the media, but countless others, like Battering Ram herself, delved into the roots of the martial arts. At least, she thought, watered-down insight is better than total blindness.

Redirect the force of the enemy, and let the enemy destroy itself! Dragon let out a dreadful sound that shook everything. Tiger and Dragon began to chase one another around in a great circle until Phoenix came to join in the game. They rushed around in an increasing complexity of intertwining patterns, until they became such a blur that they transformed into a wall of motion, color and action. Slowly they began to form the physical plan of existence, and a crucial point in history began to emerge.

Across the now self-defining reality, Battering Ram caught sight of Fall Breeze. "Come here. We must go back!" Fall Breeze called across that which formed as they gazed into a duplicate of the Tapestry that had passed on before.

Battering Ram struggled with her thoughts. She had not yet discovered the truth about herself and Fall Breeze. More questions remained. She decided to dive even deeper into the Record. Remembering how hard it was just to glide along the surface of the huge mandala, she concentrated her will to pierce into the very core of history. "You promised me a view of the formation of the Council of Nine!" she called out to Tiger; "I need to see those days. Take me there!"

Your wish is granted, came the voice that ran through all things.

"No! Wait!" Fall Breeze rushed afterwards as Battering Ram spiraled ever deeper into the Akashic Record and into the core of her own soul.

Nationalism and the Akashic Brotherhood

Although their nations have traditionally been enemies, Akashic mages have come from all across Asia since the Brotherhood's inception. The long enmities between China, Japan, Korea and Tibet have raised tensions within the Tradition from time to time, but the all-encompassing ideal of Ascension often overrides the frailties of simple politics.

This has not always been the case; China's subjugation of Tibet remains a bitter pill lodged in the Brothers' collective throats. The bloodbath of the Japanese occupation during World War II nearly ripped the Brotherhood apart. China's own invasions of Japan in the late 1200s, though not as vicious, caused rifts that have not healed to this day. Secret hatreds still fester among the Brotherhood, beneath the civility of daily routine.

Negotiations of national disputes are often mediated in the Record itself. Every person has a story and a reason for her actions; by bringing warring Brothers face-to-face with their rivals' perspective, the Tradition enlightens its members about the greater picture. When this fails to calm disputes, the Brothers are taken to dueling grounds and left to work out their differences in blood or magick. Such drastic measures are rare today, but have played an important part in the Brotherhood's history throughout the last century.

Few non-Asian mages were initiated into the Brotherhood before 1900. Many eastern Brothers still regard their white counterparts with a mixture of pity and disdain. Although the Tradition now welcomes all cultures into its fold, few Europeans can master the ideals and disciplines of Do. Those who do earn great respect with their Asian Brothers. African initiates have an easier time of it than European or American newcomers, but the Akashic mindset seems to work best among those raised within its founding culture.





JOSHUA GABRIEL TIMBROOK
M C M X C I V

Chapter Three: The Blossom and the Thorn

(The Council of Nine and Our Own Search for Balance)

The personal communion that the mystic requires is often conveniently supplied within a pantheistic concept, that is, identifying the Deity with various forces and workings of nature. All religions are in some degree mystical. Nevertheless, mysticism, because of its tendency to overthrow dogma, has frequently come into conflict with orthodoxy.

— Sang Kyu Shim, "Mysticism and the Martial Arts,"
Tae Kwon Do Times



Battering Ram stopped mid-sentence. His body didn't feel right; something felt strangely odd. The crowded room looked toward him as he stood facing Nichiba across the table, debating a point as the Brotherhood so often does. "I still think we must bring the Sleepers into play," the Weaponless Defender said. "For all our strength, we do not have the manpower to wage this battle, even if we join these 'Traditions', which I am not certain we will do." Nichiba drew nods of approval from the surrounding body.

"It is not our place," Battering Ram retorted, "to send the unenlightened to their deaths. Save that for the Euthanatos." He punched the tabletop for emphasis. "Study your history. We must join the Council, or at least meet with them, and see what we who know the Ways can do

together." Battering Ram swept the room with his gaze, still disoriented by his sudden discomfort.

All was still. Finally, Nichiba bowed to his Brother: "I concede."

"Good." The Simiao Zhuchi of the Temple of Inner Truth signed the symbol of peace and both Brothers sat down. "Then it is decided. Battering Ram and Cheng Sa will go to meet this 'Council' and bring our goodwill. Thank you all for participating in this debate. Your part in this will forever be remembered."

Brothers began to rise and mill out into the courtyard.

Nichiba leaned across the table toward Battering Ram: "That line about the Euthanatos was uncalled for."

Battering Ram rose from the table to leave as Nichiba followed. "And they call me the headstrong one! Our purpose is to teach Balance and connection to the inner

self. I like a good fight too, but we should not sacrifice the unenlightened needlessly."

"Sleepers play all parts. You've been talking to Fall Breeze too much. She's made you forget about the troubles of the earth. You focus on yourself and not on what is truly going on around you." Nichiba looked across the courtyard as Fall Breeze ran toward them. "I see she's come to see you again."

Fall Breeze rushed up and grabbed hold of Battering Ram's hand and shoulder. "I'm going to the meeting! Darumha is going as well, but he'll be taking notes as usual. You know how he is."

"We'll be going together, then," he said. His feelings for his female Brother ran deeper than he would like to admit. "Cheng Sa is going as well. I won the debate against Nichiba." Battering Ram bowed his head slightly to Nichiba.

The Defender did likewise. "Good luck to the both of you. It makes no difference who goes. I know that you'll uphold our views at the Convocation. That's the important thing. Still, I would have enjoyed the journey."

Battering Ram smiled. "Come on. I want to tell Quiet Meadow the good news."

"I had forgotten about your mortal mate, Battering Ram," Nichiba added knowingly. "No wonder you were so firm in your stance."

• • •

The Mages of the Convocation

Lao-Tzu's response to the epic chaos of the warring states was to "go with the flow." (The technical term is "wu-wei," non-action). Do nothing to oppose the Tao... contemplate nature... seek a non-verbal, meditative state. Lao-Tzu's social philosophy, if you can call it that, is that violence is wrong, and that the best government is neither kind nor harsh, but rather barely detectable...

— Larry Gonick, *The Cartoon History of the Universe*

The sun blazed from the sky like Phoenix incarnate. Wind tore the upper layers of sand from the dunes and whipped it at the travelers. Wrapped in layers of protective clothing, they trudged slowly with their cargo camels toward the west.

Fall Breeze kept silent. She knew how many Muslims felt about women. She dressed like a man and played the part of a mute. The others had to handle whatever communication would occur between the Akashics and the Subtle Ones.

Darumha walked beside the fabled Wlakar Fahir, exchanging tales of adventure and intrigue. Despite linguistic difficulties, each mage had taken a liking to the other upon their initial meeting. Yet never once did Fahir drop his facial protection to reveal his features to his new-found friend. Such was the way of the Ahl-i-Batin.

That evening, Battering Ram and Cheng Sa played at battle around the night campfires with the Batini warriors. Do blended with the evasive tactics of the desert nomads into an elaborate fury of dance. Their blades clashed and sparks flew, but none were injured beyond the minor scratch or bruise. All came together for the great feasting that followed.

"Why is it that you never reveal yourselves to others if you expect unity among the Traditions?" Cheng Sa asked. Of all the Brothers, the Woodcutter seemed best at the new tongues they had to master.

"Unity is one thing; trust is another," the beweaponed Batini replied. "Giving away your face is like giving away your true name. It gives power to others. We wish to control our own destiny."

"If you believe that we retreat too much from Sleeper society," Battering Ram added, "why do you live within it and cloak your existence from Sleeper and Awakened alike?"

"That would be telling," came the reply. "Don't think about what we aren't doing. Concentrate on what we are doing. We wish to achieve Unity. That is the important thing. No matter how we feel toward one another, we all have a common enemy who would lock the world away from possibilities."

"No one restricts our possibilities more than we ourselves do," said Battering Ram, "The Artificers are merely external distractions. The greatest distractions come from within."

"If we are to influence others," the Batini replied, "we must be as they are. We must be indiscernible; until we, ourselves, do not know that we are not what we pretend to be." The leader gestured with his hands as he talked. "This is our Path."

"Each has his own. Such is Do." Battering Ram motioned understanding.

"If life is a dance, so should one become the pattern of steps."

Battering Ram smiled as the Batini spoke. "If life is a dance," he said, "I hope to be the greatest dancer of all."

The Arab mage laughed at Battering Ram's remark. "Surely we are each sides of the same coin. Thus we must always be. For without one, how can the other exist? Both coming and going, ever leaving and returning." Several within the group began to play musical instruments and the Batini leader broke into a dance: "Come and join us, and let us both have our way!"

• • •

"I would like to point out to you, Fall Breeze..." The priest rolled back the cuff of his large sleeves. "Or should I call you Jiu Ling?"

"Either is fine." Fall Breeze stared at the crowds. Their clothing was so different from the fashions of her home country. The strange words rattled in her throat.

The priest continued: "We of the Celestial Chorus understand that you as a people have not developed to the state where you understand that we are all only shards of the One. It is our duty to reform that which has been torn asunder." He gestured strength and unity with his hands and arms.

"Our beliefs are similar, but I do not find that one teaching can be above or below another." Fall Breeze noted the mass of Euthanatos mages making their way across the grassy hillside below. The days of feuding between the two groups might end if the Convocation went as planned. "While we seek to perfect the Self, you seek to perfect the All. Both are paths to the same end. For in perfection are we not part of the Cosmic All? Balance is the key. That is why we bring with us both sides of humanity, both the peaceful and warlike, the accepting and the repelling."

"Yes, then you understand why the Traditions must come together as one." He reached out his hand toward Fall Breeze, who accepted it with her own. "I can count on your vote to bring the Traditions together then? Thank you very much for taking the time to talk to me."

• • •

"I have been told to deliver this to you." Cheng Sa tossed the wooden backpack onto the table top before the dervish seer. Battering Ram pulled a brass key from a string around his neck and unlocked the small padlock.

The leader of the Ecstatics licked his lips as he reached forward to open its doors. The aroma of the opium rolled forth from its packaging in thick waves blown by the wind.

"We of the Brotherhood hope for your cooperation in the formation of the Council of Nine and we value your insight into its future." Cheng Sa sat down at the roughly hewn wooden table. His boots ground into the soft earth of the floor.

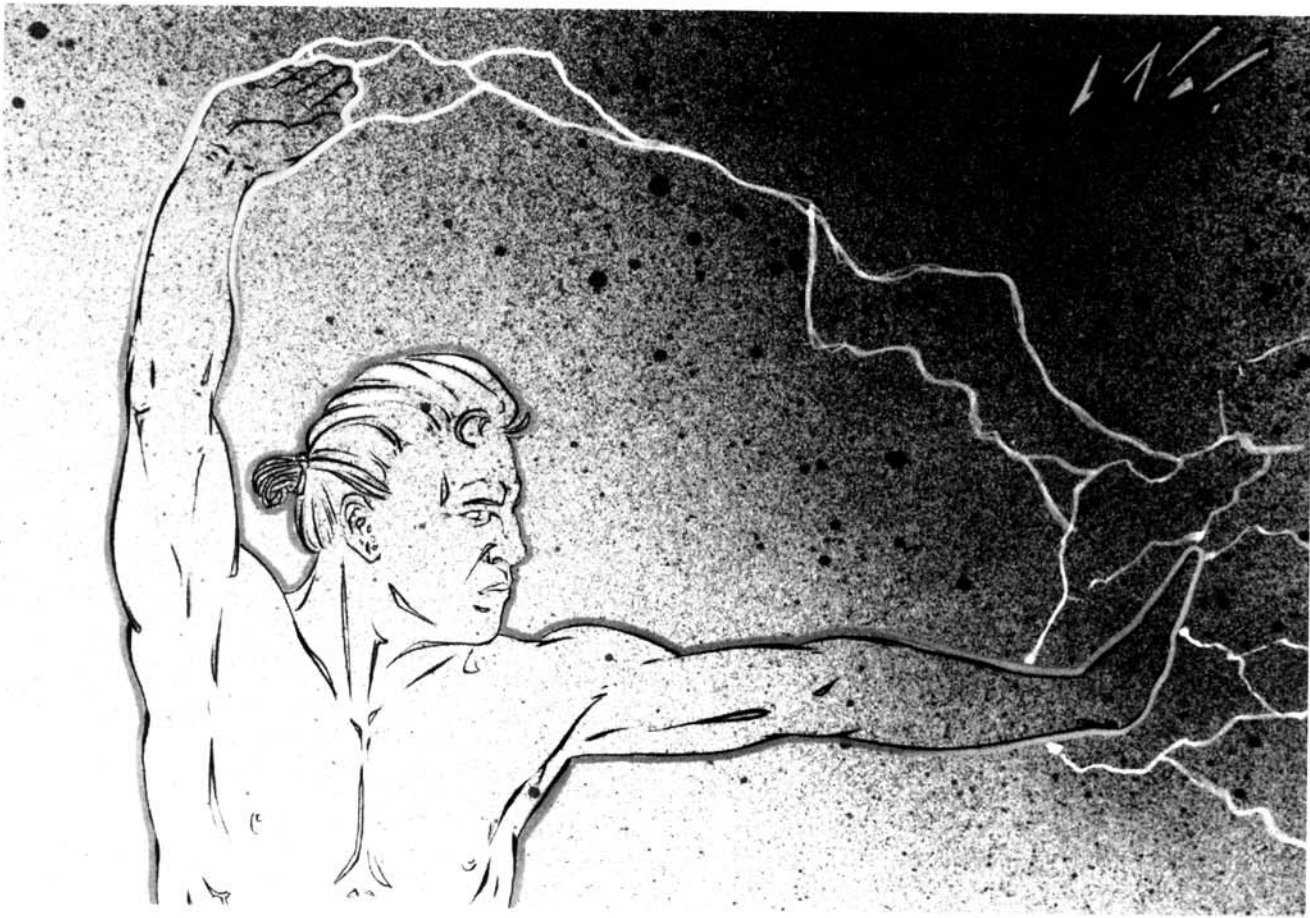
The leader placed a fair amount of the Quintessence-laden opium into a graceful hookah and offered it to the Akashic mages, who politely refused. The swarthy man shrugged and deeply breathed the hookah's contents. "What misuse of proper breathing," Battering Ram exclaimed in his native tongue. Cheng Sa elbowed him into silence. Presently, the leader refilled the bowl and passed it to his fellow Ecstatics.

