

# Dark Kingdom of JADE Adventures™



A Dark Kingdoms Sourcebook  
for Wraith: The Oblivion™



# Dark Kingdom of FADE *Adventures*<sup>TM</sup>



By Tim Akers, Mark Cenczyk, Ben Chessell, Chris Howard and James A. Moore  
Additional Material By Allen Tower





МОНКЕВИ



Existence is sanctuary:

It is a good man's purse

It is also a bad man's keep.

Clever performances come dear or cheap

Goodness comes free;

And how shall a man who acts better deny a man who acts worse...

Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*





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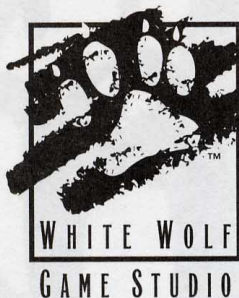
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...and all of the other victims of Bloody Wednesday. Those of us who remain miss you, and want you back.



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Because of the mature themes involved, reader discretion is advised.

Humble apologies to Markleford Friedman, co-author of **Dark Kingdom of Jade**, for yet another typo in the credits. Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima maxima culpa...





# Dark Kingdom of JADE *Adventures*<sup>TM</sup>

## Table of Contents

Introduction	6
Part I: Places to Go	
The Odyssey of the <i>Prince Alexsei</i> : Flagship of the Tsushima Floating Renegades	10
Bangkok: The House of the Fallen Sun	30
The Well of Night: The Jade Palace	46
Part II: Things to Do	
A Hope in Hell, or The Mask and the Mirror	66
A Voice in the Wilderness: The Lost Legion	82
In The House of Pika Don	98



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# Introduction



The Empire of Yu Huang is not restricted to the Shadowlands of the People's Republic of China. It yawns eastward to Japan, and south to the bare branches of Mekong jungles dosed with Agent Orange. Nor is it restricted simply to the Shadowlands; deep within the Tempest rest the twin citadels of The Jade Palace and Ti Yu. Heaven and Hell are Yu Huang's domain, or at least he would have his subjects believe so.

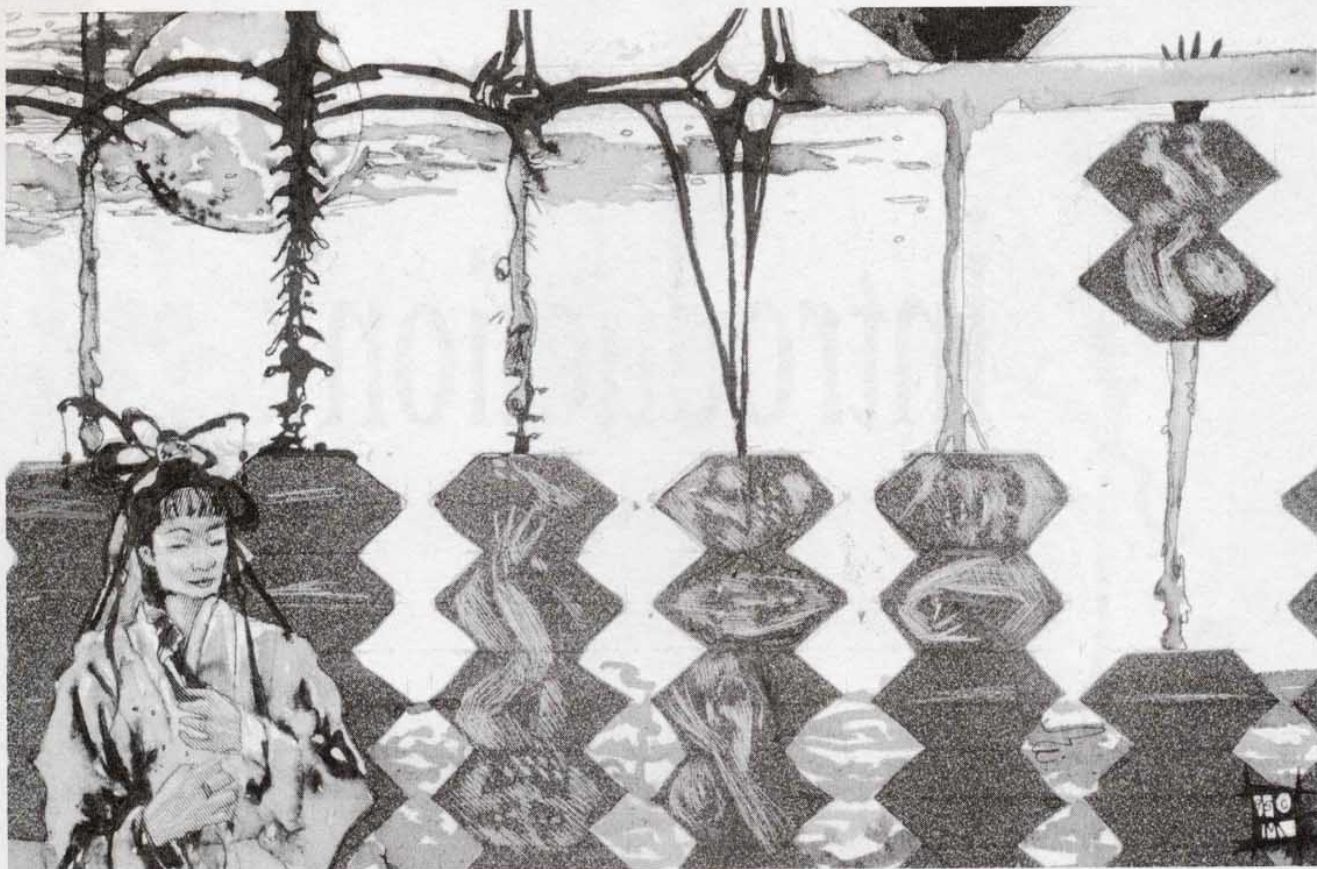
In theory, the Empire is a perfect realm of order and stability. There is no difference in order or law, whether one rests on the Jade Palace's doorstep or stands in the heart of conquered Nippon.

The reality, of course, is something different. Even within the Palace itself, intrigue and corruption fester. And if such things can occur outside the chambers of the

Emperor himself, what might go on in the tributary states of Bangkok or Vietnam? What unholy deals might be struck on the streets of Ti Yu, which the people call Hell? And what of those who rebel against the Emperor's rule? From the seas of the Tempest to the heart of Spectre-haunted Hiroshima, they are a far greater threat than the smiling men from the Protectorate would have one believe.

So, there is a place within the borders of the Jade Empire for those who do not wish simply to be model citizens, paying their taxes and obeying the edicts posted on Eunuchs in town squares. There is a place for those who rebel and a place for those who seek to end rebellion. There is a place for foreigners attempting to find their way into the Yellow Springs and a place for those desperately trying to escape. From Hell to Hiroshima, the gates of the Jade Empire have been thrown wide open.





## How To Use This Book

**Dark Kingdom of Jade Adventures** is a chance to explore the other lands that Yu Huang lays claim to. The book is divided into two sections: Places to Go (Haunts) and Things to Do (Adventures). There are three of each. The first section, Places to Go, details a trio of settings for play.

**The Odyssey of the Prince Alexsei: Flagship of the Tushima Floating Renegades** details one of the most feared rebel groups in Yu Huang's domain, as well as offering rules for ship-to-ship combat in the Tempest.

**Bangkok: The House of the Fallen Sun** unveils the terrible secret hiding in the attic of one of the most haunted and cursed brothels in Bangkok.

**The Well of Night: The Jade Palace** is a guide to the wonders and horrors of the Emperor's Palace, which sits on an isle of sanity in the heart of the Tempest. Also included are statistics for the Four Magistrates, as well as the nightmare construct that is Eunuch Central.

The second section, Things to Do, is a series of unconnected adventures set in the Yellow Springs.

**A Hope in Hell, or The Mask and the Mirror** takes the characters to the depths of Hell before offering them a chance for escape; but the price of escape may be too high, even if all of the jailers do take bribes.

**A Voice in the Wilderness: The Lost Legion** is designed as a way to introduce Western wraiths to the Jade Kingdom. Set in the jungles of Vietnam, **A Voice in the Wilderness** brings the characters face to face with the legendary Col. Roth and his Lost Legion. All is celebration when the colonel puts the word out that he's looking for allies in his fight against Yu Huang, at least at first....

**In The House of Pika Don** takes the characters to the heart of Hiroshima's nuclear devastation. Designed for Jade Kingdom characters, the adventure sends the hapless wraiths into the depths of the Spectre-ravaged city in search of the great treasure hidden within: the relic of the first atomic bomb. The Fist of Nippon wants the bomb as well, however, and the denizens of the Nihil may not want to let it out of their grasp.



# Lexicon

Included here for Storyteller reference is an updated version of the Lexicon from **Dark Kingdom of Jade**.

**Buddhism:** A philosophy, founded in India, that teaches that right thinking and self-denial will enable the soul to reach Nirvana, a divine state of release from misdirected desire.

**Confucianism:** The ethical teachings formulated by Confucius and introduced into Chinese religion; they emphasize devotion to parents, family, and friends, cultivation of the mind, self-control and honest social activity.

**Conquered Territories:** The non-Chinese Shadowlands under the dominion of the Jade Kingdom.

**Eunuch:** A soul Moliated and lobotomized into serving as a recording device for information. Commonly used by Magistrates and as methods of disseminating the laws to the populace.

**Feng Tu:** Entrance into the Hell created by the Emperor as a place to send criminals and enemies.

**Fist of Nippon:** A revolutionary movement, dedicated to freeing the Shadowlands of Japan from Yu Huang's grasp.

**Hun:** The intellectual aspect of the soul, controlling higher functions. Equivalent in game terms to the Psyche.

**Immortal Guard:** The Emperor's elite army; incredibly strong and fanatically loyal.

**Jade Palace:** The Emperor's colossal abode, located within the Tempest.

**Kuei:** Hungry Ghosts; nearly mindless manifestations of the disgruntled p'o who has not been properly buried. They wander the Yellow Springs causing mayhem.

**Kuei-go:** The equivalent of barghests; wraiths who have been tortured and Moliated into inhuman killing machines.

**Ma Mien:** Horse Face Demon, one of Yu Huang's most potent servants in Ti Yu.

**Nippon:** Another name for Japan.

**P'eng Lai:** Another term for Paradise.

**P'o:** The part of the soul related to physical aspects of existence; often referred to as the "animalistic" side of the soul. In game terms, equivalent to the Shadow.

**Qin Shihuang:** Yu Huang, Jade Emperor. In life, the first emperor of a united China. In death, something more.

**Taoism:** A philosophy founded on the doctrines of Lao Tzu; it advocates simplicity, selflessness and similar virtues.

**Ti Yu:** Earth Prison, the capital of Hell

**White Jade:** The term for the milky white substance into which enslaved wraiths are often transformed; similar to Stygian metal.

**Yellow Springs:** Another term for the Shadowlands.

**Yu:** The Chinese word for jade, which has mystical powers in the Underworld.

**Yu Huang:** The Jade Emperor; ruler of the lands of the Chinese dead and many conquered territories.








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JONES  
1996





# The Odyssey of the *Prince Alexsei*

Flagship of the Tsushima Floating Renegades

By Mark Cenczyk

Haunt Level: 4

Memoriam Level: 2

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,  
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;  
It had been strange, even in a dream,  
To have seen those dead men rise.  
The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;  
Yet never a breeze up-blew;  
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,  
Where they were wont to do;  
They raised their limb like lifeless tools—  
We were a ghastly crew.

— Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*





The Far East has historically been an area shrouded in mystery for Westerners, its exotica captivating the imagination and exciting the wanderlust of adventurers from Columbus to Captain Cook, from Admiral Perry to Marco Polo. Europeans have looked to the enigma of the Far East as a treasure chest of wealth for the taking. The "opening" of China and Japan by the imperialistic West in the last half of the nineteenth century was only the first step in peeling away the protective layers of Oriental culture and society. In the Shadowlands, however, the situation is drastically different. The Dark Kingdom of Jade, a colossus swathed in a thick fog of the unknown and foreboding, holds no such enticement for Stygian wraiths. The only wealth in the Jade Kingdom is in the currency of foreign souls, and the Jade Emperor has stretched his talons across his empire's borders into Japan, Korea, Tibet, Nepal, Indonesia and Indochina to mine the spirits of other nations. Of course, pockets of rebellion spring up in these Conquered Territories every so often, but the Jade Empire has successfully suppressed them, and fleets of Imperial Reapers continue to make regular voyages to these Territories for the constant harvest of these sentient crops.

But now another force goads the Jade fleets. It is the Tsushima Floating Renegades, a crew of men and women whose paths crossed at Tsushima Strait, the decisive sea engagement of the Russo-Japanese War. Their vessel is the sunken Russian battleship the *Prince Alexsei*, a headquarters and sanctuary for souls they pick up and safeguard from the Reapers' blades. A collection of wraiths from every time and place, the Tsushima Floating Renegades patrol the sea lanes of the Tempest in their one-ship navy — part soldiers, part pirates, wholly pledged to freeing the Conquered Territories from the Emperor's legions.

## The *Prince Alexsei*



The *Prince Alexsei* is the base of operations for the Tsushima Floating Renegades. Built in Philadelphia in 1902, it measures over 400 feet long and 75 feet wide, the largest battleship in the Second Baltic Fleet that made the journey east. Her shell lies irretrievable at the bottom of Tsushima Strait, a narrow sleeve that separates the Korean peninsula from the string of islands that is Japan.

Over the years, a few enterprising divers have ventured beneath the waves to explore the wreckage and collect what curiosities they could: a ship's log here, a sidearm there, even a complete silver tea service from the officers' wardroom. These few baubles accompany a scale model of the *Alexsei*

on display in a long-forgotten alcove of the Imperial War Museum in London, but they only begin to tell the tragic story of this vessel. Those that have delved below and poked around the great wreck bear witness to a twisted mess of rotting metal, and cannot help but gaze in wonder at the wretched sight that once held the hope for the future of the Russian empire. Six 12-inch guns, eight 6-inch guns, and over 50 smaller gun turrets dot the deck of the *Prince Alexsei*. Four massive smokestacks, inexplicably painted in eye-catching bright yellow and ringed at the top with a wide black band, are smothered in layers of kelp and coral. Whole schools of fish make their homes in the mouths of the *Alexsei's* four torpedo tubes, and her great black hull lies savagely ripped apart by the pair of holes that took her to the bottom, along with any hope of a Russian victory.

In the Shadowlands, the *Prince Alexsei* survives as a relic ship. She still carries the scars of her first and final engagement at Tsushima, but fevered work by her Russian crew has again made her seaworthy, and the sight of the *Prince Alexsei's* massive bulk and four unmistakable smokestacks cutting through the water has put many a crew of Imperial Reapers to flight.

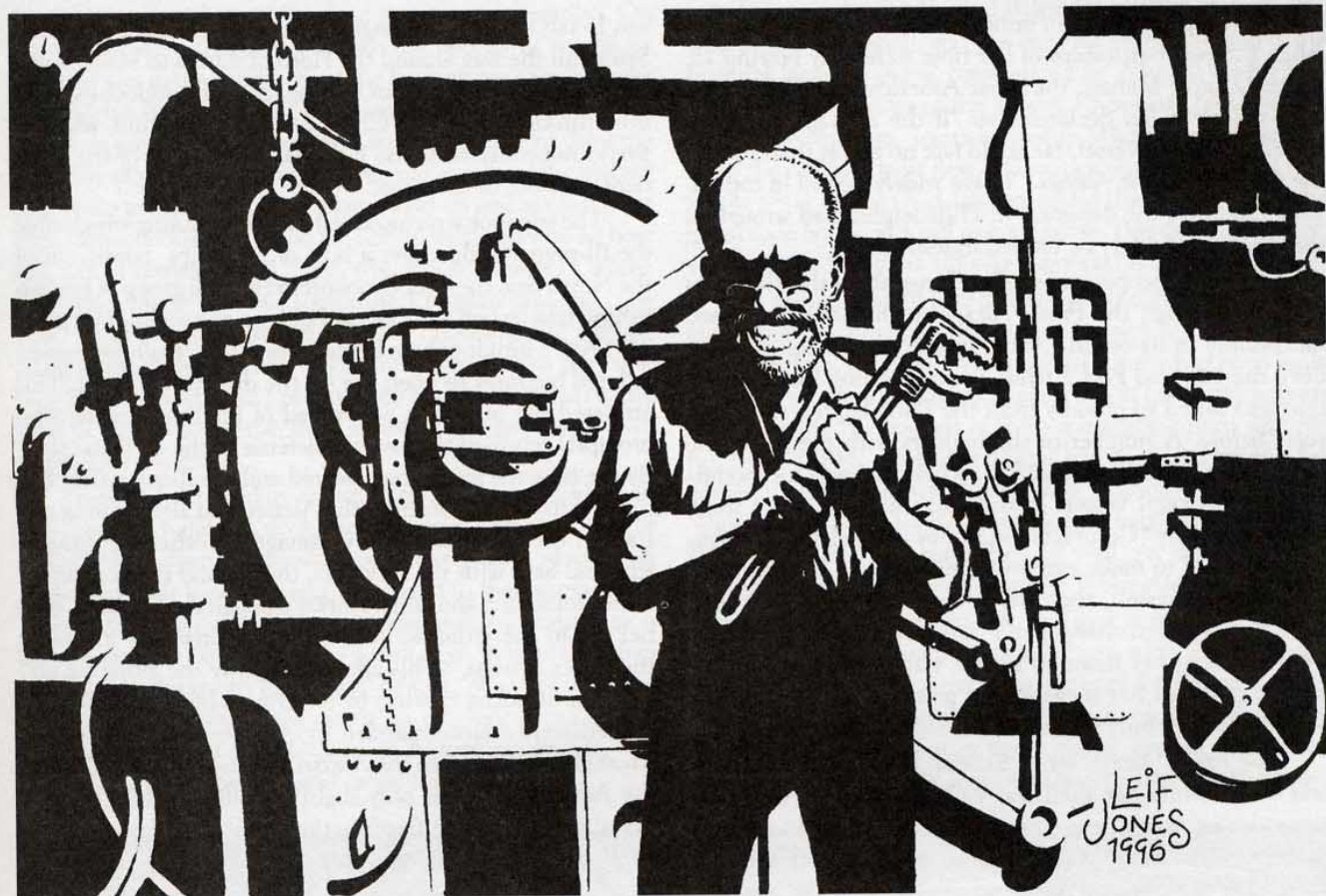
The bridge is centered on the foredeck, where Captain Marius Khiznekov guides the Renegades along their sojourn through the Tempest, ever on the lookout for the enemy's vessels. Directly behind the bridge is the officers' wardroom, the nerve center of the Renegades. Khiznekov holds court here, with a small nucleus of trusted wraiths as his officers. All of these define Tsushima Strait as their moment of reckoning, and their Passions have led them in death to the *Prince Alexsei*.

Around the deck, the *Alexsei's* full complement of guns has sent many a foolhardy Reaper craft into the abyssal depths of the Tempest. Atop the main mast flies the "Zed Flag," a cloth square consisting of four converging triangles of red, blue, yellow, and black — the adopted symbol of the Tsushima Floating Renegades. Lifeboats are connected, three on each side, and used as landing craft for the times when the Renegades mount raids into the Conquered Territories themselves.

Below decks, living quarters for 200 persons are filled to capacity with rescued souls and full-fledged Renegades. Those with mechanical expertise work in the engine room or man the guns and torpedoes, while those with a natural affinity for tracking and combat assemble in the large general quarters room to be briefed on their missions, which are meticulously mapped out by a tight-knit group of strategists under the auspices of the operations officer, Lt. Comdr. Matsuhiro Sati.

The engine room is the factory of the *Alexsei*, where chief engineer Grigory Radenska toils away on the solid state machinery of the Shadowlands, building, tinkering with and repairing anything that ends up on his workbench. He and a small think tank of Renegades keep the *Alexsei's* turbines running on Pathos, meanwhile manipulating the raw stuff of the Jade Empire into the weaponry of rebellion. A huge pair of





holes in the engine room marks the fatal point of impact from Japanese torpedoes; they have been painstakingly patched up with Moliated spirits of the first crew of Imperial Reapers who unwisely crossed the Renegades' path. Radenska thinks this a fitting end to those members of the Jade Emperor's legions. His fellow Renegades do not disagree.

Ships are living things; every sailor knows that. They have names — familiar, human pronouns that are used to refer to them. They are painstakingly maintained, repaired and operated, and are genuinely loved. In the heat of battle or the eye of a storm, they can do the most improbable things, almost as if the ship is willing itself not to die. Every ship has a soul; the *Prince Alexsei* is no different, and this fact is never more apparent than in the Shadowlands. The Tempest itself is a frightening thoroughfare, and those wraiths with exceptionally keen hearing can make out the innumerable shrieks of souls submerged in the inky whirlpools of Oblivion, a cacophony of horridness that the *Alexsei's* hull, like some great sepulchral radio receiver, is particularly attuned to catch. As her mangled propellers effortlessly cut through the Tempest, the *Prince Alexsei* pulsates with the energy of being. She emits a low hum, just on the outermost edge of sound, that many wraiths mistake for the churning of the engines when they first board her. The Russians know better — the *Alexsei* is literally crying.

## History



"There was a ship," quoth he.

— Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

On February 8, 1904, a fleet of Japanese warships under the command of Admiral Heihachiro Togo sailed into the Yellow Sea and attacked the Russian Pacific Squadron at Port Arthur, off China's Liaotung Peninsula. To the world's amazement, the Japanese sank several of the Russians' warships and damaged others to the point where they had no choice but to be scuttled. This attack marked the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War, which was to end with final Japanese victory in the turbid waters of Tsushima Strait the next year. The *Prince Alexsei* was one of five battleships that went down in that final battle, and many of the more superstitious scholars of naval history believe that the *Alexsei* was, from the beginning, a cursed ship. Named after the Tsar's hemophiliac newborn son and staffed by a ragtag group of unschooled and inexperienced sailors, many of whom were thrown into their first sea battle at Tsushima, she was the victim of these and many other factors.

At its launch in 1902, the *Prince Alexsei* was considered to be one of the fiercest ships of battle yet created. Along with its immense arsenal, the *Alexsei* was clocked in test runs





off the Atlantic coast at an unheard of speed of 24 knots; this when the best battleships of her time were only besting 18. Alfred Thayer Mahan, the great American naval logician, after sailing in her declared that "If the Almighty Himself were to captain a vessel, He could fare no better than by taking the helm of the *Alexsei*." It was widely agreed in top naval circles that the designers in Philadelphia had wrought a ship that could safely be termed indestructible.

Of course, people said similar things about the *Titanic* as well, and though the *Prince Alexsei* might have performed successfully in its original form, by the time it sailed to relieve the besieged Port Arthur, it was nothing like the ship that had sailed so proudly from the Philadelphia yards two years before. A number of shipbuilders with friends at the court of Nicholas II managed to secure contracts for modifications of several vessels in the Tsar's navy to make them "more seaworthy." Contracts and money in hand, these schemers proceeded to make extensive changes to a large number of the navy's vessels, the *Prince Alexsei* being one of them. Superfluous design changes and "improved" officers' quarters were added to her frame in such a way that the additional weight rendered her incapable of going any faster than 20 knots, and then only when she was sailing flat out.

The *Prince Alexsei* sat in Russian naval yards for a year and a half while her shell was violated by these modifications, during which time three workers lost their lives to accidents. By the time the shipbuilders had had their way with her and it came time to commission and man her, the best seamen had long since been assigned to the Far East. After Port Arthur, most of these men were dead, leaving the greatest battleship in the Russian navy sitting deserted in drydock. With no experienced men to man her, the head of the Second Baltic Fleet, Admiral Zinovy Rozhdestvensky, was compelled to turn to merchant marines and reservists' ranks for a crew able, if not worthy, to man the *Prince Alexsei*.

Chosen as captain was Marius Khiznekov, a middle-aged merchant marine seaman whose previous experience was spent captaining a trawler in the North Sea. His crew was a patchwork of fishermen, aged naval reservists, lower-class shipyard workers and peasants recruited from landlocked farming villages. Half of them had never been to sea, and those that had been had sailed so long ago that the technology of the *Prince Alexsei* was completely foreign to them. Unable to delay the projected date for the fleet to sail, the *Alexsei's* men were subjected to rushed and haphazard training, and by the time they raised anchor with the fleet, they knew little more than when they started. The senior gunnery officer on board a sister ship, the *Suvaroff*, said of the *Alexsei's* crew: "Some of them know nothing and the rest can only remember what is obsolete and useless."

Despite the mounting handicaps, Captain Khiznekov was determined to get his crew and his vessel into fighting shape during the long voyage east. The Second Baltic Fleet's course

was to sail through the English Channel, around France and Spain, all the way around the Horn of Africa to Madagascar, through the Indian Ocean to Singapore and Indochina, and then through the South China Sea to Port Arthur, where it would hopefully blow the First Battle Division of the Japanese navy out of the water.

The trip took a tortuous eight months, during which time the ill-prepared fleet met a host of hardships. Barely out of the North Sea, the fleet encountered a small group of English fishing trawlers off the Dogger Bank on the night of October 21, 1904. Thinking them English destroyers, Rozhdestvensky ordered his ships to open fire on the diminutive boats. This attracted the attention of a squad of English cruisers, who promptly returned the favor in defense of the civilian crafts. By the time the smoke had cleared and the Russian fleet had realized its error, shots from the *Alexsei* had already sunk one trawler, the *Crane*, and badly damaged another. Refusing to stop and help with the survivors, the Second Baltic Fleet resumed formation and sailed quickly through the English Channel out to the Atlantic. Khiznekov was inwardly furious at the fleet's actions, as his efforts to rectify the situation and help the attacked trawlers by lowering a lifeboat party were immediately countermanded by Admiral Rozhdestvensky. Khiznekov returned to the *Alexsei*, having lost all respect for the Admiral, and was only slightly mollified when international outrage at the fleet's actions sent Rozhdestvensky to sweat it out before a Court of Enquiry.

After the Dogger Bank incident, attitudes toward this mad-dog fleet cooled considerably around the world. The Second Baltic Fleet was met with decidedly frigid response at practically every port they stopped at to refuel. Seamen, given shore leave, were looked upon askance by the native residents. Rather than have his men add fuel to the fire, Khiznekov kept his crew on board the ship at every single port, drilling them on procedure and battle tactics and exhorting them to learn every single switch and button on board the ship. The other ships found the sight of a gang of backwater rubes running around all decks during a General Quarters drill to be akin to a circus sideshow, but Khiznekov kept at it all the way around Africa and through the Indian Ocean, promising himself that the crew that would face the Japanese would be fluid in their execution and deadly in their aim.

Not surprisingly, Khiznekov's mindset was not shared by his fellow captains, who continued to see the entire journey as futile. With each passing day at sea the general morale of the fleet in regards to prospective victory sank lower and lower; many ships were openly voicing their disgust with the Tsar and his "vain little war." Victory against the Japanese, and the glory that would come with it, held no attraction for the fleet captains, and the unvoiced preference was for defeat and the subsequent blow to the monarchy. The fleet captains, whose standards would never have been described as Nelsonian, spoke



directly amongst themselves about mutiny and desertion. On the night before the battle, Khiznekov and all of the fleet's captains met in the wardroom of the *Suvaroff* for a final dinner with Rozhdestvensky before the engagement. The atmosphere was more suitable for a wake, with no captain present thinking anything of victory. Growing angrier and angrier at the blatant cowardice around him, Khiznekov stood up and made a toast to his ship and his crew: "You are not soldiers, you who sit here and talk of surrender and flight, who mock those of us whose duty has brought us here. Tomorrow, I promise you, my crew and I will fight the Japanese, alone if necessary. We are certainly alone in our opinion of victory. It may be that the Japanese blow us to bits. But I promise you one thing: All of us, the crew of the *Prince Alexsei*, shall at least know how to die. We will not surrender."

Disgusted, Khiznekov returned to his ship and his men and called all hands on deck. He ordered the officers' store of vodka broken open and passed around to the men, whereupon he toasted their loyalty to each other and to their captain. He praised their duty and their resourcefulness, and called upon them to face the next day with a will of iron. "It is for ourselves that we fight the enemy tomorrow," he said. "We must be strong and brave, and temper our mettle to the task ahead. Come what may, we must not go down in history as cowards." At this, he dismissed the men and called for lights out.


The next day the Second Baltic Fleet sailed in single file, "line ahead" formation, and met the First Battle Division of the Imperial Japanese Navy, commanded by Admiral Heihachiro Togo. From the bridge of the *Alexsei*, Khiznekov could see the fleet of the Japanese, Togo's battleship *Mikasa* leading the way. Atop the *Mikasa's* mast flew one solitary alphabetic signal flag, for the letter Z. Togo had long ago added this single code to the naval code books, as a call to courage: ON THIS ONE BATTLE RESTS THE FATE OF OUR NATION. LET EVERY MAN DO HIS UTMOST.

At approximately 1:30 PM, the fleets collided, and it was clear that the Japanese ships were far superior to the Russians'. By 3:15, the Russian battleship *Oslyaba* had been sunk, and Togo's method of sailing straight across the Russian fleet's line and isolating pockets of ships was spectacularly successful. By 7:00 PM, the Russian lines had broken, and another pass by Togo's ships isolated and sunk Rozhdestvensky's ship. Within a half hour, Togo had isolated the battleships *Alexander III* and *Borodino* and sunk them as well. At that point, the Japanese trained their sights on the *Prince Alexsei*.

The *Prince Alexsei* had not fared well in the fight. She had suffered damage to most of her smaller guns and half of her larger guns; to make matters worse, a torpedo from the Japanese cruiser *Azumi* had hit her main propellor. The torpedo was a dud, but it had done significant damage to the blades, and the *Alexsei* was only able to manage half speed for the remainder of the battle.







However, if the Japanese ships thought that the crippled battleship was going to be a submissive target like her first three sunken sisters, they were fatally mistaken. Khiznekov ordered an all-out attack on the four ships opposing him, saturating them with every single shell the *Alexsei* had left. He sank one and caused serious damage to another, but while the *Alexsei* was attempting to round on the *Mikasa*, the damaged propellers could not make the turn fast enough, and the bulk of her hull exasperatingly trying to reposition itself was enough of a target for Togo to fire his torpedoes. The pair of underwater missiles slammed into the exact same point on the *Alexsei's* body, converging on the engine room. The explosion lifted the *Prince Alexsei* almost clear out of the water, spilling her over on her side and sending her below. As he watched her go down, Admiral Togo, whose personal code of honor had taught him to respect the bravery of an opponent, bowed his head and uttered a short prayer for the peaceful rest of the *Alexsei* and her crew, the only true warriors in the entire Russian fleet.

# The Tsushima Floating Renegades

*...We all were sea-swallow'd, though some cast again  
(And by that destiny) to perform an act  
Whereof what's past is prologue; what to come,  
In yours and my discharge.*

— William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Although comprised of men and women of several nationalities, the heart of the Tsushima Floating Renegades is a tight nucleus of Russian wraiths whose individual emotional ferocities have kept them a few steps ahead of Oblivion. The spectral hulk of the *Prince Alexsei* imbues them with renewed

## The Guns of the Alexsei

Ship to ship combat in the Shadowlands and Tempest is a far cry from its Skinlands counterpart. When a ship is damaged by "gunfire" in the wars of wraiths, what is actually sundered is its unity as a relic construct. If too much of the fabric of the memory that manifests as a relic is damaged, then the memory itself dissolves and the relic is destroyed.

Such is the way of naval warfare in the Tempest and Shadowlands. The ultimate goal when facing an enemy ship is not to let the surging waters into your rival's hull; there are no waters here, and the Tempest will not swallow a ship until it is destroyed. Rather, one seeks to damage an opponent's ship so severely that it can no longer maintain any pretense of what it once was, causing it to dissolve spectacularly. This dissolution may take the form of sinking beneath the waves of the Tempest, but what is really occurring is that the idea of the ship itself has been destroyed.

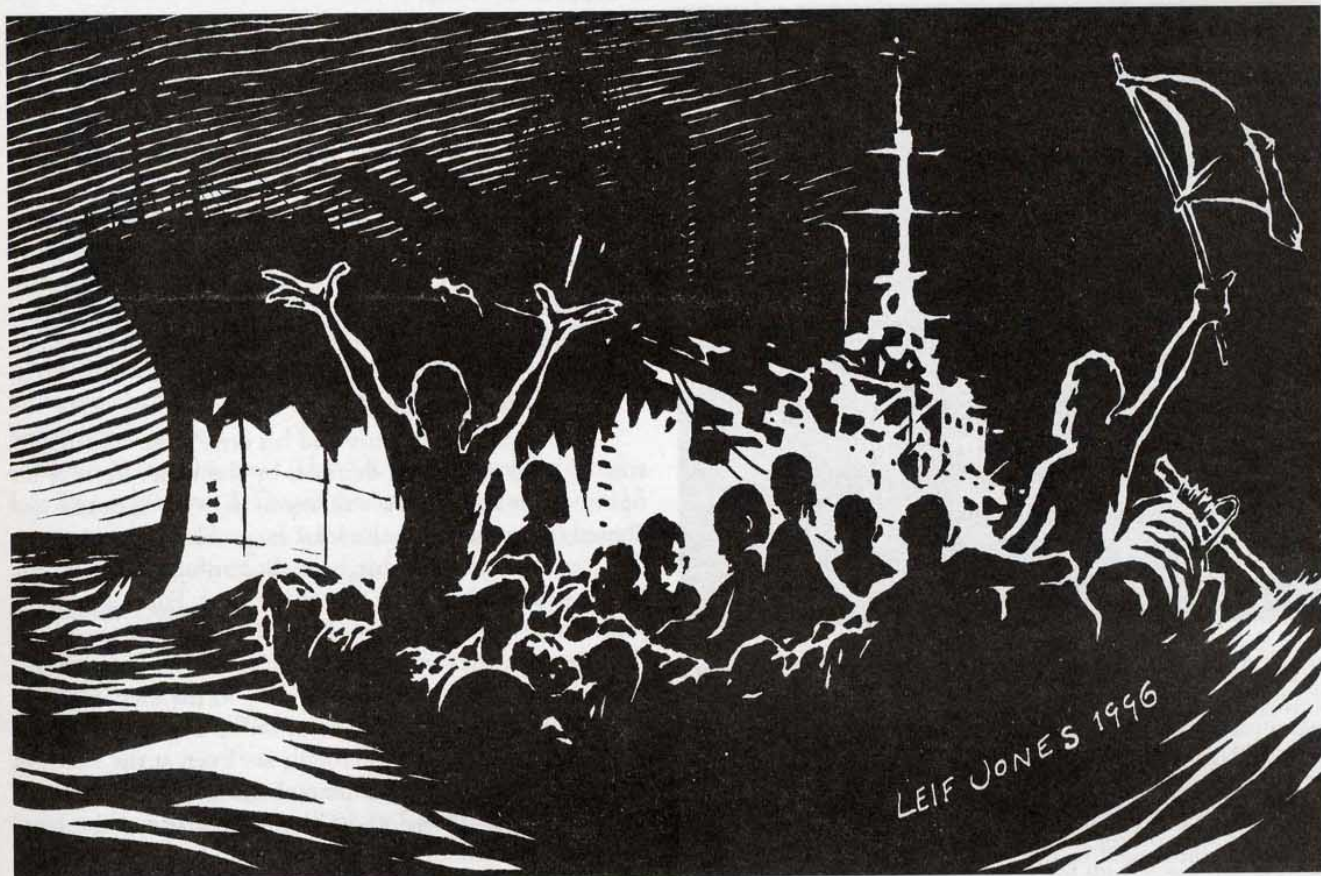
Khiznekov and Togo have learned this lesson well and use their understanding effectively in combat. The *Alexsei's* usual method of attack is to target any outstanding features of the ship or ships opposing them, thus quickly rendering them generic hulks

and unravelling their existence more quickly than a series of shots at the waterline would.

The *Alexsei's* guns use relic ammunition which the Renegades have scrounged from the sea floor at the Tsushima Straits. They've also been known to use whatever relics or Artifacts are handy in times of desperation, and the guns have never yet failed to fire no matter what was placed within them.

**System:** The *Alexsei's* guns have a base damage dice pool of 6, 8, or 10 dice, depending upon whether one is using the small, medium, or large guns. In addition, the smallest guns are triple-mounted in turrets, so that assuming that there are sufficient gunners, all three guns can be fired at once. To use the guns, the gunner must roll Dexterity + Firearms. If the gunner has a specialty in Artillery, the difficulty is 5, otherwise the difficulty is 9. The guns can be fired every other round in combat; the intervening round is spent reloading. The average Reaper ship can stand up to 100 levels of damage before going down; it is rare for an individual wraith to survive a single direct hit.





strength and a sense of focus that has saved them from the fate that has befallen so many of their fallen comrades.

Initially, the Russians wanted nothing to do with the fight against the Jade Emperor. Their primary purpose was one of simple evasion of the Reapers' nets; under Khiznekov's command, they were outsiders and liked it that way. For a time, this arrangement worked. The *Prince Alexsei* and her crew sailed the disused byways of the Tempest in an expert fashion — hiding out in unchartable coves and inlets, sailing on the very edge of storms in order to camouflage their presence, and staying just ahead of the Reapers and Bugi mercenaries.

The transition from hunted to hunter came about unexpectedly, as all such great transitions do. Sailing along the coast of that part of the Conquered Territories that had once been the Shadowlands of Japan, the *Prince Alexsei* caught sight of a small, rickety craft no more than 20 feet long. The vessel was crammed to bursting with wraiths, sailing hard to get away from an Imperial vessel hard on its wake. On the bridge, Khiznekov was ready to slink back into parts unseen when he saw the tiny craft hailing the *Alexsei*; it was a wraith in naval uniform frenetically wigwagging a distress signal. Peering at the craft, Khiznekov could make out an SOS call, but more importantly he recognized the flag the wraith was using to hail his ship: a signal flag for the letter Z, the same flag that flew atop the *Mikasa* on that fateful afternoon.

At that moment, Khiznekov ordered for a hard about turn, uttering one short command: "Sink it." By the time the captain of the Reaper ship realized what was coming up hard on his starboard side, the *Prince Alexsei* had already fired off its main guns. Targeted from point-blank range, the spectral shells connected with the hull of the Reaper ship and blew it clear on its side. As the Imperial ship went down, littering the sea with Jade functionaries, Khiznekov ordered a lifeboat lowered and ventured out to pick up the drifting Japanese wraiths. When he reached the little boat, Khiznekov recognized the man who was signaling to him — Admiral Heihachiro Togo, his opposite at the battle of Tsushima Strait. The flailing Imperial functionaries were left for the circling Spectres.

The force of that moment hit Khiznekov harder than any torpedo blast could; it was then that he realized that if he and his crew were to survive in this non-world, they could not be spectators. The *Prince Alexsei* had faced death with an unflinching gaze; now, trapped in this world of death, they could not betray that resolution. It was shortly thereafter that both groups of wraiths combined to form the Tsushima Floating Renegades.

It was also shortly thereafter that the Jade Empire first got wind of their existence — the ship Khiznekov had sunk was the *Jade Dragon*, the pride of the Emperor's Reaper fleet. Soon





## Storyteller Note:

Many of the Fetters of the members of the *Alexsei's* crew are either at the bottom of the ocean or in such far-flung locales as Moscow and Port Arthur. This makes reaching and protecting them extraordinarily difficult, and the strain the characters feel that being separated from their Fetters is an important component of the *Alexsei's* shipboard tension. On the other hand, a quest to retrieve Khiznekov's captain's bars from the sunken wreck of the *Prince Alexsei* might make for a fascinating chronicle...

after, reports started to pour into the Jade Palace of other Reaper ships disappearing: the *Jade Tiger* had been forced aground off the Vietnamese coast with all aboard destroyed. The *Silkworm* had been raided and scuttled, its cargo of Korean wraiths liberated. Three of the Emperor's finest Reaper ships, the *Baiji*, the *Jade Lotus*, and the *Windchime*, had been sabotaged in one of the Imperial satellite harbors, and were now useless. There was an unfamiliar ship in the Tempest, it was said; it seemed to have come out of nowhere, an avenging angel descending upon the Reaper crafts and destroying them.

