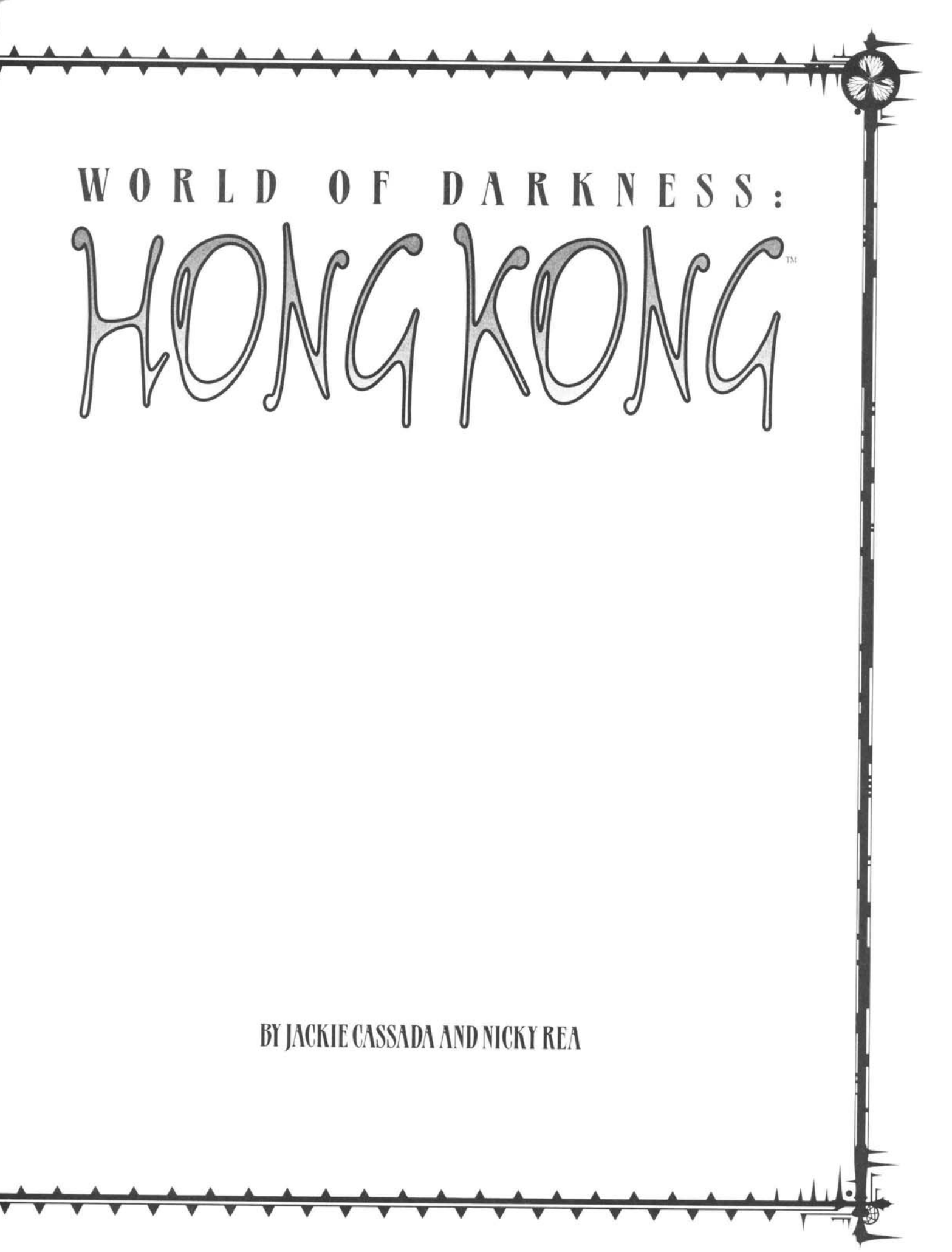


WORLD OF DARKNESS: HONG KONG™



A WORLD OF DARKNESS SOURCEBOOK FOR VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE®



WORLD OF DARKNESS: HONG KONG™

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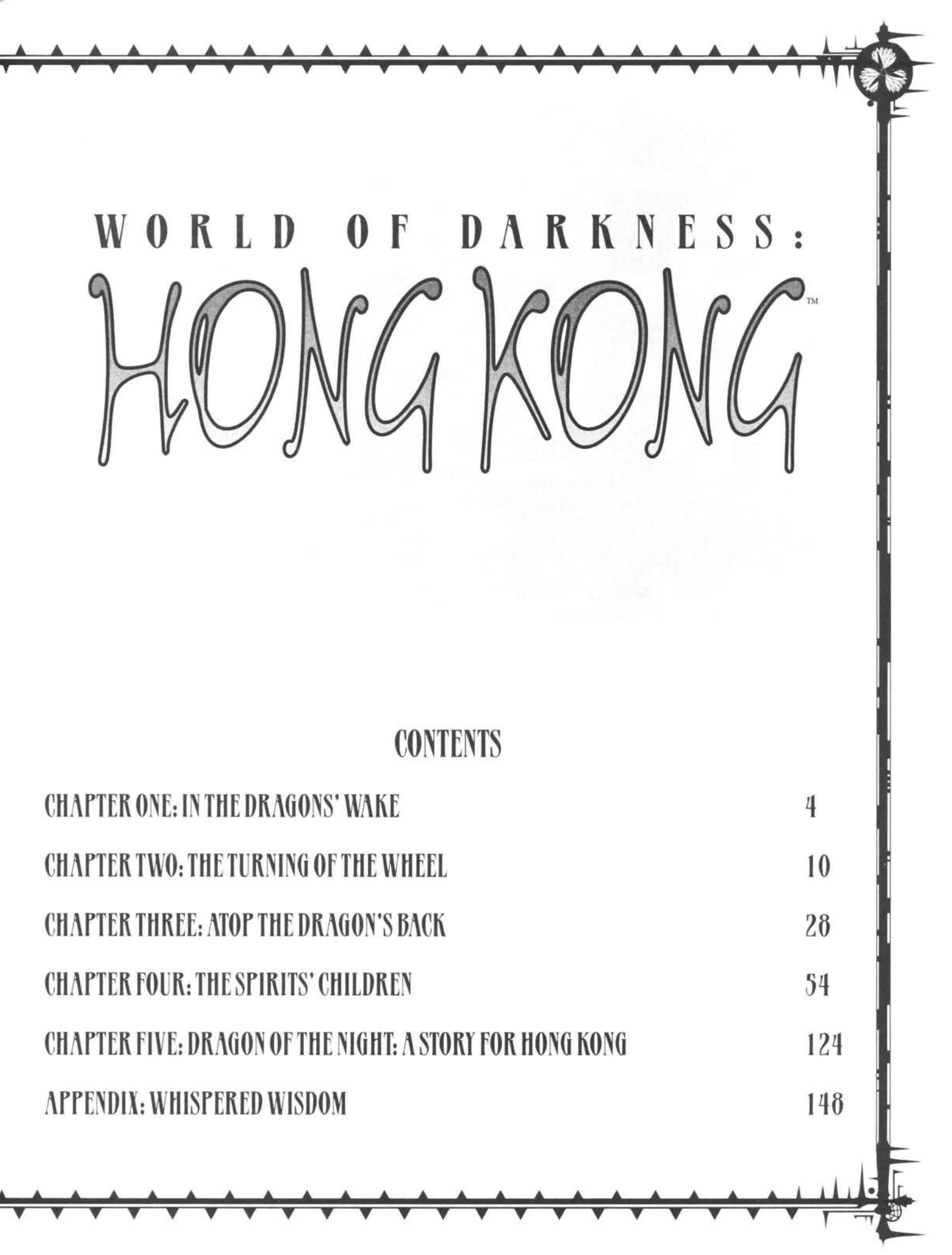
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CHAPTER ONE: IN THE DRAGONS' WAKE

On July 1, 1997, the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong reverted to the People's Republic of China. Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China, theoretically able to retain the laws, culture and lifestyle it had held under the British. Some residents saw this change in government as the just restoration of China's territorial rights. Others eyed the Chinese occupation warily, fearing a loss of rights and, in some cases, personal freedoms and fortunes.

For the supernatural denizens of the World of Darkness, the repossession of Hong Kong signifies more than just a transfer of power. Some wanderers of the night say the reversion of Hong Kong to its place in the Middle Kingdom portends a larger shift in the Great Cycle of Being—one that will unleash a whirlwind of chaos and carnage on East and West alike.

THEME

The tripartite themes of uncertainty, risk and fatalism reflect the changes afoot in Hong Kong and, by extension, in the Middle Kingdom, or World of Darkness Asia. A cosmic cycle winds down to its inevitable and recurrent end, rolling from the current Fifth Age of the world to the catastrophic Sixth. The exact time of the transition between Ages is a matter for speculation and prophesy. Gambling and risk-taking are endemic to Hong Kong—from multibillionaires to boat people, everyone plays the odds. Now the stakes are

higher than they have ever been. Above all, however, looms the sense that the gods have already written the future in the stars, in the bamboo sticks, and in the turning of the Wheel of the Ages. This paradox—that nothing is certain, yet everything transpires according to the celestial patterns—makes life for supernaturals and mortals a constant mystery and a never-ending game of chance.

MOOD

Hong Kong attracts the exotic, the strange, the bizarre and the supernatural. Here, at the gateway to the East, the lines between this world and the spirit worlds blur. Belief in the existence of celestial and infernal creatures is normal. Dragons sleep in the earth, ghosts watch over their living relatives, shapechangers and spirit beings mingle with mortals in the crowded streets. Kuei-jin vampires stalk their prey amid the clamor of Hong Kong's endless nightlife, while sorcerers and mystic warriors strive to slow down or speed up the turning of the Wheel.

Though Hong Kong is historically part of the Middle Kingdom, the influx of Westerners—including supernatural beings—over the last century and a half has left an indelible mark on the island and its neighboring territories. Western and Eastern cultures exist in an uneasy balance. Unlike the perfect symmetry of Yin and Yang, values and philosophies face off against one another, vying for precedence.



While Western vampires strive to keep their presence hidden from the mortals around them, their Eastern cousins do not recognize the necessity for an elaborate Masquerade. Mortals suspect their existence but believe that it is only “natural” for the unnatural to have a place in the scheme of things.

This awareness extends to all of Hong Kong’s supernatural denizens. Unlike their counterparts in Europe and the Americas, these beings align themselves by common interests and allegiances rather than by “species.” The enmity between Kindred and werewolves, so common in the West, has little meaning for the Kuei-jin and the hengeyokai of the East. The dividing lines that create enemies and make companions or co-conspirators are determined instead by the particular goals and factions of the supernatural beings in question.

For Western supernaturals, this creates a confusing and often disturbing ambiance. The old standards for judging in whom to trust and who to watch out for no longer serve to distinguish friend from foe.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

World of Darkness: Hong Kong offers a unique opportunity for storytelling. In addition to information on the history and geography of one of the world’s most puzzling and exotic locales, this sourcebook provides the means for Storytellers and players to participate in a chronicle that touches on all facets of supernatural existence.

Each chapter focuses on a particular aspect of Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories, giving historical perspectives, geographical information, and descriptions of some of the prominent “movers and shakers” in the region. In addition, this book provides a complete story that illustrates the intricate interplay among the living, the dead and the undead in Hong Kong.

“Chapter One: In the Dragons’ Wake” serves as an introduction to **World of Darkness: Hong Kong**, setting the stage through mood, theme and local color. A list of helpful (or just interesting) references gives Storytellers and players directions on where to go to embellish the details presented here. A lexicon of terms used throughout this book also appears in this chapter.

“Chapter Two: The Turning of the Wheel” chronicles the history of Hong Kong in the present (Fifth) Age, from its earliest inhabitants to the coming of Western trade and eventual ownership. Since the mortal realm intersects with the spirit worlds, the mythic history of Hong Kong occupies equal prominence with mundane affairs. Sidebars highlight cultural and philosophical topics. A section on current events discusses the recent transfer of power from Britain to the People’s Republic of China and the implications for the mortal and supernatural communities.

“Chapter Three: Atop the Dragon’s Back” details the local geography, describing the major regions of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the

New Territories. The sights, sounds, textures and atmosphere of Hong Kong come to life here. Hong Kong attracts large numbers of visitors each year; this chapter explains where they go, what they see and what they do when they get there.

"Chapter Four: The Spirits' Children" introduces the major inhabitants of the Middle Kingdom. The change in rulership of the former British colony has catapulted Eastern supernaturals into prominence, but a few Western Kindred, werewolves and other magical creatures remain, for they are reluctant to leave the land that has been their home. Here the reader can meet vampires from both East and West, Garou and other members of the Changing Breeds, wraiths who serve the Dark Kingdom of Jade, as well as those few allied with Stygia, and changelings from both sides of the sunrise. In addition, the war for Ascension reaches new heights, as Traditions and Technocracy find their allegiances are not as clear as they once were. Even stranger creatures make their homes in Hong Kong; a pair of mummies watch events unfold from the sidelines — unprepared, despite their vast stores of knowledge — for the roles they are to play in the turning of the Wheel of the Ages. And yes, here be dragons....

"Chapter Five: Dragon of the Night" brings together the major elements of the preceding chapters in a story that combines several aspects of World of Darkness Asia. Beginning in the Dark Kingdom of Jade with the loss of a powerful artifact, the story breaks through the Wall between the living and the dead, threading its way through the mortal world until it reaches its conclusion in the Yin and Yang Worlds.

"Appendix: Whispered Wisdom" details information on the spirit realms of the Middle Kingdom and how supernatural creatures can travel between them and the material world. Furthermore, this section details the real secrets behind events in the story.

BACKGROUND MATERIALS

Storytellers wishing to embellish the information in this book can take advantage of numerous resources available in libraries and bookstores. A few helpful titles appear below.

FICTION

The Last Six Million Seconds, by John Burdett, is a murder mystery that captures the tension and intrigue accompanying the transfer of power. Extremely graphic scenes of violence, while gruesome, bring a dark realism to the novel. *Last Year in Hong Kong*, by Robert Elegant, provides a poignant description of an impossible love affair against the background of imminent political change. *Kowloon Tong*, by Paul Theroux, offers an introspective and broodingly cautionary tale about the tribulations of foreigners who elect to remain in Hong Kong. *Hong Kong, China*, by Ralph Arnote, provides a typical "blockbuster" approach to current events (complete with bad love scenes). *Tai-Pan* and *Noble House*, by James Clavell, cover Hong Kong's history during its founding and the 1960s with the author's characteristic panoramic touch.



NONFICTION

Guidebooks are not just for tourists anymore. Many excellent travel guides depict Hong Kong and its surroundings. Of particular note, *Travellers' Tales: Hong Kong* and *Travellers' Tales of Old Hong Kong* present essays on life, geography and culture rather than the straightforward "go here, do this" approach of standard travel literature. *Fodor's Citypack: Hong Kong* provides information about the region in condensed form, while other travel guides such as the *Insight Guides: Hong Kong*, *Frommer's Hong Kong*, and *Fodor's 97: Hong Kong* explore the area in greater depth.

Other nonfiction titles shed light on both China and Hong Kong from decidedly Western perspectives. *Hong Kong*, by Jan Morris, demonstrates an insightful (though somewhat dated) assessment of Hong Kong's vigor and sordidness. *China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Inc.*, by Willem van Kemenade, provides an up-to-date evaluation of the impact of Chinese consolidation over their old territories. *City on the Rocks*, by Kevin Rafferty, while written almost 10 years ago, depicts the history of Hong Kong and looks guardedly forward to what is now the present. *Fragrant Harbor: Early Photographs of Hong Kong*, by John Warner, brings to life the buildings and people of 19th-century Hong Kong.

Books on traditional Chinese topics such as *feng shui*, the *I Ching*, martial arts and Chinese mythology abound. Most libraries have at least a few of each. Don't forget to check out the children's sections for Chinese folk tales and myths.

FILMS

Hong Kong has been the hub for the martial-arts film industry for many years. The films of Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan, besides their obvious cult appeal, often feature Hong Kong settings. Any Hong Kong films directed by John Woo are also a must. *Dragon*, the life story of Bruce Lee, has some stunning harbor scenes and provides a glimpse of life in the frantic and effusive Hong Kong of the 1970s, as does the James Bond movie *The Man with the Golden Gun*.

WORLD OF DARKNESS RESOURCE MATERIAL

This is a World of Darkness sourcebook, containing information from all five lines of the Storyteller System. Storytellers and players can benefit from any or all of the following rulebooks and supplements: **Vampire: The Masquerade**, **Kindred of the East**, **Werewolf: The Apocalypse**, **Mage: The Ascension**, **Wraith: The Oblivion**, **Changeling: The Dreaming**, **A World of Darkness 2nd Edition**, **Dark Kingdom of Jade**, and **Mummy 2nd Edition**. In addition, information on Hong Kong and Eastern supernaturals can be found in **Bastet**, **The Book of Crafts** and the forthcoming **Hengeyokai** and **Demon Hunter X**.

LEXICON

The following terms are used throughout this supplement. Additional words and phrases may be found in **Kindred of the East**, **Dark Kingdom of Jade** and other upcoming Eastern supplements.

Amah: a female housekeeper or servant

Ancestor: roughly equivalent to a "prince"

Cathayan vampire: Eastern vampire (see **Kuei-jin**)

Cheongsam: Chinese-style dress, fitted to outline the body and with a long slit up the side

Chi: the mystical energy of the Great Cycle

Chop: A personal seal or stamp depicting a Chinese character or two that sound like a person's name. Each is unique and difficult to forge. They are often used in place of, or along with, personal signatures.

Dai pai dong: a street stall that sells food or snacks

Dragon boat: A long, narrow boat that holds several oarsmen. Usually decorated to resemble a dragon, the crafts are used in the races on Dragon Boat Day.

Feng shui: literally, "wind and water"; geomantic art that specializes in the proper and auspicious alignment of buildings, graves, and interiors

COMMON PHRASES

Cantonese

nei ho ma
m'goy ching
nei gwei sing ah?
or sing...
joy gin
cheung mun, gay dim le?
deui mjyuh
Heung gong
Gau luhng
San gaai
Saan deng
Cheung wan
Seal sam
Lay say yun
Gow men ah!

Mandarin

Ni hao
Xiexie
Nin jiao shenme mingze
wo jiao...
zai jian
Zhege duoshao qian?
Dui buqi

English

How are you?
Thank you
What is your name?
My name is...
Good-bye
How much does it cost?
I'm sorry
Hong Kong
Kowloon
The New Territories
The Peak
Central
Danger/beware
You're a dead man
Help

Gaido: motorized sampans used as water-taxis to ferry passengers, usually used to take passengers from Kowloon to the outer islands such as Lamma and Lantau

Godown: warehouse

Gweilo: "Ghost man." A term used by the Chinese to identify all Westerners (much like the term "paleface"). Once a derogatory term, it is now accepted as a word that identifies non-Asians.

Hengeyokai: shapeshifters

Hong: a major company

Hukou: a permit that designates where someone is to live

Joss Sticks: incense

Junk: Large boat with a high deck, flat bottom and overhanging stern. Fitted with triangular sails, usually colorful. The boat most identified with China (along with dragon boats). Though usually confined to coastal sailing, they are seaworthy, if slow.

Kapoo Gwei: vampire (any)

Kin-jin: Western vampires

Kuei-jin: Eastern vampires

Kumo: goblin spiders

Mahjong: A Chinese game played with tiles. Fortunes can be won or lost playing mahjong. Many citizens of Hong Kong are addicted to the game.

Middle Kingdom: World of Darkness Asia

Morlau: Literally, "black ghost." (All people outside of Cantonese lands were thought to be ghosts, hence the term.) It is like the word *gweilo*, but *morlau* denotes a brown or black stranger (non-Chinese) rather than a Caucasian.

Pat kwa: Colorful octagonal mirrors placed in windowsills or hung outside windows; the superstitious believe that they protect occupants by deflecting or repelling evil through the mirrors' reflections. (Bruce Lee's *pat kwa* was blown away by Typhoon Dot; Hong Kong believers think he thus became vulnerable to evil spirits seeking his powerful Chi and died.)

P'o: the inner Beast (for Kuei-jin), the Shadow (for Eastern wraiths)

Samfoo: black pajama-like clothing associated with the Hakka people and many peasant Chinese

Sampan: small, flat-bottomed boat, often used as a taxi to ferry people about the harbor and to the boats in the typhoon shelter

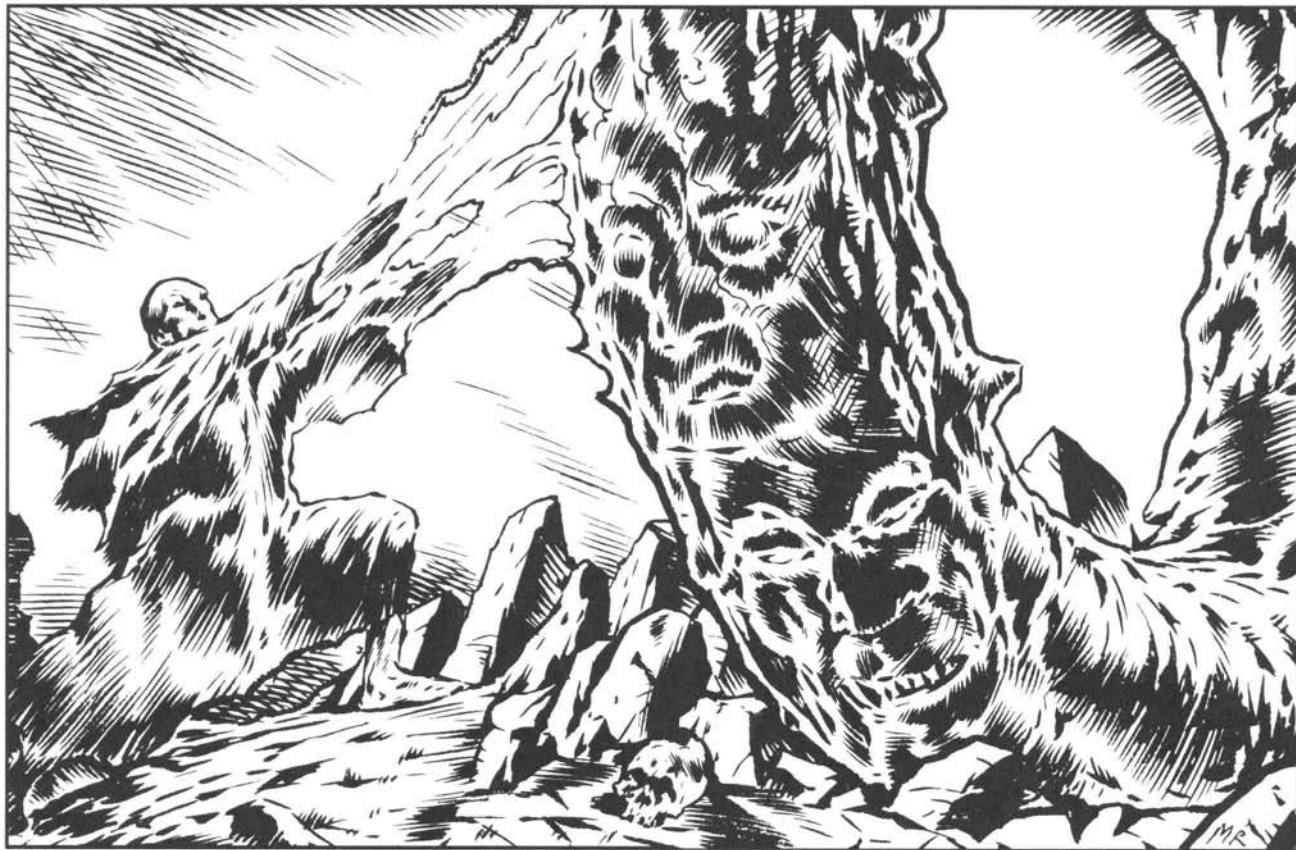
Shen: supernatural creatures

Snake-head: someone who smuggles illegal immigrants

Tai-pan: Boss of a major company. *Gweilo* became particularly attached to this designation.

Yin: passive principle, entropy, darkness

Yang: active principle, light, creativity





CHAPTER TWO: THE TURNING OF THE WHEEL

Squeezed between giant antagonists crunching huge bones of contention... [Hong Kong] has achieved within its own narrow territories a co-existence which is baffling, infuriating, incomprehensible and works splendidly — on borrowed time in a borrowed place.

— Han Suyin

TELLING THE TALE OF AGES

To speak of the history of Hong Kong is to speak of the history of China in microcosm. Though claimed by the British throughout most of its modern existence, this small region remains essentially Chinese in character — and to the inhabitants of the Middle Kingdom, myth is often more reliable than history. History, after all, is written by the winners and, therefore, is seldom true; myth is written from the heart by dreamers and poets, and sometimes by the myths themselves.

Throughout this “history” of the Middle Kingdom are interspersed legendary or mythical events. Without the wisdom these events impart, the background of the region becomes mere repetition of dry facts concerning Hong Kong’s past. Do not be misled by these “real” occurrences; the *shen* know which version is ultimately more important.

THE WHEEL OF AGES

Like the spokes of a great wheel, the Twelve Ages of the world flow outward from its core or heart. All is centered in the beginning, but as the wheel turns and a new Age begins, so do things spin away from that center, drifting farther from oneness into disharmony. Things become worse as the Ages advance, turning from paradise into legend, from loss to devastation. Yet, when the nadir is reached in the Sixth Age, halfway around the karmic circle, the wheel begins its upswing again, passing from sorrow into joy and back again to the First Age, where the Cycle begins again. All history is but a working out of this Great Cycle, all strife a necessary turning of the wheel. Thus, while no sane being truly wants the death, destruction, horror and agony that the Sixth Age promises to bring, those who understand that “this too shall pass away” accept it and seek to fulfill their roles in the turning of the Wheel of Ages.



THE FIRST AGE

The First Age was not an Age at all, but a oneness of being in a time so remote that there was no movement to the celestial clock. Heaven's will was All, for All were One, seamlessly melded — with no differences, no disagreements, no tension and no strife. Yet, Heaven foresaw that for all its unity and greatness, it lacked change against which to measure its perfect stillness.

THE AGE OF BEAUTY

All divided and became two, opposite, yet balanced one by the other. So began the forces of Yin and Yang. Yin denotes the passive force that reacts to stimuli and breaks down that which is made, while Yang is the active partner, the force of creation. Among the *shen*, these forces are often called the Ebon Dragon and the Scarlet Queen. Though Yin is considered female, its personification is the Ebon Dragon — he who contemplates and reflects. The Ebon Dragon is the force of cold reason and destruction. Yang, usually considered masculine, is symbolized by the Scarlet Queen — she who feels and initiates. The Scarlet Queen is the force of fiery emotion and creativity.

With this division, each one half of the whole, each moving in reaction to the other, the Ebon Dragon and the Scarlet Queen joined in an eternal dance, ever circling. And as they danced, the Wheel of Ages began to move. The Second Age came to be. Called the Age of Beauty, it was a time when the Ebon Dragon and Scarlet Queen began to breathe and their breath called into being the Ten Thousand Things — dragons, gods and spirits, who took up places in and under the earth and among the clouds. And Heaven smiled, for the Two did Heaven's will.

Some of the Ten Thousand whom Heaven placed in position within the spirit worlds grew tainted, taking on an imbalance of Yin or Yang. These creatures became demons and monsters. Despite this change, the Second Age was paradise.

THE AGE OF LEGENDS

With the coming of the Third Age, the Age of Legends, the Great Cycle began to move faster. Humans came into existence, beings of both Yin and Yang. Dragons birthed during the Second Age lay down within the sparkling seas,

creating land on which the humans could live. Kuei-jin and other spirit guardians watched over the newly born, driving away monsters and demons who might harm them. Yet sometime during that age, corruption surfaced. Where humans had offered their Chi (life essence) to their guardians in grateful recognition of their help, now those same guardians stole the Chi, both that of humans and of other *shen*. The spirits cried out against the theft of their Chi.

THE AGE OF BEAUTIFUL SADNESS

With that cry began the Fourth Age, known as the Age of Beautiful Sadness, for many wondrous things passed away from the Middle Kingdom. This Age saw the wall between the World of Spirit and the Middle World grow thick. The Yin and Yang Worlds separated from the Middle Kingdom. Heaven cursed the Kuei-jin, taking from them the knowledge of how to breathe and with it the ability to inhale the Chi of the world, so that they must ever after steal their Chi to nourish themselves. As the Ebon Dragon and the Scarlet Queen failed to discipline their unruly children and restore the balance, so they were also punished. The dragons who formed the foundation of the land slid into sleep and became imprisoned in stone. Also during the Fourth Age, the Cathayan Five Courts and Hundred Corpse Families were born, and Cathayan civilization developed its essential character.

THE AGE OF DARKNESS

Some 500 years ago, the sages say, the Fifth Age began. Roughly corresponding to the coming of Western barbarians and the opening up of China, this modern era is known as the Age of Darkness. It marks a decided decline in the fortunes of both mortals and *shen*. Traditional values and beliefs have fallen into disrespect, *shen* refuse openly to perform their duties, and Chi is corrupted or destroyed. Greed, competition, ruthlessness and self-aggrandizement at the expense of all others skip hand-in-hand with repression, rage, anxiety and hatred. The Wheel turns; few doubt that the Sixth Age is almost upon us.

THE AGE OF SORROW

The lowest point on the Great Wheel, the Sixth Age, is called the Age of Sorrow. Many *shen* believe that the Sixth Age will be a time of titanic upheaval, an apocalypse of unbelievable proportions. Monstrous Yama Kings and their demon minions will arise to rule over this violent and terrible time, slaying wantonly, draining away the land's Chi and issuing in a reign of darkness and terror. Some *shen* believe that the Yin and Yang Worlds will reunite with the Middle

Kingdom, with dragons and spirits once again free to walk the world. Those who believe so also look for this time to begin the turning of the Wheel back to the positive, moving it into an upswing to a better Seventh Age, then an Eighth, and so on, back to the First Age and unity again.

Other *shen* are not so optimistic. They believe that the weight of disorder in the world will slow the Wheel so much that it will stop turning altogether, grinding to a halt before it can climb back to the zenith. Thus, the Middle Kingdom will come to an end, with matter and spirit forever sundered.

Whatever happens, though, the Wheel moves. The passage of the Ages is inevitable. Whether it brings apocalypse or salvation, none can say; they can only accept it, for that is the way of the world.

RELIGION AND SUPERSTITION

To understand the culture of Hong Kong requires an understanding of the philosophies and schools of thought that shaped China. Hong Kong has three major Chinese or Eastern religions — Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism — as well as Christianity (Catholic and almost all Protestant denominations), Judaism, Islam and other Oriental faiths. Some have few adherents, but all are tolerated and granted religious freedom — thus far.

Most of Hong Kong's people practice the three traditional Chinese religions. Hong Kong boasts hundreds of temples and shrines, located in the streets, countryside and even homes. Many folk practice more than one faith — attending Mass, for example, before burning incense and having their fortunes told in a Taoist temple. Further, there is a cross-pollination, as Buddhist deities may be worshipped in Taoist temples, as is the case with Kuan Yin, Buddhist Goddess of Mercy.

Both religion and so-called superstition form patterns of belief that provide the backdrop against which Oriental thought can be examined. Chinese (and the people of Hong Kong are essentially Chinese) typically adhere to value systems that differ from their Western counterparts. Many of the same things are important to them (wealth, happiness, physical well-being), but other concerns — personal honor, fulfilling one's Dharma, providing for one's family and achieving harmony, for example — have equal value and are often little understood by *gweilo* (literally "ghost men," so named because of their pale faces, for it was believed only ghosts lived in the lands beyond China; the word indicates someone of Western descent).

Hong Kong's *shen* population embrace these beliefs every bit as fervently as their mortal counterparts. Indeed, many *shen* are even more bound up with these forces, it being the *shen*'s cosmic duty to assist the spirits in their tasks.



THE CHINESE FUNERAL

Death, the afterlife and ancestor worship are essential features of Chinese religion, and the Chinese funeral is designed to ensure that a dead soul has everything it needs in the afterlife. White-robed mourners, weeping, copiously, burn hell-money and paper models of yachts, houses and even mobile phones, items that may prove useful to the spirit of their departed relative. In order to speed the soul's path to its reward, mourners offer a veritable banquet to please the gods. Additionally, the funeral must be held on an auspicious day, which is determined by a fortune-teller, so there is frequently some delay between death and burial.

TAOISM

Dating from the sixth century B.C., Taoism is a philosophy that advocates following a path known as Tao or "the Way." Those who follow Taoist teachings try to understand the nature of all things — including their own natures. This introspective path seeks perfection and unity with all things. Taoist gods are legendary figures, beings formerly of the Middle Kingdom who led lives worthy of imitation. Each god has a sphere of influence dictated by aspects of its former earthly form (such as Man, God of Literature, who is always depicted holding a brush with which to write). Taoists search for immortality through harmony, alchemy and prophecy. Despite Taoism's introspective character, Taoist temples are bright, colorful places filled with the perfume of incense that cater to all sorts of fortune-telling. Taoism is the most popular local religion, seldom practiced by non-Chinese. It's often associated with alchemy and the search for immortality, and is linked to the supernatural — self-mutilation, hot coal dances, witchcraft, magic, and fortune-telling are all evident on visiting a Taoist temple during festivals, such as Yuen Lan.

CONFUCIANISM

Confucius' philosophy has become a religion in the 2500 years since he died. Concerned with piety, humanitarianism and devotion to the family, the underlying ideals of Confucianism are linchpins of Chinese life and thought. Emphasizing loyalty and education, Confucianism espouses respectful behavior toward one's superiors and parents, encouraging hierarchy and the acceptance of one's place within the social spectrum. The least common of the Eastern religions practiced in Hong Kong, Confucianism nonetheless colors the ideals of all Chinese — in principle, if not in actual practice. Its emphasis on keeping to one's ordained place led to its repudiation in China when both the Nationalists, then the Communists, gained power and overthrew the old imperial hierarchical system.

BUDDHISM

Imported from India in the first century, Buddhism centers around the idea that the suffering of the world can be relieved only through the attainment of personal enlightenment. Called nirvana ("extinction"), this occurs when the self is extinguished. Nirvana, though nearly impossible to achieve, can be reached through proper meditation. Though there are several sects of Buddhism, the branch that is most popular in China is the Mahayana ("Great Wheel") School. It strives for enlightenment through following the example of Gautama Buddha, who lived in India in the sixth century B.C. It is the second most popular religion here. Though Buddhist temples are not as bright as Taoist ones, they are built frequently in relaxing, beautiful surroundings conducive to meditation.

CHRISTIANITY

While many practitioners are sincere in their beliefs, other Chinese convert to Christianity (at least nominally) so that their children may attend parochial schools. In these private institutions, children receive an excellent education, which once almost guaranteed them acceptance at Hong Kong University (considered the key to employment, as important banks and corporations give priority to HKU graduates in hiring — mostly due to their greater familiarity with English). Other practical concerns encourage Hong Kong's Chinese to adopt Christianity: Christian charities provide funds for financially strapped adherents, and certain businesses show preference to Christian employees.

SUPERSTITION

Superstition is Hong Kong's true religion. No matter what faith they follow, almost all Chinese believe occult forces control their destiny. Considering China's more than 5000 years of civilization, who is to say they are wrong? Of most immediate concern is the almost universal belief in *joss* (luck). *Joss* determines whether someone advances in business, finds a suitable wife, wins at the racetrack, or even contracts a life-threatening disease. Steps can, of course, be taken to influence one's *joss* — burning incense or promising donations to various gods in return for their intercession, wearing the proper colors, and getting out of bed on the correct side all might help someone attract good *joss* or deflect bad *joss*. Working hard, putting aside savings, being frugal, making the right friends and pleasing the boss don't hurt either.

From arranging the furniture in certain ways (see also the section on *feng shui*), to writing on "lucky" red paper, to consulting astrologers for auspicious dates, to providing ancestors with a good view from their gravesites in hopes that they will send good fortune, Hong Kong's people engage in hundreds of little superstitious actions every day. Certain

numbers are considered lucky or unlucky, mostly because the words for the numbers sound similar to other "positive" or "negative" words. For example, the number 4 (*sei*) sounds like the Cantonese word for "death," and many people do not accept a telephone number or license plate with that number in it. The number 14 is even worse (it sounds like "certain death"), and so Hong Kong buildings often have no 14th floor. Other numbers, such as 2 (easy), 3 (longevity), 8 (prosperity) or 9 (eternity), are considered very fortuitous. Many residents of Hong Kong pay extra or bribe the phone company to assign them "lucky" numbers, while the best car license plates (8888, for example) are auctioned to the highest bidders each year; some bring in thousands of dollars. Each of these actions, taboos and practices promises to give people a way to control their lives and fortunes. And if adhering to all the taboos, reciting the correct words and utilizing the proper tools to bring prosperity, health and happiness don't work? Well, that's *joss*.

LUCKY COLORS

Numbers are not the only "lucky" objects in Chinese superstition. Certain colors also have particular significance. Red and gold are lucky colors, signifying good fortune and prosperity; this is one reason why Chinese dresses are red. Writing in red ink, however, is not so lucky, for it looks like blood; giving a Hong Konger a note written in red ink is in very poor taste. Likewise, white is an unlucky color, as white is the color of death and mourning, so giving your date a bouquet of white roses would not be well received.

HONG KONG FESTIVALS

CHINESE (LUNAR) NEW YEAR [FEBRUARY]

The New Year is the most important festival of the year for Hong Kongers, and it precipitates a three-day holiday during which the whole of Hong Kong closes down. Revelers must adhere to certain rituals (cleaning their houses, paying off debts, making up with enemies), which can affect one's luck for the entire year. During the holiday, every home displays pictures of gods in the doorway to drive off evil spirits, while golden messages on red paper welcome good spirits. Small "lucky" trees bearing tiny oranges are placed throughout the city. Hong Kongers hand dozens of *Lai See* envelopes (each containing a few dollars) to children and unmarried friends, relatives and employees; these symbolize wealth for the coming year. Everywhere can be heard the traditional greeting: "Kung Hei Fay Choi," which means "good wishes, good fortune."



System: The New Year is a celebration not only for Hong Kong's mortals, but also for the city's werewolves. Moots lasting several nights take place in the region's parks and wild places.

CHING MING [APRIL]

During Ching Ming, Hong Kongers visit the graves of their ancestors, repainting headstones, clearing weeds and offering gifts of food, wine, hell-money and incense. At this time, ancestors are asked if they are satisfied with the care they have been given. During the festival, cemeteries are packed to bursting, and roads leading to cemeteries (in areas such as Shek O, Lantau and the New Territories) are severely congested.

System: As noted in *Dark Kingdom of Jade*, the gifts brought to the gravesites grant extra Pathos to wraiths thus venerated (Memoriam roll, difficulty 6).

TIN HAU FESTIVAL [APRIL]

During this festival, Tin Hau, the goddess of the sea, bestows good luck on all seafaring folk. Hong Kong's fishermen, sampan owners, junk skippers and sailors all go to town to celebrate. Hundreds of boats head to rocky bays to make offerings to the goddess, and brightly colored flags decorate harbors and fishing communities.

CHEUNG CHAU BUN FESTIVAL [APRIL/MAY]

This peculiar festival takes place on the island of Cheung Chau. Revelers construct bamboo towers, which are studded with buns and effigies of Chinese gods and spirits. The buns are baked as offerings to please the ghosts and spirits that inhabit the island. Additionally, the fourth day of the eight-day festival features a great procession, as local residents deck out in fancy dress, often representative of mythological characters and spirits. The parade's children are particularly spectacular; dressed in fanciful garb and balanced on bamboo poles, they are carried above the heads of the adults, making it seem almost as though they are floating above the parade.

System: For the duration of the festival, all wraiths on the island gain an additional three points of Memoriam.

TUEN NG [JUNE]

Tuen Ng, or the dragon boat festival, celebrates a Chinese hero, Qi Yuan, who drowned himself over 2,300 years ago in protest of government corruption. The townspeople rushed to their boats to save him, beating drums and throwing buns in the water to scare and divert sharks from his body. Special festival dumplings of rice and meat are still made, but Tuen Ng is most famous for the dragon boat races. Long and decorated dragon boat canoes compete at a dozen beaches throughout the territory. Both locals and expatriates

take part, and although most see the races as a bit of a laugh, some teams do take the event very seriously and may practice for months beforehand.

SINO-JAPANESE WAR VICTORY DAY [AUGUST]

Although not a celebrated festival, this day is still a public holiday. Wreaths are laid at various war memorials throughout Hong Kong.

System: This day provides one point of Pathos for all Stygian and Chinese wraiths who fell in the two world wars.

YUEN LAN [AUGUST]

The hungry ghost, or Wai Sic Gwei, festival. On this day, say the legends, hungry ghosts are released from hell and roam the world for a month. Residents burn hell-money, incense and offer gifts of food and wine to the hungry ghosts to avoid their evil tricks.

System: Spectres vomit forth from the Tempest and roam the near Yin World, looking for prey to torment. In addition, the difficulty for these spirits to penetrate the Wall drops by one, unless a suitable offering is made.

MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL [SEPTEMBER]

This festival celebrates a 14th-century Chinese uprising against Mongol invaders. Rebels hid secret messages inside cakes which were smuggled and distributed throughout the country. In remembrance, celebrants bake moon cakes — sticky, sweet pies made of ground lotus and sesame seeds with a whole boiled egg yolk in the center.

Victoria Park, in Causeway Bay, becomes packed with visitors upon the night of the festival. Thousands light candles and paper lanterns, picnic and watch the moon, hoping to see good luck fall from the skies.

System: The mid-autumn festival, due to its lunar connections, is celebrated as a major moot by the Stargazer werewolves of Hong Kong.

CHEUNG YEUNG [OCTOBER]

In the Han Dynasty (202 B.C.E.-A.D.220), a soothsayer advised a family to travel to the hills to avoid disaster. This is still remembered; thousands flock to cemeteries and high ground to court good luck. In particular, the Peak is extremely crowded during this festival.

BEFORE THE FOREIGN DEVILS

Most Westerners, and certainly most Kindred, think Hong Kong's history started in 1841, when the British took possession of the island. In truth, this mountainous isle has been inhabited for over 6000 years, mostly by small commu-

nities of fishers and farmers. The territory's lack of arable land, coupled with its severe tropical storms, made it less than idyllic for cultivation on a large scale. Its protected harbors, however, offered prosperity to fishermen, both those who lived ashore and the floating communities of boat people who plied the seas around the island.

Hong Kong, which means "Fragrant Harbor," became home to Malaysian seafarers; Punti or "local people" who arrived from the north and intermingled with the Malaysians; Hakka ("strangers" or "guests"), a peasant people from northern China who spoke their own dialect; Hoklo, who were fishing folk from the coastal regions of Fukien; and the Tanka, Cantonese-speaking boat people who lived on the waters. The Tanka and Hoklo legacy continues to this night, embodied in the thousands of people who live aboard their craft in Hong Kong's harbors, some never setting foot on the dry land of the territory proper. All groups viewed one another with hostility and suspicion. The greatest dislike fell upon the Hoklos and Tankas, who engaged in piracy and smuggling.

Indeed, pirates infested the hidden coves and bays near the Pearl River Delta, preying upon trade from the great city of Canton. Lantau Island, Cheung Chau and portions of Hong Kong Island became notorious pirate dens, with pirates striking quickly, then fading back among the rest of the inhabitants — thus forestalling their capture through anonymity.

The earliest nights of the region are lost in the mists of legend. It is known that the Court of the Scarlet Phoenix, one of the first civilizations of Kuei-jin, established itself in the city of Canton and spread its provincial net over the surrounding lands. The *wu* — undead families — of the Scarlet Phoenix Court exercised control over the region's Chi while guiding subtly the daily lives of the area's denizens.

Some Kuei-jin speak of the Flame-Eater, a mighty and malevolent bodhisattva who arose in the south during the early nights. This fell vampire set itself up as a prophet and cult leader among the pirates and wreaked great havoc in the land before being bound magically by the combined efforts of the Scarlet Phoenix Court's *wu*. Some say the Flame-Eater sleeps beneath Hong Kong proper, feeding from the region's dragons and awaiting the Sixth Age.

During the Ch'ing Dynasty (221-206 B.C.E.), which unified China into a great empire, Heung Gong (the anglicized version is Hong Kong) had its own magistrate who reported to the provincial official governing Guangdong (Canton) Province. Meanwhile, the pirate problem became such a nuisance that the emperor ordered all inhabitants of the islands to withdraw from the area. This withdrawal created a zone in which the pirates could be eradicated without danger to law-abiding civilians. Obeying the emperor's wishes, the people deserted the islands, not to



return for decades. The region's Kuei-jin followed them, while native hengeyokai fought bitterly with the emperor's minions.

When the mortals did return, they resumed a life not much different from the one they had left. Though Hong Kong existed under the governance of Canton for the next 1500 years, villages were self-contained units whose people worked the land or fished the sea untroubled by events in the rest of the empire. The island remained a backwater, while nearby Canton became a great trading city with connections to India, the Middle East and the rest of China. Though still connected to the Scarlet Phoenix, and later the Flame Court, Hong Kong's vampires were largely a self-interested and insular lot.

Despite repeated attempts to wipe them out, pirates continued to prey upon shipping in the area for centuries (until well into the British era, in fact); among their early haunts was the port of Shek Pai Wan (later called Aberdeen), on the seaward side of Hong Kong Island.

Kublai Khan and the Mongol hordes swept into China in A.D. 1100 and destroyed the Sung Dynasty. Their arrival caused land-owning farmers (and their Kuei-jin parasites) to flee beyond areas under Mongol control. A clan called "Tang" settled the fertile Shek Kong Valley in what became the New Territories, establishing walled villages there. Other families followed. These clans, along with the pirates, fishermen and farmers of Hong Kong, founded enclaves in which the locals governed themselves. These people became used to doing what they wanted without interference from higher-ups and they worked hard to make a good living, whether from honest toil or pilfering. They passed on their stubborn self-reliance and resourcefulness, coupled with a healthy suspicion of authority, down to their descendants.

The lands became home to many *shen* during the early centuries. Khan claimed parts of the forested peaks and southern reaches of Hong Kong Island, while Kumo settled within a dark pit where the Walled City in Kowloon would someday rise.

Zhong Lung lay secretly among the boat people whose small crafts dotted the sheltered waters. The newly arrived Kuei-jin mingled more

or less peacefully with the earlier vampiric settlers, creating a cosmopolitan Flame Court, whose ways differed greatly from those of their northern brethren. Above their little brothers reigned the Dragon Kings, whose bodies rose up as majestic hills, whose tears salted the oceans and whose breath created the winds. While dragons yet walked the Earth, the balance was assured.

When the Age of Legends died, the dragons became one with the earth. Nine dragons curled into slumber, framing the peninsula of Kowloon (which means "Nine Dragons"), while seven dragon kings lay themselves sinuously across the breadth of Hong Kong Island. In the centuries since then, the dragons of Kowloon have been sorely wounded, as the hills have been flattened to make way for "progress." Yet, even in

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their agony, they slumber on until the time comes for their release. Hong Kong's dragons rest as well, stirring occasionally but never fully awakening — awaiting the turning of the Ages.

Marco Polo visited China in 1279 and toured the Far East for 20 years. His writings about “Cathay,” published at the turn of the century, were dismissed by insular Europe as fantasies. Nevertheless, they proved to be the catalyst for drawing Westerners to the fabled land over 100 years later.

ENTER THE EUROPEANS

China's ships sailed to India and the Persian Gulf in the early 1400s, and her voyages reached as far as East Africa. The emperor found little to attract him, however, and forbade further expeditions among the “barbarians.” Except for occasional trading forays from the Arabians (and a few disobedient Chinese traders who continued their lucrative trips westward), the Middle Kingdom maintained its isolation for almost a century.

Shortly after Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1498, Portuguese navigator Jorge Alvares realized that the “Chin” merchants he saw in Malacca must be Marco Polo's Cathayans. Sailing east aboard a junk, Alvares traded with a smaller town when he was refused admittance to Canton, but he took back word of the great Chinese empire's existence. The Portuguese did not leave China in peace despite recurrent difficulties (even a few massacres) in setting up trade. Europeans smuggled goods in and out of Canton until, in 1557, they were finally granted a trading port and exclusive rights to the trade between Japan and China. The Portuguese built the city of Macau, which prospered so much that it rivaled Venice in its riches. Other European ships arrived soon after the turn of the 17th century, with its passengers hoping to make their own fortunes.

THE BRITISH ARRIVE

The British were latecomers, attempting (and failing) to claim Canton by force in 1637. Fifty years later, they were trading for tea and silks with Canton — on China's terms. Many ships anchored off Hong Kong after long voyages, using it as a watering place and safe harbor within sight of their goal.

Two very different points of view sparked trouble between the Western traders and the Chinese: Europeans thought the Chinese were opening Canton to trade as a first step to opening all of China, while the emperor saw the trade in Canton (a city considered barely civilized itself) as a means to acquire silver without exposing his empire to the

foreign devils' “pollution.” Though the British East India Company established a warehouse at Canton in 1714, the Chinese never meant for them to penetrate any farther.

The Great Cycle, weighted down by the arrival of so many unmannered foreigners, groaned into motion again, into the Age of Darkness. European changelings rode the coattails of traders and colonists and met the strange fae of the Orient for the first time. Garou Stargazers took ship westward, seeking fresh horizons. Among the new arrivals came magi, lured by the tales of ancient and powerful magics to be found in mysterious China. Native *shen* met and interacted with these arrivals, sometimes peacefully, often with violence, as mortal misunderstandings prompted supernatural retaliation.

A time of upheaval, blatant greed, selfishness and increasing disregard for others, the 500 years since the coming of the *gweilo* have seen enforced colonization, countless wars, terrible epidemics and mass murder become the norm. Some of these sorrowful events can be put at the doorstep of the colonizers; others stem from hatred and bigotry among the natives; all represent a working out of the balance. Though it began slowly, the Wheel has begun turning ever more quickly as the years allotted to the Age of Darkness diminish rapidly, spinning downward toward the horror of the Age of Sorrow yet to come.

THE OPIUM WARS

Hoping to minimize Western influence in China, the emperor granted exclusive trading rights in 1757 with the Europeans to the Co Hong (a Cantonese merchants' guild). European traders labored under several restrictions: They were barred from learning Chinese; they could deal only with the Co Hong, and then only in Canton between September and March; they were not allowed in the city itself, instead being restricted to their warehouses on a nearby island; and they were forbidden to bring their wives and children with them. Further, the emperor demanded that tea and silks be paid for with silver exclusively; no trading of goods for goods was allowed.

By 1830 the English obsession for tea drinking had created such a large market that 30 million tons of tea were exported from China every year, but the British treasury was being bled dry as the British could not trade anything in return. The European traders were incensed that their profits were restricted by such unequal terms, but they could do little to change things until the British discovered the Chinese craving for Bengal opium — in abundant supply from Britain's colony in India and, incidentally, a legal commodity at that time. The British East India Company began importing opium to China, selling it only for silver, which they then used to purchase tea, silk and porcelain. Soon China's hunger for “foreign mud” wrecked the Chinese economy, as

GIFTS AND SQUEEZE

When granted exclusive rights to European trade, the Co Hong paid for the privilege through bribes to the mandarin in charge of the region. The mandarin, in turn, paid a higher official, who paid the emperor. This way was the accepted practice in China. These bribes were never referred to as such; they were "gifts" given to friends who had done the person a "favor." Every worker in China gave a small gift to his employer in return for being granted the privilege of working.

In modern times, gift-giving has become an accepted part of corporate practice, with favored customers or important officials receiving special compensation in return for their patronage. Today, such gifts are rarely hard cash; instead, memberships at the Hong Kong Jockey Club, invitations to weekends in Macau, month-long jaunts aboard a fancy yacht, even expensive French brandy or high-tech entertainment consoles more than suffice. Of course, money is still an option, as the recent scandal over PRC donations to the Clinton election campaign attests.

In the past, people who provided services (like servants who bought food for a master's household) took a tiny bit of the money for themselves (reporting the food as more expensive than its actual price—it is bad manners to actually mention such charges), sort of like a commission or a tip for services rendered. That particular practice is known as "squeeze," and it too has lasted into the present day. Squeeze seems like bribery to Western eyes, but to the Chinese, it is a natural business practice. Many valued and trusted servants and employees take their squeeze without a second thought; they would not dream of taking more than the amount they are entitled to, however. That would be theft! Over time, however, the custom has become corrupted, as police demand squeeze to hurry an investigation or look the other way, while triads extort protection money from every small business.

Such practices infect even the *shen*. Though not a widespread custom, certain important Kuei-jin make it clear to their lessers that a small amount of Chi donated to the higher-ups might ease their sorrowful sojourn in the Middle Kingdom. As might be expected, such practices are rampant within the Dark Kingdom of Jade.

more silver flowed out than into the Imperial coffers (more than \$18 million, or one-tenth of the kingdom's revenue, in 1830). This loss, and the damage wrought on Chinese citizens due to the ravages of opium, impelled Emperor Dao Guang and the imperial court in Beijing to ban further importation of opium. Rather than lose their profits, the British became smugglers (assisted in their activities by the Co Hong, who received a hefty cut of the profits, as well as by corrupt Chinese officials who accepted large "gifts" in return).

Britain ordered the traders to cease smuggling opium, which had limited effect. Since government officials had little idea of the realities of the China trade, the merchants on the scene ignored government recommendations as "idiotic and unenforceable." In desperation, the Emperor of China sent a new viceroy, the so-called "Lin of the Clear Sky," to Canton to stop the opium traffic. The viceroy surrounded the British, cut off their food supplies and demanded that they surrender their opium. They reluctantly did so after six weeks, and the viceroy burned more than 20,000 chests of the potent drug.

The traders squawked. Loudly. Somehow they managed to make the British government believe that her citizens had been attacked and their property stolen by the strong-arm tactics of the Chinese. Britain, apparently not realizing the irony of going to war over a cargo that the British government itself had expressly forbidden their traders to carry, responded with a naval force sent to exact reprisals, negotiate trade agreements and establish a permanent base along China's coast (similar to Portuguese Macau).

The First Opium War was underway. Blockading and attacking Canton, the British fleet sailed north, threatening Beijing itself. The panicked emperor sent an envoy to negotiate. In January 1841, the envoy agreed to the Convention of Chuan Bi after further military threats. Among other concessions, the convention granted Hong Kong Island to the British "in perpetuity." The island possessed safe anchorage in a deep, easily defensible and protected harbor. Both sides repudiated the convention. Despite that, a British landing party planted the Union Jack at Possession Point on Hong Kong Island on January 26, 1841.

The British again attacked soon thereafter, laying siege to Canton and demanding a six-million-dollar indemnity for the opium that had been destroyed. They were back a few months after that, seizing Shanghai and other ports. Nanjing, a major Chinese city, was under immediate threat. To save the city, the Chinese accepted the Treaty of Nanjing, which officially ended the First Opium War and again ceded Hong Kong to the British "in perpetuity" — this time in an agreement that was not rejected.

COLONIZATION

At the time, no one really wanted the island, as it was a barren, treeless rock with a population of 7,450, mostly smugglers, drug traffickers and fugitives. The British government (and Queen Victoria, in particular) thought the island was useless and railed against their negotiator, Captain Charles Elliot, for not acquiring a coastal city — or at least an important island like Taiwan — to use as a trading post. Lord Palmerston, Queen Victoria's foreign secretary, dismissed Hong Kong as "a barren island with hardly a house upon it."

Their reluctance to accept the island appeared to be prophetic in the first decades of the new colony's existence. Huge trading companies (called *hongs*, after the Co Hong) bought much of the land and built godowns (warehouses) and mansions in the western portions of the island facing north toward China. Almost as soon as construction was completed, however, a killer typhoon tore through the settlement and reduced most of it to matchsticks and claimed many lives in the process. Five days later, with repairs underway, a second typhoon swept through. In the storm's wake, fire claimed what was left. Then malaria took its toll. Had the early colonists consulted *fang shih* geomancers, they might have had better luck with their structures. While the Chinese understood that building atop the dragon's head was bound to make the house collapse during a typhoon (as the dragon exhaled), the *gweilo* didn't have a clue why their solid English buildings kept falling down.

By 1846, many early colonists were now residents of the hillside cemetery, but those left alive flourished. British families lived along the waterfront, which was named Victoria after their beloved queen (the area is now known as Central). The wealthy built summer mansions up on Victoria Peak to take advantage of cooler temperatures. As the British abandoned their first colony in favor of Victoria and Happy Valley, the Chinese arrived daily in record numbers and occupied a shantytown farther west, now called the Western District.

Many *shen* found places in Hong Kong alongside the mortal population. As traders built their mansions and Britain added to her empire, a few Western Kindred, called *Kin-jin* by the native *shen*, attached themselves to the burgeoning colony. Because Hong Kong was seen as rather insignificant, Robert Pedder, a British Ventrue, was able to gain a position of power — becoming Tai-pan (Prince) of Hong Kong. Pedder ruthlessly drove out or destroyed other Kindred when they sought domains in Hong Kong.

Naturally, the Kuei-jin scoffed at the very thought of this insolent foreign leech declaring himself Tai-pan of anything. Unfortunately for the Kuei-jin, the reigning ancestor, Ghost-Killer, took a fancy to Pedder, seeing a pet of

sorts in the brash and vain Kindred. Ghost-Killer spent much of her time dominated by her P'o, and she was protective of Pedder while under the influence of her shadow nature. Kuei-jin seeking to unseat the "prince" met with unfortunate accidents, which Ghost-Killer's P'o arranged to look like shadow wars between Kuei-jin *wu*. Ultimately, the Flame Court disintegrated into a hive of mutually distrustful *wu*, weakening Ghost-Killer's influence in the process. By the time the mess had been sorted out, in the early 20th century, the Tremere had established a chantry in the colony. And the Kuei-jin thought it best to lie low, avoid the Warlocks' attentions, and wait for a more auspicious era.

Tensions flared again in 1856. Chinese officials boarded a British merchant ship (a Chinese junk that was sailing in China waters), searching for pirates. Calling it an unprovoked attack (as if enforced seizure of Chinese lands and continuing sales of opium against Chinese wishes weren't provocation), the British called for help and attacked, alongside French, Russian and American naval crews. The so-called Second Opium War was started. The devastation of almost-undefended China led eventually to the Treaty of Tianjin, in which China was forced to accept a British diplomatic presence in their territory. Perhaps in response, someone added arsenic to the dough at Hong Kong's main bakery. While the Chinese in the colony ate their rice, *gweilo* became ill (and some died) from the poisoned bread. The Occidentals suspected that a plot to poison all Europeans was afoot and deported thousands of Chinese. No one was ever caught for the crime. Some *shen* believe that the Jade Emperor himself masterminded the incident in a blatant attempt to gain control over a large number of *gweilo* souls.

Furthering the turning of the Wheel through the Age of Darkness, a British flotilla with the first British Minister Plenipotentiary to Beijing tried to sail up the Pei Ho River — against Chinese requests. Forts on either side fired on the ships. A British expeditionary force landed and marched on Beijing in response, which forced the Chinese to negotiate the Convention of Beijing. The convention ceded Kowloon Peninsula and Stonecutter Island to the British "in perpetuity." This acquisition allowed the colony's Victoria Harbor to be defended from both sides.

Barely 30 years later, following China's loss to Japan in the Sino-Chinese War, the British were back at the door, demanding more land. Weakened past the point of defending themselves, the Chinese agreed to a 99-year lease of the lands north of Kowloon (called the New Territories) and 234 outlying islands. Now the colony possessed lands suitable for full-scale farming, meaning it could now feed itself adequately. (Farming on Hong Kong Island itself was forbidden by law when the British discovered that the wet rice farms were attracting malaria-carrying mosquitoes.)



THE 20TH CENTURY

By the turn of the century, the Wheel revealed what would become one of Hong Kong's most pressing problems: overpopulation, especially among the poor. The population of Hong Kong topped 300,000 in 1900, most of them mainland Chinese who arrived with nothing, set up housekeeping in a shanty or shack, and sought desperately for work. Farmers, peasants, coolies, even merchants poured into Hong Kong, all following the dream of prosperity. As America represented the "land of opportunity" for Europeans, Hong Kong symbolized the Chinese belief that good timing and a little good *joss* could be coupled with hard work to produce untold wealth. Held down by outmoded ways in China, they sought their fortunes under the *laissez-faire* business practices of the prosperous British colony.

Hard on the heels of those seeking economic opportunity came political refugees, enemies of the hated Qing Dynasty. Some among them were wealthy and influential, and a few powerful Kuei-jin took the opportunity to emigrate. Many of these wealthy expatriates opened businesses and offered employment to those who opposed the Qing emperor; others drifted into criminal activities. Resistance groups were secret societies known as triads; they spread quickly throughout the Chinese enclaves in Hong Kong. Because the Western merchants depended on the China

trade for their bread and butter, the colony soon outlawed the triads. Nonetheless, many highly trusted and wealthy Chinese members of the colony secretly were leaders in the groups, or they supported them financially.

Kuei-jin *wu* flocked to the triads, using them as Scarlet Screens to advance their ends and strike at the Tremere; the Tremere, however, also gained a foothold in the triads, and so the efforts of the warring supernaturals canceled each other out largely.

Early in the 20th century, Hong Kong rode the turning Wheel, adjusting rapidly to circumstances and, at times, threatening to disintegrate into chaos. Electricity arrived in the colony, trams provided conveyance along the waterfront, and the rich people imported cars to drive on the area's few paved roads. The opium trade, bowing to worldwide condemnation, was banned finally. Yet, all was far from idyllic. Monstrous typhoons killed 10,000 and left 40,000 boat people homeless in a storm lasting over an hour (an occurrence linked to agitation in the Dark Kingdom of Jade). Hong Kong's population exploded to a million souls as refugees (some of them *shen*) fled Sun Yat-sen's takeover of China. Happy Valley Racetrack burst into flames, murdering thousands trapped within it.

And if this were not enough evidence that the Age of Darkness was fully established — warfare, inhumanity and bloodshed took center stage.

WORLD WAR II AND BEYOND

China thrashed into revolution and counterrevolution, weakening itself further. The Japanese invaded the depleted country in 1937. Over 500,000 desperate refugees fled to Hong Kong. Then, just before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Japanese Imperial Army bombed Kowloon and poured across the border from already-occupied China. All planes at Kai Tak were destroyed while still on the ground. After four days of fighting, the remnants of the British withdrew to Hong Kong, which fell on Christmas Day, 1941. British civilians suffered harsh treatment and deprivations while incarcerated at Stanley Prison. Ten thousand soldiers were taken and interred in concentration camps. The Japanese forces deported thousands of Chinese to the mainland to work as slave labor. Hong Kong itself nearly met destruction as Japanese troops rampaged through the colony, looting, raping and slaughtering soldier and civilian alike.

The war years were a time of great anxiety for the Kin-jin as well. Fearful that Japanese occupation would bring with it an influx of Japanese vampires and fierce wolf-spirits, the area's colonist Western Kindred sought sanctuary by sinking into the earth and entering torpor. According to a few tales, some still sleep there and might be trapped should they awaken. Hong Kong's once-plentiful land has been swallowed up by high-rise apartments and skyscrapers. Unlucky Kin-jin may awaken long after the handover to China only to find their return blocked by several tons of concrete, glass and steel overhead.

Despite Kin-jin and Kuei-jin fears alike, Japanese *shen* never appeared. The Khan suffered greatly under Japanese occupation, as many of the last tigers were hunted gleefully to extinction by bored Japanese soldiers. Changelings, both European and native, turned grim and became nastier in response to the chill despair affecting their dreamers. Mages made themselves scarce (though some cooperated with the conquerors), and the Jade Emperor's smile grew wide as thousands of souls poured forth and into the Dark Kingdom of Jade.

After suffering four years of deprivation, starvation, torture and despair, the shattered colony reverted to the British when the Japanese surrendered after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Down to a population of barely half a million people, Hong Kong faced a future with no remaining industry, no fishing fleet, no public services and few houses left standing. Returning residents found a ghost city, situated behind a shipwreck-blocked harbor and populated by hollow-eyed, starving remnants of people.

Britain, burdened by its own losses, had little to spare for its tiny colony. Self-sufficiency, hard labor and making-do became the watchwords of the decade. Nonetheless, helped by the influx of refugees from China (the population doubled between 1946 and 1967), Hong Kong rose from the rubble.

THE TRIADS

Triads (named for their emblem — a triangle denoting the harmonious unity of Heaven, Earth and man) are secret societies which originated in the 17th century with the goals of overthrowing the Manchus and restoring the Ming Dynasty. The triads moved into Hong Kong, mingled with the other immigrants, then split into different societies. All triads practiced (and still practice) initiation rites and ceremonies designed to integrate new members into the mystique of the secret society.

Each triad has a supreme leader at the head of a hierarchical structure. Ranks within triads are noted by numbers beginning with the number 4, to represent the four elements and directions. After World War II, triads became endemic, most operating from the safety of the notorious Walled City in Kowloon, which was off limits to the police. Current estimates place the number of triad groups operating in Hong Kong at 50, with upwards of 100,000 members (the Sun Yee On alone has over 40,000 members).

Though triads served as political agitators originally, after the fall of the Qing Dynasty, members turned their attention to gambling, prostitution and other illegal activities, like squeezing protection money out of small businesses. In modern times, triads have become the kings of drug dealing and are responsible for almost all organized crime in the SAR (the Special Administrative Region). Using the twin lures of easy money and peer acceptance, triads attract young people of both sexes into gang life. Once in, never out. The triads, similar to the Mafia, control organized crime in Hong Kong; unlike much of the Mafia, though, triad constituents are noted for extreme viciousness. While some triads encourage members to flaunt their status (through wearing identifying clothing or haircuts), most maintain secrecy and enforce silence by exacting deadly penalties on those who do spill group secrets. The best known triads in Hong Kong are the Sun Yee On, the Wo Sung Wo and the 14K.

Yet, this rebirth was not without tension: Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist forces fled to Taiwan as Mao Zedong's Communist forces seized control in China. Terrified Hong Kong waited to be overrun across the all-too-vulnerable border. Again, millions of mainland Chinese emigrated to the colony. Many of these newcomers, though, were rich industrialists from Shanghai. Although some continued on to America or Australia, a good number remained in Hong Kong and invested their money locally.



This proved to benefit Hong Kong greatly. With the advent of the Korean War, the United Nations' trade embargo on China threatened the very lifeblood of Hong Kong — China's "window on the world." The colony faced financial ruin without Chinese goods to sell. The refugee industrialists from Shanghai proposed opening their own local factories to produce the inexpensive goods the world had been importing from China. Hong Kong was reborn — soon to become a major producer of textiles, watches and electronic goods.

Throughout the '50s and '60s, Hong Kong faced two pressing problems: continuing threats of a Communist takeover and an acute housing shortage. Hong Kong began an ambitious public-housing program and built entire blocks of cheap, but fireproof, housing in response to a devastating fire that left over 50,000 squatters homeless. Realizing other potential in their booming economy, Hong Kong's financial and service industries blossomed, especially when Hong Kong became a favored rest and recreation stop for American soldiers stationed in Vietnam.

As the Cultural Revolution in China hit its height, Hong Kong reeled in reaction as tens of thousands of more Chinese refugees raced across the border in just a two-week period. Riots and bombings, inspired by Chinese forces, rocked the colony. Kuei-jin of different *wu* and Dharmas used the chaos as a smokescreen to settle old scores. Then China's Red Guard crossed into the New Territories. Though intercepted and pushed back, the quasi-invasion devastated confidence, which resulted in a plummeting real-estate market — and the loss of major portions of China's foreign-exchange earnings, as trade and tourism halted abruptly. Sobered by this loss (Hong Kong was China's only real source of marketing at the time), China ceased to threaten its golden goose. Then, in a surprise move, after years of isolationism, China emerged on the world market, funneling goods, investments and tourism through Hong Kong. The colony (now known as a "territory" due to belated British political correctness) reached a golden age of prosperity and growth.