"The Council will be formed." The leader's eyes rolled back up into his head. Magick was thick around him and the Tapestry rippled with his thoughts. "I can see it. Discord will rock our fellowship to its foundations and the Wars will be bitter and long-lasting, but the Council will stand so long as unity prevails."

"Thank you, far-sighted friend," Cheng Sa replied. "We will speak again soon." With a quick signal, he rose and left the room with Battering Ram following close behind.

"We are going to these... degenerates... for help?" Battering Ram had to step faster to keep up with the





woodsman's long strides. "What can they offer us besides hindrance?"

Cheng Sa turned to walk into the Inn where they were staying. "They are powerful in their own right. Ask Fall Breeze. She can explain it to you. If you understand her, you can understand them."

"But they have nothing in common."

"Not true. They have much in common. And you, my friend, are blind if you have not seen it."

• • •

Fall Breeze had to smile at the life projected by the drumming. The flowers and feathers of the dancers brought patterns of swirling colors to her eyes. Darumha sat beside the group of drummers before pulling out his writing utensils and blank scrolls.

One of the dark-skinned mages approached Fall Breeze, politely offering her an exotic flower. Youthful muscles and oddly beautiful scars and markings rippled in the firelight. "Of those we meet here," he said in his musical tongue, "we find most in common with your people. Please accept this gift from one who is glad to have met you." Fall Breeze, though unfamiliar with his words, understood their meaning. With a mental touch, a smile and a nod, she thanked him.

"I really like these people," she murmured as he walked away to join the dance. "Their Avatars are pure. They seek the truth of the inner self much as we do." She smelled the scent of the flower she had been given. It had a rich, full aroma, much like those grown within the gardens of many a Xiudaoyuan.

"There is much we can learn from them," Darumha agreed. "I'm reminded of the Yogi of our own Brotherhood. These dream-mystics fascinate me, the dark ones and lighter ones both. A shame to see them forced together into one single group to satisfy the whims of the western mages." As he spoke, Darumha painted the scene before them in broad yet economical strokes.

"I argued against it," Battering Ram added, sitting beside them, "but I'm afraid that our 'hosts' give our own so-called 'Tradition' barely more respect than they showed our tribal friends." The twinge of jealousy he felt for Fall Breeze's attention colored his words with sarcasm. She, oblivious, watched as the young Dreamspeaker leapt high into the night sky, his body contorting like the flames behind him.

Slowly the area in the center of the circling dancers began to open into the spirit world. Images from deep within the Umbra began to spill to life before the awestruck eyes of the Brothers. The dancers swirled apart and a joyful dance began as the Gauntlet rippled shut.

"Beautiful..." Fall Breeze whispered. The others had to agree; Darumha painted frantically, working to capture the fleeting spectacle. Battering Ram merely sat mute beside his comrades as the young dancer gestured to Fall Breeze to join them. Pleased, she sat up, then glanced to her Brothers. "Should I? I'm not sure."

Darumha shrugged, but Battering Ram spoke up; "If you wish to, then go, and enjoy the dance." He made the sign for peace as she glided towards the fire and the young dancer. As she cast aside her shoes and spun in time with the thundering beat, Darumha peered sidelong at Battering Ram.

"That couldn't have been easy for you."

"Many things in this life are not easy," he replied. The acceptance in his voice hid the anger which raged within.

• • •

As Darumha and Fall Breeze rounded a bend, they encountered a group of Euthanatos sharpening their blades by the riverside. The death mages rose quickly, wiping their knives and swords clean with their black cloaks.

Battering Ram and Cheng Sa were there almost as quickly. Cheng Sa spun his massive axe about in his hands and Battering Ram drew his mystick blade; the glare of the Kemian shot into the eyes of the Euthanatos leader.

The dark mage's hand shot up to block the blinding light. "Stop! Sheath your weapons. We are under a bond of truce; our war is suspended!" The other Euthanatos did so, but grudgingly. One shouted "Be glad that we are here to side against a common enemy! When they have been defeated, nothing will stop me from helping you to your next incarnation!"

"Well spoken," quipped Darumha. "I shall have to record that in my report to our Simiao Zhuchi. You at least understand that the Artificers are the greater enemy."

"Of course we understand. That's why we're here. I just want to make it clear that your kind isn't worthy of the Good Death. I sentence you to death by life, for you steal power from Death." The Euthanatos leader folded his arms across his chest and turned his back. His followers followed suit.

"Our allies," Cheng Sa mused. "There may never be peace between us."

• • •

"Look, it makes sense." Alexandre DuMonte gestured over the pile of books that lay open upon the table. His Mandarin was good for a westerner. "If we organize a strong unit of our Council's best fighters, we can crush the seats of the Artificer's power." Fall Breeze only nodded politely. The Hermetic mage leaned back in his seat and surveyed Fall Breeze's dress and appearance.

"You had this same discussion with the others from our delegation," she replied.

"Perhaps you can convince them better than I." He closed several of his books and stacked them neatly on the table.

"I can agree with your basic premise," she replied. "We do need to target the key locations of power. But I do not see your Order's place in this attack."

"Wouldn't a planned strike by the Order be much more effective than a frontal assault?" Darumha added. "Surely the Ahl-i-Batin could help you more than we would be able to..."

"I told you," said the Solificato Dimitri. "They're worthless. Why are you even talking to them?"

Fall Breeze grimaced. The Hermetic mage glared at the Solificato alchemist. Dimitri turned away. "I apologize," said DuMonte, "for my companion's manners."

"It is not your place to apologize for him," said Darumha.

"What of the Batini?" Fall Breeze added, ignoring the alchemist's disdainful sneer. "Those I have met are great warriors."

"The Batini are too elusive. I'll give them credit where credit is due, but they are only an information network. They are not true warriors." DuMonte signed his apprentice to gather up his books. "Our Houses would coordinate the details of the attack, holding your ground with powerful elemental strikes." The French magus leaned forward; "We would win."

Fall Breeze shook her head. "You still do not understand just what we are fighting. The forces against us are not merely hard-headed wizards. The world is changing about us; the spirits, the animals... The unenlightened and enlightened alike sense the differences. No mere battle can stem the tide of Drahma, my friend. We must fight a war of spirit, not of body."

"So why are you here, wise woman from the East?" Dimitri sneered. "If purity alone will overturn the Order of Reason, why did your people journey here and waste our time and yours?"

She smiled grimly at his disrespect; it was not the first she'd encountered. "Wars are fought on many levels, Monsieur Dimitri. We came here to fight if necessary, but more importantly, we came to forge ties with others of our enlightened kind. The final outcome of this 'Ascension War' will be decided not on a battlefield, but in the will and desires of mankind."

DuMonte stared at her: "Rubbish! You have been listening to those Moorish Cultists again! Opium-smoking rabble... I would have thought better of you, my lady."

"I am sorry to disappoint you." Her tone did not sound at all sorry.

Dimitri snorted and left the room. DuMonte pulled a chart from the pile before them. "As I said, this tower is a noted stronghold of the Cabal of Pure Thought. Now if you were to strike here, here and here while House Tylalus brought down a curtain of fire..."

"Paradox," said Darumha. The Hermetic mage ignored him and Fall Breeze sighed. This Convocation seemed to be an endless, hopeless task...

• • •

"The Akashics regard you highly?" The woman was dressed to accentuate her form, and her hair fell red and wild to the small of her back. She scanned Battering Ram and Nichiba with her catlike gaze. The Weaponless Defender locked her eyes with his own.

Fall Breeze spoke up in French: "We have been chosen, as surely you were, to best explain and understand the different sides of this Ascension War, as the mages of these lands call it."

The woman's gaze turned to Fall Breeze. "I meant no disrespect. You should know by now what men expect of women. I am sure it is not too dissimilar in your country."

"What is your opinion of this binding of Traditions?" Battering Ram asked as Darumha transcribed their words.

"What about a trade for knowledge?" She spoke slowly. "I hear that some of your kind are well versed in herbalism. Are there herbs sacred to your Tradition?"

Nichiba interjected, "There are many who know of herbs and plants. I have heard that your people specialize in this. I am also somewhat familiar with stories of your physical fighting prowess. I was wondering if these... talents were magically augmented."

She smiled languorously. "I assume that yours are. But to answer your question, we can augment all abilities of the flesh." Her face softened and the air filled with a delicate fragrance. "Surely you wish to partake of the fruit that is mine to give. Our way accentuates the pleasures of life and the enjoyment of its cycles. You have studied too long how to inflict pain. Let me help you to release the tension that you hold so tightly within yourself..."

"When you're through playing, I'll be outside!" Fall Breeze snapped in Cantonese as she spun and walked out. Battering Ram shrugged and turned to go as well. A soft hand touched his shoulder.

"Don't go," said the fire-haired mage.

"I only have room in my heart for one."

"And which one is that, Battering Ram?" the Verbena's eyes read past his calm facade. "Your mate or your companion?"

"Myself." With that, he turned to go.

• • •

Into the third year of the Grand Convocation, the debates raged on. For the most part, these struggles of semantics and rhetoric ended in yelling matches, bruised egos and sometimes worse. For this reason, Fall Breeze and Battering Ram lobbied the central organizing council for the right to debate the issue of purpose and intervention with each other before the full body of the assembled Traditions.

"Who has the right to decide the fate of another?" Fall Breeze opened the debate. "The Artificers wish to impose their will upon us. Will we not assume their position as the creators of shackling dogma if we beat them down with excessive force? It is our Path — and as it has always been — to Ascend ourselves. Our Ascension leads the world onward. Forcing 'Sleepers' into imposed patterns of order is not our way."

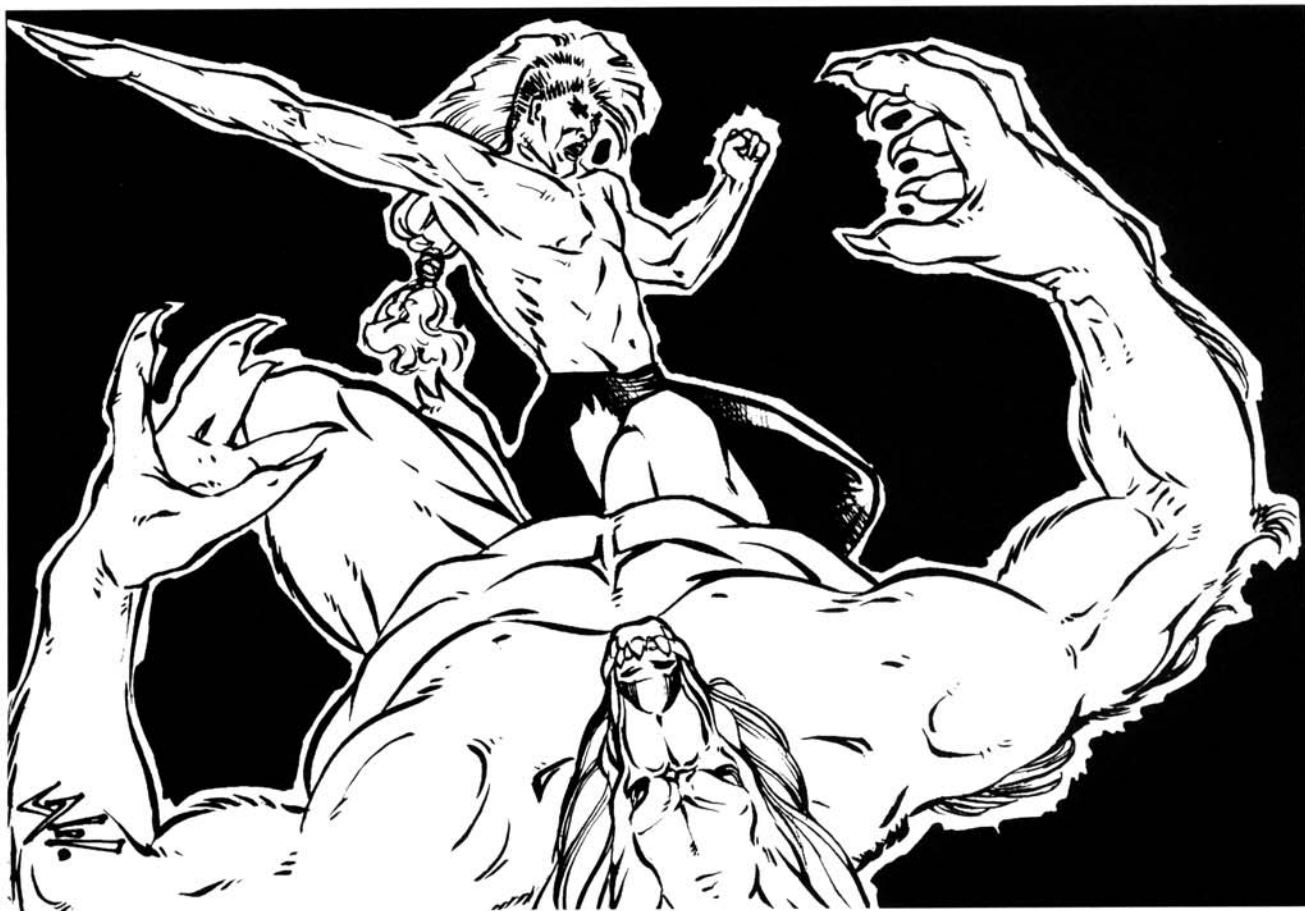
Battering Ram allowed a reasonable pause for the audience to savor her words before he began: "Can any among us argue against the necessity of this Council, formed for the mutual protection of all?" Dull murmurs arose from those gathered. "The world robbed of wonder, which the Order of Reason would impose, is a threat not only to we enlightened few, but to the spirits of this world and the others! Even in our lands, the Celestial Court writhes behind a wall of faithlessness and terror. The Artificers and their kin have done this. The only way to stop their tyranny is with force." The murmur swelled to a rumbling of debate within the crowded hall.