At this, the Jade Emperor had heard enough. If he was going to keep a steady traffic in foreign souls, the *Prince Alexsei* would have to be destroyed. Now, all Reaper ships are armed. No convoy goes out without an armed escort. The Jade Emperor has even enlisted fleets of Bugi ships to track the Tempest and report the first sign of the *Alexsei* to the Empire. The Empire is now on full alert, and the Emperor himself is looking forward to the inevitable moment when he grinds the Tsushima Floating Renegades under his heel...

After all, how much can one ship do?

## Captain Marius Khiznekov

If the *Prince Alexsei* was meant to be doomed from the start, it certainly was not because of the actions of her first, and last, captain. With the cream of the crop of Russia's top naval academies gracing the sea floor around Port Arthur, Marius Khiznekov was plucked straight out of the merchant marines and was reluctantly given the prize helm of the Second Baltic Fleet because he was literally the best man for the job. Overwhelmed with the responsibility of

commanding the Second Baltic's newest and most lauded war machine, Khiznekov was determined to prove himself to be as good leadership material as any of the top brass. His tenure on board the *Alexsei* was nothing short of nightmarish, as the obvious lack of support from the higher naval echelons made him a virtual pariah in the eyes of his fellow fleet captains. His peers perceived Marius Khiznekov to be nothing more than an ignorant backwoods fisherman who had just gotten incredibly lucky with his new assignment. To the other captains, Khiznekov symbolized the direness of the Tsar's plight — if the navy had to scrape the bottom of the peasant barrel to find a captain, what hope did this operation have?

As a result, Khiznekov and his crew were continually treated with scorn and derision by the other vessels; his opinions in the fleet's war councils were ignored and abused, his crew given the least favorable assignments on the journey east, and his boat disdainfully labeled "the floating rat-pack" by the rest of the fleet. Furious with his position in both the eyes of the fleet and the naval authorities, Khiznekov was determined not to let such insults sway him in his course of duty to his men, his fleet and his Tsar. The *Prince Alexsei* sailed at the rear of the battleship line, but sailed proudly so. Even at the Battle of Tsushima Strait, at which her reckoning would take place, Khiznekov's cool head under the intense fire of the Japanese fleet prevailed. When the Russian line finally broke, it was Khiznekov who would be remembered for his bravery in a fleet that demonstrated mainly cowardice and selfishness. His main guns gone, engine barely giving half speed and fires breaking out all over the ship, Khiznekov was not about to go down without a fight. Rounding on the main body of the Japanese fleet, he set the *Prince Alexsei* to bear down full throttle on the enemy ships, firing every single piece of ammunition available, even to the point of launching sheared chains and shrapnel at the decks of the Japanese ships when his ammunition was finally exhausted. Khiznekov managed to sink the cruiser *Nightingale* and cause serious damage to the battleship *Ijichi* before a double blast of torpedoes from the flagship *Mikasa* struck the *Alexsei's* hull and sent her and her captain to the bottom.

Harboring a deep anger toward the Russian military machine and the rest of the fleet, and feeling partially responsible for the death of his crew, Khiznekov was too much of a mule to accept mindlessly the world of death. Determined to bring glory to the *Prince Alexsei* in the Shadowlands that he could not achieve in life, Khiznekov now captains her through the Tempest, leading a mishmash crew of rebellious wraiths, refusing to follow the same path twice. Although the itinerary of the *Prince Alexsei* seems rudderless to most, to Khiznekov it is the perfect plan — never letting the enemy know when or where he will strike next.



**Nature:** Survivor  
**Demeanor:** Director  
**Circle:** Tsushima Floating Renegades  
**Physical:** Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5  
**Social:** Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3  
**Mental:** Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 5  
**Talents:** Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Intimidation 4  
**Skills:** Boating 6, Firearms 3, Leadership 3  
**Knowledge:** Bureaucracy 3, Melee 2, Military Science 3  
**Backgrounds:** Artifact 4 (working sidearm), Eidolon 2, Haunt 3, Memoriam 3, Status 4  
**Passions:** Protect his crew (Duty) 5, Protect wraiths from the Jade Emperor (Hope) 3, Thwart the Imperial Reapers (Anger) 3  
**Arcanoi:** Argos 3, Castigate 5, Fatalism 2, Keening 2, Outrage 1  
**Fetters:** The ship 5; Captain's bars 2  
**Permanent Corpus:** 9  
**Willpower:** 10  
**Pathos:** 9  
**Shadow:** The Rationalist  
**Angst:** 6  
**Thorns:** Dark Allies 2, Tainted Relic (a life ring from the Crane, the sunken trawler off the Dogger Bank) 1



Captain Marius Khiznekov

**Shadow Passions:** Run the ship with a savagery Captain Bligh would be proud of (Megalomania) 3, Abandon all non-Russian wraiths to the Tempest (Hate) 4, Betray Togo and deliver him to the Reapers (Vengeance) 3

**Image:** Khiznekov is six feet tall, with close-cropped hair and a clean shaven face, in stark contrast to his handlebar-mustachioed counterparts on the other vessels of the Second Baltic Fleet. He wears normal, workaday captain's blues underneath a billowing greatcoat with the traditional quartet of bright gold stripes on his shoulder boards. He carries a sidearm on his hip, and his sharp, angular face is most often set in a look of intense concentration. His eyes, a light hazel color, can at times seem almost iridescent with determination of purpose.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Your experiences in life with the corruption and ineptitude of the Russian General Staff and the rest of the Second Baltic Fleet have sided you against any type of stifling order. Consequently, you run the *Alexsei* with a loose, almost cavalier hand: no chain of command in the strict military sense of the word, but everyone on board knows exactly who's in charge. Despite the sense of freedom, you are very careful about not letting it degenerate into chaos, and a well-timed flight off the proverbial handle is always helpful to encourage the others.

You never venture far without the company of your closest officers, particularly your chief engineer and de facto first mate Grigory Radenska. Of late, however, you have become aware of the growing tension on board ship between your men and the Japanese you have taken aboard, and are concerned that this tension may explode. Make no mistake; this is not a walk in the park. Your innate drive has carried you this far and will carry you even farther, but you have to be able to step back and look at the big picture, and keep the fight against the Jade Emperor as the foundation of everything the Renegades do. The lack of a guiding force, you know, will foment despair and thoughts of internecine fighting in the minds of your crew, making you all an easy catch for the Reapers. Keep your crew focused on the fact that the Jade Emperor is the one trying to destroy you, and not your fellow Japanese travelers.

## Admiral Heihachiro Togo

Togo, the head of the Imperial Japanese Fleet that proved victorious at the Battle of Tsushima Strait, was so far removed from someone like Marius Khiznekov in life that it seems incredible that the two should be paired in death. The *wunderkind* of the Imperial Navy, Togo was brought up in the ancient tenets of *bushido*, the code of the samurai warrior that demands courage, endurance and undying fealty to family, prince and emperor. Already in service in the Imperial Navy for over 30 years by the time of the Tsushima campaign, Togo cut such a commanding figure with his crew that his mere presence was enough to tap their innermost strengths in battle.





During his service as a young officer on board the Imperial yacht *Jingei*, Togo had the honor of a private audience with the Mikado himself, who remarked on Togo's great intelligence and sense of duty to his country and proclaimed that this young lieutenant would one day grow to command the Emperor's entire fleet. Buoyed by the Emperor's words, Togo would have a long and distinguished career, finally rising to Admiral of the Fleet and the leader of the Japanese squadron at Tsushima. Here at Tsushima, Togo would have his first encounter with Marius Khiznekov and the *Prince Alexsei*. Khiznekov's act of bravado in the face of insurmountable odds would always leave a deep impact upon Togo, who saw the final charge of the *Alexsei* in much the same way as Khiznekov himself saw it; not as the suicidal rush of a madman, but as the strong leap of a tiger.

At his death, Togo's spirit, still imbued with the fire of the Mikado's words, led him to roundly reject the Jade Emperor's grip over the Conquered Territories of Japan, and strike out on his own with other like-minded wraiths in rebellion. Barely escaping a sweep of the region by Imperial Reapers, Togo and a small group of wraiths set out in a small Relic craft to brave the Tempest rather than succumb to the stifling machine of the Jade Empire. Drifting aimlessly in the Tempest, the ship's tiny crew was picked up by the *Prince Alexsei*, where Togo finally came face to face with the soul of the captain who had been as stouthearted as a tiger so many years ago. Sensing in Khiznekov,

behind all of the anger and resentment, a man who could be great help to his oppressed Japanese brethren, Togo persuaded Khiznekov to use the *Prince Alexsei* as a base of operations against the Jade Empire. Together the two men formed and have since led the Tsushima Floating Renegades. It has been a mutually acceptable partnership so far, but no one can serve two masters, and the arrangement between the two men has started to show signs of fraying at the edges as regards the Renegades' true purpose.

**Nature:** Visionary

**Demeanor:** Architect

**Circle:** Tsushima Floating Renegades

**Physical:** Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

**Social:** Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4

**Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

**Talents:** Athletics 3, Awareness 5, Dodge 3, Expression 3, Intimidation 3, Subterfuge 4

**Skills:** Etiquette 4, Leadership 4, Meditation 5, Melee 2

**Knowledges:** Area Knowledge 4, Bureaucracy 5, Enigmas 3, Linguistics 2, Military Science 4, Philosophy 3

**Backgrounds:** Allies 3, Artifact 5 (the ceremonial sword presented Togo by the Mikado, a weapon of True Jade), Haunt 4, Memoriam 4, Notoriety 4, Status 5

**Passions:** Free the Conquered Territories from the Dark Kingdom (Anger) 5, Gain the trust (and consequently help) of Khiznekov (Desire for Respect) 4

**Arcanoi:** Argos 4, Keening 3, Lifeweb 2, Puppetry 1, Way of the Artisan 1, Way of the Soul 4

**Fetters:** Tsushima Strait 5; Surviving family in Japan 3

**Permanent Corpus:** 9

**Willpower:** 10

**Pathos:** 9

**P'o:** The Martyr

**Angst:** 7

**Thorns:** Death's Sigil 2, Infamy 1

**Shadow Passions:** Foment dissension amongst the Japanese wraiths against the Russians (Confusion) 3, Take over the *Alexsei* and show everyone exactly how a real captain operates (Lust for Power) 2, Send the Renegades on a completely suicidal mission to glorify their cause, regardless of the cost (Pride) 4

**Image:** Togo is a wizened, Napoleonic figure. Standing only five feet three, he is in full battle dress, and has a shock of white hair and a closely trimmed beard. He wears a pair of powerful Zeiss binoculars around his neck, and more importantly, carries in Artifact form a ceremonial sword presented to him by the Mikado himself. In life, Togo believed that the spirit of the Mikado was always with him, watching over him as a guardian angel whenever he wore the sword on deck, and his spirit still believes that. The sword has been transformed



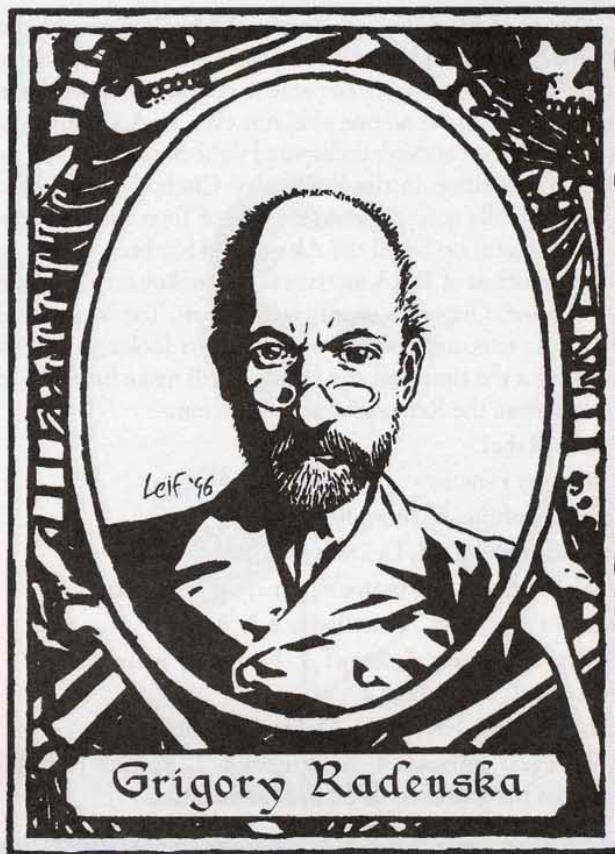
in the Shadowlands into an Artifact weapon of pure True Jade, immutable to any and all attempts to shape or destroy it. Togo is a calm, serene man, but he has vast reserves of courage, and is definitely not one to be underestimated.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You respect Khiznekov and his crew; their might, raw stubbornness and natural symbiosis with one another are the reason the Jade Empire has not been able to destroy them. You are aware of the awkward nature that exists on board the *Alexsei* regarding your band's presence, and are willing to work with it. You disagree with Khiznekov's *laissez-faire* helmsmanship, and know that if you were in charge, things would be more fine-tuned and the Tsushima Floating Renegades probably wouldn't be, well, so damned *renegade*. Despite your misgivings, defer to Khiznekov in matters on deck; after all, it is *his* ship, even though he does consider you an equal. Take every opportunity to assuage the fears of Khiznekov's crew that you and your crew are a threat — the *Alexsei* is not about to be your prize in death as it was in life.

Nevertheless, you and the rest of the refugees from the Conquered Territories have put yourselves into the hands of the unknown and have taken your chances on the Tempest because you know the same thing the Russians do — that it is better to sail as free men than to end up as slaves, or worse. Do not let your willingness to preserve shipboard harmony obscure your sworn mission. You believe that the divine eminence of the Mikado himself is with you, guiding you and your men, and you believe that the Mikado's benevolent hand has led you to the *Prince Alexsei*. Through the workings of the Renegades you will defeat the Jade Emperor and liberate the imprisoned souls of your homeland.

## Grigory Radenska

Grigory Radenska wanted to be an outlaw, not a sailor, or so he thought. Tragically, when a man makes a wish like that, it is usually granted. A member of several socialist and anarchist societies in his days as a student in Paris, Grigory found himself taking flight after being implicated in a botched bombing attempt on a local government office. Penniless, leaving a young wife behind, and unable to stay in France, Radenska fled back into the impenetrable arms of Mother Russia. The farther and farther into the motherland he burrowed, the more and more ashamed Grigory Radenska became of himself. His fervor and confidence in the cause, which he had so vociferously articulated on countless streetcorners, had blown away like a dandelion clock when the time came to put deed to word. He had deserted his comrades, his young wife and his principles; a feeling of self-loathing swept over him that was sharper and more bitter than the coldest steppe winters. Perversely, he joined the navy, mainly because it was something to do, but more importantly, because it was somewhere to hide.



A brilliant mechanic, Radenska became the chief engineer on board the *Prince Alexsei* and the sole reason the Second Baltic Fleet was kept floating long enough to actually make the journey across the several seas. In Marius Khiznekov, Radenska found a soulmate; the captain's unconventional methods of command showed Radenska an alternative to the stifling structures he used to oppose in *fin-de-siecle* Europe, and Radenska saw in Khiznekov the sort of leader that he could follow, the sort of leader under whom he could redeem himself.

However, his sense of duty was put under the strongest tests by the attitude of the rest of the fleet, whose sense of desperation and hopelessness Radenska felt every day in his job of making constant repairs to the other ships of the fleet. His skill and improvisational mechanical genius was nothing short of inspired, and his dedication to his work and to his captain put Grigory Radenska above the other crews and most of the fleet's officers. Always dreaming of the day when the fleet would reach the Russian port outpost of Vladivostok and he could return home to Anya, his wife, Radenska's singular dedication to keeping the fleet running was an outgrowth of this yearning. When the *Alexsei* was struck by the fatal torpedo blasts, Radenska was in the engine room, working feverishly to repair the damaged turbines, and perished instantly.



Aware of his engineer's loyalty, Khiznekov sought out Radenska in the Shadowlands, and the two men have become as close as brothers, Khiznekov able to confide in Radenska in a way that he can to no one else, not even to Admiral Togo. Radenska is the captain's undisputed right-hand man, and he covets this position in the Renegades' Circle. Radenska has never quite fully accepted the presence of Togo and the Japanese contingent on board the *Alexsei*, and has been known to voice his distrust of Togo's motives to Khiznekov on more than one occasion. Grigory is openly wary of Sati, Togo's calm and unreadable executive officer, and is always looking over his shoulder for the time that the Japanese will make his move to oust him from the Renegades' inner sanctum.

**Nature:** Rebel

**Demeanor:** Fanatic

**Circle:** Tsushima Floating Renegades

**Physical:** Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

**Mental:** Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

**Talents:** Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

**Skills:** Crafts 7, Firearms 3, Melee 4, Repair 5

**Knowledges:** Enigmas 4, Investigation 1, Politics (a hold-over from his anarchist days) 2, Science 3

**Backgrounds:** Contacts 2, Haunt 2, Mentor 3 (Khiznekov), Status 3

**Passions:** Serve his Captain (Loyalty) 5, Win the love of Katarina Nevchenko, a wraith whom he rescued (Love) 3

**Arcanoi:** Inhabit 5, Moliare 3, Outrage 3, Pandemonium 3

**Fetters:** The ship, 5; Radenska's letters home to his wife, 3; the Parisian government office where the bombing attack backfired, 2

**Permanent Corpus:** 8

**Willpower:** 9

**Pathos:** 8

**Shadow:** The Freak

**Angst:** 7

**Thorns:** Tainted Relic (the bomb he made for the Paris attack) 3, Death's Sigil 2, Aura of Corruption 2

**Shadow Passions:** Annihilate Sati (Envy) 4, Violate Nevchenko sexually (Sadism) 2, Remind Radenska of what a coward he was in life and depress him enough to embrace Oblivion (Fear) 3

**Image:** Radenska looks like what he is, a man who spends his eternity tinkering with things. He wears a seaman's striped boatshirt, dark navy overalls, and a regulation peacoat, his wire-framed glasses perched low over the bridge of his nose, his brow ever furrowed in concentration. He possesses an





immense knowledge of "machinery" in the Shadowlands, and is constantly on the lookout for any piece of equipment he has not yet encountered, for the sheer emotional rush of taking it apart and seeing what makes it tick. Radenska's vast reserves of strength and patience with the technology of the Shadowlands is second only to his possessive sense of duty to Khiznekov and the *Alexsei*. The combination of all of these factors are betrayed in Grigory's wry, intense visage.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Your work is what drives you, and the endless hours you have spent fiddling with all kinds of gadgetry have dulled your social skills and left you in a world of your own creation. You are fiercely protective of your captain, and occasionally have to be reined in by Khiznekov for accusing Togo and the Japanese Renegades of forgetting their "place" on board the *Prince Alexsei*. Be distrustful of Sati, who you are sure has set his sights on your place in the chain of command.

Despite your anarchist background, you are strangely fascinated with Katarina Nevchenko, a rich Muscovite volunteer on board another ship lost at Tsushima Strait. You saved her from the Imperial Reapers and brought her on board, and are discovering an odd attraction to this woman. Protect her good name whenever you can, even to the point of concocting complicated conspiracies to give you an excuse to instigate a scuffle with anyone. Not that you want to get political or anything...

## Vice-Operations Officer Matsuhiko Sati

One of Admiral Togo's most trusted battle tacticians, Lt. Cmdr. Sati held the dubious honor of being the highest-ranking officer to fall on board the *Mikasa*, his head torn away by a shell burst fired from the *Prince Alexsei* during her final lunge toward the Japanese fleet. Mourning his inability to fully serve the man for which he had held so much respect, Sati joined up with a small band of Japanese wraiths on the run from the Dark Kingdom, waiting until the day when Togo would arrive in the Shadowlands and he could complete his service to the admiral. No stranger to the loss of those men who had served under him, the sight of one of his most adept strategists so gruesomely killed right before his eyes had weighed heavily upon Togo, and when Sati appeared before him and offered his loyalty once more in death, Togo warmly welcomed him. It was Sati's encouragement that prompted Togo to launch a small craft and ride out the Tempest in search of allies. The encounter with the *Prince Alexsei*, against insurmountable odds, came at just the correct time for Togo and his band of rebels; it almost seemed preordained that the two sides should join forces to form the Tsushima Floating Renegades. Destiny aside, some of the crew of the *Alexsei*, Grigory Radenska in particular, wonder just exactly how much luck had to do with it, and whether Sati is hiding any other secrets.

**Nature:** Traditionalist



**Demeanor:** Conformist

**Circle:** Tsushima Floating Renegades

**Physical:** Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

**Social:** Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

**Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

**Talents:** Alertness 5, Awareness 4, Expression 3, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 4

**Skills:** Firearms 4, Leadership 3, Meditation 3, Stealth 5

**Knowledges:** Area Knowledge 4, Enigmas 4, Linguistics 2, Military Science 2, Philosophy 2

**Backgrounds:** Allies 2, Contacts 3, Eidolon 2, Memoriam 1, Mentor (Togo) 1, Status 3

**Passions:** Help/Protect Togo (Loyalty) 4, Defeat the Jade Emperor (Anger) 4, Win Radenska's trust (Desire for Respect) 2

**Arcanoi:** Argos 1, Fatalism 3, Lifeweb 3, Moliat 2, Pandemonium 2, Puppetry 1, Way of the Soul 2

**Fetters:** Tsushima Strait, 5; personal copy of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, 3; the decommissioned *Mikasa*, 3

**Permanent Corpus:** 9

**Willpower:** 8

**Pathos:** 7

**P'o:** The Perfectionist

**Angst:** 6

**Thorns:** Trick of the Light 2, Freudian Slip 3, Shadow Life 3



**Shadow Passions:** Attack and kill Radenska (Rage) 2, Send as many Renegades as possible on a mission that is sure to end in their failure and capture (Hate) 2, Convince Sati that Togo privately thinks him a failure (Envy) 4

**Image:** Sati is remarkably tall, close to six feet three. His grey eyes, smooth face and blank expression liken him to one of the statued rank and file of the Jade Emperor's Immortal Guard. He speaks fluidly and carefully, detailing plans and objectives fully and cautiously. Sati believes in the ultimate success of the Renegades' mission, and the attainment of that success is what burns like a white-hot star underneath his stoic countenance. With not a crease on his battle uniform, Sati's methodic and orderly manner has demonstrated its effectiveness in several successful blows against the forces of the Jade Emperor. However, there are more and more whisperings on board about just how docile and unquestioning an officer he actually is.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Be as defensively enigmatic as possible. You trust Togo as much in death as you did in life, and are the most candid about your feelings and opinions on the situation when you simply have a private audience with him. Although you defer equally to both Togo and Khiznekov, you feel wounded that your stoicism and unassuming nature are met with such suspicion by some of the Russians, especially Radenska. Although you are quiet by nature, do not hesitate to defend yourself if you feel like you are being treated unjustly, which very often you may be.



## Katarina Nevchenko

Born to a patrician Muscovite family, Katarina Nevchenko was one of the many well-to-do at the Romanov court who drank, danced, gossiped and generally thought that war was just something that happened to other, preferably poorer, people. Her fiancé, a handsome man from a respectable noble house whose navy commission was simply one of the traditional ways the younger son of a nobleman had of keeping up appearances, suddenly found himself and his heretofore sinecure officer rank pressed into active service at the onset of the war. He was shipped out to Port Arthur, where he arrived just in time for the Pacific Squadron to be devastated, and he to go missing in action. Unable to determine whether her betrothed was alive, dead, taken prisoner or making his way back home, and receiving no help from the military, Katarina took it upon herself to find out the truth. She and several of the other women from the court volunteered to go to the Pacific Rim with the Second Baltic Fleet, and were stationed on board the *Orel*, a hospital ship, as a floating Red Cross unit.

The stinging reality of life on board a wartime ship was a smiting contrast to court life for Katarina, who had to teach herself to minister to the wounded, steel her constitution against the bloodiness of battle and endure the debauched leerings of drunk, vulgar, pawing seamen at the best of times. During one particularly frightening episode, while tending to a sailor who had been injured in a routine equipment test, she suddenly found herself at knifepoint as the man's prurient interests took over and he attempted to rape her. Fortunately, her screams alerted Grigory Radenska, who had been on board the *Orel* to make some repairs; he broke in and beat the thug within an inch of his life with the navy-regulation pipe wrench he was carrying at the time. Katarina was spared the ultimate personal violation, but she knew then more than ever that if she was to find her fiancé, she would have to play by the rules of war.

The first rule of war, however, is that there are no rules; Katarina Nevchenko perished on board the *Orel* when it was sunk at Tsushima Strait, never having learned the whereabouts of her fiancé. In the Shadowlands, it was Grigory Radenska who took her Caul from her and led her to the *Prince Alexsei*, sparing her a second violation at the hands of the Imperial Reapers. Katarina's sojourn with the Renegades and her contact with Radenska has made the two an effective team, but her activity with the Renegades is always secondary to her ongoing search for the man she loved so much in life.

**Nature:** Architect

**Demeanor:** Caregiver

**Circle:** Tsushima Floating Renegades

**Physical:** Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

**Social:** Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4



**Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

**Talents:** Awareness 3, Empathy 5, Instruction 3

**Skills:** Etiquette 5, Meditation 3

**Knowledges:** Medicine 4, Psychology 3, Science 4

**Backgrounds:** Contacts 1, Eidolon 2, Haunt 3, Memoriam 3, Status 3

**Passions:** Prove to the male dominated Renegades that she, a woman, is just as capable of partaking in the fight (Pride) 2, Show gratitude — platonically — to Radenska for his self-sacrifice (Love) 1, Seek out and save the souls of those who perished on board the *Orel* with her (Sororal Devotion) 3, Continue to seek out information on the fate of her missing fiancé (Love) 4

**Arcanoi:** Castigate 1, Embody 2, Keening 3, Lifeweb 2, Outrage 2, Phantasm 1

**Fetters:** The hospital ship *Orel*, sunk at Tsushima Strait 5; The Winter Palace in Moscow, where Nevchenko was a popular member of court 3

**Permanent Corpus:** 7

**Willpower:** 8

**Pathos:** 8

**Shadow:** The Parent

**Angst:** 6

**Thorns:** Tainted Relic (the knife brandished by the seaman in the attempted rape) 2, Freudian Slip 3

**Shadow Passions:** Convince Nevchenko that she is nothing but a weak, spineless little girl (Envy) 4, Force Nevchenko to seduce and then humiliatingly dump Radenska (Sadism) 3, Make Nevchenko suicidal enough over the loss of her fiancé to succumb to Oblivion (Loneliness) 3

**Image:** Katarina is about five feet ten, with raven-black hair, deep green eyes and the sort of figure that Dostoyevski would have bitten his own right leg off at the kneecap to write about. She is dressed in hospital whites, bloodstained from the endless lines of dead and dying men who have been cut by the teeth of war. Rather than be ashamed or revolted, Katarina wears her crimson-stained smock like a medal of honor. She holds her head aloft and with pride in the contribution that she has made and continues to make with the Renegades.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Years of wealth and refinement have taught you to stay in control of your feelings, but your service on board the *Orel* was not one of some volunteer candy striper: you have seen atrocity and cruelty up close, and you sustain no illusions about the significance of the contribution you will make — you must make — aboard the *Prince Alexsei*. As a nurse you knew the importance of cultivating a bedside manner; in death your fresh insight into the situations faced by the Renegades have earned you the respect of Khiznekov. On occasion he has even asked you to sit in on the planning sessions around the wardroom war table, for which you are grateful.

Although Khiznekov appears to value your opinions, you are not so sure about the sincerity of the others. Togo's cultural male chauvinist piggery puts you off in the extreme, Sati's undecipherability drives you crazy, and the overeagerness of Grigory Radenska to defend your honor is downright embarrassing at times. There is also the matter of his deluded assumption that his past actions on your behalf therefore mean that you are now "his woman." Speak bluntly, and do not hold back your honest assessment of any plan or detail. The Renegades need all the help and ingenuity they can get: You understand this as much as any man, maybe even more so.

## Andrei Brodovin

Unlike Katarina, for whom the war was an emotional epiphany, Andrei Brodovin saw the conflict as a means to profit. His close ties to influential personages in the Tsar's court helped him to secure exclusive rights for the timber contracts that would supply railroad ties for the extension of the Trans-Siberian Railroad to the eastern outpost of Vladivostok. His greed-swelled head led him and his company to making intrusions into northern Manchuria for timber, where Brodovin ran across his first opposition in the form of local Chinese villagers. He had them beaten and terrorized by squads of leg breakers.

When Mother Russia and Japan took to disagreement about the abusive treatment that the local Manchurian







population was suffering from Brodovin and his ilk, Brodovin went straight to the Tsar and demanded that the rights of his company and the expansion of Russian interests be given paramount importance. Such demands from Brodovin and others were what came to fuel the fires of war. Those fires reflected in Brodovin's eyes as the glint of uncountable wealth, and he and his supporters did their utmost to stir up those of the more hawkish persuasions in the Winter Palace. Yet Brodovin's efforts would all be for naught. Sailing on board the battleship *Kasparov* in an "unofficial capacity," Brodovin died when she ventured into a newly-mined stretch of ocean during the attack on Port Arthur and was blown to bits.

Immediately, Brodovin's Caul was taken by the Imperial Reapers, who secretly kept him on ice rather than hand him over to Stygian authorities. With the arrival of the Tsushima Floating Renegades and the havoc they have caused the Emperor, Brodovin has been co-opted as a spy in the service of the Jade Emperor. Being a Westerner of a non-military persuasion, he has been accepted on board the *Alexsei* by the Renegades. His mission is to track the Renegades' movements and send word back to the Jade Palace so that the Emperor's forces can be marshalled to crush the upstart vessel. It has been nearly impossible for Brodovin, however, to communicate any significant infor-

mation; the *Alexsei's* path is by nature purposely directionless, and both Khiznekov and Togo are somewhat wary of the profiteer. Still, Brodovin diligently monitors the progress of the Renegades, waiting for them to make the proverbial one fatal mistake...

**Nature:** Conniver

**Demeanor:** Traditionalist

**Circle:** Co-opted by the Protectors of the Prosperous Realm

**Physical:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

**Social:** Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

**Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

**Talents:** Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2

**Skills:** Etiquette 3, Firearms 2, Melee 2, Stealth 3

**Knowledges:** Bureaucracy 3, Finance 5, Investigation 4, Law 3, Politics 4, Psychology 1

**Backgrounds:** Allies 1, Contacts 2, Haunt 1, Status 2, Wealth 5

**Passions:** Deliver the *Prince Alexsei* and the Renegades in a nice little package to the Jade Emperor (Hatred) 3, Parlay the completion of this assignment into a nice cushy job within the bureaucracy of the Dark Kingdom (Ambition) 2, Get as rich as possible while doing the first two (Greed) 4



**Arcanoi:** Argos 1, Castigate 1, Keening 2, Moliat 2, Usury 5  
**Fetters:** The dock at Port Arthur 5; The Trans-Siberian Railroad 2

**Permanent Corpus:** 6

**Willpower:** 8

**Pathos:** 7

**Shadow:** The Leech

**Angst:** 6

**Thorns:** Dark Allies 3, Infamy 2, Pact of Doom 2

**Shadow Passions:** Bring Spectres on board and let them run free (Rage) 3, Tell the Jade Emperor to go screw himself, and become a bona fide Renegade (Envy) 3

**Image:** Brodovin dresses conservatively and speaks little. He tries to stay out of the way of the other Renegades as much as possible, but his presence on board has nevertheless managed to rub a few people the wrong way, especially Radenska, who by nature hates opportunists like Brodovin. Despite this, Brodovin has started to be able to blend into the background better as time goes on, and many a time a couple of Renegades engaged in conversation will not notice that he is there, lurking, listening and taking in every scrap.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You find the randomness of the Prince Alexsei's course infuriating, but your vast reserves of patience keep you from showing your irritation. A calculator by nature, you are acutely aware of the mandate not to

draw attention to yourself. Volunteer for assignments within your range of skills, always keeping an eye and ear open for any solid pieces of information about the Renegades' motives that you may come across. Do not attempt to internally sabotage the Renegades' plans; you will most assuredly be discovered. Instead, do your assignments competently and well, even doing more than asked. The more trust Khiznekov and Togo place in you, the closer you can get to the Renegades' nerve center.

## Leiko

Leiko never had any family but her older brother, Gedde. Orphaned at a young age, the two were inseparable in the cramped life of street people in present-day Tokyo. Gedde was the leader of a small gang of toughs, kids like him and Leiko who were simply eking out a one-day-at-a-time life — not core-rotten, but not afraid to push people around if it meant another morsel of food or an temporary roof over their heads. Leiko and Gedde always knew they could count on each other and would always be there for each other. It was an involuntary action, like breathing. Even after that fateful night when Gedde's skull was stove in by the crack of an overzealous policeman's riot stick, Leiko refused to believe that she and Gedde were forever separated. When she climbed to the roof of an abandoned electronics warehouse and stepped



The Odyssey of the Prince Alexsei



off into the neon void of the Tokyo skyline, Leiko knew deep down that she would be reunited with her brother one day.

In the Shadowlands, Gedde took Leiko's Caul, and the two picked up where they left off, only this time their gang was one of rebels, and the stakes were the dearest imaginable, the freedom of the souls in the Conquered Territories from the fist of the Jade Emperor. Together, the two siblings cleared out souls from the rural areas of Japan, always just a step or two ahead of the Imperial Reapers, until that time when the Reapers finally caught up with them. Taking Gedde immediately as the ringleader of the outlaw band, the Reapers hauled him off to be Moliated into a Eunuch. They made a grab for Leiko, and would have had her had she not leaped into the Tempest and swam for her very soul.

Adrift in the hellish turbulence, Leiko was about to surrender herself to the whirlpools of Oblivion when she was spotted by the *Prince Alexsei* and immediately hauled on board. Leiko's rage against the Reapers is palpable, as is her obsession with vengeance on them. These passions are coupled with a determination to get her brother back and maybe, just maybe, discover some way to return him to his former self. Her cold-blooded singlemindedness has made Leiko somewhat of a loose cannon on board; Togo can sometimes persuade her to take part in the Renegades' raids, but both he and Khiznekov consider her far too unstable to be entrusted with any of the ship's plans or secrets.



**Nature:** Child

**Demeanor:** Loner

**Circle:** Tsushima Floating Renegades (but only up to a point)

**Physical:** Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

**Mental:** Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

**Talents:** Alertness 4, Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Search 3, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 3

**Skills:** Drive 4, Firearms 2, Melee 3, Stealth 4

**Knowledges:** Area Knowledge 2, Computer 2, Investigation 2, Law 1, Science 1

**Backgrounds:** Allies 1, Eidolon 1, Mentor 1, Status 1

**Passions:** Find the Reapers responsible for taking Gedde and kill them (Revenge) 4, Find Gedde and take him away from the Jade Empire (Love) 5, Get back to the Conquered Territories and recruit more wraiths to strike out on her own (Ambition) 1

**Arcanoi:** Embody 1, Fatalism 2, Outrage 4, Pandemonium 3

**Fetters:** The roof of the Oshima Electronics building in Tokyo, where she jumped 4; The gang's old hideout in the slums of Tokyo 1

**Permanent Corpus:** 8

**Willpower:** 8

**Pathos:** 7

**P'o:** The Leech

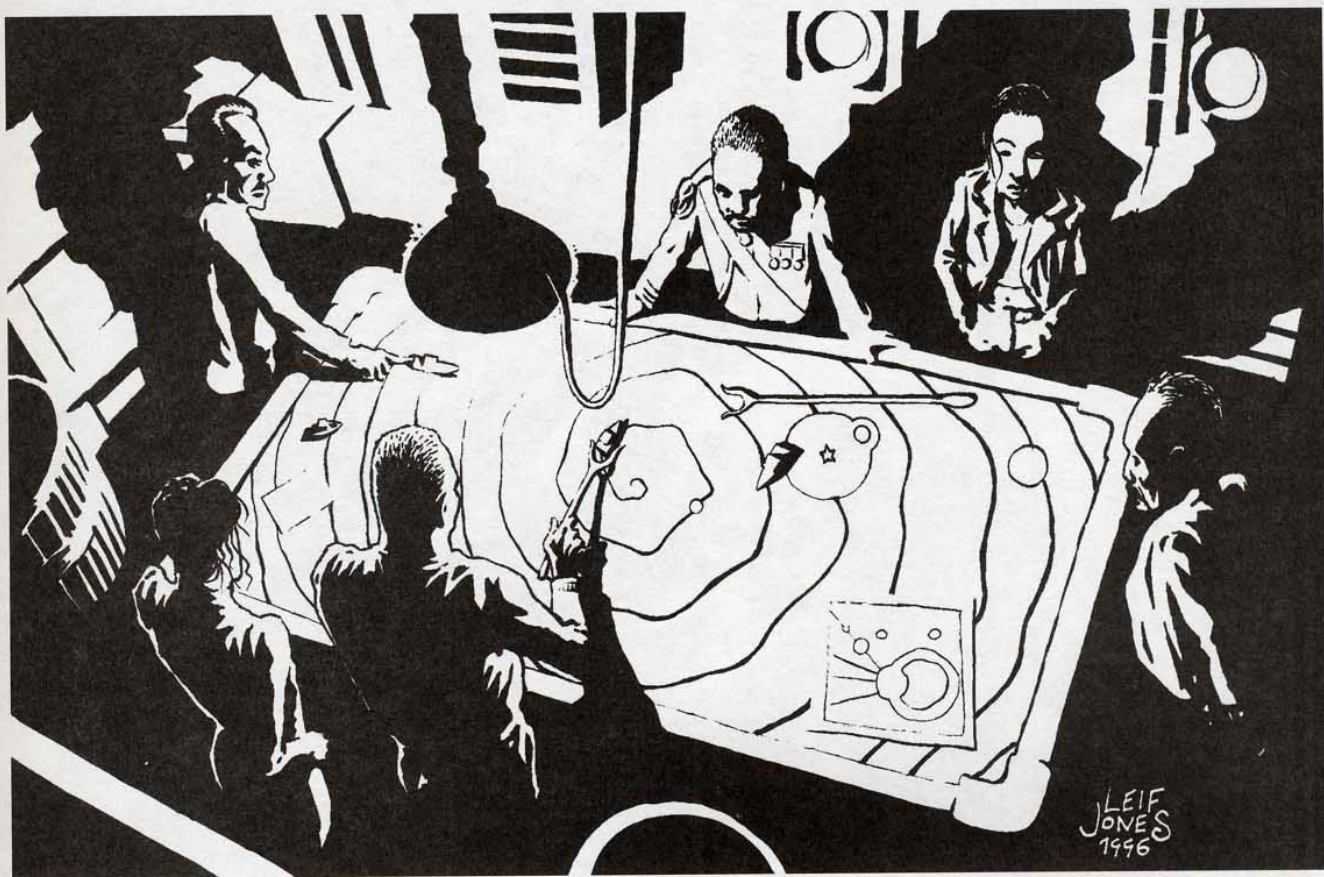
**Angst:** 6

**Shadow Passions:** Incense Khiznekov enough to have him throw you off the ship (Rage) 3, Find the nearest Dark Kingdom outpost and give away the Renegades' position (Hate) 2, Ensure that she will meet the same fate as Gedde by surrendering to the Jade Empire and becoming a Eunuch herself (Fear) 2

**Image:** Leiko is a street tough in a black biker jacket, jeans and motorcycle boots. Her eyes burn with the heat of revenge, so much so that they appear to actually glow at times. She is an accomplished street fighter, possessing a physical strength belying her small frame. Normally withdrawn and brooding, Leiko can sometimes — very rarely — display moments of joy in the Renegades' successes, for even though she could care less about their overall mission, she knows that every day with them brings her closer to finding her brother again.