Tai-pan Pedder and his cronies gloried in their wealth and watched their own private empire grow, yet Pedder realized (perhaps even before the mortals began to consider the matter seriously) that Western control of Hong Kong had a preset cancellation date — when the 99-year lease on the New Territories expired in 1997.

Fleeing persecution and bitter poverty in their ravaged homeland, the first Vietnamese refugees reached Hong Kong in 1975. Within three years, they were coming at the rate of 600 a day. Unable to support or integrate the additional refugees, Hong Kong constructed sprawling refugee camps where the Vietnamese live even today — in appalling conditions and helpless against ravaging *shen*. Despite the outlawing of further illegal immigrants from China and

Vietnam — except for genuine political refugees (as opposed to economic ones) — the influx continues up to this night. Newcomers disappear into the crowded Chinese sectors and lose themselves among the masses. Thus, by all the glitter and wealth rise ugly utilitarian apartment blocks, sprawling shantytowns and desolate refugee camps held captive behind wire barriers.

THE LAST DECADE

Realizing that the lease on the New Territories was almost up, the British went to China to discuss the territory's future. After several years of conferences, clashes and agreements, the British and Chinese issued the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1988. In essence, it recognized that Hong Kong Island and Kowloon were not economically viable territories without the support of the New Territories, especially that region's food supplies. As China was adamant about reclaiming its leased property, Britain felt it had no choice but to return the entirety of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China. Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region of China under the agreement. As such, China committed to leaving the region's capitalist system alone for at least 50 years. Nonetheless, many of Hong Kong's residents panicked at the mere concept of Communist China taking control of the greatest center of *laissez-faire* capitalism in the world.

Britain didn't help calm matters. Instead, she passed the British Nationality Act, which prevented Hong Kong citizens who were not of British extraction from acquiring British citizenship, effectively trapping those who had been their colonials in Hong Kong and preventing their relocation to England. In light of the agreement to hand over Hong Kong made soon after this act was passed, this policy has been criticized as a sellout of Britain's subjects.

THE REALITY BEHIND THE FACADE

In Hong Kong, the fix is in, and the nature of this fix is clear and grim. The men who are in the business of dictating business will not get in the way of the men who are in the business of simply dictating, and vice versa.

— Stan Sesser, "Hong Kong Betrayed?" in *The New Republic*

Despite the publication of the Basic Law document, China's intentions surfaced almost immediately. Britain implemented democratic elections in 1995 in a last-ditch effort. Of the 20 seats open in the legislature, Martin Lee's Democratic Party won 12 of them. The Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB), a confusingly named pro-PRC party, won only two. Angered by the rejection of their candidates, Beijing's Preparatory Committee (chosen by Beijing to handle transition problems) voted 149

BASIC LAW

To ease the fears of Hong Kong's citizens, China published its Basic Law for Hong Kong in 1988. The law included a guarantee by Beijing that Hong Kong's citizens and institutions need not fear the future. Under the law, individuals have the rights to travel in and out of Hong Kong, to form trade unions, to freedom of speech (including the right to express opinions), to assemble and associate, and to uncensored correspondence. Further, Hong Kong's people have the right to choose their occupations, their academic research, their religious beliefs, and even the right to strike.

The Basic Law provides for Hong Kong to be largely self-governing, to remain a free port with the right to continue independent membership in international organizations. People are permitted to retain their private property. The law also guarantees continuing employment for the colony's civil servants (both Chinese and foreigners), though the PRC controls the region's foreign policy and provides for its defense. In reality, the majority of foreign civil servants are being forced to leave under the "localization policy": i.e., if you are not ethnic Chinese, then your job will be given to someone who is.

In any event, few Hong Kong residents place much value on Chinese assurances. The region is not allowed to have its own democratically elected government, even on a municipal level. Hong Kong's leaders are to be appointed by Beijing. Skeptics note that China's own constitution makes the same guarantees of freedom and human rights, with negligible impact on the PRC's actual system. The Basic Law also gives Beijing the option to interfere in Hong Kong's internal affairs "to preserve public order, public morals or in the interests of national security." Such a broad statement actually means that China can impose any restrictions it wishes or arrest whomever it pleases at any time, simply by crying the words "national security." And the People's Liberation Army is poised to assume control of the Tamar Naval Center in Central (thus housing a potentially intimidating military force and grabbing some extremely valuable real estate — billions of dollars worth, in fact — all in one maneuver).

to 1 to close down the legislature as soon as the handover occurred. The PRC government then appointed a new Provisional Legislature in December of 1996; many members of which were on the selection committee and some of whom were rejected DAB candidates.

Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement denounced Britain's "sellout" and dubbed Basic Law as "Basic Flaw." Their fears, alas, were well-founded. Following a heady,



exuberant effort to liberalize China along with a call for democracy, the student-led democratic movement in China fell to PRC troops in the Tiananmen Square Massacre in Beijing, just a year after China's assurances to Hong Kong. Millions of Hong Kong's people took to the streets in protest. The stock market fell over 20% in one day. Those who had hoped for the best now moved their capital and company headquarters to safer climes overseas.

Yet, another shock lay in store. Article 23, a little-publicized portion of the Basic Law, calls for (indeed, orders) the new legislature to enact laws against "subversion" — a term so loosely defined it could include someone making a snide remark about a Communist Party member's choice of breakfast food. And what of the vaunted freedoms and the promise to keep Hong Kong democratic? In essence, the PRC really means it will allow horse racing, private yachting parties, pandering to tourists and Hong Kong's famous nightlife to continue.

Of course, China intends fully for business to continue making vast profits. Tung Chee-hwa, Beijing's newly appointed chief executive for the SAR, is a shipping tycoon himself and crafty enough to understand that the real politics of Hong Kong is business. An ardent and open admirer of Singapore, Chee-hwa (as well as most of Hong Kong's large businesses, which enthusiastically support his plans) wants to institute a Singapore-like solution in Hong Kong: no real freedom or civil rights for the masses, but every freedom and courtesy extended to business. Most of the multimillion-dollar corporations aren't complaining. Controlled people make better workers — they have few options and dare not complain. A stable society, however authoritarian, makes for steady and profitable business. As long as business makes nice with the new bosses, they have nothing to lose and everything to gain. The only losers are the people of Hong Kong who were promised democracy. Already the electoral situation is being changed so that the corporations, not the people, will decide Hong Kong's laws.

Many Hong Kong citizens who could not gain British citizenship because of the British Nationality Act applied for citizenship in Canada and Australia. The wealthiest, the brightest and the most technologically proficient fled Hong Kong in a steady stream as the dreaded date of the handover approached. Whipped on by China's insistence that the Vietnamese boat people be deported by 1997, Britain offered monetary inducements to those refugees who returned voluntarily to their homelands. When even that incentive failed to stop the influx (another 75,000 a year were still arriving), the British began evacuating refugees forcibly, which prompted riots and protests by camp inmates as well as world criticism. Needless to say, Kuei-jin fed well during the evacuations.

HONG KONG CHANGES HANDS

With the deadline for the changeover looming, Hong Kong's Kindred fled. Led by the former Tai-pan, Ventrue Robert Pedder, most of them departed just before the arrival of Chinese Kuei-jin *wu* signaled the return of the Flame Court. Ironically, the new arrivals harbor suspicion and contempt for the Kuei-jin who have existed in Hong Kong through the years of colonization, believing them to be tainted by their contact with the Westerners. The Hong Kong Kuei-jin rebut that belief since China destroyed most of her own culture and rejected many traditions during the Cultural Revolution. And only they are suited to reestablish the Flame Court, since only they are truly still Chinese in character.

Like their mortal fellows, neither the Kuei-jin nor the remaining Kin-jin of Hong Kong place great confidence in Chinese assurances. Tung Chee-hwa has promised that no one is to be persecuted, that no arrests are to be made of political dissidents. Chee-hwa has said he wants Hong Kong to be run by Hong Kong's people. Ironically, the vacuum created by the flight of mortal talent is being filled by foreigners. And the restrictions, though not yet overt, are nevertheless in place quite firmly. Publishers who once reported the "massacre" in Tiananmen Square now refer to it as an "incident," while artists who once freely created highly original and provocative pieces now find that their work isn't wanted anymore — unless it won't offend Beijing.

Refuting dire predictions, however, Hong Kong's economy hasn't ground to a halt; construction continues, especially on the new airport being built on Chek Lap Kok Island. Hong Kong continues to glitter and crackle with energy, with fortunes won and lost daily. Most Chinese plan to stay, pointing out that China could have simply taken over the region anytime, yet acted fairly. Further, they emphasize that much of China's technological know-how comes via Hong Kong, and around 60% of her trade and finances are Hong Kong-handled. These hopefuls believe China can't afford to mess up in Hong Kong.

More cynical residents understand that their tiny island cannot continue to exist without the daily food deliveries from across the bay, nor can Hong Kong's manufacturers produce goods without China's cheap labor pool. Many of the region's banks, hotels and department stores are now funded through PRC capital. Each is dependent on the other.

Despite uncertainty over its future, change continues to assault Hong Kong at dizzying speeds. Whole neighborhoods are obliterated to make room for soaring skyscrapers. The harbor shrinks as more valuable land is reclaimed; soon, the anchorage once known as "Fragrant Harbor" will no longer

be capable of flushing itself. The stench and floating garbage attest to the millions of tons of raw sewage dumped into it every day (to the hengeyokai's dismay).

Hong Kong's population has exploded to over six million, and real-estate costs have risen alongside the skyscrapers that dominate the Central region. An average middle- to low-range apartment could cost a family \$HK1 million a year to rent.

Even the optimists are admittedly uncertain as to how long Hong Kong's protected status as China's economic foster child will last. China depends on Hong Kong currently

for its economic strength and technological expertise, but as time passes, China will acquire more knowledge, more experts and greater familiarity with entrepreneurship. Will it need Hong Kong then? Most residents fear that it won't. And as China becomes less dependent, she may resent Hong Kong's freedoms. Mortals revel in denial or fix their sights on making themselves indispensable, while China tightens her grip in anticipation of ever-greater control. The *shen* prepare for the inevitable bloodbath promised by the arrival of the Sixth Age as the Wheel inexorably turns. The dragons stir, tasting change on the wind, as Hong Kong waits and holds her breath in anticipation. The clock is ticking....





CHAPTER THREE: ATOP THE DRAGON'S BACK

○ sea-wet rock thronged, thronged and swarming with hunger and misery and wealth and want and abundance and waste, vice and purity and corruption and law and justice and privilege, charities and private property and Monopoly and Big Business and rackets and tuberculosis and beauty and horror;...deep-roaring, bustling eternal market Hong Kong; where life and love and souls and blood and all things made and grown under the sun are bought and sold and smuggled and squandered....

— Han Suyin, *A Many Splendoured Thing*

THE VIEW FROM DRAGONBACK

Most *gweilo* see little beyond the physical make-up of Hong Kong and environs — the sea; the ruddy, rubbish-covered beaches; sinuous green hills and terraced levels that are the bases for ever more and higher buildings. Without the undulating, hilly landscape that allows for the creation of multilevel terracing, Hong Kong could never hold so many buildings in such a small space as it does.

Few outside the Chinese believe that they rest atop dragons' backs. Where *gweilo* speak of superstitious nonsense but consult geomancers to keep the peace among their Chinese workers; supernaturals and mortals who know of the dynamic pull of Yin and Yang manipulate supernatural forces routinely in the land itself.

Many *shen* haunt areas of exceptionally strong Chi. These special places are called dragon nests, forelimbs, heads and even hearts. Whether used as caerns, haunts, havens, or freeholds, such sites are hotly contested among the *shen*. Whatever their names, these areas are widely acknowledged to contain dragons.

Wise, immortal and fierce, dragons are the balance point between earth and spirit. Symbols of potent luck and power, dragons are a harmonious blend of Yin and Yang in perfect proportion. Their connection to the spirit worlds makes them the guardians of the four directions and five elements, as well as keepers of the Flaming Pearl of Perfection, which is the fifth direction (the center of all) and the sixth element (spirit). Their guardianship duties are symbol-

ized by the number of claws they have on each foot, the greatest among them having the five claws that show an achievement of perfect unity. Thus, the five-clawed dragon became an emblem that only the Emperor of China (as the mortal symbol of stability) was allowed to use.

Sporting many colors depending on their age and origin, dragons are divided into several groups, each with its own duties. The Lung Wang, or Dragon Kings, support the mansions of the gods, bring rain, control the flow of rivers and guard treasures and hidden mysteries. Because they have sinuous bodies and the eyes of demons, dragons are powerful forces against demonkind. Their sinuosity prevents demons from passing (as everyone knows these infernal beings can travel only in straight lines), while their eyes frighten off demons who come too close (since demons mistake dragons' eyes for their own and are afraid of their own reflections). Mortals who seek protection place dual dragon images before doorways or on rooftops to keep evil spirits at bay; one dragon swallows any nearby evil while another uses its sweet breath to disseminate good influence throughout the building.

No strangers to the mystic arts, dragons are adept sorcerers. Their various parts (teeth, blood, scales and saliva) are sought after highly by practitioners of magic, though only the most evil of beings seeks to slay a dragon or steal its parts. Mortals or supernaturals deemed worthy are sometimes gifted with dragon relics, though these powerful artifacts usually

appear as something more mundane (crystals, gold, foam on sea water). Nowadays, it is much harder to acquire dragon parts, at least those that are actively magical.

Ages passed, the dragons went to sleep and sank into the earth. Still, they breathe slowly. Dragon breath, which runs through the earth, crackles with potent Chi. The channels or runnels created by dragon breath are known to the enlightened as *feng shui*, or dragon, lines.

Nine dragons sleep beneath Kowloon, but their magic has faltered somewhat, for the hills that contain their curled bodies have been leveled and removed. The wounded dragons bleed slowly into the ground, sinking deeper as their Chi drains away. Greedy *shen*, attracted by the Chi thus released, flock to Kowloon to feast on the remaining strength of the dying dragons. A few *shen* seek to protect the great beings, trying futilely to stop their short-sighted brethren and to staunch the bleeding somehow.

In Hong Kong, the seven dragons sleeping beneath the island have had to put up with the silly mortals who terrace their haunches and place precariously situated skytowers atop them.) Hong Kong's dragons are happier than those of Kowloon because most buildings have been constructed with architectural idiosyncrasies designed to accommodate the dragons' breath (or their view of the harbor). Responding to the respect given them, the dragons acquiesce to the small mortals who want to live atop their undulating backs. And their view is breathtaking.



TRANSPORTATION

Travelers from mainland China may enter the SAR of Hong Kong via car, bus or train. The Hung Hom Railway Station, east of Tsimshatsui (which is the southernmost station of the KCR, or Kowloon-Canton Railway), is the arrival point for express trains from China.

The Stygian outpost of Necropolis Hong Kong depends on the railway station at Kowloon. The Midnight Express pulls in local time — a concession made to the West because of Hong Kong's British past and the presence of so many Westerners in the area. Its regular run connects Hong Kong with Stygia, allowing Western wraiths to come and go in territory controlled chiefly by the Dark Kingdom of Jade. Now that the territory is once again under Chinese control, many wraiths wonder if the Jade Emperor will allow its continued presence.

Sea travel to Hong Kong from foreign ports (except Macao and Southeast Asia) is prohibitively expensive. Cruise ships carrying those wealthy enough to afford this slow, luxurious style of travel dock at Ocean Terminal (in Tsimshatsui). Nonetheless, many visitors experience the sensation of crossing the harbor from Kowloon to Hong Kong Island via ferry.

Air travel is by far the most common means of reaching Hong Kong, and it is an adventure in itself. Some people describe landing at Hong Kong International Airport (known as Kai Tak) as exciting; others claim it's an insane game of mass Russian roulette. Despite the thrilling view, landing at Kai Tak certainly requires pilots to have excellent reflexes and pinpoint accuracy. All modern airports utilize an instrument landing system (ILS) that leads pilots on a straight path down to the runway. Not so in Hong Kong.

Here, the plane begins its run at the airport, zooming in over the South China Sea. The lights of Hong Kong blaze forth, visible for more than 100 miles out on clear nights. Roaring through alternating vistas of dark seas, high irregular hills and patches of obscuring clouds, the craft loses altitude steadily. Suddenly, as hundreds of boats and ships come into view below, the pilot banks the plane hard to the right. Rows of skyscrapers rush by just beyond the plane's wingtip. The cramped conditions have yet another surprise in store: Rather than leading the plane to the runway, the ILS guides the pilot to a huge, red-and-white checkerboard painted on a clifflike hillside nearby. Upon seeing the checks (from a minimum altitude of 675 feet), the pilot pulls quickly into a sharp turn (47.2 degrees, to be exact), and if everything is correctly positioned, altitude acceptable and air speed on target, the aircraft can line up safely with the runway barely a minute later.

Just as all seems well, the plane dives steeply, streaking down to meet the uprushing city below. Traffic and people seem almost to be in passengers' laps, and blocks of buildings

fly by so close that they seem to scrape the underbelly of the plane. Having reached its saturation point five years ago, Kai Tak is overdue for a calamitous crash, an occurrence some people believe could take over 5,000 lives due to the population density around the airport. That hasn't happened...yet. At the last instant, when it seems a crash into the heart of the city is imminent, the plane settles to the airport's one runway (another plane takes off or lands along the same runway within two minutes), floating barely over the last obstacles in its path. Suddenly, the pilot throttles back and the plane taxis to a stop just before plunging off the runway into the ocean liners and fishing craft that line the harbor. Welcome to Hong Kong.

Actually, welcome to Kowloon. From the airport or the train station, airbuses, city buses, taxis and the MTR (Mass Transit Railway, the subway) take passengers to New Kowloon, the New Territories or through the tunnels under the harbor to the Central District on Hong Kong Island. Ferries and hydrofoils ply the waters between the island and mainland.

But, getting around in Hong Kong itself means using public transport (bus, train, tram or MTR), taking a taxi or walking. The MTR is the fastest mode of travel; it's clean, air-conditioned, automated and easy to use. Sedan chairs, enclosed seats slung on long poles and carried by bearers, were the chief transport in the early days of the colony. None now exists outside museums. Rickshaws are mostly a thing of the past, too, catering to tourists who want a picture taken in one. A few rickshaw "pullers" run slowly around a block, pulling passengers, but the cost (as well as the advanced age of the pullers, who look like they might expire if forced to run more than a block) keeps all but the most determined tourists from experiencing this passé mode of travel.

PHYSICAL REGION, POLITICAL TERRITORY

China is a sleeping giant. Let her sleep, for when she awakens, she will astonish the world.

— Napoleon

Hong Kong is more than just a hill-decked island measuring 29 square miles. Encompassing a mainland peninsula (Kowloon and the New Territories) and over 200 islands off the southeastern coast of China, it plays host to over six million people. The distance from the (former) Chinese border to the southern side of Hong Kong Island is approximately 40 km and can be traveled in a couple of hours. Under British rule, Hong Kong (Chinese for "Fragrant Harbor") was known as a colony until changing political sensibilities in the 1970s encouraged the British to refer to it as a "territory" instead. Whatever it has been called throughout its colorful history, Hong Kong has never possessed political autonomy.

CLIMATE

The climate in Hong Kong is subtropical, which means it's mostly hot, humid and often stormy. Only the desperate and insane walk voluntarily anywhere on hot summer days. In spring and autumn, temperatures hover between 70 and 85 degrees; in summer, the heat climbs well into the 90s; in winter, the average temperature is 60 degrees. Oppressive humidity saps strength during the hotter months, while gray skies are the norm from winter through spring. Summer also brings in the typhoon season from July to September. Of all climatic difficulties, Hong Kong has suffered most from the destructive typhoons (from the Chinese *tai fung* or "big wind," and known to the *shen* as "the flight of the dragons"). These killer storms have roared across Hong Kong and devastated the area time and again, leaving thousands dead and costing millions of dollars in property damage. When these tropical storms threaten, radio and television carry the following warnings:

Storm Signal 1: Indicates a tropical cyclone is within 800 km of Hong Kong. Those in the area should keep abreast of weather warnings.

Storm Signal 3: Means the territory expects winds of 60 km an hour with gusts over 100. The storm is closing in; residents tie things down on rooftops and balconies and bring lightweight objects inside.

Storm Signal 8: Given once the typhoon is imminent. Storm-force winds from 60 to 100 km per hour are expected, with gusts to 180. Planes are diverted from the area; local transportation (buses, ferries, etc.) shuts down. People are advised to stay indoors and away from windows.

Storm Signal 9: Indicates that storm winds are increasing significantly. No transportation runs. People should remain within strong shelter (difficult when many live in shacks or tents on exposed hillsides).

Storm Signal 10: The most serious storm signal given; means that the area is experiencing hurricane winds of 120 km per hour and above, with gusts up to 220. Even strong shelters may be damaged. Ships may be sunk or blown up on shore; cars can be hurled through walls and roofs. Even the strongest of the *shen* do not challenge this terrifying force of nature; wraiths exposed to winds of this level can be disincorporated outright. Anyone caught out in the open should crouch down beneath a solid structure away from glass, put his head between his knees, and kiss his ass good-bye.

The area has ceased even to be a separate entity from the People's Republic of China since the handover on July 1, 1997, except through guarantees given in a flimsy agreement granting Hong Kong status as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) for the next 50 years. For several years before the handover, Hong Kong's people lived with grave uncertainty about their future; many dreaded the takeover and prophesied a worst-case scenario. While the masters in Beijing have not yet thrown aside all their agreements, certain...adjustments...are being made. Those who once spoke forcefully in favor of democracy now do so more quietly, sometimes anonymously. Business and societal dealings alike emphasize the importance of making friends with the new overlords — or hiding former colonial partnerships. Already, most of the guarantees given in the Basic Law have been shunted aside or modified (as with the recent PRC banning of the Chinese-language version of the book *Kowloon Tong* due to its unflattering portrayal of mainland Chinese businessmen). A few freedoms remain — for now. Many residents wonder if Beijing is simply biding its time until it reacquires Macau from Portugal in 1999. Perhaps the Chinese, masters of patient manipulation, are just waiting until all former European outposts are cleared from their territory before they start the real crackdown. The uncertainty and waiting are not yet over; indeed, with the Sixth Age just around the corner, the countdown has just begun.

HONG KONG ISLAND

The "island," as Hong Kong Island is popularly known, is home base for an array of enormous banks, luxurious (some even say decadent) hotels, weirdly constructed futuristic office buildings and skyscrapers, elegant mansions, amusement parks and modern resorts. Yet it is also host to the oldest Chinese communities in the colony, whose wandering, narrow streets attest to a very different lifestyle. Quiet fishing villages snuggle alongside tourist beaches, and the clamor of crowded, floating communities is offset by peaceful hikes through the island's wilderness preserves. Neon-sheathed skyscrapers pose against the undulating green hills central to the island, thus reflecting a million colors into the dark, choppy waters below.

Even at night, the streets are awash with humanity, *gweilo* and Chinese, Filipino and Indian, all thrown into the cultural pot and left to boil. In the twisting streets of Wanchai and the Western District, barhoppers rub shoulders with the street vendors of the night market, radios and televisions blare out different stations and mix with the cacophony of voices laughing, talking, berating and cajoling. Shops oblige old men who come to drink *cha* (tea) and "walk" their pet birds, showing them off in elaborate bamboo cages. As the people talk, their birds trill, having been taught to sing to one another. All over the island, the smell of blooming bauhinia

flowers blends with car exhaust and diesel fuel, sizzling sesame oil and ginger. Humanity's odors — washed and unwashed bodies, aftershaves and perfumes — merge with the salt sea-fish tang from the harbor and ever-present incense sticks.

Moving among the throngs, silent hunters seek out their supernatural prey, while those being hunted enact their own search for Chi — the life-force they need to sustain themselves. Entrepreneurs and young businesspeople hurry from meeting to meeting, moving respectfully around a *fang shih* who studies his complex compass and tells a house owner how to rid her property of the bad spirits it has attracted. Boats, ferries and ships fill the harbors and wait to unload their tons of goods or disgorge crowds of passengers. One such ferry is guided safely through by an unseen wraithly hand that deftly turns the boat at just the right time to avoid a collision.

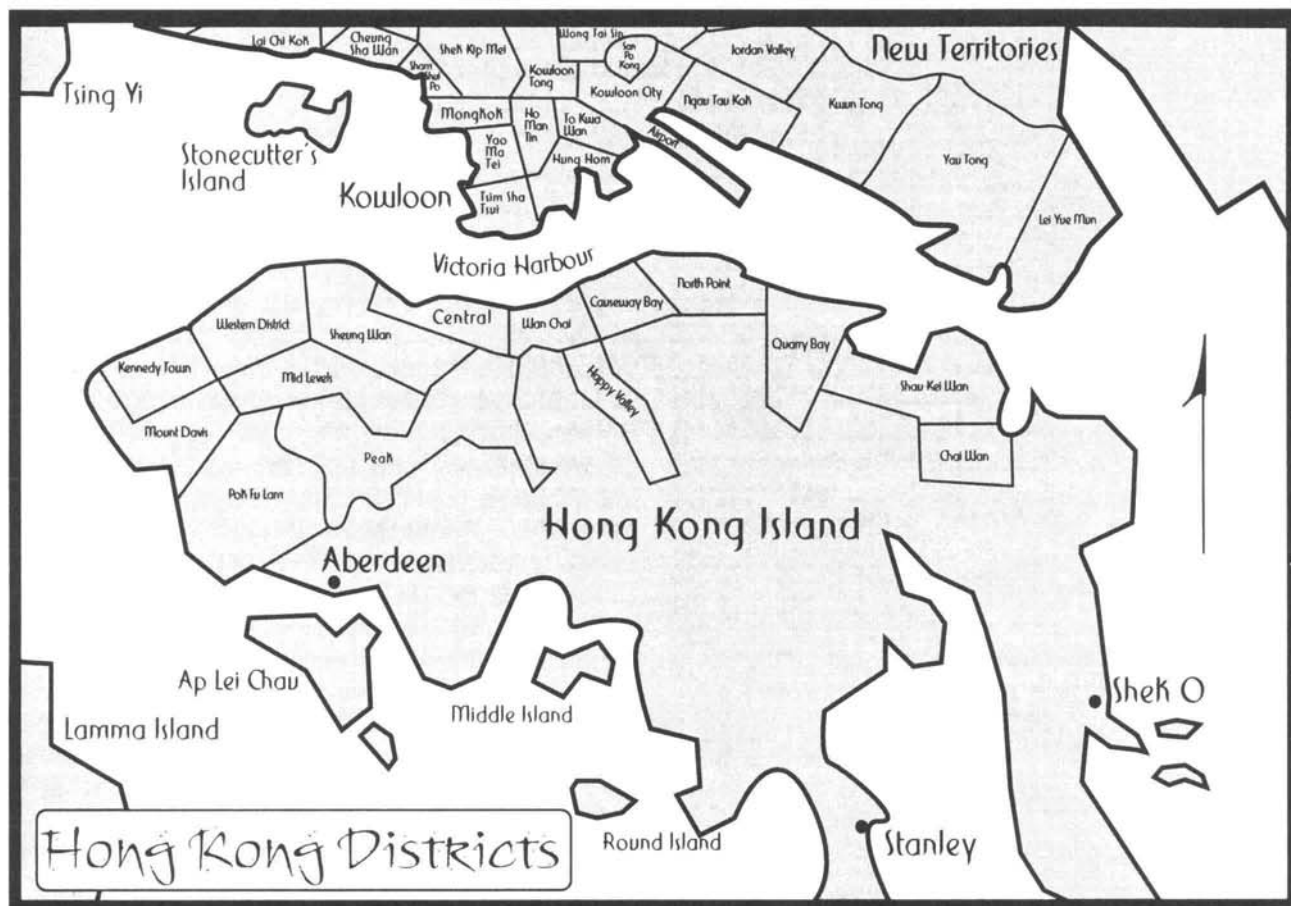
Western Kindred stare moodily down from their cloud-high offices, wondering if they should dare to walk the streets now that the Kuei-jin have returned to claim their island. Fae shiver in delight at a concert held in the Hong Kong Arts Centre and drink in the beauty of music and of mortals, then rip the Yugen from a rock group performing in the sports arena. Horses thunder along the turf of the Jockey Club in a glaringly lit night race, while one-girl sampans rock to the

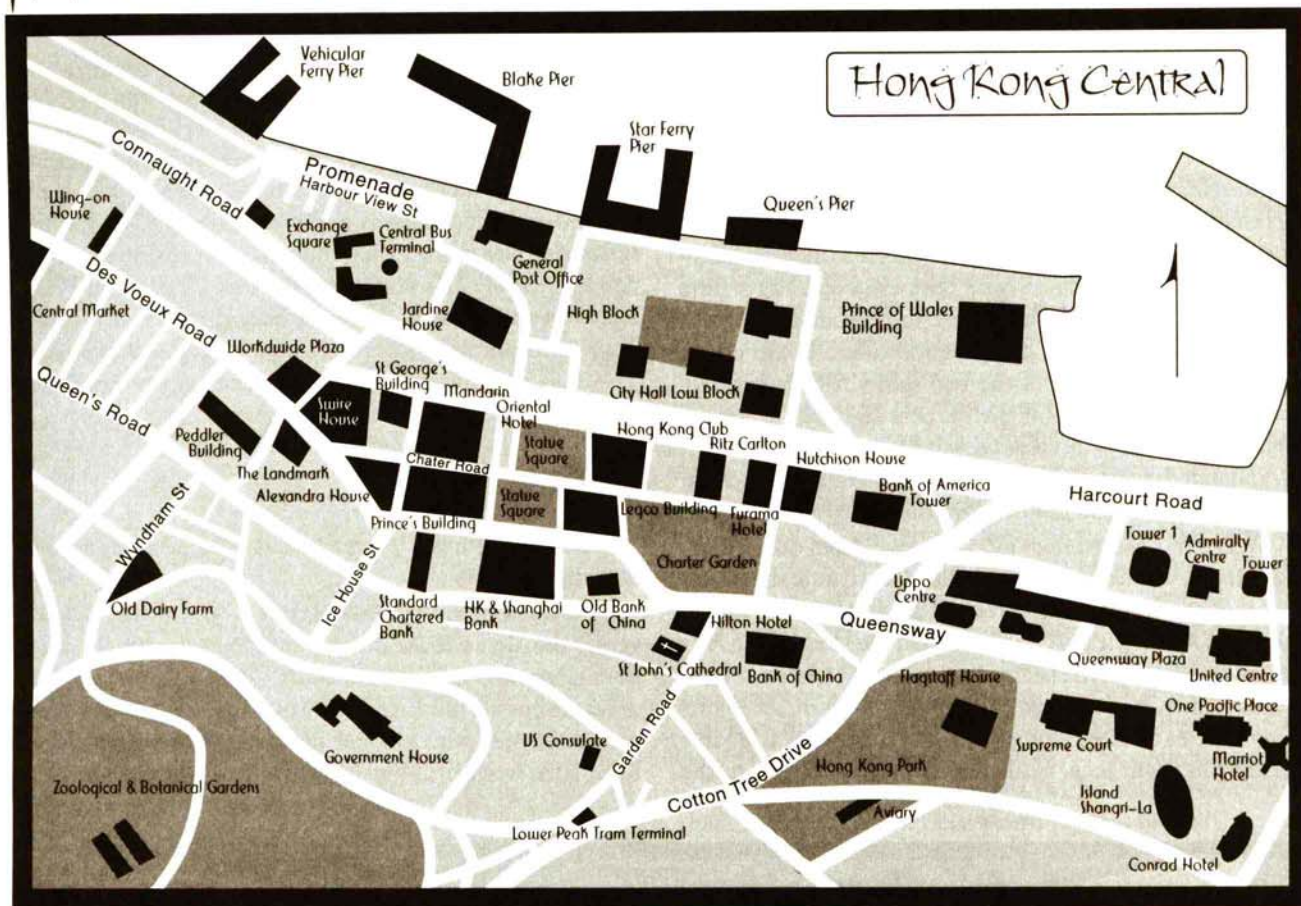
rhythm and sighs of supposed sexual ecstasy in the semi-darkness — and lack of privacy — among the boat people in a typhoon shelter. Alone, roaming the darkness of a wilderness preserve, a Khan Bastet removes his police uniform, elongating and stretching to set free the beast within him and let it roam the night. In a quiet alleyway off a back street, a bearded ancient summons a minion, bartering several lifetimes of service to the Yama King Mikaboshi in return for the power to exact vengeance for past wrongs. East meets West, and both wait for what the future brings, some with anxiety, others with a toss of the head and a mumbled acceptance. The dragons shrug and settle deeper in their stony beds. It's Hong Kong.

CENTRAL DISTRICT

Wall: 9 in many places; as low as 7 near haunts and dragon lines

Hong Kong thrives on contrast — the grossly wealthy versus the shantytown poor; technological marvels juxtaposed against traditional tools; science compared to superstition; the modern, whirlwind world of moneymaking set side-by-side with ancient mysteries. Nowhere in Hong Kong is the world of finance and business more apparent than





in Central District. Yet even in the hub, a few small oases of calm remain — a temple set between towering skyscrapers, a pagoda occupying the courtyard of a modern conglomerate.

The first thing to realize about Central is that it isn't in the center of Hong Kong; rather, it fronts on the northern coast, slightly on the western half of the island. Hugging Victoria Harbor, the panorama of impossibly tall buildings creates a jigsaw puzzle of interlocking white shapes interspersed here and there with gray, brown, dull-red or gleaming black. Dark, muted shrubs and trees pockmark the rare spaces between buildings and rise behind, undulating upward to the Peak far above.

Few of Central's towering constructions betray the four-square symmetry prevalent in modern American and European cities. Here, a terraced octagonal structure overlooks a curve-fronted edifice, which in turn looks down on a building that resembles a 10-layer birthday cake with holes carved through it at odd intervals. A maze of glassed-in skywalks crisscrosses many upper levels, while below, multilaned streets twist and curve around the buildings, meeting and merging, separating and opening into plazas, branching off into graceful cloverleaves one on top of the other.

Quivering, vibrant, overflowing with humanity either on their way to work or rushing homeward, this dynamic nerve center never sleeps. Central becomes a fairyland of twinkling lights and colorful illumination after dark. Silver-white mutes into a soft gold, accentuated with purple, aqua, crimson and green, which emphasizes the curvatures and architectural details of each skyscraper and luxury hotel. Glaring neon-red blazes company names and symbols into the night. Nightclubs and restaurants swarm with affluent natives and tourists.

If Central's watchword is money, its outward manifestation is constant, frantic motion. The rushing, pushing energy that the district's mortals exhibit keeps Hong Kong vital in the world marketplace. The city's very success works to undermine it, though, as each hurdle jumped leads to a higher, closer one that must be leapt even more proficiently. Constant anxiety, competition and the Chinese compulsion to succeed engender fantastic wealth, but also gives way to widespread corruption. Everything is for sale; nothing is sacred. Favors, payoffs, vendettas, hostile takeovers, inside tips and money laundering proceed unchecked alongside a blatant disregard for law, environmental impact, worker

safety or a basic concern for human life. Pretty much anything goes. If tourists think the nightlife is decadent, wait until they get a good look at big business — Hong Kong-style.

Supernatural Central echoes its mortal counterpart, checked only by the *shen*'s more spiritual concerns. Kuei-jin working out their Dharmas may be kinder (strange as it seems to those more familiar with Western Kindred) and more concerned with their impact on the mortals around them. Naturally, many Kuei-jin also indulge in cruelties far beyond what most mortals believe possible. Hengeyokai position themselves to grease the wheels of commerce, seeing it as a metaphor for the ever-turning Wheel of the Ages. Most changelings find Central too frenetic and too distant for them and lacking in anything other than tainted dreams of greed and "making it."

The true overlords of Central are the wraiths. A gateway leading to the Dark Kingdom of Jade (Wall Rating 5) sits concealed in the most secret sub-basement of the Bank of China Tower. The area, unseen by the community, was intended as a secret underground prison and torture room where enemies of the PRC could be questioned and dealt with. Unknowingly, the designers (not the original architect, but "interior finishers") tapped into a dragon line of Yin energy, breathed by a slumbering dragon aspected to Yin.

If the business of Hong Kong is business, then the business of the Dark Kingdom of Jade is the acquisition of ever more souls. Some mortals might mistake Central's frantic motion and assume it is an area consumed by its own passionate Yang aspect. In fact, the breakneck pace conceals a frozen disregard for everything but the dispassionate world of high finance. As money became Central's god, the district long ago surrendered to Yin. Central serves as a counting house for the Jade Emperor; its cold, uncaring facade creates a system in which bankruptcy, despair and suicide are met with a shrug, a slight gesture of distaste for the mess, and the promotion of the next guy in line.

Nonetheless, a few outposts of life — and pockets of Chi — remain within the soul-deadening commercial region. Temples dot the landscape here and there, injecting needed patches of color. A few older structures, tottering remains of the colonial government, still attest to the dreams (however chauvinistic) of empire that created modern Hong Kong. Though commuters fill the streets, in plazas and on stairways here and there, people still find room to perform their slow-motion tai chi exercises. And the area is hardly inescapable: Central is really quite small as "big cities" go. Walking from Central to Causeway Bay, for example, can be done in just over an hour. Many Kuei-jin do just that, strolling through the streets of Western or Wanchai amid the throngs, savoring the pulse of the city and the rich Chi available there.

Central has few historic buildings, partly as a consequence of Hong Kong's mania for tearing down almost-new structures to build even taller, more impressive ones. But, it's mostly because the amazing business hub of Hong Kong was



underwater as recently as a century ago. Virtually all of Central rests on land reclaimed from the harbor. Despite its lack of real, antique character, Central does boast the following famous (and important) features:

THE STAR FERRY PIER

An unusual business venture in such a modern setting, the dozen green-and-white double-decker Star Ferries cross the harbor from Kowloon's Tsimshatsui to Hong Kong's Central District over 450 times per day. A fixture of daily life, the ferries (which also provide harbor tours) play host to tourists and locals alike, who take advantage of the ridiculously low fares and the convenience of transportation that leaves every few minutes. Hong Kong's residents were so dependent on the Star Ferry line in the past that a proposed rate hike of HK 5 cents caused a riot. Today, with the cross-harbor tunnels, MTR (Mass Transit Railway) and even helitaxis, the ferries are no longer the only game in town.

Still, they provide a quieter, more romantic mode of travel, made more mysterious and beautiful after dark when the fantastic lights shine and sparkle in the dark waters of the harbor. While natives read the news or discuss the races, tourists goggle at the myriad of ships that fill Victoria Harbor — sampans, junks, freighters, tankers, and other ferries — all maneuvering for space in the harbor that has shrunk with each year and each land-reclamation scheme. And once docked, travelers come out of the underpass from the pier. From the brief but relaxing trip, they're slammed into the downtown Central bustle — back to business as usual.

ON THE HARBOR

Coming up from the harbor, two structures immediately garner attention. The first is Jardine House — 52-stories high and studded with rows of porthole windows, it more than earns its Chinese name of "House of a Thousand Orifices." The Hong Kong Tourist Association's Information and Gift Center occupies a spot in Jardine House's basement shopping arcade. The dominant structures on the waterfront, however, are the blue-glass towers of Exchange Square. Housing Hong Kong's Stock Exchange, the exchange also offers several major merchant banks and international trading companies.

THE MAIN DRAGS

Three parallel streets cut through Central, linking the area with the Western District and Wanchai. Queens Road Central, farthest from the water, abutted the harbor in the 1860s. The great trading hongts such as Jardine, Matheson & Co., and Swine & Co., who dominated China trade in teas, silk and opium (and who now own huge chunks of the world), built their headquarters along Queens Road and

established undisputed command of the waterfront. Today the street is a shopper's paradise, lined with expensive jewelry shops and large department stores. Des Voeux Road, the central street, became the heart of Hong Kong's commercial district almost as soon as it was built on reclaimed land. The Hongkong and Shanghai Bank and Bank of Canton established their sites on Des Voeux Road in the 1880s. The MTR follows the layout of Des Voeux Road as it winds through Hong Kong. Connaught Road, constructed from more recently reclaimed land fronts on the harbor, becomes Harcourt Road as it moves east toward Wanchai. Across from Connaught Road Central lies Statue Square.

STATUE SQUARE

Wall Rating: 6

This green park in the foreground of the Bank of China Tower once held a statue of Queen Victoria. Appropriately, as testament to Central's overriding concern with finance, the park now hosts only a statue of Sir Thomas Jackson, manager of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank for 30 years. An open, pleasant place with fountains and benches, Statue Square is usually an oasis of calm. On Sundays, the area is inundated with Filipina maids (*amahs*) picnicking and socializing on their day off. Some *shen* have noted that later in the evening, the park provides a quiet place where private meetings are rarely disturbed. Perhaps because of the happiness that bathes the park at least once a week, the area has developed a small store of Chi energy. Most beings find it difficult to display deeply negative emotions (rage, hate, despair) while within the park.

CENTRAL MARKET

Wall Rating: 7

Depending on the source, Central Market is either on the westernmost edge of the Central District or comprises the eastern fringe of the Western District. In character, the Central Market is more like the Western District. Easily located by following the smells wafting east from either Queens Road or Des Voeux Road, the market is busiest in early morning, when fresh fish, meat, poultry, fruits and vegetables are delivered. Several floors are divided among 300 stalls according to the wares offered: live fish, eels, turtles, crabs, chickens and quail being slaughtered on the ground floor, meat one floor up and fruit and vegetables available on the third. With its pervasive odors of fish and blood and gruesome hacking apart of food animals (as an example, fish are sliced lengthwise, but the cut is made above the heart so it continues to beat, pumping blood throughout the body...mmm...fresh!), Central Market is a delightful oasis of Yin Chi. *Shen* who thrive on such energies often tour the premises, either while the morning slaughtering is happening or after closing.



Central Market marks the start (or terminus) of the 2,600-foot-long escalator complex that rises up the hillside to the Mid-Levels on Victoria Peak. Designed to assist commuters who live in the Mid-Levels but who work in Central, this series of escalators and moving sidewalks first opened in 1933. These devices are on stilts above the buildings, giving a weird view of the city below. Escalators operate downhill from 6 A.M. until 10 A.M., then are run in reverse to go uphill from 10 A.M. until 11 P.M., taking about 15 minutes from Mid-Level to Central.

KIOSHO TECHNOLOGIES

Japanese-owned and easier to work for than most Hong Kong high-tech firms, Kiosho Technologies toes the razor-sharp edge of modern invention and manufacturing. The Hong Kong branch of the Tokyo-based corporation specializes in entertainment concerns and hopes to be first in the race for the newest, smallest and least expensive video and audio recording and playback units of the future. Workers can benefit from Kiosho Technologies' Corporate College (on the building's 21st floor) and housing and travel assistance. (The corporation helps promising employees find better housing and helps them defray travel costs to and from work by buying travel passes in bulk and arranging for entire floors or buildings in housing estates to be leased to company employees.) Those who exceed company quotas, offer useful suggestions or otherwise perform in ways beneficial to the company often receive rewards ranging from bonus pay to videotape players.

Shaped like a partially opened fan, the Kiosho Building towers 45-stories high — a virtual dwarf among some of the taller edifices of Central. Kiosho Masahiro, owner of the firm and a Japanese Genji, claims the penthouse floor — including a covered swimming pool and night-blooming garden — for his own.

THE PEAK TRAM STATION

Before the advent of the Peak Tram, a trip up Victoria Peak (via sedan chair) took three hours. Since the 1880s, when the first Peak Tram was introduced, the trek has been reduced to eight minutes. Actually, the world's steepest funicular railway rather than a tram, the Peak Tram climbs from its station behind the Hilton Hotel in Central District up to the Peak Tower over 1,000 feet above sea level. As the railway car moves upward, the tall buildings seem to lean in over the train. Pulled up and lowered down via 5,000-foot-long cables, the Peak Tram is considered the safest transport in Hong Kong. In all its years, there has never been an accident, even though it is used daily by commuting workers and schoolchildren as well as a myriad of tourists. A pedes-

THE SHEN OF CENTRAL

The following shen can usually be found around and amid the Central District.

- **Angúo Chun:** Kuei-jin who inhabits a luxury apartment on the fringes of Central's financial district.

- **Bishamon Kazuko:** A Japanese Kuei-jin, she resides currently in a closet-sized apartment near Central's western edge.

- **Kiosho Masahiro:** Japanese Genji who lives in the penthouse of Kiosho Technologies.

- **Lao Chi, heimin:** He calls home a hideously expensive apartment in Central's Blooming Gardens Apartment Complex.

- **Camille T'sien,** Robert Pedder's childe: Ventrue. An "entertainer," Camille maintains several havens (including one very private one — a cottage in Aberdeen on the south side of the island); her primary refuge is in an older apartment building in Central that is slated for rebuilding early next year.

- **Jo Wu,** Glass Walker Garou: When not at the Mother of Peach Trees Caern, she lives in a penthouse apartment in Central's posh Dragon's Tears Condominiums.

- **Chika Masato,** Japanese ronin Hakken (Shadow Lord): He resides currently in the pricey Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Central, but he spends as much time as he can in the wilderness preserves on the island.

- **Simone Carsweld,** Syndicate mage: As a member of Pearl Paradigms, she rents a penthouse atop the elegant glass-and-steel spiral Pearl Paradigm building, where she has a stunning view across the harbor to Kowloon.

- **Lorenzo Gil,** Progenitor mage: He has an apartment in the sublevels of the Pearl Paradigm building as well as a getaway home on Lantau.

- **Pavithra Adri,** Iteration X mage: She lives in her lab in the Pearl Paradigm building.

- **Neng Shou,** Syndicate mage: He also has an apartment in the Pearl Paradigm building but spends most of his time in his Kowloon apartment.



trian walkway branches off from the Peak Tower, curving around and offering a breathtaking view of the Mid-Levels, Central and Victoria Harbor.

THE LANDMARK

Typical of Central's style, the Landmark consists of five floors of chic, up-to-date shops surrounding a huge (20,000-square-foot) atrium. Over 100 shops form the outer perimeter of the atrium, while its center is graced by a magnificent round fountain with water streams and brilliant lighting. The fountain can be covered to become a stage if needed. Exhibitions and lunch-time concerts are featured in the Landmark. Younger Kuei-jin frequent the Landmark in search of quick "snacks."

HONGKONG AND SHANGHAI BANK

Founded by China traders in 1864, this bank has played a major role in financing the colony of Hong Kong since its inception. Though occupying the same spot since the 1880s, the bank's new building was completed in 1985. Known to locals as the "Robot Building," the 47-story architectural triumph/monstrosity claims world fame as the most expensive building ever constructed. Costing over \$US 1 billion, its unique architecture attracts serious architects and con-

fused gawkers. Constructed "inside out," the gears, motors, moving parts and gizmos that run the elevators and escalators are all visible. Stairwells do have walls (for safety reasons), but they are made of glass. Structural supports are external, with the ladderlike walls hung from towers like a suspension bridge.

The building is supported by groups of pillars, allowing visitors to walk underneath and look up through the glass into the high atrium above. Open offices ring the central space. The entire building is anathema to those people who are afraid of heights. Stone lions guard the entrance and the escalators are set at a peculiar angle. The building's eccentricities are attributed to a *feng shui*'s advice to refrain from offending the spirits (most notably a dragon whose view would have been blocked by a more opaque structure).

BANK OF CHINA TOWER

The other side of the *feng shui* coin, this gleaming tower, sheathed in reflective glass and incorporating a series of defining triangular and prismatic angles, houses the official financial institution of the People's Republic of China. At just over 1200 feet, the structure was the tallest building in Hong Kong (and Asia) until outdone by the recently completed Central Plaza. Designed by I.M. Pei, a Chinese-American architect, the Bank of China Tower is



intended to impress upon Hong Kong China's might and dominant position. Impressive it is, from its mirrors and angles that reflect bad Chi and point it toward the other financial institutions in the area, to its twin rooftop "chopsticks," to its barreled vaults modeled on Ming Dynasty tombs. Housed within the ultramodern exterior, the Tsui Museum of Art contains over 200 works, many of them priceless antiques. Despite this attempt to humanize the structure, bad vibes radiate from the soaring, spearlike tower (see above for its connection to the Dark Kingdom of Jade), and locals sometimes refer to it as China's rude, blue finger.

WESTERN DISTRICT

Sprawling, crowded Western District starts only a running jump away from the skyscrapers and luxury hotels of Central, but those few steps are enough to open up a different world. The oldest settled part of Hong Kong, Western originally played host to the China traders and colonial British. The latter soon moved to a less malarial area, leaving Western to the Chinese. Packed with traditional businesses, crowded residences, small temples and numerous street stalls, Western retains much of its early character, color and energy.

SHEUNG WAN

A webwork of streets and narrow lanes running westward from the Central Market, Sheung Wan features traditional Chinese markets and shops. It adjoins the Macao Ferry Terminal and is viewed as most representative of the Western District. From Wing Sing Street's gloomy egg sellers (some of whom make the famous hundred-year-old eggs) to the stalls in Man Wa Lane, where official name seals known as "chops" are carved of wood, soapstone or porcelain, Sheung Wan's businesses are far more interesting and odd than Central's high finances. The Western Market has kept its Edwardian brick and ironwork shell but hosts an arts-and-crafts center within. Bonham Strand's fame comes from its flourishing snake shops, which sell snakes' bile and gall bladders in wine as a cure for rheumatism and most other ills — the more poisonous the snake, the better the cure! Street barbers rub shoulders with herbal wholesalers, whose mainstay — ginseng — can cost thousands of dollars.

A few nocturnal businesses within Sheung Wan feature even more bizarre wares, goods catering to the *shen*. One store is run by an unscrupulous (and, if legend is to be believed, centuries-old) slaver who sells human victims from a sound-proofed underground abattoir; Kuei-jin aspected to Yang particularly prize the vendor's stock of delectable children. Another emporium hawks powdered rhino horn, inks supposedly harvested from giant squid (which are reputed to secrete the best calligraphic inks), and other tools of the trade for Hong Kong's Awakened.

FENG SHUI

It's not just in Central that architecture is a major concern. Throughout all the districts of Hong Kong, buildings look odd (with doorways set at strange angles, bulbous windows or pagodalike towers atop flat roofs, mirrors hung outside windows 20 stories up). Many are constructed of strange materials, incorporate weird symbols or colors, are set into catty-corners or juxtapose modern design with traditional Chinese elements. That's *feng shui* at work.

Feng shui is an ancient and subtle art intended to align dwellings and tombsites in harmony with both heavenly emanations and earthly configurations (blending spirit and matter). If both architecture and landscape are in accord with the principles of *feng shui*, happiness and prosperity accrue to the occupants. This geomantic practice reaches beyond the merely physical aspect of designing pleasing spaces, seeing in that creation a means to promote agreeable spiritual sites as well. Thus, a harmonious house provides the atmosphere in which physical well-being is coupled with spiritual growth.

The term *feng shui* means "wind-water," not to overemphasize those two elements beyond others (such as fire and earth), but because the nature of *feng shui* is like the wind (incomprehensible and changed by the most minute forces) and the water (which cannot be grasped, though it can be held within a physical vessel). The words acknowledge the balance of spirit (symbolized by the wind) and matter (the water).

So what exactly does all this mean?

In essence, using geomantic principles to determine harmonious placement of a structure ensures that it won't interfere with the *feng shui* lines (also called dragon lines), either cutting off their energy flow or crossing them at bad angles. Poor placement means disaster, though corrective steps (moving doorways, cutting holes through the structure to allow the free flow of Chi, etc.) can alleviate the problem. More scientific followers believe that adhering to *feng shui* balances buildings and tombsites along magnetic lines and according to underground waterways; traditionalists, on the other hand, aver that following the geomancer's dictates pleases the dragons who sleep beneath the earth. The bottom line is that it works, and the Chinese are nothing if not practical.

HOLLYWOOD ROAD

Hollywood Road curves through the district, stuffed with secondhand shops, antique dealers, curio sellers, stores offering everything from blackwood furniture to painted screens, a few Chinese apothecaries and tourist junk. Also along Hollywood Road are coffin sellers and shops that make traditional silk funeral clothes (fashionable among certain Kuei-jin). Almost anything can be found for sale along this road, including jewelry, mystical tomes, illegal drugs and specialty porno items. *Shen* haunt this area and browse for bargains among mortal buyers.

THE *SHEN* OF POKFULAN AND KENNEDY TOWN

Any of those mentioned here can be found in the area by those who look hard enough.

- **Bai Chen, Kuei-jin:** She is a member of Chun's *wu* and resides near Kennedy Town.

- **Oliver Thrace, Tremere:** Head of the Tremere in Hong Kong, he lives in the chantry, a small, two-story building sandwiched between two brothels (disguised as secondhand shops) on Hollywood Road.

- **Wan Zhu, Tremere:** Thrace's child lives in the Tremere Chantry.

- **Stephen Bateson, "Tremere":** He lives in the chantry but has several boltholes throughout Hong Kong and Kowloon.

- **Miao Min, Sun Hou Tzu (Monkey King):** She lives near Hong Kong University with her family and shares a lakshmi with other Monkey Kings in the middle of Aw Boon Haw Gardens.

- **Bian Tu, Chu-ih-yu (fae crafter):** He has a shop just off the Cat Street Market; his lakshmi (freehold), which is just large enough to hold him, is in a small, enclosed garden behind his house.

- **Dai Yun, Heng Po (storm children):** She occupies a small hut nestled in a cove on the western shores of Hong Kong Island.

- **Lian Ting, Akashic mage:** She lives in a small temple off Upper Lascar Row.

- **Ren Wei, Shih demon hunter:** He lives in a tiny basement apartment near Hong Kong University.

- **Da Nan, wraith:** He has a haunt in an old cove where pirate ships used to dock on the western side of Hong Kong Island.

MAN MO TEMPLE

The well-known Man Mo Temple sits on the western end of Hollywood Road. One of Hong Kong's oldest temples, its adornments and interior decorations evoke the mainland China of a century ago. The temple is dark inside and filled with smoke from hanging cylindrical bell-shaped coils of incense. The temple's name derives from its two aspects: "man," which means civil, and "mo," which indicates martial. The *man* aspect is dedicated to Man Cheong (God of Literature, patron of civil servants), whose statue is clad in red robes and wields a writing brush, while the *mo* aspect is represented by Kuan Ti (God of War, protector of pawn shops, policemen, the military and secret societies — an intriguing combination that allows triad members, the pawnshop owners whose protection money they take, and the police trying to arrest the triads, to worship side by side). Kuan Ti is dressed in green and holds a sword.

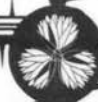
The major attraction at the Man Mo Temple (where both Buddhists and Taoists worship) is the fortune-telling performed on the premises. People shake bamboo cylinders filled with inscribed sticks until one of the sticks falls out. It is then presented to an interpreter, who tells the person her fortune.

Ladder Street crosses Hollywood Road right by the temple. The last of its kind, Ladder Street is actually a steep stairway used in the 19th century by sedan bearers to help them carry their burdens up more easily to residential areas along Caine Road. It is one of the few places in Hong Kong where older-style shuttered houses still exist. Their balconies jut out over Ladder Street, making it seem almost like a tunnel.

"CAT STREET"

Upper Lascar Row used to be called Cat Street (and still is by many of Western's residents). In our world, the area once housed a notorious red-light district; in the World of Darkness, the district and its inhabitants still exist. The Cat Street area is also known as the Thieves' Market. The two appellations (combining tomcatting with cat burglary) give the street its name. The area is also noted for its cheap flea markets (though someone may find a piece of fine jade there occasionally). For the more discerning (and discreet), other items can be purchased at Cat Street Market, including guns, drugs and fake IDs. Broken-down rooming houses, hiding places for mortal — and supernatural — fugitives, dot the area as well. The region provides ample hunting grounds for Kuei-jin *wu*.

Shen are sometimes attracted to a small, almost-hidden temple in Ting Pai Shan (Hidden Mountain) — an early Chinese settlement noted for its plague outbreaks and early triad strongholds. The temple, dedicated to Kuan Yin, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, is dwarfed physically by other more impressive temples nearby, but it houses a nigh-tangible node (Wall Rating 5) of Yang Chi beneath it. Several



shen, including Bai Chen and Miao Min, have made a pact to protect the temple, and trespassers are typically dealt with harshly.

POKFULAN AND KENNEDY TOWN

Aside from residential areas, there isn't much to see beyond Sheung Wan before reaching Kennedy Town on Hong Kong's western coast. One exception is the Fung Ping Shan Museum of Chinese Art, which holds collections of bronze mirrors, ceramics from Neolithic pottery through the various dynasties, and swords and statuettes. It also holds a rare collection of Nestorian Christian relics — over 900 crosses, some cruciform, others shaped like birds, circles, stars and swastikas (an ancient mystic symbol long before the Nazis adopted it). People can walk to the grounds of Hong Kong University from the museum. Kennedy Town itself is an overlooked area of the island that is somewhat rundown with ramshackle tenements and markets, waterfront godowns, and cranes unloading ships and junks painted in their traditional green and red. Kennedy Town serves as a destination point for some of the seaborne smuggling that occurs throughout Southeast Asia.

THE PEAK (AND MID-LEVELS)

The place to live since early colonial days, the Peak boasts fabulous mansions offering a spectacular view of the city and harbor below. Originally dotted with cool summer homes for the wealthy, the Peak used to be almost bare rock. A concerted effort to plant greenery has transformed it into a verdant haven filled with birdsong. The only way up in early times was to walk or be carried in a sedan chair, and the racist colonists banned Chinese from living on the Peak. Now, mansions vie for apartment blocks, all jostling for position, the best view and reputations for the phenomenal cost of owning or renting these exclusive properties. Since the Hotungs broke the barrier and became the first Chinese family to live on the Peak, the only criterion for residence on the Peak is a whole lot of money (say, about \$US 70 million for a small dwelling). Interestingly, for someone so concerned with "human rights," barrister Martin Lee, leader of Hong Kong's United Democrats, lives on the Peak rather than using his money to relieve the lot of Hong Kong's poor.

Mid-Levels is the community of high-rise apartment buildings and attractive houses halfway up the Peak. Ranged around a ledge cut into the mountainside, Mid-Levels provides housing that is slightly less prestigious than that on the Peak. More development of Mid-Levels was planned at one time but banned in the wake of the terrible (and costly) mudslides in the 1970s.

SHEN OF THE PEAK

Only one *shen* resides openly on the Peak.

- **Gwendolyn Fleming, Toreador:** She owns a lavish mansion here, complete with its own concert hall and small theater. Gwendolyn stages evening entertainment for the elite and showcases her latest discoveries. Her actual resting place lies below the mansion in an elaborate crypt cut deep into the mountainside.

Although the following two *shen* do not actually live on the Peak, it is the closest point of reference for locating them.

- **Qian Shi, Kumo (Goblin Spider):** He occupies an elaborate underground home beneath Victoria Peak, accessible only through secret tunnels branching off from the MTR or through the Yang World.

- **An Sheng, Kuei-jin:** This member of the Righteous Devils lives beneath a small temple in the hills near the Peak.

WANCHAI

Wanchai, once the center of R&R for sailors, soldiers and merchant marines, a place where a wink and a waggle could signal an assignation, has now fallen victim to gaudier "hostess clubs," discos and topless bars. Still the center for nightlife, Wanchai has night markets selling everything from fruit to tailored suits (not to mention any sort of illicit sex one might desire).

This sleazy underbelly of Hong Kong is undergoing a facelift in the real world. Not so in the World of Darkness. Western tourists and natives flock to Wanchai like flies to dung and lose themselves in the smattering of newer attractions or in the countless older sleaze-pits. The area is haunted by certain recently arrived Kuei-jin who use the area as an easy means of sustenance. In Wanchai, it matters little whether one feeds by luring prey to one's haven or by snatching them openly off the street; disappearances here are as common as venereal disease.

THE ARTS CENTRE AND CENTRAL PLAZA

Wanchai's two latest claims to fame are the anomalous Hong Kong Arts Centre, a 15-story venue featuring much of the fine drama, films and contemporary art in the territory, and the notable Central Plaza. Until the latter was built, the Bank of Hong Kong Tower was the tallest building in Hong Kong. Now that honor goes to Central Plaza. Its 78 stories are built of reinforced concrete and topped by a glass pyramid from which a 180-foot-high mast thrusts upward. Never ones to be overly impressed by new architectural wonders, the locals call it "the Big Syringe." Clad in reflective glass curtain walls, bedecked with neon, and topped by the pyramid that



shoots out computer-controlled, color-coded lights, Central Plaza is the brightest, gaudiest combatant in the war for attention along the harbor.

NIGHTLIFE

Lockhart Road epitomizes the character of Wanchai's red-light district. Even after the Communist takeover, its many bars and restaurants still attract a large nighttime

clientele, and a stroll down the street at night elicits all manner of raunchy offers. Off Lockhart, down a quieter alleyway, stands the House of Seven Tigers — a two-story brothel with a reputation for clean, pleasant "hostesses" and for little tolerance for rough trade. Most of the hostess bars in Wanchai are not so genteel. Patrons are enticed into sleazy bars through promises of cheap drinks and "international model dancers," where a topless waitress brings a

SHEN OF WANCHAI

A disparate group of *shen* make their homes in the area.

- Gan Shuo, pronounced *akuma* (devil) by the Quincunx: He seeks to lose himself in the red-light district of Wanchai. Involved in child porn and snuff films, he has entered a pact with the Dark Kingdom of Jade. Gan Shuo dwells beneath a stonecutter's shop, where he attempts to lower the Wall and thus create a gateway into the Middle Kingdom for his wraithly allies.

- Lang Shan, Kuei-jin: She keeps a small apartment near Gan Shuo, but most often spends her time aboard her ship *The Golden Serpent*.

- Wu Yong, Iron Ghost, Glass Walker: He has ties to Wanchai's underworld; he stays mostly at the Mother of Peach Trees Caern but shares an apartment off Hennessey Road with members of the Iron Brotherhood.

- Melody Trelawny, Stygian wraith: She haunts a brothel in Wanchai.

- Ji Pa, Wu-Keng mage: She pushes her food cart through the streets of Wanchai disguised as a street vendor. She inhabits a tiny flat in Wanchai's slum section.

- Ming Hu, a Wu Lung mage: An actor, he resides in a small apartment above an herbal shop in the back streets of Wanchai.

drink and talks amiably for a few minutes. Soon thereafter, a waiter gives the bill for \$HK500 or so and points to an illegible or mostly concealed sign explaining that talking to the waitresses costs \$HK400 for 5 minutes. Protests are handled by triad members, who explain the situation happily and accept cash or travelers' checks in lieu of breaking arms or necks.

One such bar, the House of the Ebon Dragon (Wall 6), is almost conspicuous in its unobtrusiveness. Located well off any main thoroughfares, this place is dark and laid out in an unhealthy manner, and far less lively than most brothels. The Dragon's gloomy interior smells of unwashed bodies and mildew. Vagrants, junkies, cripples, and hollow-eyed children slump in corners, some chained in alcoves awaiting the attentions of the *shen* who frequent the place. The House of the Ebon Dragon is a neutral meeting ground for Hong Kong's *shen*. Even Thrace's minions have been known to consort with their rivals here, though they suffer occasional ambushes after leaving the establishment.

Wanchai's market is similar to the Central Market, but nearby is the Pak Tai Temple. Dedicated to Pak Tai, the Military Protector and Emperor of the North who was charged with maintaining harmony on Earth, it isn't surprising that the temple houses craftsmen who make traditional burial offerings from bamboo and paper. These delicate works of art are burned to equip the dead in the afterlife.

HAPPY VALLEY, PASTIMES AND GAMBLING

Happy Valley's best known (and some say only) attraction is the Happy Valley Racecourse, where thousands wager a month's salary on the outcome of a single race. Betting on the ponies is one of the two legal ways to gamble in Hong Kong (the other is at mahjong, see below). Gambling is a mania among the Chinese, who have been accused of betting hundreds of dollars on everything from which pickpocket will steal a *gweilo*'s wallet to which fly will land on a plate of food first. Secondary in interest are the many cemeteries (catering to Muslims, Catholics, Jews and Parsee); the Hong Kong Cricket Club; and Aw Boon Haw Gardens, a garish "amusement park" and testament to the idea that a Chinese Disneyland might be a really terrible idea.

THE JOCKEY CLUB

Thoroughbreds race at a course almost as old as the colony itself, while Hong Kong's exclusive Jockey Club is a hub for the social elite. It is thought that much of the true business in Hong Kong is conducted in the club's restaurants and posh bars, where business tycoons, multimillionaires and government dignitaries meet and mingle.

AW BOON HAW GARDENS

Aw Boon Haw Gardens is a mishmash of grottos, stairways, grotesque multicolored statues of gods and animals from Chinese mythology, wall carvings of Hell's many torments, and pagodas. Built by Mr. Aw Boon Haw, a millionaire who made his money from Tiger Balm, the "gardens" form a bizarre and tasteless attraction.

Near the colorful grotesquerie of these gardens lies a series of refugee camps. The squalid camp is enclosed behind barbed wire and home to the dispossessed of Southeast Asia, with a high proportion of the lame, the blind, and the diseased clinging desperately to their dreary existences. For Kuei-jin, this place is a disease-ridden, but nonetheless

THE NATIONAL PASTIME: MAHJONG

Like Hong Kong street life played out in miniature, mahjong rushes along at a frenetic pace — tiles clacking as they are slammed onto the table, players betting and shouting, flashing through the moves of the game at a pace too fast for the uninitiated to follow. Betting chips and money flutter from hand to hand. Loud conversation accompanies each move, as if the participants were screaming insults preparatory to a wild kung fu match. The noise deafens when even there are only a few games going on. When 100 games are afoot, cacophony ensues. Some Westerners claim to be driven insane by the din and the tension. It seems as though multitudes of fistfights could break out over disagreements at any moment.

Mahjong is all-pervasive. The Chinese play it at the beach, during their lunch breaks, even at dinner parties. One story tells of a wedding invitation that informed the guests (in English) to arrive for the ceremony and wedding banquet at 8:30. In Chinese characters, however, was the notice that mahjong players should arrive at six, so that they might enjoy a rousing pre-wedding game. Despite the clamor, the Chinese play mahjong to relax and to polish their skill at betting. Some adherents even believe they can judge a possible ally's or enemy's personality and gain insight into his thought processes through a challenge to a friendly mahjong game — a ploy that the old Tai-pan Robert Pedder never recognized. To the Kuei-jin of Hong Kong, it was always obvious that Pedder would flee rather than stay under Chinese rule. They knew it from his style (and lack of expertise) in mahjong.

serviceable, buffet. Both Qian Shi and Gan Shuo come here regularly to feast on the inhabitants' blood; the *akuma* and Kumo have formed an uneasy truce, but each secretly plots the other's destruction.

CAUSEWAY BAY

Causeway Bay actually was a bay until a land-reclamation project in the 1950s. Today, thanks in part to the Cross Harbor Tunnel, it has emerged as its own little city. Best known for its huge typhoon shelter, Causeway Bay sports deluxe hotels and the 42-story World Trade Center, which itself abounds with offices, nightclubs and restaurants.

THE WATERFRONT

The Hong Kong Yacht Club shares the bay with the typhoon shelter, and many of Hong Kong's people prove that literally their ship has come in by owning a yacht. The famous Noon-Day Gun, a cannon that faces out over the waterfront, was fired each day at noon under British rule. Though immortalized in a line by Noel Coward, the duty was placed upon one of the Hong's in the 1880s as atonement for a piece of Victorian skullduggery.