"How can you advocate violence?" Fall Breeze began her questioning. "You cannot achieve inner peace and a connection with yourself if you actively attack others."

"I do not seek to find myself until I have destroyed my enemy." Battering Ram glared around into the crowd. "If they Ascend, they take humanity with them. I say, stop them from Ascension! They seclude themselves in towers while their allies force their teachings upon the masses. Strike their hidden lairs and drive those against true magicks from the Realm." Battering Ram waited a moment before returning his questions toward Fall Breeze. "How else will you stop the Artificers and their ilk from destroying our teachings? How will peace and understanding survive in a world of constant rush and greed?"

"Once people have been exposed to the Artificers' ways long enough, they must surely realize that they are being manipulated by an evil force." Fall Breeze looked into the eyes of the combined masses. "Who wishes to toil their lives in labor for an emotionless lord whose face is a mathematical equation? Fighting to stop another's Ascension helps put a stop to all Ascension. Someday the time will come when the science of the Order will turn back upon itself. Until that day, we should take care not to unbalance our selves. I do not advocate lying down and dying, but we must concentrate on the perfection of our art, not on the destruction of the works created by others."

"They seek to destroy our way of life; thus, they seek to kill us. There will come a time when our reincarnating Avatars will have nothing to return to but the structured dogma of the Artificers' dry existence." Battering Ram glared out into the crowd. "Without an end to this, now, forever, we risk becoming trapped in a world where no possibilities exist but the Artificers' own! This is what we lose in passivity and isolation."



"Those who seek Ascension will always find us." Fall Breeze cut in to Battering Ram's speech. "Even in our isolation, many Sleepers and Awakened alike make their way to our Xiudaoyuan... excuse me... our 'Chantries'... to achieve Balance and a connection to the Cosmic All. We only have our martial might to defend ourselves, not to crush anyone who stands in our way." She met his gaze. "That was the way of the Himalayan Wars. Study your history."

"There you are wrong." Battering Ram turned to look into Fall Breeze's eyes for the first time since the debate began. For some reason, he found himself caught in her beauty and fierce intelligence. Her face, lips and eyes seemed to call to him with a seductive lure. He shook his head to drive the creeping thoughts from his mind. "Those who stand in the way of our Ascension must be removed! When a snake is stepped on, does it not strike back? Yet we are like a single snake upon the road that waits to be trampled by an approaching army of footsteps."

"We can't bite every foot that comes to crush us. We do not have the numbers necessary to destroy them. Remember the wasted souls of the Himalayan Wars. Think of the Drahmnic repercussions caused by the vast incarnations slain and recycled through the Cosmic All." Fall Breeze felt a sudden draw toward Battering Ram as well. She turned toward the crowd and suddenly spotted a man who broke

the rules of the Grand Convocation, drawing upon the powers of magick in the meeting chamber.

As the man shot to his feet, a ball of light around his midsection sucked the power of the sun out of the room and directed it down his arm, focusing into a searing bolt of fire aimed at Fall Breeze. Battering Ram hurtled into her and drove her out into the crowd of assembled mages as the oratory stage exploded in flames.

Battering Ram's weight held Fall Breeze pinned to the floor. Their faces almost touched — they were so close — as their eyes locked tightly into one another's. Both felt their affection ignite like the podium behind them.

It was good to be alive.

• • •

"You're stuck in the Akashic Record." The eyes of Fall Breeze spoke into the mind of Battering Ram.

"What are you talking about? I just saved your life." Battering Ram could only see her eyes.

"We're locked in history. You've got to wake up. We are within the combined minds of all the members of the Brotherhood. We aren't really here."

Desire and confusion washed over the younger mage. "I'm feeling sick. Am I your lover?"

"What are you talking about?" Fall Breeze began to achieve a physical form once again. Her mental connection to Battering Ram began to fade.



"I have to go deeper into the Record to find out."

"No. You have to come out. All that passed between us went by in past lives. This life is what is important now. You must come back." Fall Breeze concentrated to lock Battering Ram's mind purposefully on returning to the Realm.

Enough time had been spent in the Record. Fall Breeze's Avatar latched straining onto Battering Ram's, hurling her out of the waking dream which is the Akashic Record.

• • •

Battering Ram began to feel her physical form once again. She struggled against the urge to slap away the hand that circled her waist and gripped her bosom, the tongue that lapped at her ear, and the icy cold steel that seemed to hiss as it rested against her neck.

"I'm finally going to have Fall Breeze for myself!" Battering Ram couldn't place the familiar voice even as it spoke with a voice so close that hot breath lapped at the side of her face. Something deeply evil and dark filled her thoughts. A cloud of viciousness threatened to close in upon her and rip the soul from her being, as some would pick a flower for display.

She moved so quickly that she didn't even realize what she had done. The wrist bearing the knife was within her hand, and she twisted free to throw her captor to the ground. Battering Ram's eyes, lit from a fire within, tore through layers of reality to reveal to her the Avatar of the woman she held pinned to the ground.

"Ma Yee Fuk," she gasped, "Your transgressions against the Brotherhood can never be forgiven!" Battering Ram's fist lashed out, rocking the Nephandus' head sideways.

"Forgiven?" the woman blurted out. "I can never forgive you! You and your mother had me kicked out of Shaolin." The woman's hand came up in a claw attack, but Battering Ram wedged her elbow into the woman's palm. "How could you have told Darumha? I loved both of you. I'll love you *forever*!"

The woman struggled to summon magicks to escape, but Battering Ram pummeled her relentlessly even as her body went limp and her bones crackled. Tears welled from Battering Ram's eyes as she struck again and again.

"Battering Ram! That's *enough!*" Fall Breeze rushed into the room and ran up beside her friend. "Stop hitting her. She's dead."

"He... she... I..." It was all too much. Confusion wracked her, tortured her Avatar. She began muttering in Spanish, panting and weeping.

Fall Breeze gently pulled Battering Ram from the motionless body on the floor. "Calm down. You've been through so much in such a short time. Everything will be all right."

Gentle Mountain stood beside them. "I'm sorry. We didn't know. We can't keep track of everyone all the time. Ma Yee Fuk has troubled the Brotherhood through many a lifetime. It will not happen again."

Raging Eagle threw the body over his shoulder. "We will brand her Avatar with the traitor's sigil before it passes on. She'll never be able to do this to you again."

"Why hasn't this been done before?" demanded Fall Breeze.

"We've never been able to catch her. She has never attacked so openly before. Drahma has caught up with her; perhaps she couldn't constrain her lust and rage any longer."

Battering Ram shuddered and struggled to her feet. "How can we be reincarnated time and time again like this?" she wailed, "Not knowing if we're going to be male or female, good or evil?" She punched the wall so hard that stone chips flew. Her hand remained unharmed.

As Gentle Mountain's own hand rested on her shoulder, she felt a wave of calming peace pass through her. "As our Avatars advance, we gain the ability to influence our next life; the place where we are born, our new sex... sometimes even the individual family that we are born into. But, as for good or evil, that is truly the question."

"It is each person's Drahma to live their lives through certain events," Raging Eagle added. "How one reacts to those events is the important thing."

"This is our Path to Ascension — to learn from each life and perfect our magick and our selves through each cycle. The lessons are endless and ever-changing..."

"And many lessons take lifetimes to learn."





JOSHUA GABRIEL TIMBROOK
MCMXCIV

Chapter Four: From the Record (Templates)

Do not be overly concerned by external matters. Strengthen your fundamental spirit and act in such a way as to not reveal the depths of your spirit to others.

— Miyamoto Musashi, *The Book of Five Rings* (Mizu No Maki)



Many among the Traditions make the mistake of believing that any Asian mage they meet hails from the Brotherhood, or conversely, that all Akashic Brothers are Chinese. This misconception amuses the Brothers; although the group has its roots in the far east, the Tradition's membership spans all races, genders and nationalities.

There was a time not so long ago when the secrets of Do were known only to the eastern initiates. With westward expansions and trade routes, however, the ideals of the Brotherhood passed among Awakened Ones across the world. This last century has seen the Brothers' most rapid growth; the glamour and power of the eastern martial arts have brought their philosophies of discipline and balance to multitudes. Now, in the critical years of the Ascension Wars, the ranks of the Brotherhood swell with new acolytes and Awakened (or reborn) Avatars. This bodes well for the Tradition.

Akashic mages from the east tend to be more subtle than their western counterparts, relying more on Mind magick and physical refinement than on flashy Effects. Nevertheless, all Brotherhood mystics know various levels of Do. This art makes any Brother a formidable fighter. (See **The Book of Shadows** for complete rules about Do.)

Avatars often return to Akashic past lives, rejoining the Tradition for greater enlightenment and perfection. These mages deeply believe in their philosophies and pattern their tactics and behavior upon them. A character's Avatar Essence guides his Sect, his overall concept, and often his chosen Style of Do. This does not mean that Akashic mages fall neatly into four categories — each mage is, of course, an individual. Nevertheless, Essence means more to the Akashics than to any other Tradition.

The following templates are suitable for beginning characters, Storyteller allies or player guidance. These classic types show only a fraction of the Tradition's diversity.

The Superhero: Scale of the Dragon

During my studies in the East I'd heard a lot about Taoism. They said its practitioners were magicians — alchemists — men of power who could read the future.

Those were secrets I wanted to know.

— DC Comics, *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight*

Quote: *I hope that you've learned your lesson, pal. Justice will find the Balance, and the long arm of Righteousness will reach out and seize hold of every evildoer!*

Prelude: You fantasized as a kid that you were the hero of every comic you read. In college, you took all the classes that might help you become a superhero. After graduation, you managed to swing a well-paying job and save up money for superhero gear.

It was a lot tougher than you thought. Covering up the busted ribs wasn't so hard, but the bruises you got on the side of your face when that one thug caught you with the chain... you doubted your boss bought the story about the skiing accident.

Then one day you found a lead on the occultists behind a string of harsh mutilations that had been in the papers for weeks. When the window shattered and you soared down into their ranks, the helpless woman they had bound before them broke free. Then reality began to spin. One of them motioned at you, using what must have been vile black magicks. You passed out, but not before seeing him fall,

hard. When you regained consciousness, the Orange Robes of the Tibetan Xiudaoyuan began their explanations and teachings. The woman was among them; she taught you what you know.

And with that knowledge, you became the superhero that you were destined to become.