**Roleplaying Hints:** As far as you are concerned, death has turned out to be the same-shit-different-plane-of-existence that life was. Radiate bitterness — foul language, laughing at other people's misfortunes, and God help anyone who actually physically touches you, unless they feel like crawling away. However, you have to be careful not to go too far afield with this; Khiznekov may feel for you, but he's probably seen far worse sights. Considering the captain's inherent wariness of his Japanese passengers, he might not be above heaving you over the side if you push him too far, and you know (as does he, probably) that you need the Renegades and their power if you are to stand any chance of ever finding Gedde again.





## Story Ideas

- Things come to blows on board the *Alexsei*, where Sati's Shadow and Radenska's paranoia have sparked a full-fledged mutiny. To make matters worse, a squad of Imperial ships are steaming towards the *Alexsei*'s position even as combat surges across her decks. Can the madness be stopped, and if not, whom do the players join?

- Radenska approaches the characters and asks them to accompany him in a skiff to Tsushima Strait, where he is planning to collect Artifacts from the sunken *Orel* that are connected to Nevchenko, in order to further guarantee her safety by cementing her hold on the *Alexsei*. Whether Nevchenko knows of or agrees to this is as yet a mystery, and to make matters worse, Borodvin has gotten wind of the plan. There just might be a warm reception waiting....

- A body is found drifting in the Tempest. The players haul it on board and discover it to be a Eunuch of a powerful magistrate that had inadvertently fallen overboard from a Jade Empire ship. Deciphering it, they discover that it contains evidence of Borodvin's treason. Both captains must be convinced of the danger, and the war profiteer will do anything to protect his position.

- Khiznekov has learned that Leiko is attempting to manifest herself in the Skinlands to wreak revenge on the policeman who killed her brother, and has decided that he can no longer afford to keep her on board. The players, sent by Togo, must try to stop her, and then try to convince Khiznekov to allow her to continue as a Renegade. Then again, they may want to help her....









# Bangkok: The House of the Fallen Sun

by Tim Akers

Haunt Level: 2

Memoriam Level: 2

*Bangkok, Oriental city*

*But the city don't know what the city is getting...*

— Murray Head, "One Night in Bangkok"



Bangkok is a jewel in the mud, a gloriously modern town in a pitifully poor country. It is a center of commerce and capitalism, where every desire can be fulfilled and every dream realized. You have but to imagine it, and it can be purchased. A wondrous town, a dreamland made manifest; that is the myth of Bangkok.

As with every such town, the money and show are all a facade to hide the city's true face. To feed the rich, the poor must be sacrificed. Truthfully, Bangkok's greatest industry is not a factory product, but rather a sinister form of tourism.

Bangkok's brothels have been the destination of many company trips, conferences and soldiers on leave. Today, Japanese businesses organize "sex tours" to Bangkok for their faithful employees. The prostitution business is very profitable, bringing in more and more girls from outlying villages to satiate the ever-growing demand for such innocents.

One such institution is the House of the Fallen Sun. A magnet for bad karma, the Fallen Sun has survived riches and poverty, and has weathered disasters from fires to riots. Heedless of the cruel years, it continues to churn on, an aged survivor in the ever-popular industry of victimization for profit.

*Bangkok: The House of the Fallen Sun*

31







## The House of the Fallen Sun

The Fallen Sun is a brothel that fronts as a nightclub. True to its name, the bar doesn't open until the last ray of sun is gone from the sky, and it closes as soon as first light starts to creep over the horizon. The enormous double doors are painted bright red, and open onto a raised platform set about three feet above the floor below. A broad stairway leads down to the main floor, which contains the dance floor and is lined on three sides by booths and tables. On the fourth side is the bar, which is also on a raised platform and sits about eight feet off the main floor. Two stairways lead up to the bar, one near the front door and the other facing the opposite wall. The platform that contains the bar is surrounded by a railing to prevent the more inebriated patrons from pitching themselves off headlong. There is a row of small tables lining the railing, and set behind them is the bar itself. The counter is said to be an antique from Victorian England, though how it found its way to the Fallen Sun isn't entirely clear. Regardless, it is a beautiful piece of work, with ornate carvings along the base and stained glass hanging down over the countertop. The surface of the bar is scarred and pitted, and several of the glass fixtures have been shattered and replaced.

In the far right corner of the bar is a spiral staircase that leads up about 10 feet off the floor, where it terminates in an iron door set in the wall. This door leads into the manager's office. The office is plush and comfortable, with a two-way mirror that looks out over the dance floor. Long couches line the walls, and a small bar provides the manager and his guests with libations when needed. One other door leads out of the office, a simple wooden one that opens onto a staircase leading down. This staircase takes you to the owner's private room, a vast space filled with various knick knacks purchased at Bangkok's many bazaars as well as several bed-like couches, an enormous entertainment system and a private shower and wash room. The walls are adorned with artwork gathered from around the world, and the various shelves are littered with expensive baubles. Those few who have seen this room speculate amongst themselves in whispers as to how such a dingy little whorehouse could possibly be profitable enough to afford its owner such extravagance.

Back out on the main floor, there are two other doors. The first leads to the restrooms and the fire exit. The second door leads to a hallway with four wooden doors on either side down its length, with a final locked door at the end of the hallway. Behind each of the wooden doors is a small room containing a bed and a tiny light. This is where the ladies of the house bring their customers after coming to an agreement in the bar or on the dance floor.

The metal door at the end of the hallway leads to the second floor of the establishment, where the girls live. The rooms



themselves are bare and unimaginative, designed more for utility than ambience. There is a small attic above these rooms, but it is rarely visited and contains mostly old receipts and the possessions of employees who have moved — or passed — on.

The exterior of the building is grey stone, and is fairly unimpressive. Over the door hangs a sign that reads "The House of the Fallen Sun" with the profile of a woman silhouetted against a setting sun. There are no windows on the first floor, and the second story windows are barred, as the brothel is not set in a particularly pleasant part of town.

## In the Shadowlands

In the Shadowlands, the big red doors look cracked and deformed, and the inside of the doors is charred from the fire that almost destroyed the House near the end of the Vietnam War. Inside, the lights from the dance floor are muted, and the floor is littered with trash. Close inspection of the floor will reveal the images of those who have died here, victims of bar brawls or murder. Also, the faces of the girls who have been dragged from their homes and forced to work at the House can also be seen, warped into the well-worn grain of the wood. A few Drones shuffle across the dance floor together, or sit quietly at the bar and drink from empty glasses. The bar itself virtually crawls with afterlife. The tiny engravings crawl around and howl mindlessly in shrill little voices as the scratches on the counter can be seen to writhe about. A portion of the bar is charred from the aforementioned fire, while another spot is still bloodstained from where a customer was killed in a particularly gruesome fashion.

The restrooms crawl with decay, and all of the mirrors are shattered. Occasionally blood rises from the cracks in the floor and flows about like crimson mercury, eventually re-treating back between the tiles.


The manager's office is largely unremarkable, except for the fact that a quiet voice is constantly reading off all of the names of every prostitute that ever worked at the House of the Fallen Sun. Muted howls of pleasure and pain are always coming from behind the wooden door that leads to the owner's private room below.

In the owner's room, all the lights are muted and everything is covered with dust. The scent is stagnant, the baubles are cheap and tawdry, and the air never moves. Everything feels like a mausoleum, only somehow cheapened and commercialized.

The tiny rooms in which the prostitutes ply their trade are nightmarish. The darkness each room contains shifts about, and something is always lurking in the corners. Decades of fear, hate, anger, disgust, pain, frustration and boredom have built up in these rooms, and everything shows it. The bedclothes writhe, the lights blaze painfully bright, and the floors creak with screams of innocence lost.

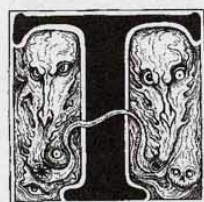






The living quarters are even more sparse in the Shadowlands than in their Skinland counterparts. For the most part, they are empty, save the occasional Drone lying in bed, mindlessly seeking the rest that death did not deliver. The attic is left completely alone, for reasons not mentioned among the occupants of the House of the Fallen Sun.

## History



There is a pleasant little story about Bangkok. The tale goes that Bangkok is a loyal client state of the Jade Kingdom, its citizens are some of the most law abiding members of the Empire, and that Yu Huang has entrusted this most loyal of Necropoli with the governing of the neighboring territories. The Lord of Bangkok is a faithful servant, and rules over his subjects with the benevolent blessing of the Emperor. In exchange for his incorruptible efforts on behalf of Yu Huang, the Lord of Bangkok only pays a small tribute to the Jade Kingdom.

Yea verily, this isn't the case. Yu Huang seems to believe the story, and the Lord of Bangkok pretends to believe it, at least in the Emperor's presence. The fact of the matter is that, while Bangkok does pay a considerably smaller tribute than do its lesser neighbors, it does little for the Emperor other than ignore him. The Necropolis of Bangkok is a thriving center of commerce, handling trade between the Jade Kingdom, the Kingdom of Ivory, the Indian City of Delights and Stygia. Anything and everything can be bought in Bangkok, from Stygian metal to Soma from India. Of course, the prices are high, and the currency can be anything from oboli to favors and obligations that will someday come back to haunt the consumer. Huge bazaars clog the city streets, and wandering merchants hawk their wares to innocent passersby. This scene holds true in both the Skinlands and the Shadowlands, though in the Skinlands the bazaars have largely been supplanted by shopping malls and gallerias.

The most profitable business in Bangkok is that of prostitution. Wraiths feel a peculiar attraction to the brothels and whorehouses where this oldest of all professions is practiced, probably because prostitution resonates with the Restless' own practice of forging souls into tools and currency. Of all the brothels in Bangkok, and there are thousands, one holds a special place in the society of the Dead. Mainly due to its unusual birth, violent life, and sheer intensity of the emotions that it has engendered over the years, the Fallen Sun has become something of a magnet for wraiths of all political affiliations and loyalties. If your money is spendable somewhere, then you are welcome in the House of the Fallen Sun.

The House of the Fallen Sun was built in 1967 by a western businessman by the name of Victor Hoertz. Hoertz was an enigmatic young man, apparently independently wealthy, and he kept largely to himself. The only person he spent much time with was a man named Gregory Feld, who was apparently his business partner in various ventures. Gregory would hang around the Sun for a few weeks, and then disappear for months at a time. When he returned he would bring with him various books, old artifacts, or sometimes large chests full of dirt. He never spoke to the employees of the House, but could be heard in whispered conversation with Hoertz in the wee hours of the night.

Disdaining the day to day operations of the House, Hoertz hired a man named Chi Xiang to run the establishment as its manager. Hoertz always stayed in the private room below the manager's office during the day, and rarely ventured out even during the brothel's business hours. Occasionally he would make an appearance at the bar, or sit in one of the booths and discuss business. He was always receiving visitors from various parts of the world, entertaining them in his room or giving them a tour of the brothel. He never let anyone else except Feld enter his private sanctum, save his foreign guests, and the various employees and clientele all found him to be a rather foreboding presence.

Then a strange thing happened. One night in the middle of the summer of 1967, Feld returned from one of his nebulous journeys abroad. He carried with him a large book bound in yellowish leather and had a look of wild perturbation on his face. He met Hoertz in the bar and demanded to speak to him upstairs. Shortly after the two retired to the office, a good deal of yelling ensued. Some of the staff could hear Feld's shrill voice screaming something about "eternal damnation and powers beyond our control or imagining," to which Hoertz only chuckled. Quickly the confrontation escalated, and Feld soon stormed out of the building.

Most of the prostitutes, employees and clients managed to make it out of the House that evening before a mysterious fire grew out of control, and some even managed to salvage their personal possessions. Neither Hoertz nor Feld were ever seen again. The local fire brigade surmised that the fire had started in the attic, and that it was intentional. Though no bodies were

## A Note on Names

It is common practice for girls sent to the brothels in Southeast Asia to be given American names, as a way of appealing to foreign customers. A large percentage of these unfortunate girls are given western names at birth; others are given their new names later and told to forget their old ones.





ever found, everyone assumed that both Hoertz and Feld had perished in the blaze. Hoertz had made arrangements declaring that Chi Xiang would assume ownership of the brothel in the event of his death. Xiang gladly accepted, and made his way into Hoertz's private domicile. There he found the room exactly as it is described above. He sold off one or two of Hoertz's old trinkets to pay for repairs to the House, but other than that has left the room in the exact condition in which he found it.

In the years that followed, especially during the Vietnam War, the brothel was a refuge to many a weary soldier on leave. Most would hang around for a few days and then disappear back into the hellhole that was Southeast Asia. Such was the case for Private Robert Williams of the United States Army. Pvt. Williams showed up at the Fallen Sun and became peculiarly attached to a particular prostitute by the name of Annie. He would write her every week while he was on tour, and during his leaves he would always visit her. Soon, despite dire threats and warnings from Chi Xiang, Williams declared his undying love for Annie, who was naive enough to reciprocate.

When his tour ended, Pvt. Williams decided that he wanted to take Annie away from the brothel and return to the States with her. She gladly agreed to this, and Williams went to Xiang and begged him to release Annie into his custody. Xiang of course refused, and Williams was furious. He returned to Annie, promising to free her no matter what the

cost. He decided that he would try to buy Annie from Xiang and if that didn't work, he would kill Xiang and abscond with the girl. On the night that he planned to do this, Private Williams arrived at the Fallen Sun a little drunk. He had been reinforcing his resolve with bourbon, and stepped up to the bar to shore it up a little more before he settled up with Xiang. The pimp was no fool, and knew of the young man's plans, at least in part. He knew that Williams was carrying his gun, and that he was willing to use it. Xiang was not aware of his intention to offer money for the girl first, and would have probably accepted that offer. Instead, as Williams was sitting at the bar, Xiang walked up behind him, placed a .38 to the back of his head, and pulled the trigger.

The bullet did more than end Private Williams' earthly existence. It smashed Annie's fragile psyche. Torn with guilt, she made her way up to the attic and hung herself. Since then, many of the girls of the house have whispered to one another about sometimes seeing a strange stain on the bar where Private Williams' shattered head fell. Coupled with these tales are the occasional sightings of two ghostly figures walking hand in hand up the stairs to the attic.

One of the people devastated by this turn of events was Lady Sun, one of the older prostitutes in the House. Lady Sun considered herself to be the young prostitutes' mother, and tried to protect them from harm whenever she was able. She had seen





the trouble brewing between Williams and Xiang, but had done nothing to prevent it. In a way, she felt responsible for the young soldier's death. As soon as she heard about Annie's subsequent suicide, she swore to avenge herself on Xiang, as well as do everything she could to protect the rest of the girls in the House.

The next victim to fall prey to the House's bad karma was not one of the prostitutes or one of the clients, however. After the Vietnam War ended, business dropped substantially, and the clientele started to include the more seedy side of Bangkok. One particular gang called the Shrouded Claw claimed the House as part of its turf. Members of the Claw could always be seen in the bar, though they tended to cost more in damage than they paid for in drinks or solicitation. Xiang tried on several occasions to kick the gang out of the bar, but to no avail. Finally a rival gang did Xiang's job for him, but not without cost. A minor turf war broke out, and the House of the Fallen Sun quickly became the epicenter. One night, as most of the Claw was lounging about the bar and hassling the paying customers, several members of the rival gang rushed in and opened fire. Their bullets came to rest in the heads and hearts of several innocent customers, as well as the bar's bouncer, Feng Tse. More importantly for the gangbangers, several members of the Claw went down, including the gang's leader Jun Cheng. After this defeat, the Claw retreated from the House of the Fallen Sun, and the staff buried their beloved bouncer.

The dirt over Feng Tse's grave was still loose when the next misfortune came along. Though the Claw was gone, the House's clientele was still on the decidedly shady side. Some, apparently, were a little shadier than others. One of these clients, Norman, an American doing business in Bangkok, went clear over the edge. He was obsessive about a prostitute named Cynthia. He spent every penny he had on her, buying her gifts as well as soliciting her services. Norman was convinced that the only way she would love him was if he proved his worth. While fond of the gifts, Cynthia rebuffed his every romantic advance. More than slightly cracked, Norman decided that if he couldn't have Cynthia, no one would.

This is how Cynthia ended up dead on the bathroom floor, shards of glass in her hair from where her lover had smashed her head about the mirror until she had died. Sometimes, you can see the reflection of her face in the mirror, as it was the second before Norman smashed her against it.

Lady Sun was mad with grief, near suicidal. She rushed into the bathroom just as Cynthia's broken body slumped from Norman's embrace, and threw herself on the disheveled man. Norman ran, left the building, and like so many Westerners, never returned.

Many more years past before the next catastrophe, and Lady Sun was always on the watch for potentially dangerous patrons, throwing out many clients before anything



happened. She made an enemy of Xiang in these years, but she had the staunch support of her girls, as well as a certain popularity with the regulars in the bar. With the coming of the '80s, business boomed as Japanese companies began to ship in their employees for hard earned "sex tours." These tourists would wander the city, going from brothel to brothel buffet style. They were big spenders, and though most of them abused the girls, they brought in a lot of revenue. Xiang prevented Lady Sun from removing any of the businessmen, and the animosity between the two grew by leaps and bounds.

Lady Sun's trepidation proved correct one painful evening, though she was prevented from acting until it was much too late. An anonymous businessman came into the brothel, and Lady Sun felt uneasy about him right away. He immediately grabbed a girl by the name of Clarissa and half dragged her into the back. Lady Sun went to Xiang and told him what had happened, demanding that he do something about it. He tried to calm her down, insisting that there was nothing to worry about, but was cut short by a scream from the back. When Lady Sun went to investigate she found the door to the cubicle that Clarissa was in jammed shut, and it took a while before Lady Sun could smash it in. When she did, she found Clarissa, her body motionless and askew on the bed, her face turning blue, and the man getting dressed in the corner. She immediately hurled herself onto the man,

beating and thrashing at him. The man looked at her as if she were mad, and then slammed her head into the wall. Both Clarissa and Lady Sun died, while the man shrugged his way past Xiang just as he appeared in the doorway. He never returned, but there was never any effort made to find him.

The death of Lady Sun broke the morale of the girls in the House. Business dropped drastically, as a brothel full of glum, crying prostitutes doesn't attract many patrons. Xiang fought to keep the House together, working desperately to get new girls into the House, but he couldn't afford any new help, and he couldn't unload his present staff on any other brothels. He struggled on for many years, but reports that the House of the Fallen Sun was cursed started to circle like ravens. It became increasingly difficult to draw the crowds. The Japanese tourists would still occasionally enter the establishment, but few of them stayed long, and fewer still indulged. It was years before Xiang was able to start to make a profit again.

Most of the girls who knew Lady Sun finally left the House, and new girls came in. Profits picked up, and the House seemed to be reborn. Only occasionally would the girls see the ghostly couple walking in the halls or the blood on the bar. The businessmen started to come back and things started to look up. Of course, it was right about this time that Xiang succumbed to a heart ailment and joined many of his disgruntled former employees in the Shadowlands.







## A Little Revelation

Everyone has always wondered what this little brothel did to deserve so much bad luck. These people have no idea just how much bad karma there actually is, nor how richly it is deserved.

The truth is, both Hoertz and Feld were vampires, renegade Tremere who were abandoned by their sires. Determined to pierce the shroud of earthly existence and peer into the lands of the dead, they learned of wraiths' natural affinity towards places of emotional extremes and decided to try to design the perfect wraith bait. Hoertz came up with the idea of a brothel, offering a wide range of emotions to the targeted ghosts. He upped the ante by ensuring that the clientele would be as keyed up as possible by placing the brothel in Thailand. There, Hoertz hoped he would attract soldiers on leave from the burgeoning conflict in Vietnam. It was only common sense that soldiers on leave tend to be seething cauldrons of emotion, and Hoertz hoped to tap that reservoir.

Feld was relatively unconcerned with the location of the wraith magnet, and was more interested in its results. He spent most of his time "in the field" collecting information on wraiths and their activities, in the hopes of coming to understand their inner workings. Too much the intellectual, Feld did not realize the consequences of his actions until it was considerably too late.

While the pair enjoyed significant success in their early work, the efforts were not one-sided. In the Shadowlands, all the havoc of Southeast Asia was manifesting in a most unpleasant way. The jungles of Vietnam were rife with Oblivion-tainted activity, and Nihil burst open to divulge Spectres. A particularly nasty Nihil bubbled over in the Bangkok Necropolis, and the Lord of Bangkok was hard pressed to maintain the safety of his citizens. During the conflagration, Hoertz's activities caught the attention of a particular Malfean known only as the Lord of the Thousand Mirrors, who devised a more covert plan to infect the population of the Necropolis after the tide of war inevitably receded. Eventually, the Lord of Bangkok did in fact manage to stop the marauding Spectres, and the streets of the Necropolis were safe.

Thus foiled, the area Spectres began to act upon their alternate plan of assault. They manipulated events so that certain books fell into Feld's hands, opening up new paths of enlightenment to the vampiric investigators. Rather than bringing the Skinlands closer to the Shadowlands, the two actually scraped open a Nihil in the Shadowlands corresponding to the attic.

Unfortunately, Feld realized his mistake, and recognized the Nihil for what it actually was. He immediately confronted Hoertz, and suggested they find a way to stop the incursion before it got too severe. Unknown to Feld, however, Hoertz was all too aware of the consequences of his actions. The Spectres had managed to gain Hoertz's ear, and had coaxed him over to their cause. He had made common cause with a Malfean on the other side of the Nihil, offering his support in

exchange for unmentionable gifts. Hoertz told Feld to quit worrying, that he had the situation well in hand.

Feld was not reassured, and had a paranoid's flair for exaggeration. After leaving the House, he melodramatically decided that he had to destroy the damned brothel before it ate the Underworld. Returning quietly, he started a fire in the attic, the site of his and Hoertz's work. Aware of the intrusion, Hoertz stormed in and tried to extinguish the fire, but Feld leapt to the attack to stop him. Hoertz threw his opponent to the flames, but realized that it was too late to save the tome or the House. Cursing, he escaped through a hole in the roof.

Through an informant in the Shrouded Claw, the prince of Bangkok got wind of Hoertz's actions and called Blood Hunt on him as a Diabolist. (Note: Even Sabbat members will attack Hoertz on sight, as the tales of his experiments have grown in the telling.) The Cainite went to ground, but has occasionally returned to prod the ashes. Heaping misfortune on the heads of the occupants of the House in an attempt to rip open the Nihil once again, he is personally responsible for the outrages of both Norman and the nameless Japanese businessmen who recently visited the establishment.

A little offshoot of Hoertz and Feld's experimentation is that a high percentage of the people who die in the House end up as wraiths with the brothel as their major Fetter. This has led to an unusual mix of permanent residents in the House, but is possibly the least troubling aspect of their machinations.

## In The Shadows of Bangkok



As previously mentioned, the Bangkok Necropolis is a very busy and confusing place. Souls flow like water in its streets, and business is done on every corner. Anything and everything can be bought or sold in the markets of Bangkok, and the prices can range from outrageous to highway robbery. Every

faction in the Underworld is represented in one form or another, from Stygian traders to Bugis pirates, and conflict is passé. All factions recognize that certain places need to be set aside, where differences can be settled and honest business, if there is such a thing, can be done. Bangkok is one such place, and even the Lord of the City bows to the almighty profit motive.

### The Stadium

Conflicts between wraiths are easy to settle in Bangkok, at least temporarily. All conflicts can be taken to the Stadium. The Stadium is a grand structure located in the Shadowlands just outside the city, resembling nothing so much as a modern domed stadium. It serves two purposes: the resolution of differences, and the entertainment of the masses.



Any disagreement brought to the Stadium is settled quickly enough by the Judges who operate the establishment. They decide (usually based on the bribes offered) which party was wronged, and then arm him with a weapon made of True Jade. The loser of the judgment is also armed, though with White Jade, and the two are sent into the Arena. There they are allowed to attempt to work out their disagreement for a predetermined period of time, with the duration based upon the severity of wrongdoing. The time allotted is also subject to bribery, though taking this sort of bribe is regarded as a trifle declass   by most Judges.

The main attraction of the Stadium is the regular gladiatorial combats. Lemures are gathered from around the city and roughly trained in the sport of war. These gladiators are then pitted against each other, either in individual combat or in massed battle. The gladiators are also used to execute criminals, or sometimes thrown into the Judgment fights described above just for fun. Particularly excellent fighters are awarded prizes, and some eventually are able to win their freedom. This is rare, as any warrior who is that experienced in combat draws huge paying crowds to his shows. Few Judges are willing to let go such a source of revenue.

## The City and the House

Bangkok appears to be a smoothly running machine from the outside, but the view from inside shows that it is rotten to the core. Doppelgangers hold many positions of power, and go to great lengths to conceal their influence from the neighbors of Bangkok. Thousands of wraiths pass through Bangkok every day, and servants of Oblivion are spreading its influence quietly through them. The Lord of Bangkok suspects that something is amiss, but cannot act openly for fear that the Jade Emperor will learn of the problem and wipe the Necropolis off the face of the Shadowlands forever.

The House itself has recently come to be recognized as a safe zone by the various warring factions in Bangkok. Here, free trade can be exploited and one can lift a glass with the enemy without worrying overmuch that he's lifting a knife as well. Unknown to both the proprietors of the House and those that frequent the establishment, the Nihil in the attic has had quite a bit to do with the peace that reigns there. While the Nihil has subsided to an intermittent occurrence, the Doppelgangers that have forced their way through are slowly worming their way into the minds of the House's occupants. Several have fallen prey to the Shadow-Eaters' promises of wealth and power, and are actively recruiting others. Spectres now have followers or Doppelgangers in all of the political and economic factions in the city, and have managed to set up the House of the Fallen Sun as the only safe place to meet. Now the most powerful figures in Bangkok all come to the House, unknowingly placing themselves within the grasp of the servants of Oblivion.

# Dwellers in the Fallen Sun

## Lady Sun



The girl who would become Lady Sun was sent to Bangkok by her parents at the age of 13, hoping that she would become rich and return to share her wealth with them. For a while she survived on her own, but quickly discovered that independent prostitutes were unwelcome in most of the best "working" areas, all of which were controlled by one pimp or another. Looking to acquire access to these restricted areas, she met up with Xiang, who offered her a position at a new house that was opening up. She accepted, and quickly became one of the most popular girls. Hoertz noticed her preeminence among his stable of girls, and changed her name to Lady Sun (She has forgotten her real name, most likely by choice). She was the model for the silhouette that hangs outside of the brothel, and still gathers occasional Memoriam from it.

Slowly, those around her began to die or to move on, and even at her tender age Lady Sun became something of a grand dame to the House. After Hoertz and Feld apparently died, she







assumed many of the responsibilities that were Xiang's, as well as tending to the needs of the newer girls. Most of the girls started to view her as a mother, taking their woes and misfortunes to her, as well as their joys and revelations. Lady Sun helped where she could, commiserated when she could be of no assistance, and scolded when one of her charges got out of hand. She loved her girls, and her girls loved her.

It was this love that proved to be Lady Sun's undoing. Lady Sun had only just turned 20 when Annie and her lover met their untimely end. Annie had been one of the original girls at the House, and Lady Sun had regarded her as a sister. After Pvt. Williams' death, Annie had gone to Lady Sun for consolation. Lady Sun had done all that she could to comfort Annie, but was forced to leave her alone for a short period while she tended to some business downstairs. When Lady Sun returned, Annie was gone. Lady Sun herself found the girl's body, swinging peacefully from the attic rafters.

Lady Sun blamed Xiang for the death of her friend, some would say rightfully. Ever since that day, she has nurtured a hatred of the man. She has gone out of her way in both life and death to thwart his plans and has caused him no small inconvenience. However, all of her actions against him are covert, as she still needs to maintain the fiction of friendship to protect her girls.

Cynthia's death struck just as deeply as did Annie's, for Lady Sun had begun to believe that she really could protect

her girls from harm. In the weeks following Cynthia's murder, Lady Sun spent much of her time in the attic, contemplating both her impotence and suicide. Disdaining the latter, she decided to do something about the former.

She stopped taking customers eventually and concentrated on keeping her girls safe. She would wander the bar, interrogating customers and throwing out any whom she did not see as "worthy" of patronizing her charges. This seemed to work, even though Xiang protested her actions, and no harm came to her girls for quite some time. Furthermore, it added a cachet of prestige to the House, as Fallen Sun customers came to consider themselves a cut above the usual run of whorehouse clientele.

When the enigmatic Japanese tourist who would prove Clarissa's undoing walked in the door, Lady Sun immediately wanted him thrown out. Xiang prevented her from doing so, and Clarissa paid for this decision with her life. This was the final straw for Lady Sun, who simply snapped when she walked in to find Clarissa's body. Thinking only of vengeance, she rushed the pimp. Unfortunately, all that she got for her efforts was a broken skull and a rude awakening in the afterlife.

Lady Sun and Clarissa awoke side by side in the Shadowlands. They were quickly reaped by Annie and Private Williams, and now Lady Sun tries to maintain what she had lost in life. She dotes on the girls and distrusts the many wraiths who frequent her bar. She is dreadfully aware of the Nihil in the attic, and has become obsessed with searching out evidence in the House of its corrupting effects. She has managed to stay free of its influence, but only by her blind devotion to her family of whores. She conveniently overlooks their wrongdoings, and attempts to cover up their faults. She may know more than she lets on, but she refuses to admit it to herself.

**Nature:** Director

**Demeanor:** Caregiver

**Circle:** House of the Fallen Sun

**Physical:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

**Social:** Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

**Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

**Talents:** Alertness 1, Empathy 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 1

**Skills:** Etiquette 4, Leadership 3, Meditation 2

**Knowledges:** Bureaucracy 3, Enigmas 1, Law 3, Politics 5

**Backgrounds:** Allies 5, Contacts 4, Eidolon 4, Haunt 3, Memoriam 1, Notoriety 2, Status 2

**Passions:** Keep the girls safe (Love) 5, Make everything alright (Caring) 3, Find her parents (Love) 1

**Arcanoi:** Castigate 3, Embody 2, Intimation 2

**Fetters:** The House 5, Her home village 2

**Willpower:** 10



Pathos: 10

P'o: The Parent

Angst: 3

**Shadow Passions:** Destroy the House (Hate) 3, Hurt her adopted family (Anger) 2

**Image:** A middle-aged woman, half Thai, half Japanese, Lady Sun looks tired but always has a smile for her charges. Only her eyes betray the fear she feels over the horrors that the attic will inevitably let loose.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Bustle, dote, smooth over the rough edges, ignore trouble and most of all, smother those around you in care and love.

## Chi Xiang

Xiang is mere moments from falling into Spectrehood. He has sold himself wholesale to the Shadow-eaten, and now works only to fulfill their needs. He plays the part of benevolent host in the bar, influencing where he can and bantering where he can not. It is only a matter of time before his Shadow reinvents him as a Doppelganger — or worse.

**Nature:** Conformist

**Demeanor:** Bon Vivant

**Circle:** The House of the Fallen Sun

**Physical:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

**Social:** Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 2

**Mental:** Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

**Talents:** Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Awareness 2, Dodge 3, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 5

**Skills:** Etiquette 2, Firearms 1, Melee 3, Stealth 1

**Knowledges:** Bureaucracy 2, Occult 3, Law 2

**Backgrounds:** Allies (Spectres) 4, Contacts 5, Haunt 2, Notoriety 2, Status (Spectres) 2, Status (Bangkok) 2

**Passions:** Destroy Bangkok (Hate) 3, Set himself up as leader of the House again (Envy) 2, Ruin his Brother (Hate) 1

**Aranoi:** Moliat 2, Outrage 3, Phantasm 2

**Fetters:** The House 5, His Brother 1

**Willpower:** 10

Pathos: 3

P'o: The Monster

**Image:** An ugly, twisted man, Xiang is a little weasel who is forever wearing tacky clothes and sleazing his way into every conversation. His smile is plastic, and his hair is fake. Xiang looks every bit the part of the pimp, only dead.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Whine a lot. Make bad jokes and laugh stupidly. Always drop big names at inopportune times ("Say, that reminds me of what that Jade Censor and I were talking about over at the Stadium..."), and get upset when people don't look impressed. If asked about black market deals, at



first seem standoffish, then hook the players up with whatever they need. Try to figure out the players' Shadows, and cater to them. Try to force as many Harrowings as possible, and do anything to add to the players' Angst. After all, you've got hungry allies to feed.

**Note:** Xiang is not a Spectre. Yet.

## Annie

Annie is a lovely young girl, though she still bears the scars around her neck where she received her final, sinewy embrace. She spent many years after her death alone, unaware that Private Williams had been whisked away into slavery immediately after his demise. She would wander the streets of Bangkok by night and sleep at the foot of the attic stairs when Slumber called her. Only chance brought the young lovers together, as Williams won his freedom and returned to the place of his death to seek his love. Since their reunion, the two have been inseparable. Annie now wanders the main floor of the brothel, tracking the hints and rumors of the living lands. She has taken up the role of reporter, keeping the dead informed of events in the Skinlands, as well as maintaining the House's political ties in the land of the dead.



**Nature:** Child  
**Demeanor:** Gallant  
**Circle:** The House of the Fallen Sun  
**Physical:** Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3  
**Social:** Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4  
**Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3  
**Talents:** Alertness 3, Awareness 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Expression 3, Streetwise 2  
**Skills:** Craft 2, Stealth 4  
**Knowledges:** Enigmas 3, Investigation 4, Politics 3  
**Backgrounds:** Contacts 5, Haunt 2  
**Passions:** Smother Williams in affection (Love) 4, Find out the truth about any and everything (Righteous Curiosity) 3  
**Arcanoi:** Argos 2, Castigate 1, Moliat 2  
**Fetters:** The House 5, Rotted piece of rope 2  
**Willpower:** 7  
**Pathos:** 5  
**Shadow:** The Leech  
**Angst:** 2  
**Shadow Passions:** Destroy Williams (Hate) 3, Burn the House to the ground (Rage) 1  
**Image:** Annie is a beautiful young girl, with savage rope burns on her neck. She is the image of vibrant youth, smiling, asking questions and trying to help whenever she can. Usually she wears dresses



with high collars to hide the signs of her unfortunate demise, and commenting upon them is a sure way to earn her enmity.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Pry into places you shouldn't be. Ask every question that comes to mind. Write it all down. You could be of some use to the players should they need to contact anyone in the Necropolis, and you would be more than happy to oblige. Be so chipper you make people sick, and hang on Private Williams' every word. Young love really is forever, at least for you.

## Private Robert Williams

The good private was not as fortunate as most of the spirits in The House of the Fallen Sun when it came to his life after death. Rather than being protected by Lady Sun or cared for by Annie, he was dragged away to one of Bangkok's more bizarre attractions: The Stadium. At the Stadium, new wraiths are chained up and made to fight one another for the entertainment of the crowd. Williams was fortunate enough to have considerable training in the combat arts, and eventually won enough through his victories to buy his freedom. He immediately returned to the House where he died, hoping to find the girl he loved, maybe to help her in her life, or maybe to aid her in death.

It was Annie's wraith that Williams found, but the reunion was all that the two had hoped for. Together at last, Annie and Williams settled down in the House. They kept the place safe and did what they could to help out Lady Sun in the Skinlands. When she died, they were there to remove her Caul and greet her with open arms.

Williams now does everything that he could not do in life. Specifically, he protects Annie from harm and sorrow and does what he feels is right without worrying about contradicting his orders. The Vietnam War was rife with ambiguities, and the confused private often found himself acting against his conscience. Having been freed from mortal moral concerns, Pvt. Williams now only answers to his own good judgment. The change is enormously liberating, and is something that he felt he should have done years ago.

**Nature:** Judge

**Demeanor:** Director

**Circle:** The House of the Fallen Sun

**Physical:** Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 3

**Mental:** Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

**Talents:** Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3

**Skills:** Firearms 4, Leadership 2, Melee 3

**Knowledges:** Law 2, Medicine 3, Military Science 3

**Backgrounds:** Artifact 5 (.45 caliber pistol with a dozen Artifact rounds), Haunt 2

**Passions:** Protect and Love Annie (Love) 5, Protect the House (Duty) 3



**Arcanoi:** Embody 2, Outrage 3, Pandemonium 2

**Fetters:** The House 5, His home in the States 2

**Willpower:** 10

**Pathos:** 10

**Shadow:** The Martyr

**Shadow Passion:** Hurt Annie (Hate) 4

**Image:** A slightly decayed American GI in full kit and camo, Williams is almost a parody of a Vietnam-era soldier. Taking his duties very seriously, he barks out orders, salutes and marches whenever the opportunity presents itself. He actually looks happy to be dead, and this weirds out most of the other wraiths around to no end.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Tolerate no mention of lawlessness on the part of the players. Express your opinion whenever you feel like it and at great volume. Bluster around, checking up on people, investigating strange occurrences and generally being anal-retentive.

## Cynthia

In life, Cynthia was young and convinced of her own immortality. She believed that nothing could hurt her and that she was destined for greatness. Norman proved her wrong, but she regarded this as a minor setback on her road to immortality. Upon finding herself in the Shadowlands, Cynthia began to believe that she really was invincible, that she had conquered death by her sheer will to live. This pseudo-triumph has driven Cynthia to new levels of recklessness and wild abandon. She is Lady Sun's biggest headache, as the loving matron is always digging her out of one scrape or another. Cynthia has done everything from smuggling True Jade out of the Empire to taking part in assassinations of major political figures. She sees her wraithly existence as an opportunity to fulfill all of her potential that Norman wasted. Over the years since her death, she has accumulated a network of contacts, lovers and enemies, second only to Xiang's in this area. She has no political leanings, but rather does things based on how much fun they might be. One week she may be supplying a Renegade group with relics and information, and the next she is helping spies from the Jade Empire infiltrate the same group. Cynthia is extremely untrustworthy, but also extremely well connected, and as dangerous as she is, often there is no choice left but to deal with her.

**Nature:** Rebel

**Demeanor:** Gallant

**Circle:** The House of the Fallen Sun

**Physical:** Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4

**Mental:** Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

**Talents:** Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 4, Dodge 2, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 5

**Skills:** Drive 2, Firearms 3, Leadership 2, Melee 4

**Knowledges:** Law 3, Occult 2

**Backgrounds:** Allies 1, Contacts 5

**Passions:** Please yourself (Sybarism) 5, Share in whatever pleasures the House offers the Quick (Lust) 2

**Arcanos:** Mnemosynis 2, Pandemonium 3, Puppetry 2

**Fetters:** The House 4, Norman 2

**Willpower:** 5

**Pathos:** 7

**Shadow:** The Monster

**Angst:** 4

**Shadow Passions:** Self-Destruct (Self-Hatred) 3, Bring the wrath of the Lord of Bangkok down on the House (Hatred) 2

**Image:** All spoiled brat, Cynthia looks young and innocent, but her eyes cut with the sarcasm of a little queen. Like Dorothy Parker, the first thing she does in the morning is sharpen her tongue. She wears whatever will offend the present company, and will do her best to get on everyone's nerves. She is fine-boned and small, but there is no weakness in her.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Do whatever it takes to annoy everyone else. Their reactions are the only thing that gives your existence purpose, anyway.





## Clarissa

Clarissa had only arrived at the brothel from her home village a week prior to her murder. Upon her arrival, she had immediately attached herself to Lady Sun, finding in the mothering madam her only solace in this frightening new town. Devastated by her murder, Clarissa re-attached herself to her mentor with frightening ferocity the instant the Lady was Reaped. Since the time of her death, Clarissa has been in Lady Sun's presence as much as possible. She tends to the Lady's every need, and relies on the Lady for her own protection.