SHOPS AND RESTAURANTS

Causeway Bay may be mistaken easily for a continuation of its western neighbor, Wanchai, at least in terms of the traditional shops in the area that sell everything from funeral effigies to woks. Near the Excelsior Hotel, which overlooks

the typhoon shelter, exists a block of cheap Japanese-owned shopping outlets, movie theaters and hundreds of smaller shops selling cameras and CD players. But Causeway Bay is most noted for its many eating establishments: Food Street, an 80,000-square-foot stretch, contains about 30 eateries that attract 100,000 people each week to dine on Peking duck, Japanese, Indian, and Szechuan delicacies, and even American-style beefsteak. Italian, Vietnamese, Russian and German restaurants are found on Hysan Avenue among dozens of boutiques. Western Kindred come to the area to sample the cooking secondhand.

NORTH POINT AND BEYOND

North Point and other reaches (Quarry Bay, Shau Ki Wan and Chai Wan) sit east of Victoria Peak. Somewhat shabby, they host industrial areas and high-rise apartments. The main attractions (if they can be called such) in the area are the Tam Kung Temple in Shau Ki Wan and an enormous Chinese cemetery in Chai Wan. Many mid-range apartment complexes take up most of North Point and the other eastern districts. Besides a few movie theaters and department stores, the area isn't much of a tourist attraction.

Past North Point and actually in Quarry Bay lies the Hong Kong Funeral Home — the largest mortuary on the island — and its attendant wreathmakers. Quarry Bay now has Taikoo Shing, a recent vertical (high-rise) city, and Cityplaza I and II, a shopping and entertainment area featuring cinemas, bowling alleys and roller rinks.

THE SOUTHERN SIDE OF THE ISLAND

Shek O, Stanley, Repulse Bay and Ocean Park are on Hong Kong's south (ocean) side. The area features rocky coasts, white beaches and small fishing villages, but no office buildings and factories, and it is either quiet and seemingly deserted or as noisy as a carnival and filled with tourists — depending on which area you visit. Ocean Park, the world's largest oceanarium, has attractions ranging from the Shark Aquarium to the sky cablecars to Ocean Theater (where dolphins and whales perform), and from the Dragon, one of the longest rollercoasters ever built, to the animatronic museum known as the Middle Kingdom, which brings 5,000 years of Chinese history to life. Ocean Park is adjacent to the water slides and plastic beaches of Water World.

SHEK O

Shek O is best known for its beach, where Sunday bathers gather. Hiding beyond Shek O Village and its bathers' market are several beautiful, luxurious mansions owned by some of Hong Kong's richest residents.

THE SHEN OF SOUTHSIDE

Though scattered, these *shen* can be found on Hong Kong's southern side.

- **Dong Tao, Zhong Lung (Mokolé):** He lives among the Tanka boat people in Aberdeen Harbor, staying with his great-granddaughter, her husband, and his new grandchild.

- **Kuan Hui, wraith:** Her haunt is in Stanley, where she died, but she also frequents the house in Aberdeen where her *gweilo* lover's descendants now live.

- **Duncan Gordon, wraith:** A soldier in WWII, Gordon is now one of the Western wraiths of Hong Kong. His haunt is in the ruins of the Repulse Bay Hotel, where the British soldiers made a valiant last stand against the invading Japanese.

- **Michaela Neff (Merit-neferu), Shemsu-heru vizier of Asia, mummy:** She lives in a small, well-kept house in Stanley.

STANLEY

Founded long before being given the English name Stanley, this town owes its existence to the pirate Cheung Po Tsai, who captured the island in 1770. Though quieter during the week than most other parts of Hong Kong, Stanley's market (selling fashionable clothing, rattan, artwork, food and almost anything else people might want) and beach host thousands of visitors on weekends. Near the

SHEN OF CAUSEWAY BAY

Most *shen* who can be found in Causeway Bay are not residents, but visitors attracted by the easy access to mortals.

- **Mao Lun, Kuei-jin:** He resides in the basement of an old *feng shui* shop down a little-traveled alleyway in Causeway Bay, where he practices geomancy for his nighttime clientele.

- **Huan Hai, Kuei-jin:** She makes her home in a sampan among the Tanka boat people, sleeping below sea level during day; she oversees protection rackets among the floating slums of Victoria Harbor and Causeway Bay, and she helps *shen* find safe passage and shelter from demon hunters.

- **Liu Shao, Kuei-jin:** He lives with the Hoklo boat people in Causeway Bay.

village rests Stanley Prison, where the Japanese interned British prisoners-of-war in WWII, and the Stanley Military Cemetery. Both remind viewers of Hong Kong's grim past.

REPULSE BAY

Rising against the backdrop of the green hills over which the Japanese army invaded in 1941, the noted Repulse Bay Hotel (designed with a hole in the center—either in response to *feng shui* considerations or for wind control) overlooks often-widened Repulse Bay Beach. The resort becomes a madhouse when weekend sunbathers descend upon it. Named for the battleship *HMS Repulse*, it, too, once served as a pirate base.

ABERDEEN

Aberdeen is best known for its ideal typhoon anchorage, which is home to some 20,000 of Hong Kong's 70,000 boat people. Not to be confused with the Vietnamese boat people who have fled their homeland since the '70s, these people are Chinese fisherfolk who make their homes aboard

sampans and junks (approximately 3,000 boats in all) and have done so for centuries. The boat people consist of two main groups: the Tanka (which means "egg people" because they used to pay their taxes in eggs) and the Hoklo. Neither group found acceptance by the Chinese, and the Communists view them with suspicion and disdain. In our world, recent years have seen efforts to build schools and construct housing for them; in the World of Darkness, the boat people remain as miserable and oppressed as ever. Hungry *shen* often snack among the boat people because crimes among their number are rarely reported and even more rarely investigated.

Though synonymous in most tourists' minds with the "romance" of Hong Kong, this city on the water is little more than a floating slum. Aberdeen is known to natives as Seal Heung Gong or "Little Hong Kong." The Tin Hau (Goddess of the Sea) Temple comes alive every April when gaudy boats of all sorts come to Aberdeen's shores to celebrate the Tin Hau Festival. *Shen*, particularly Zhong Lung, join in on the Tin Hau Festival, typically pouring great libations of blood into the waves. Perhaps the goddess indeed feasts; the sharks certainly do.

ABERDEEN'S FLOATING RESTAURANTS

Though no longer in Aberdeen Harbor proper, Hong Kong's famous floating restaurants, with their brightly painted and carved exteriors, can be found in the yacht basin across from the Aberdeen Boat Club and Marina. While they can be reached via ferries, most folks prefer a more romantic ride to the boats aboard sampans rowed out to the restaurants by old women. A deadly fire aboard a Jumbo Floating Restaurant in 1971 turned the entire boat into an inferno within minutes and thus prompted owners to move the cooking facilities from the interior of the boat itself to a safer area nearby. Still, the floating restaurants, lit by hundreds of beautiful lights at night, provide a posh and exciting dinner experience.

SHEN OF NORTH POINT AND BEYOND

Few *shen* bother with these suburban bedroom communities. The exceptions are notable, however.

- **Ling Chu, Khan Bastet:** Ling Chu has a small apartment in North Point, where this "supercop" lives quietly when not on duty.

- **Kun Su, wraith:** The administrator for the Necropolis of Hong Kong, Kun Su spends most of his time near his grave in the Chinese cemetery in Chaiwan.



Two minutes away from Aberdeen is Ap Lei Chau Island, which is noted for its boat builders. Yachts, ferries, sloops, speedboats, junks — you want it, they can build it — including junks built by traditional methods, which means “feeling” what is right rather than following blueprints.

UNDEVELOPED HONG KONG

Most visitors fail to realize until they arrive that Hong Kong’s developed communities hug the island’s coasts and hardly penetrate into the interior of the island. Much of this part of Hong Kong Island is virginal and earmarked for wilderness preservation.

WILDERLAND ZOO

Unlike Hong Kong’s other “zoos,” parks and botanical gardens, the Aberdeen Country Park is an open nature preserve designed as a check to the runaway growth of business and industry, so there’s still some “nature” left on Hong Kong Island. No fences mark the perimeter of the park, though discreet signs warn hikers they are about to enter an “uncontrolled” environment that houses potentially dangerous animals. Technology has been put to work for the zoo; animals are kept within the park by underground sensors cued to send an invisible tingling signal when an animal approaches. The creatures dislike the shock and accompanying high-pitched whine (inaudible to humans) generated by the sensors and they avoid it by staying away from the area. Though the zoo houses small herbivores and birds primarily, several predators (including a mated pair of tigers visited by the region’s Khan) also roam the enclosed space. During the Japanese occupation (before the advent of the sensors), the area was not designated as a wilderness preserve. The Japanese soon learned not to enter the area on patrol, however, as “terrible wolf-spirits” inhabited the region, slaying any that they found infringing on their territory.

The zoo encompasses several acres of forest and its most notable feature is High West Mountain, which lies in a central position in the park. The mountain itself is strictly off-limits, and the sensors surrounding it deliver a nasty shock to anyone crossing through their perimeter (except those who have the control wands, of course). On the mountain’s eastern side, a waterfall plummets down the tree-lined rock to splash into a quiet lake below. Hidden behind the waterfall is a grotto leading into the Mother of Peach Trees Caern; true to its name, the grotto is filled with thousands of peach trees. On the far side, facing west, a curious rock formation resembling an open dragon’s maw forms a gateway to the Yang World.

The zoo, along its eastern edge, fronts on the beach and looks out over the South China Sea. Quite nearby (almost too close for comfort) are the newly constructed Smiling Buddha Shopping Mall and the backlot of the Wok Wok Rik film company.

MOTHER OF PEACH TREES CAERN

A powerful source of Yang Chi, this hidden caern lies within the forested Wilderland Zoo. The source of much of the Chi is the primordial growth called the Mother of All Peach Trees. This enormous tree, and several nearby it, grow so tall that they actually climb through the heart of the hollow mountain and emerge into the sky, looking like normal trees from a distance (hence, the restricted access to High West Mountain). Sept members sometimes refer to the caern as "the dragon's empty belly," a reference to the hollow within the mountain. The trees form the heart of the caern, which is claimed by Hong Kong's few but dedicated Lupines. Led by Jo Wu, a native Glass Walker, the Sept of the Council for Universal Trade protects the caern and zoo and promotes the use of ecologically safe technology for Hong Kong. Further protecting the zoo area, Jo Wu owns the Smiling Buddha Mall, and an elder of the sept (Wok Wok Rik himself, in fact) owns the film company that bears his name.

KOWLOON

The peninsula named for nine dragons is sometimes called "the other Hong Kong." While some visitors are so clueless that they don't realize Hong Kong has other parts to it besides the island, others never set foot in Central or Wanchai at all, immersing themselves in Kowloon's dense spread of shopping arenas, restaurants and hotels. The main areas found in Kowloon (only three and a half square miles in size) are Tsimshatsui (the southern tip), Tsimshatsui East, Yamatei (to the west) and Mongkok, which covers the northwestern edge of the peninsula from Yamatei to Boundary Street. The dragons for which the area is named hardly exist anymore due to deforestation of the hills during the Japanese occupation, and due to the British government's penchant for carving the tops off mountains and dumping the land into the bay to develop new living and recreational areas.

TSIMSHATSUI

Tsimshatsui, meaning "sharp, sandy point," comprises the heart of Kowloon's busy commercial district. Though originally used by China traders as the perfect spot to build vacation homes (or as discreet hideaways for their mistresses), the area has grown into a tourist mecca. This small area is literally covered with restaurants, pubs, topless bars,

fast-food joints, clothing shops and camera and electronics stores, and as such, it is known to locals as the "tourist ghetto." Many of Tsimshatsui's buildings are old and run-down, with signs that hang out over the street, almost blocking out the sky in places. The neon-on-neon jumble creates such a bewildering array of advertising at night that it's hard to figure out where anything actually is. More than any other area of Hong Kong, Tsimshatsui epitomizes the "get rich and get ahead" mentality that pervades the region. Unlike Central with its calculated financial schemes, Tsimshatsui vibrates with the energy of individual entrepreneurs selling every designer label, cheap brand-name knock-off, watch, stereo, gizmo, gadget or bauble a shopper's heart could desire. Yang energy literally screams from Tsimshatsui — a fact that attracts lots of *shen* to visit, if not to live. Tsimshatsui, despite its reputation, holds a few other attractions beyond merchandise marts.

THE CLOCK TOWER

Adjacent to the Star Ferry Terminal stands the Clock Tower, sole remnant of a railway station that once existed here. Once the southernmost stop on the Kowloon-Canton Railway, the old colonial station was judged as too small to handle passenger influx and was torn down subsequently. Its replacement is an ultramodern building located northeast of Tsimshatsui. The only train that now meets its schedule beneath the old Clock Tower is the Midnight Express, which is the ghostly transport linking the area to Stygia. It stops beneath the clock nightly just as it strikes the midnight hour.

SPACE MUSEUM

This three-part museum houses a planetarium and halls of astronomy and space sciences. Exhibits include moon rocks, telescopes, rocket models and the Mercury space capsule.

NATHAN ROAD

The main drag through Kowloon cuts a north-south line through the center of the peninsula. Shops on the street glitter with gold and silver, gemstones, watches, stereos, cameras and calculators, clothing, shoes and fine art. Of course, it's sometimes difficult to actually get in the stores, since the sidewalks overflow with street hawkers offering the same goods at knock-off prices. The lower end is known as the Golden Mile. Though "golden miles" in other cities are noted for their swanky shops, Nathan Road's "mile" is "golden" due to the real-estate prices in the area. Some wags have claimed it's golden because of the shopowners' avaricious abilities to extract the last dollar from tourists — right down to the gold in their teeth. If the general area is overblown with neon, Nathan Road holds the record for it. The road's

signs are so numerous and illumined that, by law, they are forbidden to flash, lest incoming planes mistake the road for Kai Tak's runway.

TSIMSHATSUI EAST

Constructed over the last decade, Tsimshatsui East is built completely on reclaimed land. Expensive luxury hotels, entertainment complexes, shopping centers and restaurants are offset by a coliseum, the new railway station and the brand-new Hong Kong Science Museum. Hands-on exhibits explain and guide users through the intricacies of everything from flush toilets to robotics, computers and cellular phones.

HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL (KAI TAK) AIRPORT

With its one runway, Kai Tak is hopelessly outdated, yet until the new airport on Chek Lap Kok Island opens, it's the only game in town. Though technically in the New Territories area, the airport's main impact is on the Kowloon neighborhoods that its planes fly over (and through); hence, it's referred to as a part of Kowloon. See the travel section for a description of the hair-raising approach to Kai Tak.

YAMATEI

Like the Western District on the island, Yamatei features a gridwork of streets with traditional shops with a more Chinese character. Jade and ivory shops specialize in mahjong sets, while red Chinese wedding gowns vie for attention amid hardware, embroidered pillowcases, joss sticks, bronze urns and tiers of fresh fruit.

Yamatei's markets are famous, with the jade market being the most important. Several hundred stalls display wares ranging from uncut blocks of jade to tiny statuettes, rings and other jewelry. The jade comes in many colors, and quality varies widely. Small trinkets (little more than souvenirs) are largely available and cheap, yet certain pieces can cost thousands of dollars. Hong Kong's *shen* prowl the jade market, looking for useful pieces. A few stall owners comply with the 4 P.M. closing time of the market but arrange for showings at night for certain customers.

The area is noted for one other attraction — its floating brothels. Those who wish for a tryst can arrange for a one-girl sampan to pick them up and ferry them to Yamatei's typhoon shelter. There, in the not-so-private midst of an entire community of boat people, customer and oarswoman join together in "rocking the boat." Arrangements concerning payment are conducted before entering the sampan; bargaining is difficult in the middle of hostile boat people, especially when the girl may decide to dump an uncooperative customer into the foul waters of the harbor. Nonetheless, some

Kuei-jin who thrive on blood (and a few Western Kindred) patronize the sampan girls regularly, paying them well for (or terrorizing them into) silence.

MONGKOK

Imagine packing 38 people into a room designed to hold three and having them all live there together — indefinitely. Welcome to Mongkok, the most densely populated area on Earth. Calculations put the number of souls living in Mongkok at 116,000 per square kilometer. Mongkok is north of Yamatei and reaches up to Boundary Street, the official end point for Kowloon and the beginning of the New Territories. Dilapidated and dingy as it may be, the area's residents resist being removed from their neighborhood even when promised spacious new accommodations in modern apartments.

THE BIRD MARKET

Aside from its over-abundant population, Mongkok's claim to fame rests on its bird market, where songbirds (the most popular Chinese pet) — and lovely cages and even tiny decorated porcelain eating bowls for the winged set — find avid buyers. The bird market was moved from its traditional location on Hong Lok Street to the fancy new Mongkok Market, where it attracts serious buyers or those who come just to look and listen. A few shopowners, having refused to go, still sell birds from their old shops.

NEW KOWLOON

The area north of Kowloon proper is called New Kowloon even though it is geographically within the New Territories. Mostly taken up by residential enclaves and factories, New Kowloon has almost none of the same sort of tourist attractions as Kowloon proper. A few areas are notable:

KOWLOON WALLED CITY

Wall Rating: 6

When the Chinese leased the New Territories to the British, they used a legal flimflam based on this walled area's former use (as a garrison) to retain it, making Kowloon Walled City into a separate area. A notorious slum that was rocked with disease repeatedly, the Walled City was a bizarre enclave and a no-go area for Hong Kong police, since China claimed territorial rights within the walls. Haunted by triad gangs, sweatshops and factories, the area was perfect for criminals who committed crimes in Hong Kong; they then slipped back into the Walled City to avoid prosecution. During the Japanese occupation, the walls were torn down and used to extend the airport. After the war, even without their walls, the region remained and received an influx of refugees from China. Brothels, unlicensed medical

and dental shops, abortion clinics, bars, gambling dens and drug houses inundated the slum. Though evacuated and torn down in 1991 to make way for a park, the Walled City's unsavory taint remains over the area — giving it a strange aura.

Within the confines of the park rests a small pool of brackish water. Mostly screened by weeds and ignored by visitors to the park, its faint odor of decay tends to deter those who might try to investigate it. Known as Dragon's Pool, this uninviting (and frankly, nauseating) spot collects the blood that seeps slowly from the wounded dragons of Kowloon, making it an area of powerful Yin Chi (Wall 5). A few Westernized Kuei-jin claim the spot and feed from it regularly.

LAI CHI KOK AMUSEMENT PARK AND SUNG DYNASTY VILLAGE

Filled with fairly tame rides, a pathetic zoo and a sideshow or two, this amusement park fails even to enthrall children. Ocean Park is a far more popular destination. Beside the amusement park lies the Sung Dynasty Village, a re-creation of a Chinese village from the Sung Dynasty "typically Chinese" period. Shops sell souvenirs, but most of the attractions focus around reproduced buildings, craft workshops, a teahouse and village square with duck pond. Employees dress in traditional costumes and provide entertainment — vignettes that feature a martial arts display, a wedding parade, acrobatics and various music and dance shows.

NEW TERRITORIES

The New Territories are the largest (and least visited) area of Hong Kong and constitute more than 70% of the SAR's land area. Most of the region is taken up by the New Towns Program, with its government-built housing, land-reclamation, road-building and sewage-disposal projects. Opened up to fast travel between the New Territories and the rest of Hong Kong by the MTR, the area has become Hong Kong's bedroom. The New Territories are also noted for their prime farmland. Much of Hong Kong's food is grown here. Some of the region is set aside as a nature preserve, which attracts hengeyokai to the area.

As more and more of Hong Kong's workers take up residence in the New Territories, industry follows them. Of the 900,000 people who live in the Tsuen Wan residential area northwest of Kowloon, for example, over half of them are employed in Tsuen Wan itself rather than commuting to jobs elsewhere in the SAR. The Tsuen Wan Plaza, a full-scale multilevel shopping mall, is the pride of local residents and boasts one of only three musical fountains in Hong Kong as its centerpiece.

SHEN OF KOWLOON

The *shen* of Kowloon reflect that area's disparate character.

- **Jun Yow, Kuei-jin leader of Victorious Whirlwind:** She resides in Kowloon, where she can keep an eye on Hong Kong without feeling like she's left the mainland.

- **Bing Kai, Kuei-jin:** This former Mongol general lives in Kowloon with Jun Yow and the other members of Victorious Whirlwind.

- **Bao Qun, Kuei-jin:** He lives in Kowloon with the other members of Victorious Whirlwind.

- **Fen Jin, Kuei-jin:** This ally of the *akuma* Gan Shuo resides in Mongkok in one of the many tenements, although he sometimes stays with Gan Shuo as his bodyguard.

- **Mona Ying, Kuei-jin:** A member of the Sublime Caretakers, she sometimes stays with the Tanka boat people.

- **Nuan Mei, Kuei-jin:** This heimin has an apartment on the edge of Kowloon but spends much of her time in the wilderness areas of the New Territories.

- **Clive Cooper, Nosferatu:** He maintains numerous places in the maintenance tunnels and access ways along the MTR. His favorite spots are in Kowloon, where he meets with his friend Brian Ang.

- **Kintaro Tanijiro, ronin Hakken (Japanese Shadow Lord):** He finds a home wherever he can, usually in some dark hole in the backstreets of Kowloon.

- **Gao Kui, Khan (Bastet):** She keeps an apartment in Kowloon but has a Den-Realm in the Kam Shan Country Park.

- **Shui Fang, Zhong Lung (Mokolé):** She lives among the Hoklo contingent who inhabit the Typhoon Bay at Yamatei in Kowloon and maintains several private retreats on the small uninhabited islands around Hong Kong.

- **Brian Ang, Nezumi:** Brian frequents numerous boltholes in the MTR and sewers, sharing some of them with Clive Cooper. He also has a few hiding places scattered throughout Mongkok.

- **Kito Sullivan, Virtual Adept mage:** He often stays at the company headquarters of Childplay Games on the outskirts of Kowloon; he also maintains a cottage on Lantau.

TAI MO SHAN

At 975 meters in elevation, this mountain is twice the height of Victoria Peak. No Peak Tram eases the climb up "Big Misty," though buses run there. The Macleho Trail, which spans the New Territories, follows the ridge line and crosses Tai Mo Shan's peak, offering beautiful views along its length.

SHEK KONG AIRFIELD

Not an alternative to busy Kai Tak, Shek Kong caters to parachuting and helicopter enthusiasts. It is also used for military training.

CHINESE UNIVERSITY

Established in 1963, Chinese University took a decided back seat to Hong Kong University until recently. While HKU teaches courses in English, Chinese U's main classes are conducted in Cantonese. The Institute for Chinese Studies is an integral part of the university and houses an art gallery that exhibits paintings and calligraphy, 2000-year-old bronze seals and jade flower carvings.

SHATIN RACECOURSE

A testament to the growing importance of the region, Hong Kong's second racecourse cost HK\$500 million, financed through introducing night racing at the Happy Valley course (some say at the behest of Robert Pedder, the old Tai-pan). It opened in 1980 and has attracted steady customers ever since. The center of the track is Penfold Park — a greensward open to the public except on race days, the day after common holidays and Mondays.

CLEARWATER BAY

A beautiful bay on the New Territories' southeastern edge, Clearwater Bay has one of the best beaches in Hong Kong — when it can be seen through the sardine-packed weekender crowds, that is. The monied set have erected Mediterranean-style villas on hillsides above the bay and "improved" the area with the Clearwater Bay Country Club (complete with golf course, tennis courts, and jacuzzi). The Shaw Brothers movie company, one of Hong Kong's leading film corporations, has a huge studio (known as Movietown) on Clearwater Bay Road.

UNTRAMMELED WAYS

Several nature reserves, marshes and country parks lie within the New Territories and provide wide-open spaces for the region's hengeyokai. Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve, just above Tolo Harbor, holds a wealth of native woodland that is shelter for both resident and migratory birds. Sai Kung

Country Park lies in the extreme east of the New Territories' merging woodlands, grassland and scrub forest. Remnants of abandoned villages and temples dot the park. Several species of snake abound in the region; while most are timid, some (like the king cobra) are highly venomous. Kam Shan Country Park is north of Kowloon and acts as a catchment area for four reservoirs. Hilly and wooded, its best known feature is Golden Hill, which provides a panoramic view of Smuggler's Ridge, Lion Rock and distant towns and harbors. The wilder areas within these regions can be used to open gateways into the Yang World (the Umbra).

AGAMA TE

This small island (the name means "death journey") sits off the southwestern coast of the New Territories. Though it appears rocky, barren and uninhabitable, it actually serves as the base of operations, temple and school complex of Ru Mang, a Euthanatos *barabbus*. Aside from his experimentation with death and the reanimation of corpses, Ru Mang has decided recently to "improve" his island through turning part of it into an obstacle course, "game of death," and opening up a competition (with appropriate monetary reward) to a select, invited few.

SHEN OF THE NEW TERRITORIES

- **Yao Lie, Chu Jung (fire-spirit):** He has a lakshmi in Kam Shan Country Park in the New Territories.
- **Ru Mang, Euthanatos *barabbus*:** He lives in quarters underneath his school on the island of Agama Te.

THE MANY ISLANDS

Outside the glitter and glitz of Hong Kong's better known regions are over 230 other islands that make up part of her territory. Most of these islands are tiny, barren and uninhabited; some are off-limits due to their use as detention centers (rumored to be growing in number since the PRC takeover) or as drug-rehabilitation facilities. The best known trio (known as Lamma, Lantau and Cheung Chau) are just southwest of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories. These three comprise the most popular spots for visiting among tourists and natives alike. Still largely untouched, the areas offer the timeless magic of grass and trees, beautiful beaches, quaint fishing villages and quiet monasteries. Rock carvings from the people who lived here in ancient times indicate that they were probably the ancestors of the Vietnamese.

Today, the people of the islands (Hoklo, Hakka and Tanka) are divided generationally. While the elders continue to live in traditional communities, almost all the younger generations have fled for the excitement and allure of Hong Kong, London or San Francisco. Their idyllic

lifestyle is atrophying rapidly as land speculators snatch up large parts of the islands to create resorts for the rich and the tourist trade. Paved roads and electricity (with its attendant power stations) have come to the islands. It's merely a matter of time until traditional village lands become too expensive for the local people to live there anymore.

LAMMA

Wall Rating: 6

Often called the "Stone Age Isle" because of archaeological evidence linking it to the earliest settlements in the area, Lamma is the third-largest of Hong Kong's islands. Mountainous and blessed with lovely bays, the island has several fishing communities. The isle's major attractions are the many seafood restaurants that line the quay of Sok Kwu Wan's Picnic Bay. "Weekend admirals," as pleasure-junk captains are called, sail the area and bring hungry diners to the island. Once inland, there are vegetable farms and a gentle climb to the top of its central hills for a view of the land and water below. It's definitely the place to get away from the frenzy of the rest of Hong Kong.

CHEUNG CHAU

Wall Rating: 6

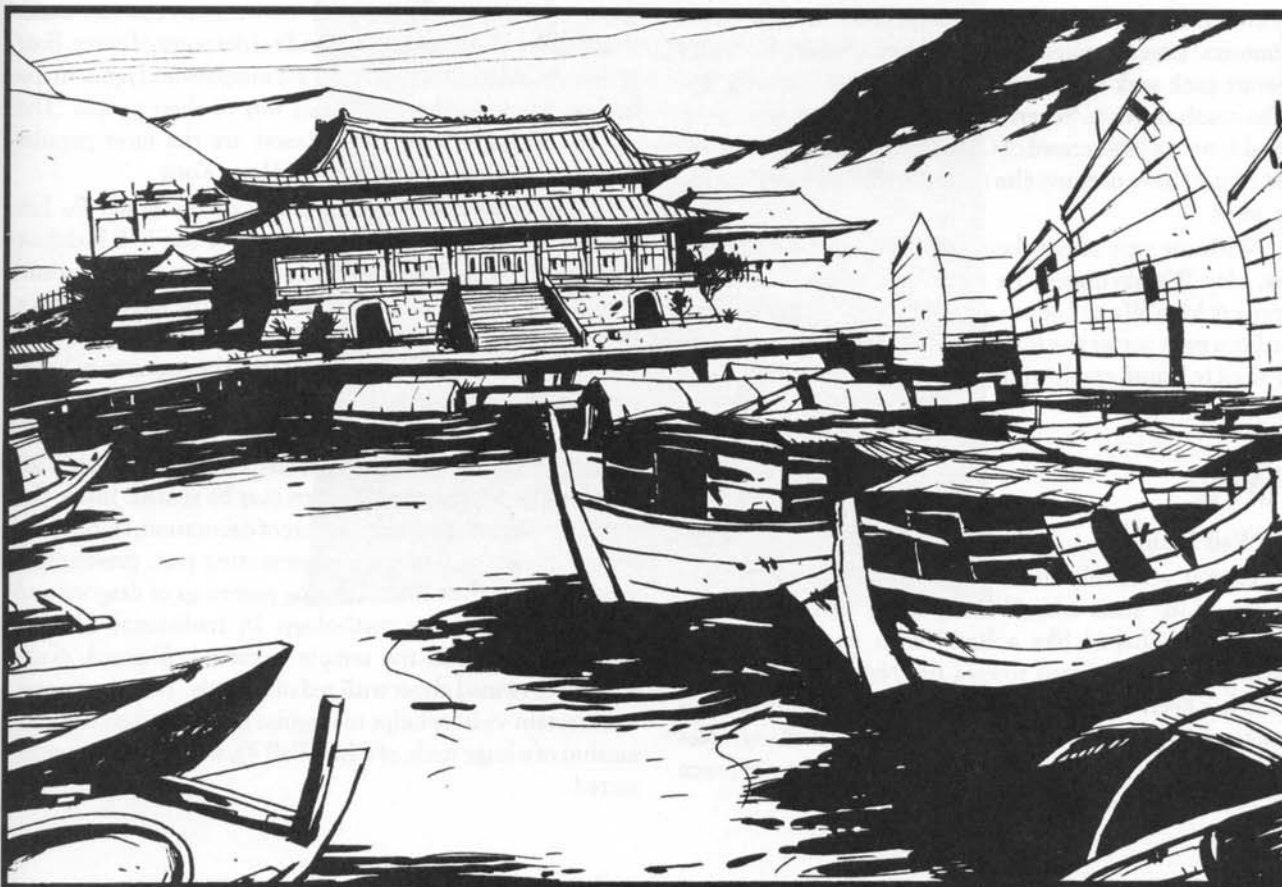
Narrow enough in its central portion for someone to walk across it in just a few minutes, Cheung Chau has few visitors and no cars. Cheung Po Tsai, one of Hong Kong's greatest pirates, used a cave retreat on the island to hide from authorities.

A nest of skeletons found many years ago prompted islanders to hold a four-day-long festival each year. Known as the Bun Festival, its intent is to exorcise wandering or malicious ghosts. After operas are performed and street entertainment provided, specially inscribed buns (taken from decorative bamboo towers) are given to bystanders to bring them luck for the coming year.

PING CHAU

Wall Rating: 6

Located in Mirs Bay, this crescent-moon-shaped island once boasted a population of 3,000. Now only two people live here full-time. Others come on weekends or holidays to



open up hostels and run restaurants catering to visitors. When the tourists depart, so do those who once lived here. Since it lies very close to the coast of the mainland, those leaving China in a hurry often sought to swim to Ping Chau — despite the sharks. Ping Chau should not be confused with the island known as Peng Chau, which is densely populated and boasts a village, a market and several cottage industries.

CHEK LAP KOK

Wall Rating: 9

The site of Hong Kong's new airport-to-be, this small island just north of Lantau has had a mountain flattened and land reclaimed to make it a suitable site. Some *shen* are very concerned that this process is attracting very bad *joss* and negative Chi to the new airport. They fear that there may be a curse on the new facility, and they must do something to restore the balance here. Bridges reaching out for Kowloon and the New Territories are half-finished.

MAN WA

This flat, forested island off Lantau's northeastern tip was once known as the Gate to Kowloon, where foreign ships stopped before sailing into Chinese waters. The western side abuts the Kap Shui Mun ("rapid water gate"), where dangerous currents have deterred unmotorized junks and drowned swimmers. Legend states that the pirate Cheung Po Tsai's treasure junk sank in these waters and is unrecoverable due to the rough currents. Several fine seafood restaurants on the island attract a large crowd of Chinese on weekends. Restaurant owners have nothing else to do but play mahjong during the week.

With the new airport being built on nearby Chek Lap Kok, Man Wa has undergone significant changes. A bridge connects Man Wa to Lantau and the New Territories, thus cutting a path across the lower third of the island, and plans are afoot to transform the rest of the island into a Hong Kong movie theme park.

LANTAU

Wall Rating: 6

Lantau, relatively untouched and one and a half times the size of its "sister island" Hong Kong, basks in its own potent Chi. Shaped like a lizard with its head pointed southwest and tail aimed toward the New Territories, the island has been a retreat and safe harbor for centuries. It is sometimes called "the holy island" because of the temples and monasteries that grace its slopes and the feeling of peace that pervades its atmosphere.

Misty, tranquil Lantau (the name means "broken head") received its name because of its most notable feature, the two-headed Lantau Peak that rises raggedly over 3,000 feet high in the center of the island. Though the island has weathered centuries while remaining essentially rural, a recent influx of weekend sunbathers (escaping the even more crowded beaches on Hong Kong) and a steady stream of international tourists may be the death knell portending destruction of Lantau's legendary tranquillity.

The most attractive lands on Lantau (as elsewhere) are being set aside for local or international investors who want to develop hotels and resorts in the area. Potential housing sites for the poor afflicted by urban crush are parceled out to the rich instead. Still, new housing estates are also planned. Partly, this is fallout from the new airport being built on Chek Lap Kok Island, barely a stone's throw from Lantau's northern shore; but mostly, it is the necessity of crowding ever more souls into too little space. With the airport so near, many of the island's residents fear they will be inundated with the roar and whine of incoming and departing aircraft at all hours.

Sheathed in a veritable spider's web of wandering trails and half-overgrown paths, one of the island's major benefits is simply room enough to walk without the press and bustle of the city. Within its rolling greenery nestle the religious communities for which the island is famous. Silver Mine Bay, the small fishing village on the southeastern end just under the lizard's tail, serves as the island's chief point of entry. Boat people crowd together aboard their sampans and junks in the harbor, living in the traditional way of their people. The Silver Mine Bay Beach and Resort are the most popular destinations for weekenders from Hong Kong.

Buses now travel from the bay to the grand Po Lin Monastery, which is the most famous of the 135 Buddhist communities on Lantau. Brightly painted in vermilion and gold, Po Lin ("precious lotus") is home to the largest outdoor bronze statue (over 100 feet high) of Buddha in the world. Sprawled across a 2,000-foot plateau, the monastery holds temples, gateways, quiet courtyards and lush gardens that hover serenely above their surrounding tea fields. Dormitory space is available; alternatively, air-conditioned chalets located in the adjoining tea garden may be rented. Inside the main temple, amid a dazzling array of decoration, stand three bronze statues of Buddha — representing past, present and future — as well as bright ceiling paintings of dragons and figures from Chinese mythology. In traditional Chinese style, everything in the temple is carved, filigreed, ornamented or twined about with red silk tassels. Their happiness to entertain visitors helps to disguise the monastery's guardianship of a huge node of Chi (Wall 4), which they consider sacred.

Walking beyond the monastery, along a path that wanders through mountain ridges and canyons and crosses several streams, travelers reach the Yin Hing Monastery, which is set on a slope facing the South China Sea and renowned for its traditional Buddhist statuary and paintings. On the northeast coast sits the Trappist Haven of Our Lady of Liese (Joy). The order is sworn to silence but offers simple fare and overnight accommodations in a simple dormitory to visitors (when they have room).

Lantau's main town, Tai O, holds many Tanka boat people who have become land dwellers. Not used to life in cottages or apartments, many have turned their junks into

three-story living quarters, shoved together (partly on land, partly in the water) into a semi-aquatic slum. Others have constructed homes on stilts to weather the rising tides.

Just to the north of Tai O are the islands of Lung Kwu Chau and Sha Chau. Boat trips regularly take tourists to these islands to watch for Hong Kong's famous, but nearly extinct, pink dolphins, as they swim about in Hong Kong's polluted waters.

Discovery Bay, a housing and resort complex with its own golf course and view of the beach, may point the way to the island's future. Isolated from the rest of the island and served by hover-ferries from Central District, it provides a pleasant, uncrowded enclave for its upscale residents.

SHEN OF LANTAU

Two notable *shen* live on the misty isle:

- Zhan Xue, Stargazer Garou: Zhan Xue, a wandering teacher, lives near Sunset Peak in a small house so covered by greenery that it disappears into the surrounding countryside. He knows about Lantau's resident mummy, though he is fairly certain the ancient one knows nothing of his own presence. The Stargazer stands ready to help the mummy defend the monks of Po Lin should the need arise. His presence keeps Kuei-jin from exploiting the region's Chi; though Eastern Garou do not hate vampires as do their Western cousins, Zhan Xue nonetheless distrusts the greedy Kuei-jin.

- Nian Shun, Asian mummy: He inhabits a small, unassuming house near the Po Lin Monastery. Often mistaken for one of the monks by visitors to the area, he basks in the Chi that underlies the monastery and he stays nearby to protect the monks from other supernaturals who might try to harm the monks or steal the vibrant life-force.



CHAPTER FOUR: THE SPIRITS' CHILDREN

Hong Kong hosts more supernatural creatures per square mile than perhaps anywhere else in the world. Unlike Western supernatural society, Eastern *shen* do not associate solely with others of their kind. Common causes unite the *shen*, and these ties take precedence over "species" lines. Political factions and secret societies abound within both the mortal and supernatural communities. For example, a pro-Chinese group might consist of a Kuei-jin vampire, a Glass Walker sept member and a Syndicate mage, while a criminal organization might include a resident Giovanni, a rogue Shadow Lord, and a Kumo Goblin Spider.

This chapter presents a partial cast of characters representative of the denizens of Hong Kong's Middle Kingdom. Storytellers should feel free to alter these characters to suit their own chronicles and fill in any gaps with characters of their own devising. Hong Kong continues to serve as a crossroads (though not always a friendly one) where East and West confront and collide with one another and, occasionally, agree to cooperate. The possibilities are limited only by the imagination.

CROSSOVER CHARACTERS

The characters that appear in this section come from the entirety of the World of Darkness. Their descriptions employ the Traits that are standard for their type. Kuei-jin characters use the powers and abilities detailed in **Kindred of the East**, while Western vampires and werewolves use those from **Vampire: The Masquerade** and **Werewolf: The Apocalypse**. In the same fashion, Asian wraiths have characteristics drawn from **Dark Kingdom of Jade**, while their Stygian counterparts in Hong Kong reflect the character generation rules contained in **Wraith: The Oblivion**. While it is useful for Storytellers to have access to **Kindred of the East** as well as to the core rulebooks for the **Vampire**, **Werewolf**, **Mage**, **Wraith** and **Changeling** games, it is also possible to translate characters from one system to another using the Crossover Guidelines detailed in the Appendix.

Alternately, if you don't want to get involved in crunching numbers and deciding equivalencies, or if you don't have the necessary titles, simply use your best judgment in determining appropriate abilities. For example, Blood Points, Gnosis, Rage, Pathos, Angst, Quintessence, Paradox, Glamour, and Banality correspond roughly to the concept of Chi (whether Yin- or Yang-based); in other words, they all represent positive or negative forms of supernatural power. Werewolf Gifts may be described in terms of appropriate Disciplines, Spheres of magick, Arcanoi, or Arts. A Western Kindred's Humanity score or a Sabbat vampire's Path of Enlightenment may be expressed in terms of a Dharma score (though, in all likelihood, a low one).

While attention to systems and character statistics allows precise definitions of abilities for Storyteller-controlled characters, such details should not impede the capacity to create enjoyable stories. After all, numbers are essential only for resolving combats or other conflict-oriented encounters. Characters who appear in a story in noncombative roles or to provide information and local color need strong, vibrant personalities — not a series of statistics.

KUEI-JIN

Cathayan vampires form a race of supernaturals all to themselves. Unlike Western vampires, whose Embrace prevents the occurrence of true death and catapults the recipient headlong into a new life as one of the undead, Kuei-jin literally return from the dead as spirit beings, either to reinhabit the bodies they occupied in life or to possess new bodies (if their old bodies were destroyed). Kuei-jin do not have sires; rather, they have mentors in the form of older Kuei-jin, who take upon themselves the duty and responsibility of assimilating new Kuei-jin into their society. Kuei-jin lack the clan-based structure of the Kindred and are bound by allegiances to their "families" (*wu*), their Dharmic paths, and the spirits.

QUINCUNX

Most of Chinese Kuei-jin at one time fell under the aegis of the Quincunx — a group of five courts that itself harkened back to an earlier model. Steeped in tradition, the Quincunx once influenced the unlives of Kuei-jin from Mongolia to Japan. Its power has waned with China's fortunes during the Fifth Age; particularly in the east and south, few Cathayans heed its dictates.

Hong Kong once fell under the dominance of the Flame Court, the southernmost "arm" of the Quincunx. The city was ruled during this time by the mighty ancestor Ghost-Killer, who ran her domain nearly independently of the Flame Court's Cantonese headquarters. The Flame Court waned and collapsed during the 19th century, and Ghost-Killer sank into corruption and was ultimately destroyed.

Today, Hong Kong is haunted by a patchwork of Kuei-jin — legacies from the older court who are interested primarily in self-advancement. Additionally, a powerful militant *wu*, Victorious Whirlwind, has arrived in the city and seeks to put the old Flame Court back in power. Victorious Whirlwind's goals include reuniting the Kuei-jin of Hong Kong with the other four elements of the Quincunx, thus reestablishing the Flame Court, as well as its name, and eradicating the taint of foreigners (i.e., Western vampires and the mortal agents of European and American Imperialism) from their homeland.

THE RIGHTEOUS DEVILS OF KOWLOON

This loose court consists of Chinese Kuei-jin who have lived in Hong Kong a long while. They had an understanding with Tai-pan Pedder, who saw the advantage in keeping the peace with these powerful local undead. Now that Pedder is gone, the Righteous Devils plan to rule the night overtly. Nominally, the Devils pay allegiance to the *de facto* ancestor, Angúo Chun; because most are not bound by any ties of *wu*, however, the question of who among the Righteous Devils is fit to rule becomes an interesting one....

ANGÚO CHUN (PROTECTOR OF THE PURE)

Background: As a member of the delegation responsible for the cession of Hong Kong to the British in 1842, Chun felt personally responsible for his emperor's humiliation before the barbarians' guns and bluster. Seeing death as the only way to atone for his personal failure, Chun took his life. Yet, the Great Cycle destined him to another fate, one far more fitting than simple abdication of the material world and its pleasures. Chun was buried shamefully, as he had committed suicide, and he slept in his tomb for 49 days, then emerged as one of the Hungry Dead.

Discovered soon after by the Kuei-jin who was his mentor, Chun adapted quickly to his new life, recognizing and accepting as his *kôa* the



regaining of Hong Kong and the reinstitution of the Flame Court. Chun was indoctrinated into the Righteous Devils Court and used his diplomatic skills to establish himself as a harvester, maintaining harmony among the city's mortals.

Chun, after his mortal failure, kept one paranoid eye ever alert for trouble. This practice served him in good stead in the year 1913, when he discovered the Righteous Devils' reigning ancestor, Ghost-Killer, indulging in loathsome sacrifices to the Yama Queen Tou Mu. Circumspectly, as was his nature (and because he knew he could not hope to best Ghost-Killer in combat of any sort), Angúo Chun fed misinformation to the *akuma*, trapping her finally in an old godown, which Chun had had set on fire by his mortal contacts. Chun dreamed of the purifying flames that night, discovering blissful *satori* in his visions.

Thus freeing the city of one taint, Chun dedicated his unlife to restoring Hong Kong to its rightful place among the Ten Thousand Things. As a harvester, Chun concerns himself not only with his duty to Dharma and court, but also with the mortals who live in his realm.

Realizing that the Great Wheel turns at its own pace and that certain things cannot be precipitated, Chun employed the services of Lao Chi, a heimin of questionable repute, as well as several mortal servants, to form a liaison between himself and the Tai-pan of the Kin-jin, Robert Pedder. By opening up relations with the Ventrue, Chun sought to achieve concessions for local Kuei-jin and to assure the Western vampires that their rule would not be threatened. Thus, Chun was able to lull the gullible Kin-jin into ignoring plans that he and the other Righteous Devils were already making for Hong Kong's eventual return and for the overthrow of the foreign interlopers.

Now that China has once again gained sovereignty over its lost child, Hong Kong, Chun and the Righteous Devils have the opportunity to make their presence not only known (as it has been among the Kuei-jin), but felt. Chun regrets that Pedder and most of the Kin-jin have fled; he had hoped to see them brought low by the city's rightful rulers. Still, there is much work to be done to bring back the glory of the Flame Court and revive the fragmented Quincunx. Far from having achieved his Dharma, Chun realizes that his true purpose is just beginning.

Image: Chun appears in death much as he appeared in life; he dresses in the manner of a 19th-century mandarin and wears his hair in the same style. His Chi balance gives him the appearance of a calm, tempered aristocrat, neither obviously undead nor passionately mortal. Apparently in his late 40s (give or take 10 years), he carries himself with dignity and poise and never shows emotion of any sort to barbarians (except his victims).

Roleplaying Hints: You have spent over a century laboring under the yoke of the Kin-jin conquerors; now your time has come to raise the Flame Court to prominence once

more. This must be done, however, in accordance with the ancient ways — not with crude, slashing strokes, as Victorious Whirlwind would see done, but with delicacy and craft equal to the finest calligraphy. The mortals under your care must be carefully and judiciously inculcated with the proper values after generations of false ones; the Kuei-jin, on the other hand, need to realize that they are no longer expected to conform to barbarian ways. Any Kin-jin who still remain in Hong Kong do so at their own peril.

Haven: Chun has left Kowloon recently to take up residence in Hong Kong's Central District, a fact that other Kuei-jin find somewhat unsettling. It does, however, place him closer to the action.

Secrets: He is aware that Pedder has left behind an agent or two. Chun is unaware of these agents' identities or exact locations, however.

Influence: Chun exercises great direct influence over the Kuei-jin who acknowledge his leadership; likewise, he controls large portions of the mortal population through subtler means.

Nature: Penitent

P'o Nature: The Slave

Demeanor: Caretaker

Chi Balance: Balanced

Direction: East

Dharma: Resplendent Crane 5

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 4, Intimidation 2, Leadership 4, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Crafts (lacquerware) 2, Etiquette 5, Meditation 3, Melee 3, Performance (poetry) 2, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 5, Finance 1, Law 4, Linguistics 5, Medicine (herbal cures) 4, Occult 4, Politics 4

Disciplines: Black Wind 3, Blood Shintai 4, Equilibrium 4, Internalize 2, Obligation 4, Yang Prana 1, Yin Prana 1

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 4, Horoscope 3, Jade Talisman (Yang) 4, Resources 4

Chi Virtues: Yin 5, Yang 5

Soul Virtues: Hun 5, P'o 5

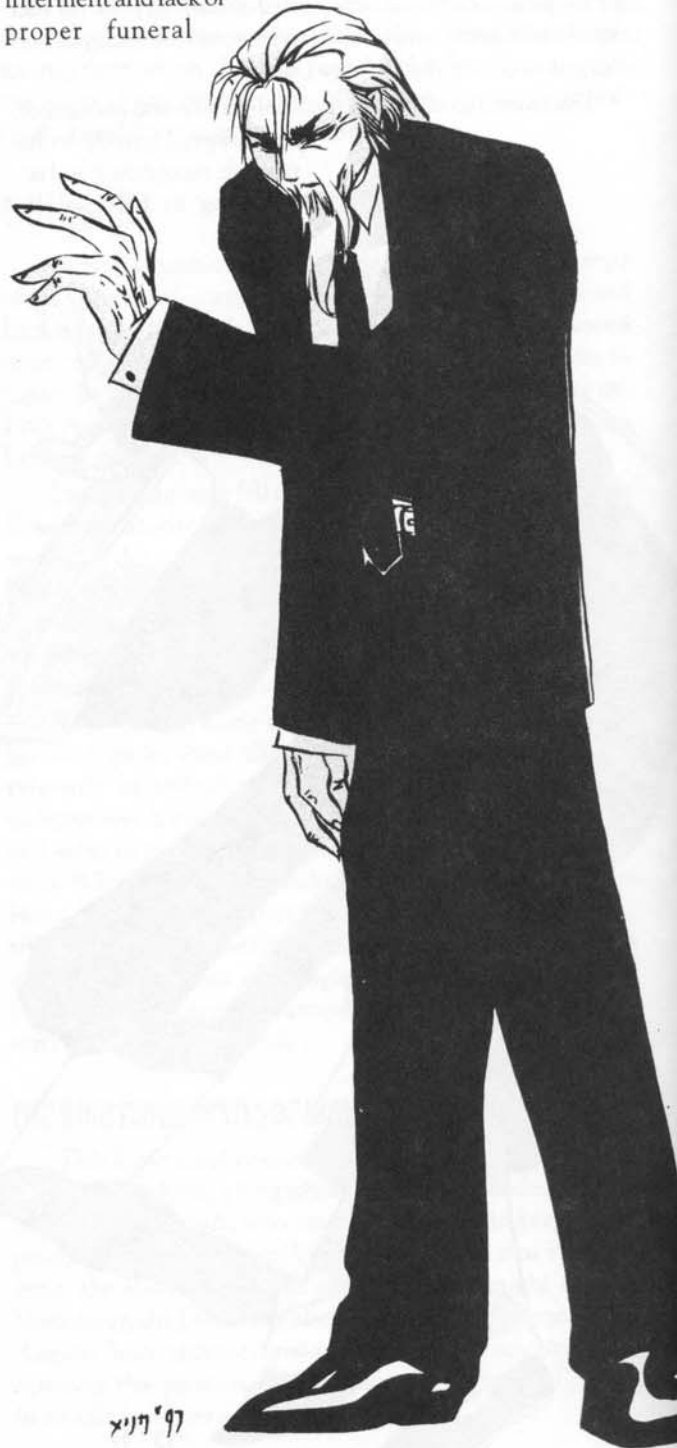
Willpower: 8

MAO LUN (DILIGENT PATTERN)

Background: A geomancer in life, Mao Lun settled in Hong Kong near the end of the 19th century and hoped to propitiate the island's sleeping dragons by ensuring harmonious construction practices among its *gweilo* occupiers. He soon hated the barbarian devils for their outright disregard of *feng shui* and the mockery that greeted his efforts to correct the mistakes made by their architects and builders. Never-

theless, Lun persisted in his attempts until his good intentions finally roused the anger of one of the construction foremen. Lun was assaulted one evening as he returned home from yet another fruitless meeting with an architect, and he suffered the horror of being buried alive in the foundation of an inharmonious building.

Cast into the whirlwind of Yomi, Lun's P'o howled at the horror of his premature interment and lack of proper funeral



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rites. Unable to take it anymore, his P'o and Hun reunited and Lun's corpse broke free of its torment and crawled up through tons of dirt and stone to return as one of the Kuei-jin.

Lun's ancestors had to be appeased first, of course. The foreman who had assaulted him — well, Lun demonstrated for him the principles of harmonious and inharmonious alignment, joint by joint, before feeding on him and casting his mutilated corpse into the harbor waters.

Accepting his fate, Lun soon sided with Angúo Chun against Ghost-Killer (whom he found terrifying). Now Lun acts as advisor to Chun and, with him, targets certain buildings — including the church that he died under — for demolition once the current mortal regime is solidly in place.

A practitioner of the Tapestry Discipline, Lun is concerned with the proper situation of graves and burial sites, and he finds himself in great demand among the local Cathayan population. Secretly (though he feels certain that the other members of his court would approve), he searches for the havens of the remaining Kin-jin, so that one night soon he may invoke the powers of “wind and water” against them. For now, Lun stands by Angúo Chun but feels that Chun is not acting fast enough against the *gweilo*. Were he to turn against Chun (or were his Demon to possess him for an extended period), Mao Lun could use his knowledge of his opponents' havens to terrifying effect, perhaps even black-mailing his way to leadership of all of Hong Kong's Kuei-jin.

Image: A spindly-legged man in his mid-40s, Mao Lun presents a unprepossessing image. Dressing in ill-fitting Western suits, he seems to disappear in a crowd. His features are bland and innocuous, concealing a keen and vengeful mind. He wears his hair a little too long for Western tastes, but too short for traditional styles.

Roleplaying Hints: Make yourself indispensable to your court and to other Kuei-jin. Hide your less noble intentions beneath a veneer of self-effacement. Nod and smile a lot, especially when you are in the company of rivals such as Victorious Whirlwind. When you are alone with *gweilo*, let your Demon come out and play.

Haven: Mao Lun resides in the basement of his old shop, in Hong Kong's Western District. He has reopened his *feng shui* enterprise and still practices for a nighttime clientele.

Secrets: Mao Lun knows the resting places of many local Kuei-jin; he also has some ideas about the havens of the remaining Kin-jin, though he has not yet been able to confirm his theories.

Influence: He has immense influence among local Kuei-jin, who rely on him for maintaining the propitious flow of energy around their tombs and gravesites.

Nature: Architect

P'o Nature: The Demon

Demeanor: Confidant

Chi Balance: Yang

Direction: North

Dharma: Resplendent Crane 3

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Crafts (wood-carving) 3, Etiquette 3, Melee 1, Performance (poetry) 2, Repair 4, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Area Knowledge (Hong Kong) 3, Bureaucracy 2, Law (building) 4, Linguistics 2, Occult (*feng shui*) 4, Science (architecture) 4

Disciplines: Blood Shintai 2, Demon Shintai 1, Jade Shintai 1, Tapestry 4

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 2, Resources 3

Chi Virtues: Yin 4, Yang 6

Soul Virtues: Hun 6, P'o 4

Willpower: 7

BAI CHEN (PURE STAR)

Background: To make ends meet after her husband's accidental death, Bai Chen went to work as an *amah* for one of the rich *gweilo* families living on Victoria Peak. For 10 years, she mothered and nurtured Leslie and Aaron, a pair of spoiled, privileged British “devil children,” often at the expense of her own son and daughter.

During a rare free weekend, Bai returned to her tiny flat to find her children missing and her mother-in-law, who cared for them in her absence, frantic. The entire apartment building turned out to search for the lost children, but to no avail. Bai Chen reported the disappearances to the police, who could do nothing save fill out paperwork and add it to the insurmountable files of “missing children.”

Desolate, Bai returned to work. Her employers showed minute sympathy for her misfortune and merely admonished her to be more careful with their children than she had been with her own. Although she tried to put her sorrow behind her, Bai Chen instead began to experience seething anger toward her charges, who were now approaching puberty. She determined to get some small revenge on her employers for their lack of concern. Perhaps, if Bai offered substitutes to the gods of *joss*, she might get her own children back.

Bai Chen took Leslie and Aaron on an “outing” one Saturday while their parents were at the races in Happy Valley. She traveled with the children to Shanghai, where she found a flesh-peddler who was more than happy to add the comely pair of barbarians to his stable. Bai then traveled to Kowloon and lost herself in the slums of Mongkok for two years. Her sanity continued to disintegrate. Each morning, she waited anxiously in her seedy apartment for her children to show up — returned to her by the gods. Bai went to bed

disappointed every night. She stopped eating and neglected her appearance until she gained a reputation in the neighborhood as a cursed woman.

No one was surprised when her emaciated, filth-covered body was discovered in her apartment three days after she had died from self-imposed starvation. With no clue as to her real identity, her body was unclaimed and she was buried hastily at public expense.

Full of despair, Bai Chen's soul entered the Yomi World, there to whirl in knife-edged winds for what seemed a million eternities. Finally, something within her snapped; she had been punished enough. Her P'o seized control and propelled her back into the Middle Kingdom. Her time as a *chih-mei* did not last long, however. By the time she was discovered by the Righteous Devils, she was relatively sane, though full of despair that she had not been able to sink gratefully into Oblivion.

Assigned the *kôa* of protecting the young and helpless, Bai Chen gratefully accepted the honor of joining Angúo Chun's own *uu*. Now she serves as his conscience by reminding him of his duties toward the mortals of Hong Kong even as Chun tries to consolidate his power among the Kuei-jin.

Secretly, Bai Chen still searches for her own children, as well as for the ones she so callously sold in the sex-markets of Shanghai. She believes that she will never fulfill

her Dharma until she has found them — or their spirits — and made personal restitution to them.

Image: Bai Chen is a woman in her mid-30s, plain-looking and painfully thin. Her hair is streaked with gray, which makes her look 10 years older than she was when she died. Bai Chen finds it difficult not to weep, and her eyes continually leak bloody tears. She dresses in simple clothes, harking back to her days as an *amah*.

Roleplaying Hints: Even now, you sometimes hear the tortured cries of your lost children and the plaintive sobs of the *gweilo* children you delivered into slavery. Your existence must be an atonement for your misdeeds. Chun has placed much faith in you, and you will not disappoint him; you speak to him in the name of all the children who fall under the jurisdiction of the Flame Court. You are their only hope.

While under your P'o's dominance, of course, you prey exclusively on children.

Haven: Bai Chen resides in Hong Kong's Western District.

Secrets: None.

Influence: She has considerable influence over agencies who care for abandoned or orphaned children.

Nature: Caregiver

P'o Nature: The Fool

Demeanor: Penitent

Chi Balance: Balanced

Direction: East

Dharma: 1,000 Whispers 2

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Empathy 4, Streetwise 2

Skills: Crafts (toy-making) 2, Etiquette 2, Melee 2, Music (singing) 1, Security 3, Stealth 1

Knowledges: Investigation 1, Linguistics 2, Medicine 2, Occult 3

Disciplines: Black Wind 1, Blood Shintai 2, Chi'iu Muh 1, Jade Shintai 1, Yang Prana 2

Backgrounds: Mentor (Ancestor) 3, Resources 1

Chi Virtues: Yin 4, Yang 5

Soul Virtues: Hun 6, P'o 4

Willpower: 6

AN SHENG (PEACEFUL SAGE)

Background: Raised since childhood in a Buddhist monastery in Hong Kong, An Sheng thought he knew all there was to know about fulfilling his karmic duties. Unfortunately, the lessons he learned were incomplete.

An Sheng detached himself completely from the world of feeling instead of reconciling his emotions with his reason. He refused to mourn the deaths of his family in a fire that swept



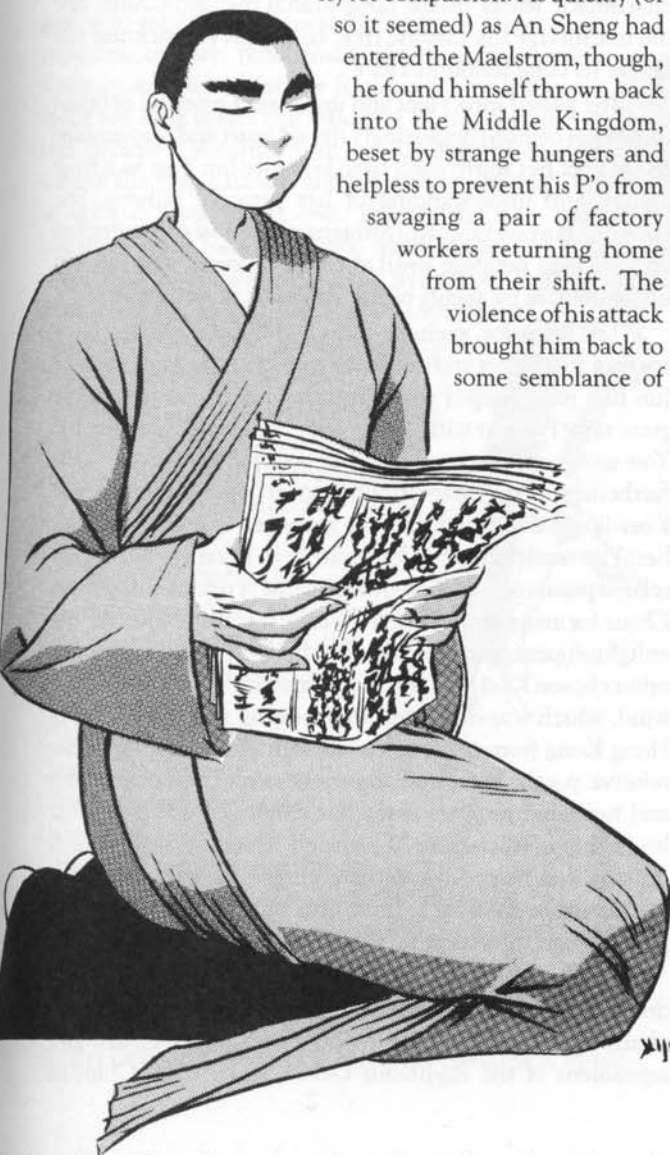
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through their Kowloon residence; inuring himself to the sufferings of others, he watched dispassionately as the street violence around him escalated. While protected by his monk's robes, he felt safe from the depredations that haunted the lives of Hong Kong's common people. Sheng occupied himself with prayers and rituals, expecting fully to achieve enlightenment upon his death — presumably at a respectable age.

It was his *joss* to be caught up in the angry demonstrations that accompanied the tragedy at Tiananmen Square. Surrounded by a mob of unruly protesters that filled the streets of Kowloon, An Sheng had the misfortune of stumbling as he tried to make his way out of the crowd. A fight erupted above his prone body and the police intervened. The mob fled and trampled An Sheng to death in their haste.

An Sheng was thrown headlong into the spirit worlds and he experienced — for the first time in his life — all the emotions he had ignored for so long. Fragmented images of the suffering and terror experienced by the less enlightened masses tore through his mind, awakening his dormant capacity for compassion. As quickly (or

so it seemed) as An Sheng had entered the Maelstrom, though, he found himself thrown back into the Middle Kingdom, beset by strange hungers and helpless to prevent his P'o from savaging a pair of factory workers returning home from their shift. The violence of his attack brought him back to some semblance of



self-control; Sheng sought out others like him and presented himself to them for punishment.

Instead, Angúo Chun and his court brought An Sheng completely into the society of the Kuei-jin. As a member of Chun's *wu*, the former monk now acts as an interpreter of traditions. He has adopted Chun's commitment to restoring Hong Kong's Kuei-jin to prominence. An Sheng seeks nightly to learn the lesson that he ignored in life — compassion for the suffering of others.

Nature: Autist

P'o Nature: The Legalist

Demeanor: Caregiver

Chi Balance: Yang

Direction: North

Dharma: Thrashing Dragon 2

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 1, Intimidation 1

Skills: Crafts (gardening) 3, Etiquette 3, Melee 2, Performance (singing) 2, Repair 3, Stealth 1

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 2, Law 2, Linguistics 3, Medicine 3, Occult 4

Disciplines: Cultivation 2, Demon Shintai 1, Equilibrium 2, Flesh Shintai 2, Internalize 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Jade Talisman 2

Chi Virtues: Yin 2, Yang 4

Soul Virtues: Hun 7, P'o 3

Willpower: 8

Image: An Sheng wears the robes of a Buddhist monk. His shaven head and austere features belie his inner turmoil. He forces himself to display his emotions, but when he does so, he appears to be wearing a mask. He moves with dignity and his lips often move in silent prayers.

Roleplaying Hints: It is so difficult to break the habits of a lifetime, although you realize that you have many years ahead of you in which to do just that. It is your Dharma to learn to feel, and so you attempt to plunge yourself into the emotions of your P'o. Nevertheless, you long for the sterile comfort of nonfeeling.

When under the P'o's dominance, An Sheng is the epitome of callousness. He passes down judgments on Kuei-jin and mortals alike, seeking ruthlessly to enforce "correct" and "propitious" behavior.

Haven: An Sheng resides beneath a small temple in the hills outside Hong Kong.

Secrets: None.

Influence: He has a reputation among other monks as a sage of great wisdom and tolerance.



VICTORIOUS WHIRLWIND

The return of Hong Kong to Chinese control has resulted in the arrival, after over a century of waiting, of Victorious Whirlwind — a militant *wu* dedicated to reestablishing the Flame Court. Led by Jun Yow, a mainland Kuei-jin warlord with strong connections in the PRC, Victorious Whirlwind seeks to wrest control of the region from the hands of the Righteous Devils, whom they see as irreparably corrupted by their former associations with the Western Kindred. As well, Victorious Whirlwind scorns the Devils' habitual reliance on the "old ways" rather than following the path of proletarian progress exemplified by the People's Republic.

JUN YOW (WOMANLY TRUTH), "THE WARLORD"

Background: One of many women who found long-awaited egalitarian reform among the forces of Mao Zedong, Jun Yow left her family and their expectations to follow the charismatic leader on his Long March through China. She did not survive the historic trek, falling prey to sickness just before its completion in 1935.

She passed into Yomi and underwent a period of brutal torture, as demons unceasingly ripped apart and reassembled the jade of her spirit; each time bringing Jun Yow to a fresh and painful understanding of her personal failures. She returned as a ravenous and tormented *chih-mei* and embarked on a vicious rampage until she was captured and brought under control by agents of the Ancestor of Beijing.

The ancestor, seeing within the fledgling Cathayan a spark of true fervor and desire to serve a greater goal, assigned Jun to a jina charged with preparing her for undertaking a great task. Fraught with shame over her incomplete life, Jun Yow embraced the teachings and discovered her *kôa* — the furthering of the revolutionary spirit among mortals and Kuei-jin — in the process. She managed to compensate for her Yin tendencies by deliberately cultivating her Yang-related passions. Jun labored in the cause of reform throughout China for many years. When the time was auspicious and her enlightenment had progressed sufficiently, she and a few other chosen Kuei-jin formed a *wu* named Victorious Whirlwind, which was dedicated to liberating the lost region of Hong Kong from its decadent foreign yoke. In spite of her relative youth, Jun Yow's experiences on the Long March and her rapid progress along her Dharmic path led to her leadership of Victorious Whirlwind. Over the next several decades, Jun helped tweak the political undercurrents from behind the scenes that led to China's recognition as a world power on an international scale.

As the time for Hong Kong's reversion to Chinese rule drew nearer, Jun Yow and her *wu* prepared for their triumphant entry into the lost territory of the Flame Court. Her assessment of the Righteous Devils, and Angúo Chun in

particular, is not a kind one; she blames Chun's cowardice and political kowtowing for the hideous state of Hong Kong's moral barrenness. Despising the "old ways" of the Devils and believing that Hong Kong's resident Kuei-jin want merely to replace the now-departed Kindred hierarchy with their own corrupted leadership, Jun Yow desires total control of the region for its own good and for the fulfillment of her Dharma.

Image: Jun Yow dresses much as she did when she was alive, affecting the serviceable uniform of the participants in the Long March. Her hair is short and worn straight with no concessions to style; likewise, she does not "prettify" herself with cosmetics and despises anyone who does. Her stance and attitude project a supreme contempt for those who fail to meet her exacting standards. Her Yang tendencies, however, give her a vitality and passionate energy, and they endowed her with an attraction that comes from inner fire rather than outward artifice.

Roleplaying Hints: You were unable to complete the Long March, which you regret deeply. However, other concerns now supersede that unfortunate circumstance. Your goal is to reestablish the Flame Court in Hong Kong; regardless of their proclaimed loyalty to the Great Cycle, you believe that the Righteous Devils have spent too long under the influence of the corrupt and decadent Kin-jin. Your *wu* is destined to control the Flame Court, and everything you do is directed toward that end. Your talent for inspiring others has already won many to your cause. You work through mortals when you must, and you are not above unleashing your P'o when violence seems the best and most effective course of action.