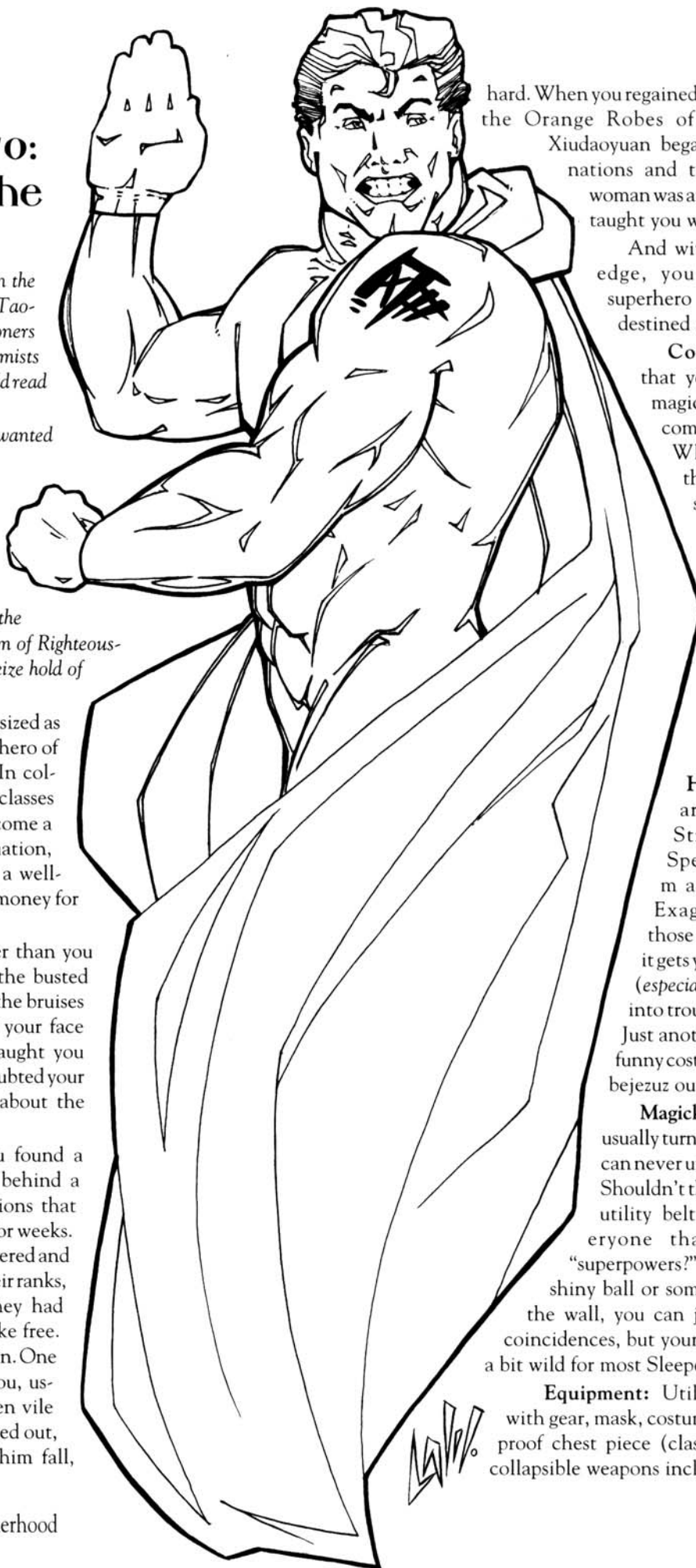
Concept: Now that you know what magick is, you've become a superhero! Why not? Isn't that what you're supposed to do? Protect humanity? Guide them to Ascension? Doesn't everyone want to be a superhero?

Roleplaying

Hints: Jump around a lot. Strike poses. Speak very dramatically. Exaggerate. Help those in need, even if it gets you into trouble (especially if it gets you into trouble)! Paradox? Just another villain in a funny costume to beat the bejuz out of.

Magick: Your magicks usually turn out vulgar. You can never understand why. Shouldn't the cape and the utility belt convince everyone that you have "superpowers?" If you toss a shiny ball or something against the wall, you can justify a lot of coincidences, but your acrobatics are a bit wild for most Sleepers to accept.

Equipment: Utility belt filled with gear, mask, costume with bullet-proof chest piece (class two armor), collapsible weapons including a staff.





Akashic

BROTHERHOOD

MAGE: The Ascension™



Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Essence: Questing
Nature: Traditionalist
Demeanor: Bravo

Concept: Superhero
Sect: Scales of the Dragon
Cabal:

Attributes

Physical

Strength Tough ●●●●○
Dexterity ●●●●○
Stamina ●●●●○

Social

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

Mental

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

Abilities

Talents

Alertness ●●●●○
Athletics Gymnastics ●●●●○
Awareness ○●●●○
Do ●●●●○
Dodge ●●●●○
Expression ○●●●○
Intuition ○●●●○
Intimidation ●●●●○
Streetwise ●●●●○
Subterfuge ○●●●○

Skills

Drive ●●●●○
Etiquette ○●●●○
Firearms ○●●●○
Leadership ●●●●○
Meditation ●●●●○
Melee ○●●●○
Research ○●●●○
Stealth ●●●●○
Survival ○●●●○
Technology ●●●●○

Knowledges

Computer ●●●●○
Cosmology ○●●●○
Culture ●●●●○
Enigmas ○●●●○
Investigation ●●●●○
Law ●●●●○
Linguistics ○●●●○
Medicine ○●●●○
Occult ○●●●○
Science ●●●●○

Advantages

Spheres

Correspondence ○●●●○
Entropy ○●●●○
Forces ●●●●○

Life ●●●●○
Mind ●●●●○
Matter ●●●●○

Prime ○●●●○
Spirit ○●●●○
Time ○●●●○

Other Traits

Acrobatics ●●●●○
Akashic Signs ●●●●○
○●●●○
○●●●○
○●●●○
○●●●○

Backgrounds

Allies ●●●●○
Avatar ●●●●○
Destiny ●●●●○
○●●●○
○●●●○
○●●●○

Arete

●●○○○○○○○○○○

Willpower

●●●●●●●●○○
□□□□□□□□

Quintessence



Paradox

Health

Bruised -0 ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

Experience

Study Points

自然風月情無盡



The Mystic: Reincarnated Yogi

He's a hypnotist.

A hypnotist of ladies.

Never had a pocket watch.

Never counting backwards.

You're getting sleepy.

Very sleepy.

— They Might Be Giants, "Hypnotist of Ladies"

Quote: Yes, this house is haunted. I know what must be done to put this wandering spirit to rest.

Prelude: You got into horror books when you were young. This led you to start checking out the spirit world that supposedly lay hidden just beyond "normal" sight. No luck. It was starting to look like the world was dull and mundane.

Dabbling in the occult gave you a reputation. People pushed themselves on you. They wanted to know about the future, ghosts and magic, but you couldn't help them. Then one spirit decided to help you. Qi Lee Hin opened your eyes to the worlds beyond; whether she did so out of favor or spite is something you've never quite figured out. She led you to the Akashic Brotherhood, however, so you figure you owe her something.

The Brotherhood remembered you. They taught you all the things you'd thought you had forgotten. With your aptitude with the spirit worlds, you form a valuable member of your cabal.

Concept: Trained to interact with the spirits of the Umbra, you have many contacts in the Otherworlds. You have often wondered if you should have been initiated by the Dreamspeakers instead.

Roleplaying Hints: Be very noncommittal in all your talk and actions. Take credit or say that you know the reason for every eerie thing that goes on. Start sentences and then stop them abruptly; slowly search the surroundings with your eyes and say, "This is not the time or place to discuss such matters."

Magick: You are highly skilled in the Sphere of Spirit. With this knowledge comes your ability to fight against the evils of the spirit world. You have also learned to access the Sphere of Time in order to look into events that took place in other times.

Equipment: Clothing with pockets, flash powder, sticks of incense, "exorcism" gadgets, a walkman tape deck with a cassette of spooky noises.



Akashic

BROTHERHOOD

MAGE: The Ascension™



Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Essence: Dynamic
Nature: Traditionalist
Demeanor: Visionary

Concept: Mystic
Sect: Yogi
Cabal:

Attributes

Physical

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

Social

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

Mental

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

Abilities

Talents

Alertness _____ ●○○○○
Athletics _____ ○○○○○
Awareness _____ ●●●○○
Do _____ ●●○○○
Dodge _____ ●○○○○
Expression _____ ○○○○○
Intuition _____ ●●○○○
Intimidation _____ ○○○○○
Streetwise _____ ○○○○○
Subterfuge _____ ○○○○○

Skills

Drive _____ ○○○○○
Etiquette _____ ○○○○○
Firearms _____ ○○○○○
Leadership _____ ○○○○○
Meditation _____ ●●●○○
Melee _____ ○○○○○
Research _____ ○○○○○
Stealth _____ ●○○○○
Survival _____ ●○○○○
Technology _____ ○○○○○

Knowledges

Computer _____ ○○○○○
Cosmology _____ ●●●○○
Culture _____ ○○○○○
Enigmas _____ ●●●○○
Investigation _____ ○○○○○
Law _____ ○○○○○
Linguistics _____ ○○○○○
Medicine _____ ○○○○○
Occult _____ ●●●○○
Science _____ ○○○○○

Advantages

Spheres

Correspondence _____ ○○○○○
Entropy _____ ○○○○○
Forces _____ ○○○○○

Life _____ ○○○○○
Mind _____ ●●○○○
Matter _____ ○○○○○

Prime _____ ○○○○○
Spirit _____ ●●●○○
Time _____ ●○○○○

Other Traits

Akashic Signs _____ ●●○○○
Astrology _____ ●●○○○
High Ritual _____ ●○○○○
Hypnotism _____ ●○○○○
Spirit Lore _____ ●○○○○
_____ ○○○○○

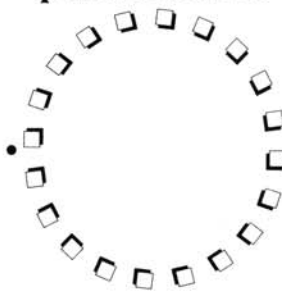
Arete

●●●○○○○○○○○

Willpower

●●●●○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□

Quintessence



Paradox

Health

Bruised -0 ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

Experience

Study Points

Backgrounds

Allies _____ ●○○○○
Avatar _____ ●●○○○
Dream _____ ●●○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○

Street Tough: Reincarnated Blue Skin

As they dragged him away, Rorschach spoke to the other inmates. He said "None of you understand. I'm not locked up in here with you. You're locked up in here with me."

— Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, *Watchmen*

Quote: You can learn a lot about life from what you find thrown away or abandoned on the street. A person's trash says plenty about him. Out here, things don't get in the way of a person's inner self. We are what we are, each and every one of us.

Prelude: You were orphaned when you were young. The foster homes and children's shelters only served to drive you into the streets. You ran away to far-off cities and learned to live your life on the run. The harshness of the environment and your survival instincts hammered your Avatar into shape. Thinking came naturally to you. As you matured, the patterns of the world began to make sense, and you formulated your own thoughts about creation and enlightenment.

One day you felt an irresistible urge. You traveled out of the city and into the country.

Was it days or weeks? Eventually you reached a strange building. The people seemed to be priests of some sort. They invited you in, and before long you were learning about the Dharma and the Cosmic All; somehow it all seemed strangely familiar...

The dojang was comfortable. Too comfortable. A normal life was not your lot, and you soon left. Enlightened or not, the back alleys are your home, even now.

Concept:

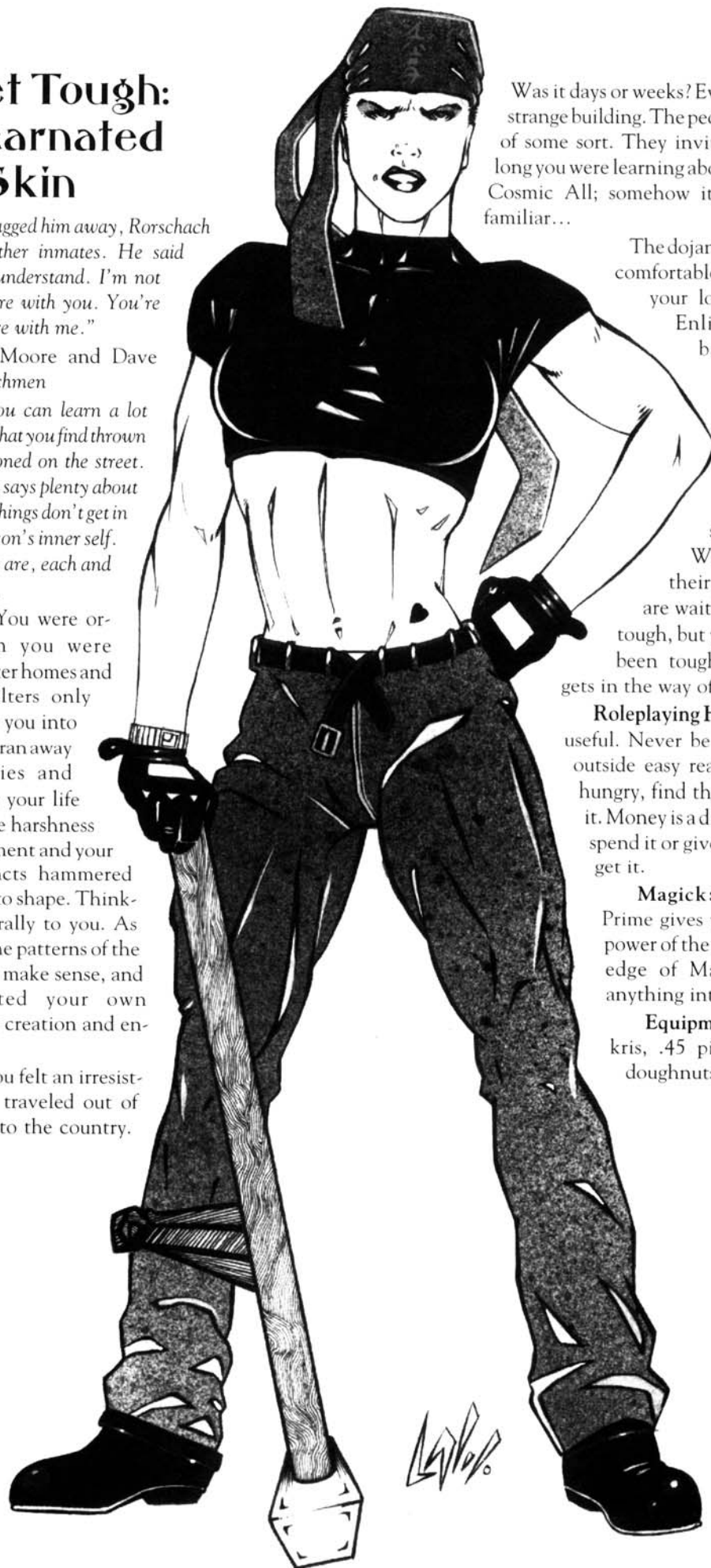
You've lived on the streets your whole life. You know every inch of the alleys, sewers and roof tops.