Clarissa is terrified of her new life after life. She hates the constant moans that emanate from the floors, the horrid appearances of her fellow wraiths and the decay that spreads through the world like gangrene. She only survives because Lady Sun is at her side. When the Lady is absent, Clarissa buries herself in some forgotten corner, or simply under her bed until she returns.

Clarissa is trying to become strong enough to return to her village, where she hopes to be greeted by the spirits of her family. She has tried to convince Lady Sun to make the trip with her, but the Lady is adamant in her refusal to leave the House for even a short period. In the mean time, Clarissa waits, gathers her strength and prepares.

**Nature:** Child

**Demeanor:** Child

**Circle:** The House of the Fallen Sun

**Physical:** Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 5

**Mental:** Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 2

**Talents:** Dodge 4, Empathy 3

**Skills:** Meditation 3, Stealth 4

**Knowledges:** Bureaucracy 3, Enigmas 2, Linguistics 2, Occult 1

**Backgrounds:** Eidolon 3, Haunt 2, Mentor 1

**Passions:** Get Home (Longing) 4, Escape the fate of the Drones around her (Fear) 1

**Arcanos:** Keening 4

**Fetters:** The House 3, Her parents' home 3

**Willpower:** 5

**Pathos:** 4

**P'o:** The Freak

**Angst:** 1

**Shadow Passions:** Do all the things that terrify Clarissa (Self-Destructiveness) 3

**Image:** Clarissa was very young when she died and a thing of great beauty. She wears pretty clothes, and tries to look as much



like she did in life as she can. She always looks very frightened, bringing to mind the image of a rabbit about to bolt.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Tremble whenever anyone asks you a question. Don't say anything, just stare at strangers and then run away. If cornered, turn and fight.

## Jun Cheng

Cheng was the leader of the Shrouded Claw, a gang that made its base in the House, when he was shot. A few of his fellow gangbangers died with him, and they have formed a new Shrouded Claw in the Shadowlands. Lady Sun tries to keep the gang out of the House, but it's hard to keep ghosts out of a haunted building.

Since his death, Cheng and his followers have been operating out of the House. The main aim of this post-mortem Claw is to topple the Lord of Bangkok, and Cheng has secretly been receiving supplies to this end from the Jade Empire. Cheng wants to topple the Lord of Bangkok for a simple reason: He spent his entire life rebelling against the nearest available authority figure, and he sees no reason to not continue this practice after his death. In truth, the Shrouded



Claw is of little threat to the Lord of Bangkok, and spends most of its time warring against other street gangs in the Necropolis. The ministers of the Imperial Military would not be pleased to discover that the aid that they are sending to overthrow this troublesome neighbor is instead being used to wage turf wars, but Cheng doesn't think that will ever happen. Then again, Tsiang doesn't think he has anything to fear from his Shadow, either.

**Nature:** Rebel

**Demeanor:** Deviant

**Circle:** Shrouded Claw

**Physical:** Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

**Mental:** Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 5

**Talents:** Alertness 2, Brawl 4, Dodge 2, Streetwise 5

**Skills:** Leadership 3, Melee 4, Repair 2

**Knowledges:** Law 1, Enigmas 2

**Backgrounds:** Allies 3, Haunt 2, Notoriety 1

**Passions:** Cause Havoc (Mischievousness) 3, Overthrow the Lord of Bangkok (Hatred) 4

**Arcanoi:** Pandemonium 4, Outrage 2

**Fetters:** The House 5, His old gang turf 2

**Willpower:** 7

**Pathos:** 5

**P'o:** The Pusher

**Angst:** 6

**Shadow Passion:** Embarrass Cheng in front of his gang (Ridicule) 4

**Image:** A snot nosed little punk, always sticking it to the Man, Cheng dresses in leather and denim. His jacket bears the Shrouded Claw gang sign on his back.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Disagree with everyone. Go on long tirades about the oppressive bureaucracy and generally incite chaos.

**Note:** Cheng has between three and five Shrouded Claw members with him at all times. Leather-clad punks, they're armed with Artifact knives and will instantly move to attack anyone who threatens Cheng. Shrouded Claw members encountered when Cheng is not around will be rowdy, obnoxious and belligerent.

## Story Ideas

- The party is in Bangkok on business, and ends up staying in the House. During their stay, there's an incursion of Spectres from the Nihil in the attic, and the characters end

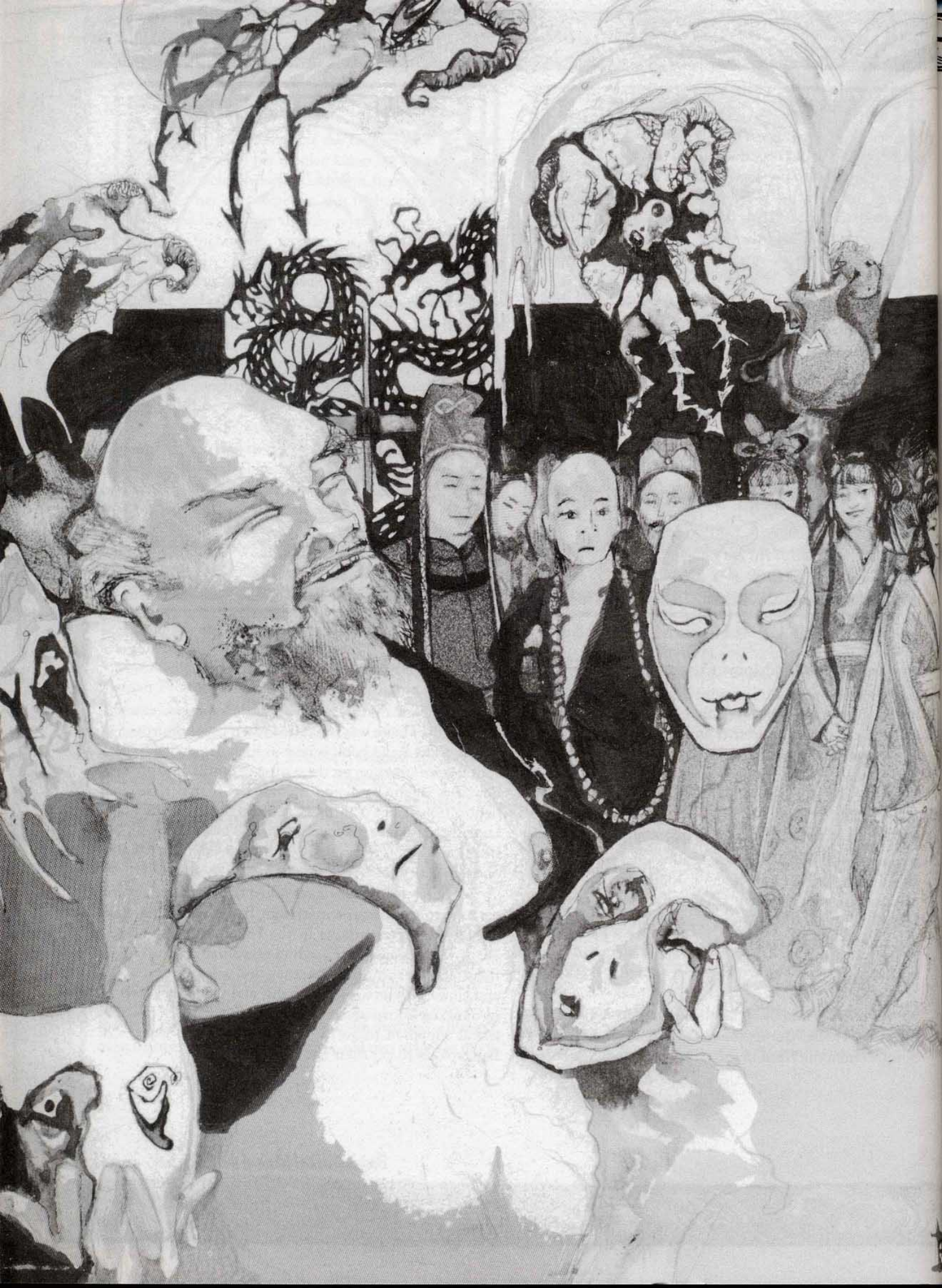


up fighting for their very existences in the cramped and twisted hallways. Forced to retreat, they find themselves in the owner's room, and some of Hoertz' magical toys are starting to act up...


- The book that allowed Feld and Hoertz to create the Nihil in the House was Inhabited when it was destroyed in the fire. The Relic book is now in high demand, as it also contains information on the nature of Nihilis, and possibly how they might be closed. Rumor has it that a freedom fighter from Tibet is in town and has obtained the book. Looking to finance his revolution, he's looking to sell, but what can the players offer — and what happens if someone else gets to him first?

- Hierarchy officials have asked the party to deliver a package to their representative in Bangkok. While waiting for the representative in the Fallen Sun, the players are privileged enough to see him assassinated as he crosses the street. Opening the box, they find a dagger that howls and glows with an unearthly light, and suddenly everyone in Bangkok knows about it. What is the dagger for, whom was it supposed to go to, and what will the wraiths of Bangkok do to get their hands on it?









# The Well of Night: The Jade Palace

By Christopher Howard

*Towers culled from broken dreams.  
Walls of broken flesh.  
Beauty torn from innocence's breast.  
The Demon King squats on a throne of White Jade.*

*Topple the towers.  
Break down the walls.  
Innocence returned.  
The demon will fall.*

— Popular revolutionary song of *The Struggle*, composer unknown





The presence of Yu Huang, the Jade Emperor, permeates every level of society in the Yellow Springs. Nowhere is this more true than his center of power, the Jade Palace. The palace fulfills two purposes: it is both the home of the Emperor and the center of the Empire's sprawling bureaucracy. Few who have seen the palace will deny that it is an awe inspiring sight, but its main connotation in the hearts of many Chinese wraiths is one of horror. Many call the palace the "Well of Night."

## The Tempest



The Jade Palace is located in the figurative eye of the hurricane. Surrounding it, the Tempest regularly reaches near-Maelstrom intensity. Spectres, *kuei* and other monstrosities collect at the periphery, circling like sharks. For the safety of everyone, the Emperor has ordered that no one may approach the Palace except by way of the Great Imperial Highway. The use of Argos to approach the Palace, except in the case of extreme emergencies, is punishable by dissolution. Few have any reservations about following this order since any other approach is far too dangerous (All Argos rolls in the Tempest here are at +2 difficulty).

The Imperial Highway extends throughout the Jade Kingdom. Its final destination in the Shadowlands is the Necropolis of Xi'an. From here it ascends into the "heavens" and the Tempest until it reaches its final destination at the Palace's gates. The Tempest-scape along the Highway is a nightmare of whispering voices, tortured screams and visions to scar the soul. Spectral forms may try to lure travelers off the road and into the Tempest by means of seductive visions. The rest of the surrounding Tempest is so nightmarish, however, that this ploy is rarely successful.

On the highway there is always a sluggish, dirty wind blowing, but this is merely the faintest shadow of the Tempest that howls nearby. It is obvious to all that only the protective hand of the Emperor holds back the fury of the storm. This realm of relative calm extends off the highway about 25 feet in all directions. Visibility in the surrounding Tempest varies. One can rarely see more than 100 yards, yet in places there are portals that seem to lead to far off, barbaric lands; even the shores of Stygia. Investigating these portals is strongly discouraged by the soldiers of the Immortal Guard, who regularly patrol the highway.

Some visions seen from the highway are obviously the obscene fictions of Spectres. These vistas show unarmed civilians being cut down and tortured by the Immortal Guard. Those who witness such scenes are advised to seek out a Protector of the Prosperous Realm for confession and counseling.

## The Outer Palace

Beyond the grand Seven Dragons Gate lies the Jade Palace. The Jade Palace is more like a small city, consisting of 251 palaces, four great pagodas (housing the Four High Magistrates) and numerous buildings which contain the Empire's bureaucracy. The entire complex sits on a great island of black, basaltic rock which seems to pulse and breathe in time with the surrounding Tempest. The same sluggish wind that beats down the length of the highway sweeps through the city.

Like the highway, the city is surrounded by a protective shell that shields it from the Tempest. The relative calm that surrounds the city gives way to the most violent part of the Tempest, a violent whirlpool of garish blue energies. This miniature Maelstrom boils about a mile above the city. Over two miles in diameter, it dominates the city's skyline. Bolts of eldritch lightning lance through its interior, occasionally licking the surfaces of the complex's higher towers. None, save the Emperor, knows what lies beyond this hideous storm. No one who has entered has ever returned. The Maelstrom casts its incessant pall over the entire city, casting eerie, blue shadows that undulate over every surface. The lightning constantly flickers, and its light seems to find a strange, scintillating resonance within the building's surfaces of White and True Jade.

Many visiting wraiths find the city's exterior very disturbing. All wraiths must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) every hour that they stay outside, or receive a temporary point of Angst. (Those with an Argos rating of at least three do not have to roll.) Most wraiths spend little time outdoors and scuttle on their bureaucratic errands from building to building, rarely looking upward.

Architecturally speaking, the city is looming and oppressive. Ornamentation tends to run along dark and violent lines, even on the most delicate of structures. The overall outline of the city is unmistakably Imperial Chinese in flavor, and gracefully arched rooftops are the order of the day. Some find the entire scale of the city to be most unnatural and the mind rebels at the scale of the architecture. Many buildings employ the architectural contrivances of buildings that are usually of a more modest scale. The overall impression is, then, of a much smaller city, magically enlarged to a giant's scale. The front edifices, of even the smallest buildings, are looming affairs that seem to swallow up anyone entering them. Critics of the Emperor attribute the bizarre large/small dichotomy of the city to psychological faults within the Emperor himself (They do this very quietly.).



# The Inner Palace



iven the alien qualities of the palace without, it is small wonder that most inhabitants wish to stay indoors. There is an air of safety within, such as one might find inside one's house on a stormy day. This safety is illusory, however, for it is safer outside. Many of the complex's buildings are linked by tunnels

and covered walkways, so that one may go months without going outside. Existence in the Jade Palace has a very subterranean feel, and some even attribute a hive-like quality to it.

On the surface, the mood of the city varies greatly from place to place. There are bustling corridors filled with harried bureaucrats conducting the affairs of the city, and there are serene, contemplative gardens. There are teeming marketplaces, theatres and public gardens. There are sweeping vistas and intimate corners. Construction of the complex has never abated throughout its entire history and there is always a new sight to explore. Still, just beneath this seemingly endless panoply of variation, there is a maze-like feeling of sameness. Incidents of madness are common among long-term residents of the Jade Palace. There is a high level of bureaucratic paranoia here, of a kind that only a Technocracy mage could love.

## Landmarks

There are many strange sights and places within the Jade Palace. Given its size, only a few of the more central ones are listed here. The Storyteller is encouraged to add her own elements.

## The 251 Palaces

The 251 palaces are all, technically, the abodes of the Emperor, though many of them are infrequently used for this and are given over to other purposes. The Emperor moves freely and regularly between them, taking up temporary residence in each in a seemingly random pattern. Constructed haphazardly over the past two millenia, the palaces contain anywhere from 250 to 3000 rooms. They vary significantly in style, in accordance with changing architectural conventions. The interiors are grandiose even by imperial standards, as hundreds of artisans have competed over the centuries to create works pleasing to the Emperor's eye. Some would consider the overall effect to be somewhat ostentatious, for while the Emperor is famed as a great patron of all the arts, many artists secretly consider his artistic sensibilities to be questionable.





## The Menagerie

When the Emperor realized that the souls of animals were not able to travel to the Yellow Springs, he was sad. The Emperor missed the loyalty of his great war steed and grew nostalgic for the poetry of a sparrow's flight. Not to be deterred, he made a proclamation.

"Let those subject-citizens who are most loyal, come forward."

And they, more precious than True Jade, came forward and said...

"We will be the creatures of the land and sea and air, for you, our beloved Emperor."

And such was their love for the Emperor, that their forms began to change. Becoming, each in kind, a beast that walked, or swam, or flew.

— From the History of Yu Huang, by Shih Chi

The Emperor did, indeed, grow nostalgic for the presence of animals. The conversion of loyal subjects into beasts was not nearly as idyllic as usually portrayed, however. In the early years of his reign, the Emperor had many conquered foes. A small and lucky minority of them were not hurled into Oblivion or rendered down as White Jade. They were instead Moliated into animal forms. Furthermore their minds were "simplified" to the level of animals. The creatures are reasonable facsimiles of animals, but are not, of course, like real animals. Many are even stylized representations of mythic beasts such as *ki'rin*, or twisted monstrosities which have never walked the earth save in nightmares.

The Emperor has over 5000 such creatures in the Jade Palace's extensive Menagerie (open to the public) and another 15000 roam freely throughout the Empire. They are considered holy by the public. Occasionally one of these creatures goes mad and attacks citizens of the Yellow Springs, but even defending yourself against such a creature is a crime punishable by an eternity in Feng-tu. Most communities terrorized by mad animals must simply put up with the nuisance and hope the animal will go away.

## Buddy Wu's Survival Tips. re: Dragons

Long before the Korean "National Dragons" appeared, the Emperor created seven dragons through a similar process. The Emperor's dragons are winged serpents approximately 80 feet long. Protected by thick armor plating and studded with diamonds, they are stark white (Ring a bell!). Dragons, more than any other creature, are sacrosanct here in China. The Emperor's scholars regularly pen treatises, trumpeting their "ancient wisdom." A lot of people worship them as "good luck spirits." Few dare guess what their true nature is. It is known that they are the only creatures allowed to keep their intelligence. It is considered unthinkable that one of them might ravage a village. But they wouldn't cover up a thing like that. Would they?!!

Dragons are real. They are rare, but extremely dangerous when aroused. Their true nature isn't known, but avoid them. And let's study up on our early Qin Shihuang history, shall we? Especially the references to Lung Wang.

—A rant from The Righteous Hammer, a Struggle revolutionary pamphlet.

## Internal Memorandum: Ministry of the Prosperous Realm

**INTERCEPTED:** Pamphlet created by small, three member *Struggle* cell in Hong Kong. Please dispatch compliment of Immortal Guard. Danger: Author's writing style betrays an insignificant, but criminal mind. Obtain him for interrogation. Destroy all witnesses.

The moment is most propitious.

Praised be the Emperor's most perfect name.

Tan Wushang,

MR

Record: Remote Tactical, Lotus Series -Six Eunuch # 226-08-95 A

## The Garden of Life

Another example of the Emperor's "poetic sensibilities" is his recent creation of the public botanical gardens. An expensive and embarrassing public relations disaster, the botanical gardens consists of a vast jungle setting containing every verdant species known to the Emperor's artisans. The "plants" are backdropped by skillfully crafted sword trees, much like those found in Feng-tu. Wraiths go into Imperial gardeners' "studios" and come out as rare and beautiful flora. However, not all plants here are Moliated from former enemies; some were originally Imperial subjects whose loyalty outweighed their enlightened self-interest.

The botanical gardens were supposed to capture the imagination of the public. The Minister of the MPR himself attended its gaudily orchestrated opening. The first crowds were ushered in for the Grand Tour to a fanfare of horns and drums, and the Emperor himself anxiously awaited the awed praise which he knew was forthcoming.

Two hours later the first visitors emerged, shaken and frightened by the experience. The exhibit was too alien and bizarre for the crowd to handle. (Those who enter must make a Will-power roll [difficulty 6] or be forced into a Harrowing). Word quickly spread that the place was a horror, and now even the Emperor's most loyal subjects avoid the place in droves.

The Emperor considers the affair a fiasco, but has invested too much of his own prestige to simply wipe the project out and start over. To cover the Emperor's embarrassment, the Minister of the MPR has been invited to retire. Despite the garden's failure, the Emperor's imagination is still stirred by the idea of making the hillsides green again. His generals talk of a "final solution" and the plant program is being quietly moved to Japan. The Emperor's private, ultimate figure is a luxurious wilderness containing over 10 billion Moliated wraiths. This is a long term plan, but the Emperor has the luxury of time. It is with a smile that he notes that regional population trends are promising.



Conquering and handling the world:  
I have experienced that this fails.  
The world is a spiritual thing  
which must not be handled.  
Whosoever handles it destroys it,  
whosoever wants to hold on to it loses it.  
— Lao Tsu, *Tao Te Ching*

## The Men from the Ministry

The Seats of the Four Magisterial branches of Government are situated around a large central square. At the square's center is a grandiose, semi-public fountain. Water burbles and sighs through it, whispering secrets from the Emperor's "good water spirits." The water is quite a miracle to most wraiths, because it has all the physical qualities of mortal water, though drinking it is strictly forbidden.

The water is, in reality, made from Moliated wraiths. The wraiths transmogrified for this purpose were poets who displeased the Emperor in some way, and while their form has changed, many of these unfortunate souls retain their poetic gifts. By listening closely, one can hear the tongues of poets speak amidst the splashing of the waters.

Although the being sentenced to the fountain is technically a form of punishment, the Emperor rarely punishes his artists as severely as his other subjects. Spending eternity as a "water spirit" is comparatively painless.

Each of the four Ministry buildings is identical in appearance to all of the others. Their individual functions are only denoted by long silk banners of varying colors. Over each of these banners is the Emperor's banner, which is yellow.

The Square between the four buildings is guarded by a detachment of the Immortal Guard. Sightseers are discouraged. Underneath the Square is a honeycomb of labyrinthine tunnels. At their center (beneath the fountain) is Eunuch Central.

Protectors of the Prosperous Realm—  
Black

The Judges of the Dead— Blue

The Jade Censors — Jade

The Imperial Army — Red

The Emperor— Yellow (According to custom, only the Emperor and his chosen subordinates may wear yellow. Violators are sent to Feng-tu.)







## Eunuch Central

The nerve center of the Emperor's intelligence network squats in a series of chambers beneath the Magisterial Square. Of all the horrific sights in the Jade Palace, this is perhaps the grisliest. Built by the Emperor's greatest artisans, sages and engineers is a twisted framework of True Jade, utterly alien in its complexity. Covering this framework is a twisted, twitching mass of Moliated wraiths. Hundreds of Eunuchs are networked together, their collective intelligences combined to create a hell-born mainframe computer. Eunuchs and portions of Eunuchs clatter in a never ending cacophony of calculations. The names of a million traitors to the Empire are encoded within this database of flesh. Bony protrusions, tipped with True Jade, extend from the morass. These protrusions slide neatly into the skull sockets of Remote Eunuch units from throughout the Kingdom and allow them to "download" into the great central consciousness everything that they have seen.

Eunuch Central has a stark and glistening hive-mind intelligence to it. It has so far foiled all rebel attempts to hack into it, but they keep trying. Each of the four Magistrates has access to Eunuch Central, as does the Minister of the MPR, several well-paid technicians and other favored members of the Emperor's inner circle. Only the Emperor has full access, however. Eunuch Central has access to Arcanoi and uses them within the parameters of its program, generally for purposes of self-defense. The Emperor occasionally directs operations here from his Imperial booth, overlooking the construct. Eunuch Central is well protected by elite forces, but it also has its own defense capabilities.

## Eunuch Central

**Nature:** Judge

**Demeanor:** Judge

**Physical:** Strength 0, Dexterity 0, Stamina 6

**Social:** Charisma 3, Manipulation 6, Appearance 0

**Mental:** Perception 5, Intelligence 8, Wits 5

**Knowledge:** 5 in most Knowledge Abilities.

**Arcanoi:** Argos 1, Fatalism 4, Hive Mind 5, Inhabit 1, Keening 4, Lifeweb 1, Moliat 4, Pandemonium 5, Way of the Artisan 1, Way of the Merchant 5, Way of the Scholar 2

**Pathos:** 35

**Permanent Corpus:** 25

**Willpower:** 8

**Passions:** Serve the Emperor 5 (Fear)

**Angst:** 2

**P'o:** Martyr



## Mood

The mood of the Jade Palace is one of constant threat and intrigue. It is never known when the Emperor may explode, or what might anger him. Everyone scrambles to have scapegoats at the ready to divert attention from themselves. Palace newcomers are particularly tempting victims, and there is an atmosphere of creeping paranoia and of constantly being watched. The palace has a strange, mindbending quality to it and no one is completely unaffected by this. The palace is not all darkness, however. Wraiths, after all, must continue with their existence despite their surroundings. The Jade Palace may be a cage, but it is at least a gilded one. Many here live in opulent luxury and even the poorest have most of their needs fulfilled.

On a more artistic note, there is something of a theatrical renaissance going on here. Most of the theatre is highly traditional, and the plays of Chan (see *Personalities* below) are about as subversive as things get. The Emperor coddles his creative class (artists, actors, musicians, poets, etc.), but keeps them well away from controversial subject matter.

## The Emperor Artist

Artisans are the Emperor's pampered class. The Emperor is "humbled" by their works of heavenly beauty, and artists have a special place in the Empire as a result of this adoration. (All artists, musicians, actors, etc. receive +1 on all Social rolls when dealing with the bureaucracy.) The Emperor dabbles in all arts and is considered to be quite good at forms ranging from flute playing to sculpture. (As Chan says, with over 2000 years to practice, even a king may produce something worthwhile.) Many in his artistic stable privately realize that he will never be a great artist, however, and content themselves to avoid pronouncing this revelation.

The Emperor is particularly interested in the Art of Moliation. Much of the Jade Palace is formed out of White Jade and Moliated wraiths, all of which still have sentience. These poor souls are woven into almost everything and their purpose is not purely ornamental. Eyes woven into paintings can see much of what occurs in the city. Much of the city is "automated" by wraiths Moliated into various components. Unlike the Eunuchs, however, the Emperor can no longer rely on their loyalty. The Spirits of the Jade Machine, as they are called by some, despise the Emperor for what he did to them. Restless for revenge, they have plotted carefully for over 300 years. The Emperor is only now realizing that there is something amiss. However, it is far worse than even the Emperor fears: The Struggle Against Qin has established contact with the Spirits of the Jade Machine and the two groups are beginning to explore the potential of an alliance.

The Emperor is powerful in all the Arcanoi, but Moliates has a special place in his heart and he practices it on a level never before seen. His use of this Arcanos in combat is devastating, as he works seemingly without fear of his p'o. All wraiths feel their Corpus crawl in his presence; unlucky ones feel it run and melt.

## Personalities

### Judge Li Gao



Li Gao has been the Emperor's flattering toady since his death by poisoning. He is universally despised by everyone (including his fellow Magistrates) and is often ridiculed by Chan. No one else dares to criticize him openly, however. Possessing a monstrous appetite for new and different sensory experiences, he has used his position as Judge of the Dead to enrich himself. He is particularly despised by his subordinates at the Ministry of the Dead. Under his rule, the judicial system has reached new heights of corruption and inefficiency.

**Nature:** Deviant  
**Demeanor:** Judge  
**Physical:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3  
**Social:** Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1  
**Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 5  
**Talents:** Alertness 2, Awareness 2, Expression 4, Intimidation 4, Subterfuge 5  
**Skills:** Etiquette 4, Leadership 2, Meditation 2, Performance 3, Stealth 3  
**Knowledge:** Bureaucracy 5, Eunuch Central 3, Investigation 3, Law 4, Linguistics 1 (Ming Dynasty cant), Occult 2, Politics 4  
**Passions:** Serve the Emperor (Jealousy) 3, Seek pleasure (Lust/Greed) 5  
**Backgrounds:** Allies 5, Artifact 3, Contacts 5, Haunt 5, Memorium 1, Notoriety 3, Status 4, Wealth 5  
**Arcanoi:** Argos 3, Fatalism 3, Keening 4, Moliates 4, Usury 2, Way of the Merchant 5, Way of the Scholar 3  
**Willpower:** 6  
**Pathos:** 8  
**P'o:** Parent (Speaks in mother's voice. "Li Gao, look at yourself. You're a disgrace to your family's name!")  
**Angst:** 8  
**Thorns:** Aura of Corruption  
**Dark Passions:** Wallow in Pleasure (Lust) 4, Surrender to Oblivion (Laziness) 4, Make others pay for your self-hatred (Disgust) 3  
**Flaws:** Fragile Corpus, Addiction (Pleasure), Rotting  
**Image:** Every "morning" Li Gao Moliates himself into a handsome and striking wraith, but this guise invariably crumbles over the course of the day as he indulges in his manifold, petty pleasures. By evening he is back to his real form, which is pudgy and pasty white. He looks like, more than anything, a corpulent and rotting toad.



**Roleplaying Hints:** Some people consider you "slimy." Let them. It doesn't matter if people like you as long as they do what you say. Power here is coined in favor of the Emperor and you have gained his ear. You must flatter and cajole him at all costs. Rapidly sliding towards Oblivion, you know there are many who wish to lend you a helping hand in getting there.

**Quote:** *Your family is guilty of many sins, but I know of a way you can save them. Listen...*

## Fan Wushang

Fan Wushang is easily the Emperor's oldest and most trusted advisor. An advisor to other Emperors in his living days, his fame preceded him to the Yellow Springs. Upon his death a delegation was present to welcome him. The Emperor himself cut his Caul and placed him high in the Protectors of the Prosperous Realm. Within a decade he became Magistrate, a position that he has filled through the present day.

**Nature:** Architect

**Demeanor:** Director

**Physical:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

**Social:** Charisma 5, Manipulation 6, Appearance 2

**Mental:** Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

**Talents:** Alertness 4, Awareness 3, Empathy 4, Expression 5 (Oratory), Intimidation 4 (Implied), Subterfuge 6

**Skills:** Etiquette 5, Leadership 5, Meditation 3

**Knowledge:** Bureaucracy 5, Eunuch Central 5, Enigmas 4, Investigation 5, Law 5, Linguistics 4, Occult 3, Politics 5

**Backgrounds:** Allies 5, Artifact 4, Contacts 5, Eidolon 4, Haunt 5, Memorium 3, Status 5, Wealth 5

**Passions:** Serve the Emperor as no other can (Ego) 5, Protect the Magistracy and the Realm (Duty) 5

**Arcanoi:** Argos 4, Chains of the Emperor 3, Fatalism 2, Intimation 5, Keening 3, Phantasm 5, Way of the Farmer 1, Way of the Scholar 5, Way of the Soul 4

**Willpower:** 8

**Pathos:** 9

**P'o:** Rationalist

**Angst:** 2

**Thorns:** None

**Dark Passions:** Strangle the Empire in red tape (Sadism) 5, Bewilder the Emperor (Envy) 3

**Merits / Flaws:** Eidetic Memory, Iron Will, Tomb (2) / Driving Goal (Crush rebellion)

**Image:** Fan Wushang looks every bit the part of the sage, imperial advisor. He is tall and a little frail looking. He has a long, thin white mustache and a forked beard. He dresses austere, but well, usually in black. He comports himself in a manner befitting a member of the favored intelligentsia.



**Roleplaying Hints:** You are the Emperor's hidden hand, the political enforcer of his whims and desires. None except for the Emperor have as much control over the nation's political machine. Order must be kept in the Empire and you subscribe to the Legalist tradition's method of governing. A certain degree of fear must be maintained.

You are currently maintaining some distance from the Emperor, waiting for that upstart Li Gao to hang himself. You have watched many such petty Magistrates come and go, and you know that the wise man learns patience. You keep your p'o under tight control and are rarely disturbed by it, even as you do anything necessary to mislead the public about the Emperor's true nature. A master propagandist, you realize that you are more hated by the rebels than any except for the Emperor, but your conscience is untroubled.

**Quote:** *As Li Ssu said... "Only an intelligent ruler is capable of applying heavy punishments to light offenses. If light offenses carry heavy punishments, one can imagine what will be done against a serious offense. Thus the people will not dare to break the laws."*

**Special:** The MPR is the political wing of the Protectors of the Prosperous Realm. Recently wraiths who are former Communist Party members have ensconced themselves here. The MPR now has certain Communist trappings, but Fan Wushang is undisturbed by this recent trend.



## Hu Ji

Hu Ji has been the Jade Censor for a century, but no one is familiar with her activities before this time. There is some speculation that she may have been a mage before her death. She is the only Magistrate who shows modern sensibilities and she is known to have strong connections to the Skinlands. Unguarded moments also betray Western sensibilities, though only Fan Wushang realizes this. In her short rule as the Jade Censor, Hu Ji has collected more Relics than anyone in the Empire, except for the Emperor.

**Nature:** Avant Garde

**Demeanor:** Traditionalist

**Physical:** Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

**Social:** Charisma 5, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

**Mental:** Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

**Talents:** Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Dodge 4, Empathy 3, Expression 4, Intimidation 4, Subterfuge 4

**Skills:** Etiquette 3, Firearms 3, Leadership 4, Martial Arts 4, Mediation 3, Performance 3

**Knowledge:** Bureaucracy 4, Enigmas 2, Eunuch Central 3, Investigation 4, Law 4, Linguistics 2, Occult 3, Politics 4, Science 1

**Backgrounds:** Allies 5, Artifact 5, Contacts 5, Eidolon 1, Haunt 5, Status 4, Wealth 5

**Passions:** Collect as many relics as possible (Greed) 5, Serve the Emperor (Fear) 3

**Arcano:** Argos 5, Embody 4, Flux 5, Lifeweb 3, Outrage 3, Puppetry 3, Way of the Artisan 4, Way of the Merchant 3

**Willpower:** 7

**Pathos:** 7

**Angst:** 4

**P'o:** Pusher

**Thorns:** None

**Dark Passions:** Destroy all the relics (Vindictiveness) 3, Overthrow the other Magistrates (Fear) 2

**Merits / Flaws:** Full of Life (4), Luck/Compulsion (Collect relics), Overconfident

**Image:** More striking than beautiful, Hu Ji is a model of modest, womanly comportment. While in the Jade Palace, she dresses in a conservative manner. While visiting the provinces, however, her wardrobe and demeanor change significantly. She has a strong predilection for modern fashions and has confiscated quite a wardrobe from the recently deceased.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You are the proverbial magpie. You just love beautifully crafted objects of art and can not pass up any opportunity to collect them. Your position as Jade Censor is a means to an end, facilitating your passion for Relics of every description. You have given standing orders to all Censors to report particularly beautiful or useful Relics to your attention.



Although you present a strong traditional façade at court, you are really a free spirit and not beyond a little self-indulgence. You keep your vices under control, however, unlike that slug Li Gao.

**Quote:** *Your license on this relic is expired. I am afraid I shall have to confiscate it.*

**Special:** Hu Ji has every conceivable manner of relics, some of which are extraordinarily dangerous. She is highly adept at protecting herself physically, and has a relic or Artifact for every occasion tucked away within easy reach.

## Peng Xin

Killed in a skirmish during the Qing Dynasty, Peng Xin quickly found his talents in demand in the Emperor's army. Distinguishing himself for bravery and battle prowess, he rose quickly through the ranks. The highlight of his soldiering career came during the wars with Stygia, where he acquired the reputation of a true war hero. He gained his current high position during the closing days of World War II, after the former Imperial Commander (General Wu), was "removed" from office.

**Nature:** Survivor

**Demeanor:** Director





Peng Xin

**Physical:** Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5  
**Social:** Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2  
**Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4  
**Talents:** Alertness 3, Athletics 5, Awareness 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 4, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2  
**Skills:** Etiquette 3, Firearms 4 (Assault rifle), Leadership 4, Meditation 2, Melee 5, Repair 2, Stealth 3  
**Knowledge:** Bureaucracy 2, Enigmas 1, Eunuch Central 3, Investigation 2, Law 2, Linguistics 1 (Japanese), Medicine 2, Occult 3, Politics 2  
**Backgrounds:** Allies 4, Artifact 5, Contacts 3, Eidolon 5, Haunt 5, Memorium 2, Status 5 (War hero), Wealth 3  
**Passions:** Protect his family (Love) 4, Reach P'eng Lai (Regret) 3, Serve the Emperor (Pride) 4  
**Arcanoi:** Argos 4, Fatalism 2, Keening 5 (War song), Moliat 3, Outrage 4, Way of the Farmer 4, Way of the Soul 3  
**Willpower:** 8  
**Pathos:** 8  
**P'o:** Teacher  
**Angst:** 4  
**Thorns:** Trick of the Light  
**Shadow Passions:** Order all Peng's troops to destruction (Megalomania) 4, Overthrow the Emperor (Fear) 1  
**Merits / Flaws:** Code of Honor, Higher Purpose (Reach P'eng Lai) / Dark Secret (Quest for P'eng Lai)

**Image:** Sometimes referred to as the "Tiger of Qing," Peng Xin looks the part. He is a massive man, standing a full head taller than anyone else in the Jade Palace. For all his mass, however, he moves with a sinewy, catlike grace. Peng wears lightweight armor alloyed from True Jade and a strange version of Stygian Steel. He has long, black hair which he wears in a complex warrior's braid. Rarely seen without his True Jade sword (a powerful War relic), at court he wears a perpetual, imperious sneer, though this changes when he is at home with his family.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You do not belong in this den of vipers. You are an honest soldier, attempting to serve your Emperor. You are disgusted by the corruption and decadence of the city (especially the other Magistrates), but there is little that you can do about it. A dozen petty generals seek your high position. If it were not for your loyalty to the Emperor, they could have it. Ever since you killed that holy man during the Fourth Rebellion, your heart is no longer in the soldier's profession, though you still perform your duties well. Higher purposes now call you.

## Herr Holbein

Holbein was raised in the powerful merchant class of the Holy Roman Empire in the 1550s. Despite his common origins, he quickly worked his way among the nobility through a combination of charm, luck and hard work. He was posted as the ambassador to Queen Elizabeth's court, until he was murdered by Spanish Tremere vampires, for his part in the defeats of the Spanish Expedition in the Netherlands. The nature of this death still manifests itself in the appearance of his Corpus.

Like Fan Wushang, his fame as an ambassador preceded him to the Shadowlands, and he soon found himself involved in Stygia's elite diplomatic corp. Despite his bizarre appearance Herr Holbein has made the best of his situation. He has had several diplomatic coups over the centuries and was instrumental in forging Stygia's current peace treaty with the Jade Kingdom. He has been posted at the Jade Palace since the attack on Boston. Despite their differences, Herr Holbein and Fan Wushang have a healthy respect for each other.

**Nature:** Survivor

**Demeanor:** Dreamer

**Physical:** Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4

**Social:** Charisma 5, Manipulation 5, Appearance (See below)

**Mental:** Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

**Talents:** Alertness 4, Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Empathy 4, Expression 5, Intimidation 4 (Implied), Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 5

**Skills:** Diplomacy 5, Drive 1, Etiquette 4, Firearms 4, Meditation 2, Melee 5 (Sword), Performance 3 (Violin), Stealth 3





*Herr Holbein*

**Knowledge:** Bureaucracy 4, Enigmas 3, Investigation 4, Law 3, Linguistics 5, Occult 2, Politics 5

**Backgrounds:** Allies 4, Artifact 3, Contacts 5, Eidolon 2, Haunt 5, Status 4 (In Stygia only), Wealth 5

**Passions:** Keep Peace (Fear) 4, Find new adventures (Bravery) 4

**Arcanoi:** Argos 5, Castigate 2, Fatalism 3, Inhabit 2, Intimation 4, Keening 4, Mnemosynis 2, Moliat 4, Pandemonium 5

**Willpower:** 8

**Pathos:** 9

**Shadow:** Mr. Adventure

**Angst:** 4

**Thorns:** None

**Shadow Passions:** Spark a war (Ego) 4, Seduce Lei-Zu (Lust) 2

**Merits / Flaws:** Eidetic Memory, Self-Confident / Curiosity

**Image:** Herr Holbein's appearance is bizarre to say the least. He is a walking, animated skeleton arrayed in finery familiar to English courts between the reigns of Queen Elizabeth I and Charles I. Inside his body burns an orange, Moliated flame which casts eerie orange and purple shadows on everything in his immediate vicinity (low lighting situations only). He is a sweeping, grand gentleman-noble. Despite his odd appearance, he is very well-respected in diplomatic circles. His appearance has also not prevented him from becoming a successful "ladies' man." Hu Ji has taken some notice of him and is intrigued.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You are privately very concerned about the current diplomatic situation. War between Stygia and the Jade Empire is coming sooner or later. (Sooner, you think and Stygia is nowhere near ready.) The Deathlords place far too much faith in their Legions and the oceans which separate the two Empires. They talk about a "policy of Containment." Hah! You wonder if there will be a Stygia in 20 years, or just another conquered territory feeding the Emperor's manias. With the disappearance of Charon, the Emperor's interest in Stygia has increased precipitously.