Haven: Jun Yow resides primarily in Kowloon, where she can keep an eye on Hong Kong Island while still feeling a spiritual connection to the Chinese mainland.

Secrets: None.

Influence: She enjoys a great deal of influence among the new mortal regime in Hong Kong.

Nature: Judge

P'o Nature: The Monkey

Demeanor: Fanatic

Chi Balance: Balanced

Direction: South

Dharma: Resplendent Crane 4

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

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

Intimidation 2, Leadership 4

Skills: Drive 2, Etiquette 2, Firearms 4, Melee 3, Music

(revolutionary songs) 3, Repair 2, Security 4, Stealth 4, Torture 2

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 2, Investigation 2, Law 3, Linguistics 4, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Politics 4

Disciplines: Black Wind 3, Blood Shintai 2, Demon Shintai 3, Internalize 1, Obligation 3, Yin Prana 1

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts (Communist leadership in Beijing and Hong Kong) 4, Herd 3, Resources 2

Chi Virtues: Yin 5, Yang 5

Soul Virtues: Hun 5, P'o 5

Willpower: 8

BING KAI (TRIUMPHANT WARRIOR)

Background: A Mongol general of the Yuan Dynasty, Bing Kai achieved a reputation for courage in battle — and for hideous brutality. Even the men under his command walked softly around the fiery-tempered warrior, for the slightest fault could lead to an agonizing death under his watchful eye. Bing Kai reveled in battle, but he took even greater pleasure in its aftermath.



The disposal of prisoners occupied much of Bing Hai's "off-duty" time. He never ceased to delight in thinking up new ways of tormenting his victims, particularly women and children; their helplessness and weakness inflamed his basest passions and excited his lustful imagination.

Fittingly, Bing Kai died at the hands of one of his intended victims, a beautiful young woman captured and accused of spying on the general's army. A few minutes after she was dragged to his field tent for "questioning," a mighty explosion rocked the area, as what looked like a gigantic fireball engulfed the tent and everyone in it. While most of Bing's men told themselves that the general (and his prisoner) were victims of ball lightning, a few whispered that the captive woman was actually a fire-spirit sent in human form to punish the general for his repugnant behavior.

Regardless of the cause of his death, Bing's spirit soon found itself in Yomi, where he experienced the torments he inflicted on his past victims. His own suffering was so great that his P'o seized control of his tortured body and propelled his soul back into the world of flesh.

Bing Kai does not remember what actions he committed as a *chih-mei*, but he suspects that they put his mortal deeds to shame in their excess. When he finally managed to control his mindless fury and present himself to be judged by the local Kuei-jin, he accepted the *kôa* given him — the atonement for his past crimes against the helpless. Alas, his will was not equal to his desire, and Bing Kai's progress along the Road Back was measured in inches for centuries.

Then the unthinkable happened. The Council of Mandarins for the Flame Court decreed that Bing Kai must join a newly formed *wu* and accept an advisory position. Thus, the Mongol general and torturer of women now finds himself subordinated to the commands of Jun Yow, the leader of Victorious Whirlwind. Kai's only consolation is in the knowledge that his *wu* is charged with the reclamation of Hong Kong for the Flame Court — a prospect that stirs the flames of his warrior's heart once more.

Image: Bing Kai looks and dresses like the Mongol general he was in life. Short and stocky, with long dark hair and a plentiful mustache, he struts and postures as if he is in command of his *wu*. His dark, calculating eyes and cruel mouth make him appear truly formidable and forbidding.

Roleplaying Hints: Atonement is the torture you must bear for your crimes in life. Accept your lot stoically, but grudgingly. Give in to your P'o whenever possible; what you do under its command is not your fault and provides you with a few small pleasures in the midst of your long Dharmic journey. Obey the woman who commands you, even though you seethe inside at having to submit to her orders.

Haven: Bing Kai resides in Kowloon.

Secrets: He schemes to replace Jun Yow as leader of the *wu*.

Influence: He is slowly building up a following among the more militant-minded soldiers in the People's Liberation Army that now quarters in Hong Kong.

Nature: Bravo

P'o Nature: The Demon

Demeanor: Autist

Chi Balance: Yang

Direction: North

Dharma: Devil-Tiger 3

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 5, Dodge 3, Intimidation 4, Leadership 4

Skills: Crafts (flesh-carving) 4, Etiquette 2, Melee (sword) 5, Stealth 3, Torture 4

Knowledges: Linguistics 2, Medicine (prolonging pain) 4, Occult 2, Politics 1

Disciplines: Black Wind 5, Blood Shintai 2, Demon Shintai 3, Flesh Shintai 3

Backgrounds: Resources 2

Chi Virtues: Yin 4, Yang 6

Soul Virtues: Hun 3, P'o 7

Willpower: 6

BAO QUN (HONOR THE MASSES)

Background: A product of China's Cultural Revolution, Bao Qun worked hard to revolutionize his consciousness, throwing off the shackles of tradition and outmoded culture and superstition. Serving in the People's Liberation Army, he traveled throughout China, while stamping out signs of cultural recidivism with a ruthlessness that earned him the respect of his comrades-in-arms.

Therefore, Bao Qun's cadre genuinely mourned his death from a blow to the head (caused by a stone thrown with uncanny accuracy by a hidden reactionary). Not that Bao Qun could appreciate their grief: Even as his devotion to the principles of Chairman Mao was being eulogized, Bao Qun's spirit was undergoing hideous tortures in the Yomi World. Multiple crimes flashed through his P'o's consciousness — ignoring and repudiating the sacred truths of existence, executing innocents simply because they refused to give up the old ways, and overweening pride in false doctrines.

Bao Qun grew enraged enough finally to rip free of his prison and reenter the world of the living. He was found almost immediately and brought before the Ancestor of Beijing, who noted Qun's youthful fervor and questioned him at length about his desire to atone for his rejection of tradition. The ancestor was satisfied that Bao Qun could be salvaged and assigned him to Victorious Whirlwind.

Arriving in Hong Kong with his *wu*, Qun now seeks to fulfill his *kôa* by accepting the traditions he once rebuked. He also ferries messages from the spirit worlds to his *wu*. Despite his best efforts, however, Qun remains at heart a child of the new China. If he cannot divest himself of the old ways, he can at least help purge Hong Kong's Kuei-jin of their capitalist, foreign-influenced trappings.

Image: Bao Qun dresses in army fatigues or peasant's clothes. When his P'o is in charge, however, he affects Western dress (much to his chagrin). His hair is cut short and his dark eyes have the intensity that only a reformed reformist can display. He is short and stocky, with well-developed musculature from his army discipline.

Roleplaying Hints: You are still learning to honor the ways you once denied. Sometimes you forget to be properly deferential to your elders. Your patriotic fervor must find new channels, such as the conversion (or elimination) of the Western-infected Kuei-jin in the new Special Administrative Region. Observe the traditions as best you can; ask questions about the ways you don't understand.



Haven: Bao Qun shares a residence with the rest of his *wu* in Kowloon.

Secrets: None.

Influence: Qun has some political influence among the anti-Western administrators of the new regime in Hong Kong.

Nature: Director

P'o Nature: The Barbarian

Demeanor: Fanatic

Chi Balance: Balanced

Direction: West

Dharma: Resplendent Crane 3

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Intimidation 3, Leadership 2

Skills: Drive (army truck) 4, Etiquette 1, Firearms 4, Melee 2, Repair 3, Security 3, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Investigation 2, Law (military) 3, Linguistics 2, Occult 1, Politics 4

Disciplines: Black Wind 2, Blood Shintai 2, Equilibrium 1, Obligation 2, Yang Prana 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Resources 1

Chi Virtues: Yin 5, Yang 5

Soul Virtues: Hun 6, P'o 4

Willpower: 8

THE BONE WEB

Although it does not function as an official *wu*, this loose confederation of Hong Kong's renegade Kuei-jin works to undermine the efforts of both the Righteous Devils and Victorious Whirlwind, seeking to keep themselves in power and prevent the disruption of their lucrative enterprises.

GAN SHUO (BOLD ACHIEVER)

Background: Even during his mortal days in the brutally decadent courts of the Qin Dynasty, Gan Shuo demonstrated an awesome lust for personal power and a taste for cruelty to rival the emperor himself. Soon after the overthrow of the Qin Dynasty by the Han, Gan Shuo was put to death for his excesses and suffered a lingering torture that lasted seven days. Propelled into the Yomi World after his death, he underwent even more vigorous torments under the watchful eyes of the Yama Queen Tou Mu, until his screaming spirit broke free of his imprisonment and resurfaced as a Kuei-jin.

Assigned to a *wu* and placed under the tutelage of an exacting jina, Gan Shuo chafed beneath the restrictions

of his new existence. His hunger for power, particularly that derived from the suffering of others, had not eased even after his experiences in Yomi. He continued to pursue his own proclivities — feeding almost exclusively from the Chi of tortured victims.

His actions brought him eventually to the censure of the Quincunx, which pronounced him *akuma* and declared him outcast from the ranks of the Kuei-jin. Sentenced to Face the Eye of Heaven, Gan Shuo nevertheless managed to escape his executioners and take flight.

His wanderings took him throughout most of the Middle Kingdom. And he left behind him a trail of victims and a palpable aura of terror in each place. Finally, in the middle of the 19th century, Shuo found a more permanent refuge — on the barbarian-infested island of Hong Kong.



Gan Shuo took advantage of the chaos in Kuei-jin society and insinuated himself in Hong Kong's slums. Practicing subtlety for perhaps the first time in his self-indulgent existence, he began building a network of allies among gullible mortals and like-minded *shen*, constructing a finely patterned web of corruption and vice directed toward satisfying his depraved desires.

Shuo controls a select subculture of Hong Kong's criminal underworld, one that caters to child pornography, the slave trade and the snuff market. His customers, few of whom know of his existence except as a cold, corrupting presence lurking in the corner of a darkened room, include both Kuei-jin and Kin-jin. Privy to a host of dark secrets, Gan Shuo has also formed a pact with emissaries from the Dark Kingdom of Jade (ruled by his former emperor, Qin Shihuang) to further their ambitions in the Middle Kingdom.

Since the return of Hong Kong to Chinese rule, Shuo has been forced to move even deeper into the shadows. Reluctant to give up the empire he has built, he hopes to take advantage of the conflicting factions who seek control of Hong Kong's *shen* community, playing them off against one another and gaining knowledge of their secret vices and most perverse weaknesses. Kuei-jin, Kin-jin, hengeyokai: It matters little. Gan Shuo acts solely for himself, remaining as he always has been — his own master.

Deep within the Hell of Being Skinned Alive, Tou Mu laughs.

Image: Though Gan Shuo dresses in the ancient finery of the Qin Dynasty, his elegant clothing cannot conceal his near-skeletal, corpse-like appearance. His sunken eyes burn with the dark fires of his negative energies, and the bare bones of his hands move expressively when he speaks, exercising a mesmerizingly repulsive grace. He is a *ch'ing shih* in every sense of the word.

Roleplaying Hints: The pain of mortals gives you sustenance and power. So do the secrets you hold within you, as they grant you influence over your enemies. You move, spiderlike, within the web of your plots and schemes. Work to keep your enemies at each others' throats and away from your own.

Haven: Gan Shuo dwells in the Wanchai district of Hong Kong, below a stonecarver's shop.

Secrets: He knows most of the dirt on the colony's supernatural community, both Eastern and Western.

Influence: Gan Shuo controls the most perverse elements of the vice market; through intermediaries, he also has formed a tentative alliance with the Tremere Oliver Thrace (see below) and with the Kumo (Goblin Spider) Qian Shi.

Nature: Deviant

P'o Nature: The Bandit

Demeanor: Plotter

Chi Balance: Yin (imbalanced)

Direction: South

Dharma: Song of the Shadow 7 (corrupted by Yama Kings)

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 6, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 4, Intimidation 4, Leadership 3, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Crafts (bone-carving) 3, Etiquette 3, Melee 5, Stealth 4, Torture 5

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 2, Law 3, Linguistics 4, Medicine 3, Occult 4

Disciplines: Black Wind 3, Bone Shintai 5, Demon Shintai 3, Ghost-Flame Shintai 4, Jade Shintai 4, Chi'iu Muh 5, Yin Prana 5

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 2, Horoscope 3, Resources 4

Chi Virtues: Yin 10, Yang 4

Soul Virtues: Hun 5, P'o 9

Willpower: 8

FEN JIN, "VIGOROUS ACHIEVER"

Background: Born into a triad family, Fen Jin grew up on the streets of Mongkok. He had joined his triad brothers in collecting squeeze money from the small businesses in his district by the time he was 12. He later specialized in kidnapping and torturing the sons and daughters of wealthy Chinese families for extortion. Jin's favorite "sport" (besides gambling), however, was fighting rival triads. He became known for his vicious streetfighting abilities.

One evening, returning home from checking in on his latest kidnap victim, Jin heard a soft thud in the air behind him. He barely had time to recognize the sound of a silenced rifle when he fell, fatally wounded by a shot in the back of the head. Propelled into the spirit worlds, Fen Jin's P'o was too strong even for Yomi's hells. Crashing through the Wall, Jin rose and began rampaging through the streets of Mongkok.

A group of Kuei-jin were sent by the ancestor to put down the raging monster, and they cornered the mindless and slaving Fen Jin. Suddenly, a hand reached out from behind the *chih-mei* and pulled him to safety through a hidden doorway in a seemingly dead-end alley. His rescuer, the *akuma* Gan Shuo, calmed Jin's raging P'o and explained to the

young Cathayan what had happened to him. Shuo spoke of the Righteous Devils' evil and promised Fen Jin the fulfillment of all his desires if he did for Gan Shuo what he did for the triads in his life — extort from and eliminate rivals.

Since Fen Jin's entire knowledge of what it is to be Kuei-jin comes from his mentor and boss, he has no familiarity with the higher purposes of his state of existence. He lives now to indulge himself in the same bloodthirsty activities he excelled in before his death.

Image: Fen Jin looks and acts like a street tough, wearing a leather jacket, tight jeans and dark glasses. He wears his hair in a short buzzcut and smokes constantly (a habit he believes adds to his "tough-guy" image). He spends much of his time in Demon Shintai form.

Roleplaying Hints: Talk tough, walk tough. Speak in monosyllables and act knowledgeable even when you're not. The only person you respect is your devil boss.

Haven: Fen Jin lives in Mongkok, but he often stays with his boss as a bodyguard.

Secrets: He still knows many secrets of the brotherhood.



Influence: Fen Jin has contacts within the triad network.

Nature: Bravo

Demeanor: Bravo

Chi Balance: Yin

Direction: none

Dharma: 0 (*akuma*)

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3,

Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 5, Dodge 4, Intimidation 4, Streetwise 4

Skills: Drive 3, Firearms 4, Melee 4, Security 3, Stealth 3, Torture 4

Knowledges: Area Knowledge (Mongkok) 5, Area Knowledge (Hong Kong region) 3, Finance 2, Law 1, Linguistics 1, Occult 1

Disciplines: Blood Shintai 2, Bone Shintai 1, Demon Shintai 2, Obligation 1

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 1, Resources 3

P'o Nature: Deceiver

Chi Virtues: Yin 6, Yang 4

Soul Virtues: Hun 1, P'o 9

Willpower: 6

LANG SHAN (BRIGHT CORAL)

Background: One of the fiercest pirates to roam the South China Sea, Lang Shan cost the British many good vessels and valuable cargoes of opium. Determined to stop the depredations of Lang Shan, the British sent a fleet of ships to confront the pirate. During a great battle on the open sea, the flagship of the British fleet rammed the pirate ship; soldiers poured on board, intending to kill or capture the crew. Superior numbers carried the day, and one by one the pirates either fell to the foreigners or surrendered. The first-mate refused to be taken alive and cast himself into the sea. Lang Shan was taken prisoner and brought to Hong Kong for trial.

Only then did the authorities discover that the pirate who had caused them so much grief was a woman — barely out of her teens. Lang Shan refused to speak to her *gweilo* captors throughout her imprisonment and trial. When her sentence — death by hanging — was

pronounced, she grew pale but still said nothing. Fortunes were made and lost by the gamblers who came to view her execution. Lang Shan died silently while looking out to sea as the platform opened beneath her feet.

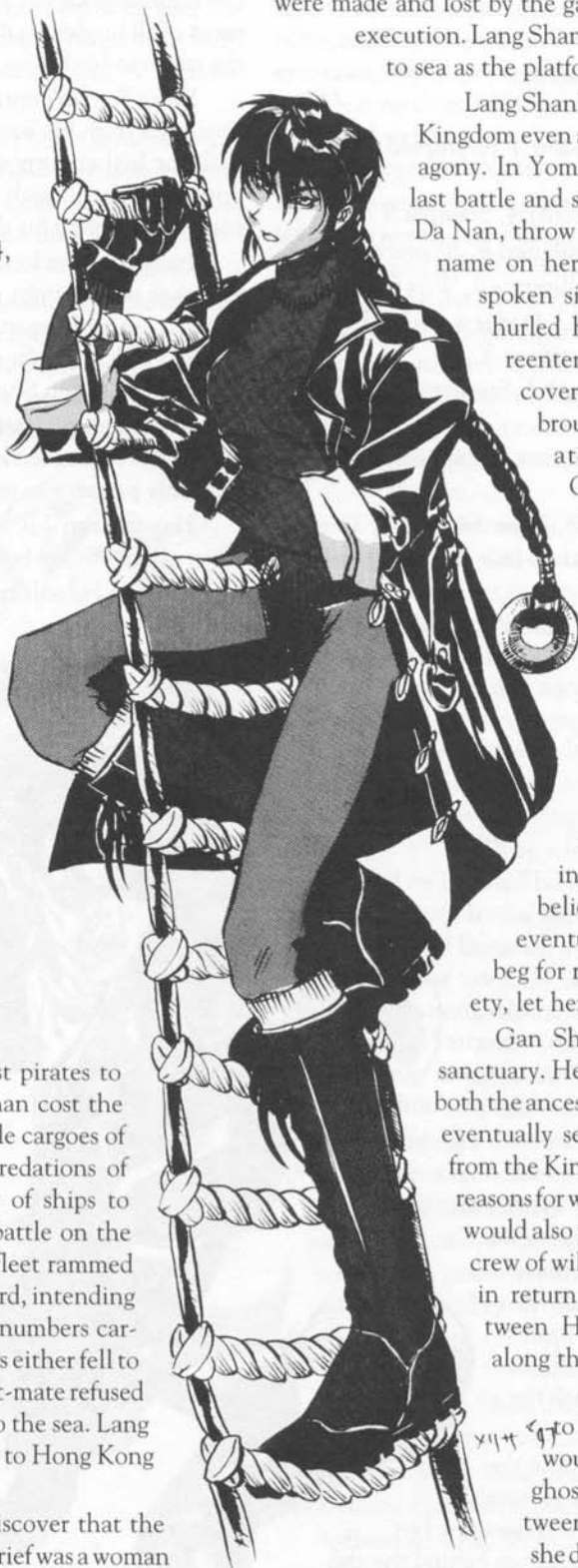
Lang Shan's spirit flew beyond the Middle Kingdom even as her body twitched in its final agony. In Yomi, Lang Shan's P'o relived her last battle and saw her secret lover, first-mate Da Nan, throw himself into the sea. With his name on her lips (the first words she had spoken since her capture), Lang Shan hurled herself through the Wall and reentered the Middle Kingdom. Discovered by Ghost-Killer, Shan was brought before her court and initiated into Kuei-jin society. Ghost-Killer, seeing her usefulness as a sailor, charged her with the *kôa* of keeping the peace in the South China Sea.

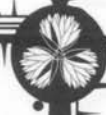
Lang Shan, however, refused to cooperate with the foreigners who had taken her life and who had driven her lover to suicide. Disavowing her *kôa*, she broke with the ancestor and her court, declaring herself *heimin*. Ghost-Killer, believing that Lang Shan would eventually come to her senses and beg for readmission into Kuei-jin society, let her go.

Gan Shuo found Shan and gave her sanctuary. He promised her protection from both the ancestor, who (Shuo told her) would eventually seek her out and slay her, and from the Kin-jin Tai-pan, who had his own reasons for wanting her removed. Gan Shuo would also provide Shan with a boat and a crew of willing mortals. All she had to do in return was transfer some cargo between Hong Kong and various ports along the China coast.

Lang Shan accepted. Eager to be back at sea, she hoped she would find some trace of her lover's ghost. She saw little difference between piracy and smuggling until she discovered that her "cargo" consisted, not of drugs or weapons or

silver, but of human slaves bound for the brothels and child-labor factories of Shanghai, Guangdong and other ports.





Lang Shan protested, but Gan Shuo reminded her that her continued existence rested in his hands. She had no choice but to cooperate.

Shan has hardened herself to her job over the years. She keeps her distance from her suffering cargo and concentrates instead on searching for any trace of her dead lover. Thus, she survives.

Image: Lang Shan no longer bothers to disguise herself as a man, and therefore, she appears as the attractive young woman she was in life. Her long black hair is usually worn in braids to keep it out of her face; her dark, long-lashed eyes have a clear, direct gaze. She dresses in modern clothes that are sturdy enough to stand up to bad weather and strong winds.

Roleplaying Hints: You hate the work you do, but you need your mentor's protection and you relish the freedom you have to continue your search for your lost lover. Think about everything but what you do; as the captain of a ship (and a smuggling vessel, at that), you have plenty to keep you busy. Walk carefully on shore — you don't know who to trust except your crew.

Haven: Lang Shan lives for the most part aboard her ship, the *Golden Serpent*. When she must stay on shore, she usually resides in a small apartment near Gan Shuo, who provides her with guards to protect her sleep.

Secrets: She knows a lot about the flesh market, from a conveyer's point of view.

Influence: Lang Shan is respected among other smugglers; her crew is devoted to her.

Nature: Rebel

P'o Nature: Barbarian

Demeanor: Survivor

Chi Balance: Yang

Direction: Center

Dharma: Thrashing Dragon 3

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 3, Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3,

Dodge 3, Intimidation 3, Leadership 3

Skills: Boating 5, Crafts (boat-making) 3, Firearms 2,

Melee 3, Stealth 4

Knowledge: Area Knowledge (South China Sea) 4,

Finance 2, Investigation 2, Law (sea) 3, Linguistics 2,

Medicine 1, Occult 1

Disciplines: Black Wind 2, Blood Shintai 3, Obligation

2, Yang Prana 3

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Mentor (Gan Shuo) 2, Resources

3

Chi Virtues: Yin 4, Yang 6

Soul Virtues: Hun 5, P'o 5

Willpower: 7

SUBLIME CARETAKERS

Led by a powerful *penangallan*, this *wu* consists of Kuei-jin united primarily by their feelings of responsibility for the forgotten masses of Hong Kong — the hordes who inhabit the floating cities of sampans and junks that clog the territory's harbors.

HUAN HAI (JOYOUS SEA), "CONVEYER OF TIDINGS"

Background: Huan Hai remembers the first appearance of the foreign sailing ships, for she grew up among the pirates of the Pearl River. Her father had dealings with some of the English traders, which formed an important link in the chain of opium traffic so valued by the British mercantile forces. The forceful, crude and uncivilized foreigners both fascinated and repulsed the young girl, who watched her father interact with them from a discreet distance. Huan's curiosity was unfortunately her undoing.

A British sea captain saw Huan from afar. So smitten was he by her beauty and grace that he determined to have her. At first, he went about this endeavor honorably by asking to buy Huan from her father as a concubine. Her father refused, so Captain Shockley resorted to kidnapping.

That night, Shockley claimed his prize aboard his boat. Overwhelmed with pain and shame, Huan



sought release by casting herself into the sea. Huan Hai passed from the world of flesh.

Finding herself tossed about in the tempestuous and mind-breaking currents of the Yomi World, Huan Hai relived her shame again and again until she had only one desire — to be the vehicle for administering the spirits' anger on those who treated her so badly, and on their descendants.

Driven by her P'o, she located and repossessed her body, which was half-eaten by fishes at the bottom of the ocean floor near the harbor of Hong Kong. She propelled herself upward and arrived upon the land, starving for Chi and ready to slake her thirst on foreign blood. Eventually, she was inducted by the local Kuei-jin and set on her *kôa*, acting as the voice of the spirit worlds to *shen* and mortals who dwell atop the sea.

Making her home among the Tanka boat people, Huan Hai and her *wu*, the Sublime Caretakers, involve themselves in both Kuei-jin and mortal society in a number of ways. They oversee much of the protection racket among the floating cities of Causeway Bay on a purely mortal level. In addition, they provide safe passage and shelter for local Kuei-jin who need assistance escaping persecution by demon hunters. As leader of the *wu*, Huan Hai spends most of her time interpreting the directives of the spirits, particularly those from the Yang World, to which she is most closely attuned.

Huan Hui is able to separate her head and digestive organs from the rest of her body, and she roams the harbor and docks in search of prey while the rest of her body remains in safety within its floating crypt. Her frequent communion with the spirit worlds keeps her apprised of the spirits' will, and she passes along their advice (including instructions for eliminating offensive individuals) to her *wu*. The Kuei-jin of the Quincunx see Huan Hai and her *wu* as one of their foremost weapons in the coming effort to eradicate the Western Kindred. They are not aware that their "weapon" has a double-edge — Huan Hai serves the spirit worlds first, and all others second.

Image: Huan Hai appears as a young, vivacious woman in her mid-teens. She dresses in the clothing of the boat people with whom she surrounds herself. Only the keenest of eyes can spot the faint wrinkling patterns on her skin, as if she has been immersed in water for hours (or, in her case, for days). Because of her Yang imbalance, her skin is hot and flushed and she often carries one or more diseases.

Roleplaying Hints: The spirits need messengers to strike where they find it difficult or inconvenient. You have carried out their wishes time and again and have found it possible to satisfy your own urges for vengeance against all foreigners as well. Now that Hong Kong has returned to the Flame Court, any foreigners stupid enough to remain here are fodder for your vengeance.

Haven: Huan Hai rests aboard a sampan indistinguishable from the thousands of others that clog the harbors at Hong Kong. She sleeps during the day below the level of the sea, an irony that never ceases to amuse her.

Secrets: She knows of the existence of one of the Zhong Lung (see below) among the boat people. She also knows of the existence of Gan Shuo, the *akuma*, whom she despises. Finally, Huan Hai has recently been impregnated by a tourist john (who did not survive the encounter). She is trying to bear and keep the child, for the spirits have told her that this dhampyr is of great importance to the future of the Middle Kingdom.

Influence: Huan Hai's influence extends over the community of floating peoples, particularly the Tanka.

Nature: Mediator

P'o Nature: The Demon

Demeanor: Director

Chi Balance: Yang (imbalanced)

Direction: West

Dharma: Thrashing Dragon 7

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Intimidation 2, Leadership 3

Skills: Etiquette 2, Melee 3, Portents 5, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Finance 1, Law 1, Linguistics 2, Medicine 3, Occult 5

Disciplines: Chi'iu Muh 3, Demon Shintai 4, Flesh Shintai 5, Yang Prana 4

Backgrounds: Allies (boat people) 5, Herd 5

Chi Virtues: Yin 5, Yang 9

Soul Virtues: Hun 7, P'o 7

Willpower: 7

MONA YING

Background: Mona Ying became interested in politics as a student at Hong Kong University. Blooded during the Tiananmen Square support rallies, she discovered her talent for public speaking (or "rabble rousing"). Later, she found herself to be equally critical of the British, whose economic laxity doomed the majority of Hong Kong's millions to the mercies of the fabulously wealthy (mostly British) upper classes.

Urged by her friends to enter the political arena, Mona refused. She believes that all politicians at one time succumb to graft, bribes or personal ambition. She opted for a grass-roots style of political agitation, organizing workers to lobby for better working conditions. She eventually expanded her "peoples' platform" to include women's and children's rights. The plight of the thousands of boat people in Hong Kong's

harbors moved her to campaign for them as well. In this way, she earned many enemies in both the Chinese and British camps.

Mona began to receive death threats, some of which came from those who supported the approaching turnover of Hong Kong to China. Other warnings had a distinctly British cast to them. She ignored them, for she was determined not to be dissuaded from what she believed to be a righteous course of action.

And so, two days before an important rally in front of the People's Bank of China, Mona Ying's battered body was found in an alley in Kowloon.

Her spirit, rent by the extreme violence of her death, split and entered Yomi. Over and over again, Mona confronted her foolish idealism and her stupid ignorance of the danger in which she had placed herself. Mona's P'o rescued her finally from further humiliation and thrust her out of the Maelstrom and into the Middle Kingdom.

Brought before Angúo Chun for judgment and placement within an appropriate *wu*, Mona insisted that she be allowed to continue her interrupted life's work. Huan Hai, leader of the Sublime Caretakers, asked for Mona's assignment to her *wu*. Chun assented.

Despite her disapproval of her *wu*'s connection to the protection rackets among the boat people, Mona agrees with the necessity of caring for these largely despised and denigrated residents of Hong Kong. She is prepared to go to battle against the PRC should they continue their attempts to destroy a way of life.

Image: Mona appears thoroughly Westernized in dress, though she wears small jade studs in her ears. Her black hair is cut short, emphasizing her large eyes and expressive mouth. She wears little make-up and gives the impression of self-confidence and assertiveness.



Roleplaying Hints: Speak your mind. You have already died once and survived; nothing more can phase you. There are too many important issues to worry about, particularly now that the Chinese from the mainland are overrunning Hong Kong and doing their best to bleed her dry while putting on a good face for the world.

When Mona's P'o is in charge, it does everything possible to destroy what Mona's Hun Nature strives for. Mona's Demon half has been responsible for several grisly murders among the boat people, and, unbeknownst to her, she acts occasionally as Gan Shuo's lackey while possessed by her Demon.

Haven: Mona sometimes stays with the boat people; she also has an apartment in Kowloon.

Secrets: She is aware of most of the back-door politicking currently going on in Hong Kong and Kowloon.

Influence: She has the support of the boat people and is encouraging social activists who espouse the causes she died for.

Nature: Caregiver

P'o Nature: The Slave

Demeanor: Rebel

Direction: East

Dharma: Resplendent Crane 3

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Empathy 4, Intimidation 1, Leadership 2, Streetwise 1

Skills: Crafts (flower-arranging) 2, Drive 3, Etiquette 3, Firearms 1, Melee 2, Performance (oration) 4, Stealth 1

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 4, Computer 2, Finances 1, Law 4, Linguistics 3, Occult 2, Politics (Asian) 5

Disciplines: Black Wind 1, Blood Shintai 2, Internalize 2, Jade Shintai 2, Yang Prana 1, Yin Prana 1

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Resources 3

Chi Virtues: Yin 5, Yang 5

Soul Virtues: Hun 5, P'o 5

Willpower: 9

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LIU SHAO (GLORIOUS YOUNG WILLOW)

Background: Liu Shao's clear, melodious singing voice and delicate features marked him as unusual among his Hoklo family. Where others saw a girlish boy ill-suited for the rigors of life among the boat people, Shao's grandmother looked with clearer vision; she saw a child designated for a special destiny instead. The old woman arranged for Shao to audition for Hong Kong's Peking Opera Company after consulting with fortune-tellers and offering incense to the gods.

The boy was accepted and, after his grandmother negotiated a suitable compensation for the loss of her grandson, Liu Shao became an apprentice with the prestigious opera company. He took to his new life almost immediately. He regretted having to sever his family connections and deny his origins, but the intricate costumes and make-up, the entrancing musical dramas and the joy of performing for an appreciative audience more than made up for his sacrifices.

Shao's supple body and ethereally beautiful face made women's roles a natural for him, and he soon found it easier to adopt a female persona off-stage as well. Although he took lovers of both sexes, he found himself more comfortable with male partners, particularly when he could pretend to be the tragic heroines whose lives he enacted nightly.

Shao accepted an invitation one evening for what seemed to be a casual tryst with a wealthy fan who claimed to have desired him since his debut with the Peking Opera. Shao did not survive his encounter with the psychopath.

Awakening in Yomi, he was confronted with his abandonment of his familial duties. Forced to sing his tortured responses to the agonies he suffered, his mind finally snapped and his violent P'o escaped the white jade prison for the Middle Kingdom. More directed than most

chih-mei, Shao sought and found his killer and slaked his initial thirst on the murderer's flesh, blood and bones.

Brought before the Kuei-jin of Hong Kong, Shao regained his senses and begged forgiveness for his loss of control. He was assigned to the Sublime Caretakers in deference to his background.

Although he has begun to reconnect with his Hoklo roots, Liu Shao also continues to perform — for a more select audience of Kuei-jin. Occasionally, he attends the opera and has become an invisible patron of his old company. He is determined that the changes in Hong Kong's government do not mean the end to cultural excellence.

Image: Whether dressed as a man or a woman, Shao is achingly beautiful. His finely sculpted features and slender body are simultaneously otherworldly and erotic. His manners border on the effeminate, though he is far from stereotypical; rather, he is quiet and self-effacing, except when performing.

Roleplaying Hints: You are both male and female, and it is hard for you to decide which gender you prefer. Seduce everyone with your eyes and body language. Speak softly; save your voice for singing.

Haven: Liu Shao lives with the boat people he abandoned as a child.

Secrets: His P'o's torment in Yomi has left him with a fear of singing, which he must (and usually does) overcome each time he performs.

Influence: His influence is moderate among the boat people; he exercises a considerable amount of indirect control over the opera companies in Hong Kong through his patronage and support.

Nature: Deviant

P'o Nature: The Monkey

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Chi Balance: Yin

Direction: North

Dharma: Song of the Shadow 3

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity



5, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 1, Appearance 5

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 5, Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 1, Dodge 4, Empathy 3

Skills: Crafts (mask-making) 2, Etiquette 4, Melee 1, Performance (Chinese opera) 5, Stealth 3

Knowledge: Linguistics 3, Mythology 2, Occult 3

Disciplines: Black Wind 2, Blood Shintai 2,

Bone Shintai 1, Internalize 1, Yin Prana 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Horoscope 3, Resources 3

Chi Virtues: Yin 6, Yang 3

Soul Virtues: Hun 5, P'o 5

Willpower: 6

GAKI (JAPANESE KUEI-JIN)

Hong Kong's financial and business interests have attracted Kuei-jin from Japan despite the enmity engendered by occupation forces during WWII. Even more enigmatic and inscrutable than their Chinese counterparts, the *gaki* or *ketsuki* (as Japanese vampires are known) walk carefully in Hong Kong, cognizant of their tenuous claim to the hospitality of the local Kuei-jin.

KIOSHO MASAHIRO (THE TOLERANT ONE)

Background: The Kiosho family rose to prominence after the opening of Japan to the West. Combining noble ancestry with financial acumen, they attained wealth and power by embracing the trend toward industrialization. Kiosho Masahiro, a Kuei-jin of the Genji *uji*, has directed the fortunes of his mortal family since the time of the Mongol invasion of 1266 by foretelling subtle shifts in the winds of intrigue and politics and taking advantage of them.

A consummate warrior as well as the head of his house, Masahiro took part in the early efforts to repulse the forces of Kublai Khan. Though he fell nobly in battle, Masahiro refused to resign his duty as the driving force behind his family and returned from the Yomi World with a determination to continue his leadership of the Kiosho line.

Serving as a mentor to generations of Kiosho scions, Masahiro has worked diligently throughout the centuries since his Second Breath to keep up with the times and refused to let even the most complex 20th-century technologies pass him by. Masahiro saw the import of Hong Kong to the post-war economy of Asia, so he founded a Hong Kong

branch of his Tokyo-based Kiosho Technologies. Masahiro's benevolent corporate policies (not to mention discreet gifts to the Kin-jin Tai-pan) ensured his company's place in the colony's thriving business community, despite local aversion to the Japanese.

The collapse of the Hong Kong stock market in 1987 nearly resulted in the ruin of Kiosho Technologies. Until that time, Masahiro had delegated his expansion into Hong Kong to promising family members. The near-disaster led to his decision to take a personal hand in business. Although he found it difficult to uproot himself, Masahiro traveled from Tokyo to Hong Kong.

Masahiro has been keeping a very close watch on the pulse of the business community since the reunion with China. Uncertain as to the future of his company, he feels the forces of *joss* strongly at work in his existence. Masahiro's connections with the Kin-jin are worthless now, and his status with Angúo Chun is tenuous at best. His hopes are with the Kuei-jin of Victorious Whirlwind, banking on their need for allies to help them assert their control over the Righteous Devils of Kowloon.

Image: Kiosho Masahiro has adopted modern dress as a sign of his willingness to change (at least superficially) with the times. He appears to be in his mid-30s and has a hard-angled face that seldom conveys emotion. Masahiro's supreme confidence in his decisions shows in authoritative speech and in the way he carries himself.

Roleplaying Hints: You see the patterns of the future and trust your insight to help you make the right decisions. Speak only when you have something significant to say; expect your words to result in action from your subordinates. You are simultaneously a wise and benevolent mentor and a demanding taskmaster. It is the way to success on the Road Back.

Haven: Masahiro makes his home in a penthouse apartment atop the Hong Kong headquarters of Kiosho Technologies, in the Central District.

Secrets: He has made overtures to a group of technological wizards residing in Hong Kong and hopes to gain their support and backing.

Influence: Masahiro has great influence in the business community.

Nature: Director

P'o Nature: The Fool

Demeanor: Mediator

Chi Balance: Balanced

Direction: East



Dharma: Resplendent Crane 7
Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5
Social: Charisma 6, Manipulation 6, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 5
Talents: Alertness 3, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Intimidation 4, Leadership 4, Subterfuge 3
Skills: Crafts (netsuke) 3, Drive 2, Etiquette 4, Firearms 3, Martial Arts 4, Melee (katana) 6, Stealth 3
Knowledges: Bureaucracy 4, Computer 3, Finance 4, Law 4, Linguistics 5, Occult 3, Politics 3
Disciplines: Black Wind 5, Blood Shintai 4, Equilibrium 4, Flame Shintai 4, Obligation 5, Yang Prana 3
Backgrounds: Allies 5, Contacts 3, Resources 5
Chi Virtues: Yin 7, Yang 7
Soul Virtues: Hun 8, P'o 6
Willpower: 9

BISHAMON KAZUKO (OBEDIENT DAUGHTER)

Background: The only child of an ancient samurai family, Kazuko dedicated herself to atoning to her father for the unfortunate accident of her gender, since there would be no sons to carry on the family line. After the death of her mother, when Kazuko was still a child, she remained by her father's side and cared for him when he grew old and infirm. Her father confessed to her on his deathbed that his family had been cursed centuries ago through their possession and loss of an ancient sword. The demon blade, which could not be destroyed, was responsible for the extinction of the family line, appearing time and again to mow down another scion. He charged his daughter with the duty of finding the sword and discovering the means to destroy it.

Kazuko searched fruitlessly through old manuscripts and hired many agents to scour the Middle Kingdom in search of the weapon. She wished to please her father so she undertook her task with feverish intensity. Indeed, not

even her early death from the same wasting sickness that claimed her father's life could keep her from discharging her duty. Kazuko returned from death as a Kuei-jin of the Bishamon *uji*. Immediately recognizing her *kôa*, she continued her relentless search for the accursed blade.

Kazuko has received evidence recently that the weapon no longer resides in Japan but has somehow made its way to Hong Kong. Following the dictates of her obligation, she traveled there and attempted to attain an audience with Angûo Chun. Chun received Kazuko with cold politeness; he allowed her to stay but instructed her to refrain from stirring up trouble or invoking the wrath of the spirits. Realizing that she could expect no more assistance from the native Kuei-jin, Kazuko has begun to seek help from other sources among the local *shen*.

Kazuko finds the relatively untainted Chi of Hong Kong adequate compensation for her status as a barely tolerated guest. She does, however, find it difficult to remain apart from her homeland for long. The forces that bind the Bishamon Kuei-jin to Japan exercise a continual pull on Kazuko, one that she knows will inevitably result in a deterioration as deadly to her as the sickness that led to her mortal end.

Image: Kazuko dresses conservatively — wearing traditional clothing in private but donning modest street attire for mingling with mortals. She affects a disarmingly meek attitude, but when she is thwarted, her intransigence shows. She is small, painfully thin and almost sickly in appearance (the evidence of her wasting disease).

Roleplaying Hints: Nothing is more important than the fulfillment of your Dharma. Act with scrupulous deference and politeness, but do not let anything deter you from your search. Only by succeeding can you return to your homeland and complete the Road Back, escaping the perpetual suffering of your existence.

Haven: Kazuko resides in Hong Kong's Central District.

Secrets: Her family's loss of the demon blade is both Kazuko's deepest secret and her greatest shame.

Influence: She has little influence in Hong Kong.

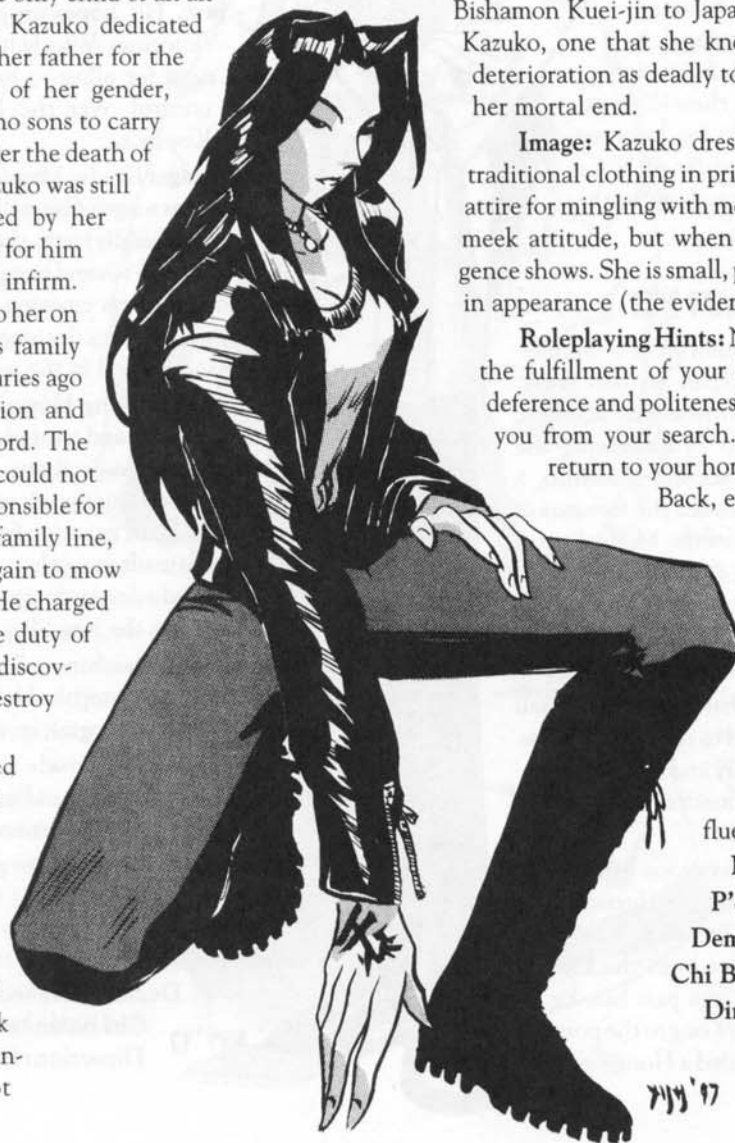
Nature: Fanatic

P'o Nature: The Deceiver

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Chi Balance: Balanced

Direction: Center



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Dharma: 1,000 Whispers 3
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2
Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 5
Talents: Acting 1, Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 3
Skills: Crafts (brush-painting) 2, Etiquette 4, Melee 4, Performance (samisen) 2, Stealth 1
Knowledge: Bureaucracy 2, Investigation 2, Linguistics 3, Occult 3
Disciplines: Black Wind 1, Equilibrium 2, Internalize 3, Jade Shintai 2
Backgrounds: Resources 3, Jade Talisman 2
Chi Virtues: Yin 4, Yang 4
Soul Virtues: Hun 4, P'o 5
Willpower: 9

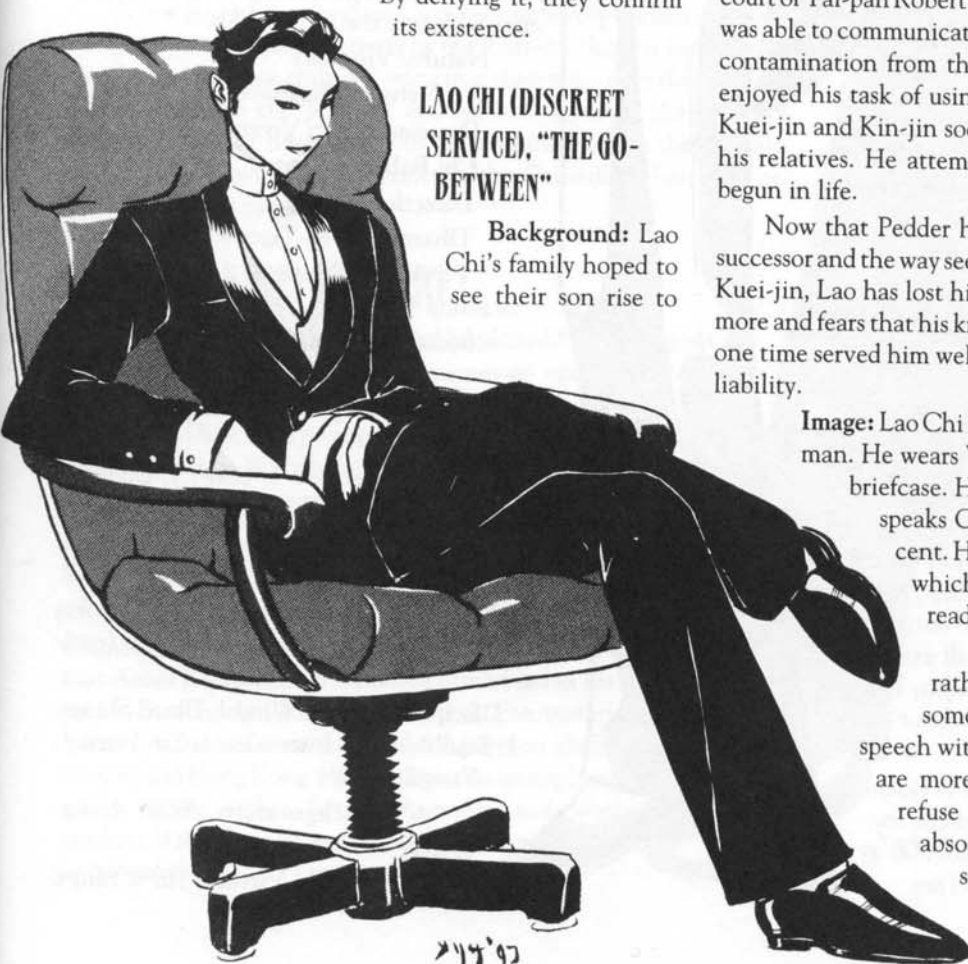
HEIMIN

A few of Hong Kong's Kuei-jin walk outside the paths ordained for them. Some do so out of necessity, others out of scorn for outmoded ways and binding traditions. These, too, have their place in the Great Cycle.

By denying it, they confirm its existence.

LAO CHI (DISCREET SERVICE), "THE GO-BETWEEN"

Background: Lao Chi's family hoped to see their son rise to



the top of Hong Kong's business community. After his graduation from Harvard Business School and his return to Hong Kong to participate in his family's independent brokerage firm, Lao Chi seemed on his way to doing just that. Then his *joss* turned against him and placed him in the wrong place at the wrong time and, thereby, ended his life in the shoot-out crossfire between rival triads.

The trauma of his death awakened his P'o in the otherwise phlegmatic Lao Chi. He had died on the verge of great promise, and even death could not keep him from filling his predetermined role. Lao Chi rose as Kuei-jin only seven days after his death.

Although he was rescued from his existence as a *chih-mei* and inducted into the world of the Kuei-jin, Lao Chi discovered that his Western sensibilities prohibited him from feeling comfortable within the rigid structure of Kuei-jin society. Although he acknowledged his Dharma, he found it impossible to reconcile his path with that of the *wu* to which he was assigned. Lao's decision to declare himself heimin was met with great sorrow by his jina, who, nevertheless, respected Lao Chi's choice and sought to turn it toward a useful end.

In this fashion, Lao soon found himself acting as an official liaison between the Righteous Devils and the Kin-jin court of Tai-pan Robert Pedder. Through Lao's efforts, Chun was able to communicate with the Tai-pan without suffering contamination from the barbarian's uncivilized ways. Lao enjoyed his task of using his diplomatic immunity in both Kuei-jin and Kin-jin societies to improve the conditions of his relatives. He attempted to continue the work he had begun in life.

Now that Pedder has left Hong Kong without a clear successor and the way seems clear for a total reassertion of the Kuei-jin, Lao has lost his special status. He is an exile once more and fears that his knowledge of Western ways, which at one time served him well, may now prove to be a dangerous liability.

Image: Lao Chi looks like a young Chinese businessman. He wears Western suits and ties and carries a briefcase. He affects British manners and even speaks Chinese with a slight American accent. His intelligence is evident in his face, which demonstrates his emotions more readily than most Kuei-jin's.

Roleplaying Hints: Shake hands rather than bow when introduced to someone for the first time; sprinkle your speech with American and British slang. You are more Western than Eastern, and you refuse to alter your ways radically until absolutely necessary (which may be soon). If you can't weather the storm, you may need to go elsewhere.

Keep your plans to yourself, however. You made your choice to go it alone, and there can be no turning back from that decision.

Haven: Lao Chi has a hideously expensive apartment in Hong Kong's Central District.

Secrets: Lao knows of Pedder's child and plans to use her as "clout" to help him leave town if necessary.

Influence: He has some influence in the mortal financial community. His clout with the local Kuei-jin is fading quickly.

Nature: Loner

P'o Nature: The Barbarian

Demeanor: Confidant

Chi Balance: Balanced

Direction: Center

Dharma: 1,000 Whispers 2

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Drive 3, Etiquette 3, Security 2, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 3, Computer 3, Finance 4, Law 2, Occult 1

Disciplines: Black Wind 1, Blood Shintai 2, Equilibrium 2, Internalize 1

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Horoscope 1, Resources 4

Chi Virtues: Yin 5, Yang 5

Soul Virtues: Hun 6, P'o 4

Willpower: 6

NUAN MEI (GENIAL ROSE)

Background: Nuan Mei, a hedonist and sensual experimenter in life, spent her short life trying to sample everything. Wilderness hikes, karaoke bars, shopping sprees, pilgrimages to out-of-the-way shrines, and Western movies all attracted her equally. As the daughter of a wealthy Hong Kong businessman, she grew up without fear and without conscience.

Her untimely death in an auto accident thrust her headlong into Yomi, where she experienced the undifferentiated chaos that her life had become. Though she had not

felt particularly amoral while she was alive, she realized that she had no roots and no clear idea of who she really was.

Nuan Mei was brought before Angúo Chun upon her return to the Middle Kingdom, and he tried to fit her into Kuei-jin society. After trying to conform to expectations, Mei realized that she still did not know any more than she did when she was alive.

She broke with her *wu* and declared herself *heimin*. Now she seeks even more ardently to discover her true purpose. Her method of doing so, however, harks back to her mortal lifestyle. Mei spends more time outside Kuei-jin society than within its confines. Her friends and allies are the nature spirits, the *hengeyokai* and, occasionally, the ghosts who linger just outside the mortal realm. From consorting with all of these (and with the remaining *Kin-jin* as well), Mei hopes to acquaint herself with the real meaning of her prolonged existence.

Nuan Mei fears the changes China's control over Hong Kong will bring, both to herself and her spirit friends, particularly the shapeshifting *hengeyokai*. She is determined, however, to remain in Hong Kong and experience whatever the future holds.

Nature: Visionary

P'o Nature: The Slave

Demeanor: Bon Vivant

Chi Balance: Yang

Direction: South

Dharma: Devil-Tiger 4

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 3, Empathy 4, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3

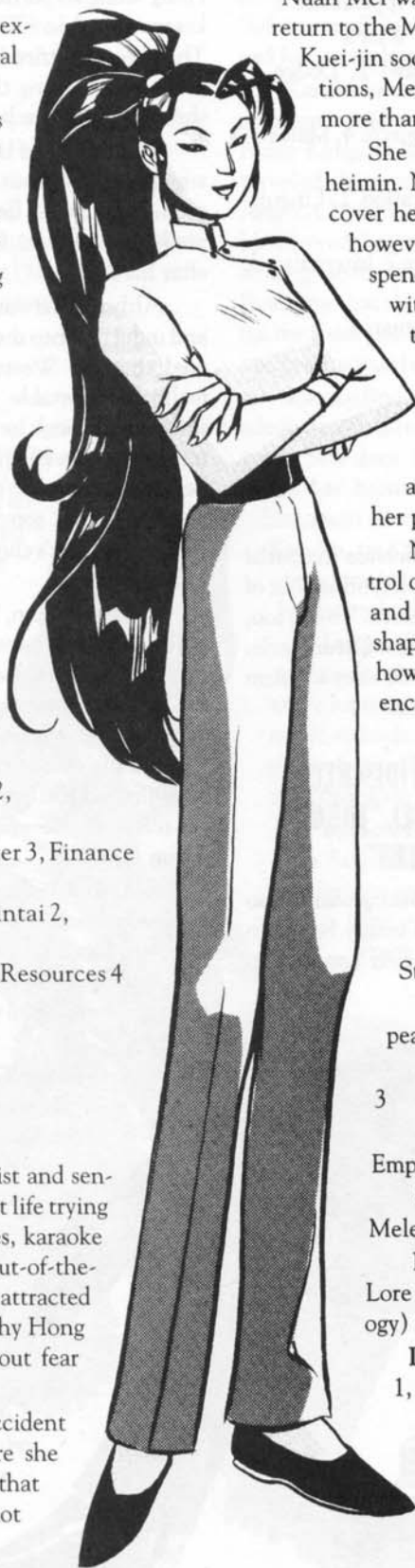
Skills: Animal Ken 3, Drive 2, Etiquette 3, Melee 2, Music 2, Stealth 1

Knowledges: Computer 1, Hengeyokai Lore 3, Linguistics 2, Occult 2, Science (ecology) 2

Disciplines: Black Wind 1, Blood Shintai 1, Equilibrium 2, Internalize 1, Yin Prana 1, Yang Prana 2

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Resources 3

Chi Virtues: Yin 4, Yang 6



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Soul Virtues: Hun 3, P'o 5

Willpower: 5

Image: Nuan Mei is pretty, particularly by Western standards. Although she sometimes affects traditional dress (cheongsam), she more often wears casual American or British styles. She pulls her long hair back into a tight ponytail for trekking in the wilderness.

Roleplaying Hints: Do everything you can to avoid coming into contact with the Righteous Devils. You suspect that the Kuei-jin of Victorious Whirlwind are just as bad, so avoid them as well. The shapeshifters and nature spirits have more to teach you than stodgy traditionalists. Walk your own path and don't let anyone deter you from it.

Haven: Nuan Mei lives on the edge of Kowloon, and she spends much of her time in the wilderness parks of the New Territories.

Secrets: She knows the locations of the lairs of many of Hong Kong's hengeyokai, as well as how to get in touch with them.

Influence: Mei has contacts among much of the non-Kuei-jin *shen* community.

THE KIN-JIN (WESTERN VAMPIRES)

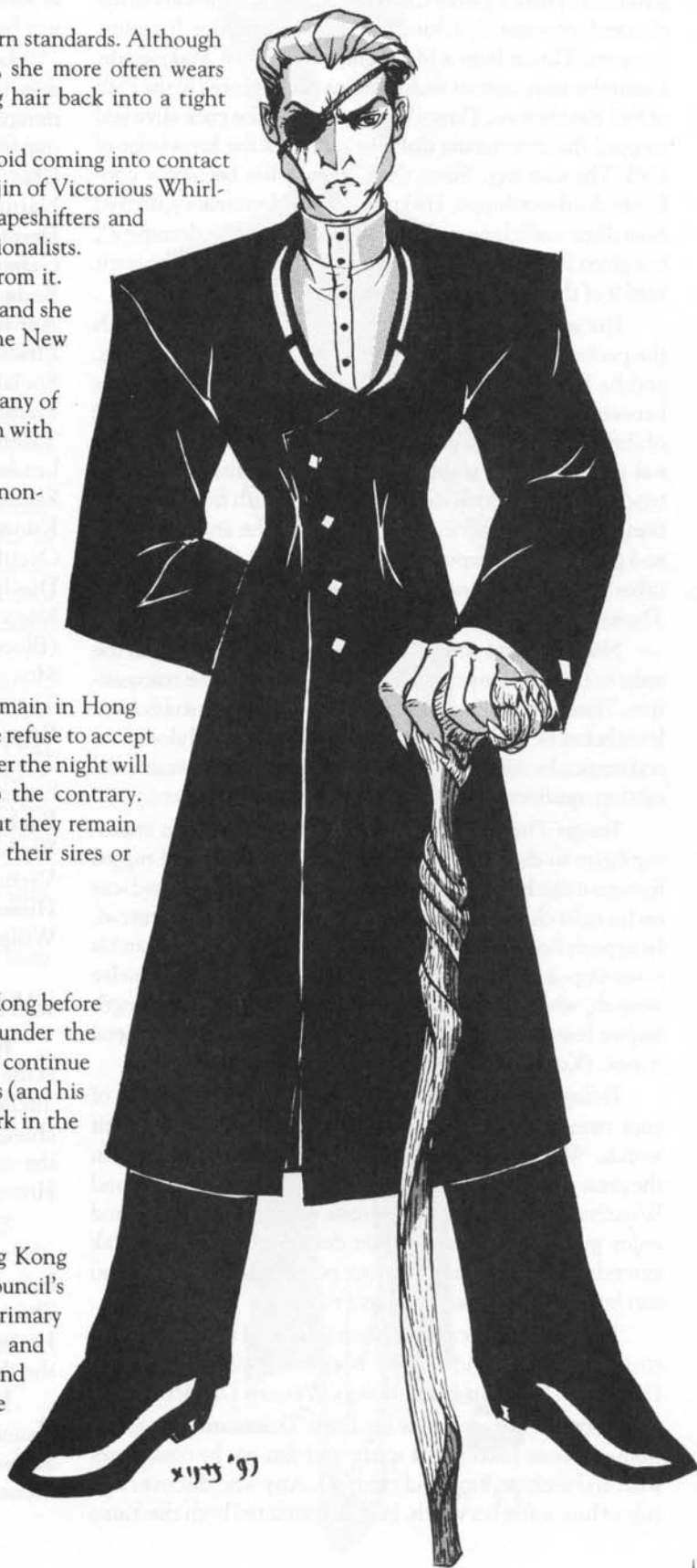
A few powerful individual Cainites stubbornly remain in Hong Kong, despite increasing activity by the Kuei-jin. Some refuse to accept the change in power, truly believing that their reign over the night will continue despite the political and spiritual signs to the contrary. Others realize just how dangerous their position is, but they remain anyway — following the mandates of the Camarilla, their sires or their own secret purposes.

THE HONG KONG CHANTRY

Although most of the Tremere abandoned Hong Kong before the takeover, a small chantry continues to operate under the direction of the Warlock Oliver Thrace. Determined to continue his studies, Thrace has managed to convince clan elders (and his mentor, Thomas Wyncham, in particular) that his work in the region is vital to Tremere interests.

OLIVER THRACE

Background: Thrace has been head of the Hong Kong Chantry since Thomas Wyncham, the Tremere Inner Council's East Asian Representative, invited him to act as his primary agent. Ever hungry for power in both the material and spiritual arenas, Thrace accepted the position gladly and relocated to Hong Kong. His reputation as an implacable enemy to the Sabbat, Setites, Assamites and other enemies of the Tremere ensured his renown as a force to be feared.



To all appearances, Thrace is the consummate Tremere — governed by reason rather than passion, driven by loyalty to the clan and consumed by a thirst for magical knowledge. In reality, however, Thrace lives a Masquerade within the Masquerade. During his early contact with a Sabbat pack devoted to the Path of Evil Revelations, Thrace captured one of the pack alive and stripped the unfortunate diabolist's mind of the knowledge of Dark Thaumaturgy. Since then, Thrace has become a confirmed devil-worshiper. His knowledge of Necromancy, derived from illicit trafficking with the Giovanni (to their detriment), has given him a passion for learning how to control the spirit worlds of the dead and the infernal.

His assignment to Hong Kong has provided him with the perfect opportunity to analyze the ways of the Kuei-jin, and he has immersed himself in a study of the differences between Eastern and Western vampires. On the material end of things, Thrace has garnered a strong hold over the criminal underground, rivaling that of his opposition, the 14K triads. Because he derives much of his wealth from prostitution, drugs and other illicit undertakings, he and his mortal and ghoulish allies compete directly with the 14K. This rivalry takes many forms, including bloody street fights between Thrace's goons and members of the triads.

Now that most of the Kindred have fled Hong Kong in the wake of (and in many cases, well before) the Chinese reacquisition, Thrace finds himself in a tenuous position. Too stubborn to leave before he has learned all he can about Kuei-jin philosophies and magics, he finds himself forced to exercise both restraint and subtlety, qualities in which Thrace often proves deficient.

Image: Thrace, tall and well-muscled, presents an imposing figure to those who meet him. His silver hair and rugged features make him almost handsome, except for the jagged scar on his right cheek and the eyepatch over his right eye. Instead, he appears fierce and uncompromising. He is never without his silver-tipped walking cane. The cane itself is a formidable melee weapon, while the diabolic rituals inscribed along its length inspire fear in the hearts of any who recognize their general nature. (Kuei-jin believe it to be a cursed artifact.)

Roleplaying Hints: You are ruthless in your pursuit of your twin goals: material wealth and power over the spirit worlds. While you usually maintain a facade of icy calm in the presence of your clanmates (and particularly when around Wyncham), you are actually prone to frequent frenzies and enjoy giving vent to your inner demons. Your cruel streak extends throughout most of your personality, although you can be charming when you have to be.

Haven: The Tremere Chantry, located in a small, two-story building sandwiched between two brothels on Hollywood Road, in Hong Kong's Western District.

Secrets: Thrace keeps his Dark Thaumaturgy a secret from everyone (except the spirits and demons he communes with and seeks to bind and control). Any who discover this side of him suffer his wrath. He has contacted both the Yama

King Mikaboshi and his rival, the Queen Tou Mu. Thrace seeks to play the two demons against each other, not realizing just how transparent they find him.

Influence: Thrace once enjoyed a great deal of influence among certain criminal elements in Hong Kong. The reimposition of Chinese rule, however, has jeopardized this important source of wealth and power.

Clan: Tremere

Nature: Bravo

Demeanor: Autocrat

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1496

Apparent Age: 40

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 6, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 6

Talents: Alertness 5, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Intimidation 6,

Leadership 3, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Etiquette 2, Firearms 2, Melee 4, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 3, Finance 5, Linguistics 6, Occult 3, Politics 4

Disciplines: Auspex 6, Dominate 6, Fortitude 2, Necromancy 4, Obfuscate 4, Potence 4, Thaumaturgy 6 (Blood 5, Elemental Mastery 5, Lure of Flames 5, Movement of Mind 4, Spirit Thaumaturgy 5), Thaumaturgy (Dark) 3

Rituals: Thrace knows most of the rituals of his level of Thaumaturgy, though he specializes in summoning and binding spirits and ghosts.

Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Influence 4, Mentor (Thomas Wyncham) 5, Resources 5, Retainers 5

Virtues: Conscience 0, Self-Control 2, Courage 4

Humanity: 2

Willpower: 9

WAN ZHU (GRACIOUS GEM)

Background: Born in Guangdong, Wan Zhu left China at the time of the Cultural Revolution, knowing that — as an intellectual — she would not long survive the cataclysmic changes in her homeland. She escaped to Hong Kong, where she accepted a job as a curator for the Museum of Chinese Historical Relics in Wanchai.

She attracted the attention of a distinguished-looking, silver-haired *gweilo* who visited the museum regularly just before it closed for the evening. More and more often, Wan Zhu permitted him to remain behind after locking the doors. His genuine interest in Chinese culture won her respect, and she shared much of her esoteric knowledge with him.

He asked to see her on urgent business one evening, claiming that he had come into possession of a rare jade artifact and wanted her to verify its authenticity before donating it to the museum. That night, in Wan Zhu's office,

Oliver Thrace Embraced the curator and inducted her into the Tremere Clan. He also secretly Blood Bound her, despite his clan's prohibition against the practice.

Wan Zhu is Thrace's eye on the Kuei-jin community. She has learned enough about the Cathayan vampires and their society to "pass" for brief periods of time. Realizing that her sire has cursed her with damnation, she finds herself torn between resentment of him (and his overbearing treatment of her) and the loyalty enforced by the Blood Bond.

She knows that she risks herself continually by her acts of espionage, but Thrace's power over her is too strong for her to break. Her orderly existence has become a nightmare of constant abasement. Thrace pushes her to discover more and more about the Kuei-jin, particularly with regard to their abilities to enter the spirit realms.

Her hopes that Thrace would flee with the other Kin-jin have long since dissipated. She continues to do his will, but she plots to free herself of his ruthless control somehow.

Image: Wan Zhu appears to be an elegant-looking woman in her 30s. At Thrace's command, she dresses in traditional Chinese clothing and carries herself with a meekness that belies her true assertive nature. She says and does nothing to draw undue attention to herself, particularly when around her sire.

Roleplaying Hints: You detest your enforced submissiveness, but you fear your sire's punishments even more. Obey him outwardly, but nourish your resentment in any way you can. You find a way to break the Blood Bond sooner or later. If all else fails, you can always throw yourself on the mercy of the Kuei-jin; your death should cause you less pain than this miserable existence.

Haven: Wan Zhu resides in the Tremere Chantry with her sire.

Secrets: She plans to find some way to free herself from Thrace's control.

Influence: None.