When stores throw away their outdated products, you are waiting. Life has made you tough, but your Avatar has always been tougher. After all, money gets in the way of enlightenment.

Roleplaying Hints: Take everything useful. Never be without a weapon or outside easy reach of one. If you are hungry, find the nearest food and eat it. Money is a dirty thing to you; either spend it or give it away as soon as you get it.

Magick: Your command of Prime gives you access to the very power of the All. With your knowledge of Matter, you can alter anything into what you need.

Equipment: Boots, rain coat, kris, .45 pistol, backpack, stale doughnuts, attitude.





Akashic BROTHERHOOD

MAGE: The Ascension™



Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Essence: Primordial
Nature: Survivor
Demeanor: Loner

Concept: Street Tough
Sect: Blue Skins
Cabal:

Attributes

Physical

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

Social

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

Mental

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

Abilities

Talents

Alertness _____ ●●○○○
Athletics _____ ●●○○○
Awareness _____ ○○○○○
Do _____ ●●○○○
Dodge _____ ●●○○○
Expression _____ ○○○○○
Intuition _____ ○○○○○
Intimidation _____ ●●○○○
Streetwise _____ ●●○○○
Subterfuge _____ ○○○○○

Skills

Drive _____ ○○○○○
Etiquette _____ ○○○○○
Firearms _____ ●●○○○
Leadership _____ ○○○○○
Meditation _____ ○○○○○
Melee _____ ●●○○○
Research _____ ○○○○○
Stealth _____ ●●○○○
Survival _____ ●○○○○
Technology _____ ○○○○○

Knowledges

Computer _____ ○○○○○
Cosmology _____ ○○○○○
Culture _____ ●●○○○
Enigmas _____ ○○○○○
Investigation _____ ○○○○○
Law _____ ●○○○○
Linguistics _____ ○○○○○
Medicine _____ ○○○○○
Occult _____ ○○○○○
Science _____ ○○○○○

Advantages

Spheres

Correspondence _____ ○○○○○
Entropy _____ ○○○○○
Forces _____ ○○○○○

Life _____ ○○○○○
Mind _____ ●○○○○
Matter _____ ●●○○○

Prime _____ ●●●○○
Spirit _____ ○○○○○
Time _____ ○○○○○

Other Traits

Akashic Signs _____ ●●○○○
First Aid _____ ●○○○○
Scrounging _____ ●●○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○

Arete

●●●○○○○○○○○

Willpower

●●●●●○○○○○
□□□□□□□□

Quintessence



Paradox

Health

Bruised _____ -0 □
Hurt _____ -1 □
Injured _____ -1 □
Wounded _____ -2 □
Mauled _____ -2 □
Crippled _____ -5 □
Incapacitated _____ □

Experience

Study Points

Backgrounds

Avatar _____ ●●●○○
Destiny _____ ●●○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○

Movie Star: Scale of the Dragon

You have mastered the arts of combat, Elektra, yet you know no peace. There is a place where men... have achieved a true and total peace of spirit. But it cannot be found unless you wander without direction, without hope... until, searching without seeking you find it...

— Frank Miller, *Daredevil*

Quote: Martial arts are easy once you get started. They teach you discipline and give you a sense of self worth. Martial arts have done a lot for me. I'll never give them up.

Prelude: You lived in a tough neighborhood. Your brothers began studying the martial arts when they were young, and they taught them to you. The arts, in turn, taught you self respect. The kids in the neighborhood left you and your brothers alone. By the time you were out of high school, you were bringing home trophies right and left. You became so skilled that you opened a small gym and started teaching. You even fought in the ring when opportunities arose.

Then the movie people came around, promising you stardom. A few films later, you were a star of sorts. They tried to tell you how to punch and kick, though, and you knew they were wrong. Then they started waving your contract around, telling you that you had better get with the program. Little secrets of your youth were brought up. Things got nasty.

That's when the janitor came over and gently persuaded them to rip up your contract. He even managed to get them to pull out all the dirt they had gathered. You burned it all in disgust.

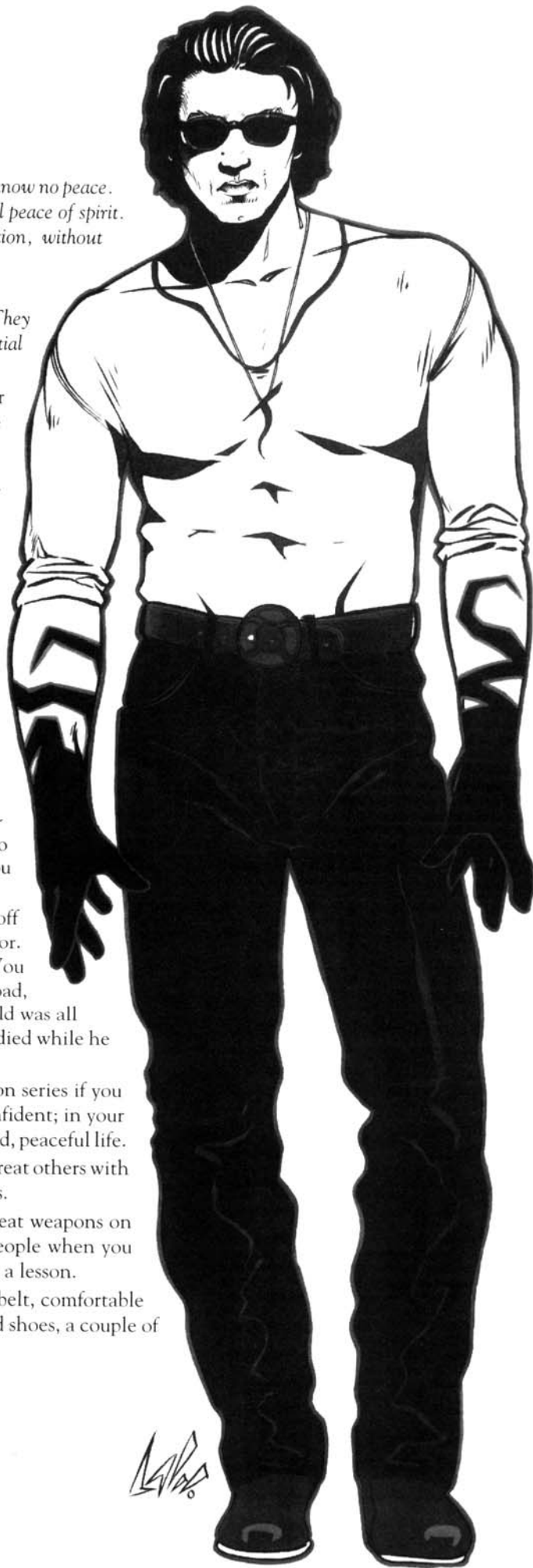
It wasn't until you had stormed off the set and taken off in your Porsche at 110 mph that you remembered the janitor. You never thanked him! What a minute... a *janitor*? You screeched to a halt, and there, standing by the side of the road, was the janitor. But he didn't look like a janitor. His build was all wrong. Suddenly his face was familiar as well. Hadn't he died while he was making a movie?

Concept: You can fight for a living or get a television series if you work at it. You believe that everyone should feel self-confident; in your vision of Ascension, everyone can get along and live a good, peaceful life.

Roleplaying Hints: Hold yourself straight and tall. Treat others with the honor and respect that they deserve as human beings.

Magick: When it comes to combat you have two great weapons on your side — the Spheres of Mind and Forces. Talk to people when you don't want to fight them, and clobber those who deserve a lesson.

Equipment: Your favorite weapon, Fifth Dan black belt, comfortable street clothes that allow freedom of movement, steel-toed shoes, a couple of hidden weapons.





Akashic

BROTHERHOOD

MAGE: The Ascension™



Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Essence: Questing
Nature: Traditionalist
Demeanor: Bon Vivant

Concept: Movie Star
Sect: Scales of the Dragon
Cabal:

Attributes

Physical

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

Social

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

Mental

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

Abilities

Talents

Alertness _____ ●●○○○
Athletics _____ ●●●○○
Awareness _____ ○○○○○
Do _____ ●●○○○
Dodge _____ ●●○○○
Expression _____ ●●●○○
Intuition _____ ○○○○○
Intimidation _____ ●●○○○
Streetwise _____ ●○○○○
Subterfuge _____ ○○○○○

Skills

Drive _____ ●●○○○
Etiquette _____ ●●○○○
Firearms _____ ○○○○○
Leadership _____ ●○○○○
Meditation _____ ●●○○○
Melee _____ ●●○○○
Research _____ ○○○○○
Stealth _____ ○○○○○
Survival _____ ○○○○○
Technology _____ ○○○○○

Knowledges

Computer _____ ●○○○○
Cosmology _____ ○○○○○
Culture _____ ●●●○○
Enigmas _____ ○○○○○
Investigation _____ ○○○○○
Law _____ ○○○○○
Linguistics _____ ○○○○○
Medicine _____ ●○○○○
Occult _____ ○○○○○
Science _____ ○○○○○

Advantages

Spheres

Correspondence _____ ●○○○○
Entropy _____ ○○○○○
Forces _____ ●●○○○

Life _____ ○○○○○
Mind _____ ●●○○○
Matter _____ ○○○○○

Prime _____ ●○○○○
Spirit _____ ○○○○○
Time _____ ○○○○○

Other Traits

_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○

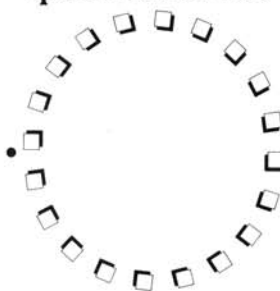
Arete

● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Willpower

● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Quintessence



Paradox

Health

Bruised -0 ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

Experience

Study Points

Backgrounds

Avatar _____ ●○○○○
Influence _____ ●●●○○
Mentor _____ ●●●○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○

Dancer: Reincarnated Orange Robe

*But who's to know the power
Behind our moves?*

— Kate Bush, "Strange Phenomena"

Quote: *When I dance, I lose myself;
I am at one with the Flow and my
music is Drahma itself.*

Prelude: When you were young, you felt compelled to leap into dances spontaneously. Whirling about and leaping through the air made you feel alive. Over the years, your love for dance made your body strong. You enrolled in professional dance training and focused your mind as well. Eventually, you became lead dancer for a troupe, and your dreams became reality.

One day you were approached by a woman who told you of a greater dance, one that would teach you to harness the raw energy of the world around you. You could do more than entertain people — you could help them rise above the grind of everyday life and live more freely in the process. She showed you the dance that had already been yours for lifetimes. That day, you joined the Akashic Brotherhood.

Concept: Your Avatar has been near Awakening most of your life. Your yearning



for dance came from trace memories of Do training in previous lives. Your joyful dance makes life worth living. You want others to know how it feels to follow the music that sets your heart free.

Roleplaying Hints: Persuade other characters into going places where you can dance. Seek out the primal beauty all around you, show it to others, and kick the crap out of anyone who treats creation with disrespect.

Magick: Your magicks developed through your need to both show emotion and project your feelings through dance. It was very easy to adapt Do into your dancing techniques. Correspondence keeps you in tune with your space and Mind helps show others what you see.

Equipment: A portable CD player with several CDs of dance music, tights, a couple of candy bars, comfortable dancing shoes, membership card to a dance company.