You have reached your current, lofty position because of your innate ability and because you are not afraid to get your finger bones dirty. You pursue international diplomacy because you find it intellectually stimulating and enjoyable. You find the Jade Empire fascinating. Your respect for its people is balanced by your fear of their Emperor. Ruthless when necessary, you nevertheless prefer to gain your ends through peaceful means.

## Lei-Zu

Older by far than the Emperor, Queen Lei-Zu is still remembered fondly by the Chinese people as the wife of Huang-Ti (the Yellow Emperor) and for "inventing" silk. After her death Lei-Zu was a powerful and benign matriarch of wraith society until the rise of Yu Huang. The Emperor razed her palace, massacred her people and took her as part of his war spoils. It amused the Emperor to make the queen just one more of his courtesans. He did not predict the hold that she would soon exert over him.

The Emperor is of two minds concerning his courtesans. He alternates between tormenting and spoiling them. Through both adoration and degradation, however, the queen has persevered with dignity; her will remains unbroken. Despite her beauty and position, the queen is, in many ways, an accessible human being. She has freedom to move about the palace, and has friends among the lowest of the palace staff. Many others fear to befriend her, however, for fear of the Emperor's jealousy. The Emperor has justified this fear more than once.

**Position:** "Favored" Courtesan (Former Sage-Queen)

**Nature:** Caregiver

**Demeanor:** Survivor

**Physical:** Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

**Social:** Charisma 6, Manipulation 5, Appearance 9 (Captivating)

**Mental:** Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

**Talents:** Alertness 4, Awareness 5, Empathy 4, Expression 4, Intimidation 4 (Implied), Subterfuge 4

**Skills:** Etiquette 5, Leadership 4, Meditation 4, Performance 4, Stealth 3

**Knowledge:** Bureaucracy 4, Enigmas 3, Investigation 4, Law 4, Linguistics 4, Occult 4, Politics 4





**Backgrounds:** Allies 5, Contacts 2, Eidolon 5, Memorium 4, Status 5

**Passions:** Guide the Emperor toward enlightenment (Pity) 5, Protect other Courtesans (Compassion) 5

**Arcanoi:** Argos 4, Embody 2, Fatalism 4, Intimation 2, Lifeweb 4, Mnemosynis 5 (Practiced unconsciously), Moliat 1 (Forbidden to practice it at higher levels), Way of the Scholar 3, Way of the Soul 5

**Willpower:** 10

**Pathos:** 10

**P'o:** The Lover

**Angst:** 1

**Thorns:** None

**Shadow Passions:** Return the favor to the Emperor (Hate) 5, Destroy all the other Courtesans (Envy) 2

**Merits:** Iron Will, Higher Purpose

**Image:** The beauty of Lei-Zu can freeze the soul. Her grace, majesty and benevolence are celebrated throughout the Jade Kingdom. She is slender and lithe like a school girl, yet her eyes reflect the wisdom of the centuries. She is considered by some (those who dare speak of it) to be the Emperor's greatest work of art. Lei-Zu's appearance is the work of 100 Corpus

artisans, working slavishly for almost 2000 years. Despite this, there is nothing "made-up" about her beauty, which seems to spring forth naturally, as if from P'eng Lai itself. When angered, the Emperor occasionally threatens to remove his "gift." This threat means little to Lei-Zu.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Oh, yes. You know the Emperor of old. You know him as no other person ever could. A gentle lover, a demon in human form, a broken and piteous man. All the high myths and rebel gossips cannot begin to describe him. Mere words fall into a tangled and useless heap at his feet. You have seen (and experienced) him inflicting the most sadistic and brutal tortures imaginable. You have seen him cry, when one of his beloved animals fell, too soon, to Oblivion. Like those animals, you are, in part, his creation; his plaything. Like the other courtesans, he considers you to be a lump of molded clay, to be Moliated into whatever form suits his inhuman desires. How can one so flawlessly embody defilement and tenderness in the same instant? The Emperor dredges up the basest dross of your soul, laying it bare and festering before you. He laughs like a schoolboy while doing it. Your body has been stretched into so many imponderable, alien contradictions, that you no longer have a "true form." Yet, there is a part of you that he can never despoil. You have seen that white light in your soul.

Violence of the spirit is a funny thing. He is the ocean, and you are a mere stream. Yet, as he has engulfed you, you have insinuated your way into his soul. The ocean depends on the stream for nourishment. When waters are mixed, who is to say what was once ocean and what was once stream? The Emperor toys with making you his Empress, but that would not change the reality of the situation. His subjects already regard you as holy, yet underneath, there is pity in their eyes. You are all too familiar with the goddess-whore paradox that is your life. Still, perhaps you should not complain. Most of his other courtesans fare far more poorly. The halls beneath the palace ooze and flow with those he has "tired" of. Their torment makes that of Eunuch Central pale by comparison. Doing everything that you can to protect the others from this fate, you are privy to his darkest secrets. Others in the palace may spread rumors of a "stranger" from the living lands, who consults with the king. You know his name.

**Special:** Some consider Lei-Zu to be even more divine than the Emperor. She is a rallying point for many in the revolutionary movement (especially those of The Thousand Eyes and Hands). On one level the Emperor fears her more than all the armies of the world. Lei-Zu is also sympathetic to anyone victimized by the Emperor's security apparatus. She has secretly intervened on several occasions (at great risk to herself) to free prisoners from the Emperor's dungeons, and even has some sway in Feng-tu.





## Palace Courtesans

The beauty of the Emperor's courtesans is the stuff of legend. Once every five years the most beautiful women from throughout the empire vie against each other in a competition that has many of the trappings of a western beauty contest. The competition takes place in the Jade Palace and only the Emperor and his most favored servitors may attend. Besides their beauty, contestants are judged by their artistic talents, adherence to "traditional values" and ceremonial decorum. All contestants must be mannerly and demure. The winner takes her place within the harem. This prettified selection process is, of course, a thin veneer to cover up the true nature of the harem, which is one of degradation, humiliation and physical abuse.

Some wraiths Moliat themselves, or their loved ones, into less attractive forms, to avoid this "beauty lottery." This practice is increasingly widespread, despite the apparent honor of being the Emperor's concubine. The Emperor's people see his brutality in most every aspect of their daily lives and few are naive enough to believe that he behaves any differently in the boudoir.

Despite the widespread rumors of the Imperial chamber of horrors, there is no shortage of women who compete for this honor. Families of women chosen for this honor are richly rewarded, which explains their eagerness. Some families begin grooming their daughters for the beauty lottery the minute they remove their caul.

There are over 800 women attached to the Emperor's bedchamber staff. In addition to their more "fleshly" duties, the courtesans are indispensable as window dressing for the Emperor, who wishes to maintain at least the appearance of human behavior. In reality, however, the Emperor's sexual proclivities bear little resemblance to those of humanity, or even most wraiths. The Emperor practices arts of sadism that would make the worst of torturers cringe. He is particularly brutal towards women, whom he considers inherently inferior to men. He practices a combination of physical and

mental torment, doling out precious crumbs of hope to his courtesans, only to dash them a minute, month or decade later. The Emperor particularly enjoys using Molation to "perfect" his harem. He pursues a strange dichotomy with their visages, placing the divine side by side with the repulsive.

All of his courtesans are, to the casual observer, beautiful beyond compare (Appearance is 5). The Emperor's artisans toil day and night to enhance their beauty, creating a never ending panoply of beauty for the Emperor's lust and amusement. Beneath this beauty, however, the Emperor has inflicted a thousand spiritual cuts on each woman. Each courtesan has at least one "alternative self," often designed by the Emperor as a cruel and clever satire on her *p'o*. Some observe that many of the courtesans move unusually beneath their robes, hinting at forms that are no longer human. The degradation does not end here. In the privacy of his chambers, the Emperor mixes Corpus, *han* and *p'o* together with the skill of a master chef. Each courtesan's essence, her immutable soul, involuntarily combines with those of others, distorting individuality and sanity. Although this violation has a patina of sexuality, in reality it is simple brutality.

The Emperor's command of Molate is such that he does not need to be present for it to continue its work. Even courtesans the Emperor has not seen in years continue to metamorphose. The greatest horror is shared by those the Emperor consigns to the palace dungeons. Here hundreds of the Emperor's courtesans boil and flow through each other in a never ending paroxysm of pain that parodies sexual pleasure. This pitiable creature is similar to Eunuch Central in many ways and has a unified, though insane, mind. It will lash out and attempt to engulf any intruders in the dungeons, absorbing female wraiths into the mass, while seducing and then utterly destroying any males. (Male wraiths must make a Willpower roll, difficulty 8, or be ensnared by the hive-mind.) Despite the danger that these women present, the Storyteller should remember that they are still merely victims of the Emperor.





## Protector # 2517- 2a, Level 2 Security Clearance

Your death was as miserable as your life. You were the smallest one in school, always picked last in line, always beaten up and ridiculed. But you learned fast. You learned that even if you do not have power yourself, you can find those who do and direct it. Far more weight is given to a single MPR memo directed to Eunuch Central than to the pleas of those it hurts.

**Nature:** Judge

**Demeanor:** Curmudgeon

**Physical:** Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1

**Mental:** Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

**Talents:** Alertness 3, Awareness 1, Dodge 3, Intimidation 4 (Implied), Subterfuge 2

**Skills:** Etiquette, Firearms 1, Melee 1, Stealth 5 (Shadows)

**Knowledge:** Bureaucracy 3, Eunuch Central 2, Investigation 3, Law 2, Linguistics 2, Occult 2, Politics 2, Science 1

**Backgrounds:** Allies 5 (MPR), Artifact 1, Contacts 5, Haunt 1 (Cubicle), Notoriety 1, Status 1, Wealth 3

**Passions:** Serve the Emperor (Fear) 4, Serve the MPR and use the power it gives you (Vengeance) 5

**Arcanoi:** Argos 1, Fatalism 3, Keening 1, Moliarte 1, Way of the Farmer 2, Way of the Merchant 3, Way of the Scholar 3

**Fetters:** None

**Permanent Corpus:** 5

**Willpower:** 4

**Pathos:** 5

**P'o:** Perfectionist

**Angst:** 7

**Thorns:** Infamy, Aura of Corruption

**Dark Passions:** Crash the System (Sadism) 3, Get the Bureaucrat sent to Feng-tu (Self-Hatred) 2

**Flaws:** Compulsion (Giggling)

**Image:** Everyone's worst stereotype of a bureaucrat. Petty and officious, he wears a conservative black robe, though business suits are coming into vogue in the Ministry...

**Roleplaying Hints:** Boss man Chen thought he was a big man when he beat you for stealing 10 years ago. Big man won't be so big when his daughter is arrested for treason and shipped to Feng-tu. You worked your way up the ranks of the Protectors of the Prosperous Realm and now you're in middle management! No one has power like the man who does the paperwork. Poor Chen won't even know why it's happening...until you tell him. And won't that be sweet?

**Special:** Most MPR bureaucrats suffer nervous little headaches.





# Chan

**Background:** Court jester for both Yu Huang and his son after him, Chan has been with the Emperor since the beginning. Executed by Chao Kao (a man notorious for his bad sense of humor), Chan was immediately dragged before Yu Huang upon arriving in the Yellow Springs. When the Emperor removed his caul, the first thing Chan did was laugh. While Chan is protected, in part, by the traditional sanctity of the jester, there is more to it than that. Like Lei-Zu, the fool has a hold on the Emperor that has only increased with time. Chan has more freedom than anyone in the Jade Kingdom and frequently leaves the country for long periods of time. He has picked up more than a few bad habits during his sojourns, making him the despair of many of his fellow courtiers.

**Nature:** Visionary

**Demeanor:** Jester

**Physical:** Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5

**Social:** Charisma 6, Manipulation 6, Appearance 3

**Mental:** Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 6

**Talents:** Acting 6, Alertness 5, Athletics 5, Awareness 5, Dodge 5, Empathy 3, Expression 5, Subterfuge 5 (Impenetrable mumbo-jumbo)

**Skills:** Etiquette 4, Humor 5, Leadership 4, Martial Arts 5 (Drunken Monkey style), Meditation 5, Performance 5, Stealth 3

**Knowledge:** Bureaucracy 3, Enigmas 6, Law 2, Occult 4

**Backgrounds:** Allies 5, Artifact 5, Contacts 5, Status 3

**Passions:** Discover esoterica (Curiosity) 5, Subvert the Empire through humor (Selflessness) 2

**Arcanoi:** Argos 5, Castigate 2, Embody 5, Fatalism 5, Lifeweb 2, Moliat 5, Outrage 3, Pandemonium 4, Way of the Merchant 3, Way of the Scholar 5

**Fetters:** Long since crumbled to dust

**Permanent Corpus:** 10

**Willpower:** 9

**Pathos:** 10

**P'o:** In harmony with *hun*. In reality, Chan should have Transcended long ago, but doesn't wish to.

**Angst:** 0

**Thorns:** N/A

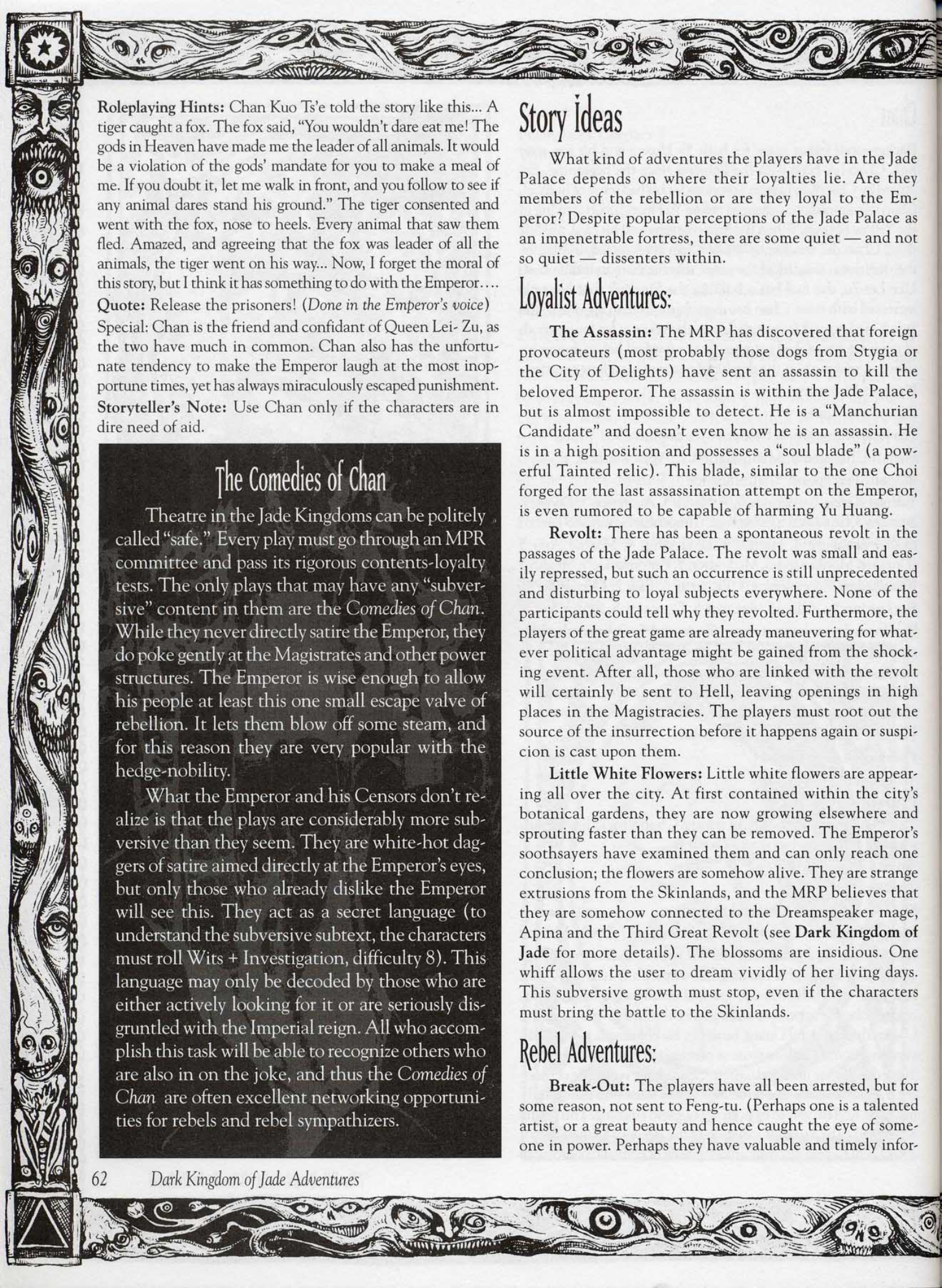
**Shadow Passions:** Identical to Passions

**Merits / Flaws:** Self Confident, Ambidextrous / Absent Minded

**Image:** Chan is a plain, wizened old man of indeterminate age and modest height. He has long but wispy white hair and a thin beard. He is potbellied and jovial, and usually wears an ill fitting, orange robe. He appears to be far more colorful than most wraiths. Unlike the Immortal Guard, however, his coloring is natural. His very presence rekindles a sense of nostalgia in most wraiths for the living days. Every limb and joint in Chan's body is capable of bending in every conceivable direction. While some find this disturbing, most find his gait to be both strange and amusing. This ability is believed to be a strange variation of the Arcanos Moliat, and it allows him to perform truly amazing feats of comedic contortion.







**Roleplaying Hints:** Chan Kuo Ts'e told the story like this... A tiger caught a fox. The fox said, "You wouldn't dare eat me! The gods in Heaven have made me the leader of all animals. It would be a violation of the gods' mandate for you to make a meal of me. If you doubt it, let me walk in front, and you follow to see if any animal dares stand his ground." The tiger consented and went with the fox, nose to heels. Every animal that saw them fled. Amazed, and agreeing that the fox was leader of all the animals, the tiger went on his way... Now, I forget the moral of this story, but I think it has something to do with the Emperor....

**Quote:** Release the prisoners! (*Done in the Emperor's voice*)

**Special:** Chan is the friend and confidant of Queen Lei-Zu, as the two have much in common. Chan also has the unfortunate tendency to make the Emperor laugh at the most inopportune times, yet has always miraculously escaped punishment.

**Storyteller's Note:** Use Chan only if the characters are in dire need of aid.

## The Comedies of Chan

Theatre in the Jade Kingdoms can be politely called "safe." Every play must go through an MPR committee and pass its rigorous contents-loyalty tests. The only plays that may have any "subversive" content in them are the *Comedies of Chan*. While they never directly satire the Emperor, they do poke gently at the Magistrates and other power structures. The Emperor is wise enough to allow his people at least this one small escape valve of rebellion. It lets them blow off some steam, and for this reason they are very popular with the hedge-nobility.

What the Emperor and his Censors don't realize is that the plays are considerably more subversive than they seem. They are white-hot daggers of satire aimed directly at the Emperor's eyes, but only those who already dislike the Emperor will see this. They act as a secret language (to understand the subversive subtext, the characters must roll Wits + Investigation, difficulty 8). This language may only be decoded by those who are either actively looking for it or are seriously disgruntled with the Imperial reign. All who accomplish this task will be able to recognize others who are also in on the joke, and thus the *Comedies of Chan* are often excellent networking opportunities for rebels and rebel sympathizers.

## Story Ideas

What kind of adventures the players have in the Jade Palace depends on where their loyalties lie. Are they members of the rebellion or are they loyal to the Emperor? Despite popular perceptions of the Jade Palace as an impenetrable fortress, there are some quiet — and not so quiet — dissenters within.

## Loyalist Adventures:

**The Assassin:** The MRP has discovered that foreign provocateurs (most probably those dogs from Stygia or the City of Delights) have sent an assassin to kill the beloved Emperor. The assassin is within the Jade Palace, but is almost impossible to detect. He is a "Manchurian Candidate" and doesn't even know he is an assassin. He is in a high position and possesses a "soul blade" (a powerful Tainted relic). This blade, similar to the one Choi forged for the last assassination attempt on the Emperor, is even rumored to be capable of harming Yu Huang.

**Revolt:** There has been a spontaneous revolt in the passages of the Jade Palace. The revolt was small and easily repressed, but such an occurrence is still unprecedented and disturbing to loyal subjects everywhere. None of the participants could tell why they revolted. Furthermore, the players of the great game are already maneuvering for whatever political advantage might be gained from the shocking event. After all, those who are linked with the revolt will certainly be sent to Hell, leaving openings in high places in the Magistracies. The players must root out the source of the insurrection before it happens again or suspicion is cast upon them.

**Little White Flowers:** Little white flowers are appearing all over the city. At first contained within the city's botanical gardens, they are now growing elsewhere and sprouting faster than they can be removed. The Emperor's soothsayers have examined them and can only reach one conclusion; the flowers are somehow alive. They are strange extrusions from the Skinlands, and the MRP believes that they are somehow connected to the Dreamspeaker mage, Apina and the Third Great Revolt (see *Dark Kingdom of Jade* for more details). The blossoms are insidious. One whiff allows the user to dream vividly of her living days. This subversive growth must stop, even if the characters must bring the battle to the Skinlands.

## Rebel Adventures:

**Break-Out:** The players have all been arrested, but for some reason, not sent to Feng-tu. (Perhaps one is a talented artist, or a great beauty and hence caught the eye of someone in power. Perhaps they have valuable and timely infor-





mation about a rebellion.) Imprisoned in one of the Jade Palace's many dungeons to await sentencing, they escape through the manipulations of a secret friend in high places. The players must now either fight their way out of the Jade Palace, or sneak under the noses of the Immortal Guard.

**Reconnaissance Mission:** The characters are part of a rebel mission to contact the Spirits of the Jade Machine. They must do this without raising the suspicions of the Protectors of the Prosperous Realm, who are launching an investigation into certain recent "anomalies." While

in the city, the Spirits of the Jade Machine give the players an Artifact (a White Jade statue of a dragon) which they claim will allow them to circumvent the palace's barriers. This will allow the rebels permanent, remote communication with them, and the players are charged with transporting the Artifact to a contact in the Fist of Nippon; however, they must get out of the palace first. To make matters worse, someone in the Spirits of the Jade Machine has informed the Empire as to the characters' presence and true mission.



What we look for beyond seeing

And call the unseen,

Listen for beyond hearing

And call the unheard,

Grasp for beyond reaching

And call the withheld,

Merge beyond understanding

In a oneness

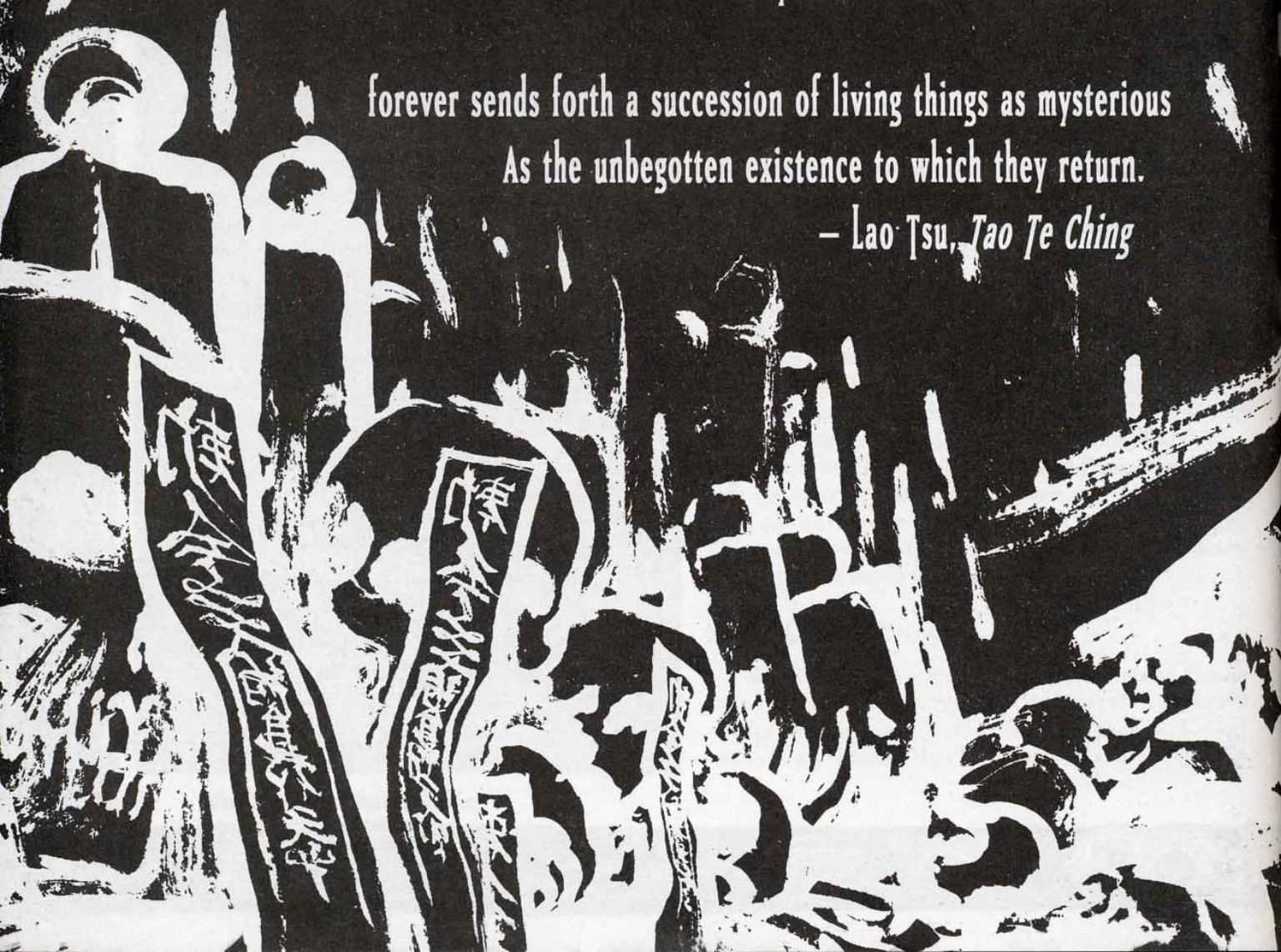
Which does not merely rise and give light,

Does not merely set and leave darkness,

forever sends forth a succession of living things as mysterious

As the unbegotten existence to which they return.

— Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*








WOLFE



# ALL THE JAILERS TAKE BRIBES







# A Hope in Hell, or The Mask and the Mirror

by Ben Chessell

*The Yellow Emperor said: When my spirit goes through its door, and my bones return to the root from which they grew, what will remain of me?*

— Chang Tzu

## Theme

**M**asks and mirrors are things which affect the ways in which we see ourselves and the way others see us. Masks are a face which is not ours which we show to others. Mirrors are tools we use to look at ourselves. This story is about what is behind the mask and what shows in the mirror. A secondary theme, associated with both masks and mirrors, is vanity, that of the characters and of various inhabitants of Ti Yu.

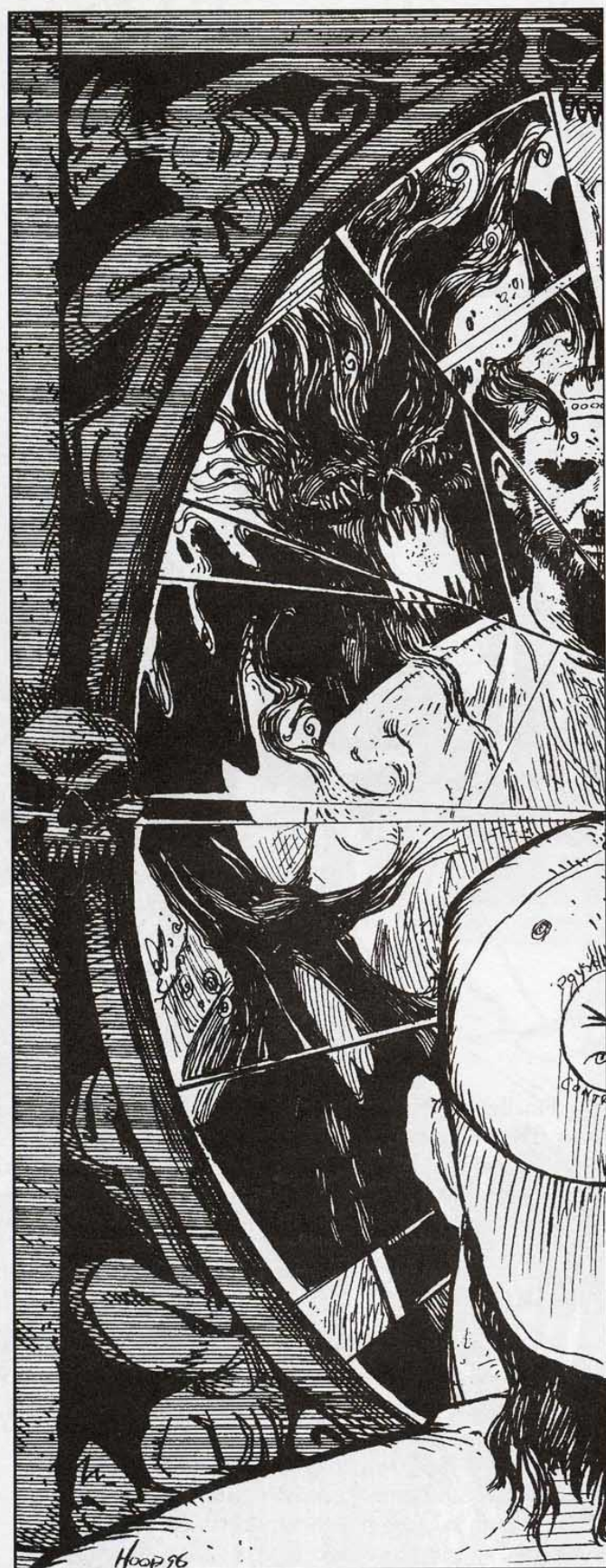
This story also revolves around images of decay and fracture. The wraiths rebuild a mirror which has been broken. Yuan-Shen is disgusted by the decay of the hell which he built. Things are falling apart, the center cannot hold, and the characters must escape the corruption or forever become a part of it.

Finally, imprisonment is also an important idea in the story. The wraiths and many they interact with are prisoners in Ti Yu, and Yuan-Shen is a prisoner in his mirror. His freedom enables the wraith's freedom and should raise questions about whether some things are not better left entrapped.

## Mood

Any story told in Hell is likely to have a dark mood, but the mood of this story, however unlikely it seems, is one of hope. There is hope for the wraiths trapped in Earth Prison, hope of both escape and redemption. In the characters of the fox-merchant and the saintly *kuei-go* trainer, the characters are shown that good can exist even in the depths of Hell. Even the lowest station offers opportunities for redemption, and even the darkest pits of Hell can be escaped.





# Background

## Hellish History



Although Ti-tsang Wang is the ruler of Hell, he was not responsible for its construction. Before even the time of Yen-Lo Wang, Yu Huang had many powerful servants. The construction of Hell was overseen by a wraith named Yuan-Shen, a wealthy and self-important tyrant who

was perfect for managing the ambitious project. Universally feared by the slaves and workers on the site, he managed to construct the entirety of Yu-Huang's vision within the severe time restrictions prescribed by the uncompromising Emperor. It was whispered that Yuan-Shen was almost a Spectre and that the difference between him and his *p'o* was so negligible that he might as well be one. As if to offer evidence, his face was terrifying to look upon. Moliated beyond all recognition, it was a grotesque parody of the living man's visage, with stretched, masklike features and piercing green eyes. Indeed, the legendary face of Yuan-Shen has become a popular subject for the mask makers of modern Ti Yu.

Yuan-Shen possessed an Artifact in the shape of a mirror. This mirror was his most valued possession — a full length looking glass in a teak frame. The mirror was, among other things, a portal into the Tempest, through which Yuan-Shen would throw wraiths who had particularly displeased him. Another property of the fabulous mirror was its ability to show the true form of any who looked into its swirling depths. The effects of age, mutilation and Molation simply fell away, and the face of youth and health looked back. Yuan-Shen looked in this mirror every day and for a moment forgot what he had become, but alas, the rumors about him were not far from the truth. His *p'o* quickly tore him from his reverie and back to his calling as the masterbuilder of Hell.

Yuan-Shen was unaware of the machinations of his *p'o*, as so many wraiths tragically are. Perhaps, had he known, he would not have cared because, apart from the short periods following rest in which he would gaze into the mirror, he was nearly a servant of Oblivion already. Whenever he gazed at the image of his former self, Spectres would gather on the other side of the mirror and feed on the dark emotions which poured from his soul. The shadow-eaten would also take the opportunity to communicate (at first secretly, but later openly) with Yuan-Shen's *p'o*, with results that can be observed in Hell's every angle and building.



As the construction of Ti-Yu came to an end, Yuan-Shen became increasingly unstable and his *p'o* was in control more often than not. When the last stone was laid and his work was over, Yuan-Shen retired to his pavilion to look into his mirror. Their time having arrived, the Spectres gathered eagerly on the other side to await their newest brother. As Yuan-Shen watched the image of beauty before him, the Spectres revealed themselves leering in the background. Yuan-Shen's *p'o*, arrogant in its strength, attempted to seize control and step through the mirror to join his comrades in the Tempest. Yuan-Shen realized what was happening too late to save himself, but soon enough to prevent leaving behind an open gateway to the Tempest as he vanished.

At the last minute he struggled with his *p'o* and twisted in its grasp. The mirror shattered with a sound like thunder and the five pieces fell to the floor. Yuan-Shen himself was broken apart and trapped in the shards of the mirror, now fully a Spectre but imprisoned until the day when the mirror would be rebuilt. Until that time, he was trapped among endless reflections of himself as he was, brooding.

The wraiths who found the shattered Artifact divided the pieces up amongst themselves, for the fragments retained their property of true seeing. The story of the mirror was forgotten, and the pieces came to be little more than amusing trinkets or tools.


## Outline

At the beginning of this story the characters are prisoners in Ti Yu, Earth Prison. They have been sent to Hell. Why they are there is not important. The Storyteller can use this story as the conclusion to a series of stories or even a chronicle set in the depressing confines of Ti Yu. It could also be the start of a chronicle, with all the players generating characters which are for some reason prisoners in Ti Yu, condemned to long, perhaps infinite, sentences. As the escape from Hell is the likely outcome of this story it is more suited to be used as the beginning of a chronicle, providing the Storyteller with a good premise to get the characters together, or as the conclusion to a mini-chronicle in which pre-established characters are sent to Ti Yu for crimes real or imagined.

During *A Hope in Hell*, the characters obtain a piece of the mirror of Yuan-Shen and learn something of its story. What they learn is at least enough to convince them of the importance of searching for the other pieces. Through various means they obtain these pieces and reconstruct the mirror. If this is done properly, they then must face the ancient Spectre Yuan-Shen, and perhaps by doing so escape the tortures of Ti Yu. Although the first scene at the Pits must begin this story, and the most satisfactory conclusion is some kind of confrontation with Yuan-Shen (followed by an escape through the rebuilt







mirror) the intervening scenes can occur in whatever order seems natural. Also, other events and stories can be interposed between the scenes of this story, turning it into the framework for a mini-chronicle within the bounds of Ti Yu.

### Scene One:

The wraiths have been chosen to fight in gladiatorial combat for the entertainment of the workers of Ti Yu. This kind of sport is common throughout the hells and many wraiths meet their end on the point of a blade wielded by the professional gladiators. They meet or defeat a strange gladiator who not only refrains from killing them, but gives them a piece of the mirror.

### Scene Two:

In an effort to learn more about the mirror and to find other pieces, the wraiths visit the Exchange. This is an informal marketplace where the prisoners and slaves of Ti Yu sell whatever pitiful goods they have. Just as the prisons of the Quick have strange economies based on cigarettes and the like, Ti Yu has an economy based on rubble, debris and Pothos. They encounter a strange wraith, Shou, who runs a stall of trinkets and who knows more about the mirror than they.

### Scene Three:

Having discovered a chance for escape, the wraiths search for the other pieces of the mirror. Because of the true-seeing properties of the fragments they are not too difficult to locate, but their owners are not usually willing to part with them. The next piece they find belongs to a *kuei-go* trainer, Chang. Chang uses his shard of the mirror as a surgical knife to clean the wounds of *kuei-go* and keepers alike. He can be persuaded to sell his piece if the wraiths can procure a better blade.

### Scene Four:

Standing on a low pillar, inside the main gates of Ti Yu there is a ceremonial stone elephant, taken as plunder from the Shadowlands of India or somewhere similar in some forgotten campaign. The elephant is covered in small bits of mirror and sooner or later the wraiths may think to look here for a piece. The elephant itself should be subtly mentioned by the Storyteller in passing in the early stages of this story (and in previous stories), and the characters should come here on their own initiative.

### Scene Five:

The last piece of the mirror (though the wraiths do not necessarily obtain the pieces in the order presented here) belongs to Ma Mien, the Horseface Demon, and is used by that creature as a torture device — revealing to horribly deformed wraiths their former visage and then confronting them with their current monstrous nature. To this end, Ma Mien

has created an entire chamber full of mirrors. All but one of these mirrors serve as regular mirrors but they are cut in irregular shapes, much like the shapes of the shards that the characters are seeking. Stealing the shard from this Hall of Mirrors is a difficult and dangerous exercise.

### Scene Six:

The wraiths are the subject of a huge hunt through Ti Yu, as by this stage their theft has been discovered. *Kuei-go* are provided with the characters' scent and released in hunting packs. Guards and slaves search in armed parties. There is probably at least one confrontation in which the wraiths must gain victory quickly, lest the main hunt catch up with and overwhelm them. The fragments of mirror which by now they possess may help them overcome the *kuei-go*.

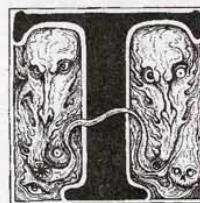
### Scene Seven:

The wraiths rebuild the mirror, fitting the pieces into the teak frame or laying them carefully on the ground. They then come face to face with the ancient wraith Yuan-Shen. Yuan-Shen, in his solitude, has long since fully transformed into a Spectre. He is a formidable opponent, but if they are clever the wraiths can avoid combating him altogether.

The mirror, when rebuilt, is a gateway to the Tempest. The wraiths can plunge through, perhaps to be lost in the swirling Spectral chaos but at least out of Ti Yu. Alternatively, if your vision is particularly bleak, the mirror is not a portal to anywhere. The only chance the wraiths have for escape is to flee in the turmoil created by the rampaging Yuan-Shen. If the characters do escape this way, then in some ways the mirror is a portal after all.

## The Story

### Getting the characters involved:



This story works best if the players have been inhabitants of Ti Yu, prisoners or slaves, for some time. If this is the case then it is simply decreed that their dwelling area is overcrowded and, to make room for some new arrivals, the characters are rounded up and sent to the Pits. Alternatively, the wraiths could be new arrivals sent straight to the Pits for immediate processing. It is a simple matter under the repressive regime of the Jade Emperor, to have wraiths condemned to Ti Yu for crimes real, imagined or invented. Once they are there, the fate of prisoners is of little interest to the rest of the Yellow Springs, and the authorities of Ti Yu are given a free hand to take whatever "administrative" measures they will.