Clan: Tremere

Sire: Oliver Thrace

Nature: Traditionalist

Demeanor: Conformist

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1974

Apparent Age: 30s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

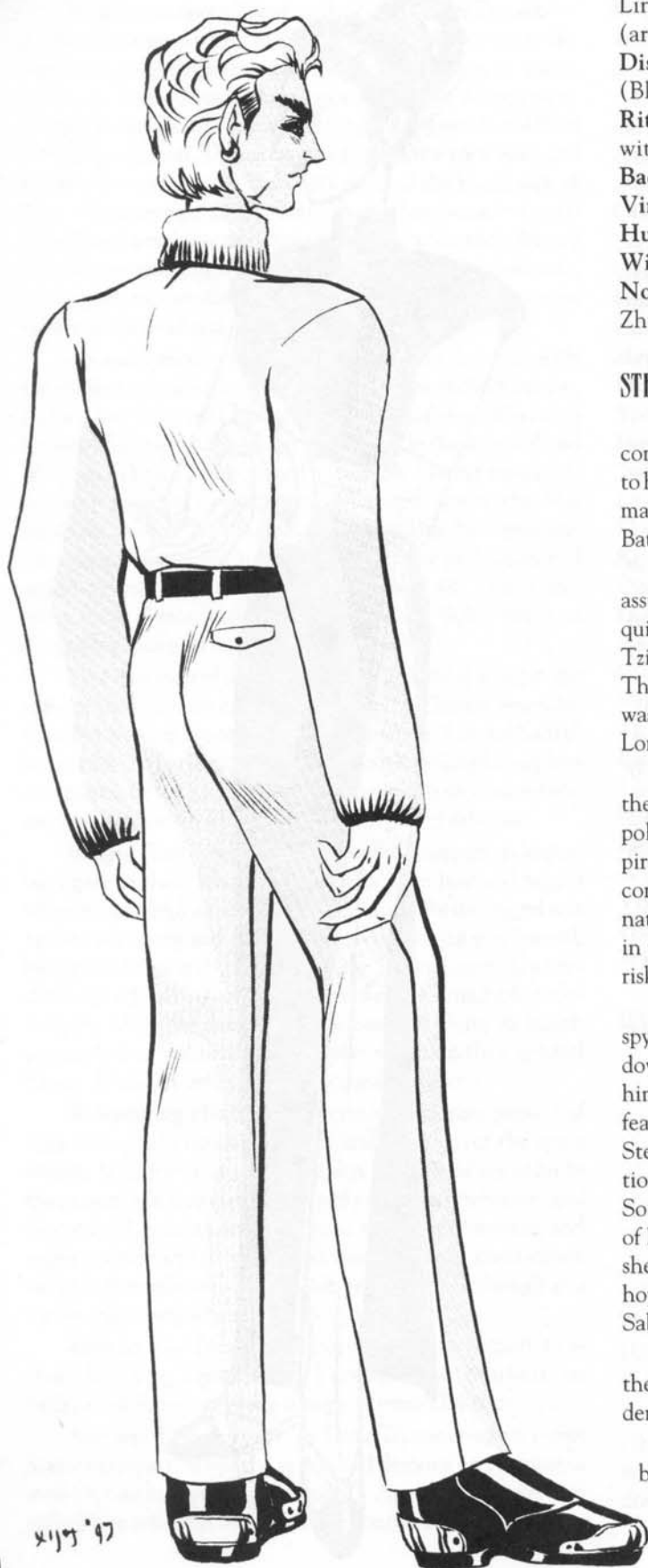
Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Leadership 1

Skills: Crafts (brush-painting) 3, Drive 2, Etiquette 3, Instruction 3, Performance (lectures) 2, Repair 3

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 2, Computer 2, History (Chinese) 5, Investigation (archaeological) 4,



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Linguistics 3, Occult (Chinese cosmology) 4, Science (archaeology) 4

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Fortitude 2, Thaumaturgy 2 (Blood 2, Elemental Control 1, Movement of Mind 1)

Rituals: Defense of the Sacred Haven, Communicate with Kindred Sire

Backgrounds: Mentor (Thrace) 4, Resources 2

Virtues: Conscience 4, Self-Control 3, Courage 3

Humanity: 8

Willpower: 6

Notes: Thrace has deliberately neglected to teach Wan Zhu the Dominate Discipline, for obvious reasons.

STEPHEN BATESON, "THE FLUNKY"

Background: Thrace's old nemesis — the Sabbat — has come back to haunt him in the person of the newest addition to his chantry. Posing as a Tremere sent to assist Thrace in his maintenance of the Hong Kong headquarters, Stephen Bateson is actually a Sabbat scout.

Chosen for his mercurial intelligence and ability to assume alternate personas at the drop of a hat (he was a quick-study improv actor), Stephen was Embraced by a Tzimisce priscus from Toronto. He spent 20 years learning Thaumaturgy in addition to his other Disciplines. Then, he was sent to Hong Kong with a forged document from the London Tremere Chantry.

Taking a gamble that Thrace would be preoccupied with the chaos surrounding the impending change in Hong Kong's political situation — and its repercussions for Western vampires — Stephen presented himself to Thrace as a vote of confidence from the London Tremere. The Sabbat spy's natural acting ability disarmed the Tremere elder, who saw in the neonate a perfect flunky to run his errands and take risks he himself was reluctant to take.

Stephen's presence serves a dual purpose. In addition to spying on Thrace with an eye to eventually bring about his downfall, the Tzimisce scout has also managed to insinuate himself into the fringes of Kuei-jin society. By altering his features through Vicissitude so that he appears Oriental, Stephen makes use of his errand-running to gather information about the beliefs and practices of the Cathayan vampires. So far, Stephen has managed to glean some intriguing pieces of knowledge concerning an impending age of great bloodshed and terror — uncannily reminiscent of Gehenna. He hopes he discovers something that is very useful to the Sabbat in the coming nights.

Stephen's long abstinence from regular participation in the Vaulderie is weakening his ties to the Sabbat. He wonders if the risks he takes are worth the potential payoff.

Image: Stephen is short (5'5") and slim, with dark-brown hair and eyes. As the "Tremere" Stephen Bateson, he dresses conservatively and inconspicuously. He moves so as not to call attention to himself. He behaves

deferentially toward Thrace; usually, Stephen succeeds so well that he is ignored. His Oriental persona is even shorter and stockier and dresses like a Hong Kong middle-class, white-collar worker.

Roleplaying Hints: Sooner or later, your good *joss* is going to run out. You have spent some of your time planning for a quick escape, but you also consider the very real possibility that you might not survive discovery. Still, the gamble is exhilarating, and the information you are discovering is potentially explosive.

Haven: Stephen lives in the Tremere Chantry, but he has a few boltholes scattered throughout Hong Kong and Kowloon.

Secrets: His biggest secret is his triple life; he also knows the havens of several Camarilla vampires.

Influence: None. (He is on his own.)

Clan: Tzimisce ("Tremere")

Sire: Rowena Alden

Nature: Conniver

Demeanor: Conformist

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1962

Apparent Age: 20s

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Acting (impersonations) 5, Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Body Alteration 3, Drive 4, Etiquette 2, Firearms 3, Security 3, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Camarilla Lore 3, Clan Lore (Tremere) 3, Investigation 3, Linguistics 2, Occult 3

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 2, Obfuscate 1, Thaumaturgy 3 (Blood 3, Elemental Mastery 2, Lure of Flames 2, Movement of Mind 2, Spirit Thaumaturgy 1), Vicissitude 3

Rites: Defense of the Sacred Haven, Communicate with Kindred Sire, Deflection of Wooden Doom

Backgrounds: Herd 2, Resources 2

Virtues: Callousness 3, Instincts 4, Morale 3

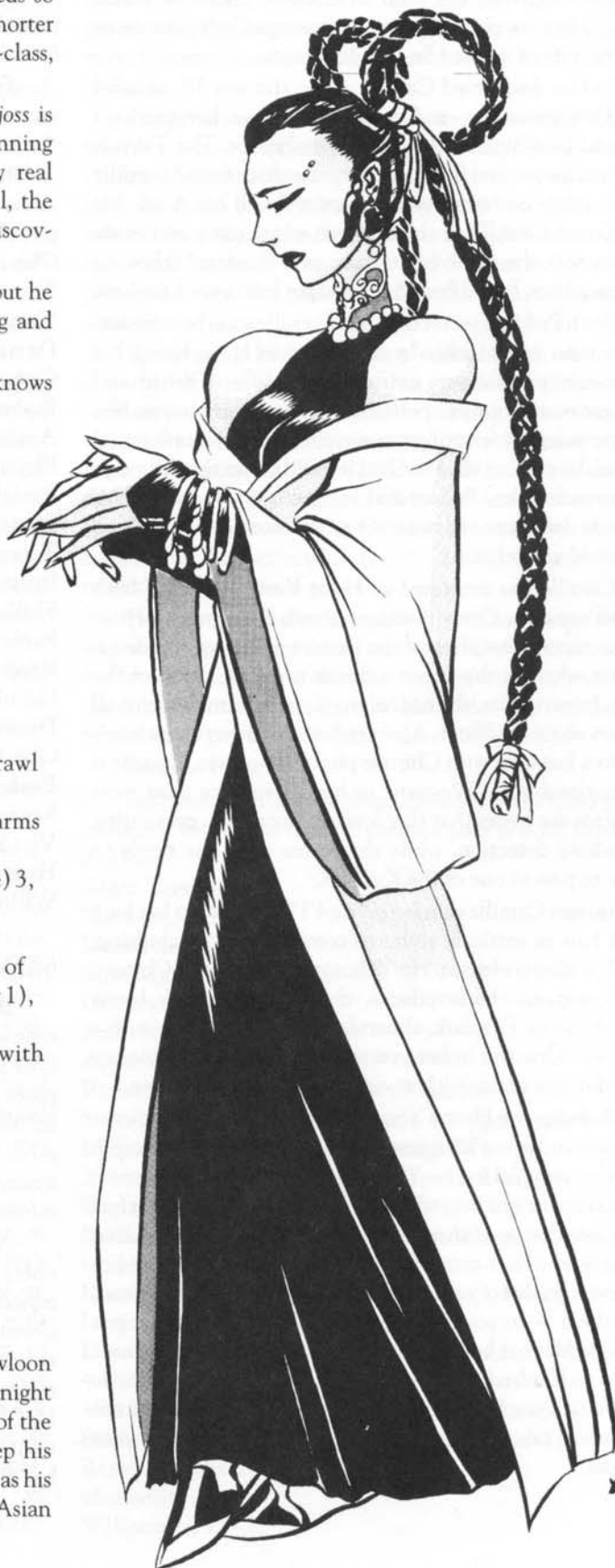
Path of Honorable Accord: 5

Willpower: 8

Notes: Stephen conceals most of his Abilities and Disciplines from Thrace.

CAMILLET'SIEN, "PEDDER'S CHILDE"

Background: As early as the acquisition of Kowloon and the New Territories, Pedder realized that the night would come when Hong Kong slipped from the grasp of the Camarilla. He set about implementing a plan to keep his hand in the pie, cultivating the perfect "sleeper" to act as his spy even after he could no longer take an active part in Asian



politics. He found his ideal in Camille T'sien, a lovely Eurasian byblow of an illicit tryst between a Cantonese artist and the wife of a bored French diplomat.

Pedder discovered Camille when she was 18, seduced her, Dominated her and arranged to have her mother's husband (the diplomat) sent back to France. The Tai-pan then had her natural father eliminated, which forced Camille to rely solely on her mysterious suitor for all her needs. He introduced Camille to the Eurasian community and made certain that she received training as a "hostess." Then he Embraced her, Blood Bound her and put her to work for him.

With Pedder's secret backing, Camille soon became one of the most sought-after "entertainers" in Hong Kong; her upper-crust patrons were a virtual Who's Who of British and Chinese power-brokers, politicians and culture mavens. She became adept at ferreting out secrets from these influential men and reporting what she had learned to her sire. Through the next decades, Pedder and his protégé planned for his ultimate departure and her insinuation into a position where she could act as his spy.

Camille has remained in Hong Kong, acting as both Pedder's and the Camarilla's agent, with the express purpose of discovering the plans of the Eastern vampires and determining whether they pose a threat to the Kindred of the West. In particular, she has received instructions to learn all she can about the "Sixth Age" predicted by many of the Kuei-jin. As a Eurasian with Chinese physical features, Camille is less noticeable as "Western" in her appearance than most Kindred; she hopes that this acts as camouflage, preventing immediate detection, while she learns what she needs to know to pass as one of the Kuei-jin.

Image: Camille stands a petite 4'11". She wears her long black hair in intricate styles to complement her clothing, which is always elegant. Her delicate features blend Chinese and European characteristics, though her father's blood predominates. Her dark, almond-shaped eyes sparkle with a keen wit. Graceful in her every movement, she combines a youthful innocence with an unmistakable sexual allure.

Roleplaying Hints: You understand your duty to please your sire and act as his agent in the very important task that has been assigned to you. Your training as a hostess has given you a keen insight into what motivates mortals, and you feel confident that you can apply this knowledge to the mainland Chinese who have come to occupy your home. The Kuei-jin, however, frighten you. You have had little direct contact with them — to your knowledge, they don't know that you exist. Pedder has been careful to keep you under wraps with regard to Kindred and Kuei-jin society. (At least you hope so.) You do not believe that the monstrous vampires of the East would take kindly to you if they discovered you or your purpose.

Haven: Camille has several havens, including a very private one on the south side of the island. Her primary haven is in the Central District.

Secrets: Camille's existence as undead is her greatest secret; she has been kept out of Kindred society to conceal the fact that she exists.

Influence: Her influence among the mortal community extends through all levels of political, financial and cultural power.

Clan: Ventrue

Sire: Robert Pedder

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Bon Vivant

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1922 (born 1898)

Apparent Age: 24

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 3,

Intimidation 1, Leadership 1, Streetwise 3

Skills: Drive 2, Etiquette 4, Firearms 1, Melee 3,

Performance (hostess) 4, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 3, Finances 2, Linguistics 3, Occult 1, Politics 3

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 1, Dominate 4,

Obfuscate 2, Presence 4, Protean 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 2, Mentor (Pedder) 3, Resources 3

Virtues: Conscience 4, Self-Control 4, Courage 3

Humanity: 7

Willpower: 8

GWENDOLYN FLEMING, "PATRON OF THE ARTS"

Background: Gwendolyn Fleming studied music at a time when such pursuits were considered fripperies in women. Gwendolyn, however, had ambitions of becoming a composer and performer of classical music. As a member of Edinburgh's upper class, Gwendolyn attended concerts and other cultural events with her parents. She basked in the strains of Haydn and Scarlatti and became even more determined to excel in her chosen field of study.

As Gwendolyn aged, she attracted the attention of a noble suitor, one Malcolm McCluan, Lord Blackloch. The mysterious nobleman exercised a magnetic control over Gwendolyn, although she bespelled him as well; he spent entire evenings listening to Gwendolyn demonstrate her remarkable musical talent on harpsichord and piano. McCluan asked her on the final evening of his sojourn if she wanted recognition and appreciation for her genius, telling her that it meant leaving behind her former notions of

respectability. Gwendolyn did not hesitate and accepted McCluan's Embrace and, with it, her introduction to Kindred — and Toreador — society.

Together they traveled extensively throughout England and the continent for the next century, and they even crossed the ocean to America in pursuit of new forms of culture, especially music. The East called to them, however, and sire and progeny traveled to Hong Kong in 1901, where Malcolm had clan connections.

Although Malcolm hated the city and found little in it to appeal to him, Gwendolyn found herself enraptured by Hong Kong's vitality. The strangeness of Chinese culture fascinated her and she was determined to understand its music and opera.

When Malcolm announced that he had had enough of the "barbarous Far East," Gwendolyn informed her sire that she intended to stay. The split was amicable, though fraught with sadness. Malcolm returned to Europe, while Gwendolyn set about establishing herself as one of the lionesses of Hong Kong's cultural community. Her discovery and patronage of talented young artists and musicians, both Chinese and European, helped build Hong Kong's prestige as a center for the arts.

With the countdown to the Chinese takeover, the city's Toreador packed up and dispersed, with the exception of Gwendolyn. She remained, as she saw herself as the last bastion of Western

culture in Hong Kong. It is her fondest hope that, by penetrating the enigma that surrounds Chinese culture, she may encourage a unique blend of Eastern and Western music and art.

Image: Gwendolyn is a slender, breathtakingly beautiful young woman, apparently in her early 20s. She dresses in the latest fashions from Europe, though she has developed a taste for Asian jewelry (particularly jade) and often wears jade earrings or bangles. Lustrous curls of chestnut-colored hair frame her heart-shaped face and draw attention to her pale-green eyes. Her presence in a room always commands attention.

Roleplaying Hints: There is still so much about the city's native music and culture that you do not understand; no mere political fluctuation deters you from fathoming the intricacies of the Chinese opera and the oddities of Asian musical composition. You intend to bide your time during the first frenzied reassertion of Chinese rule and then make your presence known to the Cathayan community; you are certain that they sense your sincerity and accept your desire to further your musical education.

Haven: Gwendolyn has a lavish mansion on the Peak, with a concert hall and theater attached. Here, she shows off her latest discoveries and stages evening entertainment for the cultural elite. Her resting place lies below the mansion in an elaborate crypt cut deep into the mountainside.

Secrets: None.

Influence: Until the change, Gwendolyn enjoyed great influence within the cultural communities of both Kindred and kine.

Clan: Toreador

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Visionary

Sire: Malcolm McCluan

Generation: 9th

Embrace: 1758 (born 1735)

Apparent Age: 20s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 5

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 4, Empathy 3, Intimidation 1

Skills: Drive 2, Etiquette 5, Firearms 1, Melee 2, Music (piano) 5

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 2, Computer 1, Finance 3, Linguistics 3, Occult 2

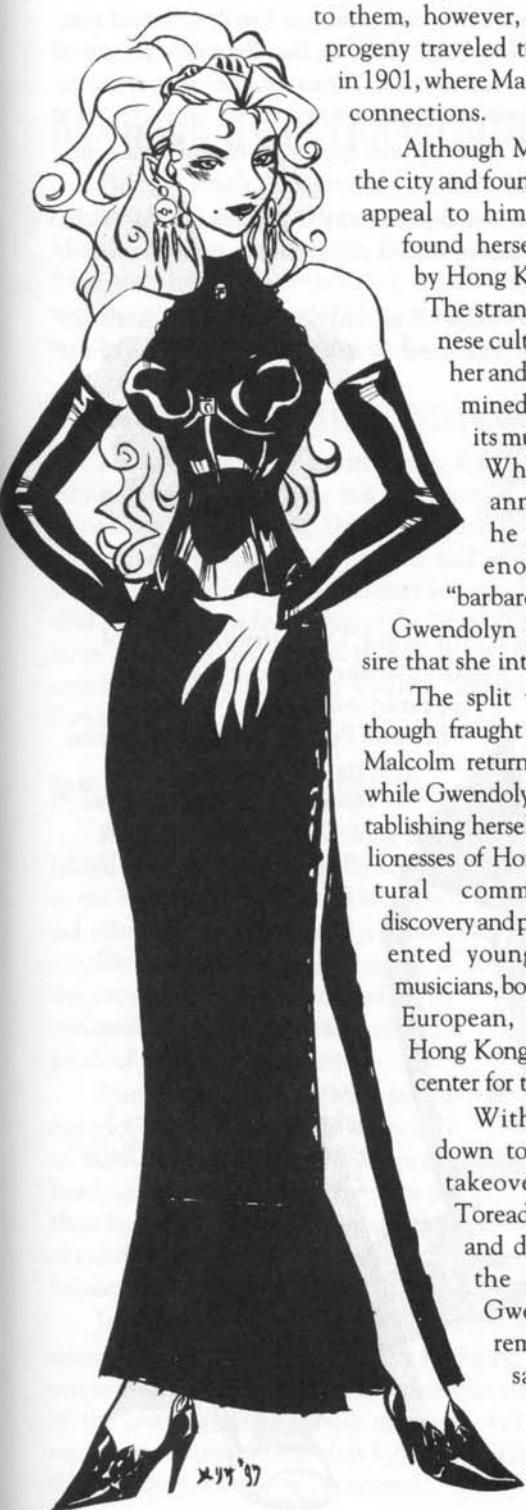
Disciplines: Auspex 4, Celerity 3, Fortitude 2, Presence 4, Protean 3

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

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 3, Resources 5, Retainers 3, Status 3

Humanity: 8

Willpower: 7



CLIVE COOPER, "LORD OF THE SUBWAYS"

Background: Embraced as part of an elaborate scheme by London's Nosferatu to take advantage of the London war between the Tremere and the Ventrue, Cooper has always been in the thick of plots, intrigues and power struggles. He was forced to flee London when his sire fell victim to a Blood Hunt; he sought anonymity in the slums, back alleys, sewers and subway tunnels of Hong Kong.

During the course of the decade-long trek that brought him halfway around the world, Cooper learned enough about his clan and the legendary enmity of its Founder to scare him silly. At first, he believed that losing himself in Hong Kong protected him not only from his enemies back in London (after more than 30 years in the city, he never presented himself to Pedder), but also from the threat of the Nictuku.

Exploring the vast underground of Hong Kong is nothing new to Cooper; the subway system is second nature to him and he spends most of his time below the surface of the colony, riding the trains or snaking his way through the tunnel walkways. He acquires a formidable amount of information here, which he then barter for favors among the other *shen* of Hong Kong. Cooper has befriended one of the Nezumi, another subway aficionado, and has a passing acquaintance with the city's heimin.

From his Kuei-jin contacts, Cooper has come to believe that the Cathayan vampires may know secrets that will enable him to fight the Nictuku, should any ever surface in his vicinity. He is desperate to know more. Cooper suspects that something important is taking place with the transfer of power and sees this as his chance to protect himself from his enemies and to garner secrets and knowledge from this unique position. Cooper welcomes the new era in Hong Kong, unlike the other Kindred (both those who fled and those who remain). Only time will tell if he has made a serious miscalculation.

Image: Cooper's monstrous appearance serves him in good stead in Hong Kong; he resembles nothing so much as a *chih-meh*, with his corpeslike pallor and desiccated features. His eyes constantly ooze a greenish-yellow pus, while his skin has completely disappeared in many places — exposing the bone and stringy musculature beneath. He

wears a skeleton T-shirt frequently, as well as torn jeans and expensive running shoes (in case he needs them).

Roleplaying Hints: You believe that by remaining outside the province of the Western clans, you can escape destruction by the Nictuku. Unlike many of the other Kindred, you firmly believe that Gehenna is just around the corner; you hope, though, that it will not come to Asia. Still, you have to be careful that someone hasn't followed you, from London, New York, Atlanta, San Francisco or any of the other places you've been. "Trust no one" is your motto (well, maybe the Nezumi you rescued...).

Haven: Cooper frequents numerous maintenance tunnels along the MTR.

Secrets: He has discovered the crypts of many of the newly arrived Kuei-jin. He is still deciding what to do with the information.

Influence: Cooper is an unknown among mortals, although he does hold some sway over the employees of the MTR.

Clan: Nosferatu

Nature: Conniver

Demeanor: Loner

Sire: John Bullock

Generation: 8th

Embrace: 1884

Apparent Age: ??

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Streetwise 5

Skills: Firearms 1, Melee 2, Stealth 5, Survival 4

Knowledges: Computer 1, Finance 2, Linguistics 2, Occult 3

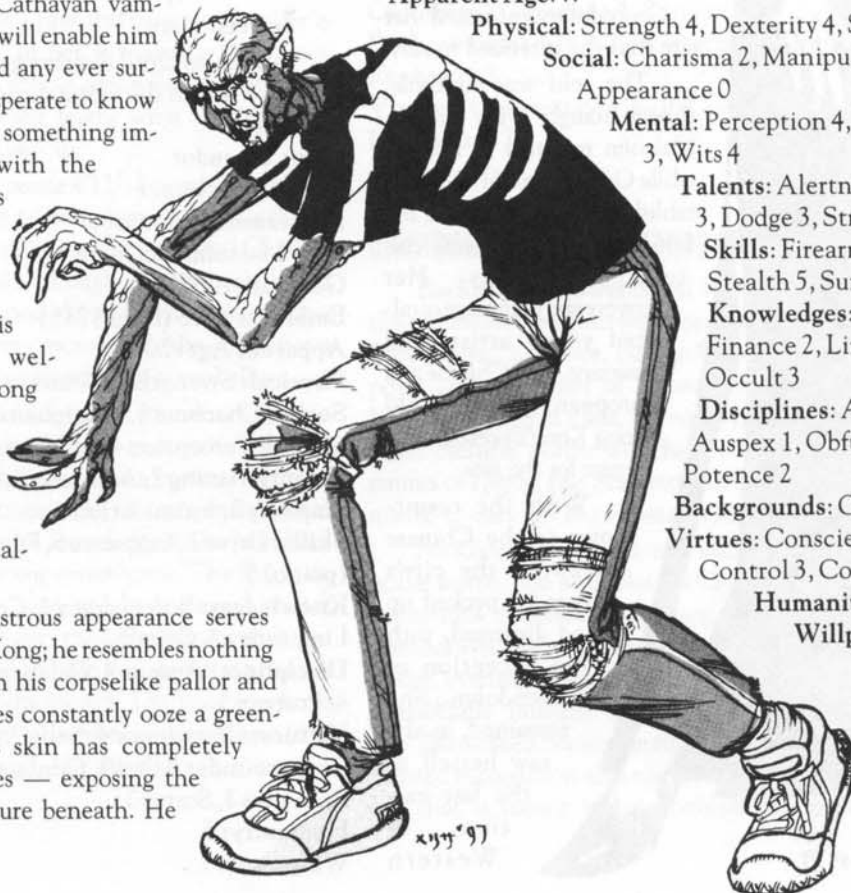
Disciplines: Animalism 3, Auspex 1, Obfuscate 4, Potence 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 5

Virtues: Conscience 2, Self-Control 3, Courage 3

Humanity: 6

Willpower: 6



CREATURES OF THE YANG WORLD

Hong Kong hosts a variety of *shen* affiliated with the Yang World. Hengeyokai (shapeshifters) of many kinds make their homes on the island, across the harbor in Kowloon and in the New Territories. Hong Kong is a city of unquenchable dreams, and the embodiments of these hopes — the spirit folk of dreams — gather to harvest the Chi generated by the region's multitude of dreamers.

HENGEYOKAI (THE CHANGING BREEDS)

Hong Kong's hengeyokai include all manner of shapeshifters, among them wolf-people, tiger-children, Middle Dragons, and rat-folk. Some, like the wolf-people, have organized themselves into groups dedicated to a common purpose. Others prefer a looser structure, content to let joss dictate their connections with others of their kind.

SEPT OF THE COUNCIL FOR UNIVERSAL TRADE

Located in a secret caern within the grounds of the Hong Kong Zoo, this sept has its origins in the earliest settlement of Hong Kong. Dedicated to fostering ecologically minded technological progress and prosperity, the Council for Universal Trade comprises several tribes of wolf-folk under the leadership of the Glass Walkers. A more complete description of this caern and its members can be found in *Caerns: Places of Power*.

JO WU, "LIMITLESS HARD-DRIVE"

Background: Born in Hong Kong, Jo Wu quickly made a name for herself in the business community. Her interest in promoting environmentally friendly power won her the respect of the local Glass Walkers and led to her assumption of the position of Sept Leader.

During her tenure as leader, Jo Wu has encouraged the harmonious growth of business, investing in and spearheading new technologies that have as their foundation the wise husbanding of natural resources and the preservation of balance.

Jo Wu has recently come under criticism for her cautious endorsement and support for Hong Kong's re-union with China. Her critics predict that the demands of the over-stressed Chinese economy will drain the resources of Hong Kong, thus forcing a decline in both the economy and the environment.

Wu argues that a sick land can be healed only from within and through holistic means rather than radical surgery. She sees the vitality of Hong Kong's economy and the efforts of the Council for Universal Trade as essential to the good health of the Middle Kingdom.

Image: Jo Wu sports the dress and manners of a Western corporate executive. She dresses conservatively, in power suits and tasteful jewelry, and projects an aura of assertive self-confidence. She ignores the inherent bias against women in business that still exists in Hong Kong and, by sheer force of will, inspires the respect of those around her.



Roleplaying Hints: You strive for balance and calm within your personal life as well as in your business dealings, uniting in your person the energy of the West with the tranquillity of the East. As one of the *shen*, you also try to balance your spirit-self with your flesh-being. You believe that the underlying principles of the Council for Universal Trade should take root in China first, and then throughout the Middle Kingdom.

Home: When she is not at the caern, Wu resides in her penthouse apartment in Hong Kong's Central District.

Secrets: Jo Wu has an obscene amount of money deposited in accounts throughout the world, forming a financial safety valve for herself and her sept in the event that her assessment of Hong Kong proves erroneous.

Influence: Among the wolf-people and many other hengeyokai, Jo Wu bears a formidable reputation; her influence over the business community is considerable, particularly in the fields of energy resources and low-impact technology.

Position: Sept Leader, Council for Universal Trade

Breed: Homid

Auspice: Philodox

Tribe: Glass Walkers

Nature/Demeanor: Alpha/Alpha

Physical: Strength 2 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6),

Stamina 2 (4/5/5/5)

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 5 (4/2/2/2),

Appearance 3 (2/0/3/3)

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Empathy 3, Expression 4,

Intimidation 3, Primal-Urge 3,

Subterfuge 3

Skills: Etiquette 5, Firearms 2, Leadership 5, Melee 3,

Performance 4, Repair 3

Knowledges: Computer 3, Enigmas 2, Investigation 1,

Law 4, Linguistics (English) 1, Medicine 2, Politics

(global trade) 4, Rituals 2

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Contacts 4, Kinfolk 3, Pack

Totem 5 (the Smiling Happy Buddha), Resources 5

Gifts: (1) Persuasion, Scent of True Form, Smell of Man,

Truth of Gaia; (2) Jam

Technology, Strength of Purpose; (3) Cybersense,

Tongues, Wisdom of the Ancient Ways; (4) Scent from

Beyond; (5) Geas, Summon Netspiders

Rage 3, **Gnosis** 6, **Willpower** 10

Rank: 5

Rites: Rite of Contrition, Rite of Cleansing, Rite of

Talisman Dedication, Rite of the Opened Caern, Moot

Rite, Gathering for the Departed, Rite of Wounding

Fetishes: Coin of Wealth, Dream Trap, Loon's Refund

Merit: Corporation CEO

WU YONG, "IRON GHOST"

Background: A native of mainland China, Wu Yong became active in the local smuggling trade and black marketeering. When his true nature emerged, he was accepted into the ranks of the Iron Brotherhood, which is a group of Glass Walkers and Kinfolk dedicated to the advancement of Asian trade. Relocating to Hong Kong, Wu Yong rose in the Brotherhood, and assumed a position as Guardian in the allied Sept of the Council for Universal Trade.

His ties to the criminal underworld of Hong Kong bring a gritty worldliness to the idealism of the sept. He understands that the way things should be is not always the same as the way things must be done, and he takes upon himself the duty of undertaking the "dirty work" of the sept.

As a firm believer in Asian supremacy in Asia, Wu Yong supports China's reacquisition of Hong Kong. He would like to see Western influence phased out and eliminated entirely, although he does concede that the territory profited immensely from its association with European-based economics and American investments. That time, however, is past; Asia, spearheaded by Hong Kong, must take its own place in the world community, without the patronage of or exploitation by Western countries.

Image: Yong is a small, slender man in his human form. His outward gentleness and calmness of spirit belie his swiftness to anger in the face of injustice and oppression. He can go from one aspect of his personality to the other in a heartbeat.

Roleplaying Hints: Carry yourself with honor, no matter what the situation. Never allow yourself to lose control, even when you surrender to your spirit-frenzies. You are an extremely private person, even by Hong Kong standards.

Home: Wu Yong spends most of his time within the confines of the caern, though he shares an apartment in Wanchai with members of the Iron Brotherhood.

Secrets: Yong's ties to triads and other illicit elements of society provide him with a great deal of clandestine information, such as where to launder money and procure contraband items (such as firearms).

Influence: He has connections with both the Iron Brotherhood and numerous illegal business organizations.

Position: Guardian

Breed: Homid

Auspice: Theurge

Tribe: Glass Walkers

Nature/Demeanor: Director/Autist

Physical: Strength 3 (5/7/6/4), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6),

Stamina 3 (5/6/6/6)

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3 (2/0/0/0),

Appearance 4 (3/0/4/4)

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 1, Dodge 3, Intimidation 4, Primal-Urge 4, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3
Skills: Disguise 2, Drive 3, Fast-Draw 4, Firearms 5, Instruction 3, Kalindo 2, Leadership 4, Repair 2, Stealth 1, Survival 1

Knowledge: Computer 3, Enigmas 3, Investigation 2, Law 1, Linguistics 3, Medicine 3, Occult 1, Politics 3, Rituals 3, Science 2

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Contacts 4, Kinfolk 5, Resources 3

Gifts: (1) Control Simple Machines, Mother's Touch, Persuasion, Smell of Man; (2) Heat Metal, Jam Technology, Power Surge, Stare-down; (3) Control Complex Machines, Disquiet; (4) Corner Shot, Doppelganger

Rage 2, Gnosis 7, Willpower 9

Rank: 4

Rites: Rite of Contrition, Rite of Cleansing, Ritual of the Questing Stone, Rite of Talisman Dedication, Gathering for the Departed, Rite of Binding, Rite of Wounding, Rite of Spirit Awakening, Ritual of Summoning, Rite of Passage, Rite of Ostracism, Stone of Scorn, Rite of the Totem

Fetishes: Dream Trap, Sands of Sleep, Death Door, Fire-Elemental Bullets (Gnosis 5; if a successful firearms hit is scored, roll activation. If successful, the round bursts into flames upon impact, inflicting three dice of aggravated damage. Wu Yong has five of these bullets.)

Merits/Flaws: Underworld Ties, Ambidextrous/Intolerance (injustice)

OTHER WOLF-PEOPLE

ZHAN XUE (FAR-SEEKING SCHOLAR)

Background: A native of Pui O Village on the island of Lantau, Zhan Xue spends most of his time wandering through Hong Kong and searching for the origin of the strange Chi-currents he feels moving through the spirit worlds. Whether these energies indicate the reemergence of the Flame Court, or are side effects of the dragons' stirring near Hong Kong and Kowloon, or simply delineate the passing of the Ages as the Great Cycle presses relentlessly onward, Zhan Xue does not know.

Posing as a traveling student, teacher, entertainer or mendicant, Xue makes friends quickly with the local *shen*—sharing his observations with them and soliciting their own evaluations and insights on the powerful doings in the spirit worlds. While he does not seek the company of other wolf-people actively, Xue never turns down the opportunity to visit the caerns that lace the wild places of the Hong Kong region. He is a welcome, though infrequent, visitor to the Council for Universal Trade and has spent many happy hours roaming the slums of Mongkok and Wanchai with local Bone Gnawers. When Xue returns to Lantau, he sometimes visits with Nian Shun, the Ageless One, whose nature he discovered and whom he considers to be a font of knowledge.



Using his keen sense of humor to disarm potentially hostile individuals, Xue seems blessed with good *joss*. He travels safely in areas and among groups that are avoided by more cautious individuals.

Image: Zhan Xue usually dresses in clothes appropriate for hiking through the wilderness, alternating between Western gear and the loose-fitting garments of a traveling monk. His long, straight hair is tied at the neck with a leather cord or held away from his face with a cloth band. He carries a staff, which serves as both walking tool and weapon.

Roleplaying Hints: You search for omens not only in the stars but in the ground beneath your feet, the movements of the rivers and the wind's passage across the land. Something momentous is about to happen, and you wish to understand it even if you cannot — or should not — affect it. You disguise your earnest search for knowledge beneath a veneer of clownish behavior. Those who greet you first with laughter seldom meet you later with violence.



Home: Xue has no fixed abode, though he feels most at home on the island of Lantau.

Secrets: He knows of the existence of Lantau's most ancient resident, Nian Shun, the Immortal One.

Influence: Zhan Xue has little direct influence over anyone, but the Spirit Courts of both Yin and Yang seem to smile on him (and anyone currently associated with him) more often than not.

Breed: Homid

Auspice: Galliard

Tribe: Stargazers

Nature/Demeanor: Visionary/Jester

Physical: Strength 3 (5/7/6/4), Dexterity 5 (5/6/7/7), Stamina 4 (6/7/7/7)

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3 (2/0/0/0), Appearance 3 (2/0/3/3)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Dodge 3, Primal-Urge 4

Skills: Crafts (origami) 2, Etiquette 1, Melee 4, Kalindo 4, Performance (poetry) 3, Portents 3, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Enigmas 4, Investigation 2, Linguistics 2, Occult 4, Rituals 3

Backgrounds: Contacts (Nian Shun) 1, Past Life 2

Gifts: (1) Balance, Beast Speech, Persuasion, Sense Wyrn (2) Dreamspeak, Inner Strength, Staredown, Surface Attunement (3) Clarity, Eye of the Cobra, Merciful Blow

Rage 4, Gnosis 7, Willpower 7

Rank: 3

Rites: Rite of Cleansing, Rite of Talisman Dedication, Rite of Spirit Awakening, Rite of Summoning

Fetishes: None.

CHIKA MASATO (COMING OF JUSTICE)

Background: Son of a distinguished Japanese military family, Masato felt the blood of generations of warriors flowing through his veins from boyhood. With the revelation of his Hakken lineage came the desire to serve as the virtuous weapon of the Lord of Thunder. Filled with heroic ambitions, Masato led his pack of brash young Hakken in search of deeds to bring honor upon themselves and to cleanse Japan of its spiritual taint.

One of the pack's exploits led Masato and his friends deep into the Yang World where they fought against a host of Banes and drove the evil spirits to retreat, and then pursued them along a twisted, blighted dragon line. Too late, Masato realized that their enemies had led them into a trap, for they stood just outside the hideously warped and spectral ruins of Nagasaki. Here the Banes made their stand, drawing strength from the poisoned Chi endemic to the region.



Masato has tracked Tanijiro to Hong Kong. Concerned that his one-time friend plans to cause some great trouble in this political tinderbox, he is anxious to locate and stop him. He has heard rumors that the corrupted Hakken seeks an ancient, cursed samurai blade, undoubtedly for a malevolent and destructive purpose.

Image: At 5'10", Masato is taller than most Japanese men. He is slim and well-muscled, and in superb condition from his constant attention to martial disciplines. He dresses in conservative, unostentatious clothing, preferring not to call attention to himself unless he wants to. His hair is cut short, which emphasizes his harsh, angular features. He projects an air of cold superiority, despite his respectful behavior.

Roleplaying Hints: Your youthful foolishness cost you not only the lives of your packmates and your standing within your Hakken tribe, but also the soul of your closest friend. It is up to you to atone for your shame by finding and thwarting the schemes of Tanijiro. Nothing will stop you.

Home: Masato stays in one of the pricey hotels in Central District currently, though he spends a great deal of time amid the island's wilderness preserves.

Secrets: His disgrace is his biggest secret.

Influence: None.

Position: Ronin

Breed: Homid

Auspice: Ahroun

Tribe: Hakken (Japanese Shadow Lord)

Nature/Demeanor: Autist/Traditionalist

Physical: Strength 4 (6/8/7/5), Dexterity 5 (5/6/7/7), Stamina 4 (6/7/7/6)

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3 (2/0/0/0), Appearance 3 (2/0/3/3)

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 4, Dodge 3, Expression (haiku) 2, Intimidation 3, Primal-Urge 2

Skills: Crafts (swordsmith) 2, Drive 3, Etiquette 2, Leadership 3, Martial Arts 4, Melee (katana) 4, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Enigmas 2, Investigation 3, Linguistics 3, Occult 2, Rituals 2

Backgrounds: Past Life 2, Pure Breed 2, Resources 4

Gifts: (1) Fatal Flaw, Inspiration, Persuasion, Razor Claws (2) Clap of Thunder, Sense Silver, Spirit of the Fray, Stare-down, True Fear (3) Heart of Fury, Silver Claws

Sure of their deaths, the Hakken fought fearlessly and desperately, managing to rout their foes. At the end of the battle, only Masato and one other packmate, Kintaro Tanijiro, remained. The pair returned to their Sept Leader and recounted the deeds of their battle. Their bravery was recognized, as was their lack of wisdom and foresight. Both men were pronounced ronin since they had proved themselves unworthy of bringing unqualified victory to the Hakken and equally incapable of dying alongside their comrades.

The two outcasts traveled together for several months, until Masato began to notice the growing bouts of strangeness that afflicted Tanijiro. Finally, his companion disappeared, and Masato feared that Tanijiro had succumbed to Harano, the lingering despair that afflicted many of the wolf-people.

Masato has learned recently that Tanijiro still lives, but that he has found another master. Instead of serving Grandfather Thunder, he has given his loyalty to the Kuei-jin Lord Hakari. Masato has taken upon himself the duty of finding his former packmate and slaying him, thus freeing his spirit from its foul bondage.

Rage 6, Gnosis 6, Willpower 8

Rank: none (formerly 3)

Rites: Rite of Contrition, Rite of Talisman Dedication,
Rite of Wounding

Fetishes: None.

THE KHAN (BASTET)

The great tigers that once roamed China and Asia are nearly extinct. Nevertheless, their spirit-kin, the Khan tribe of the Bastet, still exist as protectors of their decreasing Kinfolk, both human and animal.

LING CHU (CLEVER STONE), "SECRET AGENT"

Background: Fearless pursuer of justice, tireless avenger of crimes, swift punisher of the wicked, and bumbling seducer of beautiful women — Ling Chu is all this and more. His career as a member of Hong Kong's police force covers his true identity as an Interpol agent — not to mention his membership in the tribe of weretigers, also known as the Khan.

Over the years, Chu has built a reputation for his legendary feats of policing and unorthodox methods of bringing in his prey. His superiors have turned a blind eye to Chu's failure to adhere to proper protocol; they can find no convincing arguments against his success rate in crimefighting. Even his supposed association with the Japanese Yakuza warlord Tiger Toranaga (see **Bastet**) has received no censure from the official brass of the Hong Kong police.

But all that may change soon. With the new regime already established in Hong Kong, Chu must reconsider whether he can continue to act in an official capacity as a policeman. China's dubious sense of justice (as exemplified by Tiananmen Square) concerns him, since he cannot countenance such blatant disregard for human rights and individual freedom of expression.

Chu's Interpol bosses urge him to remain at his post for as long as possible and provide them with an insider's view of Hong Kong, China. His Khan instincts tell him that the coming days will test his self-control and, quite possibly, reveal his feline nature to the world. Still, Hong Kong is his

home; its people are his to protect. No Khan, however desperate or besieged, would ever suffer the shame of backing away from a challenge.

Image: Rakishly good-looking, with his dark hair worn as long as regulation permits, Ling Chu carries himself with a natural, "catlike" grace. His body is lean and muscular, with broad shoulders, long legs and powerful arms. He dresses in police uniform when necessary — and in comfortable, loose-fitting clothing whenever possible.

Roleplaying Hints: Your friendliness and affability hide your hair-trigger temper. Remember where you are at all times so that you don't embarrass yourself (or hurt others) by giving in to your anger at the wrong time. Though you usually succeed in acting like a suave man of the world, everything falls apart when you are around a beautiful woman, transforming you into a graceless, babbling fool. Such failures never stop you from trying, however. One day, you might succeed.

Home: Ling Chu resides in a small apartment in North Point.

Secrets: He is a repository of secrets, including his membership in Interpol, his Khan nature, and Tiger Toranaga's cell-phone number. He also knows how to get in touch with Gao Kui, who is a Khan that lives across the bay in the New Territories.

Influence: Among Hong Kong's law-enforcement agencies, Ling Chu's influence is widespread.

Breed: Homid

Pryio: Twilight

Tribe: Khan

Nature/Demeanor: Competitor/
Gallant

Physical: Strength 4 (6/7/8/
6), Dexterity 5 (6/7/7/7),
Stamina 5 (7/8/8/8)

Social: Charisma 3,
Manipulation 2 (1/0/0/
0), Appearance 4 (3/0/
0/4)

Mental: Perception
4, Intelligence 3,
Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 4,
Athletics 4, Dodge 4,
Intimidation 3, Primal-Urge
3, Streetwise 4

Skills: Animal Ken 2,
Drive 4, Escapology 3,
Fast-Draw 2,
Firearms 4,





Leadership 3, Martial Arts
5, Melee 3, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Area
Knowledge (Hong
Kong) 5, Computer 1,
Enigmas 2,
Investigation 4, Law
3, Linguistics 2,
Rituals 2

Backgrounds: Allies
3, Contacts 3,
Resources 2, Rites 3

Gifts: (1) Cat Claws, Catfeet,
Command Attention, Lick Wounds, Razor Claws, Silent
Stalking, Skin of Jade (2) Cat Sight, First Slash, Heart of
Fury, Jam Technology, Ricepaper Walk, Sense of the
Prey, Shriek (3) Caper, Cat Fear, Gift of Rage, Ignore
Pain, Paws of the Raging Spirit Tiger, Righteous Gaze
Rage 6, Gnosis 7, Willpower 8

Rank: 3

Rites: Dedication Rite, Rite of Contrition, Speaking of
the Name, Rite of Recognition, Rite of Cleansing

Notes: More information on Ling Chu is available in
Bastet.

GAO KUI (TALL SUNFLOWER)

Background: Born in a small village north of Kowloon,
in the New Territories, Gao Kui stood out among the local
children. A full head taller than even the tallest boys in her

age group, she excelled at physical activities and considered
training as a professional athlete. Remote places and wilder-
ness regions also called to her, though. Gao Kui cajoled her
family as often as possible to take her on weekend outings,
where she dreamed of the days when the whole world was
unspoiled by the ravages of human endeavors.

When she experienced her first transformation and
learned that she belonged to the tribe of the Tiger, the
Khan, she gave up on the thought of athletic awards and
threw herself wholly into her new life. While attempting
to maintain her place in her human family was difficult,

Gao Kui bided her time until
she could strike out on her
own. Then she joyfully an-
swered the call of the
wilderness and of her true
nature.

Gao Kui works as a
nature guide and park em-
ployee at the Kam Shan
Country Park north of
Kowloon. A few careless hikers
have "gone missing" due to her culling of
the mortal population. Her nurturing side
emerges when she encounters lost children,
thus guiding them to safety with a warning to learn the ways
of nature before trusting themselves to its mercies.

Gao Kui travels throughout the Hong Kong district
when she can, sampling its natural beauty while it still has
some. She is dubious about the new regime's concern for the
serenity of nature. Kui cooperates occasionally with Ling
Chu, but the two Khan usually maintain a respectful distance
from one another.

Image: Gao Kui is 5'10", a giant by Chinese standards,
but her natural grace and poise prevent her from looking
awkward or gawky. In her early 20s, she wears her black hair
cut short to keep it out of her way. She dresses in clothes
suitable for her job as a park employee — either her uniform
or in comfortable hiking clothes.

Roleplaying Hints: What wilderness remains in Hong
Kong and the New Territories needs protecting. You do this
in two ways — by educating those who are willing to learn
and by eliminating those who aren't. Your usual cheerful
disposition can erupt into violent rage at a moment's notice.

Home: Gao Kui has an apartment in Kowloon, but she
spends as much time as she can in the park, where her Den-
Realm is located.

Secrets: She has some contact with the fire-spirit, Yao
Lie, who also visits the park to replenish his Chi.

Influence: Gao Kui has some influence among wilder-
ness-protection groups and park-management authorities.
Her good relations with Yao Lie help her in the spirit worlds.

Breed: Homid
Pryio: Daylight
Tribe: Khan
Nature/Demeanor: Predator/Director
Physical: Strength 3 (5/6/7/6), Dexterity 4 (5/6/6/7), Stamina 5 (7/8/8/8)
Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2 (1/0/0/0), Appearance 3 (2/0/0/3)
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4
Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Intimidation 1, Primal-Urge 3
Skills: Drive 1, Etiquette 2, Firearms 1, Melee 3, Repair 1, Stealth 4, Survival (wilderness) 4
Knowledges: Enigmas 3, Law 1, Linguistics 2, Medicine 2, Occult 1, Rituals 2
Backgrounds: Allies 3, Resources 2, Rites 1
Gifts: (1) Banish Sickness, Dowsing, Lick Wounds, Open Seal, Pathfinder's Pride, Razor Claws, Silent Stalking (2) Call Spirits, Cat Sight, Sense of the Prey, Shriek, Touch the Mind
Rage 4, Gnosis 6, Willpower 7
Rank: 2
Rites: Dedication Rite, Rite of Cleansing

THE ZHONG LUNG (MIDDLE DRAGONS)

The ancient dragons have long since fallen to the weight of the Ages. Even now, their slumbering forms rest beneath the earth — in the process, some say, forming the very substance of the land. Their children, the great reptiles or crocodile-people, remain active in the world and keep alive the memories of the past Ages until the time when their great sires awaken once again.

DONG TAO (MASTER OF THE CRASHING WAVES)

Background: Dong Tao has lived all his life on the water, among his Kinfolk, the Tanka boat people, who consider him a living repository of history and legends. Now nearing the end of his life, Dong Tao spends most of his time in a deep, preservative sleep, waking only occasionally to keep

an eye on his human family and to check his brood of new grandchildren for signs that one of them might have the blood of dragons.

In his youth, Tao led the fishermen of his extended family on many expeditions into the open sea, where their catch was always plentiful. Now, his years prevent him from such prolonged outings, though he sometimes accompanies his eldest grandson on short trips just to keep his hand in.

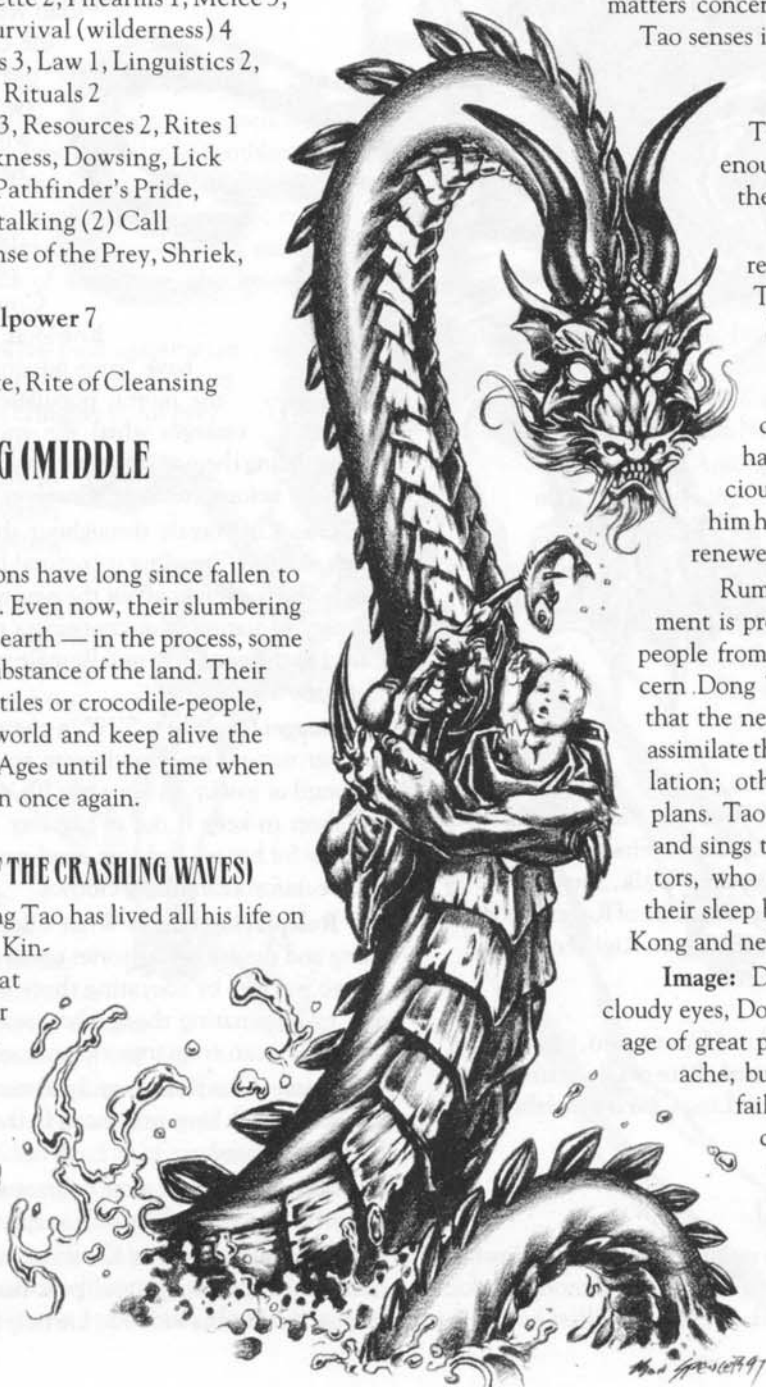
As one of the Zhong Lung, Dong Tao bears within him a prodigious ancestral memory (see **Mnesis**, below). Many of the local *shen* consult him from time to time on matters concerning the coming changes.

Tao senses in his bones the creaking of the Great Wheel as it readies itself for another turn. Tao's goal is to live long enough to witness the passing of the Ages.

On the day Hong Kong reverted to Chinese control, Tao's third granddaughter bore a son who seems to bear the marks of one of the Zhong Lung. This child, named Chao (tides), has become Tao's most precious possession, for he sees in him his legacy made real, his spirit renewed.

Rumors that the new government is preparing to force the Tanka people from their floating homes concern Dong Tao greatly. Some believe that the new administration means to assimilate the Tanka into the land population; others predict more sinister plans. Tao cradles his great-grandson and sings to him of his mighty ancestors, who even now stir uneasily in their sleep beneath the island of Hong Kong and neighboring Kowloon.

Image: Despite his silver hair and cloudy eyes, Dong Tao still projects an image of great physical strength; his bones ache, but his physique has not yet failed him despite at least a century of existence. Tao wears the customary clothes, dark and loose-fitting, of his Tanka Kinfolk. His Suchid (reptilian) form is that of a large crocodile,



while his Archid (Crinos) form resembles nothing so much as one of the dragons of legend.

Roleplaying Hints: Watch and wait; hear the Great Wheel turn. Share your stories with any who ask, so that the legends will not be forgotten and that their lessons may instruct the young ones in the coming hard times. Protect your great-grandson with your life, if necessary. Should anything happen to him, your Rage will know no bounds.

Home: Dong Tao lives aboard the sampan of his granddaughter and her husband in Aberdeen Harbor. This proximity allows him to be close to his "heir."

Secrets: Tao has been in Hong Kong for a century; a flurry of information has been passed to him through his Kinfolk. Coupled with his ancestral memories, it gives him the potential to know almost anything (Storyteller's decision).

Influence: His family, numbering in the hundreds, respects him as their elder. Many of the *shen* look up to him as well, as they honor him for his long life, memories, and connection to the "backbones of the world."

Breed: Homid

Aspect: "The Shining" (Midnight Sun)

Age: at least a century, maybe more

Nature/Demeanor: Visionary/Visionary

Physical: Strength 5 (9/7), Dexterity 3 (2/2), Stamina 5 (9/8)

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2 (0/0), Appearance 3 (0/3)

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 3, Primal-Urge 5, Swimming 5

Skills: Animal Ken (crocodiles) 4, Boating 5, Etiquette (Tanka) 4, Leadership 3, Melee 2, Performance (storytelling) 5, Stealth 3, Survival 5

Knowledge: Enigmas 4, Linguistics 2, Occult 4, Rituals 5

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Mneseis 5*

*This ability allows access to the ancestral memories of the Dragon Kings. Tao's high score enables him to "recall" events relevant to his species as far back as the Second Age.

Gifts: (1) Bellow, Talk, Cooking, Resist Pain (2) Become Log, Clap of Thunder, Tame Sunbeam, (3) Clear Mind, Dragon's Breath, Eyes of the Cobra (4) Hot Ichor, Infest (5) Song of the Great Beast, Sleep of the Dragon*, Walking Between Worlds

*This Gift allows Dong Tao to place himself in a state of limited hibernation, during which he does not age. Physical harm or excessive motion may end the sleep prematurely, but otherwise, the Sleeper remains dormant until the conditions for his Awakening (set when the Gift is invoked) are fulfilled.

Rank: 5

Rage 3, Gnosis 8, Willpower 6

Archid Characteristics: Armor (dragonlike scales, +3 soak), Horn (Str. +3, Head Butt), Huge Size (20' + in Archid form), Spikes on Tail (Str. +2, Tail Lash), Terrible Claws (Str +3 Claw)

SHUI FANG (FRAGRANT SEA)

Background: Also descended from the Dragon Kings, Shui Fang does not remember her life before her change — when she lived as a crocodile in the waters surrounding Hong Kong. She recalls the shock of her sudden transformation into human form, as well as the flood of memories connecting her to her ancient ancestors.

It is her present, however, that looms most importantly in Shui Fang's usually placid life. Finding a home among the Hoklo boat people, she spends her days operating a *kaido*, the motorized water taxi that ferries passengers to and from Kowloon or the main island and the other islands in the Hong Kong region.

Although she has no particular animosity for humans, their clutter and disregard for the purity of the waterways appall Shui Fang. She does not dare risk exposing her true nature by taking direct revenge on individuals who knowingly defile the sea and rivers, but



her contacts in the Yang World aid her in visiting punishments on those she targets as deserving of such.

Shui Fang sometimes travels by herself to one of the uninhabited islands, where she returns to her natural form and basks on the rocks, dreaming of a time before her birth. She intends to mate one day, but only when she can find a suitable male — preferably a bull crocodile. In the meantime, she learns all she can about humankind and seeks to increase her understanding of their place in the Middle Kingdom.

Image: Shui Fang is an imposing woman, large-boned and muscular (though not obese). She wears the simple clothing of her adopted Hoklo community, and conceals her short, choppy dark hair beneath a broad straw hat. Her face usually appears tranquil. Her movements are slow and measured.

Roleplaying Hints: Ask questions of the passengers you take from place to place. That is the only way you can learn about humans. Rebuke anyone you see littering the waters; if they refuse to stop, tell the water-spirits as soon as you can.

Home: Shui Fang lives among the Hoklo boat people; she also maintains several private retreats on the small islands around Hong Kong.

Secrets: She knows many things about life among the boat people, though she does not always realize the significance of her information. She also has a phenomenal knowledge of Hong Kong's outlying islands.

Influence: Her spirit contacts (particularly among water-spirits) are numerous.

Breed: Suchid (crocodile)

Aspect: "Ward" (The Setting Sun)

Age: 20s

Nature/Demeanor: Caregiver/Survivor

Physical: Strength 4 (8/6), Dexterity 4 (3/3), Stamina 5 (9/8)

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 1 (0/0), Appearance 2 (0/2)

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 2, Empathy 1, Intimidate 3, Swimming 5

Skills: Animal Ken (sea creatures) 4, Drive (*kaido*) 4, Stealth 2, Survival (ocean) 4

Knowledge: Enigmas 2, Linguistics 1, Occult 2, Rites 2,

Spirit Lore 3

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Mnesia 2, Resources 1

Gifts: (1) Bellow, Razor Claws, Cooking, Resist Pain (2) Armor of the Tortoise, Become Log, Clap of Thunder

Rank: 2

Rage 4, Gnosis 6, Willpower 7

Archid Characteristics: Back Sail (+1 soak, rear attacks only), Fins (double swimming speed), Huge Size (Sta +1, +2 damage Body Slam), Water Snorkel



NEZUMI (RATKIN)

BRIAN ANG, "EARS OF THE RAT"

Background: This wary child of the Rat-God makes his home amid the congested squalor of Mongkok. Eking out a living as a messenger for the small businesses (legal and illicit) in his neighborhood has kept him in practice for his real work — acting as a go-between and message carrier for Hong Kong's *shen*.

Born as one of a litter of rats, Brian soon adjusted to his shapechanging ability, adopting his new human and ratman forms readily. The idea of having hands that can actually grasp all the interesting stuff he has collected never ceases to amaze him.

The brash young Nezumi knows the sewer and subway systems of Hong Kong like he knows his own tail; he can travel between any two points in half the time it takes anyone else. Brian spends days at a time underground, coming up only when absolutely necessary to receive or deliver a message, or to indulge himself in visits to the many topless and karaoke bars in Mongkok and elsewhere.

A few years ago, during one of his regular "runs," Brian crossed paths with a gang of toughs who was using the sewers as a getaway route. The gang leader spotted Brian before he could get out of their path. Deciding that the young, scrawny street kid was one witness too many, the gang attacked. Although Brian could have taken any one of them alone, they were too many for him to handle all together. Praying desperately to the Rat-God of Hopeless Situations, Brian braced himself for his final battle.

Then, the heavens intervened. Seemingly out of nowhere, a misshapen hulk appeared at Brian's side. The red-eyed, long-taloned demon made short work of the remaining toughs, then picked up the badly wounded Brian and carried him to safety through the sewers. Since that time, Brian has considered the Kin-jin Clive Cooper one of his few non-Nezumi friends.

Through his association with Cooper, Brian has learned much about the *gweilo* undead and more about the nameless monsters that his Nosferatu friend fears. He has tried to reassure Cooper about the coming "Gehenna" by explaining to him the passing of the Ages, but the inevitability of the Sixth Age seems to make the Kin-jin only more nervous.

Image: Brian stands about 5'5". His muscular body and wiry legs give him a spindly, slightly out-of-proportion look. His shoulder-length black hair is shaggy and falls into his eyes unless he holds it back with a headband. Brian's habit of constantly shifting his gaze gives him the look of a man on the edge. He dresses in Western jeans and a T-shirt and usually goes barefoot.

Roleplaying Hints: Never stay in one place too long, on general principle. Stay away from the authorities — it makes no difference to you whether they are British or Chinese. Speak rapidly, punctuate your human speech with ratlike squeaks (a holdover from your days as a "normal" rat). Play hard, run hard, live smart. If the Wheel is turning, there's nothing you can do about it, so go about your business but survive.

Home: Brian has numerous boltholes (both in the physical and spirit worlds) throughout the sewer and subway systems. He shares a couple of them with Cooper.

Secrets: Brian knows where almost anything can be found. He has personally viewed many treasures long believed lost to the world.

Influence: As a Tunnel Runner, Brian has some respect from his fellow Nezumi. His value as an information broker is considerable.

Breed: Rodens

Aspect: Tunnel Runner

Nature/Demeanor: Survivor/Bon Vivant

Physical: Strength 2 (3/1), Dexterity 5 (9/7), Stamina 4 (5/6)

Social: Charisma 3 (1/0), Manipulation 4, Appearance 3 (0/3)

Mental: Perception 4 (5/8), Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 4, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Intimidation 2, Primal-Urge 2, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Crafts (subway art) 2, Melee 3, Performance (karaoke) 2, Repair 4, Stealth 4, Survival 3

Knowledges: Area Knowledge (Kowloon) 5, Area Knowledge (Hong Kong Territory) 4, Investigation 3, Linguistics 2, Medicine 1,

Occult 1, Rituals 2, Sewer/Subway Lore 5

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Kinfolk 2, Resources 1

Gifts: (1) Cloak of Shadows, Dark Sight, Shadow Throw, Smell Poison (2) Attunement, Fly-Feet

Rank: 2

Rage 3, Gnosis 4, Willpower 5

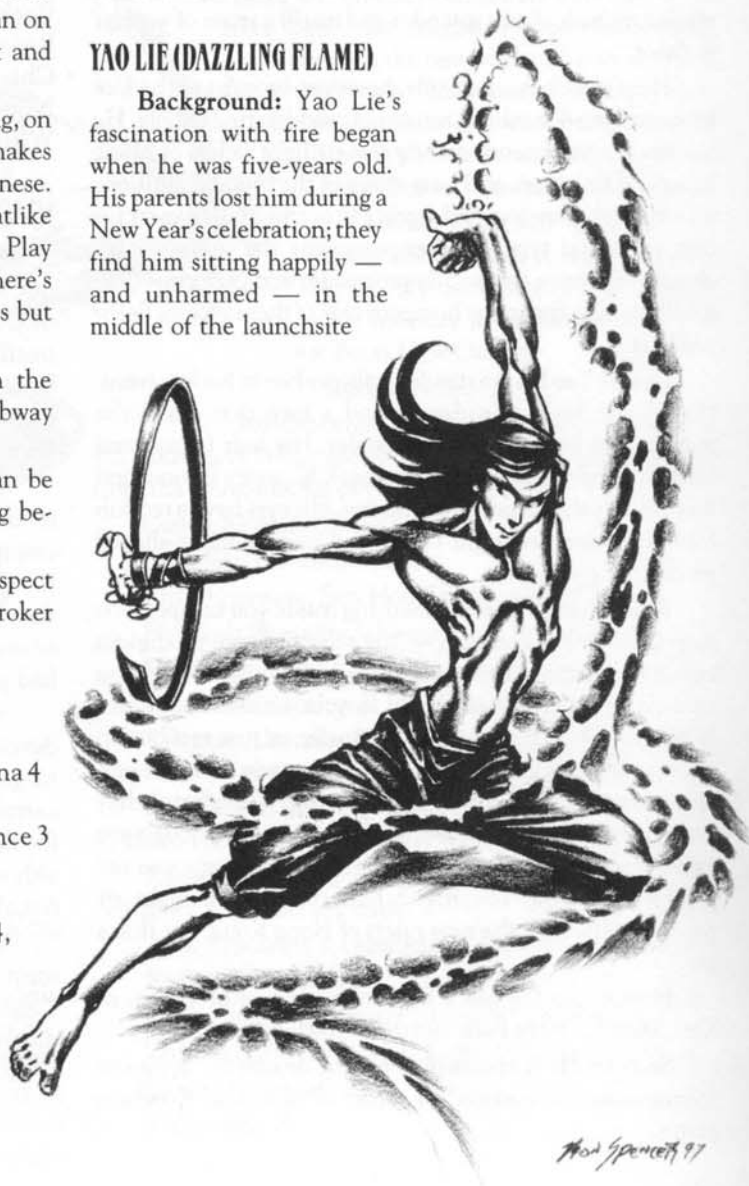
Rites: Rite of the Birthing Plague, Rite of the Bolthole

NATURE SPIRITS (THE FAE)

A host of nature spirits, children of the Xi Wang Chi (the Dreaming), exist in the wild, untouched places of Hong Kong and the New Territories. Children of the elements, trickster spirits, makers of enchantment — all find traces of Yugen (Glamour) remaining despite the changes wrought by the modern ear and its fast-paced, frenetic worldliness.

YAO LIE (DAZZLING FLAME)

Background: Yao Lie's fascination with fire began when he was five-years old. His parents lost him during a New Year's celebration; they find him sitting happily — and unharmed — in the middle of the launchsite



for the fireworks display. He was surrounded on all sides by exploding rockets and firecrackers. As he grew older, Lie studied the art of burning things: origami figures, discarded toys, his mother's antique rice-paper fan. Though his parents scolded him harshly for fear that their strange young son would set their apartment on fire or, worse, grow up to be an arsonist, Lie couldn't resist the alluring song of the flames.

His discovery, shortly before his 13th birthday, of his fire-spirit nature filled him with an explosive sense of joy. Discovered by other Chu Jung and given his duties to preserve the remnants of Xi Wang Chi (the Dreaming), Yao Lie threw himself into his new life whole-heartedly.

Yao Lie travels with a small company of spirit-folk and performs street theater and dances for the populace of Hong Kong and the New Territories. His fire-dances draw gasps of amazement from his audience. He also practices the art of fire-glazed pottery, trying to craft lasting beauty that will remind mortals of past splendor and instill a sense of wonder in them.

His nature has a dark side, however, brought to the fore by witnessing the callous actions of cold-hearted people. He has made some friends among the twilight ladies of Hong Kong and Kowloon, and he is aware of the brutal conditions under which they live and work. He occasionally exacts his own particular type of revenge against the most blatant abusers of women (especially prostitutes and performers) — usually setting fire to the homes or cars of these vicious flesh-peddlers.

Image: Yao Lie is a slender, willowy boy in his late teens. He has the body of a dancer and a face that draws the attention of both males and females. His hair is long and black (though it has red undertones); he wears it loose and flowing, like the flames he so admires. His eyes have a reddish hue. He dresses in bright colors and wears a flame-shaped pendant of red jade.

Roleplaying Hints: Something inside you compels you to frenetic bouts of activity — the source of your prodigious energy for dancing. You rarely unleash your inner fury, being content to expend it gradually in your artistic endeavors. When you do act in rage, it is usually in just retribution against the depraved actions of evil men; you seek to warm up their inner coldness so that they can feel the suffering they cause others. You enjoy making public speeches, though you care less about the topic than about the emotions you are capable of arousing. Your friends have told you this might get you in trouble with the new rulers of Hong Kong, but that's joss.

Home: Yao Lie has a lakshmi, or House of Yugen, in Kam Shan Country Park, north of Kowloon.

Secrets: He is responsible for the deaths by "apparent spontaneous combustion" of a pair of notorious Kowloon pimps.

Influence: Yao Lie is popular among other elemental spirits and enjoys the favor of most of them.