Akashit

BROTHERHOOD

MAGE: The Ascension™



Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Essence: Pattern
Nature: Visionary
Demeanor: Bon Vivant

Concept: Dancer
Sect: Orange Robe
Cabal:

Attributes

Physical

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

Social

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

Mental

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

Abilities

Talents

Alertness _____ ●○○○○
Athletics _____ ●●●○○
Awareness _____ ○○○○○
Do _____ ●●○○○
Dodge _____ ●●○○○
Expression _____ ●●●○○
Intuition _____ ●○○○○
Intimidation _____ ○○○○○
Streetwise _____ ○○○○○
Subterfuge _____ ○○○○○

Skills

Drive _____ ○○○○○
Etiquette _____ ○○○○○
Firearms _____ ○○○○○
Leadership _____ ○○○○○
Meditation _____ ●●○○○
Melee _____ ●●●○○
Research _____ ○○○○○
Stealth _____ ●○○○○
Survival _____ ○○○○○
Technology _____ ○○○○○

Knowledges

Computer _____ ○○○○○
Cosmology _____ ○○○○○
Culture _____ ●●●○○
Enigmas _____ ○○○○○
Investigation _____ ○○○○○
Law _____ ○○○○○
Linguistics _____ ○○○○○
Medicine _____ ●○○○○
Occult _____ ○○○○○
Science _____ ○○○○○

Advantages

Spheres

Correspondence _____ ●○○○○ Life _____ ○○○○○ Prime _____ ●●○○○
Entropy _____ ○○○○○ Mind _____ ●●●○○ Spirit _____ ○○○○○
Forces _____ ○○○○○ Matter _____ ○○○○○ Time _____ ○○○○○

Other Traits

Akashic Signs _____ ●○○○○
Dance _____ ●●●○○
High Ritual _____ ●●●○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○

Arete

● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Willpower

● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Quintessence



Paradox

Health

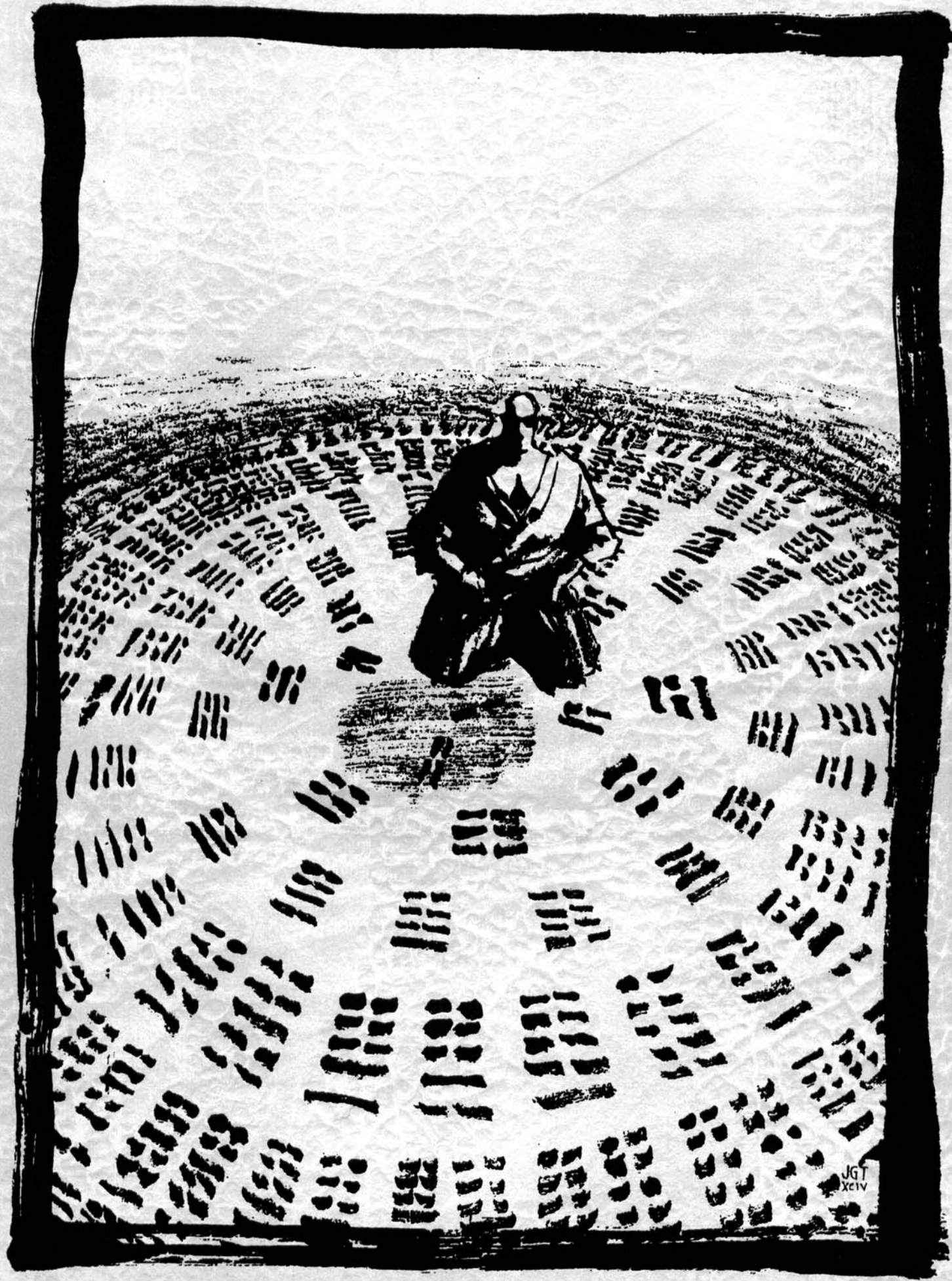
Bruised -0 ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

Experience

Study Points

Backgrounds

Allies _____ ●●○○○
Avatar _____ ●●○○○
Destiny _____ ●○○○○
Influence _____ ●○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○



心遠忘事理

Appendix: Scrolls of the Brotherhood (Systems)

Instead, they are the waves of an ocean in storm — clashing, and drowning one another's fury. And I become the storm, channeling its force into the ranks of chaos... transforming their numbers into self-imposed barriers... striking as the lightning strikes..

— Marvel Comics, *The Hands of Shang-Chi, Master of Kung Fu*

Sects of the Akashic Brotherhood



The teachings of the Brotherhood divide specialization in the nine Spheres of conventional magick among four Sects, each with a different Style of Do. These Sects follow the general inclination of their members' Avatar Essences; such striving reflects the goal of the eternal Self and must be respected. All Brothers learn the basics of the Sphere of Mind before beginning Sect studies; Sect Lingxiu understand the basic principles of the Life, Matter and Prime Spheres but reserve these teachings for advanced studies.

Sects cross-train students who show exceptional ability and acceptance of the Brotherhood's ways, but not until

the individual has mastered the basics of his own Sect's style (i.e., he or she has attained three dots in that Sect's chosen Spheres).

Orange Robes (Pattern)

This Sect comprises the majority of the Brotherhood and controls the actions within the Xiudaoyuan. Orange Robes study Drahma, the inner self, and the Cosmic All in order to maintain the Balance and progress the Realm toward Ascension through quiet, contemplative study. They specialize in the teachings of the Mind Sphere while learning the Spheres of Force and Entropy. Their Do tends to be internal, meditative and focused upon the conservation of motion. *Utilize your enemy's strengths and weaknesses to defeat him.*



Scales of the Dragon (Questing)

Protection of Sleepers and Awakened alike holds priority among the Scales, the most bellicose Sect. This Sect holds the Correspondence Sphere in high regard, as it allows them to avoid unnecessary conflicts. The Spheres of Force and Entropy increase the Brother's ability to deliver death to an opponent if combat is unavoidable. Dragon's Scale Do training functions externally and relies upon strikes and complex katas. *Skirt your foe if you can; destroy him utterly if you cannot.*

Yogi (Dynamic)

The Yogi finds fruit through pious austerity and generous actions. Spirit magick is most important to this Sect; it allows the Yogi to battle the forces that would control the Realm from beyond the Gauntlet, while befriending those spirits who would see the worlds rejoined in harmony. The cyclic nature of existence reveals the Drahmik aspects of the Cosmic All; for this reason, the Yogi also learn to manipulate the Time Sphere. *The Realms of Life and Spirit rely upon each other for existence; surely we can bridge the chasm and speak to those of both worlds.*

Blue Skins (Primordial)

A Blue Skin's destiny is to Ascend through truth, peace and connection to her inner self. This Sect helps a student to harden both mortal form and Avatar through rigorous searching, testing and concentration. The Prime Sphere enables the Sect to link directly into the flow of Quintessence. With this knowledge comes the ability to link into the Spheres of both Matter and Life.

Blue Skins do a majority of their training in isolation in order to achieve Ascension. Though the Brotherhood teaches that society should not be ignored for its place in the Balance, Blue Skins place Ascension of the individual above the Ascension of society as a whole. *The sword honed to ultimate sharpness cuts cleanly through all barriers. Such a sword, however, must be polished with care and handled with reverence, lest it break or cut its owner.*

Magicks of the Brotherhood

The physical world is a shared illusion. When a person becomes one with her inner self, she begins to understand that reality is not as stern and solid as it once appeared. Her thoughts and actions begin to slowly manifest in the world about her. People act differently, thoughts about situations affect her as they happen, and warning visions appear in dreams.

Like their Tradition brethren, the Akashic mages have a particular belief in a "tenth Sphere," a final piece in the cosmic puzzle that holds the secret of mass Ascension. The

Brotherhood, also like its fellow Traditions, has yet to unlock the mysteries of this theoretical Sphere's use or to convince other mages that it even exists. This Sphere, called Drahma, is a combination of destiny, cosmic will, personal achievement and the recognition of all these elements into a unified and harmonious whole. Though often spoken of, the Drahma Sphere remains an enigma that only the Celestial comprehend.

In Akashic teachings, it is the will of the mind and the power of the inner self, in harmony with the will of the universe, that ultimately allow a Brother to perform magicks. Over the centuries, however, basic concepts have been delineated in order to advance those in the early stages of magick study:

Correspondence — The Self as the Cosmic All

The Scales of the Dragon believe that they are a microcosmic aspect of the macrocosm. Therefore, they can relate to the totality of the Cosmic All through understanding their physical form. Through the practice of Do, the Dragon's Scales learn to harness this link to project their senses or their forms to other locations.

Entropy — The Flaws of Structure

Everything in the world is composed of pieces on smaller and smaller levels. Where these pieces meet, the structure is weak. This is where things will break if they are dropped or struck by an act of Do. For this reason, the Akashic Brotherhood has learned to sense these faults within the things around them. Once these flaws become known, anything can be broken down into its component parts on every level of reality.

Forces — Riding and Manipulating the Flow

All changes in reality are caused by disbalance. Disbalance causes the Flow to rush from one part of reality to another; this creates ripples and directs currents within the Flow. In the physical world, disbalance of the Flow manifests as the Forces.

One who follows the motion of the Flow can add the Flow within himself to the Flow of the Cosmic All. The greater the Flow, the better chance one has to succeed. One who learns to detect the Flow's aspects within the physical world can redirect that Flow by guiding it through or around his own Pattern.

Life — The Mind is the Body's Master

Just as the world is illusion, so too is the body. Illusions exist within the mind. Thus, the mind has power to influence all illusions if it is strong enough. Focus within the mind projects the image into the physical world. In the early stages of training, this projection can take on the form of physical activity by one's self or others, but in the advanced ranks the will alone is enough to bring about a response.

A Brother learns to manipulate himself before advancing; this includes control over pain, rapid healing of the body, manipulation of the physical form, and projection of appearance. Eventually the student learns that his illusion

is his body, both seen and projected, and that it is all easily mutable by the will of the mind.

Matter — Manipulating the Cosmic Image

Just as the mind controls the body and life, so it can shape the world surrounding it. (See the Sphere of Life, above)

Mind — All Minds as One Mind

The World is an illusion within our mind, so we cannot see what is truly happening. As we are all shards of the Prime, each mind is only a piece of the collective unconscious of humanity. Even though we are separate, we are still pieces of the whole. We can influence our own illusions by setting up reinforcements of our beliefs within our minds. With a strong will, one begins to sense the thoughts of others and to project her thoughts into them. On an elementary level, thought projection can be done verbally. With practice, a student can learn to project thoughts into the minds of others silently and effortlessly. With intense concentration, the will of one individual can completely overtake that of a weaker being.

Prime — The Flow

The Blue Skin Sensei teach that an underlying current runs through all things. It is the Weave of the Pattern, the Path of the Thread. One who follows the Flow finds life easier. One who learns to manipulate the Flow has true power over all things, for it is this Flow that gives things life and existence.

Spirit — The Celestial Realms

The Yogi believe that the aspects of the Realm are shadows of a greater plane known as the Celestial Realm. Composed of a structure that has remained virtually unchanged over the centuries, the Celestial Realm is one of formality and structure. It is ruled by a Celestial Court with the Jade Emperor at its head and populated by a multitude of greater and lesser deities, each of whom has powers over certain aspects of physical existence. These deities sometimes come to the aid of men if they are called. (See **The Book of Madness** for more details on the Umbral Courts.)

Time — Now Makes Tomorrow and Yesterday

The Yogi learned long ago how to access the Akashic Record, linking their beings into the currents of Prime that flow forward and backwards through existence. Things done now influence not only the future but the past as well. By utilizing the power of their minds, the Brothers are able to extrapolate on current and future events by what has gone before.

Brotherhood Foci

The Akashic teachings historically define the foci that every practitioner utilizes for magicks. Within these definitions, however, there are variables for each Brother's Path. Do holds major importance as both a focus and a Skill. It encompasses in itself a multitude of possibilities. Every student in the end has his or her own Do, a reflection of how

the Brother manipulates reality (see *The Book of Shadows* for rules about Do).

A variety of alternate foci and acts of Do are listed below to help individualize characters of the Brotherhood. A character might very well access the first level of a Sphere with one Do act and a different level of that same Sphere with another. Magick papers are specially prepared diagrams and koans, written on red paper and eaten. Such papers are not usually Talismans in and of themselves, but allow Akashic mages (and their acolytes) to focus their will through mystick connotations.