## Scene One: The Pits

The pits of Ti Yu are home to a thriving gladiator culture and gambling industry. Wraiths of varied social significance in the hierarchy of hell come here to place bets and watch violence. The pits are sponsored by the Empire as they provide a distraction for the slaves, an easy way of being rid of some prisoners permanently and a means of controlling the flow of currency through the inhabitants of Ti Yu. Here prisoners duel professional fighters, usually much better armed and more highly skilled than themselves, while the drooling patrons watch and jeer.

The gladiators are usually successful prisoners who are skilled and bloody enough to maintain their elevated and dangerous position and the privileges which come with that status. Some, however, are volunteers from within or even from outside Ti Yu who have come to the arenas for their own unimaginable reasons. Since the prisoners they fight are not armed with weapons of Jade, their position is safer than it might first appear, but neither is their life expectancy particularly long. Most are so close to Oblivion that they would not survive a Harrowing should their wounds condemn them to one. All wear masks and some rudimentary armor; all are armed with knives, blades and hooks of True Jade or even (in rare cases) exotic and highly valuable Stygian Steel.

The wraiths who fight them are sometimes offered freedom as reward for victory, though few competitors have ever gained this prize as the odds are highly stacked against them. More usually the reward for victory is a limited freedom — the right to wander Ti Yu as a prisoner but not to be assigned to any particular hell or torture. This is an easy gift for the authorities to give. As these wanderers do not usually live long and do not appear on any of the lists of Hell, they do not pose an administrative responsibility. Periodically the soldiers of Ti Yu purge the ranks of these dispossessed prisoners and send the troublemakers to be made into White Jade. It is this limited freedom which the wraiths in this story achieve, allowing them to move around enough collect the pieces of the mirror.

The characters form part of a group of 10 or so wraiths who are to be the sport this day. The group is herded into a pen, stripped to the most basic apparel and then given the chance to select a weapon from a variety of assorted, decaying instruments, implements and weapons. Nothing of any quality is to be found on the iron rack but all can be used with either the Melee or the Brawl skill (difficulty 7, Damage Strength + 1). During this entire process the crowd gathers above on the rim of the pit, exchanging jade coins and other valuables. Some of the trinkets which are later to be seen in the Exchange might first be glimpsed by a wraith as they change hands over a wager. About five gladiators (one for every two prisoners) stand, relaxed at the other side of the pit. They all wear masks and sport gleaming weapons of jade. One mask in particular catches the wraiths' attention. It is a wide, grinning, face with pointed lips and red, glowing eyes.





Unless the characters have some special knowledge they are unlikely at this point to know it as a rendition of the face of Yuan-Shen. It is not critical that this fact is discovered, and the echo between this mask and the face the characters see in the repaired mirror at the end of the story can remain a mystery.

After barely enough time to get acquainted with their weapons, the wraiths are ushered into the arena by a jailer with a rather demonic looking face. Then, the brutal spectacle begins. The combat should be played out dramatically with players making die rolls and sustaining and inflicting damage until one of the characters is close to death. The gladiators are well trained, rested and fully equipped while the prisoners are inadequately trained, tired and poorly equipped. It should be no contest, and the additional prisoners with the characters will be cut down almost immediately.

The outcome of the combat is likely to depend entirely on the skill of the wraiths controlled by the players. By the time one of the players has taken a serious wound most of the other prisoners are destroyed, their Corpus rent in tatters from the vicious strokes of the lethal weapons. A few of the gladiators might have sustained some wounds, depending on how the wraiths performed. The fight looks grim for the remaining prisoners.

As the spectators jeer above and spit with dry throats over the heads of the combatants, something snaps inside the gladiator with the mask of Yuan-Shen. Perhaps it is the constant brutality, perhaps a strong reaction against his p'o, perhaps his miserable condition becomes too much for him to bear or maybe it is some effect of the shard of mirror which he carries; the characters will never know. Taking his razor sharp, curved sword he spits another gladiator messily from behind. With the return stroke he beheads another, evening the odds considerably. His two remaining colleagues are quicker than the others and parry his rain of blows, driving him back into the corner with sheer strength and animal efficiency. The end for him is sharp and painful. While they are so engaged, the characters have the opportunity to strike the undefended backs of their oppressors, and also to pick up the weapons of the two destroyed gladiators (Large blades wielded with Melee skill for Strength + 3 damage). Even if they do not take this admittedly ignoble opportunity, the odds are now in their favor and they have access to effective weapons. It is likely that at the conclusion of the battle, amidst the yelling, shouting and brawling over the unexpected outcome, the characters attempt to discover why their enemy suddenly became their mysterious benefactor.

The gladiator will be barely conscious when the characters reach him. Mercury plasm spills from the holes in his coppery flesh in great gouts. His gaze is peaceful, if pained and he has few words to offer, being less than eloquent. This is no poignant poet's death. He pulls the shard of the mirror from beneath his jade breastplate and slips the chain on which it hangs from around his neck. Handing it to the wraiths he tells them that they should use this to escape hell. He also asks that they take word of him to a lover, a mortal woman named Mai Lin, and tell her that he still remembers her. If the wraiths should ever seek this woman in the crowded Skinlands, they will discover that she died over 100 years ago, childless and alone.



If the gladiator is pressed, and if the players are the kind who benefit from direct assistance, this unnamed benefactor might mention the name of Shou and the Exchange before he coughs quietly and expires. The wraiths are herded out of the pit by guards with bad grace and let free to wander Ti Yu, prisoners still but not slaves. They are only allowed to retain the weapons of True Jade if they conceal them from the guards, otherwise these are confiscated, deemed (rightly) too dangerous to be in the possession of prisoners at large.

## Typical Gladiator

**Physical:** Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1 (almost always wear masks)

**Mental:** Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

**Talents:** Brawl 4, Dodge 3

**Skills:** Melee 4

**Knowledges:** Medicine 2

**Arcanoi:** Argos 2, Moliat 4, Outrage 2

**Permanent Corpus:** 10

**Willpower:** 6

**Pathos:** 5

**Equipment:** Weapons of Jade (Strength +3 Damage) and Armor rating 2.



## Scene Two: Trash and Treasure

Having been emancipated to some degree, the characters will find themselves adrift on the streets of Earth Prison. However, there is not much to do in Hell, at least without cash, and the characters will find their options limited. Eventually, whether through their own initiative or the hints of the fallen gladiator, they will end up at the Exchange.

This rather un auspicious name belongs to a bazaar, a market of all conceivable goods that might be traded by the inhabitants of Ti Yu. Not much of real value is sold here, and not much real coinage changes hands. Many pitiful peddlers trade trinket for trinket in a never ending cycle of profit and loss. Occasionally some relic or Artifact of dubious pedigree finds its way to the Exchange and it is always bought for a mound of trinkets and bric-a-brac by a representative of Ti-Tsang Wang. This refreshes the trinket trade and redresses any imbalance caused by the truly valuable object. The only time a buyer can get a true bargain is when the vendor does not know the worth of her goods. As wraiths do not eat or have any vital goods of any kind, there is no trade in staples which supports the Exchange, merely a ceaseless bartering and squabbling over the worth of things that are worthless. There is a darker side to the bazaar. Occasionally slaves are sold here for sums of white jade, to buyers who take them hence, perhaps out of hell completely to an unknown fate. The authorities turn a blind eye to this practice as it is small enough to be easily controlled, and they extract a heavy tariff under the table.

The Exchange occupies a large hall in a backwater of the huge city of Ti Yu. Merchants and peddlers set up their stalls on cloth on the ground, or tables if they are lucky, and often dwell in a hovel in the dark recesses of the hall. The noise is constant and predictable. Arguing, bargaining and indignant groaning all add together to create a frightening racket. When the characters arrive they are plunged into the middle of it all, overwhelmed with vendors who wish to sell them anything and (apparently) everything. Newcomers are always tested for gullibility and purse size.

The characters, having been offered nothing of any interest (a bone in a bottle, a length of string, the head of a small image of the budda, etc.) will either search for Shou or stumble across him by accident. He is not difficult to find, kneeling behind a low board covered in pieces of colored stone and other clutter. In the middle of the collection, given pride of place, is a broken piece of mirror.

## Shou

Shou is not quite a wraith, although it is unclear what exactly he is. The wraiths need never know. Perhaps he is a reformed Spectre, perhaps he is a Changeling who has been slain with Cold Iron, perhaps he is a rare kind of Chinese spirit which is not quite any of those things; all of these rumors run rampant through the alleys of the Exchange. What is important is that he is an enigmatic figure, a trickster, and that he is neither allied with nor opposed to the characters. He fulfills the important role in the story (one taken from traditional Chinese folklore) of the unknowable,





but also wise character, and the Storyteller should keep this in mind when deciding what he will and will not reveal.

In life, Shou was a fox spirit, a manifestation of nature, a half person. In death — and he has been dead for some time — he maintains the temperament he possessed in life. He is mysterious, cunning, gentle and cheerful. He is not a true wraith, and as such has no *p'o*. He is a wanderer and a mysterious figure. It is not necessary for the characters to know even this much about him, and it is best if he and his interest in the mirror remain mysterious. Shou will bargain with the characters because he is the kind of figure who must precipitate action rather than perform it. The mirror is his escape from Hell, but he is incapable of finding that escape himself.

**Nature:** Architect

**Demeanor:** Judge

**Physical:** Strength 2, Dexterity 5, Stamina 2

**Social:** Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

**Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

**Talents:** Alertness 4, Dodge 3

**Skills:** Etiquette 3

**Knowledges:** Occult 4

**Backgrounds:** Allies 1, Contacts 5, Eidolon 3

**Passions:** Find a way out of Hell (Fear) 3, Help others (Generosity) 2

**Arcanoi:** Argos 3, Usury 3

**Permanent Corpus:** 10

**Willpower:** 8

**Pathos:** 8

**Image:** Shou is a small man with darkish skin. His features are pointed and sharp, his eyes penetrating. He speaks quickly but not carelessly and listens when the wraiths speak only so long as they interest him. Otherwise he interrupts and takes the conversation where he wants it to go. If the wraiths see Shou's reflection in either piece of mirror they see a sleek fox head upon his shoulders, the fur oily and black.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Shou is a shrewd but fair merchant. He knows instinctively the value of any purchase to the buyer, as opposed to its value to him. He will not scam a customer but neither will he accept a loss. Given the potential worth of the mirror to the characters, he will demand a high price. If, as is highly likely for inhabitants of Hell, the characters have nothing of value to trade with him, they can visit the Usurer (below) and pay at least two levels of Corpus each to satisfy Shou.

Shou will tell the wraiths a little about their purchase. The extent of the background that seems appropriate for the Storyteller to reveal is here outlined by Shou. Shou should be played by the Storyteller with constant regard to his function. He is not a free source of information but rather an inscrutable figure who always conceals more than he reveals. If the characters questions become too direct, Shou's answers become all the more obscure. The answer to the question "How do we escape from Hell?" for example, might be met with the answer. "Escape is an illusion. It is all done with mirrors."

If the wraiths have nothing to trade with Shou for his shard they can visit the Usurer who sets up shop at the very end of the market. The queue is very long with wraith lining up to sell their Pathos and their Corpus to this man in exchange for something which they can trade. It is a pitiful group and more sensitive wraiths might be put off by the whole scene. Those that persevere eventually reach the front of the queue.

## The Usurer

The Usurer, a short, fat wraith with a dripping moustache and an official seal of Ti-Tsang Wang, has a simple system of fees. Every Corpus level converted into stored Pathos will cost the wraith an additional Corpus level. If the wraiths subject themselves to the painful process the Usurer provides them with a piece of glass, containing the number of points they requested, which they may now trade with Shou.

**Nature:** Survivor

**Demeanor:** Director

**Physical:** Strength 2, Dexterity 5, Stamina 2

**Social:** Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

**Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

**Talents:** Alertness 4, Dodge 3

**Skills:** Etiquette 3

**Knowledges:** Occult 4





**Arcanoi:** Usury 5, Moliat 2

**Permanent Corpus:** 7

**Willpower:** 6

**Pathos:** 10

**P'o:** The Leech

**Angst:** 7

**Thorns:** Bad Luck, Aura of Corruption

**Dark Passions:** Destroy all his clients (Contempt) 3, Drain every last soul in Hell (Greed) 2

**Equipment:** A set of scales and various pieces of rubble which can be used as temporary reservoirs for Pathos.

**Image:** A fat, sloppy profiteer who's made his fortune off of the backs of the prisoners of Hell, the Usurer doesn't even remember his own name any more. He's dressed well and almost obscenely fat — his countenance merely emphasizes his parasitic nature. Spiderlike is the term most often used to describe him.

**Roleplaying Hints:** It's all strictly business, nothing personal. They have the commodity and you have the talents to make it usable. Your particular talents are supposed to be forbidden, but by slipping choice bits of Pathos to the Lords of Hell you do quite nicely for yourself. Besides, what can they do to you — send you to Hell?

## The Next Step

Where to from here? The wraiths may have established sources of information but most likely will have to ask others to find the remaining shards of the mirror. They can now describe the shards in general appearance and size, although they can only guess that all five shards are of roughly equal size (this is in fact true). They can also mention that the mirror reveals the viewer's former appearance. If they ask more questions at the Exchange, they will learn that another shard of the mirror was here some time ago and was purchased by one of the *kuei-go* trainers, and for a fair price too. Further inquiries elsewhere in Ti Yu will reveal that the Horseface Demon possesses a hall full of mirrors, some of which are perhaps similar to those which the characters describe. Finally, if the presence of the elephant cannot easily be subtly woven into the story then another inhabitant of the city might mention it. Depending on where the wraiths make their inquiries, and what their priorities are, they may play through scenes three, four and five in any order. If things are slowing down, the Storyteller can initiate scene six, the hunt, earlier and play out the remaining scenes in a fast paced, dramatic fashion. Alternatively, the investigation to discover the *kuei-go* trainer and the Horseface Demon's mirror-torture room might be the work of several sessions of play. The details of these encounters are unimportant, and the Storyteller is left to make them as easy or difficult as she desires.



## Scene Three: The *kuei-go* Trainer

The pens where the *kuei-go* are drilled and reared, in the Keeper's Quarter, are not pretty. The twin stench of fear and anguish batter the senses of the characters long before they see the place, a vast tangle of iron bars and shanty huts that reverberate with the howls of *kuei-go* and the crack of whips. Finding Chang without knowing his name involves shrewd questioning of some of the other trainers, all of whom are all cruel and unhelpful to outsiders. All are suspicious of questioners and all are intensely jealous of each other. They won't tell the wraiths anything about Chang unless there is something in it for them, and a series of threats and bribes is needed for the wraiths to make any headway. This might remind the characters of the periodic explosions of graffiti on the walls of Ti Yu, commenting on the fact that all the guards take bribes. When the wraiths are finally directed to Chang, by a particularly greedy and smelly trainer whose tongue lolls from his mouth in a way that makes him look like one of his charges, they find that Chang is different from the villains that surround him. They are instantly sure, however, that Chang is the wraith they have come to see.

Chang can be found sitting cross-legged in the dust of a pen with a *kuei-go* across his lap. Plasm bleeds profusely from

the great rent in its side, spilling across Chang's hands and legs in silvery waves. The trainer holds the animal with one arm and with the other cuts small pieces of Corpus from the edge of the wound. His tool, although it is somewhat obscured by silvery-red *kuei-go* "blood" is a shard of the mirror. Chang doesn't answer any questions until he has finished his work, sewing the wound shut with a huge needle and a grimy piece of thread. Then, leaving the wounded *kuei-go* to recover, he turns to the characters and eyes them suspiciously. Strangers are uncommon in the Keeper's Quarter, and usually not welcome.

**Storyteller Note:** Chang, like Shou, has a particular role in the story. He is the good man trapped in a sea of sordid villainy. Chang is a veterinarian and doctor to the *kuei-go* and their trainers, and though they express little thanks, they would be outraged if anything were to happen to him. Using violence to obtain the mirror from Chang is suicidal.

Chang's nature is the key to success for the wraiths. He will give them the mirror if he thinks that they have something which makes his task easier and more successful (presumably a blade of some kind, and perhaps a means to keep it clean). The Storyteller should not suggest this to the characters but play out the conversation with Chang, showing the characters his essential goodness, and perhaps throwing some of their own weaknesses into sharp view. In this way





Chang is a mirror, for when the characters see his virtue they may become acutely aware of their own faults. Of course, certain p'os will take full advantage of this....

Eventually Chang trades the mirror for the blade the wraiths provide, although he is at pains to point out the shard's value to him. He knows that the Horseface Demon has a similar item which he uses to torture his victims and feels that it is somehow appropriate that he uses his piece of glass to heal. When searching for an appropriate trade item, the characters might obtain a suitable blade from the Exchange. Shou has one which is suitable (though that would cost them considerable Corpus and anguish) or they might have been clever enough to keep one or more of the gladiators weapons of True Jade.

Chang is not as shrewd as Shou and it might be possible to swindle him, although the characters should be made to feel very guilty if they do this. Their p'os will be quite happy to plague them with images of him struggling on with his work regardless of the hardship caused by the inferior knife they traded him, and of all of the additional pain their greed has caused.

## Chang

**Nature:** Caregiver

**Demeanor:** Martyr

**Physical:** Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

**Social:** Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

**Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 2

**Talents:** Alertness 2, Dodge 2

**Knowledges:** Medicine 3

**Passions:** Heal the hurts of others (Pity) 4, Help the other denizens of Ti Yu (Sorrow) 3

**Arcanoi:** Argos 2, Keening 2, Way of the Farmer 3

**Fetters:** None

**Permanent Corpus:** 8

**Willpower:** 8

**Pathos:** 7

**P'o:** The Parent

**Angst:** 4

**Thorns:** Bad Luck

**Dark Passions:** Sic the *kuei-go* on Chang's masters (Hate) 4, Kill each of the Bad Dogs (Contempt) 2

**Equipment:** Chang's only possession is the shard of mirror.

**Image:** Chang is a *kuei-go* trainer in rags, tatters and patches. He's a good vet trapped in Hell. His face is long and thin, and his expression is that of one who has simply seen too much.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Be very suspicious of anyone outside the circle of Trainers. They may not be friendly, but they're a familiar form of unfriendly. Speak softly and guard your true feelings, but your great compassion for others will shine through.



## Scene Four: The Elephant

Although listed as scene four, this scene occurs whenever the wraiths think to come here, prompted by the subtle clues implanted by the Storyteller in the early stages of the story (or in previous stories in Ti Yu). If the Storyteller has a penchant for last minute dramatics this scene can be effective at the end of *A Hope In Hell*, as the wraiths attempt to find the right piece and pry it out with packs of *kuei-go* on their trail.

The elephant is larger than life size, made of black stone with 1000 pieces of mirror inset. It has an Indian feel about it, and was brought to Ti Yu as plunder in a forgotten war. Battalions of slaves dragged it here along the long and dry road and stored it in the shadows inside the inner gate of Ti Yu, where it stands neither prominent nor obscure. The elephant is a permanent fixture of the courtyard and no wraith ever gives it a second thought.

When the wraiths come here, whether in the midst of the chase or in relative peace, they have to discern which shard is the one from Yuan-Shen's mirror. They also must find a means to extract it from the stone in which it is inlaid. The obvious means for finding the desired shard is for a Moliated or otherwise changed character to look into each of the pieces and discover which of them shows a different face





to the one she now bears. This is more difficult than it may initially appear. The correct shard is to be found on the top of the elephant's neck, just below the head, and a Strength + Athletics roll (difficulty 7) is needed to make the climb. If the wraiths are being pursued by *kuei-go* and others, one must climb and search while the others conduct a desperate defense around the base of the statue. As the character searches for the shard 100 different reflections of her own face gaze haphazardly back at her from the mirrors on the elephant; a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 7) is necessary to find the correct piece.

Once the shard is located it must be removed from the rock. This is most easily accomplished with tools (once again the gladiator's blades, being made from True Jade, would accomplish this task) but certain Arcanoi might be useful as well. Obviously the shard is quite fragile, and violent or excessively aggressive use of levers and the like will reward the characters with more and smaller shards with which to construct their mirror.


## Scene Five: Horseface's Chamber — The Hall of Mirrors

The most difficult piece of the mirror to obtain is that owned by the Horseface Demon. Ma Mien uses the mirror as the centrepiece to his hall of mirrors and torture chamber. Hapless wraiths are Moliated by the capricious demon and then bombarded with images of their new and twisted selves. When they can take no more, Ma Mien taunts them with the shard of Yuan-Shen's mirror, showing them what they were just moments ago. This is usually enough to break the spirit of the most hardened victim, and most are sent off immediately to become *kuei-go* or White Jade.

The location of the chamber is well-known, and once the characters have discovered that Ma Mien has a shard, all they need do is gain entry and steal it. The chamber, when Ma Mien is not present, is guarded by two soldiers (see Scene Six). The characters have the options of fighting the soldiers, attempting to sneak past them, or somehow tricking the guards into letting them in. Whatever approach they adopt, it should not be too difficult to gain entry to the chamber.

Inside, the wraiths are confronted with a sea of mirrors, all of irregular shape and size and mounted on easels and frames of iron and wood. The reflections of the wraiths stare back at them from more than 100 mirrors, many of which are concave or convex and return a distorted and sometimes grotesque image (assuming that the wraiths themselves are not already grotesque). Being in the hall is truly frightening as, apart from the lingering anguish of the many wraiths who have suffered here, the eyes in the mirrors leer at their owners and sometimes a reflection appears more like a *p'o* than its *hun*.





Standing at the rear of the circular chamber, in no particularly auspicious place, is the original teak frame which held the mirror of Yuan-Shen. It now holds no mirror, and any wraith who notices the frame and makes a Perception + Crafts roll (difficulty 8) realizes that it is the right size and shape to hold the fragments collected thus far. It is not critical that the wraiths find the frame, as the mirror can be assembled successfully with no frame at all. What is important is the location of the shard of mirror. When Ma Mien is here, he carries the shard to shove it in the face of defeated victims. If the characters are not careful enough to choose a time when Ma Mien is absent then they are in trouble. Horseface is more than a match for any number of wraiths and fighting him is not a solution. If the wraiths have been so foolish as to arrive when he is present their only option is to grab the shard and run, and even then their escape route may very well be blocked. It is easy enough to plan to mount the extraction expedition for a time when Ma Mien will not be home; his schedule is well-known and can be obtained from gossips in the Exchange. Characters sufficiently careless as to barge in without planning may well find the demon at home, however.

When Ma Mien is not here, the shard rests harmlessly on a plain iron easel, somewhere in the center of the chamber. Finding it should not prove to be too difficult, though the experience of wading through all of the other mirrors is traumatic.

## Scene Six: The Hunt

The trigger for this scene is probably the Horseface Demon's discovery of the theft of the shard of mirror from his chamber. If the characters were unlucky enough to encounter him in the chamber then the hunt begins immediately, with the Demon himself leading the packs. Otherwise they are given a little time to take stock and to find a safe place to reconstruct the mirror. If the characters have not yet discovered the elephant, it might be effective to have them at the gates when the hunt discovers them and begins in earnest.

The hunters consist of a number of packs of *kuei-go*, with handlers, who scour the passages and chambers of Ti Yu for the characters. Behind them come soldiers in groups and trainers with more heavily barded *kuei-go* in huge leashed packs, biting each other in their eagerness to tear the wraiths apart. Masterminding the search is the Horseface Demon, furious at his loss.

The degree to which the wraiths must fight their way out is best decided by the capacities of the characters and the desires of the players. If the group enjoys combat then they can be confronted by a group of hunters, soldiers or *kuei-go* of an appropriate size to give them a hard fight. Bear in mind that the confrontation with Yuan-Shen can also result in a difficult combat and characters should not be overly wounded or exhausted. If the characters are not skilled in combat then there is a way in which they can escape their *kuei-go* pursuers, who are swift and tireless.

If a *kuei-go* is made to look in one of the shards of mirror, it will see its human face, before years of torture and Moliat made them into mindless hounds. The *kuei-go* will temporarily be overcome with remorse and pain at what it has become, giving the characters time to strike back or escape. To successfully confront a *kuei-go* with its image in combat requires a Dexterity + Brawl roll against a difficulty of 7. The number of successes gained must be opposed to those gained on the Dexterity + Brawl roll of the attacking *kuei-go*.

The final fate of a *kuei-go* confronted with the image of its former self varies from creature to creature. Some recover quickly, remembering too little of their former selves for the image to have great effect. Others are struck so deeply by the picture that they fall into a Harrowing then and there. A few are so traumatized that they tear their own flesh, or attack their masters, giving the characters the time they need to find a safe place and reconstruct the mirror. Finally a few are redeemed by the experience, remembering themselves and regaining some lost dignity. In this way the wraiths can salvage something from the degrading squalor of Ti Yu.

## Scene Seven: The Confrontation

Having avoided pursuit, at least temporarily, the characters find somewhere quiet to assemble the mirror. Whether they have the frame from Ma Mien's chamber or not, the process is the same. All that must be done for complete assembly is fitting the pieces together to again form the rectangular mirror, a task that any young child could accomplish. If time is against the characters then the speed at which the mirror is assembled can be ascertained by an Intelligence + Crafts roll (difficulty 6), with a failure denoting a five minute wait while the wraith rearranges the pieces and five successes indicating almost instant success.

When the wraiths fix the pieces of the broken mirror together, on the ground or in the frame, and step back to survey their creation, the first thing they are greeted with is a reflection of themselves. As well as seeing themselves as they were when they breathed and bled, they see cracked faces; faces not only worn with the lines of care that are the inheritance of any inhabitant of Ti Yu, but faces deeply scored by the cracks in the mirror. Perhaps some vision is awarded them, some image of a truer self. Maybe a wraith who has a great deal of permanent Angst sees her p'o looking over her shoulder, grinning. Slowly, however, the cracks close and their images disappear to be replaced with the grinning, Moliated mask of Yuan-Shen. The imitation worn by the gladiator at the beginning of the story does not do justice to the fearsome visage which now greets them.

The Storyteller should play this encounter carefully. Yuan-Shen is now a powerful Spectre, and could probably best all of the characters in a fair fight. There are other ways



## Pursuer Statistics

### Ma Mien, the Horseface Demon

**Nature:** Bravo  
**Demeanor:** Bravo  
**Caste:** Shade  
**Physical:** Strength 6, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5  
**Social:** Charisma 3, Appearance 2, Manipulation 2  
**Mental:** Intelligence 3, Perception 4, Wits 5  
**Talents:** Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 5, Dodge 4, Intimidation 5, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1  
**Skills:** Leadership 2, Melee 4, Stealth 3  
**Knowledges:** Investigation 1, Law 1, Occult 3, Politics 3  
**Arcanoi:** Hive Mind 1, Larceny 3, Lifeweb 4, Moliat 5, Outrage 3, Phantasm 3  
**Shade Powers:** Shark Teeth, Miasmal Breath, Talons  
**Backgrounds:** Allies 5, Contacts 5, Shadowlands 2  
**Dark Passions:** Grind slaves into White Jade (Contempt) 5, Overthrow the Emperor (Envy) 3  
**Fetters:** None  
**Being (Contempt):** 10  
**Permanent Corpus:** 25  
**Angst:** 10  
**Hun:** Caregiver  
**Passions:** Save just one soul (Pity) 1  
**Composure:** 2  
**Fronds:** Guilt  
**Note:** Ma Mien is actually a Shade whom the Emperor enslaved centuries ago. Very few, even in Hell, know this, and even fewer know how the Emperor manages to control the beast. For now, however, it suits Ma Mien's purposes to dwell in Hell.

### Soldiers

**Physical:** Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4  
**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1  
**Mental:** Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2  
**Talents:** Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2  
**Skills:** Melee 3, Stealth 2  
**Knowledges:** Law 3  
**Arcanoi:** Argos 2, Fatalism 2, Moliat 2, Way of the Farmer 1  
**Fetters:** None  
**Permanent Corpus:** 10  
**Willpower:** 7  
**Pathos:** 10  
**Equipment:** Crude armor and weapons (spears and swords), not made of Jade.

### Kuei-go

**Physical:** Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3  
**Social:** Charisma 1, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0  
**Mental:** Perception 5, Intelligence 0, Wits 3  
**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Subterfuge 1, Stealth 2  
**Permanent Corpus:** 15  
**Willpower:** 8 (with Jade muzzle), 2 (with muzzle removed)  
**Equipment:** All *kuei-go* have teeth and claws which cause aggravated damage. See **Dark Kingdom of Jade** for more details on *kuei-go*.

for the wraiths to survive this encounter. The infernal architect is somewhat startled to be liberated from his eternity of entrapment, and is unlikely to immediately attack those who have freed him. Perhaps the characters, being prisoners themselves, might even feel some sympathy for Yuan-Shen.

Yuan-Shen himself is more bitter and angry than any wraith the characters have encountered before, having been alone plotting and scheming revenge on everyone and everything (including himself) for more years than he can count. His release is an explosion of bitterness and rage. (Any wraith

for whom these are important Passions can attempt to gain Pathos in the normal way, against a difficulty of only five).

Yuan-Shen can be reasoned with, although he is desperately unstable, and can be convinced that he owes the wraiths a debt of gratitude for his release. A better plan is to answer his questions about Ti Yu, making it clear how old and run-down the city is. Yuan-Shen will rapidly become violently disgusted with the condition his creation is in. The decay and disrepair of his masterpiece will drive him into a mad rage, and this will be directed first against the pursuing hordes



of *kuei-go*, not the characters. If the characters mishandle the encounter, however, they may be forced to fight Yuan-Shen, although lenient Storytellers could allow the hunters to crash into the chamber at this time.

After the release of Yuan-Shen, the now flawless mirror shows the whirling storms and patterns of the Tempest, and all that remains is for the characters to leap through the mirror, as if it were a hole in the floor or wall, even as the Tempest rises to greet them.

## Conclusion

Depending on the plans of the Storyteller, the events of this story can be quite significant for the future of Ti Yu. The damage caused by Yuan-Shen and the Spectres that rally to him could cause a mass breakout of wraiths from the many prisons of the hells. Under extreme circumstances, a revolt might break out, Yen-lo Wang might seize the chance to topple Ti-tsang Wang, or any number of possibilities might come to pass. Alternatively, Yuan-Shen could disappear without great moment and everything could continue as usual.

As for the characters, they may well end up in the Tempest without a clue of where they are or what they are to do next. Alternatively, they might find themselves near a byway. There also might be pursuit by the authorities of Hell, assuming there isn't too much going on at home. Huge packs of *kuei-go* would be released into the Tempest in that case, scouring the byways for the missing wraiths. The characters, without their shards of mirror, might be forced to strike a deal with Spectres to escape pursuit. Still, whatever happens, their stay in Ti Yu is ended and they are probably better off for it.

Sometime after the events of the story the characters should hear of the final end of Yuan-Shen. Now a Nephwrack, he labors in the Tempest, building a gateway to the Void itself. Perhaps his gateway is a teak frame, for Oblivion is surely a mirror for those such as he who are empty inside.

## Yuan-Shen (Spectre)

**Nature:** Architect  
**Demeanor:** Deviant  
**Caste:** Nephwrack  
**Physical:** Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5  
**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1  
**Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3  
**Talents:** Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 4,  
**Skills:** Crafts 5, Meditation 3, Leadership 5  
**Knowledges:** Bureaucracy 5  
**Arcanoi:** Contaminate 3, Inhabit 3, Mnemosynis 5, Moliare 5,  
 Puppetry 3, Shroud Rending 3, Usury 5  
**Shade Powers:** None  
**Backgrounds:** None



**Dark Passions:** Seek vengeance on anyone and everyone who can be held responsible for the ruin of Ti Yu (Revenge) 5, Kill all who have defiled the purity of his creation (Jealousy) 4

**Fetters:** None

**Corpus:** 10

**Being (Hate):** 10

**Angst:** 10

**Hun:** Agent

**Passions:** Make Ti Yu a thing of beauty (Love) 4

**Composure:** 4

**Fronds:** Memories of Life, Mirror

**Image:** Yuan-Shen is a Spectre, but just barely so, and his visage reflects this. Normally he appears like a hideous parody of a mask, with lolling tongue, saucer-wide eyes and fangs. However, when he remembers himself he attempts to Moliare himself into some semblance of his former visage. These attempts always almost succeed, but never quite. There is always some flaw, some defect that reveals Yuan-Shen's true nature.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Beyond mad, you have been imprisoned with nothing but your own reflection for centuries. You have been released only to see the ruin of your masterwork and the degradation of your ambitions. It is utterly unbearable, so act accordingly. Rant, rave and mention the Lords of Hell (and the Emperor) on a first-name basis. They've all ruined your work, now it's time to make them pay.









# A Voice in the Wilderness: The Lost Legion

by Tim Akers

Minh nodded. "And you, Mr. Disantis, when did you leave Vietnam?"

Disantis tossed the paper wrapper into a trashcan and licked his fingers.

"I came here early in '69," he said.

"And when did you leave?" Minh asked again.

Disantis lifted his head as if to sniff the the night air. The evening was thick with the scent of tropical vegetation, mimosa blossoms, stagnant water, decay. When he looked at Minh there was a dark gleam in his blue eyes. He shook his head. "I never left," he said.

— Dan Simmons, "E-Ticket to 'Namland"





he Lost Legion is something of a legend among Stygian wraiths, especially those who were alive during the Korean or Vietnam Wars. There are whispered tales of a brave band, still fighting the wars that were thought to be over so long ago. The

Legion is portrayed as heroic, a bright spot

of idealistic gallantry in a world of decay and deceit. Little do these storytellers know or suspect what happens in the jungles of the Shadowlands and what the combination of zealotry and gallantry can do to a dead man's mind.

## The Lost Legion



he patchwork army that calls itself the Lost Legion is a truly rag-tag force. It includes among its ranks the likes of U.N. soldiers killed in Korea, French casualties from Dien Bien Phu, teenagers from the American Vietnam action, World War Two-era Allied soldiers from the

Asian theater and permanently grounded Flying Tigers. The soldiers are as different as could be imagined, and in the

Skinlands this unit would have fallen apart long ago from internal strife. Death, however, does things to a man. Knowing that the girls they left back home have probably gotten old and married others, the family dogs are all long buried, their children are parents or even grandparents, and wives left behind are dead and buried; all of these things have worn on the men of the Lost Legion. Under such a crushing burden of knowledge, these soldiers have been forced to assume new lives and to find new dreams, new beliefs and a new cause.

Colonel Roth provides that cause. He soothes the troubled minds of his men and gives them something to fight for and believe in. He brushes over the rough edges of his unit with a fanaticism born of desperation. The colonel towers over his men, the only one unshaken by death. He has set himself up as a religious figure of sorts, a prophet leading the wayward masses back to the promised land.

### Origins

There has been considerable conflict in Southeast Asia during the latter half of the 20th century, not only in the Skinlands but in the Shadowlands as well. As Yu Huang was beating back rebellions in Japan, the United Nations was holding the line against communism in Korea. Later, the United States took on the task of buttressing falling dominoes in Vietnam,





## The Legion Today

The Lost Legion has waged an endless war against Yu Huang, battling the Jade Empire wherever they find it. They maintain contact with several of the territorial warlords in the area, working in concert with them when their goals are compatible with the Legion's. There are rumors that the Lost Legion is receiving aid from several wraithly groups, from Heretics to Legionnaires. Considering Roth's distrust, even hatred, of all outsiders, it seems possible that these rumors are complete fabrications. For all intents and purposes, the Legion exists to fight Yu Huang, and for nothing more.

with less than glorious results. As soldiers died in the Skinlands, the Emperor reaped their souls and impressed them into service against the Japanese rebels. These western wraiths were treated as chattel, chained together and used as "living" cover, sacrificed in diversionary maneuvers that were nearly suicidal and given the worst assignments and missions. Most feared that life had become a cycle of war, dying in one senseless battle only to awaken to another, more brutal fight.

During these days of slavery, one man rose in the ranks of the westerners. Colonel Roth, who had fought in the Second World War and Korea before dying in Vietnam, attained a level of authority among the slaves. Under his careful eye, a plan was laid out to free the few remaining prisoners. Finally, with delicate preparation, Roth was able to lead a handful of wraiths out of the Jade Kingdom and into the trackless jungles of Vietnam's Shadowlands. Word spread among the western prisoners of Roth's daring escape, and soon all of the other detainees were spinning their own designs for emancipation. Mere months after Roth's flight to Vietnam, all of the immured wraiths were in active revolt. Some escaped, but most were destroyed in the fighting. Roth had had the advantages of surprise and years of preparation, as well as his own military genius to draw upon. The other legions unfortunately had rushed the plans for their escape and paid the price for shoddy preparation and inadequate skills. The few who escaped made their way to Vietnam and joined up with Roth's fugitives. Together, they formed the Lost Legion.

## The Eternal Struggle

When the members of the Lost Legion died, none of them expected to end up in the Shadowlands. Enslavement by the Jade Empire did not fit in with the Christian view of life after death that many of them espoused. With their basic belief system so emphatically contradicted, the new wraiths were awash in a sea of confusion and doubt. When they escaped and joined the Lost Legion, most still did not know what to expect of this afterlife, or how to explain it.

Colonel Roth recognized this desperation in his men and presented them with an answer. Part *überpatriot*, part tent-revival preacher, he declared that the men had not been mistaken in their pre-death theological leanings, but had rather been impeded on their heavenly journey by the Jade Emperor. Roth portrayed Yu Huang as the source of all their trouble, explaining that his spiritual war in Japan had caused the earthly turmoil in Southeast Asia, and that the Emperor had also trapped their souls before they could make their way to Heaven. Hence, the only path to eternal peace was through the destruction of Yu Huang and his Immortal Guard.

Since the time of its official formation, the Legion has formed a cult of personality around Colonel Roth. Roth has combined Judeo-Christian teachings with a bizarre form of jingoism. He draws ties between America's glory following the Second World War and the spiritual kingdom of Heaven, as well as between the rise of communism and the unquestionably evil Jade Empire. The Colonel professes that the Stygian Empire is in fact partially to blame for the Legion's imprisonment, as the Hierarchy did nothing to aid the lost souls of its rightful citizens. The Legion sees itself as the last pure group in the Shadowlands, committed to a higher ideal and fanatical in its striving. None outside of the Legion can be trusted, as they have been corrupted.

## The Crucible

Recently Colonel Roth has come across a problem. The very nature of the Legion's guerilla war precludes the resolution of Fetters. Roth has decided that the time has come to settle down, claim a Haunt somewhere and tend to the needs of his men. Unfortunately, in order to do this, he's going to need some outside assistance. By his very nature, Roth distrusts the wraiths of Stygia, but is beginning to believe that certain western wraiths might be able to help him. In order to find these allies (or dupes), the colonel has sent out invitations to several groups in Stygia, ranging from Hierarchy Legions to Heretic mobs. These notes propose a contest of sorts, where each group sends a Circle of wraiths who will then be tested by the Legion. The best Circle will win for its sponsors a treaty with the Lost Legion. Roth has sent these notices only to groups who have previously petitioned the Legion for relations, either political, economic or military.





Colonel Roth intends to use the various Circles to further his ambition of acquiring a Haunt. The details of each trial are found below, and the completion of each one will bring Roth one step closer to holding his own Haunt. Once the competition is over and Roth has his stronghold, he intends to do away with the victors and any of the surviving losers, informing each parent group individually that their Circle was lost in the contest and that some other team won.

## And in this Corner...

The players have been chosen by one of the invitees to represent them in Roth's competition. The exact nature of group depends on the individual players, but in the long run it's unimportant. Roth will take all comers if they'll help him get what he wants. Regardless of affiliation, the characters are sent by their superiors to Vietnam to take part in the battle royale.

The other participants come from a number of different backgrounds, from veterans who simply want to join the Lost Legion to Heretic groups who believe in Roth's philosophy of life to Hierarchy paramilitary types who like the idea of having a strong allied military force close to the Jade Empire's borders.