Court: Shinma (Seelie)

Legacies: Troubadour/Peacock

Kith: Kamuii, Chu Jung (Fire-Spirit)

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 4, Expression (fiery speeches), Intimidation 2, Kenning 2

Skills: Crafts (fire-glazed pottery), Etiquette 2, Firearms 2, Melee 3, Performance (dance) 3, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Enigmas 2, Linguistics 3, Mythlore 4, Occult 3

Arts: Fire Mastery (as Lure of Flames) 4, Primal 3, Soothsay 3

Realms: Actor 3, Nature 4, Scene 3

Backgrounds: Chimera 3 (fire cat), Lakshmi 2, Resources 2

Chi: Pa (Banality/Yin) 3, Yugen (Glamour/Yang) 6

Ninjo (Humanity): 6

Willpower: 5

MIAO MIN (WONDERFULLY SHARP)

Background: As a child, the boisterous Miao Min could not seem to stay out of trouble. Despite the efforts of her mother, grandmother, four aunts and three older sisters to instill in her the most rudimentary aspects of decorous behavior, Miao Min insisted on doing things her way. Her family consulted an astrologer to determine if she had been born under a curse.

The astrologer examined Miao Min, questioned her mother about her birth and consulted his scrolls before coming to a decision. He informed Miao Min's family that the child had a "monkey-spirit" living inside her, and that they — not she — were the unfortunate ones. The astrologer advised the family to resign themselves to the fact that joss had given them with an "interesting" child.

Miao Min's exuberance tapered off as she grew older and developed a greater sense of self-preservation; her mother no longer had to keep watch on her every movement to make certain she did not throw herself headlong into danger just for the excitement. In school, Miao evinced a keen mind, although her attention drifted with the wind and she could not always remember her lessons.

Miao Min experienced the true Awakening of her inner spirit when she was 13. A group of Sun Hou Tzu (Monkey Kings), attracted by the celestial clamor caused by her discovery, found her in the park where she had gone to play. Without thinking, Miao went off with these spirit-folk. She

stayed with them for almost a week and pestered them with questions and feelings. For the first time, she was among those who understood her.

She returned home elated with her newfound knowledge and discovered her family in mourning, sure that their ill-fated daughter had been kidnapped or killed — or both. Their grief turned to anger and Miao Min realized finally just how little of the real world her family could see. Their limited perception blinded them to what she was, and she could not expect them to understand or accept her for herself.

Thus began her great deception. Putting on a contrite expression, Miao bowed before her father and mother and professed a heartfelt apology. She promised that she would never again give them cause to worry.



Miao kept her promise to her family. One of the many things her new companions taught her was the joy of living a double life. Her parents saw only that she had changed; she applied herself diligently to her studies and gained admission to Hong Kong University.

With the greater freedom accorded her as a serious student, Miao Min now spends most of her time cavorting with her Sun Hou Tzu friends. At first, the group contented themselves with minor pranks on unsuspecting bystanders. Recently, however, at Miao's suggestion, their grandiose entertainments have taken a more timely and political turn. Mysterious displays of porno-

graphic wall art have started appearing near government buildings, while public monuments and statues have acquired new adornments — fake designer clothes purchased from the many tourist traps in Hong Kong.

On the evening of the takeover, Miao Min and her friends held their own public ceremony in which they ceded China to Hong Kong. They plan to continue their joking commentary on political events.

Image: Miao Min appears to be a typical college student. She is small, with delicate bone structure and an open, friendly face. Her dark hair hangs to her shoulders, with long bangs hiding her wide forehead. She prefers casual clothes that allow her freedom of movement, as she detests standing still for more than a few minutes at a time.

Roleplaying Hints: Stagnation and seriousness cause most of the world's ills. Your purpose in life is to make war on both conditions. People need to have their most cherished beliefs challenged, and humor is the best way to do it and survive (you hope). Keep both your faces (your serious face and your monkey face) close at all times; you never know when you will need to make a quick change.

Home: Miao Min lives with her family not far from Hong Kong University. She also shares a lakshmi with other Monkey Kings in the middle of Aw Boon Haw Garden.

Secrets: None.

Influence: Miao Min has many friends among the students of HKU; she also garners a great deal of respect from the spirit-folk for her elaborate pranks.

Court: Shinma (Seelie)

Legacies: Troubadour/Fool

Kith: Hirayanu, Sun Hou Tzu (Monkey King)

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 1, Dodge 4, Empathy 1, Kenning 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Crafts (wall art) 2, Drive 1, Etiquette 2, Leadership 2, Melee 1, Performance (acting) 4, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Enigmas 3, Investigation 1, Linguistics 2, Mythlore 3, Occult 1, Politics 3

Arts: Chicanery 4, Legerdemain 3, Soothsay 3, Wayfare 2

Realms: Actor 4, Fae 2, Prop 3, Scene 3

Backgrounds: Dreamers (students) 3, Resources 2

Chi: Pa (Banality/Yin) 3, Yugen (Glamour/Yang) 7

Ninjo (Humanity): 7

Willpower: 8

BIAN TU (DISCRIMINATING PURSUIT)

Background: From his father, Bian Tu learned the art of carving wood, from simple bamboo flutes to intricate puzzle boxes. Soon his talent outstripped his father's, and Bian Tu began setting impossible challenges for himself, fashioning pieces of such great delicacy and subtlety that it seemed as though he were carving the air itself.

When Bian Tu was 14, his father died. The boy inherited the business and set about making some long-desired changes. Bian Tu stopped producing the easily made wooden trinkets and curios favored by the *gweilo* tourists; instead, he concentrated on refining his technique by crafting elaborate screens from paper-thin sheets of teak and mahogany. His work drew the admiration of browsers who came into his shop, but there were no buyers for the oddly shaped, almost intangible pieces.

Bian Tu lost money; eventually, unable to pay his squeeze money, he ran afoul of the local triads who warned him that he must come up with his "contribution" or face the consequences.

The night before the payment was due, Bian Tu had a strange visitor. An old man dressed in archaic clothes entered his shop just before closing and handed the young woodcarver a piece of wood unlike anything he had ever seen. "Seek the form hiding within," the man intoned, "and all will be well." The old man left without another word.

Bian Tu spent the night in a fever of work. As he concentrated on the elusive slab of translucent, fine-grained wood, the world around him seemed to shift in and out of focus. Bian Tu thought he heard voices singing from within the wood, and he worked furiously to free the spirits he was sure were trapped within it. Finally, he lost consciousness and fell to the floor — his hands still gripping the tools of his trade.

When he woke, the wood had disappeared. In its place was a figure of a blue jade dragon — and

Bian Tu realized that what he had been carving was himself. He had Awakened the Chu-ih-yu spirit within him, and his life was never the same.

The collector for the triad came to visit Bian Tu the next morning to thank him for his payment. Bian Tu said nothing, not daring to question his joss. He never saw the strange old man again, but the dragon figure enjoys a prominent place above his front door.

Soon after his Awakening, Bian Tu received a new clientele. *Shen* from all over Hong Kong came to him and requested fine weapons and other items.

Bian Tu's business once again prospered, more so because he no longer had the need to purchase large amounts of wood for his carving, since the materials he used came from within the Dreaming.

In the last few months, Bian Tu has noticed a great demand for serious weaponry, as if the spirit-folk were preparing themselves for a great conflict. He senses that the Sixth Age is about to dawn.

Image: Bian Tu appears older than his actual years (mid-20s), because of his stooped posture from years of leaning over his workbench. His dark hair is long and tied back away from his face, which is marked with lines of worry. He wears a large apron over his clothes, though he rarely has to worry about woodshavings anymore.

Roleplaying Hints: You are happiest when you are working, but your joy is tempered by the knowledge that war — celestial war — looms on the horizon. Your speech is clipped, and you pay less attention to conversation than to what your hands are doing.

Home: Bian Tu's shop is in Hong Kong's Western District. His *lakshmi* lies in back of the shop, in a small enclosed garden just big enough for him.

Secrets: He senses a great influx of Chi-charged items in the area.

Influence: Bian Tu enjoys great respect among the spirit-folk because of his skill in producing the items they request.

Court: Shinma (Seelie)

Legacies: Crafter/Riddler

Kith: Chu-ih-yu

Physical: Strength 3,
Dexterity 5, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2,
Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4,



Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Kenning 4, Streetwise 1

Skills: Crafts (wood-carving) 5, Crafts (metallurgy) 4, Drive 1, Etiquette 2, Melee 3, Security 3, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Enigmas 2, Linguistics 2, Mythlore 2, Occult 3

Arts: Chicanery 4, Legerdemain 3, Primal 4

Realms: Nature 3, Prop 5

Backgrounds: Lakshmi 1, Mentor (the old man) 4, Resources 1, Treasures (katana) 3

Chi: Pa (Banality/Yin) 5, Yugen (Glamour/Yang) 7

Ninjo (Humanity): 8

Willpower: 8

CREATURES OF THE YIN WORLD

The forces of entropy and death also have their proponents in Hong Kong. Wraiths from the Dark Kingdom of Jade share the land with a few Stygian adherents. The uneasy face-off between the Eastern and Western worlds of the dead has yet to erupt into direct conflict, but there are some who say that the time for battle is not far off.

NECROPOLIS HONG KONG

The uneasy relationship between East and West reaches its apex in Hong Kong. Although part of the Dark Kingdom of Jade, Western wraiths allied with Stygia also reside here. An agreement between the emperor and Stygia formerly ceded the souls of Westerners to Hierarchy control, but numerous breaches occur yearly. Since the reversion of Hong Kong to China, this arrangement is up for renegotiation, and many wraiths believe that the emperor will now assert his dominion over all who die in this corner of the Middle Kingdom.

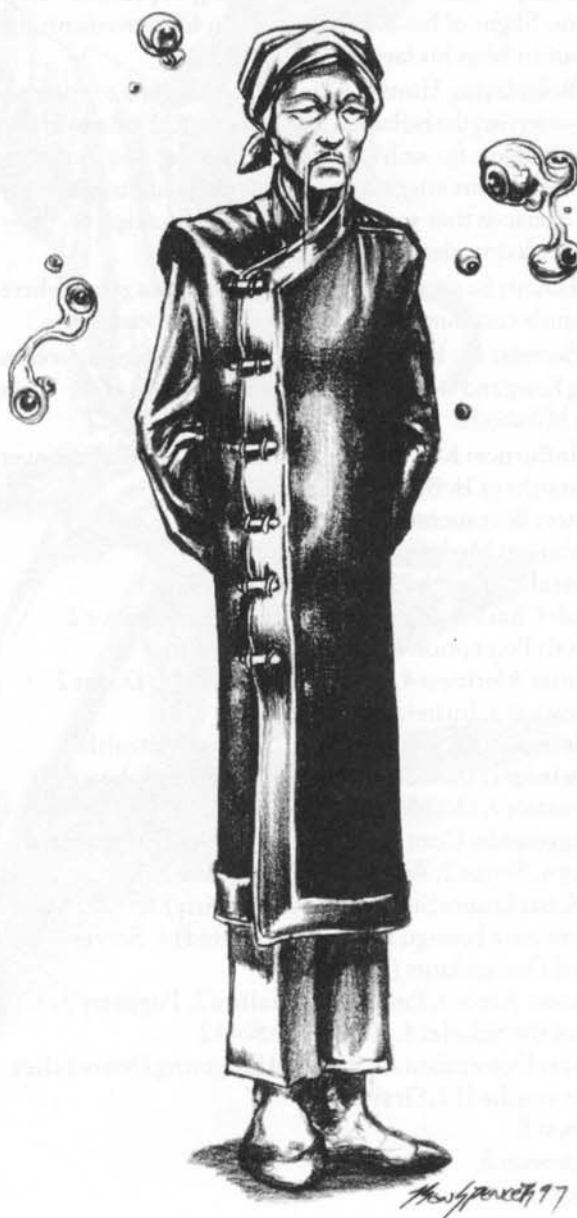
The wraiths of Hong Kong's Necropolis enjoy strong ties with their mortal families. Celebrations and holidays such as the Dragon Boat Festival, the Ching Ming Festival and the Festival of Hungry Ghosts honor the dead throughout the year, while most families maintain the graves of their ancestors regularly.

KUN SU (RESPECTFUL ELDER BROTHER), "PROTECTOR OF HONG KONG"

Background: In his lifetime, Kun Su served as compradore for one of the British merchant houses. Although he fulfilled his duties admirably, he harbored a lingering resentment of the usurping barbarian devils. Forced to walk a thin line between his duty to the merchant house and his desire to see the foreigners driven from the Middle Kingdom, Su involved himself in clandestine triad activities.

The strain of his conflicting urges fractured his inner harmony, which led Su to make unwise decisions concerning his personal safety. He seemed to court death by deliberately placing himself in its path whenever he could. One evening, he left the safety of his home to wander the most disreputable streets of the city. Soldiers discovered his battered body in an alley behind a notorious opium house, apparently the victim of one too many risks. Out of respect for his social standing, the authorities covered up the cause of Su's death, calling him a victim of "misadventure."

Incorporated into the society of the Yellow Springs, Su began to seek the harmony he had lost once more. His superiors recognized his natural capacity for organization, and Kun Su soon achieved the position of Protector of Hong Kong.



As administrator for the Necropolis, Kun Su oversees the loyalty of the wraiths within his Protectorate, scrupulously monitoring any contacts his subjects have with Stygian wraiths. The end of British rule in Hong Kong filled him with great joy; he hopes to see Hong Kong's importance to the Dark Kingdom of Jade increase with the waning of Western influence.

He is keenly aware of the threat still posed by the Westerners who remain, particularly the attempts of the Kin-jin Oliver Thrace to bind the spirits of the dead to his will. The thwarting of Thrace's nefarious schemes is Kun Su's top priority.

Image: Kun Su appears as a 19th-century Chinese aristocrat, dressing in fine clothing and bearing himself with the dignity of his office. His dark eyes assess his surroundings constantly, while his hard, unforgiving expression rarely softens. Slight of build, though agile in his movements, he appears to be in his late 40s.

Roleplaying Hints: In life, you were forced to compromise—serving the barbarian while longing for his destruction. Now you have no such constraints. Exercise your authority with meticulous attention to detail; your duty to your subjects demands that you protect them from foreign devils—whether living, dead, or undead.

Haunt: Su spends most of his time near his grave, where his family continues to observe rituals of remembrance.

Secrets: He knows most of the mundane goings-on in Hong Kong and is aware of the subtle incursions of the Yama King Mikaboshi.

Influence: Kun Su enjoys a great deal of influence over the wraiths of Hong Kong.

Nature: Bureaucrat

Demeanor: Mediator

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 4, Awareness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Expression 3, Intimidation 3

Skills: Etiquette 4, Leadership 2, Melee 2, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 4, Investigation 3, Law 4, Linguistics 3, Occult 2, Politics 3

Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Living Family 2, Magisterial Office 4, Status 2, Wealth 3, Wraith Family 3

Passions: Ensure Subjects' Loyalty (Duty) 3, Exterminate Foreign Influences (Hatred) 4, Serve Mortal Descendants (Love) 2

Arcanoi: Argos 3, Embodiment 2, Fatalism 2, Puppetry 3, Way of the Scholar 4, Way of the Soul 2

Fetters: Descendants 3, Street of Lingering Desire (alley where you died) 2, Gravesite 3

Corpus: 8

Willpower: 8

Pathos: 7

P'o: The Perfectionist

Angst: 6

Thorns: Bad Luck

Dark Passions: Undermine Subjects' Loyalty (Deceit) 3, Protect Foreigners (Treason) 2, Seek Oblivion (Self-Hate) 2

DA NAN (DISTINGUISHED ONE)

Background: As the first mate aboard the 19th-century pirate ship commanded by Lang Shan, Da Nan was the only crew member to know that the fearless captain was a woman. Serving as both Lang Shan's lover and her second-in-command, Da Nan guarded her secret closely, especially from the British authorities who had put a price on the notorious pirate's head.

When a huge naval force attacked and overwhelmed their vessel, Da Nan fought desperately until he saw that defeat was inevitable. Rather than be taken alive, he threw himself into the sea, hoping that Lang Shan would do likewise.

He found himself in the Dark Kingdom of Jade, drawn to the vicinity of Hong Kong because of his many Fetters to that region of the Yellow Springs. As an assistant to the Protector of the Hong Kong outpost, Da Nan's duties include making certain the Stygian wraiths remain in their own section of the main island and preventing them from laying claim to souls that belong to the Jade Emperor. Of course, Da Nan is not above practicing a little "piracy" upon the *gweilo* whenever he has the opportunity.

Not long after his arrival in the Yellow Springs, Da Nan discovered that his strongest Fetter was, in fact, his lover Lang Shan, who had become one of the Kuei-jin. Despite his efforts to contact her, she remains blind to his existence. Her ignorance of his nearness drives Da Nan into fits of despair.

When not occupied with his administrative duties, Da Nan plies the western coast of Hong Kong in a ghostly vessel—the battered remains of his sunken pirate ship. In his more compassionate moments, he sometimes guides endangered ships to safety, whispering words of warning in the minds of their pilots.

Da Nan recently witnessed the landing of a small, unidentified boat in a secluded cove on Hong Kong's western shore during one of his midnight patrols along the coast. The cargo smuggled ashore by the crew radiated destructive energies, and Da Nan sensed a malicious intelligence surrounding the mysterious package. What it bodes for his portion of the Yellow Springs he does not know, but he feels compelled to warn someone in the Middle Kingdom of the dangerous Chi energies about to be loosed in the world.

Image: Da Nan appears in death much as he did in life — as a brawny Chinese pirate of the late 19th century. His weathered face is tinged with the gray of a drowning victim, though he bears no other marks of his death.

Roleplaying Hints: Although you spend much of your time on land, you are a man of the open sea and prefer sailing the “waters” of the Yellow Springs in your ghost ship. You speak rarely; instead, you encourage others to speak, and you listen carefully to what they say. Thus, you acquire useful knowledge.

Haunt: Da Nan’s Haunt is the old cove where his pirate ship is sometimes docked, on the western side of Hong Kong Island.

Secrets: He is witness to much of the smuggling traffic in the waters of the South China Sea.

Influence: Da Nan has moderate influence among the wraiths of Necropolis Hong Kong.

Nature: Confidant

Demeanor: Gallant

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Empathy 1, Intimidation 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Boating 4, Crafts (wood-carving) 2, Etiquette 2, Repair 4, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Area Lore (South China Sea) 3, Enigmas 1, Law 1, Linguistics 1, Medicine 2, Occult 2

Backgrounds: Magisterial Office 1, Resources 2, Wraith Family 2

Passions: Reunite with Lang Shan (Love) 4, Harass the Gweilo (Revenge) 2, Protect Sea Travelers (Compassion) 1, Serve the Jade Emperor (Loyalty) 2, Perform Assigned Tasks (Duty) 1

Arcanoi: Argos 3, Embody 1, Puppetry 2, Way of the Soul 2

Fetters: Lang Shan 4, Deathsite (underwater) 2, Favorite Docking Site on Western Shore of Island 2, Wooden Carving Given to Lang Shan as Present (now in a museum) 2

Willpower: 7

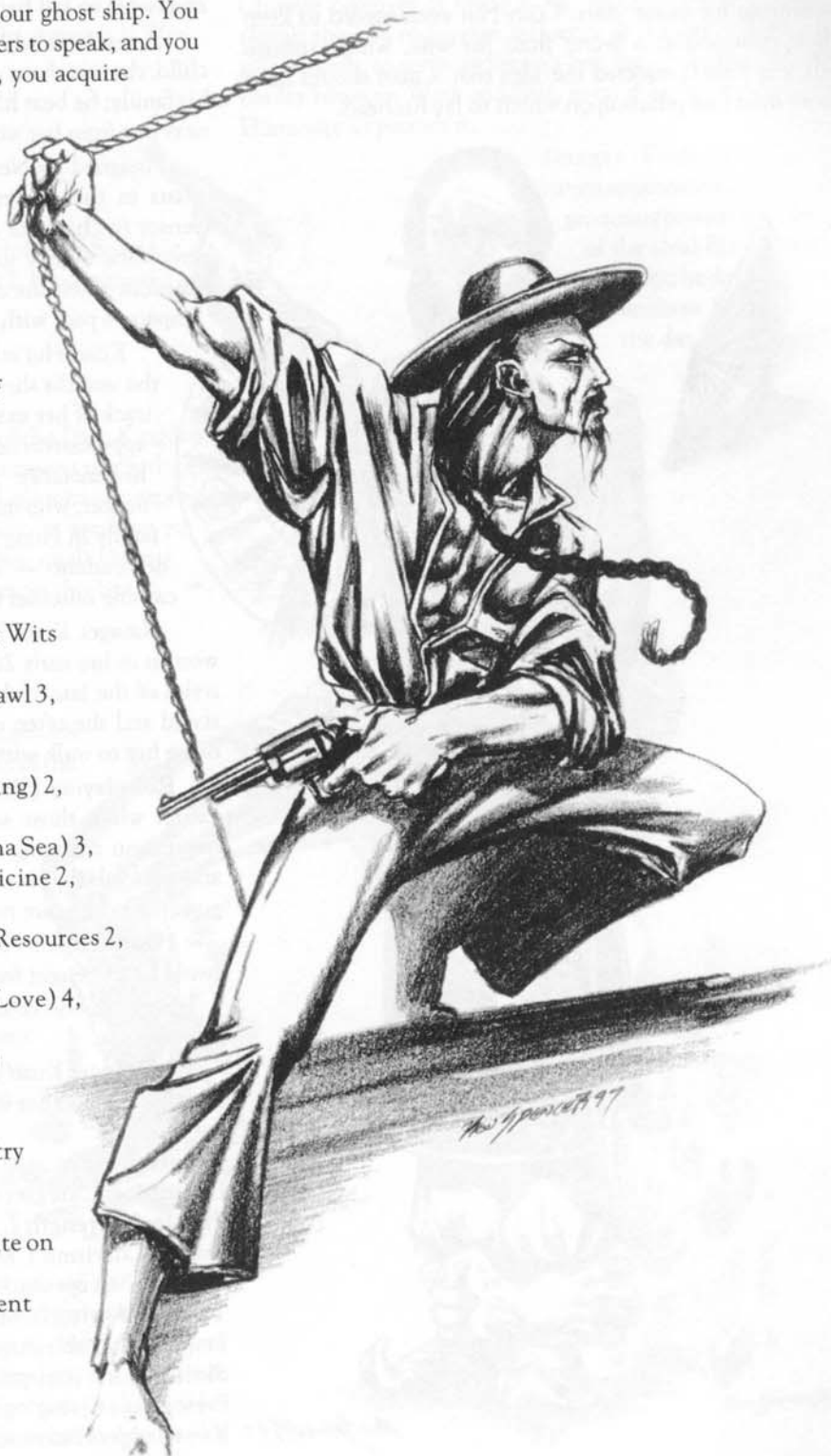
Pathos: 6

P’o: The Beast

Angst: 5

Thorns: Trick of the Light

Dark Passions: Lure Ships into Danger (Deceit) 1, Destroy Lang Shan (Twisted Love) 2, Shirk Your Duties (Sloth) 2, Help the Gweilo (Treason) 2



KUAN HUI (HAPPY ORCHID)

Background: Always a dutiful daughter, Kuan Hui complied with her father's wishes and became a concubine to the rich *gweilo* shipping merchant whose business interests her family handled. Though she detested her barbarian master's uncivilized ways and unclean habits, she suffered his attentions for many years. Kuan Hui even agreed to keep their relationship a secret from his wife, whose strange religious beliefs rejected the idea that a man should have more than one pillow upon which to lay his head.



When she bore a son to her British merchant, Kuan Hui thought he would rejoice. Instead, he grew angry, calling her irresponsible and refusing to acknowledge the "bastard" or provide for him in any way. Kuan Hui was forced to give the child to her family, who raised the boy as their own. Kuan Hui's master forbade her to have any contact with the child and swore to kill her if she became pregnant again.

A year later, when his wife died giving birth to a stillborn child, the merchant accused Kuan Hui of placing a curse on his family; he beat his mistress so savagely that she died the next day from her wounds.

Assigned to Necropolis Hong Kong, Kuan Hui now assists in the administration of the outpost, acting as a Censor in charge of reaping new wraiths for the Jade Emperor. She enjoys stealing barbarian wraiths for the Jade Kingdom when she can, even though she realizes that the emperor's pact with Stygia forbids this practice.

Kuan Hui still searches for her missing son among the wraiths she encounters in Hong Kong. She keeps track of her extended family in the mortal world and appreciates the attentions they pay to her grave and to her memory. Her hatred of her former barbarian master, who married a second time and raised a large family in Hong Kong, has driven her to persecute his descendants — haunting their house in Aberdeen and causing mischief for them whenever she can.

Image: Kuan Hui appears as an attractive Chinese woman in her early 20s. She dresses in traditional women's styles of the late 19th century; her dark hair is elaborately styled and she often carries an ornate fan. Her bound feet cause her to walk with a delicate, mincing step.

Roleplaying Hints: You are a gentle Reaper of souls, except when those souls belong to barbarians; then you become an avenging demon. You were trained to be meek and graceful; that is still part of you, but now you have real power. And you are not afraid to use it.

Haunt: Kuan Hui stays near the residence that her *gweilo* lover bought for her and in which she died.

Secrets: She conceals her smuggling of souls from her superiors.

Influence: Kuan Hui enjoys power over newly arrived wraiths. She also has some influence over her living descendants.

Nature: Martyr

Demeanor: Caregiver

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Crafts (fan-painting) 2, Etiquette 4, Melee 1, Performance (singing) 3, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 2, Enigmas 2, Linguistics 2,

Occult 3

Backgrounds: Living Family 2, Magisterial Office 1, Resources 2, Wraith Family 1

Passions: Find Lost Son (Love) 3, Cause Harm to Former Master's Family (Hatred) 2, Perform Assigned Duties (Loyalty) 1, Capture Barbarian Wraiths for Jade Empire (Revenge) 2

Arcanoi: Argos 2, Lifeweb 3, Way of the Artisan 2, Way of the Farmer 3, Way of the Soul 3

Willpower: 7

Pathos: 7

P'o: The Martyr

Angst: 6

Thorns: Shadowed Face

Dark Passions: Cause Harm to Descendants (Spite) 3, Help Barbarian Wraiths (Betrayal) 2, Undermine Superiors' Authority (Rebellion) 1

STYGIAN WRAITHS

Despite its position as an outpost of the Dark Kingdom of Jade, Necropolis Hong Kong also maintains ties with the Stygian Underworld. A contingent of Legionnaires, representative of all the Legions, maintains a garrison in Stanley Village, as well as several other small Haunts scattered throughout the island and across the bay in Kowloon.

DUNCAN GORDON, "THE SENTRY"

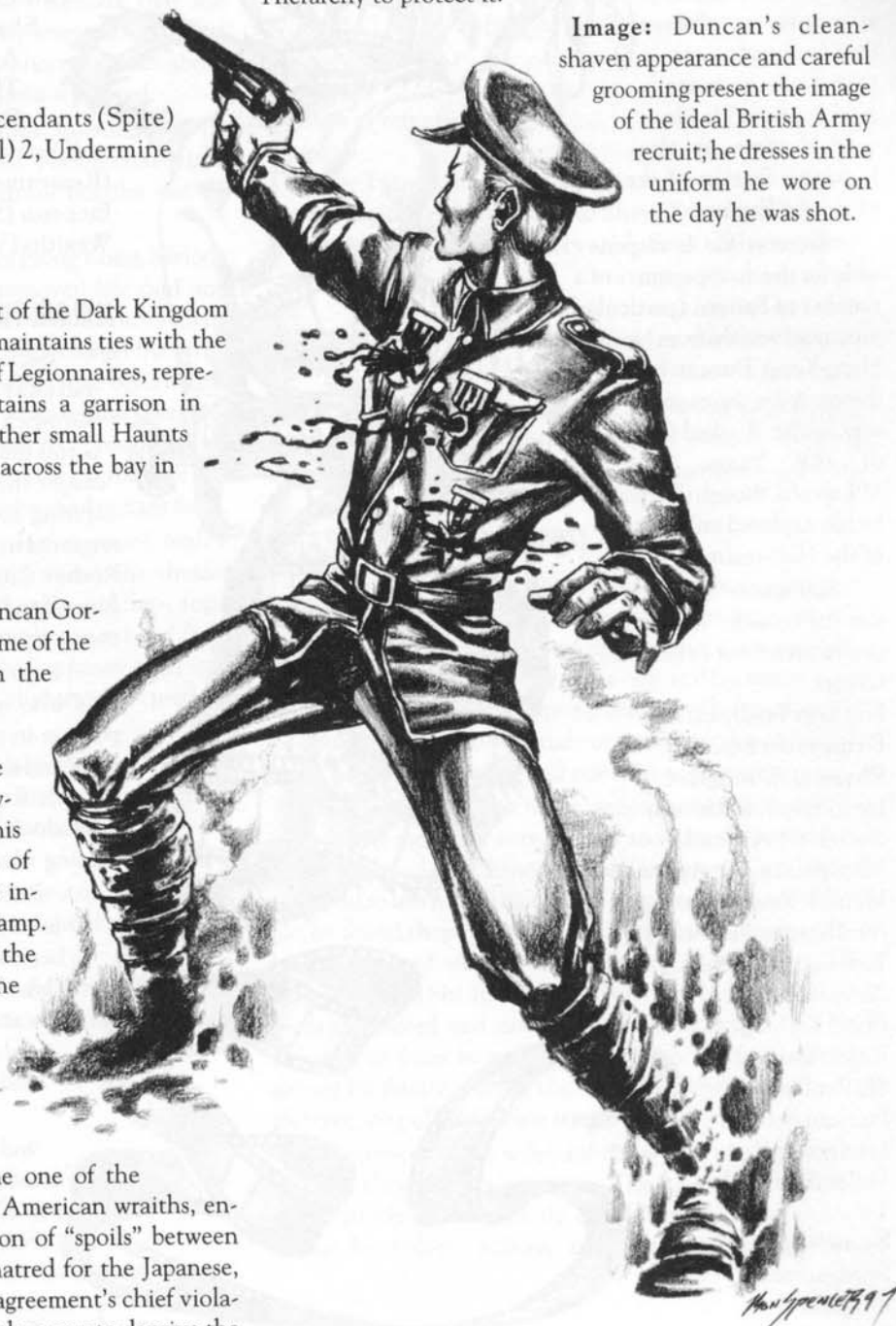
Background: Lance Corporal Duncan Gordon, stationed in Hong Kong at the time of the Japanese invasion in 1941, died in the attack on the Repulse Bay Hotel, the headquarters of British troops on the island. Reaped by a member of the Grim Legion, Duncan watched in growing horror from the Shadowlands as his comrades-in-arms fell to the rifles of their executioners or languished as inmates in the Stanley Internment Camp. Duncan was inducted quickly into the army of the Smiling Lord and spent the duration of the war battling the forces of the Jade Emperor over the souls of European soldiers and civilians, who were now arriving regularly into the Necropolis.

After the war, Duncan became one of the fiercest protectors of European and American wraiths, enforcing rigidly the reinstated division of "spoils" between Stygia and the Jade Emperor. His hatred for the Japanese, however, also made him one of the agreement's chief violators. Duncan has done his best over the years to deprive the

Dark Kingdom of Jade of as many potential servants as possible, either by sending Enfants straight to Oblivion or by Moliating their features to disguise them as Europeans and smuggling them aboard the Midnight Express bound for Stygia.

For the last 10 years, Duncan has prepared for the Chinese takeover of Hong Kong, realizing that this event signals the end of Stygian influence in the Necropolis. He stands ready to serve as Stygia's last line of defense on the border between West and East, even if he has to defy the Hierarchy to protect it.

Image: Duncan's clean-shaven appearance and careful grooming present the image of the ideal British Army recruit; he dresses in the uniform he wore on the day he was shot.



Roleplaying Hints: Despite the overt "peace" in the Skinlands, you know that a state of war continues to exist in Hong Kong. Your duty lies is to protect Western wraiths from slavery to the Jade Emperor. Behave with the outward propriety your uniform and standing demand; take any opportunity to weaken the ranks of the enemy.

Haunt: The ruins of the Repulse Bay Hotel, a solid structure in the Shadowlands, are Duncan's primary resting place. He also spends time at the Kowloon Station of the Midnight Express.

Secrets: He is responsible for the disappearance of a number of Eastern (particularly Japanese) wraiths from Necropolis Hong Kong. Duncan has discovered a secret gateway to the Wicked City of the Yama King Mikaboshi, though thus far, he has explored only a little of the Hell-realm.

Influence: The Stygian wraiths consider Duncan as one of their most valued protectors.

Nature: Traditionalist

Demeanor: Director

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Intimidation 2

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

Knowledges:

Bureaucracy 1, Enigmas 1,

Investigation 3, Linguistics 1, Occult 2, Politics 2

Backgrounds: Haunt 2, Memoriam 1, Status 3

Passions: Defend Stygian Wraiths (Devotion) 4, Destroy the Jade Kingdom (Hatred) 3, Obey Your Commander (Duty) 2

Arcanoi: Argos 4, Inhabit 1, Moliat 3, Outrage 3, Puppetry 2, Usury 3

Fetters: Deathsite 2, Stanley Military Cemetery 2, Stanley Prison 3

Willpower: 7

Pathos: 6

Shadow: The Martyr

Angst: 5

Thorns: Tainted Relic (pistol) 2

Dark Passions: Betray Stygia (Deceit) 2, Undermine Your Superiors (Resentment), Surrender to the Jade Emperor (Self-Hate) 1, Destroy Eastern Wraiths (Vengeance) 1

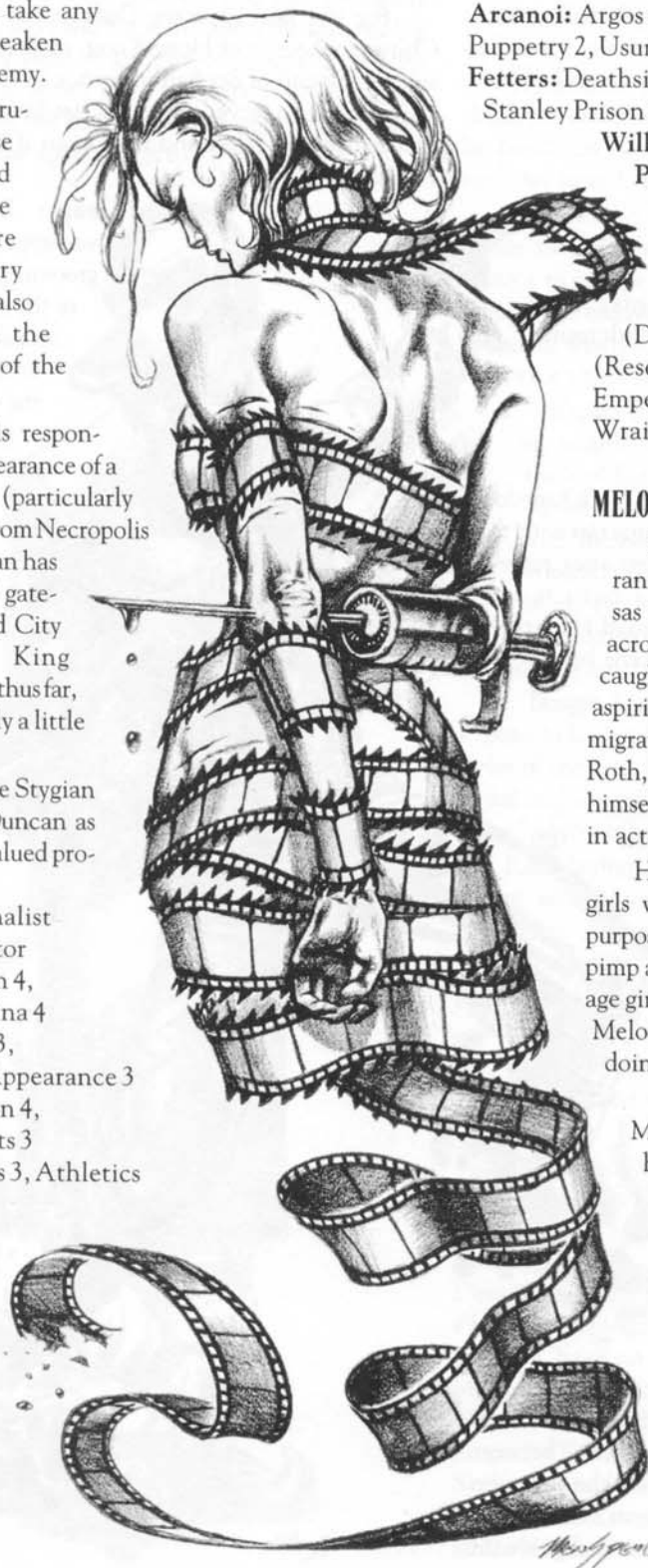
MELODY TRELAWNY, "THE RUNAWAY"

Background: Naturally rebellious, Melody ran away from her upper-class home in Arkansas when she was 14 and hitchhiked her way across the country to San Francisco, where she caught the tail end of the summer of love. An aspiring model, actress and even groupie, she migrated to Los Angeles. There she encountered Roth, a dangerously handsome man who called himself an "agent" and promised Melody a career in acting.

He put her in an apartment with four other girls who quickly told Melody of Roth's real purpose in taking her under his wing. He was a pimp and she had just joined his stable of underage girls. Roth introduced her to drugs, and soon Melody depended on him for her daily fix — doing what she had to do to get it.

Roth announced he had bigger plans for Melody when she turned 16. He introduced her to a Mr. Fong, who spoke with her briefly before indicating to Roth that he was satisfied with her. It took Melody only a few moments to realize that she had just been sold.

Mr. Fong took her to Hong Kong and presented her to the world of X-rated films. To her chagrin, Melody had achieved her dreams of celluloid fame. She looked frantically for a way out of the morass into which she had descended; she tried running



away, but Mr. Fong's hired goons caught her and several days of painful repercussions convinced her that escape was futile. Melody began to sabotage her film scenes. Exasperated, Mr. Fong told her that he no longer needed her services, but that he had another client who would appreciate her special talents even more.

When Melody arrived at the home of Qian Shi, she realized that she had reached the bottom of the abyss. Her "patron" introduced her to a whole new world of perversity, one she knew she would not survive. After Qian Shi had completed her "training," he informed Melody that she would star in her very own film. Melody knew exactly what he was talking about — she had heard horror stories about the snuff trade, but had refused to believe it existed.

Qian Shi denied her pleas for drugs, insisting that he wanted to capture her genuine reactions. The film took eight hours to make; Melody lived through all but the last 15 minutes.

Awakening in the Shadowlands of Hong Kong, Melody encountered Duncan Gordon, who removed her caul and introduced her to her new existence as a wraith. Although he has never taken advantage of her, she cannot forget the other patrons and protectors and sponsors who came before him. She suspects Duncan of some hidden purpose and spends as much time as she can distancing herself from him. Melody instead seeks out young girls and tries to warn them of the dangers they face in looking for easy money and instant fame.

Image: Melody is a pretty American teenager, with a slim body and a winsomely attractive face. She dresses provocatively in tight-fitting, short skirts and skimpy tops. Her sandy-blond hair falls in loose curls around her face, giving her expression an innocence she lost many years ago. Her eyes are green and usually look slightly unfocused, as though her thoughts are elsewhere.

Roleplaying Hints: Never trust any man again, ever. You were stupid when you were alive; surely you've learned something since your death. "Don't touch me!" is your favorite expression. Use it a lot.

Haunt: Melody stays most of the time in Hong Kong; she "reports" to Duncan now and then so he won't come looking for her.

Secrets: She knows the location of Qian Shi's private abode (see below), as well as the identities of the vice trade's chief movers and shakers.

Influence: None.

Nature: Rebel

Demeanor: Rebel

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Talents: Acting 1, Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 1,

Dodge 3, Empathy 4, Seduction 4, Streetwise 3

Skills: Etiquette 2, Melee 1, Performance (dancing) 4, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Enigmas 2, Law 1, Linguistics 1, Occult 2

Backgrounds: Eidolon 1, Mentor (Duncan Gordon) 2, Resources 1

Passions: Protect Other Victims (Determination) 4, Avenge Your Murder (Vengeance) 3, Retain Your Freedom (Desire) 3

Arcanoi: Argos 1, Embody 2, Inhabit 2, Keening 2, Outrage 3, Usury 2

Fetters: Snuff Film 3, Deathsite 2, Apartment in Wanchai 2, Alley (where her body was dumped) 1

Willpower: 6

Pathos: 7

Shadow: Perfectionist

Angst: 5

Thorns: Tainted Relic (needle)

Dark Passions: Lead Others to Share Your Fate (Misery) 2, Run Away from Gordon (Fear) 3, Seek Oblivion (Self-Destruction) 1

INDEPENDENTS

A few *shen* have deviated from their tribe, kith or group. Some of these have given themselves over to dark and destructive forces. Others pursue purely personal ambitions.

QIAN SHI (A THOUSAND SEEDS)

Background: When Qian Shi realized that he belonged to the *hengeyokai* spider-people, his heart rejoiced. The patient ways of the spider and its potential for ruthlessness and viciousness fascinated him as a boy, as if his true self were already calling to him. Following the pull of his inner nature, he applied himself to the study of poisons and restricted his mind to patient thought and meticulous planning.

Hong Kong had just fallen under British dominion, and Shi's family members were brokers and liaisons between the conquerors and the Chinese merchant houses. Qian Shi was expected to learn skills suitable to his place in the household, but he found those practices boring and demeaning. When his parents and siblings chided him for unruly or willful behavior, Qian Shi did nothing at first, but he began planting seeds of discord and distrust in their hearts. It took him almost four years to erode the ties of honor and affection among his family. And at the completion of his methodical plotting, he pulled a single strand of his vengeful web.

Convinced of his wife's infidelity, Shi's father slew her and her alleged lover in a rage. The lover was actually an innocent friend of the family. Shi's oldest brother was horrified at his father's actions, knowing that his mother was

innocent, and defied his father — calling him a murderer and threatening to take him to the police. Shi's remorseful father killed himself in front of this eldest son.

The next brother, hearing of his parents' deaths, refused to believe the circumstances and accused his brother of orchestrating the tragedy. The two brothers fought, fatally wounding each other with knives that were poisoned by Shi in anticipation of this outcome. Left with only his sisters, brothers-in-law, his brothers' young widows, and his many nieces and nephews, Shi enacted the second phase of his grand scheme.

Over the next month, Shi's brothers-in-law fell deeply into debt and drew the wrath of the local triads (whom Shi had been cultivating throughout his planning phase). After the mysterious disappearances of Shi's sisters' husbands, Shi himself stepped in to clean up the remains. He sold his sisters and sisters-in-law to brothels throughout Hong Kong and as far as Shanghai and Macao, then he imprisoned his nieces and nephews in an underground tunnel that he had prepared for them. Mutilating them so that they could not escape, Shi fed on their fresh young blood for several years and discarded the bloodless husks as they died, one by one, from neglect.

abuse and blood loss. Shi kept only his favorite niece, a delicate-looking girl-child named Qian Jing (Thousand Crystals). He preserved her beauty, though he severed her hamstrings to appease his other hungers. When she died, Shi acquired a replacement, whom he also named Jing; he has worked his way through six of these pleasure-pets and is now on his seventh "Jing."

Free of his family (except as a food supply), Qian Shi has cultivated ties with the triads, who know him only as "Our Benefactor." He has grown extremely wealthy through his participation in the opium and prostitution trades, and he specializes in acquiring and training girls and boys for "special" clients — including the snuff trade. Shi's knowledge of poisons has brought him into contact with local apothecaries and alchemists; he has managed to amass a small hoard of magical artifacts over the years that have extended his life far beyond its normal span. In spite of his innate hatred of the *gweilo shen*, Shi has active ties with the Kin-jin Oliver Thrace and supplies him with rare types of blood and sells him bits and pieces of information regarding the spirits of the dead (much of which is blatantly, but unprovably, false).

The changeover does not concern Qian Shi; he has hidden from the foreign overlords for more than a century and does not expect the new people in power to present him with much of a challenge. He has ensnared some of them already into his web of bribes and depravity, catering to their basest desires.

Image: Qian Shi's Homid form resembles a Cantonese man in his prime (mid-30s). Although he is not handsome by any means, he can appear strangely seductive when he wishes. He dresses conservatively, so as not to call attention to himself. In his own lair, Shi prefers to wear mandarin-style robes of dark silk and other luxurious materials. His Lilian (or man-spider form) stands seven-feet tall, and is covered with a coat of fine velvety-black hairs. His six arms and two legs give him great mobility and multiple attack capability. In Pithus (or Pit Spi-



der) form, Shi becomes a gigantic (five-foot long) black spider, with all its attendant capabilities. He assumes Crawlerling form (in which his body breaks down into hundreds of tiny black spiders) only for purposes of escape or espionage.

Roleplaying Hints: The spider-spirits have blessed you with their likeness and you intend to make the best use of your special powers. You think in complex patterns, sensing the diverging strands of joss and turning them to your advantage. Young blood appeases your hunger, and the prolonged agonies of your helpless victims sate your lust. You particularly enjoy watching the faces of the tender creatures you sell to the makers of snuff films. The moment of discovery, in which the "stars" of these films realize the terminal brevity of their moment of fame, fills you with an unending sense of satisfaction and repletion. You covet anything magical that can prolong your life, for you intend to live well into the Sixth Age, which promises an orgy of blood you are determined not to miss.

Home: Qian Shi maintains an elaborate underground home beneath Victoria Peak, which is accessible only through a complex labyrinth of secret tunnels branching off from the MTR line or through the Yang World. He keeps his latest crop of victims here, as well as his stable of trainees: young women and teenage boys he has lured away or kidnapped. Shi amuses himself by schooling them to extremes of obedience and submissiveness before farming them out to brothels in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Macao, Bangkok and even Beijing.

Secrets: In Crawlerling form, Qian Shi has penetrated almost every place of political power in the former colony. He has enough information on most of Hong Kong's former and current movers and shakers to ensure his political safety and continued wealth for years to come.

Influence: Qian Shi has contacts among the triads, the police and the media (particularly the pornographic film trade). He also has some influence with the residents of the Tremere Chantry and with the *akuma* Gan Shuo. Anything related to vice or corruption bears his mark somewhere.

Breed: Homid

Tribe: Kumo (Goblin Spider)

Age: 100+ years

[The numbers in parentheses refer to alterations for the Lilian (or Crinos), Pithus (Pit Spider), and Crawlerling Forms respectively.]

Physical: Strength 4 (6/7/0), Dexterity 4 (7/6/0), Stamina 4 (5/5/0)

Social: Charisma 2 (2/0/0), Manipulation 4 (0/0/0), Appearance 2 (0/0/0)

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Empathy 2, Intimidation 4, Primal-Urge 2, Seduction 5, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Animal Ken (insects) 4, Crafts (calligraphy using

blood for ink) 3, Firearms 2, Melee 3, Repair 2, Stealth 5, Torture 5, Webmaking 3*

Knowledges: Area Knowledge (Hong Kong and Kowloon) 5, Enigmas 3, Finance 3, Linguistics 2, Occult 4, Science (toxicology) 4

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Contacts 4, Resources 4

Gifts: (1) Blur of the Milky Eye, Control Simple Machines, Create Element, Eyes of the Cat, Resist Toxins (2) Replenishment of the Flesh, Blissful Ignorance, Insect Eyes (3) *Spinnerets, Wall Crawling, Bug Lord, Control Complex Machines, Visceral Agony (4) Attunement, Crawling Poison

*The Webmaking Skill works in conjunction with the Level Three Gift Spinnerets, allowing the Kumo to create sheer, yet thick, webbing for purposes of capturing victims, sealing off places, and climbing.

Gnosis 6

Willpower 8

Blood Pool: 15 (Unlike most shapeshifters, Goblin Spiders must drink blood to sustain themselves, similar to Western vampires. Most Kumo have Blood Pools of 10, but Qian Shi's life span and alchemical knowledge have enabled him to transcend this limitation.)

Rank: 4 (acknowledged by other Kumo in the Middle Kingdom who serve the principle of destruction)

KINTARO TANIJIRO (SECOND-BORN SON OF THE GOLDEN VALLEY)

Background: Like his packmate Masato, Kintaro Tanijiro dreamed of bringing Glory and Honor to himself, his pack and his tribe — the Hakken Shadow Lords. More skilled at the use of his spirit Gifts than with claws or blade, the bold young Theurge nevertheless attained considerable expertise in battle, sometimes rivaling his friend Masato in his prowess and fiery determination to succeed at all costs.

Then disaster struck. A doomed foray into the tainted spirit realm near Nagasaki cost the lives of all Tanijiro's packmates except for himself and Masato. The two survivors shared the ignominy of being branded ronin — outcasts — and struck off together to seek their lonely fortunes, their hopes of fame irretrievably shattered.

The dreams began shortly thereafter. Visions of fire and whirlwind, of screaming human torches and mutilated hungry ghosts, of holocausts past and future, became nightly visitations and disturbed Tanijiro's sleep and remained with him throughout the day. He was unable to speak of these ghastly images to Masato, for fear that his companion would desert him. Tanijiro grew sullen and withdrawn instead, listening more and more to the whispering voices that seemed to promise him delivery from his torment.

Finally, Tanijiro succumbed to his nightmares and slipped away from Masato in the middle of the night and following his spirit-senses to a secret place on the outskirts of Tokyo. Entering the spirit realm, he traveled with a guardian spirit who had been awaiting his arrival. Tanijiro emerged in an underground audience chamber and met the source of his mysterious voices — Lord Hakari, the powerful Kuei-jin commander of the armies of the dead. Perceiving through his magics the madness of Tanijiro's soul, Hakari desired the service of the ronin Hakken. He offered Tanijiro surcease from his horrid visions and a chance to command a group of tireless warriors in return.

Tanijiro accepted Hakari's offer and the Kuei-jin lord enacted a series of monstrous and painful rites centered on his newest recruit, transforming Tanijiro into a twisted caricature of a werewolf. Armed with a new knowledge of forbidden magics, he set out to do his master's will: the ushering in of the Sixth Age with all possible speed.

Nobunaga has ordered Tanijiro to Hong Kong recently in search of a magical katana. Eager to prove himself worthy of Hakari's trust, Tanijiro has every intention of locating the weapon and delivering it, unsheathed, to his master.

Image: Tanijiro is a worried-looking young Japanese man in his mid-20s. He dresses in dark-colored clothing, presenting the appearance of a street tough. His dark hair is shaggy and unkempt; mirrorshades conceal his haunted eyes. His Crinos and Lupus forms display evidence of his inner corruption; his dark fur, formerly sleek, has become matted and mangy, with whole portions of bare skin showing on his back and legs. His bones glow translucently inside his skin in all but his Homid form.

Roleplaying Hints:

Hakari took away your nightmares and substituted his own. You see millions drowning in a

great tidal wave of blood beneath a giant Sky Wheel that has stopped its revolution at the nadir. Your master and his undead armies are responsible for this monstrous vision, and you, as his willing accomplice, share in the culpability for bringing about the destruction of the world. Speak only in dark, cryptic phrases. Appear full of menace, so that no one notices the terror within your heart.

Home: Tanijiro now makes his home wherever he can find a safe, dark hole in the backstreets of Hong Kong and Kowloon.

Secrets: His corruption to the service of Oblivion is his greatest secret.

Influence: Tanijiro has some command over the spirits of the dead.

Position: Ronin

Breed: Homid

Auspice: Theurge

Tribe: Hakken (Japanese Shadow Lord)

Nature/Demeanor: Alpha/Conniver

Physical: Strength 3 (5/7/6/4), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 4 (6/7/7/6)

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 4 (3/1/1/1), Appearance 2 (1/0/1/1)

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Empathy 3, Intimidation 2, Primal-Urge 2

Skills: Animal Ken 1, Drive 1, Etiquette 3, Firearms 1, Melee (katana) 4, Leadership 1, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Enigmas 3, Linguistics 3, Occult 4, Rituals 4

Backgrounds: Mentor

(Hakari) 4, Resources 4

Gifts: (1)

*Bane Protector, *Blood

Omen, Fatal

Flaw, Persuasion, Spirit Speech (2) Clap of Thunder, Command

Spirit, *Ears of the Bat, Sight from Beyond, Stare down (3) Disquiet, Icy Chill of Despair, Pulse of the Invisible

*These Gifts resemble the Black Spiral Dancer Gifts found



in *Book of the Wyrms*

Rage 6, **Gnosis** 7, **Willpower** 7

Rank: none (formerly 3)

Rites: Rite of Binding, Rite of Talisman Dedication, Rite of Spirit Awakening, Rite of Summoning, Rite of the Fetish, Rite of the Opened Bridge

DAI YUN (DARK CLOUD)

Background: Storms of one kind or another have heralded every significant event in Dai Yun's life. She was born during a typhoon that nearly destroyed the small fishing village where her family eked out a precarious existence. Dai Yun developed an angry, petulant nature that mirrored her storm-tossed life.

When she was 14, a man wearing the elegant clothes of an old-fashioned mandarin visited her village. He left a few days later with Dai Yun and three other village girls. He told them he was taking them to Hong Kong, where they would learn to be *amahs* (nannies) for the children of the rich *gweilo*. They would earn good money for their families and enjoy luxuries they could not otherwise afford.

During the boat ride from the island of Peng Chau to the main island, Dai Yun overheard a hushed conversation between her mysterious benefactor and one of his crewmen. Thus she discovered the true purpose for which she and the other girls were intended — not the life of an *amah*, but that of a prostitute. Dai Yun confronted the man, demanding that he return her and her companions to their village. He laughed at the young girl's impotent tirade and signaled lazily to his crewmen to toss her overboard.

As soon as the water surrounded her, Dai Yun felt strangely at peace. She noticed the sky darken with threatening clouds. A minute or two later, when the boat was nearly out of her sight, a bolt of jagged lightning struck the craft, and split it in two. A great wind blew up around Dai Yun and propelled her to dry land — dumping her on Hong Kong's southwestern coast.

The storm increased in intensity and followed Dai Yun onto the land. It also attracted the attention of one of the local storm-spirits, who took the stranded girl in hand and calmed the storm with a word. Dai Yun had found both a mentor and her true nature, for Lin Meng — her rescuer — recognized her as one of his own, a Heng Po or Storm Child.

Although Lin Meng has tried to curb her unruly charge and teach her that storms need not always be destructive, Dai Yun's natural proclivity toward pessimism makes this a difficult task. Yun lives with her mentor not far from where she washed up onto shore, but she travels into Hong Kong frequently and loses herself among the teeming streets (themselves storms of a sort). She sometimes fashions beautiful windchimes from detritus deposited by the sea and sells her creations in the little shops that cater to the *gweilo* tourists.

When Yun's passions overwhelm her, she swims out into coastal waters and calls up great swells, occasionally endangering passenger boats and small commuter craft.

Yun has sensed a great storm brewing in the Xi Wang Chi recently. Whether it presages disaster in the mortal world or something far greater and more tempestuous, she does not know. She expects the worst, however; after all, she is a child born of bad weather and raging inner storms.

Image: Dai Yun's physical appearance mirrors her tempestuous spirit. Although pretty, she rarely smiles; her dark eyes smolder with pent-up anger. She wears peasant's clothes, which always look slightly mussed. And even when braided, her long black hair is tangled and wind-blown.

Roleplaying

Hints: You know you are a Storm Child, but sometimes knowing is not enough. The turmoil inside you often grows beyond your ability to control it, despite your mentor's gentle teachings and your own meditation. The *gweilo* talk about tempests in teapots; that seems to describe you perfectly.

Home: She lives with Lin Meng in a small hut nestled in a cove along the western shore of Hong Kong Island.

Secrets: None.

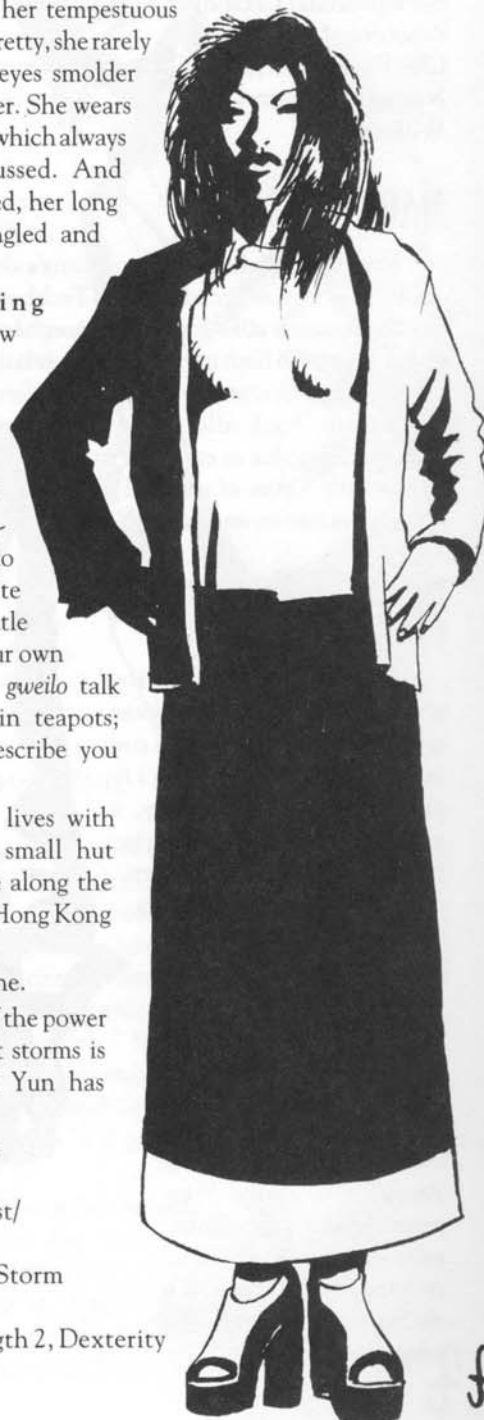
Influence: If the power to call and direct storms is "influence," Dai Yun has plenty.

Court: Kura Sau (Unseelie)

Legacies: Fatalist/Wayfarer

Kith: Heng Po (Storm Children)

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4



Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 4
Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Intimidation 3, Kenning 3
Skills: Crafts (windchimes) 3, Melee 2, Stealth 4
Knowledges: Enigmas 2, Linguistics 1, Mythlore 3, Occult 2
Arts: Primal 3, Wayfare 4, Weather Control 5
Realms: Actor 2, Nature 4, Prop 3, Scene 4
Backgrounds: Lakshmi 2, Mentor (Lin Meng) 2, Resources 1
Chi: Pa (Banality/Yin) 5, Yugen (Glamour/Yang) 6
Ninjo (Humanity): 4
Willpower: 5

MAGES

In addition to the *shen*, Hong Kong's abundance of Chi attracts Awakened mortals. Technocracy and Tradition mages alike find the atmosphere of this global crossroads both invigorating and challenging. The Ascension war goes on in boardrooms, back alleys, marketplaces and temples, as each side tries to align the forces of spiritual and financial power to its ends.

PEARL PARADIGMS (SYNDICATE CONSTRUCT)

The elegant glass-and-steel spiral building that is the headquarters for Pearl Paradigms rises in the center of Hong Kong's financial district. Ostensibly, a marketing research enterprise (though no one knows for certain what it markets), this corporation houses a Syndicate Construct dedicated to nothing less than financial control over Hong Kong. Well before the changeover, PP began soliciting investments from China and insinuating itself into the People's government. It expects to weather the change, since no matter who controls the reins of power, it is the Syndicate that cracks the whip.

SIMONE CARSWELD, "CHAIRMAN"

Background: One of the first women to graduate from Radcliffe College (thus receiving the equivalent of a Harvard education), Simone traveled to London to further her interests in business. Although Carsweld was considered eccentric and unwomanly by the financial moguls of the 1910s, her mental brilliance and sound grasp of economic theory brought her to the attention of the Syndicate. Recruited by them, she Awakened under their tutelage and has risen quickly to a position of prestige within the organization.

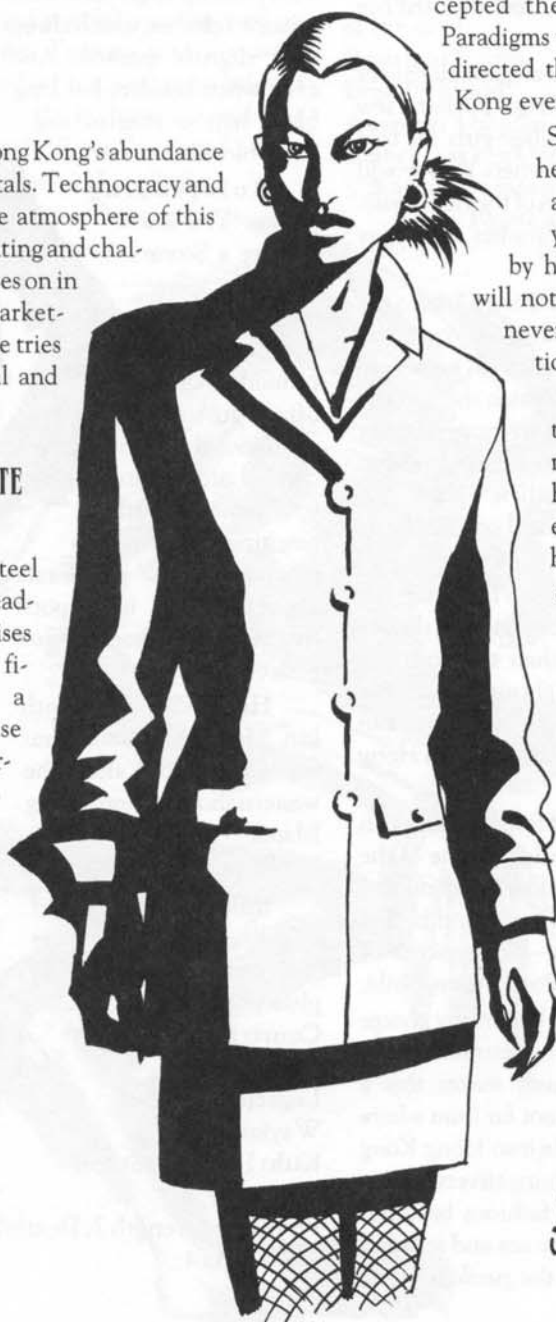
Ordered to sort out the Convention's interests in Hong Kong after the market collapse of 1987, Simone accepted the challenge with confidence. Pearl Paradigms was founded through her efforts and has directed the flow of money and power in Hong Kong ever since.

Simone can look out over the harbor from her penthouse office atop the PP building and see the skyline of Kowloon and, beyond it, the landscape of China. Assured by her superiors that the political changes will not affect her position in Hong Kong, she nevertheless keeps a wary lookout for indications to the contrary.

Image: Simone is nearing her century mark, but she looks 35 due to the ministrations of her Progenitor allies and her own Life magicks. She dresses in executive chic, wears her silvery-blond hair in a short bob and uses make-up sparingly. She exudes an aura of unmistakable power, so much so that the predominantly male business world of Hong Kong accepts her presence among them without thinking.

Roleplaying Hints: You no longer have to prove yourself to anyone, but old habits die hard. Operate from a position of strength at all times; dominate your subordinates and lovers by force of will and personality. Never give over control to another. Hong Kong is your bailiwick, and you do not allow anyone to take it from you — not even the People's representative sent by the Asian arm of the Syndicate to "facilitate" the administration of your organization.

Construct HQ: Pearl Paradigms office building in Hong Kong's Central District



f

Secrets: Simone is aware of most large-scale (and many small-scale) financial fluctuations in Hong Kong's economy. As such, she has pinpointed the existence of many other *shen*, through the strange financial eddies their doings create in Hong Kong's economic current. If any *shen* were to attempt an overt manipulation of mortal society, Simone would be aware of it.

Influence: Simone enjoys great influence over the economic fluctuations of Hong Kong.

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Visionary

Essence: Pattern

Convention: Syndicate

Methodology: Financiers

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Awareness 2, Dodge 2, Expression (motivational speeches) 4, Intimidation 3, Intuition 2

Skills: Drive 2, Etiquette 3, Firearms 2, Leadership 4, Research 2, Stealth 2, Technology 3

Knowledges: Computer 3, Culture 2, Enigmas 3, Finance 5, Investigation 4, Law 4, Linguistics 3, Science (Economics) 5

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Entropy 3, Matter 4, Mind 4, Prime 2

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Avatar 4, Influence 5, Node (Pearl Paradigms building) 4, Resources 5

Arete: 7

Willpower: 8

Quintessence: 7

Paradox: 3

LORENCO GIL

Background: Born in the Portuguese colony of Macao, Lorenzo Gil showed an early aptitude for science, especially biology. He was recommended by his elementary-school teacher, who was a recruiter for the Progenitors, and Lorenzo received a scholarship to study bioengineering at Stanford University. His advisor oversaw his Awakening and induction into the Progenitors.

Now assigned to Pearl Paradigms as Administrative Vice President for Life Sciences R&D, Lorenzo supervises the various lines of "life-enhancement" products marketed by the company. He also oversees a number of secret projects. His primary concerns include the development of a "clean drug" for use in the selective sterilization of certain elements of the population. Lorenzo acquires many of his test subjects from the local flesh-peddlers, who believe they are selling their merchandise to a wealthy Macao businessman for his personal and disposable entertainment. (In a way, his suppliers are right.)

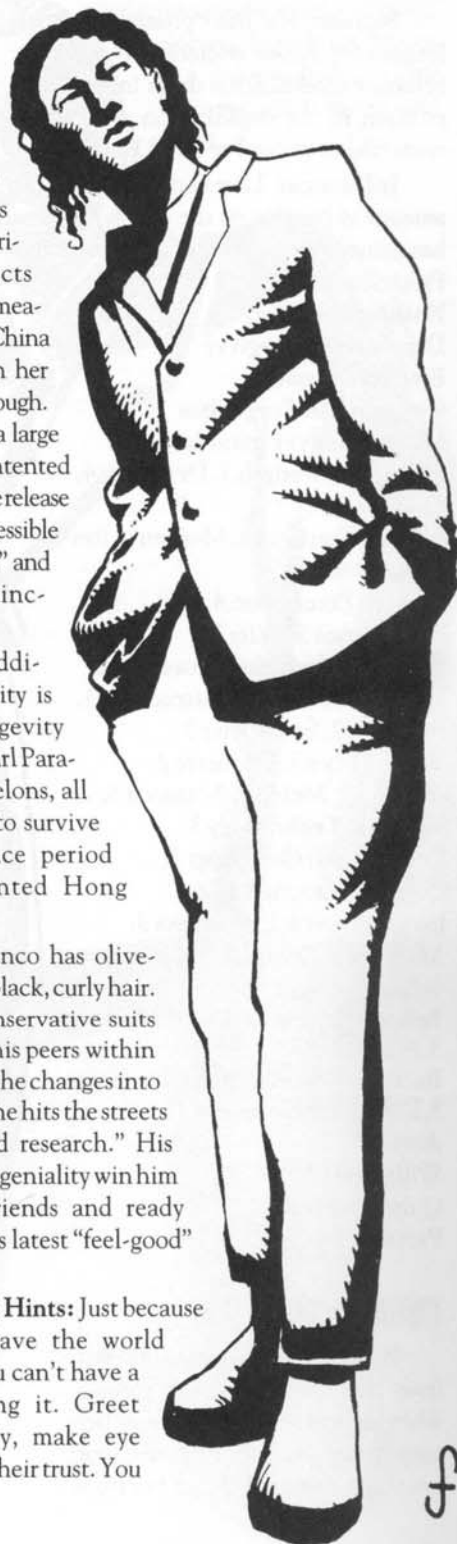
Lorenzo's American education and exposure to the west-coast lifestyle have left their mark on his off-duty habits. He enjoys Hong Kong's nightlife, seeing it as the perfect way to combine business with pleasure.