Correspondence

Intense meditation, motions of the arms and positions of the hands, large jars, blindfolds, places dark enough to hide shadows, running, gems placed over the "third eye."

Entropy

Targeting "weak points," clearing the mind of extraneous thoughts, shaving the head, kiai, Drahmich chants.

Forces

Meditation on one's center, kiai, fist wrappings, smooth wave-like motions of the arms and legs, spinning motions, jumping off of things.

Life

Melee skill, sacred weapons, undisturbed meditation, pressure points, kiai, acupuncture needles, burning incense, strikes with the limbs, intense meditation, eating or smoking of certain herbs, prayer beads.

Matter

Melee skill, kiai, holding things within the hands, reaching into concealing robes, reaching behind the back, focusing the will.

Mind

Focusing one's will, Do strikes to the "third eye," Do hand motions, staring into the subject's eyes, calm speeches, logical discussion, small dolls, magick papers, prayer beads.

Prime

Meditation, repeated motions, closing one's eyes, repeating chants, tattoos, sacred headbands, kiai, prayer beads.

Spirit

Ritual baths, application of special oils, abstinence from sex, purity of mind and body, magick papers, sitting postures, eating certain foods, fly whisks, fans with designs of the Phoenix, statues of the spirits with whom the mage wishes to communicate, wooden sword.

Time

Stomping patterns, deep meditation, preparatory kata, secret herbal mixtures, magick papers, repeated quick breathing.

General Purpose Rotes

Below are examples of rotes commonly taught to Brothers in story form. They are meant to be lessons in the constructions of one's own magicks.

Long-range Eyes (•• Time, •• Correspondence, • Mind)

In order to spy on his enemies, Pang Xiao employed the powers of the Celestial personae of Long-range Eyes. With this gift, Pang Xiao was able to look at any imaginable location and extrapolate backwards and forwards from that moment in time to determine what was presently going on, what had gone before, and what would happen next in that location.

[The character may trace a time span or follow a given target. Additional successes determine the depth of detail revealed.]

Sure Footing (••• Matter, •• Prime)

Vu Zhang's girlfriend, Glowing Orchid, had been captured by the wizard Yu Fong. Knowing that Yu Fong's mountain Chantry was accessible only by one narrow walkway, Vu Zhang was sure that Yu Fong would be ready to destroy anyone stupid enough to cross it. Thinking quickly, Zhang employed his spear to assure **Sure Footing** as he ran up the near-vertical cliff face behind the structure and onto its roof.

[The Doist alters matter into a form that he can travel over normally. This does not alter the appearance of the matter or transcend the laws of gravity; the Effect merely changes the surface's structure and composition.]

Rotes for the Ascension War

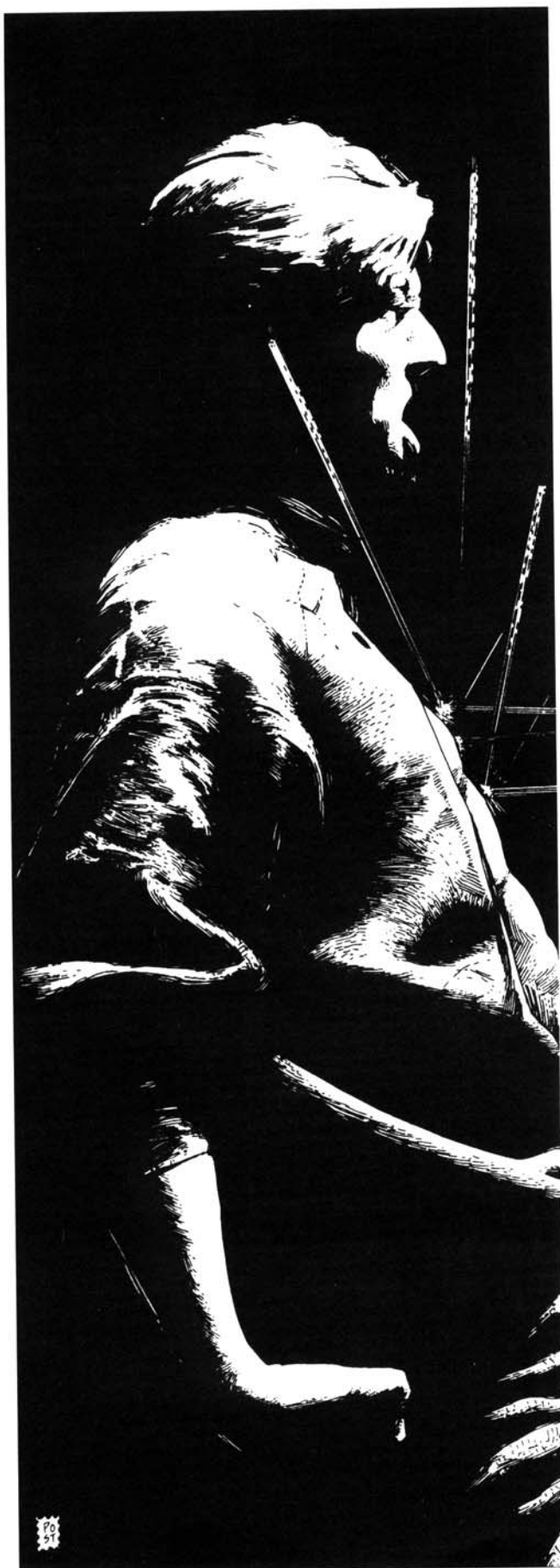
I sense seven men who follow a dark path. They seek otherworldly power for selfish and destructive purposes... Perhaps it is time for one who seeks the light to cross his path into theirs.

— Brad Parker, "White Lotus," *Tales of the Kung-fu Warriors*

Terms such as "ninja" and "mau shong" have often been applied mistakenly to a mythical fellowship composed of Dragon Scales who focus solely upon the Ascension Wars; the fellowship's true name is unknown. The rotes of this cabal are taught to those who wish to battle in the Ascension Wars, if one can find the fellowship at all. Mages who would learn these rotes must often pass some rigorous combats, initiations and tests to prove their worthiness and dedication.

Flash-bomb Stunt (•• Forces)

A method of blinding opponents for purposes of attack and evasion, this rote concentrates all the light from an area into a pinpoint and places it where it will impair an opponent's vision — usually directly in front of his eyes.



[The Sphere of Forces concentrates all light in an area into a point selected by the mage. This lasts for only a moment, but the lack of illumination and the intense light focused at its nexus point cause temporary blindness to anyone in the Effect area. Recovery takes a number of rounds equal to 6 - Stamina.]

Smoke-bomb Trick (•• Matter, •• Prime)

The Brother conjures a huge cloud of thick smoke that blocks vision. A simple eggshell or tiny grenade makes this Effect coincidental.

[The Sphere of Matter fills an area with a thick black smoke that not only blocks vision but irritates the surface of the eyes as well. The number of successes on the magick roll indicates the number of turns that the smoke retains its blinding effect before dissipating.]

Summon Weapon (••• Correspondence, • Mind, or •• Matter, •• Prime, • Mind)

In the ancient days of the Brotherhood, monks learned to summon their chosen sacred weapon, often a unique focus. If that weapon was within view, it would automatically appear within the practitioner's hand. If the weapon was not within range of sight or close travel, a Pattern copy of the weapon would appear in the Brother's hand (though this latter copy could not function as a unique focus).

[The mage instantaneously causes a weapon to appear in her hands. If it is a dedicated weapon, the energy of Correspondence moves the weapon to the practitioner. If the weapon is merely "formed," the energy of Prime and Matter forms, shapes and gives material structure to the weapon. Such weapons are often inferior and break on botched rolls. This rote is usually vulgar, but can be explained by bounces, handy companions (who must be in place before the rote begins), ricochets, or in highly mystical places, as innate mastery of the martial arts.]

Do Rotes

These rotes utilize Quintessence through execution of certain Do maneuvers. Doists must use these required maneuvers to perform the magickal Effects. See Books Three and Four of **The Book of Shadows** for more details.

Focus of the Blow (• Force, • Mind)

Required Maneuver: Punch, Kick, Flying Kick or Throw

Thundering Spring River Sparrow had a hard time teaching Do to his older students. Thus, when his students were first Awakened, he immediately taught them this rote in order to perfect their execution of Do. With this rote, the Doist can feel when a technique is performed correctly by detecting the amount of kinetic energy generated.

[The Doist's damage difficulty is lowered by one per success through this rote. This teacher can judge a maneuver's success by touch when this rote is employed during the duration of the magick.]

Spirit Wounder (••• Spirit)

Required Maneuver: Punch, Kick or Throw

From the earliest days of the Brotherhood, Yogi have perfected the art of becoming one with the spirit world. With this rote, Akashic mages may use their Do against the less cooperative members of the Umbral communities. Stylists who would contend with the ephemeral ones are lost without such magicks; their blows fall on empty air.

[Spirit magick grants the Doist an attunement with Umbral beings; through it, she may grasp or strike non-materialized ephemera. Damage is inflicted normally, though most spirits cannot soak it. A Brother with such abilities is granted fear and respect in the spirit world—and is often singled out as a greater threat than the average mage. See **The Book of Madness** for more details on Umbral combat.]

Repeating Blow (••• Forces, ••• Correspondence, • Mind, •• Prime)

Required Maneuver: Punch or Kick

Ah Mu created the **Repeating Blow** to shatter boulders and crack cliff faces. Meant only as an exercise in concentration, Ah Mu never intended this rote to be the method of attack that it has blossomed into. Still, it has become one of the most popular attacks of Brothers skilled enough to use it.

[At the beginning of a Do maneuver, the mage activates this rote. As the first blow is about to land, the Doist retracts the blow, returning to his original position; the blow's kinetic force is then redirected within his Pattern. The Doist may repeat this process multiple times.

[The Brother rolls each turn he wishes to redirect his force. The difficulty goes up by one for every turn past the first for as long as he chooses to continue (+1 the second turn, +2 the third, etc.). A failed roll will strike the surface, doing normal damage and dispersing all stored kinetic energy from the Doist's body. A botch reflects a misstruck blow, inflicting full damage against both the stylist and the target. If the mage's rolls continue to be successful, he may release all of the stored energy in a final titanic blow.

[Each success scored, up to a maximum of five, adds a multiple to the Effect damage (one = none, two = success x1 levels of damage, three = x2 levels, four = x3, five = x4). The character adds an additional level of damage to his total for every success above the fifth. The incredible amount of damage this rote can generate (up to 20 levels with five successes!) is awfully vulgar. Brothers who use this rote in the material world risk Paradox if they choose to inflict such damage, and may only roll up to three dice at a time in any case. Successes are still cumulative, however, and a Doist with a high Arete is quite dangerous to material objects in the Umbrae.

[Storytellers should note that moving targets are almost impossible to use this rote against; it is most effective when used on boulders, walls, parked vehicles and such.]

Kemian (Talismans)

The Brotherhood makes a habit of turning dedicated, unique foci into Kemian (Talismans) amplified by the use of ancient rites. Brothers travel to Horizon Realm Xiudaoyuan and give one of their dedicated foci, usually a sash or weapon, to a specific Sensei of that Xiudaoyuan. The focus is then charged with powerful magicks and transformed by reweaving the Tapestry.

Over a series of years, this process can be repeated, increasing one magickal attribute of the Kemian at a time. Brothers tend to mix the powers between their two physical foci. Because of the Kemian attunement, both of the Brother's dedicated Talismans must be present for their magicks to work, even if the Brother is no longer forced to use one of them to work her personal magicks. On the plus side, a unique focus transformed into Kemian works for the owner alone.

•• Magick Sword Coin

Arete 3, Quintessence 12

Employed in the Ascension Wars for centuries against the Nephandi and demon hordes (and, to a lesser degree, against vampires), this Kemian has the ability to allow a mage to fight without using her normal senses. The coin's second ability generates an extremely bright beam of light. The coin is usually attached to a straight sword's tassels.

[The Coin's first function activates a **Spatial Perceptions** Effect. Its second Effect uses Forces •• to blind a single opponent until it can make a successful Stamina roll versus difficulty 7. This roll may be made once per round; botches indicate the number of rounds that the target must wait before it can roll again to clear its vision. The glare from the Coin is still so bright compared to its surroundings that the target's difficulty rolls are increased by 2 (not to exceed 10) on all rolls except for non-perception related mental rolls (general thinking or understanding) and attack rolls versus the Coin itself, which are decreased by 1.

[These Effects use one point of Quintessence per turn; the beam of light is vulgar magick.]

••• Limitless Bow

Arete 5, Quintessence 20

Once this Talisman is activated, arrows will continue to materialize, loaded onto the bow and ready to fire until the magick dissipates or the user removes an arrow from the bow without firing it. This Talisman may also function as a normal bow.

[This Talisman, once activated, will continue to function until the duration of the magick is complete. Roll as usual (difficulty 5) and check the duration chart. When the duration is complete, all arrows shot from the bow dematerialize. (See below for bow statistics.)

[If the mage takes an arrow from the bowstring, the duration ends immediately, but that arrow will not dissolve



as the others did. In the future, the mage may load this arrow into the bow and gain a -1 difficulty on to activate the Kemian.]