During the contest, Roth will make minor efforts to weaken the various competitors. Anyone who gives up and attempts to return home before the game is over will mysteriously disappear, either en route or before they leave the "playing field." Teams

that are too weak to be of any further use to Roth will quietly be eliminated. Everyone should be too intent on the game at hand to notice these occurrences, though the party should stumble upon one of the eliminations at some point. Both the high price of failure and the need for success will be emphasized by watching unsuccessful competitors literally being liquidated.

The Lost Legion has set up a temporary base camp to house the games. Players will be assigned places to rest, but they will be prevented from Slumbering by the sheer pace of the games. Roth will try to keep the various players from ever feeling rested, keeping them slightly off balance so that he is more easily able to dispose of them once their services are no longer required.

## The Games

Roth has set up dozens of scenarios for the competitors, testing everything from military ability to political prowess. Most of the trials are mere busywork, a smokescreen to obscure the real intent of the contest. Each team is assigned missions randomly, with the victors going on to the next round. The player characters will only participate in three rounds, simply because playing through many more than that would get tedious. Roth has marked the party as having considerable potential, and has rigged the mission drawings so that they will get assignments that directly further his goal.



## The Haunt

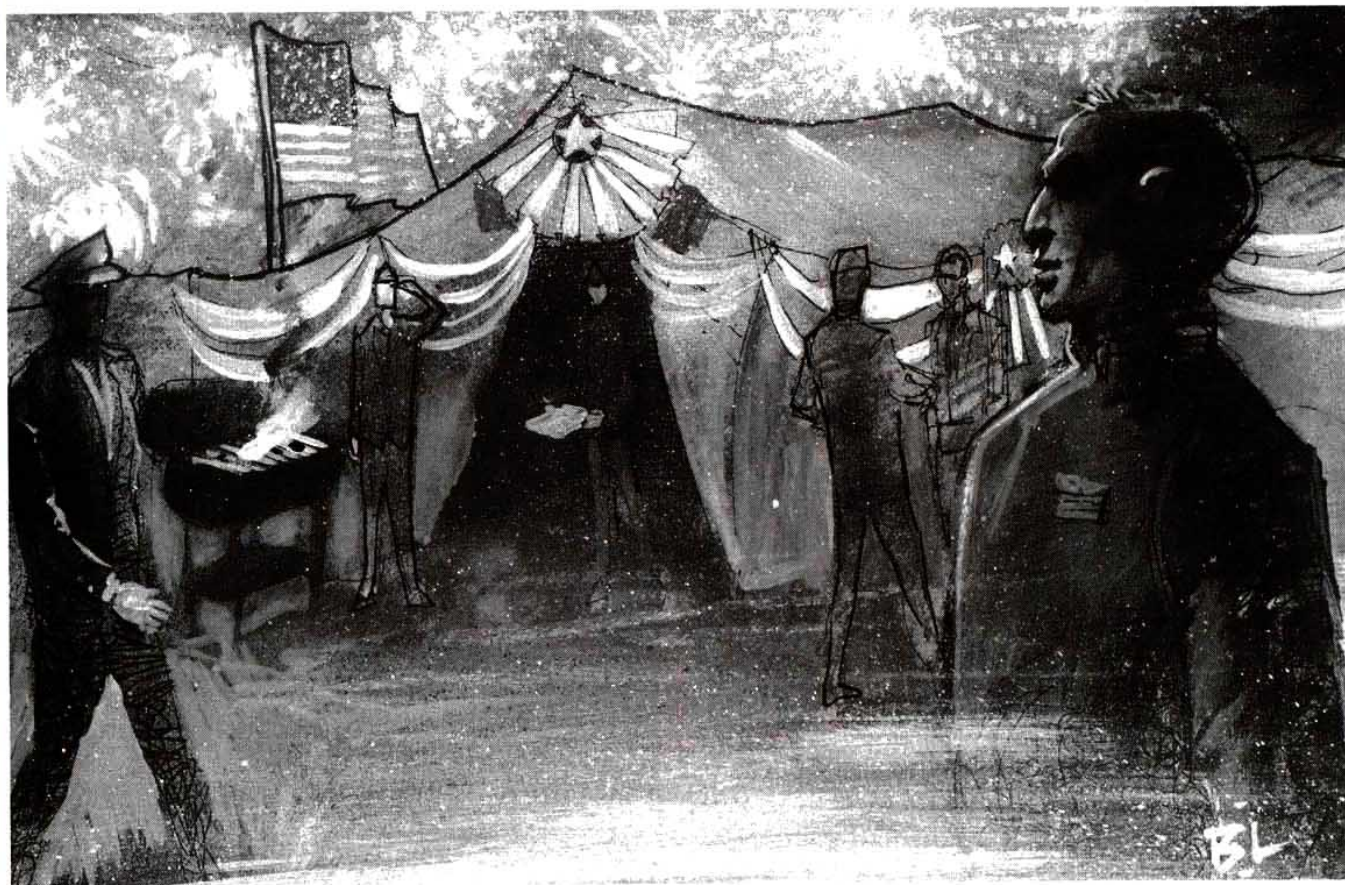
The site which Roth has chosen for his future base is an old Buddhist monastery about 20 miles outside of Saigon. Saigon is a hotbed of Imperial activity, with various ambassadors and spies operating constantly within its confines. However, that activity largely ceases once you leave the safety of the Imperial Buildings, as even the poorer sections of the Necropolis (never mind the jungles) are rife with bandits, Spectres and other undesirables.

The monastery itself has been converted into a low security sanitarium, housing mostly harmless, delusional paranoids. In the Shadowlands, a particularly deviant soul has taken up residence in the sanitarium. His name is Hoang Lam, and in life he was one of Saigon's most notorious serial killers. The perpetrator of a pattern of murders starting with his girlfriend, he came to believe that his girlfriend's soul had passed from her body and gone on to inhabit others. By use of various "auguries" he determined who was carrying her soul, and then killed the unfortunate person whom his methods had identified. He murdered eight girls in this manner, and was stalking his ninth when he was finally gunned down by police. Lam found himself in the Shadowlands and realized that his opportunity had arrived. He could end the cycle of soul exchange simply by destroying the spirit when it left its most recent body. To that end, he found the girl he had been stalking and



has haunted her ever since, trying to force her to commit suicide so that he might destroy her soul. Eventually his ghostly attentions drove the poor girl insane and she was committed to the sanitarium in the monastery. Ever since, Hoang Lam has haunted the asylum, waiting for his opportunity. He has gathered around him a collection of insane wraiths, all of whom died within the asylum's confines. Together they torment the patients and guards and resist any attempts to exorcise them from the area. The characters' missions will deal with clearing out this area and securing it for the Lost Legion, though they will never be told that. Various clues will all point to that end, and hopefully the characters will figure it all out before they are eliminated by Roth and his misguided band.

## Prelude: Arriving at the Base Camp

The Lost Legion has gone to extreme measures to shroud this event in a facade of gaiety. The base camp has been decorated with various red, white and blue streamers, American flags and other accoutrements of celebration. When the players arrive, they will be ushered to their corridors and given a schedule of events. Various events are constantly planned, and the itinerary is designed to keep the players on their toes, restless and ill at ease. The mentally imbalanced nature of the characters' hosts should be obvious early on, as various Lost Legionnaires will break into patriotic songs spontaneously, recite







the entire Declaration of Independence emphatically and otherwise behave like refugees from a militia group. If the players stop to rest or attempt to gather Pathos, members of the Legion should corner them and discuss American politics at great length. Those members of the Legion who are not American by birth will go on about how America has aided their respective countries, and set up an ideal around which all other governments and societies should be formed. Any mention of Colonel Roth will incite a fiery symposium on his philosophy, world view and politics. The Circle will be thankful to leave the camp and get on with their missions, having learned much more Americana than is considered healthy.

## The Game's Afoot: Mission One

In a ceremony part game show, part Bingo game, Roth will make a show of drawing the missions for the various teams. He will go on endlessly about how the Hand of God is guiding him to make each selection and whatnot. Finally, after a lengthy diatribe, the players are given their first assignment.

The task set before them is fairly complex, but can be accomplished with some preparation and careful application of Arcanoi. In downtown Saigon, a pinprick Nihil has recently opened in the Jade Embassy. The Circle is to make its way into the Embassy and force the Nihil open even wider. Roth will pass this off as simply "making trouble for the Jade Devils." The real story is that in his blind fanaticism, Roth has done a little business with a local Doppelganger named Blame. Blame has agreed to cease all Spectre activity around the Monastery in exchange for the opportunity to stage an incursion in Saigon.

Some of the pieces of the puzzle are available to the characters before the raid, though they won't know how they fit until after expanding the Nihil. Blame is often in the base camp talking to Roth, and may be seen with the Spectres on the other side of the Nihil when it is forced open. The exact nature of his deal with the colonel should remain a mystery for the time being, however.

The Nihil can be forced open by various methods, but the easiest is by way of the Skinlands. Destruction and despair in the Skinlands will allow the hole to widen, making it easier for Spectres to pass through. The aforementioned despair can be caused by anything from bombs planted by possessed criminals to heavy use of Pandemonium or other Arcanoi. It is up to the characters to decide how they want to do this. There is no one "right" way to open the Nihil, and any number of creative solutions to this particular problem are viable. On the other hand, failed or half-hearted attempts are likely to draw the attention of Embassy guards or even local exorcists. (See *Dark Kingdom of Jade* for more information on exorcisms).

The Embassy itself is placed in a Skinlands library in downtown Saigon. Saigon itself is something of a police state, though Vietnam as a whole has escaped Yu Huang's tightest grasp. The Embassy compound is well guarded at all times,

with guards on the perimeter and roving patrols inside the library itself. A few Inhabited sentries wander the library, posing as students or staff. In the Shadowlands, the ground is littered with torn and burned book pages that blow around, and the soft whisper of rustling papers echoes throughout the halls. One hall consists entirely of eunuchs, lined up in column formation. These Moliated wrecks contain all the records of the levies weighed against the various client-states by the Jade Empire, from Vietnam to Bangkok.

Another feature of the Embassy is the Museum to His Glorious Visage, a collection of Artifacts detailing the Yu Huang's rise to power. Here one can stroll for hours, perusing the Emperor's achievements in life as well as in death. Included are a scale model of the Great Wall, a tiny clay statue of one of the Immortal Guard and other such baubles.

It is in the room containing the museum that the nihil is to be opened, specifically because it is situated in the basement of the Embassy, in one of the disused storage rooms of the library. Located in one of the museum's sidechambers, the nihil was initially opened by the suicide of a library employee in that very room. In the Shadowlands, the displays in that room are spattered with what appears to be dried blood, and the floor oozes with amorphous gore. The various statues in the room were altered by the death, changing their serene expressions to ones of fear and horror.

The occupants of the Embassy are well aware of the Nihil, and have a guard stationed in that room at all times. Any attempt to force entry into the room will meet with resistance, and a general cry will go out, bringing swift reinforcements.

## Sample Imperial Guard Statistics

**Physical:** Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

**Mental:** Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

**Abilities:** Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Firearms 4, Intimidation 1, Melee 4, Stealth 3

**Arcanoi:** Argos 2, Outrage 3

**Permanent Corpus:** 10

**Willpower:** 6

**Pathos:** 8

**Note:** Imperial Guards are armed with a variety of weapons, from Jade spears to relic firearms.





## Les Interludes: A Brief Respite

At some point in the adventure, the characters get an opportunity to interact with their competition. Roth has other teams doing things like researching Hoang Lam's past, distracting the Jade Empire away from the monastery by launching massive assaults on the far side of Saigon and other missions that might give the players a clue as to the way in which they are being manipulated. This is a chance for the party to get a brief glimpse at the big picture. If, however, they begin to get too good an idea of what's going on, they will immediately be tossed headlong and screaming into their next mission. No time is available for "sit down and meditate" contemplation. Roth is running these events at a fevered pace specifically to keep the various teams off their guard and unaware of his barely concealed plan. Just as the characters start to say "wait a minute, what if..." they are catapulted into the next mission.

## Onward to Glory: Mission Two


Having secured his future stronghold from incursions from the Labyrinth, Roth wants to strengthen the monastery's potential for Pathos. The city government of Saigon recently declared the building inappropriate for the confinement of

the insane and ordered a new sanitarium built within the city itself. Roth desperately wants the Pathos that could be gleaned from the minds of madmen, but can't establish a Haunt within the walls of the Necropolis, where the Jade Emperor has too many eyes. To this end, the colonel has given the Circle the mission of haunting the daylight hours of the new building.

This is an opportunity for the players to have a little fun, and scaring construction workers and hospital officials is always a gas. The mission is complete when the construction is called off and all future plans for building a new asylum are put on hold. Merely haunting the site is not enough: The players must convince the city officials in charge of the construction that it's a bad idea. They can masquerade as former patients, threatening the suits and warning them away from disturbing their rest, or frighten the construction crews so much that no one will want work on the project.

Unfortunately, before the living officials give up, they'll call on the assistance of local holy men to exorcise the building. Also, the Empire is likely to notice such an obvious manifestation in the middle of one of their strongholds, and will hound the players at their every turn. The mission starts off light and chipper, but then rapidly piles shock upon shock. Packs of *kuei-go* chasing the characters away from the building, patrols of soldiers, or reprisals taken against the local wraith population are all possibilities.





At this point the characters should become aware of the existence of the other sanitarium, the one that Roth wants to haunt. They'll have to research the asylum a little and may find out about Hoang Lam and his minions. They may also notice the distinct lack of Spectral activity around the building, despite its proximity to the Nihil that they just finished opening (Blame has been ordered to stay away from the party, and will not interfere with them in any way). In fact, the Spectres might even defend the party from the servants of the Empire, and this should confuse the characters to no end. Things aren't frightening yet, but they're rapidly approaching that status, and the final hints as to Roth's master plan should rapidly be becoming apparent.

## One Last Impasse: Mission Three

Assuming that the characters have survived this far, Roth is getting very excited. He will be strutting around camp, virtually bubbling with psychopatriotic gibberish. Whenever he sees the players, he will pound them on the back and heap praise upon them. By now, the base camp will have thinned out, the "unworthy heathens lost in the crucible of God" as Roth would say. Prior to their final trial, there will be several days of festivities, mostly involving the singing of patriotic songs and firing automatic weapons into the air. During this time, the players will hardly be allowed to Slumber at all, as they are the guests of honor. They will be dragged from one event to the next, until they are lost in a miasma of red, white and blue. At the end of the revelry, Roth will gather everyone together for one final bash, at the end of which he will hand the players their final assignment.

This last mission is of utmost importance to Colonel Roth and his Lost Legion. The players are sent to the monastery, with the task of ridding the place of Hoang Lam, the serial killer wraith who haunts the place. Roth won't send his own men in because Hoang Lam has gathered a considerable number of dangerously insane wraiths to his side, and the resulting battle would prove to be too costly. Roth intends to kill the characters after they have completed their mission anyway, so if they die in the process it makes no difference to him.

## The Layout of the Monastery

From above, the monastery looks like a giant teardrop. The main entrance is at the bottom of the drop, with the patients' rooms forming the sides of the tear and slowly tapering to the administrative offices at the tip. The ancient gardens extend outside from one of the side entrances near the administrative center, but these have fallen into disrepair since the monastery became a sanitarium.

The main entrance is a magnificent archway, extending 20 feet into the air. The sides of the arch are intricately carved to look like a waterfall, flowing from engraved fountains at the top. With the recent need to keep the monastery's occupants closed in, a portcullis has been added, sulling the beauty of this grand door. In the Shadowlands, the waterfalls boil angrily, and occasionally a tiny figure appears in the torrent, screaming as it is dragged downstream. The iron gate is covered in rust, and groans whenever it is raised or lowered. This entryway is constantly guarded by at least two members of Hoang Lam's goon squad.

The central courtyard of the asylum is plain, with a few winding paths extending through a flower garden near the administrative building. The rest of the courtyard has been paved over and serves as a fitness area for those patients who feel athletically inclined. The garden was once a gorgeous creation, well groomed and lovingly maintained. Now, the flowers are growing wild, some dying and being replaced by ambitious weeds. Outside of the Skinlands, this area reverberates with the chants of long dead monks. The pitted, cracked concrete looks more like a moonscape than a parking lot. The garden is a thing of chaos and vibrant death. Vines crawl and writhe, blossoms pulse and rupture, vomiting even more troubled greenery onto the landscape. The tiny trails are dwarfed by towering, malignant bushes, and the once quiet grounds are filled with the creaking of wood and turgid shrubbery.

It is in these woods that Chi spends most of his time. He plays hide and seek among the vines, though his playmates are usually imaginary. If Chi catches the Circle wandering through this part of the asylum, he will immediately include them in his games, whether they want to play or not.

The walls of the courtyard hold the patients' quarters, and are accessible from multiple doors opening into the courtyard itself. The second and third floors include walkways that look down on the courtyard, while the first floor has an internal hallway. It is in these rooms that most of the resident wraiths live, and where the characters will find the greatest resistance to their presence. Some of the more interesting rooms are:

### Chi's Room:

Chi has littered his room with toys of all forms and fashions. He has old wooden dolls, possibly from his living childhood, playthings that seem to be from colonial French homes and new plastic cars and soldiers that Americans brought to Vietnam. In the Skinlands, Chi's room is empty, the last six occupants insisting that they couldn't sleep because someone kept playing pattycakes on their dresser all night long.

### Hoang Lam's room:

In the Skinlands, the poor victim of Hoang Lam's attentions sits quietly in a chair, clinging desperately to life.



By now, Hoang Lam has revealed to her his plans for destroying her soul, so she lives on to spoil his fun. Hoang Lam has forever to wait, as he has informed her on many occasions, and enjoys playing this little game of cat and mouse with her. In the Shadowlands, the room's walls crawl with the various auguries that Hoang Lam employed to find this girl. Spatters of blood crisscross the walls in arcane symbols, tarot cards tumble in an unseen breeze, the splintered bones of former victims form a latticework against one wall and the smell of burnt incense and flesh mingle in the air. Both in life and in death, Hoang Lam strove for this moment, and now he's settled down to savor it. Most of the time he can be found in this room, using his ghostly touch to stroke his victim's hair or knock over the lights she thinks will keep him at bay.

#### The Administrative Offices:

One of the doctors of the asylum, by the name of Dr. Binh, has dedicated his spare time (and there isn't much of it) to investigating the phenomena that manifest occasionally in the old monastery. He knows much of supernatural affairs, and is presently trying to unlock the secrets of Hoang Lam and his companions. Dr. Binh could conceivably be enlisted as an ally, particularly if the characters demonstrate to him the threat the wraith poses to one of the patients.

Should the players stray into the administrative building, Dr. Binh will quickly discover them and begin to perform his investigations on them. These tests are relatively harmless, but they will attract attention in the Shadowlands. Soon after the tests begin, members of Hoang Lam's Circle will appear to investigate.

There are a number of ways to empty the monastery, though not all of them would please Roth. The characters should be able to sneak into the sanitarium with relative ease, as the wraiths within are not watchful. Once inside, by speaking to the inmates among the Quick, the characters may be able to discover Hoang Lam's reasons for haunting the asylum. With that knowledge comes a wide variety of options, from killing the girl to having her moved to another location, or even helping her escape from the sanitarium altogether.

Alternatively, the players could rig a series of accidents, forcing the condemnation of the building and the relocation of the asylum. This would please the colonel not a bit, and his revenge would be frightening. The Legion has the Circle under constant observation, "to ensure the fairness of the contest" but if the characters attempt to leave the area before completing their task, they will be hunted down and destroyed. The players must remove Hoang Lam from the monastery or, though they might not know it yet, their unives will be forfeited.







## Strategy

In the event that the characters simply stage a frontal assault on the old asylum they will soon discover the strength of the its defenders. The exact strength of the asylum's inhabitants should be determined by the Storyteller, but the defenders should be strong enough to thrash the Circle with ease. The characters will have to find another way of forcing Hoang Lam and his minions out.

No matter how they go about it, once the Circle has gotten rid of Hoang Lam, they should return to the base camp. As they approach the camp, the sound of gunfire is clearly audible. Just before they enter the clearing, the players become aware of a massacre in the camp. Roth's men have received word of their victory, and are doing away with the remaining contestants. Roth doesn't want anyone to know of the location of his new Haunt, and annihilating the people who obtained it for him is the best way to do this. As soon as the characters realize what is happening, they will find themselves being approached by several members of the Legion. From this point on, they are fugitives.

## Getting your Derriere out of Dodge

From this point on, the action consists of the characters running like hell with the Legion doing their best to gun them down. The jungles surrounding the base camp are full of all sorts of bad things, from Spectres to inquisitive Jade Operatives investigating the recent expansion of the nihil in their embassy. The nearest refuge for the players would be in Stygia, or possibly Bangkok, but it's a long way home, and there are lots of people looking for the party.

If the players decide to run for Saigon, they will be cut off quickly. Saigon is crawling with soldiers of the Jade Empire who are battling back the Spectres so recently unleashed upon their fair city. Any major roadway, through the Temple or otherwise, will be patrolled by the Lost Legion, and an attempt to escape along these routes will quickly bring about an encounter with Dixie and the DustBunny (see below). The characters have to slink around in the jungle, slowly easing their way past trouble if they can. Headlong flight will just draw attention to their path, and hanging around too long will leave them vulnerable to Roth's roving patrols. The characters must find a middle ground between bolting for safety and holing up while waiting for the inevitable.

## Wrapping up

Once home, the players should spread the news about the misguided Lost Legion, though few will believe them. From this point in the chronicle, the players may want to further investigate the history of the Legion, in an attempt to prove their unbalanced nature. In addition, there's a good chance that the Jade Empire will express interest in the party, as they are the last known people to have had contact with the Legion. In fact, they fit the description of some wraiths witnessed at the scene of a bit of a mishap, involving a Nihil and the lobby of the Jade Embassy...

## Sample Spectre Statistics:

**Physical:** Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5  
**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

**Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 4  
**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Brawl 5, Dodge 5, Melee 3

**Arcanoi:** Contaminate 2, Hive Mind 1, Larceny 1, Moliate 3, Outrage 2

**Being (Hate):** 8

**Angst:** 8

**Permanent Corpus:** 9

## Sample Lost Legion Statistics:

**Physical:** Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4  
**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

**Mental:** Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3  
**Abilities:** Alertness 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Firearms 4, Melee 4,

**Arcanoi:** Any three Arcanoi up to level three

**Pathos:** 10

**Angst:** 7

**Permanent Corpus:** 9

**Willpower:** 10

**Note:** Members of the Lost Legion are armed with the relic weapons they died with. These include .45 automatics, M16 assault rifles and Light Anti-tank Weapons.



# The Cast and Properties

## The Lost Legion



The members of the Lost Legion are too numerous to fully describe here, as their numbers exceed 100. Instead, a few of the more colorful Legionnaires are described below. Use them as a guide for creating your own soldiers of Roth's Legion.

### Colonel Roth

Roth is a cross between a tent-revival preacher and a sulking mob boss. Sometimes ecstatic with the glory of revelation, sometimes brooding with the weight of the responsibility of enlightenment, the colonel is a difficult man to deal with. He accepts nothing but whole-hearted devotion from his followers, and nothing but repentance or death from his enemies. Having elevated himself to the level of a visionary, he feels unbound by the conventions of the society he left behind when he died. To him, enlightenment has brought on a new level of moral righteousness, justifying his every act in the name of higher purpose. He eschews all social norms and concentrates on his one true purpose: the destruction of the Jade Empire. He cares little for the America of today, feeling that the true spirit of the Founding Fathers has been abandoned, choked in litigation and greed. Colonel Roth fights a spiritual war of his own imagination and nothing can stop him, or even drag him back to reality.

**Nature:** Fanatic

**Demeanor:** Really Fanatic

**Circle:** The Lost Legion

**Physical:** Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

**Social:** Charisma 5, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

**Mental:** Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

**Talents:** Expression 4, Intimidation 4, Subterfuge 5

**Skills:** Firearms 3, Leadership 5

**Knowledges:** Military Science 4, Philosophy 3, Psychology 4, Rhetoric 5, Theology 3

**Backgrounds:** Contacts 3, Memoriam 2, Notoriety 4

**Passions:** Destroy Yu Huang's Empire (Hate) 5, Bring his boys home (Pride) 4

**Arcanoi:** Argos 2, Castigate 3, Intimation 3, Lifeweb 2, Mnemosynis 3, Outrage 2



**Fetters:** The Jungles of South Vietnam 3, Dogtags 2, Medals 2

**Willpower:** 9

**Pathos:** 9

**Permanent Corpus:** 10

**Shadow:** The Bully

**Angst:** 6

**Shadow Passions:** Give up the fight against the Jade Empire (Despair) 3

**Thorns:** Shadow Call, Tainted Touch, Pact of Doom

**Image:** Colonel Roth dresses in full fatigues, perfect from helmet to spit-shined boots. He's a heavy man, not so much fat as simply husky. He exudes an aura of power and commands respect wherever he goes.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You're a demagogue, so play the part to the hilt. Take one part televangelist, one part Achilles sulking in his tent, and one part psychopath. Mix these together, and then yell a lot. Bluster wherever you go, get in people's faces, step on their toes, and inspect their weapons. Do whatever it takes to get your message across, and do it repeatedly.



## Dixie and the DustBunny

Dixie was a simple farm boy with a knack for pool and a love for America. Rather than sitting around and waiting to be drafted when the Vietnam War started, he marched down to his local recruiter and signed his life away. Due to his familiarity with heavy machinery and vast experience with driving tractors and the like, Dixie was assigned to the Armor Corps, eventually ending up as a driver. His first assignment was a little anti-personnel vehicle called a Duster. A Duster looks just like any other tank from the turret down, but instead of a big bore gun, it sports four high calibre cannons (much like what jet fighters carry). These tanks were devastating against infantry during the Vietnam conflict, destroying cover and personnel alike with frightening ease. Being such destructive weapons, Dusters tended to draw a lot of fire during combat, and Dixie's vehicle, which he had named DustBunny, was no exception. Driver, gunner and tank were completely destroyed by a series of LAW attacks on their position, mere months after Dixie had entered the theater. Luckily for Colonel Roth and his Legion, all three passed on to the Shadowlands intact, and nowadays the DustBunny is a feared sight at many Jade Empire strongholds.

**Nature:** Survivor

**Demeanor:** Jester

**Circle:** Lost Legion

**Physical:** Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2

**Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

**Talents:** Alertness 3, Dodge 2, Streetwise 3

**Skills:** Drive 4, Firearms 3, Heavy Weapons 4, Melee 3, Pool 4, Repair 3

**Knowledges:** None

**Backgrounds:** Artifact 5

**Passions:** Obey the Colonel (Fanatic Loyalty) 4, Settle Down (Longing) 2

**Arcanoi:** Argos 3, Moliat 2, Puppetry 1

**Fetters:** The earthly remains of the Dustbunny 3, His old pool cue 2

**Willpower:** 6

**Permanent Corpus:** 7

**Pathos:** 4

**Shadow:** The Abuser

**Angst:** 4

**Shadow Passion:** Be appreciated fully by the others of the Lost Legion (envy) 4

**Thorns:** Devil's Dare

**Image:** Dixie is a silly, grinning fool. He wears a tanker's uniform, and has a Stars and Bars painted crudely onto his helmet.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Go watch *The Dukes of Hazzard*. Now, pick either Bo or Luke Duke, hop him up on greenies, and there you have it. Hoot and holler, give rebel yells as you careen headlong into combat, generally give 'em hell.



## Lt. Colonel Hopps

If Colonel Roth is the fire and brimstone of the Lost Legion, Hopps is its cold, calculating judge of damnation. Where Roth inspires and exclaims, Hopps condemns and belittles. Lt. Colonel Hopps is in charge of internal security, constantly watching the men for the slightest sign of treason. His "loyalty sessions" are widely feared by the men of the Legion, and those few survivors of his ministrations never again question the teachings of Roth.

**Nature:** Critic

**Demeanor:** Judge

**Circle:** Lost Legion

**Physical:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

**Social:** Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 2

**Mental:** Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

**Talents:** Alertness 5, Empathy 4, Intimidation 4, Subterfuge 4

**Skills:** Firearms 3, Melee 4

**Knowledges:** Enigmas 3, Investigation 5

**Passions:** Seek out traitors (Devotion) 5, Expel the invaders from Vietnam (Duty) 4





**Arcanoi:** Usury 5, Castigate 4

**Fetters:** Medals 3, copy of Freud's *Das Unheimlich* rotting in an old firebase 1

**Willpower:** 10

**Pathos:** 7

**Permanent Corpus:** 9

**Shadow:** The Perfectionist

**Angst:** 6

**Shadow Passion:** Betray Roth (Self-hatred) 4

**Thorns:** Freudian Slip, Bad Luck

**Image:** Hopps is a tall, dark man. He has had his Corpus molded to resemble the Gestapo agents of the Second World War, though he has replaced the Nazi symbols with skulls and American flags. He always wears sunglasses, even in the dead of night.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Always ask questions, probing for betrayal in the hearts of your victims. Be on guard, seek out the tainted and expel them. Never raise your voice above a whisper. If any of the players do anything that they aren't supposed to be doing, you will hear about it and come around to question them. Warn them against cheating, and if you have to talk to them a second time, unleash the consequences of their folly.

## The Committed

There are about a dozen wraiths living in the monastery, including Hoang Lam. Feel free to modify the following stats, so as to prevent the players from taking the asylum by way of force.

### Hoang Lam

For more information on Hoang Lam, see above.

**Nature:** Deviant

**Demeanor:** Deviant

**Circle:** The Committed

**Physical:** Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5

**Social:** Charisma 1, Manipulation 5, Appearance 1

**Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

**Talents:** Alertness 3, Awareness 4, Brawl 2, Intimidation 4, Streetwise 3

**Skills:** Melee 5, Stealth 4

**Knowledges:** Occult 4

**Passions:** Torture the soul of his former girlfriend (Love) 5, Disgust others (Perversity) 4

**Arcanoi:** Embody 2, Fatalism 1, Inhabit 3, Moliat 4, Outrage 3, Pandemonium 4

**Fetters:** Hang Thieu (the girl whom he believes to possess his former girlfriend's soul) 5

**Willpower:** 7

**Pathos:** 5

**P'o:** The Freak

**Angst:** 5

**Shadow Passions:** Raze the monastery to the ground (Rage) 4, Twist the minds of others (Hate) 2

**Thorns:** Shadow Trait (Strength x4)

**Image:** Hoang Lam makes a point of changing the way he looks often, never pleased with himself. With each new face, he reaches new levels of insanity and revulsion.

**Roleplaying hints:** Be scary and psychopathic. Stab yourself occasionally, just for the experience. Do whatever it takes to creep others out, and feed on their reactions.

### Chi

No one is sure when Chi was born, or when he died. The oldest wraiths in the asylum all remember Chi as already being an established force when they first entered the Shadowlands. He is reluctant to speak of his past, and seems content to stay in the monastery gardens and play hide and seek with any passersby. When not pursuing youthful pastimes, Chi wanders the halls of the monastery, apparently looking for someone or something.

Chi's true story will always remain a mystery. Suffice to say that he doesn't care who owns the monastery, as long as



they allow him to remain. The players may be able to convince Chi to assist them in their mission if they are gentle in their approach. If the players attempt to harm Chi, or force him to do anything he doesn't want to do, he will turn on them with force that only great age can produce, and a ferocity that only a child's tantrum can rival.

If the characters talk to him, Chi will start to play games with them. These games include "hide the nice person's important Artifact," "stand near the nice people and scream at the top of our lungs" and the ever popular "sneak up on the nice people when they're really paranoid and scream." More innocent games may follow, like catch or tag.

**Nature:** Loner

**Demeanor:** Child

**Circle:** The Committed

**Physical:** Strength 2, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4

**Social:** Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

**Mental:** Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

**Talents:** Alertness 5, Awareness 5, Brawl 1, Dodge 5, Empathy 4, Expression 3, Subterfuge 2

**Skills:** Crafts 4, Etiquette 3, Meditation 4, Performance 3, Stealth 5

**Knowledges:** Enigmas 5, Linguistics 2, Occult 1

**Passions:** Play (Joy) 5, Make the garden bloom (Love) 4, Heal the souls in the asylum (Compassion) 2



**Arcanoi:** Argos 5, Embody 4, Fatalism 3, Keening 4, Pandemonium 3, Way of the Farmer 3, Way of the Scholar 2  
**Fetters:** The garden 5, small icon of the Buddha kept in the monastery basement 4

**Willpower:** 8

**Pathos:** 10

**Permanent Corpus:** 10

**P'o:** The Leech

**Angst:** 3

**Shadow Passions:** Make the games deadly (Contempt) 4

**Thorns:** Shadow Call

**Image:** Chi appears as a wizened old man, remarkably similar in looks to the iconic pictures of Ho Chi Minh himself scattered throughout the city. He moves with almost alarming speed and grace and there is a clear intelligence that burns in his eyes.

**Roleplaying Hints:** There are matters of great importance afoot, but they don't matter to you much. Stay in your garden, play your games and allow the world to pass you by. You have enough power to protect what you love.





# Spectres

## Blame

Blame is an old doppelganger, very old indeed. He was once a loyal Protector of the Prosperous Realm, but his quest for advancement led him down dark paths and eventually his soul was consumed by Oblivion. Even this could not dissuade him from his quest for grandeur, and Blame continued existence as a doppelganger. Part of the Imperial occupation forces during his prior existence, Blame is driven to take Saigon at all costs. When Roth approached him with his proposition, Blame jumped at the opportunity to tear a hole in downtown Saigon.

Blame intends to allow Roth to take the monastery, and then inform the Empire as to the Legion's whereabouts. He hopes that in the ensuing chaos, his troupe of Spectres will be able to dash in and secure the area. By playing both ends against one another, Blame aspires to swallow them both and drag them all into the Labyrinth.

**Nature:** Director

**Demeanor:** Conniver

**Caste:** Doppelganger

**Physical:** Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3



**Social:** Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

**Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

**Abilities:** Alertness 3, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 5, Empathy 1, Intimidation 2, Subterfuge 3

**Skills:** Etiquette 3, Melee 2, Performance 2

**Knowledges:** Bureaucracy 3, Enigmas 2, Law 1, Occult 2, Politics 1

**Backgrounds:** Allies 3, Shadowlands 5, Status 2

**Dark Passions:** Subdue Saigon (Fanaticism) 5, Destroy the Protectorate (Hate) 3

**Arcanoi:** Contaminate 3, Hive Mind 4, Intimation 2, Larceny 3, Pandemonium 4, Tempest-Weaving 3, Usury 1

**Shade Powers:** None

**Fetters:** None

**Being (Fanaticism):** 8

**Permanent Corpus:** 10

**Angst:** 10

**Psyche:** The Agent

**Passions:** End Chaos in the Empire (Duty) 2

**Fronds:** Guilt, Penance

**Image:** Blame looks like whatever Blame wants to look like, but so as to avoid offending Roth's sensibilities, generally he appears as a mousy looking accountant type.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Saigon will be yours. The triumph that evaded you as a wraith, when you could not control the subversive city, will be yours as a Spectre. Roth is just one more tool to be used and then discarded when his edge grows dull. In the meantime, agree to whatever he wants. It doesn't cost you anything.









# In The House of Pika Don

by James A. Moore and Allen Tower

*My God. What have we done?*

— Robert Lewis, copilot of the  
*Enola Gay*, personal journal entry



At 8:15 AM on August 6, 1945, the detonation of the atomic bomb called "Little Boy" killed over seventy thousand people instantly. The bomb's effects pulled an additional fifty thousand more to their deaths over the next few months. The devastation in the Skinlands was immense.

In the Yellow Springs, the effect was even more terrifying. A Nihil of immense proportions ripped open the Shadowlands and brought with it the Fifth Great Maelstrom, a storm strong enough to cause damage in every realm of the Dead. More than 50 years have passed since the last Great Maelstrom, and the memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are faded, if still painful. In these two cities rests the proof that even wraiths need fear death.

Hiroshima is the home of a monumental Nihil, as well as the Malfean known to Japanese wraiths as Pika Don. Most who venture to Hiroshima leave as quickly as they can, for the city is ruled by the Spectres and their hunger for destruction is legendary. Members of the Fist of Nippon supposedly

operate from the city's fringes, ducking into the Spectre-haunted ruins when Imperial Censors come too close, but for most Hiroshima is a terrible place, to be feared and shunned.

The city is constantly monitored by all factions. The Jade Empire, the Hierarchy and the Fist of Nippon all have wraiths who observe the area. Not much is known of what actually goes on in the city, but the reports flowing to the Jade Palace and the Isle speak of wonders and terrors: spectral buildings re-forming themselves from the stuff of Maelstroms; moving shadows painted on walls; even the relic of a weapon of mass destruction. It is the last rumor, which has finally reached the Emperor's ears, that has spurred the great Bureaucracy into action.

The Jade Empire believes a weapon strong enough to destroy even the fiercest resistance is hidden within the Nihil. Yu Huang is offering great rewards to any who can retrieve this Artifact. The Hierarchy believes that anything Yu Huang wants should be in their hands instead, and the Fist of Nippon seeks whatever lies within the Nihil to fend off the Jade Emperor once and for all.



# The Plot

## Scene One



The Cohort is "asked" by a higher-up to investigate the Nihil at Hiroshima and to retrieve whatever is within the Nihil that is of value. Success means heavy rewards. Failure in the mission means stiff penalties. The players are given a chance to barter for better compensation and lesser fines for failure.

## Scene Two

The Cohort travels to Hiroshima, encountering several threats along the way and learning that they have competition for the prize. The Hierarchy, the Jade Empire and the Fist of Nippon are all after the great weapon within the Nihil, and no one is willing to accept anything but the prize.

## Scene Three

The prize is very real and so are the Spectres. Retrieving the weapon requires entering the Nihil and forcibly taking the powerful Artifact from its depths. The only obstacles are a small army of Spectres and one Malfean.

## Scene Four

Revealed for what it is, the Artifact proves to be of substantial size. Now the task is simply to get the bomb back home and claim the rewards. There is just one more obstacle: the other teams who have come to claim the prize.

## What Is Really Going On

The great Malfean, Pika Don, has tormented the few wraiths around Hiroshima since the destruction of the city in the Skinlands. It has drawn the Restless from their haunts and either destroyed or converted them for some time. Now, however, Pika Don has seemingly disappeared, leaving behind only the powerful Artifact once known to the living as Little Boy.

The Jade Empire, the Hierarchy and the Fist of Nippon have all heard rumors that the first atomic bomb has now become a relic, but each fears this is only a ploy by the other parties, an attempt to bring in others bearing weapons which can be stolen and used against them. More importantly, everyone fears that this may be another ploy by Pika Don, who is always looking for wraiths to destroy. That is where the characters' Cohort comes in.

## Theme

The main theme of "In The House of Pika Don" is desperation. The Cohort must race against time to prevent others from claiming their prize. Success means high rewards, but failure almost certainly means being destroyed. The Cohort is not alone in their fears. The other Circles sent to retrieve the Artifact are in the same situation, and will act with suitable desperation and courage. No risk is too great to claim the prize, for the existences of not only the competing Cohort but of their entire civilizations are on the line.

## Mood

The mood of "In The House of Pika Don" is fear. The situation is grim for the Cohort. The Spectres of Hiroshima are well-known and universally feared. Alleged to do unspeakable things to the wraiths they catch, they seldom fail to capture their prey. Additionally, the Shadowlands of Hiroshima are far more terrifying than is the norm, with spectral fires erupting at odd times, and small Maelstroms known to come from the Nihil of Pika Don almost daily. Success is a must. Failure is almost a certainty.