Lorenzo Gil views the political changeover with mixed feelings. On the one hand, he has taken advantage of Hong Kong's free-market mentality and high rate of consumerism to dispense his products throughout the territory. He expects repressive social measures to evolve as China secures her grip on her newest region, though. This may produce a large number of discontented people seeking some release through easily accessible "stress medications" and "homeopathic tinctures."

Lorenzo's additional responsibility is to maintain longevity treatments for Pearl Paradigms' upper echelons, all of whom expect to survive the 50-year grace period China has granted Hong Kong.

Image: Lorenzo has olive-colored skin and black, curly hair. He dresses in conservative suits for dealing with his peers within the company, but he changes into streetwear when he hits the streets to conduct "field research." His smile and studied geniality win him many instant friends and ready guinea pigs for his latest "feel-good" medications.

Roleplaying Hints: Just because you're out to save the world doesn't mean you can't have a good time doing it. Greet strangers warmly, make eye contact and win their trust. You



never know how useful even casual acquaintances can be. It always pays to have friends in high and low places.

Home: Lorenzo keeps an apartment in the sublevels of the Pearl Paradigms building so that he can be close to his experimental subjects whenever necessary. He also has a getaway home on the island of Lantau.

Secrets: He has "primed" his colleagues for future addiction to certain behavior-modification drugs in case his position in the organization ever warrants taking control of Pearl Paradigms.

Influence: Lorenzo enjoys a fair amount of prestige on the street; his research has gained him several commendations within the Progenitors.

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Caregiver

Essence: Questing

Convention: Progenitor

Methodology: Pharmacopeists

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4,

Intelligence 5, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Instruction 3, Intuition 2, Streetwise 3

Skills: Drive 3, Etiquette 2, Firearms 2, Melee 3, Research 5, Stealth 2, Technology 3

Knowledges: Computer 3, Culture 2, Enigmas 4, Investigation 4, Linguistics 3, Medicine 5, Occult 1, Science (pharmacology) 5

Spheres: Entropy 2, Life 4, Mind 3, Prime 2

Backgrounds: Avatar 4, Contacts 5, Library 2, Resources 4

Arete: 5

Willpower: 7

Quintessence: 6

Paradox: 2

PAVITHRA ("PAVI") ADRI

Background: Pavithra arrived from New Delhi with her parents when she was seven. In spite of her outgoing nature, Pavi discovered that her Indian features isolated her from

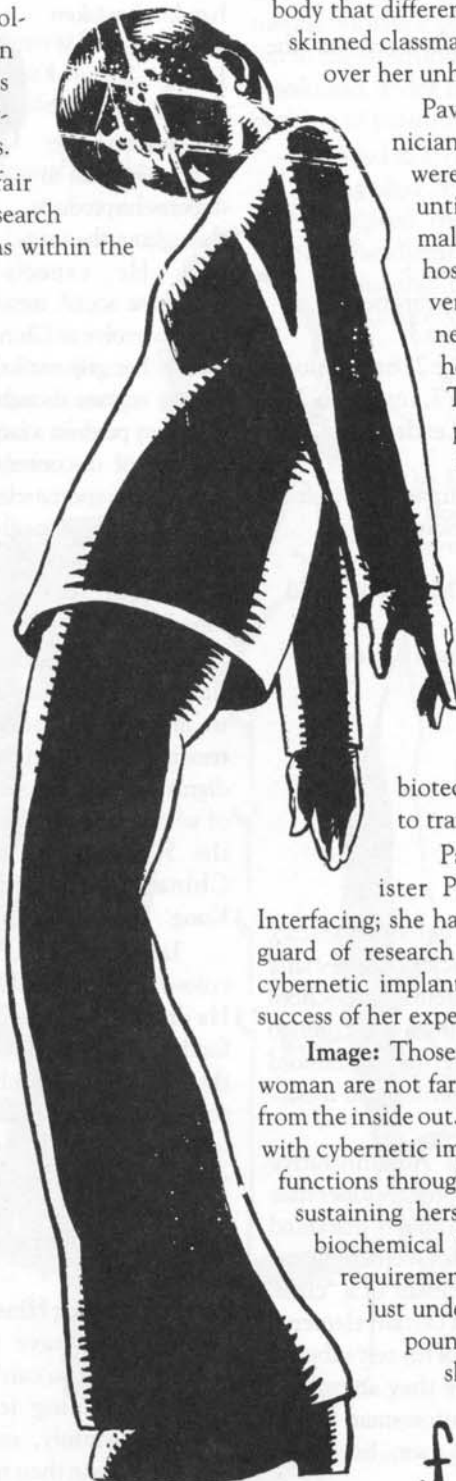
the rest of her classmates. Ostracized by both Chinese and Europeans, she grew introspective and spent most of her after-school time reading books on philosophy and spirituality. The idea that she could escape from the confines of her body through the practice of rigorous self-denial, fasting and meditation appealed to her. By denying the existence of the body that differentiated her from her Chinese and white-skinned classmates, she gained some measure of control over her unhappy circumstances.

Pavi's parents, who worked as medical technicians at Queen Mary Hospital in Hong Kong, were unaware of their daughter's unhappiness until the child collapsed from self-imposed malnutrition — anorexia. After a lengthy hospital stay, Pavi returned home and reverted promptly to her pattern of nutritional neglect — refusing to eat and subjecting herself to a rigorous regimen of exercise. This time her parents saw what was happening to their daughter and sent Pavi to a rehabilitation center in the United States.

The Berkings Institution, which specialized in the treatment of adolescent physical and emotional disorders, masked a recruiting arm for the Technocracy. Pavi's "doctors" discovered and Awakened her Avatar; she joined Iteration X, responding to the promise that, through advanced biotechnology, she could succeed in her desire to transcend the prison of her body.

Pavi was assigned to Hong Kong to administer Pearl Paradigms' Division of Bionics Interfacing; she has brought her department into the vanguard of research in the fields of nanotechnology and cybernetic implants. Her own body is living proof of the success of her experimentation.

Image: Those who describe Pavi as a mere shell of a woman are not far from wrong. She has redesigned herself from the inside out. She has replaced many of her vital organs with cybernetic implants and controls her necessary bodily functions through nanotech devices. She no longer eats, sustaining herself on a daily intravenous infusion of biochemical "soup" that supplies all her nutritional requirements and needs no elimination. Pavi stands just under five-feet tall and weighs less than 100 pounds; her dark hair is clipped close to her skull, which gives her a ghostly appearance. Her large dark eyes glow with a fanatic's intensity when she works.



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Roleplaying Hints: Soon you will rid yourself of even the most rudimentary trappings of the flesh. You hope to provide the masses with the advantages you now have and bring an end to all kinds of discrimination. If humans no longer have to worry about physical differences, and if each person exists as a collection of cybernetic and nanotech interfaces, then the major reasons for conflict and prejudice will disappear. Encourage others to stop concentrating on such useless and divisive concerns as appearance, food, sex and entertainment. The perfection of the form — no, the elimination of the need for form — is all that matters.

Home: Pavi lives in her laboratory at Pearl Paradigms.
Secrets: None.

Influence: She enjoys the respect of her Iteration X colleagues and has some standing in the local medical community.

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Director

Essence: Primal

Convention: Iteration X

Methodology: BioMechanics

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Instruction 1

Skills: Drive 2, Firearms 2, Research 5, Stealth 1, Technology 5

Knowledges: Computer 4, Enigmas 1, Investigation 2, Linguistics 3, Medicine 4, Occult 1, Science (nanotechnology) 5

Spheres: Correspondence 2, Entropy 2, Forces 4, Life 2, Matter 3, Mind 2

Backgrounds: Avatar 4, Library 2, Resources 4

Arete: 6

Willpower: 9

Quintessence: 7

Paradox: 3

NENG SHOU (CAPABLE LEADER)

Background: A recent addition to the administrative level of Pearl Paradigms, Neng Shou represents the interests of the Syndicate's Asian operations. He was recruited after the Cultural Revolution and demonstrated a prodigious grasp of mass marketing and the politics of indoctrination. The Syndicate has nurtured his progress within the PRC, ensuring his rise in journalistic circles and protecting him when necessary from the vagaries of China's purges and sweeping reforms.

The transfer of power in Hong Kong has placed the Syndicate on a 50-year timetable in which to ensure that their interests are protected adequately and that their poli-

cies are integrated into the new China. Pearl Paradigms is their window onto the East and their foot in the door to the world's largest concentration of human resources.

Neng Shou oversees the Media and Mass Marketing Division of Pearl Paradigms; he handles press releases and promotes the various products offered by the company. In addition, he acts as a liaison between the Chinese government and



the company's non-Chinese upper management.

Although he appears to be a "team player," Neng Shou secretly despises his superiors in the company. He believes firmly that only Asians can adequately represent Asian interests, and his long-term goal is to replace the upper echelon of Pearl Paradigms with more suitable executives. In this goal, Neng has the support of the Syndicate Board's Asian Vice-President of Operations.

Image: Neng Shou dresses in business suits and affects Western manners to increase his effectiveness in interacting with his colleagues. When he conducts his unofficial opinion "polls" in the streets, he transforms his appearance and actions by becoming more traditionally Chinese in his behavior.

Roleplaying Hints: You are here to do a job — sell the people of Hong Kong on the new government and prepare them for the changes that are scheduled for the near future. Smile constantly; a friendly and open facade can do more to disable the opposition than 100 guns.

Home: Neng Shou has an apartment in the Pearl Paradigms building, but he spends most of his time in his Kowloon apartment, where he has a direct line to his superiors in Beijing.

Secrets: Although he supposedly works for Carsweld, Shou actually reports directly to the Syndicate Board.

Influence: Shou's control of marketing and public relations gives him influence throughout much of the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong.

Nature: Conniver

Demeanor: Gallant

Essence: Dynamic

Convention: Syndicate

Methodology: Media Control

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Expression (media speeches) 4, Instruction 4, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Drive 2, Etiquette 2, Firearms 3, Leadership 3, Melee 2, Stealth 4, Technology (media) 4

Knowledges: Computer 4, Culture 3, Enigmas 2, Investigation 4, Linguistics 3, Science (communications) 5

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Life 2, Mind 4, Prime 3, Time 3

Backgrounds: Avatar 3, Contacts 5, Mentor 4, Resources 5

Arete: 6

Willpower: 8

Quintessence: 7

Paradox: 3

TRADITION MAGES

What few Tradition mages exist in Hong Kong belong primarily to the Akashic Brotherhood. In addition, a couple of Virtual Adepts have successfully established themselves in the region's software and electronics industries.

LIAN TING (GRACE OF THE LOTUS)

Background: Lian Ting grew up among the boat people of Yamatei Typhoon Shelter in Kowloon. Her older sister disappeared into the brothels of Hong Kong. She had been



sold by her father — she later learned — to the local triad boss to pay back a debt. When she was 12, Lian Ting began having dreams in which her sister cried out for her help and urged her to “Wake up!” One such dream resulted in Lian’s true Awakening.

Shortly thereafter, a strange, forbidding man approached Lian’s father and offered to purchase her services. Having already sold one daughter, her father did not hesitate to part with another. Lian tried to flee her “owner,” certain that she would end up like her sister, but escape was impossible. Although she ran from him as fast as she could, she could never out-distance him. Exhausted, Lian Ting surrendered finally to the inevitable.

Thus, she met her sifu and joined the brotherhood of Akashic mages. Once she discovered the true purpose for which she was intended, Lian Ting gave herself wholeheartedly to the pursuit of perfection. She realized that the dream-voice of her sister was actually that of her Avatar, which had chosen to remind her of her duty to protect other children from those who exploited their helplessness. Lian became one of the Scales of the Dragon, who specialize in the protection of women and children (particularly girl-children).

Lian Ting frequently poses as a prostitute and seeks out the worst offenders and abusers and corrects their behavior — permanently. She has aroused the enmity of several criminal groups, both Western and Eastern. As far as she is concerned, her enemies are the symbols of her honor.

Image: Lian wears her long black hair tied out of the way when she is not “working” her self-appointed rounds. On the prowl, she dresses her part, but she prefers comfortable clothing at other times. Her face is expressive, though she often looks as though she is listening to something only she can hear.

Roleplaying Hints: Long ago, you realized that when your sifu “purchased” you from your father, he actually bought your independence from your family, which freed you to devote yourself to the work of self-perfection. Your chosen path toward Ascension lies in restoring the imbalance created by the deeds of evil men and the suffering of innocent victims like your sister. Speak softly and provocatively to your intended targets, then loosen the arrow of your retribution.

Chantry: A small temple off Upper Lascar Row in the Sheung Wan section of Western.

Secrets: Lian is familiar with a great deal of Hong Kong’s underworld, including certain powerful Night People (Qian Shi and Thrace) who manipulate the triads from behind the scenes.

Influence: Her actions and words carry weight among those she has helped.

Nature: Caregiver

Demeanor: Judge

Essence: Questing

Tradition: Akashic Brotherhood

Sect: Scales of the Dragon

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 1 Awareness 2, Dodge 4, Streetwise 2

Skills: Do 3, Etiquette 2, Meditation 3, Melee 2, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Cosmology 3, Culture 2, Enigmas 2, Linguistics 1, Occult 3

Spheres: Entropy 1, Life 2, Mind 3, Prime 2, Spirit 2

Backgrounds: Avatar 2, Destiny 2, Resources 1

Arete: 6

Willpower: 9

Quintessence: 5

Paradox: 2

KITO SULLIVAN

Background: Born in Los Angeles to an Irish father and a Kenyan mother who were both students at UCLA, Kito grew up in a nontraditional household. His extreme intelligence and hyperactivity prompted his parents to enroll him in a private school, which specialized in alternative methods of education. This unstructured classroom environment fostered rapid progress in his schoolwork; by the age of 12, Kito was performing at a college level in math and science, particularly in the field of computer studies.

At home, Kito’s love for video and computer games provided his parents with a ready-made baby-sitter; the boy spent most of his evenings happily surfing the developing Internet or embroiled in his latest “conquer the world/planet/galaxy” game. Since his liberal parents refused to limit his access to the Internet, Kito soon discovered areas of the Net not commonly explored by the average computer jock. Through contact with the Digital Web, Kito Awakened at the age of 13, and he joined the Virtual Adepts without ever leaving home.

Kito’s mentor, a shadowy Net persona known as “Buddha,” advised him to go to Hong Kong to take advantage of the technological discoveries going on in Asia. Furthermore, Kito could keep an eye on the activities of the Technocracy there, whose influence in China and Japan merited close monitoring by someone with Kito’s distinct capabilities.

Following Buddha’s advice, Kito enrolled in Hong Kong University; he graduated in two years with a degree in computer science and launched his own small company, Childplay Games, which specializes in computer and video games designed to introduce young children to the joys of the virtual world and, not incidentally, to Awaken any potential mages who interact with his products.

Although he spends much of his time designing interfaces aimed at young minds, Kito keeps abreast of developments in the "real" world. He hopes to be able to remain in Hong Kong despite the changing political climate, but he has begun seeking a back door out of the region in case his presence becomes a problem.

Image: Kito's physical appearance combines the best features of his Irish-African background. He is tall and slim, with green eyes, dark skin and strong, angular features. His hairstyle changes on a whim, from red-dyed spikes to traditional African braiding.

Roleplaying Hints: Children know instinctively that life is a game and that the stakes are the highest imaginable. Your products serve to teach the young how to make the best



of their part in this "game." Although you prefer to spend your time jacked in to the constant flow of information available on the Digital Web (and its mundane counterpart), you take as many opportunities as you can to connect with the other world. You also enjoy the nightlife and restaurants of Hong Kong and know the importance of feeding the body as well as the mind.

Unbeknownst to Kito, his presence has attracted the notice — and the ire — of certain more traditionalist *shen*, including the Goblin Spider Qian Shi. The Iteration X mage Pavithra Adri has also become aware of Kito's existence; she is evaluating whether the adolescent willworker is a threat best recruited or destroyed.

Chantry: Kito's company headquarters on the outskirts of Kowloon is situated on a Node. He has a small cottage on Lantau Island and either commutes to work or telnets from his home.

Secrets: If it can be accessed on the Net, Kito probably knows it.

Influence: How much influence can a master hacker have?

Nature: Loner

Demeanor: Avant-Garde

Essence: Questing

Tradition: Virtual Adept

Legion: Cyberpunks

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 1, Dodge 3, Instruction 5, Intuition 4

Skills: Drive 4, Etiquette 2, Firearms 1, Melee 2, Research 4, Technology 4

Knowledges: Computer 5, Cosmology (Digital Web) 4, Enigmas 3, Linguistics 2, Occult 2, Science (computer science) 5

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Entropy 1, Forces 2, Life 2, Mind 3, Prime 2, Spirit 1, Time 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Avatar 5, Mentor 3, Resources 5

Arete: 6

Willpower: 7

Quintessence: 7

Paradox: 4

DEMON AND DRAGON WIZARDS: THE WU-KENG AND THE WU LUNG

The ironies of history place two warring Crafts in Hong Kong, each ignorant of the other's presence. The Wu-Keng are a sect of male wizards who assume the guise and role of women to hide their presence from society at large and from their enemies (the Wu Lung in particular). This sect fled

persecution in mainland China long ago and sought refuge in British-controlled Hong Kong. With the return of control to mainland China, the Wu-Keng fear that they face a new era of persecution.

The Wu Lung, or Dragon Wizards, exercised great control over Chinese politics until the Japanese invasion of the 1930s. Removing themselves to safety in Hong Kong, they plan for the day when they can retake the mainland and reestablish themselves at the side of its rulers. For the time being, they exercise their elaborate political aspirations from the shadows.

The **Book of Crafts** contains detailed information about both of these ancient and opposed magical societies.

Ji Pa (LUCKY FLOWER)

Background: Raised since infancy by her Ng (family) of sister-wizards, Ji Pa now serves as one of the three a-jis (or aunts) who performs their assigned duties for the spirit-masters who give them their magical abilities. Disguised as one of the thousands of street vendors who hawk their wares daily, Ji Pa pushes her food cart through the streets of Wanchai, her senses constantly alert to the people around her.

Because she has known no other way of life, Ji Pa feels comfortable with the inherent contradictions of her existence as a woman's spirit inside a man's body costumed in women's attire. (She did not even discover that she was technically a "man" until an anatomy textbook called it to her attention.) Knowing only that she belongs to an ancient school of wizards who traditionally conceal their identities through masking their gender, Ji Pa accepts the stringent rules under which she lives and obeys her a-ma (the head of her Ng) without question, and she carries out the assignments given to her by the spirit to which she is bound. Like all but the most powerful Wu-Keng, Ji Pa remains unaware of the demonic nature of her Yama King spirit-master.

Through her influence over a local triad boss who visits her food cart daily and receives (along with his lunch) advice

and counsel in return for information, Ji Pa exercises control over much of the local protection racket in her part of town. The tasks given to her by her spirit-master take her from her comfortable routine occasionally; these duties tax her usual peaceful nature and require her to assassinate or bring torment to someone that the spirit desires punished. Not daring to question the intricate designs of the spirit worlds, Ji Pa simply accedes to her master's wishes and then returns to her hidden existence.

Image: Ji Pa appears as a middle-aged peasant woman with bound feet and a weathered, friendly face. Within the safety of her Ng, however, she dresses more elegantly, dropping 10 years of false age in the process.

Roleplaying Hints: Smile and nod as you bargain with customers. Save your advice for your Ng. Listen to all that goes on around you so that you can share your information with the others in your Ng.

Secrets: Ji Pa's existence is her biggest secret.

Influence: Through her Ng, Ji Pa's influence stretches throughout the lower echelons of Wanchai. She serves the Yama King Mikaboshi, who is engaged in an elaborate contest with the demon-queen Tou Mu. When the contest spills over into the gameboard of Hong Kong (as it inevitably will), Ji Pa will be a useful and powerful pawn.

Nature: Autist

Demeanor: Conformist

Essence: Pattern

Craft: Wu-Keng

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Etiquette 1, Melee 2, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Enigmas 2, Investigation 2, Linguistics 1, Medicine 2, Science (toxicology) 2

Spheres: Entropy 2, Life 2, Matter 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Avatar 1, Resources 1

Arete: 2

Willpower: 6

Quintessence: 7

Paradox: 2



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MING HU (BRIGHT TIGER)

Background: Ming Hu's parents raised him in a traditional Chinese household and never let him forget the ancient and mighty culture from which he descended. The boy grew up venerating his ancestors and petitioning the Celestial Bureaucracy for everything from good luck at the races to better grades on his exams. Despite all this, the modern world just outside his door attracted Ming Hu. Like many Hong Kong natives, he soon learned to juggle his parents' teachings with the lure of bright lights, the club scene, high-tech gadgetry and, above all, the movies.

The first time Hu saw a film crew set up in the back streets of Wanchai, he was hooked. The excitement of seeing famous actors in the flesh and of watching stuntmen perform impossible feats, the rolling cameras and the harried directors — these things stayed with him for days afterward. Finally, Ming Hu approached the offices of Joyful Thunder Films and asked for an audition. He was turned down, but he tried again — and again — and again, until he got his wish.

Although he lacked the martial skills of the industry's most popular actors, Ming Hu's good looks and engaging persistence translated well onto celluloid, and he landed a few small roles (usually involving early deaths). It was enough to keep him hungry for more.

Then the dreams began. Hu's dead grandfather appeared to him in a succession of cinematic dreams, urging him to follow the path set out for him long before his birth and showing him a vision of a small herbalist's shop. When he spoke to his parents about these disturbingly real dreams, his father simply said, "Follow them."

The next evening, Ming Hu let his dream-grandfather lead him through the back streets of Wanchai to the door of the herbalist's shop. Hu knew exactly where to go when he woke. His introduction to the world of Wu Lung magic was complete.

Ming Hu has progressed quickly since then through the rigorous training demanded of all Wu Lung initiates. As a follower of the Tiger School, he received mandatory training in the Kuei Lung Chan, the specialized martial-arts form of the Wu Lung. He has also gotten lead roles in Joyful Thunder's latest films.

Although Ming Hu has come into conflict with some of the elder wizards who scorn his deplorable attraction to the modern world,

he has convinced even the most vocal of his critics that he still honors the traditions and venerates the ancestors who provide him with his magics.

The transfer of power in Hong Kong, according to Ming Hu's superiors, means that the time is nearing when the Wu Lung can one day assume their rightful position as advisors to the Chinese government. According to them, the day of the rabble's rule will soon come to an end, and Hong Kong will show China the way home. Ming Hu tries to convince himself of his dedication to that end, but there is always the next film, the next moment in the spotlight....

Image: Ming Hu wears his dark hair long and tied back at the neck. When he is at home or studying with his master, he dresses in traditional clothing. On the streets, he is no different than millions of other modern Chinese young men. His manner is always pleasant, if sometimes a little pushy, and his smile is infectious.

Roleplaying Hints: Pay proper respect to your magic, your ancestors and your traditions, but remember that the Cycle goes forward, not backward. The time for battle approaches, you are told, and you are ready and trained to participate in it. In the meantime, there are things to do, people to see, and a movie career in the making.

Secrets: None.

Influence: Ming Hu has built up a small, but avid, fan following.

Nature: Director

Demeanor: Bon Vivant

Essence: Dynamic

Craft: Wu Lung (Tiger School)

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Dodge 3, Expression (acting) 2

Skills: Drive 3, Etiquette 3, Firearms 1, Martial Arts 4, Melee 2, Stealth 3

Knowledges: Cosmology (Chinese) 4, Culture (Chinese) 3, Linguistics 2, Science (film) 1

Spheres: Correspondence 1, Forces 2, Spirit 2

Backgrounds: Avatar 2, Resources 2

Arete: 3

Willpower: 6

Quintessence: 6

Paradox: 5



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NEPHANDI

Some mages fall from grace. Hong Kong provides them with a fertile environment in which to describe the arc of their plummet. Unlike the Wu-Keng, who typically do not realize the nature of their corruption, the mages who willingly compact with infernal masters form a dangerous, unpredictable component to the progression of the Great Cycle.

RU MANG (LIKE BRILLIANT LIGHT)

Background: Even as a child, Ru Mang was attracted by death. His father worked as a caretaker for the Chinese cemetery in Chaiwan, and Ru Mang assisted the old man in tending the graves. He loved attending the elaborate funerals and participating in the holidays that commemorated the dead.

His fascination with death and its trappings drew the attention of a visiting Euthanatos mage, who struck up a conversation with Ru Mang and detected the boy's latent Avatar. The mage decided to prolong his stay in Hong Kong and cultivate the child. He oversaw Ru Mang's *Agama Te* (or death journey), which Awakened the boy's Avatar.

Ru Mang's instruction in the ways of the Euthanatos Tradition had barely begun when *joss* intervened. His master died suddenly and under mysterious circumstances; his body was never recovered. Upon receiving the news of his master's loss, a desolate Ru Mang held his own private ceremony in the center of "his" cemetery. He placed himself in a trance and attempted to summon the spirit of his teacher.

Something answered Ru Mang's call — something that claimed to be the spirit of his departed mentor. He joyfully accepted

the spirit's offer to continue his teaching from beyond the grave, and thus, without realizing it, Ru Mang had joined the ranks of the Nephandi.

Now, nearly 50 years later, Ru Mang fully understands the nature of the mistress he serves and accepts his fate with more than simple resignation. If anything, his interest in death has led him to an active participation in his demon-

mistress's grand design. Ru Mang works diligently to bring about the coming of the Sixth Age, knowing that the terror and bloodshed it will unleash can only help provide his mistress with many souls.

From his hidden base of operations on a small, apparently uninhabited island off the coast of the New Territories, Ru Mang sends out feelers throughout Hong Kong (and mainland China). He has constructed a temple to his Yama Queen, disguising it as a shrine to one of the many Chinese gods of death. Posing as a priest and teacher, he runs a clandestine school that indoctrinates

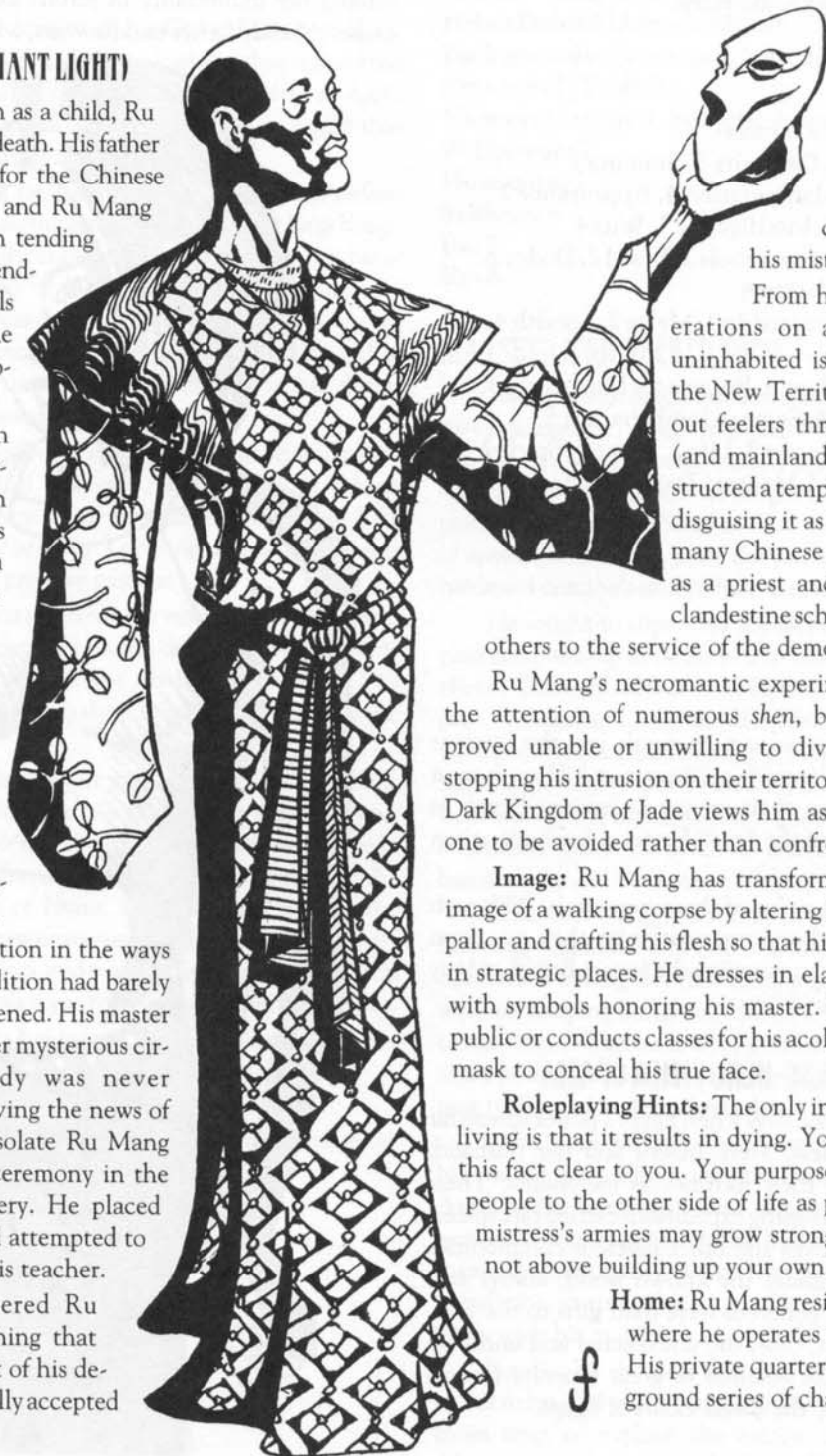
others to the service of the demon.

Ru Mang's necromantic experiments have attracted the attention of numerous *shen*, but so far, they have proved unable or unwilling to divert their energies to stopping his intrusion on their territories. In particular, the Dark Kingdom of Jade views him as a dangerous foe, but one to be avoided rather than confronted.

Image: Ru Mang has transformed himself into the image of a walking corpse by altering his skin to a deathlike pallor and crafting his flesh so that his bones show through in strategic places. He dresses in elaborate robes marked with symbols honoring his master. When he appears in public or conducts classes for his acolytes, he dons a formal mask to conceal his true face.

Roleplaying Hints: The only interesting thing about living is that it results in dying. Your mistress has made this fact clear to you. Your purpose is to bring as many people to the other side of life as possible, so that your mistress's armies may grow strong. Of course, you are not above building up your own forces as well.

Home: Ru Mang resides on a small island, where he operates a temple and school. His private quarters consist of an underground series of chambers.



Secrets: He secretly conducts experiments in the reanimation of corpses. Following successful reanimation, Ru Mang uses the zombies as personal attendants and couriers.

Influence: His influence extends over many of Hong Kong's deceased population, which results in the denial of many souls to the Dark Kingdom. He serves Tou Mu, a monstrous Yama Queen who rules the Hell of Being Skinned Alive; Ru Mang is one of her favorite pets and a vital component of her Hong Kong plans.

Nature: Deviant

Demeanor: Caregiver

Essence: Pattern

Tradition: Euthanatos *barabbi*

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Instruction 2, Intimidation 4

Skills: Etiquette 3, Leadership 3, Melee 2, Stealth 4, Torture 4

Knowledges: Cosmology 4, Enigmas 3, Linguistics 3, Occult 5, Spirit Lore 4, Science (embalming) 5

Spheres: Entropy 3, Forces 3, Life 2, Prime 3, Spirit 2

Backgrounds: Avatar 3, Mentor (Tou Mu) 5, Resources 4

Arete: 6

Willpower: 7

Quintessence: 5

Paradox: 4

THE REBORN

Perhaps the rarest of supernaturals are the ancient beings known in popular myth as "mummies." Though most of these creatures have their origins in ancient Egypt, as servants/ambassadors of the "god" Horus, a few have arisen through other means.

Hong Kong hosts a pair of these immortals. Although naturally reclusive and noninterventionist, they may soon discover that the changes sweeping the former British colony demand their attention.

MICHAELA NEFE, SHEMSU-HERU VIZIER OF ASIA

Background: In the days when Egypt's power spread far beyond its own borders, Merit-neferu and her husband, Horem-rebket, made their fortunes as merchants. Their lucrative caravans and sailing expeditions carried rare spices, precious woods, fine dyes and other precious commodities back and forth throughout the known world, always at a profit. Numerous and generous were their gifts to the Pharaoh and his ministers; thus, the unexpected and untimely death of Horem-rebket resulted in great funerary honors bestowed upon him by the Royal Court of Egypt.

After her husband's death, Merit-neferu refused several offers of marriage, vowing to continue her husband's business as though he were still alive. Her shrewd intuition and quick intelligence soon doubled the enterprise's profits. She continued the practice of making large donations (above and beyond any taxes) to the Pharaoh.

Merit-neferu's devotion to her husband's memory and to her Pharaoh did not go unnoticed by the Cult of Isis, who offered her immortality in return for her service to their cause. Already in her middle years, Merit-neferu decided to



accept their offer — believing that it would give her the chance to search in both the lands of the living and the dead for any trace of her husband's soul. Thus, a simple (and extravagantly rich) merchant woman joined the ranks of the Shemsu-heru and became one of the Reborn.

Through all her subsequent lives, Merit-neferu has always plied her trade, even when it meant defying convention or working behind the scenes. She has amassed great wealth in every instance.

When the British established the Crown Colony of Hong Kong as a center for world trade in the East and thus opened the doorway to China, the appointment of Merit-neferu as Asia's vizier seemed particularly appropriate. She has occupied that position, under a variety of names, since 1901.

Currently calling herself Michaela Neff, Merit-neferu keeps track of the changing political climate in Hong Kong. While she has no political loyalties, she does monitor carefully the actions taken by Hong Kong's new government. Though she does not fear death, Michaela does exercise great caution and circumspection in her activities, realizing that she cannot afford an unplanned interruption in her duties during this critical period of world history.

She has discovered some ancient writings recently that hint of the existence of uniquely Asian mummies, whose immortality derives from a process similar to the Great Rite that creates the Shemsu-heru. Locating one of these creatures has become her primary pastime.

Image: Michaela is an attractive woman in her mid-40s, with olive-colored skin and lustrous dark hair. Her features are Middle Eastern, though not obviously Egyptian. She wears modern dress, although she adorns herself with antique jewelry occasionally.

Roleplaying Hints: Despite no success in your searching, you refuse to give up the hope of locating some vestige of your husband's soul — either in some reincarnation or as a shade in the lands of the dead. You keep busy in the meantime with the task of serving as one of Horus' surrogate eyes. Stay in the background, lest you draw unwanted attention to yourself. Rely on your retainers, servants, and various news services and local information sources to alert you to anything of true importance.

Secrets: Michaela has reason to believe that one of her Asian counterparts dwells on one of the many islands — possibly Lantau — that make up Hong Kong.

Influence: Her investments give her some influence over Hong Kong's finances.

Known Name: Merit-neferu

True Name: An-merit-nefer-katseru,

Nature: Director

Demeanor: Loner

Occupation: Merchant

Year of Birth: 380 B.C.E.

First Death: 340 B.C.E.

Apparent Age: 40s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Awareness 3, Dodge 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Bribery 2, Drive 2, Etiquette 4, Fast-Talk 3, Firearms 2, Hagglng 4, Melee 2, Repair 3

Knowledges: Accounting 4, Bureaucracy 3, Computer 2, Finance 5, Linguistics 3, Mythology 2, Occult 3, Politics 4

Hekau Paths: Alchemy 3, Amulets 2, Necromancy 2, Ushabti 1

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Journal 2, Resources 5, Retainers 2, Tomb 2

Virtues: Memory 3, Integrity 4, Joy 3

Willpower: 7

Humanity: 7

Sekhem: 6

Ba: 5

Ka: 6

NIAN SHUN (UNHINDERED AGES)

Background: An early follower of Lao-tzu, Nian Shun (not his original name) sought incessantly for the perfect balance of the Tao. It always defeated him for one reason — the nature of suffering. No matter how he sought to accept the existence of pain and sorrow, Nian Shun could not help but weep at the sight of anyone so afflicted. Even the just torture and execution of hardened criminals moved him to tears.

He sought to cope with the fact of suffering by inflicting pain and hardship upon himself in order to inure himself to its effects. This method failed, so Shun sought to avoid the sight of pain, wandering throughout the Middle Kingdom's most isolated and desolate places. This, too, brought home to Nian Shun only the knowledge that others outside his immediate awareness were undergoing tribulations and grief. Finally, he sought to do everything within his means to alleviate pain; he studied the human body and the ways of healing.

This path brought Shun to the attention of Lung Li, a traveling alchemist and one of a small group of self-created immortals. Seeing in Nian Shun a great reservoir of Chi as well as a sleeping Enlightened One (Avatar), Lung Li offered to take Nian Shun on as an apprentice and teach him how to make potions and elixirs of a magical nature in order to effect true healing of body and mind.

Nian Shun proved to be an eager and rapid learner, and his master gave him a choice: Lung Li could attempt to Awaken his student's inner sleeper, thus making him a worker of true magick, or else he could gift Shun with the means for immortality. Nian Shun spent two years pondering his choice, during which time he continued to travel and study with his master.

Finally, he decided that immortality would lead him closer to his goal of alleviating suffering, for it would give him more time to explore the means of solving the eternal dilemma. As a believer in the Great Wheel of the Ages, Nian

Shun also reasoned that as the Great Wheel turned from cycle to cycle, each worse than the previous one, so, too, would suffering increase. He wanted to witness each turn and do whatever he could to ease the pain of as many innocents as possible.

Lung Li taught Nian Shun how to prepare and imbibe the elixirs of extended life, and he attended the consummation of his rite of transformation into one of the Immortals. Nian Shun has never ceased his wanderings in the centuries since that time. Although Shun still studies new ways to ease the pain of humankind, he has begun to realize that his search for an end to suffering is a futile one. To mask his failure and to keep from inflicting his own inner pain on those he meets, Shun has cultivated an outwardly lighthearted facade. He masks his sorrow in laughter and uses humor to leaven his often bitter observations.

Nian Shun has retreated to the island of Lantau, where he lives near the Po Lin Monastery and is often mistaken for one of its monks. Dwelling mostly in seclusion, Shun prepares to witness the end of the Fifth Age and the beginning of the Age of Sorrow. At that time, he reasons, he will either find the answer to his lifelong quest or else give in to despair and imbibe his latest magical creation, the Elixir of Blissful Oblivion.

Image: Nian Shun resembles a mendicant monk, with a bald head and a wispy white beard. His bright, youthful eyes and ready smile give his face an ageless expression, which makes it difficult to guess how old (or young) he truly is.

Roleplaying Hints: Laugh so that others may not see your tears; they are too busy dealing with their own sorrows to be burdened with yours. Help anyone who is in need of healing, whether physical, mental or emotional. You live in isolation now, but you turn no one away who seeks you out for some good purpose.

Secrets: Nian Shun can sense the presence of a powerful magickal artifact somewhere within the vicinity of Hong Kong Island.

Influence: The Celestial Courts are very interested in Nian Shun, though he does not know it.

Notes: The magical figures Nian Shun fashions through the use of Ushabti are actually intricate jade or origami likenesses. His Ren (name magic) can affect entire families rather than individuals.

Nature: Caregiver

Demeanor: Jester

Year of Birth: 550 B.C.E.

Year of Transformation: 500 B.C.E.

Apparent Age: 50s

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 3, Awareness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Empathy 5

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Crafts (origami) 5, Meditation 4, Survival 3

Knowledges: Cosmology (Chinese) 4, Enigmas 4, Linguistics 4, Medicine (holistic) 5, Occult 4, Science 3

(Hekau) Paths: Alchemy 7, Amulets 4, Necromancy 3, Ren-Hekau 4, Ushabti 4

Backgrounds: Journal 4, Mentor 3
Virtues: Memory 5, Integrity 5, Joy 2

Willpower: 9

Humanity: 9

Chi (Sekhem): 8

Ba: 6

Ka: 4

THE HUNTERS

The brotherhood of witch-hunters known as the Shih have agents seeded throughout the Middle Kingdom. Although they do not always actively pursue every bit of supernatural evidence, they keep an eye on the movements of the *shen* and are quick to intervene when the more than human creatures take advantage of mortals. The Shih are protectors of humanity, and, as such, are capable of extremes of kindness and implacable cruelty.

REN WEI (BENEVOLENT STRENGTH)

Background: Ren Wei remembers little of his childhood before the great nightmare that destroyed his family. There was a time, he believes, when his life differed little from that of his neighbors in Hong Kong's Wanchai district. Then the time of blood and screaming happened.



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Huddled in a tiny closet where his mother had stashed him in haste, Ren Wei can recall only waves of darkness and terror, sounds of screaming and pleading. Then there was only silence and the overpowering smell of blood and, later, decay.

When the boy was discovered by the police after three days of unmitigated fright, he was nearly dead from dehydration. Instead of being placed in an orphanage, Ren Wei was adopted almost immediately by a tall, thin stranger who took him to a small hidden monastery on an "uninhabited" island south of Lantau. Under the relentless tutelage of his adopted "father," Wei spent the next 20 years studying the perfection of mind and body practiced by the Shih.

From his teacher, Wei learned the true (or most likely) story behind his early trauma. His family had been victims of an enraged and mindless flesh-eater — a *chih-mei*. Arriving on the heels of the official investigators (who never solved the apparent gang-style murders), the veteran witch-hunter had tracked down the guilty creature and destroyed it; that done, Ren Wei claimed the young survivor as his own.

Since completing his training, Wei has returned to Hong Kong Island and spends his time searching for traces of supernatural activity (usually, he doesn't have to look very hard). Unlike the majority of Hong Kong's residents, Wei does not discreetly look the other way when confronted by evidence of the *shen*. He seeks out the *shen* and destroys them.

Although his teacher warned him that not all supernatural creatures merit extermination, Wei finds the concept hard to grasp. He has yet to meet a *shen* worth sparing; he believes that all the "good" ones abandoned the world long ago. The ones that remain do so in anticipation of the coming feast of blood and savagery that will signify the arrival of the Sixth Age.

Image: Ren Wei's body is lean and hard, schooled by years of rigorous discipline. He dresses in casual, loose-fitting clothes, usually favoring dark colors. His shoulder-length hair makes him look like a student, and he does little to disabuse others of the notion. His face typically assumes a guarded expression, rarely betraying any emotions.

Roleplaying Hints: Your mentor took upon himself the burden of avenging your family; now you must avenge the families of others who have fallen prey to forces beyond their control. You do not seek out the *shen* actively, but when they bring their brutal ways to your attention, you follow their trail until you find your quarry. Then you destroy it without mercy — and without emotion.

Home: Wei keeps a small basement apartment near Hong Kong University.

Secrets: He knows more than any mortal should know about the ways of the *shen*; his knowledge of specifics, however, is spotty.

Influence: Ren Wei deliberately avoids entanglements of any kind.

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Judge

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Dodge 4, Empathy 1, Intimidation 4, Streetwise 2

Skills: Drive 2, Etiquette 1, Martial Arts 4, Melee 4, Stealth 4, Survival 1

Knowledges: Investigation 2, Linguistics 1, Occult 4

Backgrounds: Mentor 2, Resources 1

Chi Virtues: Yin 4, Yang 4

Soul Virtues: Hun 4, P'o 1

Willpower: 10





CHAPTER FIVE: DRAGON OF THE NIGHT: A STORY FOR HONG KONG

History, geography and people — all these are useless to a Storyteller without a framework in which all these elements can come together. *Dragon of the Night*, a story set in Hong Kong, provides just such a vehicle for Hong Kong-based characters to explore the varied locales and encounter many of the personalities described in this supplement. Storytellers need not feel bound by the strictures of the plot; they can change any or all of the story to suit their players' wishes or their own vision.

STORY SYNOPSIS

A wondrous magical weapon, a katana originating in the Fourth Age, has arrived in Hong Kong. The *shen*, who are attuned to such things, sense its presence, which prompts a scramble among several supernatural factions, all of whom seek the enchanted blade. The sword has its own agenda, though: It contains the spirit of its maker, an evil master swordsmith, and thus, it has plans of its own.

The characters become involved in the machinations of the sword and with the various factions who seek control of it. In the beginning, the characters seem to be pawns in the plans of others; later, as they discover more about the sword and those who desire to own it, they can formulate their own opinions and take charge of their fate.

MOOD

Hong Kong acts as a repository for the weird and the wonderful. Its crowded streets, wilderness regions, and many, many magical places hold a treasure trove of secrets. Even seemingly normal encounters often contain elements of strangeness or outright eeriness. Characters should feel caught up in the interplay of cosmic forces, tossed headlong into a cacophony of sights and sounds calculated to throw them off balance. Suspension of disbelief is an everyday occurrence in Hong Kong.

THEMES

Four interweaving themes form the story's subtext. The first involves the phenomenon of contiguity: Everything touches everything else. All things are related in one way or another. Actions have consequences that lead to further actions in an ever-widening circle (or, for the linear-minded, an ever-lengthening chain of events).

The second theme involves the importance of maintaining the cosmic balance. The cursed katana has upset grossly the delicate harmony in the region, overwhelming the Middle Kingdom and forcing the Wheel of Ages into

overdrive. In order to preserve the cosmic scheme of things, the balance must be restored — or else dire consequences ensue.

The third theme involves the viewing of existence as a test of moral character. The events each individual faces in her lifetime (whether natural or supernatural life) test her mettle. Just as fire and water temper a fine blade, so do personal challenges and problems help perfect those who overcome them. Failure teaches a lesson, though frequently a harsh one.

Finally, the unpredictability of joss forms an ongoing pattern throughout the story. Again and again, characters must risk themselves (or others) in order to grapple with the problems they face. Whether they succeed or fail is in the hands of fortune.

THE TROUPE

While the story assumes that most characters are Kuei-jin of one faction or another (or that a group includes at least one Kuei-jin character), the plot can accommodate any number of permutations. With some modifications, a Storyteller can adjust the story for troupes of shapechangers,



wraiths, spirit-folk (Eastern changelings), or mages (both Tradition and Technocracy). It is also possible to adapt the story for Western supernaturals — Kindred, Sabbat vampires, Garou (including Black Spiral Dancers), Stygian wraiths, Seelie or Unseelie changelings, and non-Asian mages. With more dramatic changes, weaker characters such as ghouls, Kinfolk, mediums, consors, Enchanted mortals, and hunters can become involved in the story's events.

THE LEGEND BEHIND THE STORY: THE SWORDS OF ISAMU

Japanese legends from the time of the Kamakura Shogunate tell of the swordsmith Isamu Harujiro, who was supreme among artisans for the superb quality of his blades. So finely balanced and harmonious to the eye were the swords of Isamu that the kami themselves desired them; taking the form of mortals, they left their spirit dwellings and traveled to Isamu's home to request his wondrous swords. They brought a great store of gems and fine jade ornaments with them to present to Isamu as payment for his good work.

At first, Isamu considered himself honored to have such illustrious and noble petitioners (for he did not recognize the heavenly beings in their mortal guises). But, he grew angry when he heard their demands, for these wealthy clients not only ordered that he make their blades from the finest materials, with hilts of precious jade, but they also required him to destroy the blades after their making. Having made their wishes known, the kami departed the world and returned to their homes to await the arrival (through destruction) of their swords.

Isamu found himself in a difficult position: His patrons were obviously gentlemen of means and status, but the thought of destroying his perfect blades was unthinkable. He conceived a plan, believing that he could outwit his noble customers and still garner their acclaim.

Per their instructions, Isamu labored for three years to forge seven blades. When his work was completed, he labored another 10 days to craft seven false blades — hastily made copies of the originals. He took these false blades with him on his journey to the mountain that his patrons had designated as the place of delivery and destruction. There, they had told him, he would find a fiery pool. Isamu was to drop the swords one by one into the pool, whose heat would melt and destroy them utterly.

Isamu did just that, but the blades he consigned to fiery oblivion were the seven false blades. Satisfied that he had met his patrons' requirements —

for how could they know which blades were destroyed after the deed was done? — Isamu returned to his home.

When the blades arrived in the spirit worlds, the kami were furious. These were not the elegant weapons they had requested, but inferior toys that broke as soon as they were used. They all placed a curse on Isamu together. His blades would continue to be balanced to perfection; their edges would retain their keenness; their appearance would delight the eyes of all who saw them — but each sword he made would hereafter bear a curse. Additionally, the kami sent lightning and great typhoons to plague Isamu, until the blades they had commissioned were destroyed by the elements' anger.

This would be a cautionary tale intended to warn mortals of trying to deceive the gods if the story ended here, with Isamu contrite and ruined by his pride and duplicity. But there is more to the legend.

Isamu Harujiro grew yet more prideful and arrogant despite the curses placed upon his work. He used his blades as instruments of vengeance, giving them as presents to unsuspecting nobles and samurai, then watching from the sidelines as the curses ruined the wielders. An evil spirit grew within Isamu, urging him to commit even more heinous acts. He learned finally that dark magics enabled him to direct the specific nature of each curse — so that one blade could not return to its sheath without drawing blood, while another required the sacrifice of a loved one's finger or toe each time it left its sheath.

Of all his swords, Isamu's masterpiece — made for his personal use — was a flawless katana, which he named Tatsuko Sayo (Dragon of the Night). Using his mightiest magic, Isamu crafted a piece of his P'o into the blade and invested it with a special curse: Once drawn, Tatsuko Sayo could not be sheathed unless it drank the blood of a *shen*. With this weapon, Isamu Harujiro declared war on the spirit worlds.

Thus began the period known to the *shen* as the 4,000 Nights of Unending Sorrow, when many wise and gentle spirits (and an equal number of malicious and stupid ones) fell to Dragon of the Night. The spirit worlds shook with anger at Isamu's offenses and sent their own champion, the great spirit warrior Ishitaro, the Stone's Child, to slay the master swordsmith.

A great battle ensued, resulting in the deaths of both Ishitaro and Isamu. Because of this melee, there was no one left to claim the cursed blade of Isamu, and Dragon of the Night disappeared.

The spirit of Isamu Harujiro entered the Dark Kingdom of Jade. There he underwent many torments before coming to the attention of the Jade Emperor, who had heard of the swordmaster and his *shen*-slayer sword and coveted Dragon of the Night for himself; he had the tortured wraith brought before him and commanded him to reveal the location of the

sword in the Middle Kingdom. The Jade Emperor promised Harujiro an honored place in his palace if he cooperated, and then he threatened an eternity of agony if he refused.

Harujiro pretended to agree but secretly determined that none but himself would ever possess his sword — his greatest and most powerful Fetter in the world of the living. Isamu alone knew where the sword had fallen into hiding, and he alone could retrieve it. By the force of his will (and his angry P'o), Isamu Harujiro escaped the Dark Kingdom of Jade and returned to his own body — not as one of the Kuei-jin, but as a Risen wraith.

His arrival in the Middle Kingdom provoked a storm of fury among the *shen*, who sensed his return and sought out Shizuko Kokoshin, mightiest of the Shih demon hunters, at great risk to themselves. Though Shizuko despised most *shen*, he agreed to a temporary truce and set about tracking down the Risen monster. Isamu did not even have time to recover Dragon of the Night before he fell to the whirling blades and potent Chi powers of Shizuko Kokoshin. The swordmaster's Hun fell once more into the Yin World, where the winds of the Tempest ripped it to shreds, casting it into Nothingness.

THE UNTOLD LEGEND

For those who still remember the story of the Wonderful and Terrible Swords of Isamu Harujiro, the story ends with the swordmaster's "final" destruction. But there is more to the tale, a third part that has never been told, until now.

Isamu's P'o escaped destruction miraculously by hiding itself within the white jade grip of Dragon of the Night, still Fettered to the sword and now trapped inside it. By melding its substance with the precious white jade (the magical properties of which it discovered while imprisoned in the Jade Emperor's dungeons), the P'o has attained a certain ability to act in the Middle Kingdom.

The swordmaster's P'o also has discovered that it can still work magic and has added embellishments to Dragon of the Night's curse: Not only can the sword not be sheathed without bloodying itself on one of the *shen*, but any wielder who fails to accomplish this requirement must sheathe the sword in his own body. In this manner, "Isamu" can use and discard unworthy or incompetent carriers. Further, the beauty of the cursed katana ensures a steady supply of greedy warriors desirous of possessing such a marvelous and perfect blade.

Through these powers, Dragon of the Night made its journey slowly across Japan. It passed through the hands of many samurai families (inevitably leading to the ruin of those noble houses), found its way aboard a seagoing vessel, transferred itself to the captain of a pirate ship that traveled the South China Sea, and roamed the Chinese mainland until it made its way back to Japan in the early part of the 20th century. There Dragon of the Night remained until it sensed that one of the Bishamon Kuei-jin, the sole survivor

of one of the samurai families who possessed it briefly, was on its trail. Unwilling to be found and destroyed, the demon blade sought another hiding place. Maneuvering itself into the hands of smugglers, it arrived in Hong Kong during a particularly chaotic time.

Its arrival has been noticed by the local supernatural population. Even now, Kuei-jin factions and other groups of *shen* engage themselves in a frantic search for the potent artifact. Few suspect its true nature, and only one individual can recognize it for what it truly is. Nevertheless, the hunt is on and hunters are in demand.

ENTER THE CHARACTERS

The Fettered P'o, however, has plans of its own. It desires to avenge itself against the Dark Kingdom of Jade by destroying its Hong Kong outpost. Likewise, it seeks revenge against all who caused it so much travail. The P'o's enemies, thus, include the denizens of the spirit worlds, the *shen* (especially the nature folk and the shapeshifters), and the Dark Kingdom of Jade.



AN OVERVIEW OF THE STORY

"Dragon of the Night" begins in the Dark Kingdom of Jade, as an obedient minion reports to the Jade Emperor that the katana he has sought for centuries has come to rest inside the boundaries of the Necropolis of Hong Kong. Since the weapon exists as a material object in the Middle Kingdom, the story's action must cross the Shroud and enter the world of the living. The bulk of the story takes place in the physical world, but the resolution requires the characters to visit either the Yin or Yang World.

If the characters involve wraiths, it may be possible to play through the prologue in the Dark Kingdom. At different points in the story, alternate approaches are suggested for specific groups of players characters.

Though, even greater is its hunger to possess a new body and achieve the semblance of human existence once more. Its preferred means of accomplishing this is by psychically possessing a powerful Kuei-jin with a potent Yin rating, thus resurrecting itself in a new body. By using its own negative energies to overpower such a host, the P'o could move about freely in the Middle Kingdom (and be subject to the physical restrictions of the Kuei-jin).

The characters can become involved with the action of the story in a variety of ways, a few of which are detailed below. Their decisions may lead them to all sorts of unusual places (even for supernaturals) and take them to the region's most exotic and elegant (or sordid and squalid) locales, or even into the Dark Kingdom of Jade and the Yin and Yang Worlds. They may literally need to go to Hell and back to realign the land's cosmic balance and lay the evil P'o to rest. Alternatively, they may fall prey to the sword's attraction and attempt to help it achieve its goals. Whatever they decide will determine the fate of Hong Kong's *shen* population for years to come.

PROLOGUE: AN AUDIENCE WITH THE JADE EMPEROR

Behind his screen of carved white jade, Yu Huang, the August Personage of Jade, Emperor of the Dark Kingdom of Jade and Master of the Yellow Springs, listened carefully as his Second Minister of Information received the cowering messenger's report. Smiling to himself, the Jade Emperor felt a deep satisfaction in learning that Tatsuko Sayo, the fabulous sword of the traitor Isamu, had once again surfaced in Zhongguo, the lands of the Middle Kingdom.

That the sword had come to rest in Hong Kong disturbed his inner harmony only mildly. Although now officially and totally under Yu Huang's jurisdiction once again, that fractious and unstable outpost was still not his ideal choice to sequester a treasure. Trusting the imperfect tools who administered that distant region of his domain was out of the question. The possibility of corruption through proximity to the barbarian ghosts was ever prevalent.

No, far better to send his own agents — skilled, but not so skilled that they succumbed to ambition. He intended to possess the great blade for himself, not deliver it into the hands of mere lackeys. The situation called for subtlety and delicate maneuvering.

The Minister dismissed the messenger, then turned and crawled toward the Imperial throne. Stopping a respectful distance from the concealing screen, the bureaucrat prostrated herself before her hidden overlord and waited.

"Select a handful of competent and loyal subjects to travel to Hong Kong. They shall inform the Protector that he is to assist them in their efforts to procure my missing treasure, but that he is not to interfere with their methods. Tell the subjects to leave

immediately and to tell no one where they are going. After you have done that, find the messenger you dismissed and reward him suitably before sending him to the Nine Abysses of Hell. When those things are done, report back to me for your own reward."

The Minister signified her acceptance of the emperor's commands and backed out of the throne room. Once outside the Jade Emperor's presence, she rose and quickly went about her duties.

The emperor studied his elegant hands, extending elongated fingernails and carving elaborate patterns in the air before him. The Minister had served him well for many centuries; it was time for her to rest. He could always use a new footstool....

RUNNING THE PROLOGUE FOR WRAITH CHARACTERS

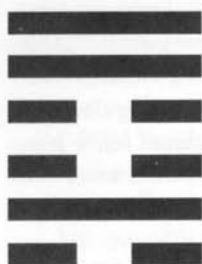
If the troupe contains wraiths, or if the Storyteller is adapting "Dragon of the Night" for use with **Wraith: The Oblivion** and **Dark Kingdom of Jade**, the option exists to play through the events described in the prologue. This decision may entail beginning the story with only the wraith character(s), bringing in the nonwraiths for Scene One or constructing an additional scene to gather the characters together.

In this case, the story should begin with an interview by the Minister, who has selected the characters — perhaps because they belong to her wraith family or are in some way indebted to her. The Minister tells the characters only that they must travel to Hong Kong and retrieve an artifact, bring it back to the Imperial Palace and place it in the hands of the emperor himself. She gives them an Imperial document to show the Protector of the Necropolis; the message instructs the local wraiths to provide assistance to the emperor's agents (the characters). It also cautions the Protector against interfering with the characters' actions. The Minister describes the katana and says only that it is somewhere in Hong Kong, probably on the island itself. She warns them of the price of failure and urges them to leave without delay.

Wraith characters who qualify as Rebels (Renegades) or Buddhists (Heretics) may begin the story by overhearing the events of the prologue and deciding to take matters in their own hands. They may ambush the Minister's selected wraiths and steal the document, thus legitimizing themselves in the eyes of the Protector of Necropolis Hong Kong, or they may decide to travel to the Necropolis on their own and trust joss to direct their course of action.

Note: In order for wraiths to participate fully in the events of this story, they should have fairly high levels in Puppetry; other Arcanoi allowing interaction with the world beyond the Shroud are also helpful.

SCENE ONE: WIND OVER WATER – AUSPICIOUS OMEN (“BEGINNINGS”)



In this scene, the characters come together with the intention of locating a legendary sword that has just arrived on Hong Kong Island. The troupe's make-up may determine whether the characters receive a summons (from Chun, Jun Yow, or some other authority figure), hear of the sword on their own (through local contacts), or acquire the information and impetus to search for the sword via dreams or omens.

Although many players may resist the cliché of having a mission “assigned” to them, the hierarchical nature of Chinese society — including its criminal element — makes this a perfectly acceptable choice. Unless characters are playingheimin vampires, ronin werewolves or other outcast types, they most likely work for or are accountable to someone.

The Timeline (see insert) lists the progression of the story's events as they would occur without the characters' intervention. Some of these events provide opportunities for characters to get involved in ways that seem less contrived than an “official summons.”

The setting for the scene depends on who, if anyone, calls the characters together. Angúo Chun holds a formal audience in his court (located in Hong Kong's Central District), while Jun Yow conducts a military “briefing” from her headquarters in Kowloon. If Bishamon Kazuko hires the characters, she meets them in an out-of-the-way tea room, where she hopes her rendezvous goes unnoticed.

Wraith characters actually receive their instructions in the Prologue; for them, this scene takes place in the Hong Kong outpost of the Dark Kingdom and consists of a reversal of a usual “superior summons inferiors” scene. Instead, the characters must inform the Protector of their business in his Necropolis and request his cooperation (backed by the authority of the Jade Emperor's Minister).

Since members of Hong Kong's supernatural community interact better with one another than their Western counterparts, it is possible that the characters may include a variety of *shen*. If so, the Storyteller should adjust the location of the “meeting” to accommodate all concerned; for example, a group containing any of the fae needs a site relatively free of baneful influences. Hengeyokai may prefer to meet somewhere outside the urban centers of Hong Kong or Kowloon.

Wherever the characters come together, they hear the following information: A powerful item — a great source of Chi — has arrived on Hong Kong Island, possibly along the

coast near Aberdeen. Such a treasure needs to be recovered by those who can deal with it properly. There is some urgency to the quest, lest the item fall into the wrong hands.

Storytellers should tailor the above information based on the knowledge available to the individual who brings the characters together. Kazuko, for example, knows the sword is cursed; she may or may not decide to inform those she hires of this fact. Jun Yow knows only that the item is powerful and that it might give her an edge in her struggle against Angúo Chun.

Characters may make an Intelligence + Occult roll (difficulty 8 for Chinese characters, 7 for Japanese characters, 9 for all others) to recall legends about magic swords. Three successes allow a character to remember general details about such swords — such as their ability to retain Chi, their possession of special powers and the attachment of certain conditions to their use. Five successes actually enable the character to realize that some swords bear curses, and that these usually come into effect only if the weapon is unsheathed.

Note that only characters with very high scores in Occult or specializations in Japanese legends should actually “remember” the story of Isamu's cursed swords, unless Kazuko herself tells them.

ALTERNATIVE BEGINNINGS

The characters may also hear of the sword's arrival through sources other than “official” ones. Rumor and gossip spread quickly, and characters who possess either the Allies or Contacts Background may hear of the arrival of something valuable on the Aberdeen side of Hong Kong Island. Dreams or omens concerning the sword may plague characters with the Portents Skill or Awareness Talent. Storytellers should decide what method of getting the characters to the Aberdeen coast (Scene Two) is most effective.

SCENE TWO: THUNDER OVER THUNDER – SIGN OF THE SACRIFICE (“MURDER AT ABERDEEN”)



Following their instructions or proceeding from clues received (whether in a dream or from street sources), the characters wind up along the southwest coast of Hong Kong Island, a little outside Aberdeen, a city once notorious for its pirate settlements. Regardless of the time of day, the sky is overcast; thick clouds and the distant rumble of thunder promise a storm in the not too distant future.

TIMELINE

Isamu's P'o does not rest idly waiting for someone worthy to find it. It has a plan of action that it will carry through to its conclusion unless the characters intervene and interrupt its schemes.

The following timeline is intended to help Storytellers keep track of the sword's movements after its arrival in Hong Kong. In the event that the players diverge from the intended order of events (and, in all likelihood, they will), the Storyteller can use this schedule to pull the characters back on track.

In addition, other events complicate the search for the sword; the arrival of such a potent magical presence in Hong Kong has imbalanced the region's Chi, causing ripples in the spirit worlds that have the potential to disturb *shen* (possibly including some of the characters).

- **First Day:** Dragon of the Night arrives in Hong Kong in the company of a group of smugglers, one of whom it controls. Needing to replenish its Chi, it assists its wielder in locating and killing a *shen* — a Heng Po who happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Qian Shi, the Kumo (Goblin Spider), attempts to meet the smugglers, but the sword, sensing Qian Shi's desire to destroy it rather than wield it, has other plans and manages to abort the rendezvous. The Kumo launches his own search for the weapon, possibly using intermediaries or even hiring the characters to do his legwork.

- **Second Day:** Tiger Toranaga (see **Bastet**) tips off Ling Chu that something powerful has left Japan and is headed for Hong Kong. Toranaga associates it with the mysterious deaths of several Japanese persons, including a number of *shen*. Ling Chu begins his investigation, not knowing exactly what he is looking for. Near evening, he discovers the slain Heng Po.

One of the friends of the dead spirit may contact fae characters or allies of the spirit-folk and solicit their help in finding the murderer, thus involving them in the story. In addition, wraith characters (or characters who have connections to the Dark Kingdom of Jade) have now received their "marching orders" from the Jade Emperor's Minister.

- **Third Day:** Kazuko arrives in Hong Kong and seeks an audience with Angño Chun. She receives a barely civil reception, along with permission to pursue her mission as long as she does not disturb the harmony of the local *shen*.

She begins casting about for someone to help her. (This is another opportunity for the characters to get involved with the story and provides a "natural" excuse for hiring the characters or soliciting their help.)

- **Fourth Day:** The sword compels its wielder, the leader of the smugglers, to search for a suitable vessel for it to possess. This element throws the sword and the characters together. If they are already involved in the story, this may be their first opportunity to cross paths with the sword. If they have not already come into contact with the events of the story, this serves as a collision with a "runaway plot device."

- **Fifth Day:** By this time, most major figures in the *shen* community (as well as some of the mages) have figured out that something powerful is loose in Hong Kong. If the characters are not already involved, one of these groups may require their services.

- **Sixth Through Tenth Days:** Unless the characters claim the sword and deliver it to the spirits for judgment, Isamu's P'o attaches itself to one of the following "most likely candidates": Gan Shuo (the *akuma*), Kiosho Masahiro of the Japanese Genji Clan, or — as a last resort — Oliver Thrace (the Tremere).

Once this attachment has occurred, one of two events occurs. If Isamu's P'o dominates the sword's recipient, it takes over the *shen*'s body, replacing the host's personality with its own. It then begins a deadly rampage through Hong Kong, using the host body's powers and the deadly katana to slay one *shen* after another. The P'o first attempts to eliminate the Jade Kingdom wraiths of Necropolis Hong Kong. This vendetta and the ensuing Maelstrom created by the sword's presence prompt the arrival of the Jade Emperor's armies. Spectres, summoned by Isamu, boil up from the Tempest, and the spirit landscape around Hong Kong becomes a battleground for months, which may well lead to political repression and endemic violence in the Middle Kingdom.

If, on the other hand, the recipient manages to subdue Isamu's P'o (through Necromancy or by besting the Spectre in a contest of P'o versus Being), a dangerous adversary has just acquired a very deadly weapon. The possible consequences of this are manifold, depending on the personality and motivations of the sword-wielder, but will very likely prove extremely inauspicious for Hong Kong's *shen*.



Exploring the coastline near Aberdeen brings the characters eventually to the site of the murdered Heng Po. The concentration of death energies around the pieces of the dismembered corpse are tangible to anyone with the Awareness Skill, Disciplines or Gifts that allow them to sense disturbances in the local Chi.

As characters approach the site, they see a lone figure bent over the ground: This is Ling Chu, who has arrived here to conduct an investigation on a reported murder. Unless the characters take extraordinary precautions to sneak up on him, the Khan policeman realizes their arrival and rises to confront them.

If the characters do not attack immediately, Ling Chu questions them about their business in the area. Unless the characters' behavior or response to his questions warrants it, he does not identify himself as a police officer right away. He is more interested in finding out what the characters know about "his" investigation than he is in revealing his own reasons for being there, but if the characters are particularly persuasive, Ling Chu may reveal some of what he has discovered so far. Hengeyokai or spirit-folk (changelings) may elicit his cooperation, although he has worked with Kuei-jin presumably from time to time and may respond to characters working for Angúo Chun.

Should he be so inclined, Ling Chu can tell them that the victim was one of the spirit-folk, a Heng Po (as far as he can tell). The murder weapon seems to be some kind of blade, possibly a ritual sword (from the residual Chi energies). The characters may already have this information, but Ling Chu's conclusions can confirm what they know.