Familiars of the Akashic Brotherhood

It was said that an old master had a pet cricket, and that it watched over him as he slept in his secluded hermitage. One day a young man came to learn Do from the master.

Seeing the cricket, he snatched it up to demonstrate his great speed and awesome perception. In the act, he accidentally killed the cricket.

The old man just laughed, "That was my oldest and truest friend." And with that, he died.

— Nichiba, the Weaponless Defender

Throughout the ages, the Akashic Brotherhood has taught that one should focus upon the inner self for the channeling of all magicks. This hasn't stopped countless Brothers from linking with certain creatures in a mystickal way which benefits both. Such "familiars" are rarely magickal beings; instead, they bond for life to their mages, becoming exceptionally loyal and intelligent animal companions. Some exist as living foci, while others simply accompany

the Brother everywhere she goes, communicating with a mystic bond similar to limited telepathy.

Such familiars can be bought as one or two point creatures without special abilities beyond this mental link. The intelligence of an animal familiar is roughly that of a dim human, but tempered with instinct and a non-human perspective. The telepathic bond allows mage and companion to speak to each other without words. Long-range conversations would require the usual Mind magicks.

Each Sect of the Akashic Brotherhood has developed a philosophy concerning familiars; these lessons are revealed only to those who approach their Sensei about such matters.

Orange Robe Familiars

The quiet life of an Orange Robe leaves little room for the keeping of what the Sleepers would term "pets." For this reason, most Orange Robes seeking familiars look to small animals or insects. Crickets and praying mantises have been the insects of choice for centuries upon end.

Dragon's Scale Familiars

Scales of the Dragon tend to ally themselves with large animals. Tigers, bears, lions and even giant alligators have been known to come to Dragon's Scales seeking familiars. The stern nature of the Scales often balances out when such creatures come to them in the form of infant animals

that must be nurtured and cared for. These companions require many years to become formidable allies.

Yogi Familiars

Familiars drawn to Yogi often have Umbral ties; some Yogi actually link with minor Umbrood and animal spirits (Gafflings or normal mystick familiars). These companions often grant their mages obscure spirit lore and an understanding of the worlds beyond.

Blue Skin Familiars

Blue Skins are not drawn to Familiars; such stylists need no distractions as they chart their pathway to Ascension.

Hand signs

Over the centuries, the Brotherhood has created a complex system of hand signals for silent communication. These hand signs are highly secretive; revealing the "translation" of any given sign to non-Akashics is a punishable offense and considered treason against the Brotherhood.

There are over 1080 hand signs in use. Examples include: "Act like you don't know me," "Act like you don't like me," "Ask no questions," "Follow me," "Help me," "Hide fast," "Act like we're fighting," "I'm being followed," "I'm marked for death," "I need food," "Others are coming this way," "That is our enemy," "Be at peace," and "You are being followed."

The Book of Shadows offers the Sign Language Knowledge in Book One. At the end of basic Do training, initiates learn the secret hand signs — one dot of Sign Language (Akashic). Any Brother wishing to have contact with other members of the Brotherhood should purchase this Knowledge.

Special Weapons

The East is known for its exotic weaponry. While Akashic mages usually work best with swords, many embrace other instruments of death not covered in the Mage rulebook.

Some of these weapons — nunchaku, bows, sai — are well-known enough to require no definition. More exotic weapons are described below. Weapons marked with a * require at least three dots in Melee to use properly.

To disarm an opponent with a specialty weapon, roll a resisted Dexterity roll after a successful hit. If the Brother scores three or more successes, the weapon is ripped from the opponent's hand.

Butterfly Knife — 1) A knife built so that the handle separates into two parts that can be folded to cover the blade. Also called a balisong. 2) Short hacking swords built with a hook to catch the hafts of pole-arms and staves. Often wielded in pairs, they can be used for blocking attacks.

Kukri — A hooked fighting knife with a 12" blade, originating in India. It is used as both a hand-held weapon and a throwing knife.

Gim — A Chinese straight sword, usually balanced by a tassel weighted with a coin. Used primarily for stabbing, but sometimes for slashing attacks. Mostly used singly, they can be wielded in pairs as well. The sword's blade is thin and very flexible. Used as an internal weapon.

Hook Swords — The ends of these swords turn back down in a 'u' shape before coming to a point. A crescent moon shaped blade is attached in front of the handle, while the butt of the hilt ends in a small stabbing blade. They are usually used in pairs.

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage	Conceal	Notes
Bow	8	3	N	90" range, Rate 1/Turn
Butterfly Knife	5	Str. + 1 or 2	P or J	
Kukri	5	Str. + 3	J	
Gim	5	Str. + 3	T	
*Hook Sword	6	Str. + 3	N	Can Disarm
Kampilan	6	Str. + 4	J	
Katana	6	Str. + 5	T	
Kris	5	Str. + 3	J	
*Manrikigusari	8	Str. + 1	T	Can Disarm or Grapple a target with difficulty 9 strike
*Meteor Hammer	8	Str. + 4	T	Extra reach
Monk's Spade	7	Str. + 3	N	
*Nunchaku	7	Str. + 1	J	
Sai	7	Str. + 1	J	Can Disarm or reduce armor rating by 1
Tanto	4	Str. + 1	J	Reduce armor by 1
*Urumi	7	Str. + 3	J	Extra reach
*Wind and Fire Wheels	6	Str. + 3	T	Can Disarm

Kampilan — A hacking sword of the Philippines. The backside of the blade is the only sharpened edge, though the point of this edge is also barbed.

Kris — A blade with a wavy blade utilized in the Philippines. Similar weapons appear in India and Thailand as well.

Manrikigusari — A fighting chain, from six to eight feet long, with a fist-sized weight on each end. Some have a hook on one end instead.

Meteor Hammer — A heavy weight attached to a rope or chain; used for swinging and throwing attacks.

Monk's Spade — A tool utilized within monasteries for gardening, but also used as a weapon. One end is sharpened and shovel-like. The other end is a blade in the shape of a crescent moon with sharpened teeth on its inner edge.

Tanto — A Japanese fighting knife with a point designed to pierce armor.

Urumi — A spring or whip sword of Indian origin. Usually about five feet in length, it can be worn as a belt. The blade is coiled and strikes out with a whipping motion.

Wind and Fire Wheels — Small fighting rings with jagged protrusions used to catch weapons and cause damage to opponents. Often utilized by internal stylists.

Characters of Notable Worth

Raging Eagle

One of the lead Sensei of the Scales of the Dragon for over 50 years, Raging Eagle is known throughout the Brotherhood for his martial mastery. He trains in a secret cavern high in the mountains of Tibet. It is there, decades ago, that he met a mysterious group who practiced an ancient art that supposedly focused the spirits of the wind.

Raging Eagle only trains students who are heading towards oneness within their inner selves. When necessary, he has been known to train small classes in the ultimate destructive nature of Do. The Akashic Record traces his Avatar back to before the Himalayan Wars in which he fought valiantly. The Record further yields that he has been associated with Gentle Mountain, Fall Breeze and several other mages of high rank — both inside and outside the Akashic Brotherhood and the Traditions as a whole — during virtually every incarnation cycle.

The young Raging Eagle studied boxing. One day, he Awakened during a deep meditation after an intense workout. Soon afterward, he was found by the Brotherhood and taken to a Xiudaoyuan in Colorado. It was there that he later met Gentle Mountain and began deep studies of the Mind Sphere. Much later in life, he began to study his past lives within the Record. Over time, he understood what would happen if he became engaged in the Ascension



心遠忘事理

Wars, and vowed that day to work as hard as he could to avoid his fate and to achieve Ascension.

It is written repeatedly in the Akashic Record that when Raging Eagle goes out into the world to battle in the Ascension Wars for more than a week at a time, Death will soon be upon this incarnation. When he has battled for close to a week, he goes into deep Quiets, which he endures in solitude and contemplation.

Raging Eagle's chiseled features accentuate his stone-like muscles. He shaves his head completely. Through the use of powerful magicks, his clothing matches the common dress of wherever he travels.

Gentle Mountain

Since the turn of the century, Gentle Mountain has instructed the prized pupils of the Brotherhood. His knowledge as an Orange Robes master complements his abilities as both a teacher and a guide to powerful Avatars. He tends to remain in seclusion and teaches his students by projecting his mind into that of the student, helping her to perfect

the thought forms necessary to utilize Do, work magicks, and live life to the fullest.

Gentle Mountain climbed his way into the mountains of Tibet to find the Temple of the Inner Truth at age nine. He had been a beggar in India during much of his youth. One day he found a secret tome while stealing from what turned out to be a Nephandi mage's house. That tome had been stolen from the Record during the Himalayan Wars. Within this book, he found the location of the Temple. He would have died in a blizzard during his search if it had not been for several members of the Brotherhood, who found him half-buried in the snow; one of these monks was Raging Eagle in a past incarnation.

By perfecting his control of the mind through repeated lifetimes, Gentle Mountain has realized that thought is merely a script of existence that he has influence upon. Naturally bald, he is a spry old man with a long flowing beard of gray and eyebrows of outstanding proportion. His ear lobes are unnaturally long — a sign of his great longevity. He dresses himself in the mode of an Orange Robe and wears a set of Kemian prayer beads.





Akashit

BROTHERHOOD

MAGE: The Ascension™



Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Essence:
Nature:
Demeanor:

Concept:
Mentor:
Cabal:

Attributes

Physical

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

Social

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

Mental

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

Abilities

Talents

Alertness _____ ○○○○○○
Athletics _____ ○○○○○○
Awareness _____ ○○○○○○
Do _____ ○○○○○○
Dodge _____ ○○○○○○
Expression _____ ○○○○○○
Intuition _____ ○○○○○○
Intimidation _____ ○○○○○○
Streetwise _____ ○○○○○○
Subterfuge _____ ○○○○○○

Skills

Drive _____ ○○○○○○
Etiquette _____ ○○○○○○
Firearms _____ ○○○○○○
Leadership _____ ○○○○○○
Meditation _____ ○○○○○○
Melee _____ ○○○○○○
Research _____ ○○○○○○
Stealth _____ ○○○○○○
Survival _____ ○○○○○○
Technology _____ ○○○○○○

Knowledges

Computer _____ ○○○○○○
Cosmology _____ ○○○○○○
Culture _____ ○○○○○○
Enigmas _____ ○○○○○○
Investigation _____ ○○○○○○
Law _____ ○○○○○○
Linguistics _____ ○○○○○○
Medicine _____ ○○○○○○
Occult _____ ○○○○○○
Science _____ ○○○○○○

Advantages

Spheres

Correspondence _____ ○○○○○○
Entropy _____ ○○○○○○
Forces _____ ○○○○○○

Life _____ ○○○○○○
Mind _____ ●○○○○○
Matter _____ ○○○○○○

Prime _____ ○○○○○○
Spirit _____ ○○○○○○
Time _____ ○○○○○○

Other Traits

_____ ○○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○○

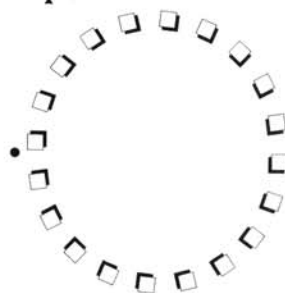
Arcs

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Willpower

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Quintessence



Paradox

Health

Bruised -0 ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

Backgrounds

_____ ○○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○○

Experience

Study Points



Akashit BROTHERHOOD™



Merits & Flaws

Merit	Type	Cost	Flaw	Type	Bonus

Magick

Preferred Effects

Rotes

Talismans

Name	Level	Arete	Quintessence	Appearance

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage	Range	Rate	Clip	Conceal

Do Maneuvers

Maneuver	Difficulty	Damage
Punch	6	3+ Successes
Kick	7	4+Successes
Flying Kick	8	5+Successes
Throw	8	3+successes
Grapple	6	Strength
Body slam	7	Special; see Options

Special Maneuver	Roll	Difficulty	Effect	Related Rotes

Armor: _____

Do Style: _____



Akashic BROTHERHOOD™



Expanded Background

Contacts, Sleeper

Contacts, Awakened

Influence, Sleeper

Allies, Awakened

Resources

Mentor/Sect

Familiar

Chantry

Acolytes

Node(s)

Possessions

Gear (Carried)

Foci

Equipment (Owned)

Past Incarnations

Names

Friends

Enemies



Akashic BROTHERHOOD™



History Awakening

Goals / Destiny

Seekings

Quiets

Description

Age _____
Apparent Age _____
Date of Birth _____
Age of Awakening _____
Hair _____
Eyes _____
Race _____
Nationality _____
Height _____
Weight _____
Sex _____

Appearance / Nature of Avatar

Visuals

Cabal Chart

Character Sketch





Harmony is the Way of Dojo

Atmosphere of the Brotherhood: A love, hate, terror, and violence are aspects of all creation. Through physical, mental, and spiritual perfection, the Fellowship hopes to bring Ascension to all humanity. Dangerous enemies, however, require drastic solutions.

But if you see the cyborg on the road, kill him!

The Akashic Brotherhood Tradition Book explains the history, culture, and beliefs of this most wise and ancient Tradition. It includes:

- A variety of weapons, magic, and Tolkunil's for the Masters of Do.
- Five character templates for players or storytellers.
- History, relations, and more, many more.