## Scene One: The Gathering Clouds

*We have discovered the most terrible bomb in the world. It may be the fire destruction prophesied in the Euphrates Valley area after Noah and his famous Ark.*

— Harry Truman, personal thoughts from his diary



The Cohort is called together by their direct superior, who in turn has been asked to bring them before the local Magistrates, not in the principality, but in the Jade Palace itself. (For more information on the Palace and how it can be reached, see **Dark Kingdom of Jade and Chapter 3:**

**The Well of Night.**) While the players wait for the Magistrates, several well dressed and obviously important people move through the room, including 10 members of the Immortal Guard. Several other Cohorts are also present. Some are there before the players, some arrive later. They are apparently gathered together for the same reason. While many of the characters may have questions, the only answer they are granted is simply: "You will know the answers to your questions when the time is right." Discussions with members of other Cohorts will prove equally fruitless, as most of these wraiths have no idea as to what they are doing either.





Each of the districts has been ordered to gather their finest young soldiers for a special mission into the Conquered Lands. Depending on the flavor of your chronicle, the characters may actually be the best young soldiers in the district or simply the most expendable. Not all of the magistrates or their assistants are willing to sacrifice their best at the whim of the Emperor. Some magistrates may take this opportunity to rid themselves of potential threats to their position or even as a method of meting out punishment. They will, in any case, sing the praises of the Cohort before the Commander of all the Armies, Peng Xin.

While the Cohort is left waiting for a while, Peng Xin takes all of the magistrates aside and speaks with them. Characters who take the time to pay attention will soon gather that there is a great deal of politicking taking place. Fully half of the gathered Cohorts are dismissed before the general speaks to those who remain.

Peng Xin will take time at this point to explain the situation to the remaining wraiths. "Word has come that a great weapon has been discovered in Hiroshima. It is believed that this weapon would make it possible for the Jade Empire to bring the Hierarchy to its knees and allow our lord, Yu Huang, the Jade Emperor, to claim what is rightfully his: dominion over all of the lands of the dead." At this point, the general pauses for a moment, allowing the impact of his words to sink in to all of the characters. Should anyone murmur for too

long or attempt to ask questions, however, Peng Xin holds up one hand for silence. The wise wraith will choose to be quiet.

"Yu Huang, the Jade Emperor, has asked that the magistrates from every district and every city select their finest warriors for a special mission. You have all been honored by your leaders and selected for this task." Once again, the general pauses briefly. "Success in this matter is of great necessity. Failure is inconceivable. The Emperor has expressed a personal interest in this, and has stated that the successful retrieval of a the Artifact at Hiroshima would be greatly rewarded. Who among you will do this deed for our Emperor?"

Whether or not the Cohort speaks up, the other gathered wraiths immediately volunteer their services. Should the members of the Cohort not volunteer, their local magistrate takes the choice away from them and volunteers their services. There is little choice in the matter. Moments later, the general moves off to a smaller room and the magistrates wait, going one by one into a separate room to speak with Peng Xin. As soon as the general is out of the main chamber, the magistrate will verbally and possibly even physically reprimand any who did not volunteer. The more astute among the players should be allowed to make a Wits + Bureaucracy roll (difficulty 7) to realize that the magistrates are each attempting to bribe the general. The Artifact is of such importance that every magistrate is trying to ensure their personal choice is the group selected to go.





## The Known Facts

Peng Xin can give the following information about their objective, but will only do so if he is asked. Otherwise, he will brief the characters on their mission objectives. Specifically, the characters are to be transported by the Imperial Navy to the ruins of Hiroshima, where they are to infiltrate the Nihil, extract the Artifact, and transport their booty home. Any injured wraiths are to be left behind in the interest of the mission's success; nothing is more important than the task. Any others either preventing the Cohort from retrieving the weapon or attempting to take the weapon themselves should be dealt with summarily. The additional information Peng Xin will not volunteer is:

- The Necropolis of Hiroshima is primarily populated by Spectres. All attempts to overwhelm the Spectres and take the city back have been met with failure. There have been rumors that the Spectres are weakening, however.

- A Malfean called Pika Don is said to reside within the Nihil at Hiroshima. The great Malfean has not been seen in over three years and is believed by some observers to have left the place entirely.

- The Fist of Nippon and the Hierarchy are both aware of the Artifact within the Nihil and are allegedly sending their own retrieval teams.

- The Emperor believes that a small group of wraiths has a better chance of retrieving the Artifact than a large battalion, which would immediately be detected and forced into pitched battle by the Spectres. A smaller group might be able to evade detection.

- The reward for succeeding in this quest is one boon from the Emperor himself. The possibilities are endless: wealth, Artifacts, titles and even full citizenship if the Cohort comes from one of the Conquered Territories.

- Failure to accomplish the mission could result in Sundering, or if the Emperor is in a good mood, being placed within Ti Yu, the Earth Prison, for a century.

- Upon request, each member of the Cohort will be given a fine sword of White Jade which is theirs to keep upon successful completion of their mission.

- Also upon request, the Cohort will be granted the use of two *kuei-go*. They will be held responsible for the safe return of the monstrous killing machines. (For more information on *kuei-go*, see *Dark Kingdom of Jade*)



After having their questions answered, two members of the Immortal Guard will appear and escort the Cohort to one of the Emperor's Jade Ships, which sets sail for the harbor at Hiroshima. The crew of the ship can also answer questions for the Cohort, but their answers are not quite along the same lines as those Peng Xin gave.

- Hiroshima is alive with Spectres. They are everywhere and often hide among the ruins.

- Many of the buildings in Hiroshima are said to have a life of their own: They are sometimes in ruins and sometimes in perfect shape. There is no way of knowing when they will suddenly collapse and send deadly shards of metal and brick away from the center of the blast zone into the distance.

- The great explosion that leveled the city is still there, burning like a thousand suns above the Nihil. But the fire is all black and there is a great cold where there should be heat.

- There are shadows burned into the walls of the buildings. The Spectres have made the shadows their haunts and lie in wait for wraiths who get too close to them. Some say the shadows themselves are alive and move from building to building, looking at the wraiths and calling out for help.

- Pika Don is capable of swallowing wraiths and forging them into weapons within his bowels. Most of the wraiths foolish enough to enter Hiroshima now are carried as weapons by the Spectres. Those are the lucky ones; the unfortunate end up as Spectres themselves.

- The Nihil is actually growing smaller, which is why there are now fewer Spectres in the city.

- From time to time, the great explosion which hovers above the city drops down and tears through the city again, sweeping all of the wraiths into the Nihil and sending spectral flames across the entire city.

## Attacked!

About halfway through the journey, the characters' ship is approached by another craft, one manned by Bugis mercenaries. The Bugis have sources too, and they have heard about the great Artifact of Hiroshima. They offer, for a fee, to escort the ship safely through to Hiroshima.

The captain of the characters' vessel has his orders from Peng Xin, and declines their "generous offer." The Bugis then do exactly what they'd planned to do all along, and attempt to storm the ship.







## The Bugis Mercenaries.

The Bugis are very experienced pirates, capable of taking the ship if that were their intent. But their actual mission is to capture at least one of the Cohort for information and trading purposes. While the battle rages all around, the captain and seven of his crew will actively seek to kidnap at least one and possibly more of the Cohort for the purpose of bartering. Telling the crew of the ship from the Cohort is not difficult; even the way a longtime sailor stands and walks is markedly different from a wraith used to standing and living on land. Unless the members of the Cohort have sailing experience, they will be easily marked.

Below are sample stats for the Bugis:

### Bugi Captain

**Nature:** Deviant

**Demeanor:** Bravo

**Circle:** Bugis Pirates

**Physical:** Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

**Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

**Talents:** Acting 2, Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Intimidation 3, Intuition 2

**Skills:** Sailing 5, Firearms 1, Leadership 4, Melee 3, Survival 5

**Knowledges:** Bureaucracy 3, Enigmas 2, Investigation 3, Linguistics 4 (Japanese, Cantonese, English, Vietnamese), Medicine 2, Occult 4

**Backgrounds:** Allies 5, Artifacts 3 (True Jade sword), Contacts 5

**Passions:** Acquire wealth and power (Greed) 5, Out-maraud any other captain with whom you share the seas (Pride) 3

**Arcanoi:** Argos 5, Lifeweb 3, Moliat 2, Usury 1

**Fetters:** Family 2

**Permanent Corpus:** 8

**Willpower:** 8

**Pathos:** 6

**P'o:** The Director

**Angst:** 4

**Thorns:** Shadow Call, Tainted Touch

**Shadow Passions:** Lead your followers to certain doom (Sadism) 4, Wreck every Bugi captain out there (Self-hatred) 2

**Image:** The captain is a lean, hard man, seemingly carved from mahogany. His skin is covered in various tattoos reflecting the places he's been, and his clothes are an eclectic mess of various cultures clashing. His left hand has been Moliated into a five-fingered set of fishing hooks, the better with which to rend and tear opponents.

**Background:** The captain has sailed the Tempest for so long that he barely even remembers his days before coming to







the Shadowlands. He knows only that his family is still alive and that he must protect them when he can. Aside from his family, he cares only for the thrill of riding the Tempest and taking what he can from those weaker than he.

**Roleplaying Hints:** It's nothing personal. You just want what the Cohort has: Knowledge of the great Artifact. You have no intentions of harming their friend. You simply want the Artifact for your own. What a bargaining tool!

## Sample Bugis Sailor

**Nature:** Follower

**Demeanor:** Bravo

**Circle:** Bugis Pirates

**Physical:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2

**Mental:** Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

**Talents:** Acting 1, Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 2, Dodge 2

**Skills:** Sailing 5, Melee 3, Stealth 2, Survival 4

**Knowledges:** Medicine 2, Occult 1

**Backgrounds:** Allies 5

**Passions:** Seek adventure (Lust) 3, Avoid disappointing the Captain (Terror) 1

**Arcanoi:** Argos 3, Moliat 2, Pandemonium 2

**Fetters:** Varied

**Permanent Corpus:** 7

**Willpower:** 6

**Pathos:** 5

**P'o:** The Monster

**Angst:** 6

**Thorns:** Aura of Corruption, Tainted Relic ( 1 pt.)

**Dark Passions:** Loot, Pillage, Murder and Rape (Bloodlust) 5, Please the Captain (Fear) 2

**Image:** The sailors are as eclectic as their captain. Some are Asian, others are Caucasian, Indian or even Slavic. The group is an unruly wolfpack in combat, shrieking, hissing and swinging swords.

**Background:** Pirates and mercenaries, most are on the verge of losing their Fetters. Like the captain, few care about the world before they became what they are now.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Always follow the captain's orders. So far, he has brought you fame and fortune. There is no reason to doubt he will continue to do so.

If a character is captured by the Bugis, they will immediately retreat to their ship and cast off to a safe distance. A rough-and-ready interrogation will take place, and the character will be pumped for all he knows about the mission



(troop strength, destination, target, etc.). In the meantime, the captain will begin negotiating for the prisoner's release.

The captain of the Imperial ship will insist upon abandoning the prisoner and heading at once for Hiroshima. He will use the argument that the mission comes first, and that a delay to retrieve the unfortunate kidnap victim will simply allow other groups to reach the Nihil first. There is also the question of what the characters can offer the Bugis; their swords will make a fine starting offer.

Once they have their information, the Bugis will be extremely interested in selling the prisoner and making their escape. They already have a ready buyer waiting in the Tempest, a team of Fist of Nippon extraction experts. Should the ransom of the kidnapped character be made, the Bugis Captain will laughingly inform the characters of his next appointment even as his ship vanishes into the Tempest.

## Reaching Harbor

From the harbor the Cohort must row to the city proper and proceed alone. They are given two relic flares which they may ignite to summon the ship back into the harbor. If they fail to retrieve the Artifact, they are not to use the flares.

# Scene Two: In The Cold Wastelands

*The city is/was situated in a valley — on one side the mountains, on the other the sea. As you stand in the middle of town, for miles on every side nothing rises above the level of your knees except for the shell of a building or the grotesque skeleton of a tree or perhaps a mound where the rubble has been pushed into a pile.*

— Ensign Osborn Elliot, excerpts from a letter home.




Simply landing at the bay is not enough. Despite the calm waters around the devastated Necropolis, the city itself is in ruins. Very few buildings stand amid the rubble, and most of those are toward the center of the blast zone, far from where the Cohort lands. The ground is treacherous and deadly. Shards of half-molten glass lie buried among the fragments of stone, wood and metal.

The air is dark with soot and flecks of burnt flesh dance among the ruins, fluttering like leaves in an autumn wind.



RITCHIE





Above the spot where the buildings still stand, a massive roiling black cloud swirls in a constant explosion. Despite the violent motion and flashes of light that come from the cloud, there is no sound coming from the blast.

As the Cohort walks through the city, they see shapes in the distance, vaguely humanoid but twisted and burnt, slinking among the rubble. From time to time a figure will rise, turn toward the center of the city and scream as it bursts into flames. The burning shapes run howling, only to explode into a ball of fire a few seconds later. The flames erupting from these figures are extremely hot and do two levels of damage to anyone within 10 feet when the blast goes off. These burning forms leave a shadow cast across the rubble or buildings where they finally explode. If the Cohort waits long enough, they will see the very same figures lift themselves from the ground and repeat the process again and again.

Closer to the epicenter of the original explosion, a few buildings remain standing. All of the structures are in excellent condition, especially for edifices residing within the Shadowlands. A small church stands among the existing structures. It is in perfect shape. It almost seems as if there is a weird sort of rebuilding going on here, perhaps as a result of the radioactivity unleashed a half century before. None of the characters are likely to have seen anything like it, and particularly observant characters may notice peeling paint flecks working themselves back onto walls. Several cars are here as well. Should the characters attempt to start any of the vehicles, however, they have no success.

Just past the last standing building, a massive crater leads down towards the depths of Pika Don's Nihil.

The characters must make their way from the harbor to the Nihil itself, dodging the various inhabitants of Hiroshima. The light from Hiroshima Memorial Peace Park is clearly visible once the characters enter the city, but those who wish to investigate this phenomenon more closely may regret the decision. Spectres, *oni* and *akuna* hover around the edge of the park, hedging in those souls fortunate enough to reach its confines. Any attempt to reach the park's sanctuary is likely to be more of a fight than whatever the characters are fleeing from.

On the other hand, the way to the Nihil at the center of the city is almost perfectly clear.

## The Nihil

The Nihil appears as a massive crater, easily a mile across. The edge of the ground around the Nihil is blackened and glassy, with small spots every few inches that pulse with heat and light. A heavy fog seethes a few feet below the edge, and the fog is lit by a greenish glow coming from beneath. Occasionally, dark shapes move through the fog. They resemble nothing human.

Starting just a few inches below the burnt crust of the Nihil's edge, there is a long, gently sloping path that has obviously been carved with care. The path runs the entire circumference of the crater and leads downward in a spiral. The walls of the pit are black and dark gray. Anyone looking at the walls soon realizes that the rough-textured sides of the pit move slowly in an endless dance of pain. The lighter


## Hiroshima Memorial Peace Park

Haunt Level: 2

Memoriam Level: 3

All is not bleak here, however. In the heart of the city lies the Hiroshima Memorial Peace Park. A somber and moving site in the Skinlands, it projects incredibly strong emotions of both sadness and hope tinged with the heavy knowledge of its failure. The eternal flame casts a light that is visible from most locations with a clear view in the Shadowlands, and all servitors of Oblivion are distinctly uncomfortable in the direct light of its flame (roll Angst, difficulty 6 or suffer one wound level per round of exposure). This effect extends to the perimeter of the actual park, though many *oni* are instinctively uncomfortable in the light of the flame, and skulk from shadow to shadow through the clearer areas of the city. The Peace Park makes an effective safe area for any unfortunate enough to die in Hiroshima, yet it is more a prison than a fortress; *oni*, *akuna* and other creatures lurk in the shadows around the perimeter, waiting for any wraiths to stray from the protective light. Nonetheless, the Peace Park remains a destination of hardy and headstrong pilgrims, particularly veterans and victims of cancer.





areas of the walls are actually trapped souls, burned into the very fabric of the Nihil. Close examination shows that these tortured spirits are aware of everything going on around them, but unable to break free from their prison.

Directly above the Nihil, the sky is filled with rapidly swirling clouds. The storm boils and throws an eerie light outwards from time to time. From so short a distance, the sounds of a thousand screams comes from within the cloud. As with the distant ruins, shreds of burnt flesh swirl within the storm above. This is in actuality a Maelstrom. It has not moved since the explosion that destroyed Hiroshima 50 years earlier. Anyone foolish enough to attempt touching the Maelstrom is immediately yanked into its depths, never to be seen again.

This suspended Maelstrom is also the home of most of the Spectres in Hiroshima.

## Scene Three: Into The Nihil

*Lewis said he could taste the fission; it tasted like lead.*  
—Newsweek, July 24, 1995, "A bright light filled the plane."



The Cohort must actually enter the Nihil in order to retrieve the Artifact they seek. Unlike most Nihils, however, the Nihil of Pika Don is constantly open. The burning green mists of Pika Don's Nihil maintain the great gaping wound where Hiroshima once stood.

The spiraling pathway leading into the green mists is covered with a heavy soot. The soot is harmless, but hides many deep gaps in the actual pathway. Both Glowing Hands and Screamers tend to roam the path, making the trek a dangerous one. Characters who stand still and avoid contact with the Screamers need not fear Spectres or the other inhabitants of the depths. Just the same, the Glowing Hands will take full advantage of their habitat. The Hands tend to hide in the crevices of the trail, waiting for a wraith to pass before leaping out and attaching themselves to their victims.

A strong wind pulls against the Cohort as they move downward, drawing them faster and faster into the depths of the Nihil. Between the heavy soot and the wind, the characters need to make five consecutive successes (Dexterity + Athletics, difficulty 6) or be sucked down into the Nihil. Should the Cohort have come prepared for climbing into the Nihil and have ropes of other similarly useful relics, the difficulty for their downward climb is reduced to 4.

Any characters looking up will also notice that there is a new threat to their quest: another band of wraiths is in the process of heading down into the Nihil. While the characters' Cohort has an obvious head start, there is now competition for the prize.

## In the Pit

Use of any Arcanoi in the Nihil will immediately notify the Spectres that they have company. One Wounded Demon for each member of the Cohort will come up from the depths below in order to stop the characters. The Wounded Demons are hungry and do not negotiate.

The further into the great Nihil that the Cohort travels, the more treacherous the ground becomes. By the time they have reached the base of the chasm, just keeping one's footing is extremely difficult. The process of ascent should be daunting.

At the very center of the Nihil, a dark spine of what appears to be glass thrusts toward the Maelstrom far above. Aside from this, there is little to see at the bottom of the Nihil. The glowing green fog completely covers the ground up to knee height. Far above, the raging Maelstrom is barely visible through the heavy glowing mists. Every word spoken is amplified and echoes eerily.

As the Cohort approaches the very center of the Nihil, the glassy spire can be seen in greater detail. The tower is made up of countless bodies twisting and contorting in agony. The mouths of a thousand or more people are opened in perpetual silent screams, and the eyes of the people beg for mercy. Occasionally a hand will reach out briefly, and the fine detail allows the characters to see the hairline fractures that run through every part of the great crystalline spire. At the base of this great structure, the Artifact the Cohort rests in a cradle of crystalline souls.

## The Artifact

The Great Artifact of Hiroshima is none other than the atomic bomb which leveled the city in the Skinlands. Little Boy rests in the glowing mists atop the Nihil proper, though it looks little like it did before. Basically oval in shape, Little Boy is fully 10 feet around and 15 feet in length. The mas-

## Consequences of Theft

Little Boy is a very powerful Artifact, but just how powerful is anyone's guess. One thing is certain, however: the Spectres of Hiroshima will not touch the weapon. They are afraid of its power, and for understandable reasons. So long as the Cohort has Little Boy in their possession, they will remain unmolested by the Spectres (who have no desire to touch the thing in order to haul it back to its cradle). Even the mindless denizens of the pit will instinctively shy away; only the Hachiman Dragons will attack the thieves.





sive bomb glows with an inner light that far surpasses the heavy fog around it. The hellish glow is nearly blinding, and the shape generates a cold that is painful to the touch.

Anyone touching Little Boy for an extended period of time (one full Scene or more) suffers two levels of damage as the cold destroys part of their Corpus. Extended exposure to this hellish cold literally freezes the Corpus of any wraith to the point where it becomes brittle and shatters under its own weight.

Surrounding the Artifact are the six Hachiman Dragons. Extremely powerful, these warriors cannot be bargained with or bribed. Subverted by the Malfean decades ago, the Hachiman Dragons are faithful to their master, Pika Don. However, they are also loyal to Nippon. The characters, if they are sufficiently cunning, may well be able to convince the Hachiman Dragons to release Little Boy by convincing them that the bomb is the only way to finally bring an end to the Jade Emperor's subjugation of Japan.

Even if the characters cannot convince the Hachiman Dragons that they represent the Fist of Nippon, the group coming down behind them certainly does. Wise wraiths will recognize the opportunity here and understand that ambushing another Cohort of wraiths is likely to be a lot easier than taking on the Hachiman Dragons. Let the Fist of Nippon do the dirty work and then take the prize from them.

## Standard Cohort Member

**Nature:** Traditionalist

**Demeanor:** Survivor

**Circle:** The Fist of Nippon Hiroshima Expeditionary Team

**Physical:** Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

**Mental:** Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

**Talents:** Acting 1, Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Subterfuge 2

**Skills:** Firearms 2, Melee 3, Stealth 3, Survival 2

**Knowledges:** Bureaucracy 2, Enigmas 3, Investigation 1, Linguistics 2, Science 2

**Backgrounds:** Allies 4

**Passions:** Free Japan (Patriotism) 5, Destroy the Empire (Hate) 3

**Arcanoi:** Argos 2 (5 Dots in any of the following: Keening, Lifeweb, Moliarte, Outrage, Pandemonium, Phantasm, Puppetry, Usury)

**Fetters:** Varies

**Permanent Corpus:** 8

**Willpower:** 6

**Pathos:** 6



## The Earth Shattering Kaboom

In extremis, the characters could decide that they may as well detonate Little Boy, for whatever suicidally insane reasons may seem appropriate at the time. While certainly an interesting approach to the problem of encroaching enemies, the question of how to do so remains problematic.

First of all, very few characters are likely to have enough skill in nuclear engineering or thermonuclear weapons maintenance to actually detonate the bomb. It's not simply a matter of pressing a button; even in Artifact form an atomic bomb is a sophisticated piece of equipment unimaginably far removed from the daily experience of most characters.

Even if there is a character with sufficient skill to decipher a method of detonation, there is hardly likely to be time for the detailed study this will require. Examining an object that one can't even touch while being assaulted by a half-dozen rampaging Hachiman Dragons is a less than ideal way to go about it.

Ideally, the characters will retrieve the bomb and signal for pickup. They will be ferried home and appropriately rewarded. The bomb will disappear into the Jade Palace, where the Emperor's brightest and most loyal servants will attempt to decipher its secrets. Of course, the characters may well have second thoughts about the power they have placed in their Emperor's hands, and may wish to rectify their mistake....

Should the characters, by dint of outrageous luck, inhuman cleverness and ungodly intuition, actually manage to detonate the bomb, things get serious quickly. The explosion will tear open a Nihil covering the entire city, releasing Pika Don and his hordes of Spectres. The Sixth Great Maelstrom will unfurl itself, and as far away as nighted Stygia the Sunless Sea will rise and crash at the great gates. As events in the Shadowlands tend to be echoed in the Skinlands, some horrible catastrophe will overtake Hiroshima, which will set up a feedback loop with the Shadowlands, ripping the Nihil open even wider. The characters will almost certainly be incinerated instantly; if not, Pika Don will make a point of expressing his personal thanks to them.

Attempting to detonate Little Boy is not a recommended course of action.

P'o: The Martyr

Angst: 6

Image: Similar in number and appearance to the characters' Cohort

Thorns: Shadow Dice (Strength) 3

Dark Passions: Blow the Empire to hell and himself with it (Hatred) 5

Background: Just like the characters, the Cohort is here to retrieve the Great Artifact. Otherwise, they wouldn't be caught dead within 50 miles of the place.

Roleplaying Hints: These are not vile, Spectral foes. These are wraiths. Just as with the players, they have their fears and their weaknesses. The Storyteller may wish to expand and add depth to the Cohort, in order to make their impact on the characters even more significant. Destroying these wraiths should provide the characters' Shadows with plenty of good source material. After all, they're not evil. They are guilty only of wanting the same thing that the players do.

## Scene Four: The Journey Home

*On that day half a century ago, we felt pity but no remorse. In our view, the atom bomb had saved thousands of lives — quite possibly our own.*

— Osborn Elliot, "Eyewitness," an article in *Newsweek*, July 24, 1995



Even if the competing wraiths and the Hachiman Dragons have been dealt with, the Cohort must still bring their prize back out into the Shadowlands from the Nihil and turn it over to their superiors. The Jade Empire has provided a boat and flares, but unless the characters had the forethought to bring extra equipment, they now must physically carry Little Boy back up the long spiraling path out of the Nihil.

Once out of the Nihil of Pika Don, they must still work their way back to the harbor before they can expect any further assistance. Other teams of retrieval experts may still be lurking in the ruins, waiting for the characters to do the hard part before swooping in and stealing the prize. Potentially, the threat exists that the other groups could wrest the Artifact away with little or no trouble from characters weakened by a series of running battles.

The Cohort has one advantage over any bushwhackers, however. The Spectres will not bother them so long as they



possess Little Boy. Using Arcanoi in Hiroshima always brings the Spectres running. While it may have been true that few Spectres responded to the initial actions of the Cohort, the characters now have a very powerful Artifact in their possession, and the earlier skirmishes have now brought most of Hiroshima's Spectres into the area around the Nihil. Even if the characters use their Arcanoi to attract the Spectres, they are safe. The same is not true for any other wraiths in the area. As the characters look on, any Spectres brought out by the use of Arcanoi swarm through the area, consuming or destroying any wraiths who do not have possession of Little Boy. Any group attacking the characters in order to steal the bomb will rapidly find itself fighting a two-front battle.

If the characters do manage to avoid conflict in this manner, the Storyteller is encouraged to get into graphic detail as to the means of their opponents' demise.

Once safely away from any attempted hijackings, the characters have only to deliver the prize in order to gain their rewards.

But what about Little Boy? With so powerful a weapon in the hands of one ruler, what ramifications will the news bring? That matter is entirely in the hands of the Storyteller, who is encouraged to make the most of the situation.

## Dangers Along The Way



Several types of Spectres are extremely common in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Most of them have never been encountered in other areas, though whether or not the atomic explosions are responsible for their creation is uncertain. In addition, the region hosts creatures that appear to have crawled from the most tortured depths of the Tempest. Neither Spectre nor anything else known, beings such as the Burning Hands and the Screamers are as unique as they are terrifying.

Most of the Spectres will attack anything that catches their interest. The good news is that the characters normally have to work at getting noticed. Simply walking through the ruins of Hiroshima is not enough to catch the attention of the less human denizens. However, use of any Arcanoi is almost certain to get a character noticed. Once the Spectres have realized that they are not alone, they will attack. Any Spectres getting injured will call out in a hideous screeching voice and immediately draw others of their type to them.

Storytellers should avoid sending too many of the Spectres out in a group. Hiroshima is a fairly large city, and most of the Spectres will only be able to gather two to three more to them by calling out. The only exception is the Children of the Atom, who are unaware of anything save their own perpetual torment.



### Children of the Atom

**Nature:** Tormented Soul

**Demeanor:** Tormented Soul

**Physical:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

**Social:** Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0

**Mental:** Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 0

**Talents:** None

**Skills:** None

**Knowledges:** None

**Backgrounds:** None

**Passions:** Relive their demise eternally (Despair) 3, Flee the great explosion (Terror) 5

**Arcanoi:** None

**Fetters:** Hiroshima 5

**Permanent Corpus:** 10

**Shade Powers:** Burning (See Below)

**Willpower:** 1

**Angst:** 5

**Image:** When inactive, the Children of the Atom appear as silhouettes on the walls of the few standing buildings. When in their active form, the Children materialize as burning figures moving constantly and attempting to flee from some-





thing directly behind them. Any attempt to move the rubble where one of the Children is "resting" will immediately bring the Spectre into its active state.

**Background:** The Children of the Atom are effectively mindless *kuei*. They are forever trapped in the shadows where they were burned away in the nuclear conflagration that destroyed Hiroshima. The Children are incapable of rational thought, but will respond to the summoning calls of wraiths who attempt to communicate with them.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You are incapable of actual speech, but you are aware of everything that goes on around you. You are just beyond caring because the pain is too extreme. Writhe in pain; you're on fire! If someone tries to get your attention, hold out your arms and beg with your eyes for release from this eternal damnation.

**Storyteller's Note:** Burning is a Shade Power that costs 1 Angst. When Burning, the Children of the Atom release a hideous Spectral flame from all over their body. This flame causes two levels of Aggravated damage to any wraith touching it. The Children of the Atom do not consciously control this power, and it will remain active until they have once again expended all of their Angst. While inactive, the Children regenerate their Angst.

## Keloids

**Nature:** Maniac

**Demeanor:** Maniac

**Physical:** Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5

**Social:** Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0

**Mental:** Perception 2, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

**Talents:** Acting 2, Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 1

**Skills:** Stealth 4

**Knowledges:** None

**Backgrounds:** Allies 2, Haunt 3

**Passions:** Sociopathic loathing of everything that is not corrupted by Pika Don (Hate) 5

**Arcanoi:** Argos 3, Keening 4, Pandemonium 1

**Fetters:** Hiroshima 5

**Permanent Corpus:** 7

**Shade Powers:** Bind, Numbing the Heart, Pathos Drain

**Willpower:** 6

**Angst:** 10

**Image:** Keloids vary radically in their appearance. These Spectres are among the most vicious (and viscous) of all the servants of Oblivion roaming about Hiroshima. Most are only vaguely human-



oid, and have developed jagged mouths filled with hollow, needle-like teeth. They have earned their name primarily because of the thick, callous-like hide that covers each and every one of them. This hide is blistered and cracked, seeping a vile pus-like substance that burns when it touches a victim. It is this liquid which is the actual root of the Keloids' Shade Power: Numbing the Heart

**Background:** The Keloids are all that remain of many who were at Ground Zero when Little Boy detonated. Their deaths were instantaneous and almost painless, but Pika Don refused to let these wraiths seek their own way. Burning with the heat of his own radiation, the Malfean warped the spirits of the dead and corrupted them to serve as his food gatherers. The Keloids now exist solely to steal Pathos and feed it to the great Malfean. Of late, Pika Don has not been present to take his tithes, and the Keloids have become addicted to the extra power.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Giggle and drool. There is little you like more than feeding on the foolish wraiths who come into the area. It is true that there are fewer Spectres around Hiroshima of late, but only because the wraiths have learned to stay away. Now you feed on the weaker Spectres who come too close to you.

**Storyteller's Note:** The Keloids are well on the way to becoming Malfeans in their own right. Without Pika Don to steal the excess energies from them, many of the Keloids have taken to absorbing as much as they can from all that is around them. In fact, a cannibalistic food chain of Keloids is already in place, with greater beings tending and "farming" the lesser ones.



**Hachiman Dragons**

## Hachiman Dragons

**Nature:** Fanatic

**Demeanor:** Fanatic

**Physical:** Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3

**Social:** Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

**Mental:** Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

**Talents:** Alertness 5, Athletics 4, Dodge 4, Intimidation 4, Martial Arts 4

**Skills:** Melee 5, Stealth 5

**Knowledges:** Enigmas 4, Investigation 4, Occult 3

**Backgrounds:** Allies 5, Artifacts 5 (True Jade Katana, Banded Armor and Helmet)

**Passions:** Unfailingly serve the great master, Pika Don (Duty) 5, Free Nippon from the *gaijin* (Patriotism) 3

**Arcanoi:** Castigate 2, Fatalism 3, Moliat 3, Outrage 4, Way of the Farmer 4

**Fetters:** Hiroshima 2

**Permanent Corpus:** 9

**Shade Powers:** Bind, Rend the Lifeweb

**Willpower:** 8

**Angst:** 10

**Image:** These six warriors stand nobly in their full samurai regalia. Each wears the symbol of a different animal, and each bears a mask



**Keloids**



with the face of a demon. It is very hard to make out any fine details, however, as all of the Hachiman Dragons seem to be carved from the darkest night. They seem to absorb any light around them.

**Background:** The Hachiman Dragons were once rebels against the Jade Emperor. They stood ready to fight and defend their country against the vile Yu Huang and his minions. Elite troops, they were the lure used to bait the Imperial Army into Hiroshima in the last days before the Maelstrom. Unfortunately, they were not able to escape before the blast and Pika Don seized upon their souls as playthings. Now they serve the Malfean before Nippon, and guard the bomb that was their doom.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You do not speak to *gaijin* (foreigners). Anyone who is not from the Fist of Nippon is your enemy. If you encounter the Fist of Nippon, you will warn them away. If they continue forward, regretfully destroy them. Your mission is to protect the Artifact at any cost.

## Screamers

**Nature:** N/A

**Demeanor:** N/A

**Physical:** Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

**Social:** Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0

**Mental:** Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 1

**Talents:** Brawl 5



**Skills:** None

**Knowledges:** None

**Backgrounds:** None

**Passions:** None

**Arcanoi:** None

**Fetters:** None

**Permanent Corpus:** 7

**Shade Powers:** Bind, Spectral Scream

**Willpower:** 2

**Angst:** 7

**Image:** The Screamers are devoid of any human features. These Spectres look like gray, tattered lumps of meat which float about aimlessly, even when there is no breeze. Thin tendrils run from the main body of the Screamers. These strands apparently work as a sensory organ, as the Screamers remain inert until one of the tendrils is touched (or touches something else).

**Background:** Ever since the explosion, the Screamers have been present. The most common belief held by those who have encountered these creatures is that they are fragmented sections of wraiths who have not been able to locate the remainders of their Corpus. Many believe that this accidental fragmentation has left the Screamers locked into an endless struggle to find the rest of themselves and coalesce. Oth-



ers feel that they are simply beasts of the Tempest who have been vomited forth through the Nihil into the Shadowlands.

**Roleplaying notes:** Just sort of sit there and wait. If touched, scream and wrap yourself around anything that moves.

## Wounded Demons

**Nature:** Maniac

**Demeanor:** Maniac

**Physical:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

**Social:** Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0

**Mental:** Perception 5, Intelligence 1, Wits 1

**Talents:** Alertness 4, Brawl 5, Dodge 2

**Skills:** Stealth 5

**Knowledges:** None

**Backgrounds:** None

**Passions:** None

**Arcanoi:** Moliare 4

**Fetters:** Hiroshima 3

**Permanent Corpus:** 7

**Shade Powers:** Shark's Teeth, Ectoplasmic Tentacles

**Willpower:** 2

**Angst:** 8

**Image:** Wounded Demons are humanoid, but only just barely. Many have completely lost any hint of human features and have adapted to a more bestial form. The raw, red hide of the demons is covered with open sores and festering blisters. None of the Demons have hair. Most have faces which are grossly out of proportion with the rest of their bodies. Large mouths hang constantly open, often blending into the upper torso of the neckless Spectres. These mouths are filled with jagged yellow teeth and numerous tongues. Most of the Wounded Demons tend to emit a high-pitched whistling shriek from the smaller mouths on each of their tongues as they charge.

**Background:** Only a decade ago, when the Fist of Nippon was struggling to establish a stronghold in Hiroshima, the Wounded Demons came pouring out of the Nihil in a seemingly endless wave. Since then, the Demons have occupied all of the surrounding buildings and even learned to hide themselves in the rubble that occupies most of the city.

**Roleplaying Hints:** If it moves, bite it. Repeat the process until there is nothing left but empty air to gnash your teeth against.







## Glowing Hands

**Nature:** N/A

**Demeanor:** N/A

**Physical:** Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 1

**Social:** Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0

**Mental:** Perception 3, Intelligence 0, Wits 0

**Talents:** None

**Skills:** None

**Knowledges:** None

**Backgrounds:** None

**Passions:** None

**Arcanoi:** None

**Fetters:** None

**Permanent Corpus:** 5

**Shade Powers:** Chameleon Parasite, Seeding (See Below)

**Willpower:** 4

**Angst:** 5

**Image:** The Glowing Hands are small gourd-shaped masses with numerous skeletal appendages. These pseudopods resemble extremely long fingers with at least 20 joints. The

main body of these spider-like Spectres is usually no larger than a softball.

**Background:** The Glowing Hands seem to be the most common of the Spectres in the area. These parasites normally hover within the depths of the Nihil, climbing the walls and following an intricate path that only they understand. From time to time, large numbers of these Spectres fall from the bowels of the Maelstrom floating above the Nihil.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Find a wraith and make yourself at home. Feed merrily.

**Storyteller Notes:** Seeding is a Shade Power unique to the Glowing Hands. The Hands are capable of "reproduction" in the form of seeds which they plant on their unknowing hosts. For every day the victim of a Seeding is left untreated, they will lose one Pathos and one Corpus. These losses come as a result of a new Glowing Hand taking part of the wraith's Corpus as its own. After five days a new Glowing Hand is born, destroying its host utterly.

Removing a Glowing Hand requires a delicate use of the Moliarte art Rend, otherwise the Hand cannot be taken out save by hacking out the infected portion of the wraith's corpus.



## Akuna and Oni

*Akuna* and *oni* are the names given to the creatures of Oblivion living in or near the blasted wastelands of what were once the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Whether malformed by the physical environment or the human capacity for such total devastation, these are nightmares made corpus.

The only distinction between the *oni* and the *akuna* is that the former is seemingly mindless and instinctually driven, whereas the latter operates with a malevolent intelligence. In this respect they are more similar to Shades and Doppelgangers than to *kuei* of the mainland.

Typical statistics (Numbers in Parentheses are for *akuna*):

**Nature:** Maniac

**Demeanor:** Maniac

**Physical:** Strength 5, Dexterity 2 (3), Stamina 5

**Social:** Charisma 0 (3), Manipulation 0 (3), Appearance 0

**Mental:** Perception 2, Intelligence 1 (3), Wits 3

**Talents:** Alertness 2, Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Stealth 3

**Skills and Knowledges:** Only for *akuna*

**Arcanoi:** Hive Mind (*akuna* only) 1

**Permanent Corpus:** 7

**Shade Powers:** Variable



**Willpower:** 0 (5)

**Angst:** 8

**Image:** These creatures are a litany of nightmare: thick, dull-hued carapaces often cover disproportionately exaggerated musculature; extremities vary from hyper-developed thighs and biceps to spindly, structurally impossible calves or forearms; bony ridges and curving spikes sprout from innumerable surfaces; animalistic features combine far beyond the boundaries of kingdom; facial features are often spread throughout the form, such as eyes in the hands or abdominal mouths; chthonic, combat effective tentacles often extrude from any orifice. (Oftentimes these deformities do aggravated damage at Storyteller's discretion). Despite the individual differences, *oni* and *akuna* are uniform in the degree of deformity and horrific appearance.

**Roleplaying Hints:** There's a big world out there that's waiting for you to sink your teeth into it. If anything moves, chow down — unless of course it's someone carrying the bomb. Otherwise, let your appearance do half your work for you. Terrified food tastes much better.

**Storyteller Note:** Individually, *oni* are restricted to physical powers such as Shark's Teeth, Ectoplasmic Tentacles and Bind, though creative Storytellers can think of many more — the more disgusting the better. *Akuna* are just as likely to possess



these physical abilities, but may also possess rudimentary Arcanoi. Only in rare cases should an *akuna* possess advanced Arcanoi; such is the stuff of rumor and legend.

Due to their horrific appearance *akuna* and *oni* often cause feelings of horror in those they encounter that go beyond simple fear due to circumstance. Any wraith viewing these

creatures for the first time must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 5) to avoid fleeing or cowering (the result of a botch) in terror. Familiarity does bring a certain degree of resolve; a wraith with sufficient experience need not roll at all, though her friends might be more than a little suspicious that she did not run as well.





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