The Khan prefers to work by himself (or with Toranaga), but he has come under censure from his new superiors for not being a "team player." If characters actively win his favor or seem genuinely concerned with solving the murder and tracking down the murder weapon, Ling Chu may offer to assist their independent inquiries, possibly even enlisting their help in an official capacity.

In either case, the trail ends here apparently. If the characters attempt to trace the Chi energies (using Lifesight, Death/Ghostsight, or similar powers), hoping they can track the sword through its emissions, they can follow them north toward the Hong Kong-Kowloon side of the island. Once the characters are in the city, the overwhelming interplay of energies makes following any one impossible.



SCENE THREE: WATER OVER THUNDER – APPOINT HELPERS (“THE WAITING GAME”)



The characters may need to spend some time gathering information from Allies or Contacts before they can proceed further in the search for the sword. This “scene” provides the Storyteller with the opportunity to use several of Hong Kong's more exotic or less savory locales. The potentials for ferreting out information include, but are not restricted to, the following ideas:

AT THE RACES

Characters not limited to nocturnal hours may visit the racetrack at Happy Valley or Shatin, on the chance that someone who has come into possession of a powerful Chi-repository may seek to use it to draw luck at the betting stalls. And knowing the propensity for gambling among Hong Kong natives (regardless of their nationality), this is not a far-fetched idea.

Races take place on the weekends and on Wednesday nights. One of the smugglers has, in fact, gone to the track and placed a bet for an upcoming race, on a horse named Luck of the Blade. Bribes, favors or other kinds of persuasion (including supernatural ones) can elicit the name (false) of the bettor and an address in Wanchai (a brothel called the House of Seven Tigers).

FINE DINING

Another possibility for the characters is that whoever has the sword may attempt to make contact with the monied crowd, hoping to cash in on the weapon's probable monetary value. Hong Kong's floating restaurants in Aberdeen provide a look at what's left of local high society. Here, the millionaires who have decided to cast their lot with the new government retire to remind themselves of the finer things in life, while the incoming administrators from the People's Republic take advantage of the luxuries offered by their new province.

Characters may learn that certain executives from Pearl Paradigms have been making inquiries about the purchase of rare Japanese artifacts. In addition, Gwendolyn Fleming, noted collector and patron of the arts, has also been seeking information about antique swords, claiming she wishes to

give one to a "friend." Storytellers wishing to involve characters with either the Syndicate or the Kin-jin may use this setting as a way to bring disparate groups together.

Pursuing any line of inquiry leads to a rumor that more information can be found among the boat people, who "know about smuggling and all sorts of black-market activities."

FORTUNES, ANYONE?

Belief in *joss* and the telling of fortunes may lead the characters to one of many temples in Hong Kong where professional fortunetellers and interpreters can cast the *I Ching* or read the fortune sticks for them. Storytellers may use this scene to give characters broad hints as to where to go (i.e., *The clash of blades amid the water holds misfortune for those who make their home on the sea.*) or express a sense of urgency in the completion of their quest (i.e., *A great storm builds overhead—when it breaks, disaster for the Middle Kingdom.*).

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS, OR TALK ISN'T CHEAP

Characters who decide to visit any of Hong Kong's red-light districts have a storehouse of information waiting for them if they ask the correct questions and make the right moves. The denizens of the twilight world have been shaken by recent events. One of the most popular "girls," a gentle and ambitious individual named Mo (Jasmine), has disappeared after entertaining a customer in the House of Seven Tigers, where she works. Characters who do not already know where the pleasure house is may roll Intelligence + Streetwise to locate it in the heart of Wanchai.

Discreet inquiries (or a successful Wits + Streetwise roll, difficulty 7) reveal that a pair of rough-looking individuals (one of whom was definitely Japanese) requested Jasmine's services earlier in the evening. One of them carried a long bundle that he seemed reluctant to let out of his sight. Jasmine felt uneasy about taking both of them up to her room, but she needed the money to bankroll her departure from Hong Kong. If characters ask to see the room, they have to purchase one of the girls as the price of admission.

The girl assigned to them gives her name as Ping (Apple) or "Pinkie." After she takes them to Jasmine's old room, she asks the characters what they want and tells them she charges extra for multiple partners. If told that all they want is information, she merely says, "Sex, talk, same price. Never mind."

[Note: If the characters speak Cantonese, Ping comes across as articulate and polished in her speech. If, however, a serious language discrepancy exists between her and the characters, her conversation has a pidginlike quality.]



WHAT REALLY HAPPENED

Two of the smugglers, including the one carrying the cursed sword, decided to combine the need to hide with the opportunity to enjoy themselves by renting a girl for the night. The two began making demands on Jasmine for services they had not agreed to pay for, and she protested. One of them unwrapped the sword and drew it to scare her. Jasmine conceded to their demands but raised her voice to alert her friend Ping, whom she knew was listening for signs of trouble.

Unfortunately, by the time Ping was able to roust the pair of burly triad members who worked as guards for the brothel, the damage was done. The smuggler who had drawn the katana found himself unable to sheathe it except by plunging it into his own body. His partner, thinking quickly, forced Jasmine to help him bundle up the body (and the sword, which he sheathed with no trouble) and escaped through the window to the alley one floor below. He elicited Jasmine's reluctant cooperation by threatening to claim she had murdered her customer if she refused to help. Disposing of the body in a nearby alley, the pair fled to Mongkok.



PACING THE STORY

Despite most players' beliefs that characters can accomplish "six impossible things" before breakfast, followed by a full schedule of going places and meeting people, even supernaturals have their limitations on how much they can actually get done in one 24-hour period (especially if their activities are restricted to night hours or if, like most creatures, they need to sleep).

The characters become involved in the story on the day after the sword's arrival in Hong Kong, at the earliest. The investigations described in Scene Three should take at least a full day (or night), or perhaps two. The Storyteller should attempt to enforce a realistic sense of time's passage.

In addition, life (or unlife) doesn't come to a grinding halt while the characters attend to their quest. Social concerns, duties to *wu* or pack, demands from Allies or even mundane events like classes, jobs or familial responsibilities intrude on even the most focused individual. (Any fan of detective stories knows that the ex-spouse, ailing relative, dependent child or despondent best friend always interrupts the investigation at the worst possible moment.) Storytellers should make certain that the characters do not lose track of their personal lives while being embroiled in the events of the story. The Timeline (see above) should help set the pace for the actions; if the characters are moving too fast for "necessary" events to occur logically, the Storyteller should feel free to insert scenes involving the characters' other duties or personal relationships. Although, in a sense, these scenes are "time-wasters," they help to flesh out the characters' development as individuals and allow the Storyteller to include settings not covered in the story itself.

Ping watches the characters search the room. If they display any evidence of supernatural abilities, she pretends not to notice. (Mages who use magick in her presence do not accrue Paradox, since she does not count as a Sleeper. If anyone questions her feigned ignorance of their activities, she replies, "I see what I'm paid to see, nothing more.") Characters may also take this comment to mean that, if paid, she can remember "seeing" quite a bit.

Ping did not see exactly what went on between Jasmine and her customers, but she overheard some of their discussion from the room next door. "Not that I was eavesdropping," she tells the characters quickly, "that would be rude. But Jasmine and I were friends and looked out for each other. She gave me a signal that she was worried, so I tried to listen for signs of distress."

From the little bit Ping heard, she could tell that Jasmine's clients first asked and then demanded more than they had paid for. The girl protested and the men became harsh. Ping heard a strange noise, like something metallic rubbing against another surface. Then Jasmine pleaded, "Okay, I'll do whatever you want. Just don't cut me." Ping ran downstairs to summon help from the brothel's strong-arms, but by the time they could intervene, it was too late. "The window was open, the room was a mess, and the bed sheets were missing."

Jasmine's old room has since been cleaned up. Nevertheless, anyone with the ability to see into the past or sense Chi emanations can discover something about the sordid events surrounding Jasmine's disappearance. Storytellers should determine how much information to give such characters based on the success of their attempts.

The characters should at least be able to determine that Jasmine's disappearance is connected to the sword. If *joss* is in their favor, they may discover clues pointing them to the smugglers' safehouse in Mongkok.

OTHER SOURCES OF INQUIRY

If the characters make inquiries among the Kuei-jin or report back to one of their patrons, they hear that a member of the Bishamon *uji* from Japan has arrived in town and has been asking about a family relic — an ancient katana that she believes has come to Hong Kong. Characters who are not already working for her may seek out Kazuko and attempt to obtain additional knowledge from her.



SCENE FOUR: HEAVEN OVER EARTH — OBSTRUCTION ("BEHIND THE SCENES")



This scene does not involve the characters, but it must take place before the characters have the opportunity to visit the boat people. Frustrated in his attempts to gain possession of the sword that he paid to have smuggled into Hong Kong, Qian Shi (the Kumo) has decided to proceed with the second part of his plan, which involves acquiring a potent source of untapped Chi to power the longevity ritual in which he intends to sacrifice the sword.

His Crawlerling form has enabled him to spread his awareness throughout most of Hong Kong — even extending to the domains of the Hoklo and Tanka boat people. Thus, Qian Shi knows of the birth of the Zhong Lung infant, who fits his requirements perfectly. He arranges for the kidnapping of the child (and his mother), using a group of thugs to snatch the pair during one of the rare times when they are unattended by Dong Tao. Once this group has done this, the constituents flee into the streets of Aberdeen and attempt to make their way to their rendezvous with Qian Shi. Should they succeed, the Goblin Spider takes mother and child to his lair beneath Victoria Peak.

SCENE FIVE: WATER OVER WATER — SEEK SMALL GAINS ("AMONG THE BOAT PEOPLE")



Sooner or later, the characters' investigations lead them to the community of the Tanka in Aberdeen Harbor. The PRC has been making an effort to eliminate the unsightly (and ungovernable) chaos of sampans and junks that crowd the floating cities of the Hoklo and Tanka peoples. Unease has settled like a thick mist over the insular and, to outsiders, the closed community. And that is at the best of times. Now, the Tanka are in an uproar.

The characters can feel the tension as soon as they arrive. For this reason, inquiries made by strangers are not met with as much caution as usual; anyone asking about someone "in the know" finds herself directed to "the old man's sampan, over there."

Characters with Allies among the boat people or those who know any of the members of the Sublime Caretakers *wu* may already be aware of the presence of one of the Middle Dragons (the Zhong Lung) in the Tanka community. If so, they may suspect (correctly) that he is the “old man” they are being sent to see. Those who do not know Dong Tao’s true nature do not have long to wait.

The ancient Zhong Lung is in a rage over the theft of his heir and hovers between mindless fury and overwhelming despair. In other words, he is not in the mood for conversation about magical swords. Characters can sense his “otherness” immediately; attempts to penetrate his human form succeed automatically regardless of whether supernatural powers or Skills such as Disguise or Sense Deception are used. Dong Tao is not concerned with concealing himself from anyone at this time.

His reaction to characters depends largely on their conduct when they approach him — and his Kinfolk make certain that they do approach him once they have been pointed in his direction. If characters attempt to broach the subject of the sword, ignoring Dong Tao’s obvious state of agitation, he turns his anger on them, railing at them for expecting him to be concerned with inconsequential when his world has been turned upside down. “My future has been stolen! My past lies in the dust!” He makes it clear that he will not talk to anyone until the child has been returned to him.

If the characters persist, or if he has any reason to suspect that they are connected with the kidnappers, he shifts into his Archid form right in front of them, filling the low-ceilinged cabin with his bulk and looking like a dragon out of legend. Storytellers may want to have characters roll to avoid surrendering to their P’o (if they are Kuei-jin) or to some form of frenzy (if they are Kindred or shapeshifters). Wraith characters may find themselves ripped from the Skinlands and thrown into a Harrowing by the overpowering nature of Dong Tao’s transformation. Changelings or mages could enter a state of panic.

Unless the characters provoke him further or attempt to attack him, Dong Tao does not initiate a violent confrontation. If a fight between the characters and the Zhong Lung does break out, however, the Storyteller should go with it; it may be necessary to remind the characters that they will be in dire trouble if they actually kill one of the Middle Dragons (not to mention destroying any chance for using him as an information source).

The most sensible course of action for the characters is to offer Dong Tao their services in tracking down his son. He is able to compose himself enough to answer questions that may assist the characters in achieving this goal.

Dong Tao can tell the characters that the kidnapping occurred just before their arrival. The abductors timed their approach to coincide with his daily swim. His granddaughter and her son (his heir) were taking the air on the deck of the sampan. Dong Tao had heard the child’s mother scream and made his way back to the boat just in time to see a group of

dark-clad figures heading swiftly away from his sampan toward the shore, making use of the other boats as stepping stones in their flight.

By retracing the kidnappers’ route away from Dong Tao’s sampan, characters should be able to pick up a trail that leads onto the shore and into Aberdeen. From there, characters can either ask people on the street if they saw a group of people, with a young woman and an infant, running past them. At least one person saw such a collection of individuals heading toward the Central Bus Terminal in Exchange Square just a few minutes ago. Characters native to Hong Kong know that two regular bus routes run from Aberdeen to the north side of Hong Kong Island; one bus goes via the university, while the other goes through the tunnel that cuts beneath the island and connects the settlements on the north and south sides.

As the characters arrive in Exchange Square, the No. 70 bus is just pulling away, headed for the tunnel. The chase is on.

CLOUDY, WITH A CHANCE OF RAIN

The negative Chi energies of the sword have caused a ripple effect that has spread across the Wall into the Middle Kingdom. Since the weapon’s arrival in Hong Kong, storm clouds have gathered in the skies above the region. Muffled thunder rumbles perpetually in the distance, while the wind (particularly outside the urban centers) fluctuates between a brisk breeze and a strong blow. As time passes and the sword’s energies build, the weather worsens. By the end of the story, Hong Kong should face a full typhoon (mirrored in the Dark Kingdom of Jade by a Maelstrom of equivalent force).

Not only does the weather suffer from the sword’s presence, the balance of Chi has been seriously disturbed, and everyone (mortals and *shen* alike) is feeling the effects. Yang-aspected Kuei-jin, shapeshifters, and other *shen* attuned to the Yang World find themselves beset by bouts of depression and other negative emotions (frenzy difficulties increase by one). Riots occur spontaneously over apparently trivial concerns among the populace; political plans go awry; business takes a decided turn for the worse; and, horror of horrors, the stock market dips precipitously. The Storyteller can insert descriptions of the overall malaise to call characters’ attention to the fact that all is not well in the Middle Kingdom.

SCENE SIX: LAKE OVER THUNDER – THE CHASE (“CHILD-CARE”)

No story is complete without a chase scene and, as in most chase scenes in which one vehicle unerringly pursues another through traffic-congested streets or cops chase robbers through the cars of a speeding subway, realism goes by the boards in the interest of excitement and plot resolution.

The Storyteller should make note of whether characters have their own vehicles (cars, motorcycles or bikes), or they grab a taxi or employ supernatural means of pursuit (such as flight). Systems for running chase scenes are available in the Storyteller System basic rulebooks, or the Storyteller can make up her own rules for adjudicating the pursuit.

In any case, just as the characters are about to close with their quarry (or lose them altogether due to bad joss), traffic screeches to a halt as a vehicle ahead of them (maybe it wasn't the bus, after all...) stops suddenly. Several figures leap from the stopped vehicle and disappear into the side of the tunnel.

This is the signal for the characters to bail out of their own vehicle, abandon their taxi or take a hard left into the stone facing of the tunnel. They can easily find a door in the wall that opens into a maintenance corridor that runs the length of the tunnel. Within this confining place, the characters should have no problem running the kidnappers to ground. Doing so without harming the child or his mother presents complications, however.

The kidnappers do not surrender the child willingly, even when they have evidence that their opponents are something other than “normal” humans. The goons hired by Qian Shi are cold-hearted and prepared to sacrifice their victims to save themselves if necessary. They may threaten harm to the mother or child (or both). If nothing else, one of them thrusts the mother in the path of the characters, hoping to use her to deflect an attack. Only as a last resort do they harm or give up the child, knowing that if they fail to deliver it to their boss (the Kumo) at the rendezvous point (further down the tunnel), they will suffer for it.

The scene should end with the characters in possession of the child and, with luck, the mother. Either or both of the mortals may suffer injury; it is possible that the mother dies in the course of the battle.

The kidnappers who survive their encounter with the characters attempt to flee the scene; if captured, they refuse to volunteer any information about why they stole the child or for whom they work. (Of course, the characters have ways of making them talk.)

The characters can learn that a local flesh-peddler paid the abductors to acquire the child and his mother. Their boss' insistence on these particular individuals surprised them, since “the girls he fancies are usually prettier and the kids are usually at least a few years older,” but they didn't raise any objections.

Characters with a high score in Streetwise or those who have ties to the criminal underworld might connect the goons' boss with rumors of a quasimythical figure who reportedly controls the most perverse and esoteric elements of the flesh trade. It should not be possible, however, for characters to finger Qian Shi at this point. Returning mother and child to their family is the next order of business.

[**Note:** If the characters are working for Qian Shi, they can still involve themselves in the rescue of the child. Their job consists of retrieving the sword, which assumes primary importance in the Kumo's schemes. Acquiring vital information from the Zhong Lung may, therefore, necessitate preempting the kidnappers' mission. Since Qian Shi hired each group separately for their task, the characters may not even realize they are interfering in their employer's business unless they speak to one of the kidnappers. In any case, in order to proceed with their mission, they need to return the child to Dong Tao. (If necessary, the heir can always be stolen again....)]

KIDNAPPERS

These are some of Hong Kong's toughest professional goons. Although they have no special abilities, they excel at their job (killing, maiming, stealing, strong-arming, etc.). Storytellers should feel free to alter their statistics (within the limitations for normal humans) in order to present a challenge for the characters.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 2, Dodge 3, Intimidation 3, Martial Arts 3, Streetwise 3, Firearms 2, Melee 3, Stealth 3, Area Knowledge (Hong Kong) 3

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated





SCENE SEVEN: EARTH OVER LAKE – PREVAILING ("THE DRAGON'S REWARD")



When the characters return the mother and child to Dong Tao, the ancient Zhong Lung welcomes them with open arms. If the mother died in the battle, Dong Tao expresses his grief and instructs his family to begin preparing the body for the funeral rites. (If the characters left the mother's body in the tunnel, the old man sends

some of his Kinfolk to retrieve her and berates the characters for their thoughtlessness.)

He does not refer to the characters' original reason for coming to see him until after they have eaten with him and passed several minutes in casual conversation. Only when Dong Tao is ready does he ask the characters why they sought him out among all the denizens of the floating city. This is the opportunity the characters have been waiting for.

Dong Tao uses his Mneseis as well as his general knowledge of storytelling to recall the legend of the cursed swords of Isamu Harujiro. He knows most of the information related in the Story Background, up to and including Isamu's destruction at the hands of Shizuko Kokoshin, the legendary demon hunter. Dong Tao can offer his own speculations about the subsequent history of the sword called Tatsuko Sayo (Dragon of the Night), suggesting that this might be the katana the characters are seeking. If it is, he warns them, it is probably cursed and they should treat it with caution should it come into their hands.

If the characters take heed of his wisdom (provided they have behaved respectfully toward him), Dong Tao offers to have his oldest daughter cast their fortunes. The Storyteller can use this as an opportunity to point the characters in the desired direction (i.e., toward Mongkok and Scene Eight).

SCENE EIGHT: HEAVEN OVER FIRE – GATHERING ("TRAVEL ACROSS THE GREAT STREAM")



The characters need to travel to Mongkok to pick up the trail of the sword. They can cross the bay from the island to Kowloon via the Star Ferry or by one of the other means of above- (and below-) water travel available. A tunnel runs beneath Victoria

THE SWORD AT WORK

In fact, the characters are not expected, but someone else is. Isamu's P'o has not been idle while the characters have combed Hong Kong in search of the sword it inhabits. The smugglers, acting under Isamu's compulsion, have contacted agents of both Gan Shuo and Kiosho Masahiro, either of whom would make an ideal host for Isamu's P'o. Both Kuei-jin indicated an interest in acquiring what they believe is an antique sword and which Gan Shuo suspects may have magical properties. Both have agreed to send emissaries to the shop to negotiate a price.

Although Gan Shuo leaves his stonecarver's shop rarely because he prefers to conduct his business through intermediaries, Masahiro comes to the shop personally, provided the rendezvous takes place after dark. This may place him hard on the heels of the characters, if they arrive during the evening hours.

Harbor, connecting the island to the mainland, so characters may elect to drive across the water.

Although this subdistrict of Kowloon is one of the most densely populated places in the world, finding someone or getting information becomes relatively simple — merely a matter of finding the right price. Characters with Streetwise or appropriate connections need only to put out the word that they are willing to pay for news of a valuable sword, Japanese smugglers, or a runaway pleasure girl (Jasmine); information rains down on them suddenly with monsoonlike intensity. Incidentally, characters who have remarked on the phenomenally bad weather that has been building up since the sword's arrival may notice that the skies over Kowloon appear even stormier than those above Hong Kong Island.

Characters who know either the Nezumi Brian Ang or the Kin-jin Nosferatu Clive Cooper — and who can locate either of them — can gain precise knowledge of the sword's location. Otherwise, word on the street alerts the characters to the fact that a group of Japanese toughs (with a pretty woman in tow) have moved into one of the few remaining bird shops on Hong Lok Street.

Since most of its competition has relocated to the new Mongkok Market, the Harmonious Nightingale Songbird Emporium (a sign on the door advertises in bad English and in better Chinese: GOOD-SOUNDING BIRDS FOR YOUR HOME AND PROSPERITY/REASONABLE PRICES/CAGES AND FOOD) is not hard to locate. The shop stays open until late, closing down well after midnight.

From outside the shop, despite the street noises vying for precedence, the frenetic chirpings of hundreds of birds acts as its own advertisement. The noise is deafening inside. The shop is tiny, with walls lined with shelves and crammed with cages in which songbirds of every size, shape and tonal variation warble incessantly. A rack full of bins containing masses of small, writhing worms bears the label: CHOICE MEALY WORMS FOR YOUR FINE BIRDS. Cages made of wicker, bamboo and wire stand on tables that demarcate barely negotiable aisles. An old woman sits at the back of the shop playing mahjong with a group of friends, all of them elderly. She looks up briefly as the characters enter and waves them inside, then returns to her game.

If the characters interrupt her to inquire about the presence of the sword, the smugglers or Jasmine — presumably in a less than direct manner — she nods at them and smiles. "Downstairs in the back," she tells the characters. "You're expected."

SCENE NINE: WIND OVER HEAVEN — IMPENDING STORM ("INTERESTING TIMES")



The characters can proceed without impediment to the back of the shop and down a narrow, rickety flight of stairs (unrepaired deliberately in order to alert the smugglers to visitors, expected or otherwise). Characters attempting to avoid making noise on these poor man's "nightingale floors" must make a Dexterity + Stealth roll

(difficulty 9) and score at least three successes to mask the sound of their footsteps completely.

A small storeroom at the bottom of the stairs contains several crates marked "Bird Cages." If characters attempt to move them, the weight of the crates indicates that many of them contain something more substantial than wire or wicker constructions. The characters can make out a door equipped with a spyhole at the far end of the room; knocking on the door gains them entry after a cursory examination by the smugglers inside.

Characters should already realize from their reception by the shop's proprietor that the smugglers are, in fact, expecting someone to show up for the sword. Whether they attempt to convince the smugglers that they are the prospective buyers, or they decide to go for a frontal assault against obvious mortal opponents, should be left up to the characters entirely.

The door opens into a small apartment containing an outer room and a small back room; the door to the inner room is slightly ajar, revealing part of a bed. Jasmine is there, tied to the bedposts to prevent her escape. The smugglers have also blind-

folded and gagged her “for her protection” in anticipation of the coming negotiations. They are considering taking her back with them to Japan, so they are reluctant to kill her at this point.

Four of the original smugglers remain. They are desperate to unload the sword, confused about why they did not keep their scheduled rendezvous in Aberdeen. Furthermore, the smugglers are agitated by the unexpected and inexplicable suicide of their leader and are completely unaware that the sword has been controlling their actions since their arrival in Hong Kong.

Characters attempting to masquerade as the smugglers’ “expected” guests may succeed initially in their ruse. The Storyteller should require either good roleplaying or a successful Intelligence + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 7). Unless at least one of the characters meets the sword’s criteria for an acceptable host (i.e., Dharma of 6 or higher and a high Yin rating), however, Isamu’s P’o “voices” its own objection by forcing the smuggler currently under its direct control to unsheath it and attack the characters.

Even if the characters succeed in acquiring the sword through subtle means (or through more direct methods), their efforts are interrupted before they gain actual possession of the weapon. The sound of footsteps on the creaky basement stairs announces the arrival of either Gan Shuo’s agents or representatives of Kiosho Masahiro (Storyteller’s choice). If this scene takes place at night, then Masahiro accompanies his agents. The other potential buyer arrives a few minutes later.

If the characters are busy fighting the smugglers, then the new arrivals attempt a hasty withdrawal. The sword, however, switches tactics, forcing its wielder to deliver it to an appropriate individual. If one of the characters has managed to wrest the sword from its smuggler wielder during the battle, then she must make a resisted Willpower roll against Isamu’s Being (see **Appendix**) each time she attempts to use the weapon. If she fails, she must immediately attempt to hand the sword over to its preferred target instead.

If the agents of Gan Shuo or Masahiro acquire the weapon, they break off combat and flee rapidly; their objective was to retrieve the sword, not engage in combat. (If the sword has already inflicted at least four Health Levels of aggravated damage to a *shen*, it allows itself to be returned to its sheath; otherwise, its wielder cannot do anything except continue fighting or else, as the late leader of the smugglers discovered, turn the sword upon himself.)

If the characters seize the weapon, they face the same dilemma. Now that the weapon is in their possession, their next step is to deliver it to their patron or employer, not to finish off their opponents. Any character holding the sword who has not used it to draw *shen* blood must either continue fighting or else follow the same compulsion to harm herself.

This scene serves at least two purposes. First, it places the characters in the sword’s vicinity, giving them a chance to acquire it (if they can successfully grab it from the smugglers and retain it after the rival factions arrive), or at least to get a good

look at it before someone snatches it out from under them. The scene also exists to bring together some of the parties interested in the sword — a precursor to what follows as word of the sword spreads like wildfire through the supernatural community. The scene ends when either the characters or one of the rival groups gets the sword and leaves the shop.

BACK AT THE HARMONIOUS NIGHTINGALE SONGBIRD EMPORIUM

Any surviving smugglers decide that a speedy return to Japan is the best course of action. They leave the shop as soon as possible and make their way out of Hong Kong by whatever means available, forgetting about Jasmine in their haste, to put as much distance between themselves and the “demon sword” as they can.

Jasmine manages to free herself from her bonds during the battle and slip out unnoticed in the confusion. Shaken by her experiences with the sword and her captors, she goes to the police, where she hopes to clear herself of any connection to the “murder” of her Japanese client, as well as to detail her mysterious disappearance.

Fortunately, Ling Chu handles her initial interview. The Khan believes her story, since it fills in gaps in his theory about the weapon used in the death of the Heng Po. Unfortunately for the characters (unless they are working for Ling Chu), Jasmine’s tale (which includes a graphic replay of the battle in the basement of the bird shop, as well as accurate descriptions of the characters) draws Ling Chu’s attention.

SCENE TEN: LAKE OVER WATER — TRAPPED (“THE HUNTERS BECOME HUNTED”)

The characters either have the sword (or vice versa), or they have seen a rival group lay claim to it. In either case, a pursuit through the streets of Mongkok ensues, as the characters (if they have the sword) attempt to evade their rivals or (if they don’t) catch up to the group that acquired the blade.

Storytellers should take pains to describe Mongkok’s congested, tenement-lined streets and incorporate the inevitable problems posed by attempting to follow anyone amid sidewalks clogged with pedestrians and vendors. Weaving in and out among the cars, people, carts, rickshaws, bicycles and other obstacles requires several Dexterity + Dodge rolls, while more

TAKING POSSESSION

The Storyteller should be prepared to run this mini-scene at any time after the characters gain possession of the sword. Even if none of the characters qualifies as an ideal recipient for Isamu's P'o, it still tries to control one of the group in hopes that it can use that individual to deliver it to a suitable host.

If the sword succeeds in a Manipulation + Puppetry roll (difficulty of the subject's Willpower), it possesses the mind of its target. The victim enters a semiconscious state and carries out the P'o's wishes while the P'o remains in control. The controlled character may try to resist the possession by spending a Willpower point and rolling Willpower versus the P'o's Manipulation + Puppetry. Each success reduces the number of scenes in which the P'o controls the character by one.

Should the P'o succeed in taking over one of the characters temporarily, it compels that individual to search for either Gan Shuo or Masahiro. The allies of the controlled individual may notice some odd behavioral changes in their friend. Successful Wits + Occult rolls (difficulty 8) or the use of an appropriate Discipline, Gift or other supernatural ability may permit a character to perceive the cause of these personality changes.

A controlled character could leave her group suddenly and wander off in search of either the *akuma* or the Genji, or she may endeavor to convince the others to delay delivering the sword to their patron or employer. If the characters are working for themselves and think to offer the sword to the highest bidder, the P'o maneuvers its host into suggesting one of the top two candidates. If the characters were ordered to get the sword by Angúo Chun or Jun Yow, Isamu's P'o strives to delay or subvert its delivery.

If the characters are wraiths working for the Dark Kingdom of Jade, the sword may not discover this fact until it actually gains control of the body that the wraith character inhabits currently. In that case, the sword tries to throw the resident wraith into a Harrowing, even if that denote loosening its control over the host body. This may lead to some odd complications if the mortal host regains consciousness and finds herself in a strange place among people she does not know.

The Storyteller may need to repeat this "scene" several times over the rest of the story, as long as the characters maintain possession of the sword without taking precautions to avoid falling prey to its powers.

elaborate maneuvers (such as leaping across the tops of moving cars) entail Dexterity + Athletics rolls in order to accomplish them successfully.

If the characters are pursuing their rivals, it should be possible (barring serious misfortune or bad *joss*) for them to catch up with their quarry and make another attempt to retrieve the sword. The characters should succeed on their second attempt, since the agents for both Gan Shuo and Masahiro are relatively weak Kuei-jin, or else mortal assistants. If Masahiro is present, the characters face a greater challenge, particularly if they have no desire to slay the Kuei-jin outright.

If the characters are the pursued rather than the pursuers, they may need a respite or a way to shake off their rivals. Both Brian Ang and Clive Cooper noticed the brouhaha (especially if the characters consult them earlier). One of them could come to the aid of the characters, stepping out from an alley or emerging from a manhole and motioning for the characters to follow him. Their rescuer leads the characters on a circuitous, deliberately confusing path through the sewers and tunnels under Mongkok, finally arriving at one of Ang's or Cooper's numerous boltholes. Here, the characters may rest in safety and take stock of their situation.

Either Ang or Cooper summarizes the characters' predicament in a few succinct words: "You have something that everybody is looking for!" This is an understatement. Their host informs the characters that news of a magical sword has begun circulating throughout the *shen* underground, and anybody who is anybody wants it. Both Ang and Cooper know the identities of most of the movers and shakers among the *shen* and cheerily (in the gleeful manner in which disaster-hounds recite the latest catastrophes) enumerate most of the individuals who are interested in acquiring the sword.

Both the Nosferatu and the Nezumi know that Chun, Jun Yow and the Genji want it. Cooper knows that a few of the remaining Kin-jin may also desire the weapon, either for its value as an antique art object or for its potential as a bargaining tool; whether or not he chooses to divulge this information to the characters is left up to the Storyteller. If the characters do not know who sent the rival groups to the smugglers' hideaway, either Ang or Cooper can identify Gan Shuo and Masahiro from their own street knowledge. Neither Brian nor Cooper, however, is aware of Thrace's interest, and neither suspects the involvement of the Dark Kingdom of Jade.

The characters should begin to get an idea of the sword's import, both as a focus for Chi and for its symbolic value. They should not yet realize the extent of the sword's powers or the trouble that waits ahead of them as they decide the disposition of the sword.

SCENE ELEVEN: LAKE OVER HEAVEN — ALARMING NEWS ("THE HORDES DESCEND")

Shen society, like any other complex and hierarchical structure, demands rituals of protocol to maintain its integrity. Despite the characters' perceived urgency to complete their mission and deliver the sword to their patron or employer, they must follow proper procedures. If they work for Chun or Jun Yow, in particular, they may have to wait for an "auspicious" time for a meeting.

One of the few exceptions to this custom occurs if the characters have agreed to work with Ling Chu in his search for the "murder weapon" used in the killing of the Heng Po (see **Scene Two**). The Khan does not stand on ceremony where matters of life and death are concerned, and he agrees to see the characters immediately (provided they are able to deal directly with him rather than with the front office of the Hong Kong police).

While the characters cool their heels waiting for the proper time to hand over the sword, the other factions wanting it go into action. Unless the characters begin as complete newcomers to Hong Kong, they are already integrated into *shen* society (even at its lowest levels). This factor means that other supernaturals have a chance of knowing at least one of their dwelling places or how to get in touch with them, either directly or through a third party.

The characters thus begin receiving a series of "visitations," as various *shen* seek to take the sword from them. The nature of each faction's approach depends on a number of factors, including motivation, relationship to the faction supported by the characters, a sense of honor and general moral leanings.

The Storyteller needs not to involve all the possible factions listed in the Allies and Rivals section at the end of the story; a few choice rivals allows for greater interplay among characters than a gallery of antagonists. Additionally, Storytellers can decide which groups to include based on the make-up of the characters. A group with a mage character might respond more enthusiastically to challenges from the Syndicate, while *hengeyokai* characters might relish encountering rival shapechangers such as Kintaro Tanijiro, the ronin Hakken. Changeling characters are ideally suited to deal with an attempt by Miao Min, the Monkey King, to steal the weapon.

Storytellers should keep in mind the fact that the sword has its own opinions as to who should possess it, and it does not hesitate to make its intentions known (either through controlling a character and making her agree to hand over the sword, or through compelling her to attack an unsuitable candidate regardless of the consequences).

The following examples offer a few suggestions for incorporating potential groups or individuals desiring to take the sword. The Storyteller should also feel free to construct her own rival factions and introduce new personalities into the mix if none of these suits his story or his version of the Middle Kingdom.

- Chun, Jun Yow, and Kazuko all prefer to approach the characters discreetly and formally, requesting a meeting and opening up negotiations for the sword. If pressed, Jun Yow and her *wu* become aggressive in their pursuit of the sword.

- The Syndicate's initial approach might take the form of an invitation to discuss the purchase of "a rare item of great worth." Refusals by the characters opens them up to strong-arm tactics or subtler means of exercising pressure to gain the characters' cooperation. Resources might dry up suddenly, or the characters might become victims of extortion or blackmail. (See **Technocracy: Syndicate** for the arsenal of dirty tricks available to this Convention.)

- Oliver Thrace works through middlemen since he desires generally to keep himself hidden from the Kuei-jin and the *shen*. If he somehow suspects that the sword is connected to the Dark Kingdom of Jade, he does not hesitate to use his necromantic powers and Spirit Thaumaturgy to gain control of the sword or its wielder. Thrace is also not above hiring someone to steal the sword from the characters.

- The Wu-Keng and Wu Lung wizards do not confront the characters directly, but they use subtlety and, in the case of the Wu-Keng, seduction to entice the characters into handing over the sword. Of course, each faction warns the characters against letting the sword fall into the "evil" clutches of the other group.

MORE ON WEATHER-WATCHING

The weather continues to worsen until the sword's fate is resolved. Regardless of the season, meteorologists begin predicting a storm of monsoon intensity for the Hong Kong area. Thick clouds cover the sun, bringing perpetual twilight to the Fragrant Harbor. A constant drizzle makes travel miserable.

This phenomenon does not go unnoticed by the *shen*. Nature spirits and *hengeyokai*, in particular, realize that something momentous is happening in the spirit worlds.

• Wraiths need to employ extremely indirect methods to gain the sword (unless the characters are wraiths themselves and free to interact directly with others like them). The characters may be approached by mediums or possessed mortals speaking on behalf of a departed relative. (See **Dark Kingdom of Jade** for the continuing relationships between Eastern wraiths and their living family members.)

• Michaela Neff, the Reborn (mummy), might get involved at this point. She, too, prefers civilized discourse to outright hostility. She takes great pains to appear to the characters as nothing more than a normal human who is interested in preserving and protecting ancient artifacts for posterity.

• Qian Shi and Gan Shuo employ the most drastic measures to acquire the sword. Qian Shi arranged for the sword's arrival in the first place and feels he has a right to it; he sends more thugs to wrest the sword from the characters, kidnaps (if he can) anyone close to them, blackmails them and sends professional thieves after it. Shi may strive to have the characters assassinated. Gan Shuo, while he has only recently been made aware of the sword's existence (via the smugglers in Scene Eight), nevertheless, he wants the katana, for he believes he can control its power. He, too, sends not only his mortal minions, but also his army of animated corpses after it.

• Ling Chu's approach is, perhaps, the most up-front. If the characters are not working for him and if he suspects that they are concealing a murder weapon deliberately, he confronts them directly. He first orders them to surrender the sword; if they refuse, he demands an explanation. If that proves unsatisfactory, Chu tries to commandeer the sword from them. Things could get ugly.

Just when matters seem to have become as complicated as possible, the arrival of Ren Wei, the Shih demon hunter, adds another level to the story.

SCENE TWELVE: HEAVEN OVER LAKE — TAKING RISKS ("THE TRUE HUNTER APPROACHES")

By this time, the characters' knowledge of the sword should have grown considerably. From Dong Tao's recounting of the tale of Isamu, they know the sword bears a curse; their experiences with the katana may allow them to intuit the nature of the curse. If any of them have fallen victim to the sword's mind control, they may also realize that something or someone inhabits the weapon.

Wraith characters have the best chance of recognizing the presence of a P'o within the sword, but other characters can sense that the blade contains a great deal of Yin energy without any Yang to balance it. The thought of placing such an item in the hands of any individual with power over others (even their patron or employer) may seem less and less viable as the sword becomes a focus for the basest impulses of greed and covetousness.

When the Storyteller feels that the characters (or the players) have had enough convolutions, she should introduce the catalyst that launches the final phase of the story. Enter the demon hunter.

The increase in supernatural activity has attracted the attention of Ren Wei, a Shih hunter who specializes in controlling marauding supernatural creatures. He is able to find the characters without a great deal of trouble, unless they go into deep hiding. Ren Wei's abilities to track the supernatural enable him to trace the strong emanations of Chi put out by the sword.

He does not stupidly pit himself against multiple opponents, but he does begin stalking the characters, by trying to get them alone and picking them off one by one. After the first such attempt, characters may choose to do something about the pesky hunter.

If they can reason with him rather than try to eliminate him, Ren Wei exhibits at first a singular lack of willingness to trust any paranormal creature. Only the most careful displays of good faith have any chance of scoring points with the fanatic. Any attempt to control or affect Ren Wei with supernatural powers garners his unrelenting hatred.

Should the characters manage to convince him that the matter requires either his help or his agreement not to interfere, Ren Wei considers their arguments carefully before demanding to examine the sword for himself. If the characters let Ren Wei draw the weapon, the sword's P'o seizes control of the Shih and forces him to attack the characters.

Although Ren Wei's mind is strong enough to throw off the sword's control after the first minute or so, the experience convinces the Shih that the blade must be destroyed despite its power as a *shen*-slayer. He is, however, subject to the strictures of the curse; Ren Wei must either draw *shen* blood or turn the sword upon himself before he can sheathe the weapon. Unless one of the characters offers herself as a sacrifice to fulfill the conditions of the curse, Ren Wei thrusts the sword through his own body, inflicting enough damage on himself to bring him to Mauled. Remember that the sword needs only to inflict four Health Levels of damage before it is satisfied; it's possible that the characters may not know this or may have forgotten this piece of data. Thus, although it is possible for a character to die at this point in the story, it is not absolutely necessary.

If the characters attempt to care for the stricken Shih, they may be able to heal some of his damage. He begins to reconsider his opinions about the characters if they do so. Ren Wei also agrees with them that the sword must not fall into the wrong hands, but he has no idea whose hands are the right ones. He has, however, heard of a very wise man who lives near the Po Lin Monastery on Lantau Island. If anyone can help determine how best to deal with the sword, it is the venerable monk, Nian Shun. If Ren Wei is able to travel, he offers to take the characters there as soon as possible.

SCENE THIRTEEN: HEAVEN OVER WATER – CONSULT THE GREAT PERSONAGE ("WHAT'S IN A NAME?")

Ren Wei uses his contacts at the Po Lin Monastery to arrange a meeting with Nian Shun. Because of the ever-increasing severity of the weather, however, travel to Lantau Island is risky.

Storytellers should emphasize this fact as the characters make their way across the waters that separate Hong Kong and Lantau Islands. Wraith or Kuei-jin characters may see the ghostly ship of the pirate Da Nan shadowing them as they make the crossing.

Nian Shun meets the characters in front of the temple at Po Lin. There, they can explain to him what they know of the sword. Like Ren Wei, Nian Shun asks to see the sword; however, unlike the young Shih, the ageless one does not attempt to unsheathe the sword but instead examines its hilt carefully. At one point, Shun stops his analysis and looks up at the characters, his eyes full of compassion. "So much pain," he says. "So much sorrow."

After he has finished assaying the weapon, Shun informs the characters that he might be able to help them destroy it, assuring them that, in his opinion, the continued existence of the sword will result only in great catastrophe for anyone who comes into contact with it.

Shun invites the characters to stay at one of the guest houses on the monastery grounds and asks their permission to take the sword with him to a place where he can study it safely without invoking its curse. Characters can examine his motives freely through any means available to them; they find that his honesty is without question.

If the characters allow him to, Nian Shun takes the sword away and returns to his retreat near the monastery. Ren Wei shows the characters to a small guest house where they can stay in safety until Shun finishes with the sword.

It takes at least five days for Nian Shun to complete his studies and make his preparations. The characters can take advantage of this time to heal any wounds they might have sustained over the last few hectic days or otherwise replenish their resources of Chi.

When he summons them again, Nian Shun tells the characters that he has discovered the sword's True Name and has fashioned an amulet that empowers the characters with the ability to destroy the sword and obliterate its essence from the world. That is the good news. The bad news is that this event cannot take place on this side of the Wall. In order to dispose of the sword properly — banishing the spirit trapped within it and freeing its Chi to mix with the cosmic energies of the spirit worlds — the characters must themselves travel to either the Yin or the Yang World and enact the ritual there. Nian Shun unfortunately cannot advise the characters as to which realm would be the better choice. That decision, he says, is theirs to make.

SCENE FOURTEEN: WATER OVER FIRE – FULFILLMENT ("THE SPIRIT COURTS")

Armed with the amulet inscribed with the sword's True Name, the characters must now cross the Wall into one of the two spirit worlds, there to perform the ritual that will destroy the possessed sword and lay to rest (or banish) the P'o of Isamu Harujiro.

By now, the storm that made it difficult for the characters to reach Lantau has crescendoed to a full typhoon, making it impossible for them to leave the island (or for anyone else to arrive, for that matter). As luck has it, openings to both the Umbral (or Yang) Court and the Jade (or Yin) Court lie within five miles of each other on Lantau. Getting to either gate in the midst of a typhoon may present dilemmas of its own, though.

Characters with the ability to locate such portals into the spirit worlds may determine the location of each gap in the Wall (+1 difficulty due to howling winds, rain, and pervasive roiling Chi). Nian Shun also knows the locations of these passageways, but he waits for the characters to make their decision as to which world to enter before he shares this knowledge with them.

The group may debate long and hard over which world to choose, or they may elect to use some method of fortune-telling or divination to determine the more auspicious of the two choices. In truth, there is no clear-cut, "right" choice, and each world presents its own challenges.

THE YANG WORLD

An opening into the Yang World sits within the Po Lin Monastery grounds at the center of a small, out-of-the-way shrine. Characters who possess the ability to cross the Wall and take others with them may do so. Because this event forms the climax of the story, the Storyteller should facilitate the characters' ability to enter either world as a group rather than cut some players out of the finale. (Nian Shun is a good source for amulets of various kinds. Also, the Stargazer Zhan Xue, who frequents Lantau and knows Nian Shun, may show up to assist matters with a timely fetish.)

Entering the Yang Realm throws the characters into a raging sea of chaos, amplified by the resonance from the typhoon in the Middle Kingdom. Characters must expend Willpower to maintain their focus in this place of seething life energies. (All Yang Chi pools are refreshed instantly by exposure to this potent barrage.)

The presence of the sword acts as a klaxon announcing an invasion of pure Yin energy, and the spirits that make their home in the Yang World sense the sword's intrusion and flock to defend their territory. While one of the characters chants the prescribed ritual and breaks the amulet bearing the sword's True Name, the other characters must fend off forays from various bizarre, amorphous guardian spirits.

GUARDIAN SPIRITS

Rage (P'o) 7, Gnosis (Hun) 5, Willpower 6, Chi Reservoir 40

Charms: Armor, Blast Flame, Dragon Sight, Materialize, Shapeshift

The Storyteller should play this scene for maximum drama and tension so that the culmination of the ritual occurs not a moment too soon. When the ritual is completed, the sword's spiritual essence explodes into a brilliant display of fireworks, delivering three Health Levels of damage (soakable) to any creature within 20 feet of it — including the spirits. Isamu's P'o materializes briefly as a medieval Japanese master artisan before it dissolves, howling, into the overwhelming energies of the Yang Court.

The characters may take advantage of this distraction to make a hasty retreat back across the Wall.

THE YIN WORLD

To reach the opening into the Jade Court, the characters must brave the elements and travel to the port village of Tai O. The small temple to Kuan Ti, the God of War, also houses a passageway into the Yin World. Once again, Storytellers should assist players in finding a way for all the characters to make the crossing into this world.

Entering the Yin World catapults the characters into the midst of a full-fledged Maelstrom, also reflective of the storm in the physical world. Here, in the realm of death energies, characters must contend with the possible emergence of their P'o (in the case of Kuei-jin or wraiths) or fight off frenzies (in the case of Kindred or hengeyokai characters). Storytellers should call for an initial Willpower roll from each character upon arriving in the Yin World. Additional rolls are left to the discretion of the Storyteller.

Again, the sword's presence does not pass unnoticed. Wraiths from the Dark Kingdom of Jade seek to claim the sword for the emperor. In addition, the creatures spawned by the Maelstrom attack anyone who comes too close, including the emperor's minions. Here, too, one character needs to perform the ritual while the others protect her from harm.

WRAITH/SPECTRE ATTACKER

Rage (P'o) 8, Gnosis (Hun) 5, Willpower 5, Chi Reservoir 40

Charms: Armor, Calcify, Corruption, Dragon Sight, Possession

An additional complication arises in this world, however. Isamu's P'o separates itself from the sword and materializes as a Spectre to battle the characters for its one remaining Fetter to the Middle Kingdom. (Statistics for both the sword and the P'o are given in the Appendix.) Again, the Storyteller should attempt to extract as much drama and excitement from this final confrontation as possible; the characters, if they succeed, should feel that they have accomplished something more than challenging.

When the ritual is completed, the sword implodes with a deafening clap of thunder, causing three Health Levels of damage (soakable) to anyone within 20 feet (as above); Isamu's P'o continues to battle on, though the sword's destruction has weakened it considerably. When it finally falls due to the concerted efforts of the characters, it shatters into hundreds of fragments, which are sucked up into the Maelstrom. Once this destruction happens, the characters are free to return to the Middle Kingdom.

ENDING THE STORY

When the characters return from their journey into the spirit worlds, they see that the typhoon has dwindled into a gentle rain. The characters may be surprised to learn that the physical sword still remains in their possession; only its spiritual counterpart — along with the P'o that inhabited it — perished in the ritual. Now, however, the sword is nothing more than a finely crafted katana, with its blade and hilt showing signs of wear and aging. All the magic that empowered it and the Chi energies that made it so destructive have dissipated at last.

The characters need to decide what to do with the still-valuable, spiritually worthless antique. The choice may be obvious, such as delivering it (late) to their patron along with an explanation of their actions. This may be possible for

characters in the service of Angúo Chun or another honor-bound individual; other employers may not be so generous, and the characters may face further complications as a result. If characters know of Bishamon Kazuko's connection to the sword, they may feel it appropriate to present her with the evidence of the fulfillment of her personal quest. Some characters may decide that the best course of action lies in destroying the physical sword to eliminate any future possibility of its attracting some other malevolent spirit. The Storyteller should leave this matter entirely in the hands of the characters; they have earned the right to decide this part of their destiny.

As for what happens next, that remains in the hands of joss and the inexorable turning of the Cycle toward the Sixth Age.



ALLIES AND RIVALS

The factions interested in acquiring Dragon of the Night include most of Hong Kong's supernatural community. Below, in no particular order, are the major players in the game, along with their particular motivations, disadvantages and strong points.

- **Angúo Chun:** Chun believes that possessing the katana will enable him to prevent the mainland Chinese Kuei-jin from usurping his rightful place as ruler of Hong Kong's Cathayan population. In addition, he plans to use the weapon as a means of eliminating the remaining Kin-jin who are polluting his realm.

- **Jun Yow:** Jun Yow hopes that with the katana, she and her *wu* can overcome Chun and assert true rulership in the name of the mainland.

- **The Tremere:** Oliver Thrace suspects the sword's necromantic powers and desires it as a tool to assist him in gaining control over the wraiths of the Dark Kingdom outpost.

- **The Kin-jin:** Camille T'sien, Pedder's agent in Hong Kong, may try to acquire the sword (if she hears of its existence) to use as potential leverage in dealing with the Kuei-jin. Unless someone informs her otherwise, she does not know the katana has supernatural powers. On the other hand, she has little reason to unsheathe the blade other than simple curiosity.

- **Qian Shi:** The Kumo arranged for the katana's arrival in Hong Kong through his smuggling connections. Knowing of the sword's power, he wishes to use its Chi to bolster his own magical abilities. If he discovers its effectiveness against the *shen*, he may consider employing it to eliminate some of his enemies in the supernatural community.

- **Gan Shuo:** The *akuma* desires the sword for himself and for his master. He does not learn of its existence until several nights after the sword arrives in Hong Kong, but once he does, he attempts to get his hands on it through any means possible.

- **Dark Kingdom of Jade:** The wraiths of Necropolis Hong Kong are under direct orders from the Jade Emperor to acquire the katana, and so they turn all their efforts toward succeeding in their mission. They may attempt to influence mortals (particularly living family members) to assist in locating and gaining possession of the blade. The sword itself, however, resists them actively, since the last thing it wants is to fall into the hands of the Jade Emperor.

- **The Stygians:** Wraiths who serve the Stygian Hierarchy are a minority in Hong Kong, but they are determined to continue their protection of Westerners who die in the region. In their hands, the sword might give them the edge they need to do this. They may even attempt to smuggle it out of the Shadowlands of the Middle Kingdom by means of the Midnight Express.

- **The Syndicate:** Despite their Technocratic allegiance, these mages want the sword to make use of it in dealing with reality deviants.

- **Ren Wei:** The Shih demon hunter desires to use the sword against the creatures he hunts and also seeks to keep it out of the hands of the *shen*. He believes in the nobility of his actions; this makes him, unfortunately, particularly vulnerable to the katana's wiles.

- **The Wu-Keng and Wu Lung:** These rival wizard factions both want the sword. The Yama King masters of the Wu-Keng covet the weapon's corruptive magic, while the Wu Lung see it as a symbol of power that may help them reassert their place in the hierarchy of China. Both groups sense the katana's potent magical energy and proceed with caution should the opposing faction acquire it.

- **The Reborn:** Horus' Asian vizier, Michaela Neff, has a great respect for ancient artifacts of any culture. If she acquires the katana, she may study and preserve it. Conversely, Nian Shun, Neff's Chinese counterpart, has heard of the sword's cursed nature and sees it as another source of the world's pain. By destroying it, he hopes to lessen the amount of suffering in the Middle Kingdom. Neff's and Shun's conflicting intentions may bring about a confrontation between them.

- **Ling Chu:** The Khan "supercop" is looking for a murder weapon. Unless he actually comes into contact with the katana, he may not suspect its true power. Unfortunately, like Ren Wei, Ling Chu may prove to be susceptible to the sword's seductions.

- **Bishamon Kazuko:** This Japanese Kuei-jin arrives in Hong Kong looking specifically for the sword. Because she does not know her way around and acts alone, it takes her some time to trace its activities. Her purpose in finding the sword is to destroy it and end the curse on her family, restoring their good name, even though the family itself has passed into history.



APPENDIX: WHISPERED WISDOM

THE SPIRIT WORLDS

Just beyond the material world of the Middle Kingdom lie the worlds of Yin and Yang. The following section provides brief descriptions of these two source-worlds for Chi energy. The Yang World corresponds roughly to Western *shen*'s idea of the Umbra, while the Yin World encompasses what Western supernaturals call the Shadowlands, the Dark Umbra or the Underworld. For more information on these realms, see **Kindred of the East**, **Dark Kingdom of Jade** and the forthcoming supplement **Hengeyokai**.

THE YANG WORLD

Just as the Yang principle embodies change, chaos, creativity, fertility, passion, violence and all types of action, so does the Yang World reflect the spiraling, inchoate madness of forms without form and substance without structure. Each individual brings her own perception to this “fuzzy” realm, imposing sense upon the senseless swirl of figures without ground and interpreting the images that assault her according to her own peculiar world-view. Thus, hengeyokai view this realm as a primal wilderness, where wildness reigns unchecked; the inhabitants of the Yang World personify the spirits of nature, both benevolent and malign. Creatures of

the Dreaming (changelings) view this world as their lost homeland, an ideal place of creative energies and the birthplace of dreams, ideas, illusions and nightmares.

In describing this realm, Storytellers should attempt to evoke the unpredictable, fractious and exhilarating nature of pure, unadulterated creation. Brilliant colors, heady aromas and cacophonous melodies should assault the senses (synthetic experiences can also add to the utter strangeness of the Yang World). To creatures with high levels of Yang-based Chi, the experience should be an inspiration and a catalyst. Yin-based creatures, on the other hand, feel distinctly uncomfortable and disoriented — literally out of place — in this antithetical realm.

THE YIN WORLD

Entropy, decay, stagnation, passivity and rigidity constitute the hallmarks of the Yin principle and form the cornerstones of the Yin World. Though more familiar in its similarity to the Middle Kingdom, the Yin World (otherwise known as the Dark Kingdom of Jade) appears dark, foreboding and a little shabbier in comparison with the world of living beings. This is the abode of the dead (the truly dead, as opposed to the undead); wraiths and Spectres inhabit this dreadful landscape.

Storytellers should emphasize the dull colors, foul odors and rot and dissolution. Buildings (unless they are fashioned from white jade — a substance refined from the souls of unfortunate wraiths) seem worn and decrepit; the “sky” overhead bears a leaden cast, and only the howling of the great Monsoon (or Tempest) that surrounds the settled areas of the Dark Kingdom pierces the silence in much of the realm. Yin-based characters should feel at home (if not at peace) here; Yang-based characters find this realm almost unbearably confining and claustrophobic.

THE YOMI WORLD

The Yomi World also makes itself felt in Hong Kong, albeit sporadically and indirectly. The Wicked City of the Yama King Mikaboshi adjoins Hong Kong (as it does with many other places); from here, Mikaboshi sends bakemono and elemental agents to do his bidding. The Hell of Being Skinned Alive, ruled by the Yama Queen Tou Mu, also juxtaposes Hong Kong at certain inauspicious times and places. Tou Mu has few agents, but possesses the body of a mortal or *shen* occasionally, and uses the hapless husk to enact her schemes. Tou Mu's hatred for the Kuei-jin is rivaled only by her loathing for Mikaboshi; the two plot against each other ceaselessly, using Hong Kong's *shen* as pawns in their war.

A SWORD AND ITS MASTER

This section presents full descriptions and statistics for the enchanted sword and its resident P'o, both of which form an integral part of the story outlined in Chapter Five.

TATSUKO SAYO: DRAGON OF THE NIGHT (CURSED KATANA)

Chi Reservoir: Yin 30 (used to activate sword's powers)

A katana made of the finest steel, hammered and folded more than 200 times to achieve its strength and durability, Dragon of the Night is set into a haft of carved white jade. The sword possesses an elegant simplicity lacking in more ornate weapons. Its perfect balance makes it easy to wield, even by a novice, and lethal in the hands of a trained swordmaster.

POWERS

Dragon of the Night possesses a number of powers given to it by its maker, the master swordsmith Isamu Harujiro. These powers, which utilize Chi (from the sword's reservoir) to activate, include:

- **Enhance Skill:** Should its wielder be unfamiliar with swordplay, the katana grants her two dice in Melee. If she already knows Melee, it increases the wielder's skill by two dice (to a maximum of 7). This power costs one Chi to use and lasts for one scene.

- **Extra Damage:** In addition to the standard damage listed for a katana (Strength +3), Dragon of the Night also allows the wielder to add her level in Melee to the Dice Pool for damage. Those who have only the two levels of skill granted by the sword add only those levels. Wielders who have Melee skill add only their natural skill level to the damage, not the extra levels granted by the sword. *Shen* take aggravated damage from the sword. The cost of this power is one Chi and must be declared before each swing of the weapon.

This power may also be used to enable the sword to cut wraiths and spirits. While the sword is charged with energy, the wielder may make a normal attack against a wraith or spirit, provided the wielder can sense the presence of the intangible being. The blade inflicts damage to Corpus, Power or Chi, whichever is most appropriate.

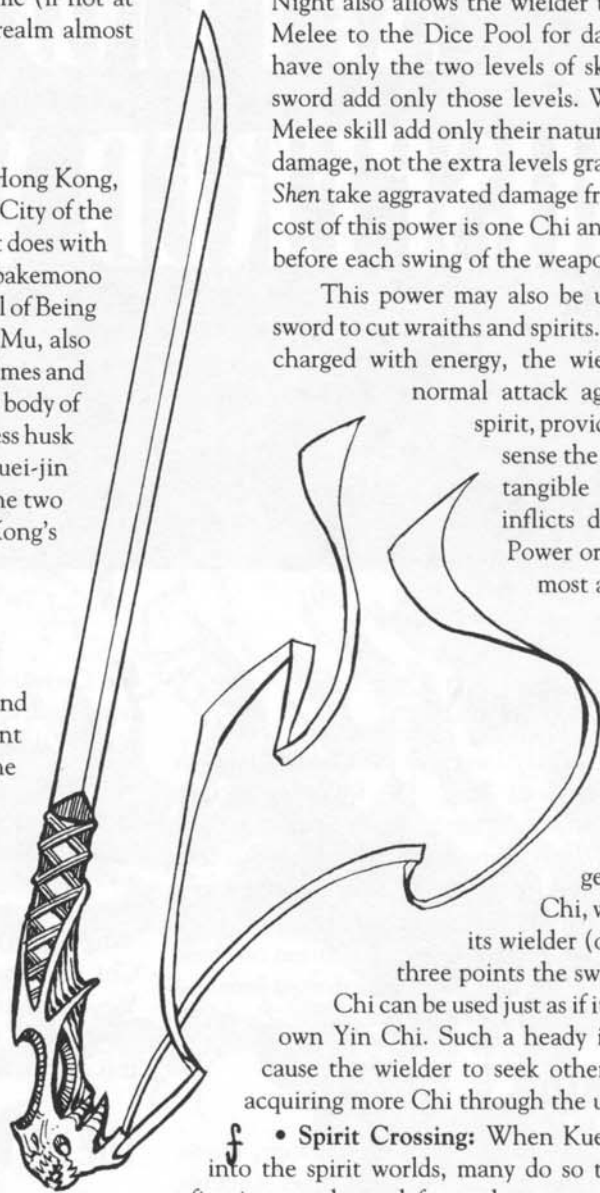
- **Chi Bestowal:**

Whenever the sword draws *shen* blood, it drinks in Chi points to replenish its own Chi Reservoir. It also generates a point of Chi, which it bestows on its wielder (one point for every

three points the sword takes in). This

Chi can be used just as if it were the wielder's own Yin Chi. Such a heady inrush of Chi may cause the wielder to seek other opportunities for acquiring more Chi through the use of the sword.

- **Spirit Crossing:** When Kuei-jin seek to cross into the spirit worlds, many do so through using jade figurines enchanted for such a purpose. Dragon of the Night lets such crossings be made without need for the figurines — its haft of white jade serving in their stead. When used for such a purpose, the katana is not left behind as the figurines usually are, but it travels with its possessor. Note that the katana is filled with Yin energy, making crossings into the Yang World more difficult (+1 difficulty); conversely, crossing into the Yin World is made easier by a corresponding amount. Ironically, the P'o animating Dragon



of the Night has no desire to enter the Yin World, from fear of falling into the hands of the Jade Emperor. It therefore attempts to prevent its wielder from entering the Yin World, trying to Dominate (see below) her into compliance with its wishes. There is no cost to cross into the spirit worlds when using Dragon of the Night.

- **Reflection:** Because the katana wants no one else controlling its wielder, it adds its potent magic to her attempt to resist anyone or anything else's control. When used to offset Dominate and Presence Disciplines, Mind Magick, Puppetry or the mind-controlling powers of the fae or *hengeyokai*, the katana grants its wielder a Willpower of 9 to resist. If the wielder already has a Willpower of 9 or better, this portion of the power has no effect.

Further, the sword's wielder may utilize Tatsuko Sayo's Chi to resist commands as if the wielder were spending Willpower to overcome the effects. Usually, the sword does not grant more than three or four points of Chi to such an endeavor, since the wielder should have sense enough to either leave the area or draw the katana to slay the *shen* causing the trouble. This power costs one Chi to activate, plus as many points of Chi (to a maximum of four) as the katana allows its wielder to use. Note that the katana may refuse to utilize this power on its wielder's behalf if a Kuei-jin suitable to Isamu's needs is trying to Dominate the wielder into giving him the sword. Additionally, it grants no immunity to its own attempts to Dominate (see below) its possessor.

CURSES

Offsetting the powers of the sword, however, are various curses that have made Tatsuko Sayo the object of the spirits' wrath and the bane of those who have attempted to hold it over the centuries.

- **Dominate:** The P'o within the sword can attempt to control its wielder, thereby causing that individual to obey its wishes (which usually consist of instructions to attack chosen targets). Other uses of this power include compelling the wielder to take the sword to a particular place or search for a certain person. The sword need not be unsheathed for noncombat-related commands.

System: The P'o engages in a resisted roll, pitting its Being against its target's Willpower. One success allows the P'o to control the actions of the sword's target for one scene. Additional successes increase the number of scenes during which the victim must heed the sword's instructions. The controlled person may expend Willpower to overcome the weapon's control temporarily or to take an action detrimental to the blade (such as asking someone for assistance in breaking the sword's control). This power costs five Chi points for each use.

- **Attraction:** The sword's beauty and quality are such that individuals trained in the use of a sword (particularly a katana) must resist actively the temptation to possess it.

System: Any character with a rating in Melee must succeed in a Willpower roll (difficulty 8) or try to acquire the sword in the manner most appropriate to her temperament. For example, a thief might try to steal it from its current possessor; an affluent individual, however, is more likely to attempt to purchase the weapon.

- **Blood of the Shen:** Once drawn, the sword cannot be returned to its sheath without spilling *shen* blood. If this is not possible, the wielder feels a compulsion to plunge the blade into her own body. In this fashion, Dragon of the Night ensures that inept or unsuitable individuals do not possess it for long.

System: The sword must inflict at least three Health Levels of (aggravated) damage on a *shen* before its wielder can return the weapon to its sheath. Each level of aggravated damage inflicted restores one point of Chi to the sword and is the only way in which the weapon can replenish its power.

Furthermore, the three newly acquired points of Chi permit the sword to generate a fourth point, which is bestowed upon the wielder. (See above for uses of this Chi.) Receiving such bursts of Chi can become addictive.

To resist the suicidal compulsion resulting from the failure to draw *shen* blood, the wielder must succeed in a Willpower roll (difficulty 8). Self-inflicted wounds generate no Chi for the wielder (but grant the sword three points of Chi if the wielder is *shen*). Once the sword has inflicted three Health Levels of damage on its unlucky wielder, it lets itself be sheathed (until the next time).

ISAMU HARUJIRO, "VENGEFUL SPECTRE"

Background: As a master swordsmith and swordmaster in medieval Japan, Isamu Harujiro took justifiable pride in his craftsmanship, so much so that he attempted to cheat the gods rather than see his work destroyed. Using his prize katana Tatsuko Sayo (Dragon of the Night), he declared war on the spirit worlds, annihilating many spirit creatures before falling finally to the legendary *shen* warrior Ishitaro.

Imprisoned in the Dark Kingdom of Jade, Isamu came to the attention of the Jade Emperor, who coveted the famous sword for himself and ordered the wraith to procure it for him from the Skinlands. Instead, Isamu escaped from the Yellow Springs and reentered the living world as one of the Risen (though not as a Kuei-jin). As such, he sought out to reclaim his sword and finish his self-appointed mission to slay as many spirits (and even the gods themselves) as possible. These plans never came to full fruition, though; a Shih demon hunter, Shizuko Kokoshin, caused Isamu's second (and final) death, sending Isamu's Hun to Oblivion.

The swordsmith's P'o proved to be harder to dismiss; still bound to Dragon of the Night by its desire for vengeance, Isamu's P'o imbedded itself within the hilt of the sword, imbuing the weapon with a crafty intelligence and a hatred

for those who caused his demise. The sword passed from one samurai family to another for centuries, bringing destruction on each family in turn through the workings of its curse. Finally, in the 20th century, the resourceful P'o conceived a plan to possess the body of a powerful Kuei-jin, thus enabling it to assume a bodily presence in the Middle Kingdom apart from the sword that has been both its vehicle for revenge and its protective prison.

As long as it remains in the Middle Kingdom, Isamu's P'o remains confined to the sword it inhabits. Should Isamu enter the Yin Court once more (particularly if brought there by the player characters, as part of the conclusion to the story in Chapter Five), he may separate from the sword and materialize as his true form — a Spectre of the Doppelganger Caste. In this form, he can both wield the sword and use his own powers, thus presenting a formidable challenge for any who dare to confront him.

Image: Isamu Harujiro appears in Spectral form much as he did in life, except that his face is twisted into a perpetual mask of hatred directed at the creatures of the spirit realms. His muscular "body" testifies to his membership in a demanding craft, while his quick, lithe movements proclaim his agility in physical combat. He retains the medieval Japanese dress and hairstyle familiar to him from his mortal life.

Roleplaying Hints: No one can best you with a sword, particularly one of your own making. Anyone wielding a lesser weapon is beneath you. Show no mercy to your inferiors, unless they happen to possess bodies suitable for your purposes. Under no circumstances will you let yourself fall prey to the Jade Emperor or his minions again.

Note: More detailed information on Spectres and their powers is available in **Dark Reflections: Spectres**, a supplement for **Wraith: The Oblivion**.

Caste: Doppelganger

Nature: Perfectionist

Demeanor: Director

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Intimidation 3

Skills: Crafts (swordsmith) 5, Melee (katana) 4, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 2, Enigmas 3, Linguistics 4, Occult 4

Backgrounds: Artifact (cursed katana) 4, Shadowlands 3

Dark Passions: Destroy the Shen (Hatred) 4, Acquire a Suitable Body (Covetousness) 5

Arcanoi/Dark Arcanoi: Contaminate 3, Embody 3, Larceny 3, Shroud-Rending 5, Usury 3

Fetters: Tatsuko Sayo (cursed katana) 5

Corpus: 9

Being: (Covetousness) 8

Angst: 8

Psyche: Counselor

Passions: Seek Forgiveness (Humility) 3, Destroy Cursed Fetter (Righteousness) 2

Fronds: Guilt

Composure: 1



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